UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

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INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INDEPENDENT CINEMA AND POPULAR MUSIC CULTURE

By Matthew William Nicholls

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ABSTRACT

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In recent years, many American independent films have become increasingly engaged with popular music culture and have used various forms of pop music in their soundtracks to various effects. Disparate films from a variety of genres use different forms of popular music in different ways, however these negotiations with pop music and its cultural surroundings have one true implication: that the 'independentness' (or 'indieness') of these movies is informed, anchored and embellished by their relationships with their soundtracks and/or the representations of or positioning within wider popular music subcultures. Independent American cinema, often distinguished from mainstream Hollywood cinema in terms of the separateness of its production or distribution, or its thematic and/or formal transgressions, can also be seen as distinctive in terms of its musical expression. This thesis will investigate the impact that these popular music cultures have had on contemporary American independent film since the 1980s. The primary objective of this thesis is not to discuss how these films are positioned within the industry (this has been done elsewhere), nor is it the aim to scrutinise a film's independentness (or 'unindependentness') in terms of its production, but rather to assert how music functions in these films and how a notion of independence (indieness) can be measured from the relationship between the film, its soundtrack, and a wider music culture. This will involve textual analyses of how popular music has been used to score a selection of key independent films (ranging from *Blue Velvet* and *Do the Right Thing* through to *Ghost World* and *Juno*), how popular music trends and subcultures have been represented on screen (such as dance music culture in *Go*), and how the film and music worlds have interacted, particularly through collaborations between directors and pop musicians (such as Darren Aronofsky and Clint Mansell).

List of contents

List of illustrations

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Introduction

In recent years, many American independent films have become increasingly engaged with popular music culture. From using pop songs as part of a soundtrack, through having pop musicians produce original scores, to films including explicit references to (and representations of) different aspects of various popular music subcultures, the way in which an independent film interacts with pop music has become a big part of establishing an independent, non-mainstream identity. The full aims of this thesis will be explained in more depth later. For the first section of this introduction I will outline some of the ways in which contemporary American independent film engages with popular music culture, using Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006) as a case study. The use of a pop soundtrack and a layering of references to popular music subcultures imbues this particular film with a degree of 'alternative value' that can also be found across a range of movies over the past twenty-five years. Interactions with pop music are used to embellish the excessive intertextuality, the lavish visual style and playful reconfiguration of generic conventions, and is indicative of a form of independent cinema that seeks to separate itself from the mainstream.

i) Music and intertextuality in *Marie Antoinette*

In a wide-angle shot, a parade of horses and carriages march past the gardens of the Chateau de Versailles (Figure 1). The guards are wearing royal blue uniforms with cocked hats, the carriages are decorated with gold trimming, and the palace is framed in the centre of the shot, its sandy red-brick colour accentuated by the stark green grass and shrubbery that surrounds it. We cut to a shot of the palace courtyard as the horse-drawn carriages pull in. More guards are standing in the yard, again dressed in royal regalia (this time red jackets, white shirts and trousers, and black bicorns), while women adorning pink and cream full-skirted ball gowns cool themselves with lace fans. The congregation awaits the opening of the carriage doors (Figure 2), before finally, out steps the 14-year-old Austrian Archduchess Marie Antonia Josepha Joanna (played by a then-23-year-old Kirsten Dunst); 'She looks like a child,' quips one character in a tongue-in-cheek manner (Figures 3 and 4).

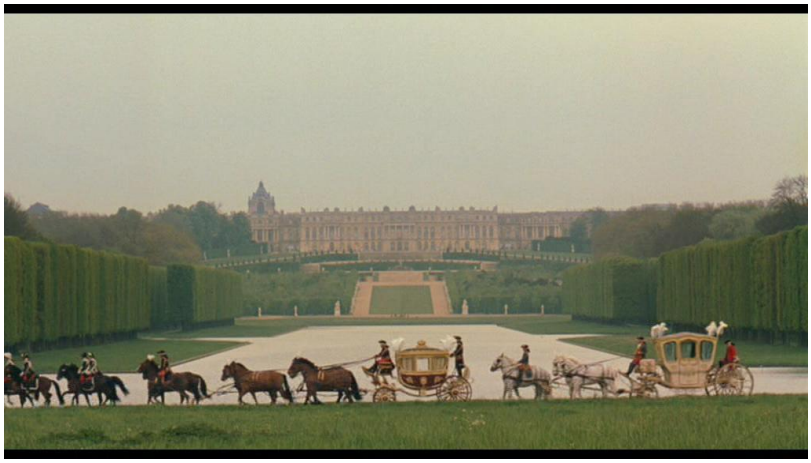

Figure 1

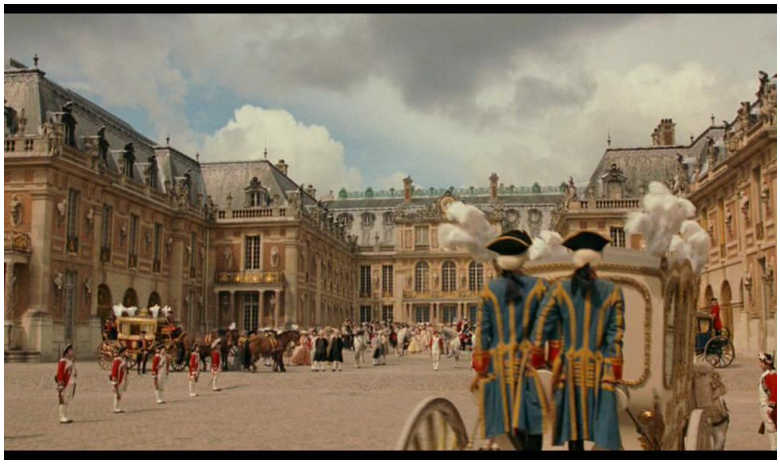

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Visually, these scenes demonstrate the typical iconography of the period drama, but if one listens to the soundtrack, something quite unorthodox is happening. Instead of using an appropriate classical piece from the period to score the action, the sequence is accompanied by a drum machine beat and synthy guitar riff, sampled from a song called 'I Don't Like It Like This' by The Radio Dept, a Swedish indie band from the 2000s. Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* is an intertextually-rich, intentionally anachronistic film that does not follow the typical conventions of the historical biopic. The film is indicative of Coppola's audacious mode of expression, incorporating influences from art, fashion and especially popular music; she comes from a family of Hollywood royalty (her father, Francis Ford, being one of the most celebrated directors of the post-classical era, with extended family members including the composer Carmine Coppola, and actors Talia Shire, Nicolas Cage and Jason Schwartzman, among many others), and has dabbled in myriad artistic trades, as an amateur filmmaker, artist, photographer, music video director (working with bands such as The Flaming Lips and The White Stripes), one-time chat show host, fashion designer (she co-founded the fashion label Milk Fed with a childhood friend in 1995),[1] and occasional actress (her poorly received performance in her father's *The Godfather Part III* [1990] being her most notable).

Her work is distinctly personal, employs a heavily stylised, glossy design, and, coming from a music video background, prominently references pop music and wider aspects of popular music culture. This boldness has not always gone down well with critics. The widely-reported booing of *Marie Antoinette* by some French journalists at its Cannes premiere in 2006 has become part of the film's folklore. Although Coppola herself is rather dismissive of the affair (she asserts that the film "got portrayed strangely in the press" and points out that the film had

[1] Pam Cook, 'Portrait of a Lady: Sofia Coppola', in *Sight and Sound*, v. 36 n. 11 (November 2006), p. 36

also received many positive reviews),[2] it is fair to say that the movie received a mixed response from reviewers: some called it 'irresponsible' by choosing to omit key historical events (notably Antoinette's execution),[3] some were dismissive of Coppola's 'consumptive' style,[4] while others praised Coppola and found her portrayal of Marie Antoinette as a vivacious, glitzy, somewhat innocent teenager searching for an identity in eighteenth-century aristocratic France to be an interesting take on 1980s-era teen movies.[5]

Produced independently by American Zoetrope (a studio founded by Francis Ford and George Lucas, now part-owned by Sofia), the film is loosely based on a biography of Antoinette by Antonia Fraser, and follows the relationship between the future queen and the 15-year-old Dauphin of France (soon to be King) Louis XVI (portrayed by a 25-year-old Jason Schwarzman). In a sense, it is a coming-of-age narrative that follows the couple from their initial fledgling romance to a later strained relationship as the young archduchess becomes increasingly jaded by aristocratic life. It makes sense, therefore, that the film does not *sound* like a typical historical biopic, forgoing a classical score and instead employing a series of anarchic new wave pop songs, long time staples of the American teen film. It is therefore not surprising that Coppola's idiosyncratic style seemed to alienate several critics. From the first few seconds of the opening credits it is clear that Coppola's vision of eighteenth-century aristocratic Paris is not going to be a traditional period piece. The film opens with the clanking guitars of Gang of Four's 1979 post-punk song 'Natural's Not In It', while on a black screen the production credits pop up, followed by Kirsten Dunst's name in a thin, italicised pink font that is reminiscent of the logos of punk and post-punk bands such as The Buzzcocks or The Cure (Figure 5). After her name lingers on screen, there is a cut to a shot of Dunst as Marie Antoinette in flamboyant white costume. Gang of Four continues to play. Slumped back in a chair with her eyes closed and surrounded by several fancy pink cakes, the archduchess is having a pair of shoes fitted by a maid. She rolls her head to the side, glances at one of the fancy cakes and runs her finger across the cream. She licks the icing off her finger and gazes straight down the lens of the camera (Figure 6).

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2 Anonymous, 'Q&A: Sofia Coppola' in *Empire*, n. 209 (November 2006), p. 151

3 Glenn Kenny, 'Marie Antoinette' (review), in *Premiere*, v. 20 n. 2 (October 2006), p. 40

4 Rob Nelson, 'Cannes: *Marie Antoinette*: Let them eat whatever', in *Cinema Scope*, n. 27 (July 2006), p. 80

5 Andrew Sarris, *Marie Antoinette* review, http://www.observer.com/node/39490

Figure 5

Figure 6

This arch glance at the audience affirms that Coppola is divulging in intertextual excess. In the first thirty seconds of the film we have heard music from a London-based 1970s/'80s post-punk band, seen textual cues that reference punk design, and watched an American actress portraying an Austrian / French aristocrat, wearing a costume that, while appearing to be an authentic period dress, also recalls overstated Vivienne Westwood glamour. The cakes are a knowing reference to Antoinette's famous, if perhaps mythical, exclamation, 'Let them eat cake'. It is a bold opening sequence, one that emphasises the movie's style and hyperbole, and adamantly challenges tradition, historical accuracy and period drama conventions. Indeed, if one examines the *Marie Antoinette* universe more closely, it is apparent that the film is layered with popular music references.

As I have mentioned, pop music has always played a part in Sofia Coppola's work. Her feature debut, *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), was scored by a selection of original music cues by the French duo Air, and her follow-up, *Lost in Translation* (2003), featured a mixture of artists as diverse as The Sex Pistols and the British electronica band Death In Vegas, as well as a collection of fuzzy,

dreamy music cues by Kevin Shields, a record producer and former member of the '80s alternative rock group My Bloody Valentine. Three years later, Coppola's choice of soundtrack for *Marie Antoinette* is arguably once again its most striking feature. Along with the aforementioned tracks by Gang of Four and The Rado Dept., there is a combination of contemporary rock (by 21st century bands such as Phoenix and The Strokes), avant-garde electronica by the experimental noise producers Aphex Twin and Squarepusher, a selection of classical baroque pieces orchestrated by the composer Jean-Philippe Rameau, a series of original music cues by Air, and, perhaps most significantly, an assortment of early '80s new wave and new romantic pop by artists such as Adam and the Ants and Bow Wow Wow. (Furthermore, it has been noted in interviews that Coppola's depiction of Marie Antoinette seems to deliberately mirror that of Annabelle Lwin, Bow Wow Wow's lead singer: Lwin joined the group at the age of 14, the same age that Marie Antoinette married Louis XVI, with both girls having to grow up in the public eye.) All of this music was partly compiled by Coppola's regular music supervisor Brian Reitzell (who had previously played with Air as a drummer), and was released on a double-CD soundtrack: disc one is a 'night-time party version', while disc two is a calmer 'morning after' compilation.[6] The *Marie Antoinette* DVD is also musically rich: the menus are underscored by Aphex Twin's 'Nanou 2', plus there is a bonus behind-the-scenes featurette shot in the style of the MTV series Cribs, a programme that explores rock stars' houses.

Even the film's casting alludes to popular music culture. Coppola's decision to give a cameo role to rock icon Marianne Faithful is certainly deliberate, while Steve Coogan's appearance as Ambassador Mercy is also particularly notable: Coogan had previously played Factory Records boss Tony Wilson in Michael Winterbottom's *24 Hour Party People* (2001), a film that dealt with the Manchester indie scene in the early 1980s that included bands such as Joy Division and New Order, both of whom appear on the *Marie Antoinette* soundtrack. For Coogan to be milling around a film world that is occupied by the same music is surely no coincidence, nor is the casting of Shirley Henderson, who played Wilson's wife, Lindsay, in *24 Hour Party People*.

Visually, the film's logo is especially striking: a cut and paste-style font that is clearly referencing the work of punk designers such as Jamie Reid. The costume is also important: the overly flamboyant Vivienne Westwood-esque dresses and other new romantic-influenced costumes and make-up (particularly on the men) help to situate the film in an ambiguous time and place.[7] Moreover, in one

[6] Marc Jacobs, Interview with Sofia Coppola in *Interview*, November 2006, p. 121

[7] Cook, 'Portrait of a Lady: Sofia Coppola', p. 38. Cook notes that one of the key

scene, a pair of Converse trainers (an item often associated with street style and aspects of urban and alternative popular music) can be spotted in the corner of a bedroom. Coppola's regular music video collaborators, her cinematographer of choice, Lance Acord and art director K. K. Barrett, are also employed here, and are responsible for creating *Marie Antoinette*'s luscious, often deliberately ostentatious, visual design.

This anarchic style is both personal and heavily influenced by other maverick filmmakers. Coppola has listed films by John Schlesinger and Terrence Malick as inspirations, while more importantly, Marie Antoinette's referencing of contemporary music culture is greatly indebted by Ken Russell's 1975 film *Lisztomania*, an audacious biopic of the composer Franz Liszt (portrayed by The Who's Roger Daltrey), who is presented as the 19th century equivalent of a 1970s rock star.[8] As Coppola states, '[*Lisztomania*] just showed me that you don't have to obey the rules. If the tone is right, why can't you have an ice cream sundae in a period film? … There are people who are open-minded and get what it is. And then there's the more square people'.[9]

This list of personnel, influences and intertextual references demonstrates how the film is indebted not just to pop music itself, but also wider popular music culture. In producing a period piece that is so rich with contemporary cultural and musical references, Coppola has created a forthright and provocative film that eschews convention. While its iconographic visions of French architecture and gardens, and the fleeting sound of baroque music locate the film in eighteenth-century France, the prominence of a teen-movie-style coming-of-age narrative and the abundance of references to 1980s pop music imbue the film with a sheen of nostalgia: it becomes a wistful depiction of 1980s popular culture and new wave style, albeit communicated through a portrait of French aristocratic life. In an article in *Sight and Sound*, Pam Cook aligns this piece of cinematic excess with the idea of artistic travesty. On travesty, Cook notes:

> (Travesty) brazenly mixes high and low culture, and does not disguise its impulse to sweep away tradition. In the case of historical fictions, travesty collapses boundaries of time and place through pastiche, emphasising that history is in the eye of the beholder, whether group or individual. Travesty is playful, but it can have a serious purpose: to demonstrate that the past is always viewed through the filer of the present, and represents the vested interests of those who reinvent it.[10]

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vehicles for filmic travesty is costume design: "Fashion consciously disrespects boundaries of time, place and culture, yet as every costume historian knows, it is intimately tied to history, not only in its source materials, but in its capturing of the spirit of the contemporary moment and its relationship with the past."

8 Anonymous, 'Q&A: Sofia Coppola', p. 151

9 Anonymous, 'Q&A: Sofia Coppola', p. 151

10 Cook, 'Portrait of a Lady: Sofia Coppola', p. 38

Indeed, Coppola's emphasis on the hyperbolic positions *Marie Antoinette* in an ambiguous time and place, and between aspects of high and low culture. Two instances of this occur in the middle of the film. The first is a montage in which Antoinette, who at this point in the film has started to lead an increasingly hedonistic lifestyle after becoming disillusioned with aristocratic etiquette, is shown surrounded by girlfriends preparing for a masked ball. The fast-cut sequence involves a range of shots focusing on fancy cakes (Figures 7 and 8), champagne, ridiculously overstated dresses and an array of extravagant shoes (Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

The three-minute passage is scored by the song 'I Want Candy' by Bow Wow Wow, and is edited very much like a music video, with cuts on the beat and occasionally featuring selections of non-linear images.[11] The movement of the montage and the rapidity of the cuts almost brings these non-linear images into animation; two shots of a collection of shoes (Figures 9 and 10) are juxtaposed in such a way that it looks as if the shoes are dancing as they move from one position to another. This moment in the film results in the collapse of time and space. The music (and with it, the visual pop aesthetic) arrives abruptly and ultimately aids in undermining classical editing devices such as cause, effect and continuity.[12] The scene that follows this montage, the masked ball itself, also results in a collapse of time and space. As the guests arrive at the ball and gather on the dancefloor, Siouxsie and the Banshees' 'Hong Kong Garden' starts playing. As the revellers dance, the visual codes (particularly the hair, make-up and costumes) begin to take on new meanings: instead of signifying the historic past, they become reminders of the not-

[11] E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock* (London: Routlege, 1987), pp. 33-48
[12] Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock*, p. 33

too-distant past, referencing 1980s post-punk flamboyance and New Romanticism. The music and costumes (particularly the feminine attire of the men – frilly shirts and periwigs) are reminiscent of post-punk androgyny, and seek to challenge a traditional representation of the period.

Marie Antoinette provides many examples of intertextual excess, and employs a form of musical expression that has huge implications on its tone and style. The film is not alone in this respect; in recent years independent American films (and filmmakers) have become increasingly engaged with popular music culture and have used various forms of pop music in their soundtracks to various effects. Disparate films from a variety of genres use different forms of popular music in different ways, however these negotiations with pop music and its cultural surroundings have one true implication: that the 'independent-ness' (or 'indieness') of these films is informed, anchored and embellished by the relationships with their soundtracks, and also by their representations of (or positioning within) wider popular music subcultures. Independent American cinema, often distinguished from mainstream Hollywood cinema by its separateness in terms of production and distribution or its thematic and/or formal transgressions, can also be seen as separate in terms of its musical expression. This thesis will examine the different ways in which this is achieved.

ii. Aims, objectives and methodologies

> Nothing classifies more infallibly than taste in music.
>
> - Pierre Bourdieu[13]

Pierre Bourdieu's famous notions of taste distinction are obviously echoed in this study of independent cinema and popular music. Although social change (changes in industry and a blurring of class boundaries) and an explosion of media content (a proliferation of material via the internet and other digital innovations) have made such distinctions harder to pin down in the context of contemporary mass culture, the basic premise of Bourdieu's notion can be applied to a study of an American cinema that seeks to be 'different' from the 'mainstream.' In recent years, it has become harder to determine what exactly qualifies as an 'independent' film. At festivals such as Sundance and at award ceremonies such as The Independent Spirit Awards, films produced and/or distributed by major studios underneath 'indie' subsidiary umbrellas (such as Fox Searchlight and Paramount Vantage) frequently

[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 18

rub shoulders with much smaller films produced on a shoe-string budget by new, fledgling directors. A pertinent example can be found at the 2008 Independent Spirit Awards, where one film, *Rachel Getting Married* (2008), featuring a big-name director (Jonathan Demme), a star lead (Oscar-nominated Anne Hathaway) and backing from Sony (through their Sony Pictures Classics division) vied for the Best Film prize with *Wendy and Lucy* (2008), a film by a much lesser-known director (Kelly Reichart) and distributed by the small Oscilloscope Laboratories. But while these two films occupy different positions within the industry, they both share a similar verité aesthetic and naturalistic performance style, and, if one digs deeper, a comparable negotiation with popular music culture. *Rachel Getting Married* features original music by the influential jazz saxophonist Donald Harrison Jr, a cameo appearance by hip hop historian Fab Five Freddy, and a prominent co-starring role for Tunde Adebimpe, best known by popular music aficionados as the lead singer of the New York band TV On The Radio. *Wendy and Lucy* similarly features a prominent musical sensibility; there is original music by the guitarist Smokey Hormel (of the band Smokey and Miho) as well as a cameo appearance by the singer-songwriter Will Oldham (a.k.a. Bonnie Prince Billy), who also contributes to the film's title theme. Despite the different production backgrounds, both *Rachel Getting Married* and *Wendy and Lucy* share a particular musical authenticity. In contrast to several Hollywood blockbusters which may typically employ a soundtrack of recognisable, mainstream songs (as can be found in films such as *I Am Legend* [2007] and *Watchmen* [2009], which respectively feature the hits of Bob Marley and Bob Dylan), the independence and 'otherness' of indie cinema is largely informed by a particular interaction with alternative and independent forms of popular music.

Throughout this thesis I will often refer to the differences between 'mainstream' and 'independent' cinema. 'Mainstream' is a word that is often used but rarely defined in works of film or cultural theory. As Barbara Korte and Claudia Sternberg note, the term can be likened to other nebulous concepts such as 'middlebrow,' 'popular' or 'low' / 'high' culture; while the boundaries of these particular terms cannot be precisely located through an exact scientific method, they remain a helpful part of the discursive formations that exist within wider discourses in sociology and cultural studies.[14] Although there is no systematic method for understanding its exact limits, 'the mainstream' is a useful umbrella term for describing a phenomena that has largely penetrated public consciousness. By extension, 'mainstream cinema' should be loosely understood as a form of

[14] Barbara Korte and Claudia Sternberg, 'Mainstreaming and its discontents' in *Bidding for the Mainstream: Black and Asian British Films since the 1990s* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), p. 7

filmmaking that is often produced by major Hollywood studios, that is populist and whose *raison d'ètre* is to appeal to as wide an audience as possible (this may be achieved through being overly generic or featuring bankable stars).[15] In opposition to this, 'independent' cinema should be broadly recognised as a text that has been produced on low budgets from outside a major studio and/or that includes stylistic properties that differs from what Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger define as a classical idiom.[16] Furthermore, throughout this study there is an implicit argument that independent cinema that does not seek the same mass-audience appeal as 'mainstream' cinema; these films, I will argue, can be understood as 'oppositional' (or 'subversive,' 'different' or 'other') and may eschew generic clichés, use lesser-known actors, partially attempt to deviate from formal and narrational conventions of classical Hollywood cinema, or, most crucially in the context of this thesis, use particular forms of popular music in place of conventional scoring. By 'popular music', I am referring to any form of music that is not art music (or 'serious music', as Adorno ascribes); this incorporates many styles and genres (including jazz) and often (though not always) is music that is produced within or associated with the popular music industry.[17] I will also use the term 'pop music' as a synonym for 'popular music'; although 'pop' can sometimes be construed to mean a particular form of popular music [that of short, simple, melodic, radio-friendly tunes], in this thesis the terms 'pop' and 'popular' are used interchangeably to mean the same thing. When referring to the specific genre of pop, I will clarify this by using terms such as 'mainstream pop' or 'chart pop.' This set of definitions, while admittedly loose, should be seen as part of a discursive formation in which the increasingly complicated boundaries between independent and non-independent cinema can be explored.

Closely related to Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital (or indeed, to extrapolate, 'subcultural capital') is the idea of 'authenticity'.[18] Whether a film or a piece of music, by presenting a work as 'independent', and thus counter to the mainstream, it is likely to be closely scrutinised in terms of its credibility and authenticity. Matt Hills has observed that the value of 'authenticity' within fan cultures is greatly important; the 'fan-ownership' of certain cult TV series or comic

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[15] Chris Holmlund, 'Introduction: From the margins to the mainstream' in Chris Holmund and Justin Wyatt (eds) *Contemporary American Independent Film: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (London: Routledge, 2005)

[16] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, London: Routlege, 1985

[17] Theodor Adorno, 'On Popular Music' in Richard Lippert (ed.), *Adorno: Essays on Music*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 437-469

[18] See Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) for a fuller discussion of the notion of 'subcultural capital. I shall refer to this in-depth later.

books allows fans to uphold their own values and distinctions: if part of the series does not adhere to the values set out by the fans, it cannot be considered 'authentic'.[19] In terms of independent cinema, this may also be true. Independent films that do not seem 'independent' enough (either in terms of their alignment with a major studio, or indeed their stylistic and thematic mainstream appeal), can receive a backlash from indie film connoisseurs, as evidenced on the IMDB messageboards of hit indie films such as *Juno* (2007) or *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) (for instance: "Why is cheap entertainment like [*Little Miss Sunshine*] so appealing to the masses nowadays?" or "[*Juno*] copied and ripped off *Rushmore*.").[20]

Simon Frith and Lawrence Grossberg have both written about authenticity in popular music. For Grossberg, authenticity in rock music is forged when the music appears as a direct reflection of its target audience's anxieties and ambivalences. As an example, Grossberg posits that the cynical, and at times ambivalent, youth culture during the Cold War period was appeased by the 'authenticity' rock music during the 1970s.[21] For Frith, authenticity is not so much about embracing or reflecting a particular ideology, but rather delivering a 'real' performance. Frith cites Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's hot, sweaty, often athletic live concerts (he likens them to sporting events) as examples of musical authenticity.[22] In the context of this study, the independent nature of these films are often given greater credence by their choices of music. A film that includes a soundtrack of alternative, non-mainstream 'indie' music can lay a greater claim towards being a more authentic independent experience.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the impact that these popular music cultures have had on contemporary American independent film over the past twenty years. The primary objective of this thesis is not to discuss how these films are positioned within the industry (this has been done in dedicated studies elsewhere), nor is it the aim to scrutinise over a film's independent-ness (or unindependent-ness) in terms of their production, but rather to assert how music functions in these films and how a notion of independence (indieness) can be established from the relationship between the film, its soundtrack, and its interactions with wider music culture. It should also be noted that not *all* independent films interact with popular music to the same extent as others. The aim

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19 Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 37

20 *Little Miss Sunshine* messageboard thread: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0449059/board/nest/161724139 (accessed 20/06/2010)
Juno messageboard thread: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0467406/board/nest/163331151 (accessed 20/06/2010)

21 Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 208

22 Simon Frith, *Music For Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 96

of this thesis is not to suggest that all of independent cinema is characterised by this relationship, rather that certain films choose to brand themselves as 'different' by either employing a particular soundtrack or wearing their pop-music references on their sleeve.

My methodology is twofold: I will examine, through textual analysis, how popular music has been employed as an oppositional scoring practice, and I will also map out various histories of how certain aspects of pop music culture have infiltrated American indie cinema. I will pay particular attention to the following:

1) How pop music scores have functioned in American independent cinema from a formal perspective, and also how pop music scoring has aided in embellishing particular indie 'sensibilities.'
2) How pop soundtracks have exploited popular music trends (such as hip hop in *Do the Right Thing* [1989] and indie-pop in *Juno*), and how musical genres and subcultures have been represented on screen.
3) How pop musicians have entered the industry as film scorers, and the relationships they have with their directors.

My study will focus specifically on wholly independently-produced and 'Indiewood' (or 'independently-spirited') film (which includes films produced by indie subsidiaries of major studios, such as Disney's Miramax or Universal's Focus Features) of the last twenty years or so, starting with David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986) and ending with 2009's *(500) Days of Summer*. Because the history of independent cinema is as long as the history of cinema itself, I need a sensible starting position. Although there are many examples of independent filmmaking utilising popular music before the 1980s, by beginning this study with *Blue Velvet*, I hope to provide a clear example of an independent film using popular music in a unique and formally atypical way. Furthermore, the boom in independent cinema during the 1980s and the emergence of new directors such as Lynch and Jim Jarmusch, as well as the concurrent rise of independent and alternative music culture throughout the decade, means that it appears logical to use this time as my starting point. This study will take me right up until the present day. The persistence of the relationship between indie film and indie music means that this study could continue beyond 2010, which I hope to demonstrate by the end of the thesis.

The thesis aims to examine how some of the smaller-budgeted American films and more independent-minded filmmakers (such as Spike Lee, Paul Thomas Anderson and Richard Linklater) have approached this interaction between film

and popular music after the mid-to-late 1980s. I have chosen to focus on independent American cinema and not mainstream Hollywood for the following reasons:

- Material that catalogues the relationship between mainstream Hollywood cinema and the major music labels already exists (notably in Jeff Smith's *The Sounds of Commerce* [1998]), whereas the role of popular music on the fringes of the mainstream has not been examined in as much depth.
- More importantly, films made by independent filmmakers are usually the first to recognise trends in contemporary music culture and focus on new genres (particularly hip hop cinema, rock/punk/grunge, and dance music), before it becomes absorbed by the mainstream.
- And finally, indie cinema aesthetics are often more likely to be more subversive when compared to a 'purer' classical style; a pop soundtrack (which subverts classical scoring practices) is therefore very likely to be closely tied to a slightly more unorthodox aesthetic.

Given the frequent correspondences between film and popular music, particularly in American independent cinema over the past fifteen to twenty years, it is noticeable that there is scant discussion of the role that pop music has played in this wave of new independent film. Although many film music scholars have noted that Film Studies often privileges the visual over the aural, in recent years there has been a wealth of academic material discussing the function of film music and the art of composition, from Jeff Smith's exploration of the commercial aspects of popular film music (1998), through Anahid Kassabian's study of compilation scores and their role in representing race and gender (2001) to 2007's *Beyond the Soundtrack*, a series of essays that attempted to explore film music in its own right, independent of the image.[23] These studies, though welcome additions to film music scholarship, make little mention of the different functions of music in mainstream and independent American film.

In his introduction to the volume *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, K. J. Donnelly notes that 'there is no solid tradition or accepted approach' to discussing film music.[24] Donnelly has suggested that film music has often been typically analysed from two perspectives: the musicological and the semiotic. The purpose

[23] Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Heppert (eds) *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007)

[24] K. J. Donnelly, 'The Hidden Heritage of Film Music: History and Scholarship' in Donnelly [ed.] *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, Edinburgh University Press, 2001, p. 1

of the semiotic approach is to look at the way certain music cues communicate specific codes to an audience. The semiologist Christian Metz has analysed film sound in a similar fashion, suggesting that the soundtrack can be heard as a 'linguistic unity'.[25] Semiotic analysis is concerned with music as an active object, and that it is used substantially (or, in some cases, solely) for its communicational value. The musicological method, however, attempts to contextualise film music in relation to its historical and cultural value, and also in terms of its musical heritage, often in relation to nineteenth-century art music. Musicology views music as a complex process of communication where meaning is informed greatly by its context and, as Donnelly notes, is 'never a simple transitive communication between text and audience'.[26] This approach also takes on board in-depth musical analysis dealing with harmonics and notation analysis, an approach forged by the music theorist Heinrich Schenker.

My analyses of the films and soundtracks throughout the thesis will not strictly adhere to one methodology. As a non-musician, I do not possess the skills to provide thorough musical analyses of soundtracks in the way that a musicologist would. Furthermore, as I am also concerned with the situation of these films in the wider context of popular music culture, this study will not solely be a semiotic-based, textual analysis. This study is in many ways an examination of the *identity* of independent cinema; I am dealing with contextual issues as much as textual ones, so this methodology will incorporate textual analyses of the function of popular music in the films alongside a contextual discussion of the films' position in a wider popular music culture, often referring to aspects of cultural studies and pop music criticism.

This thesis will deal with a wide range of genres (teen films, historical epics, comedies), film movements (New Black Cinema, New Queer Cinema, 'smart' cinema), popular music genres and filmmakers across twenty years of independent cinema. I will be mapping out various histories of film movements and music genres, however, it should be made clear that this study will not be a *detailed history* chronicling every twist and turn of independent American film since the mid-1980s. This should rather be seen as a collection of case studies that aim to highlight the different ways in which pop music has been used as a form of expression within recent indie cinema. My study will be structured chronologically and will be split into three chapters, each looking at a particular decade. The bulk of the case studies will focus on the work of various directors. To an extent, this decision was instinctive; since the works of the *Cahiers* critics and British and

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[25] Christian Metz, 'Aural Objects' in Elizabeth Weis and John Belton (eds.) *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 156

[26] Donnelly, 'The Hidden Heritage of Film Music', p. 2

American writers such as Robin Wood and Andrew Sarris, Film Studies has regularly gravitated towards a focus on the *auteur*, despite some (sometimes valid) criticism. But this is also the most historically and industrially logical way to approach these studies. Given the greater freedoms in independent filmmaking, it is often the case that the musical choices in these films have come from the director, as evidenced by the range of interviews with filmmakers and composers that are cited throughout this thesis. To an extent, the role of music in these films can be seen as an active part of the director's voice, just as much as his or her choice of shots or visual design. Claudia Gorbman's notion of 'auteur music' in 1960s European art cinema and New Hollywood also attests to the idea that music has become a primary 'element of personal expression.'[27]

The three chapters in this thesis will focus on three respective decades of independent filmmaking (the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s), with each chapter using a set of case studies in order to illustrate the ways in which independent film and popular music have interacted over the period. This first chapter will examine the fledgling years of new independent cinema (circa 1986-1991), exploring the work of three key filmmakers: David Lynch, Spike Lee and Jim Jarmusch. The first part will examine Lynch's use of pop music as well as Angelo Badalamenti's pop aesthetic in order to gain an understanding of an oppositional form of film music. Compared to classical film music, Lynch and Badalamenti experiment with electronic/live instrumentation, diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, and an eclectic array of pop styles to create a subversive form of scoring. The second section will examine the early work of Lee, in particular the politics of his seminal film *Do the Right Thing* in relation to its musical expression and how its rap- and soul-based soundtrack acts as an oppositional form of scoring. Moreover, I will investigate the production history (including the controversy surrounding Public Enemy and their 'militant' style), the marketing of DTRT's soundtrack and its association with Motown Records, and Spike Lee's place within the hip hop movement, including his involvement in the early commercialisation of rap (such as his adverts for Nike Jordans and the TV appearances of his Mars Blackmon character). The final part of the chapter will focus on the musical sensibilities of Jarmusch, noting his collaborations with musicians such as Tom Waits and John Lurie, as well as looking at aspects of memory, nostalgia and the appropriation and recontextualisation of classic pop songs in *Mystery Train* (1989).

The second chapter will explore American independent film through the 1990s (circa 1991-2000), with a key emphasis on films that focused on teenagers

[27] Claudia Gorbman, 'Eyes Wide Open: Kubrick's Music' in Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (eds) *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-Existing Music in Film* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 3

and young adults. The first section will examine the notion of the 'slacker' that became prevalent during 1990s culture, starting with Richard Linklater's film *Slacker* in 1990 and then Linklater's two slacker-esque follow-ups, *Dazed and Confused* (1993) and *subUrbia* (1996). The second section will touch upon New Queer Cinema and the role music plays in underscoring the 'fractured existence' (in Gregg Araki's words) of teenage life and particularly gay teenage life. Through an examination of Araki's 'Teenage Apocalypse' trilogy, in particular 1994's *The Doom Generation*, I will discuss how oppositional forms of popular music (such as left-field punk and electronica artists) play a vital role in creating a desired aesthetic. The third part of this chapter will examine youth in the context of dance music culture in Doug Liman's *Go* (1999), paying particular attention to the representation of the rave subculture in late-nineties Los Angeles and the role of recreational drugs.

The final chapter will deal with some more recent American films (circa 2000-2010). One key text throughout this chapter will be Jeffery Sconce's 2002 essay 'Irony, nihilism and the new American "smart" film', which discusses how films peppered with ironic content serve to divide audiences. The first subchapter will focus on what I have termed 'twee cinema', a particular branch of smart cinema that adopts a distinctly light and whimsical approach. I will examine the evolution of the 'twee' sensibility from popular music and into cinema, referring to films such as *(500) Days of Summer* and *Thumbsucker* (2004). I will also compare and contrast the way Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World* (2001) and Jason Reitman's *Juno* use popular music in presenting a coming-of-age narrative, importantly touching on notions of irony and kitsch. The second part of this chapter will focus on the increasing number of pop musicians who began working as film composers in the early 2000s. This section will explore smart cinema and its incorporation of 'excessive' scoring, focusing on the work of three composers: Jon Brion, Clint Mansell and Jonny Greenwood. The final sub-chapter will focus on more recent 'minimalist' movements of independent filmmaking. Although lacking the exaggerated artifice of other films from the smart canon, films from low budget directors such as Kelly Reichardt and Andrew Bujalski also reflect the themes and issues of other films from the decade, and also engage with popular music culture in an interesting, albeit much quieter, way.

The case studies across the three chapters have been chosen partly for their disparity (the films of Gregg Araki, for instance, are very different stylistically from Kelly Reichardt's more minimal work) and serve to illustrate how popular music culture has informed such different aesthetics across a wide spread of independent cinema. Yet, there are also connections to be made across some of the

analyses; for instance, the examination of the interaction between youth culture and popular music in the 'twee' films of the 2000s harks back to Richard Linklater's similar explorations in the 1990s, while the 'lo-fi' style and use of diegetic music in the work of Andrew Bujalski bears some stylistic similarities with the early films of Jim Jarmusch and their interaction with 'no wave' culture. Above all, the case studies serve to illustrate the persistence of a relationship between independent cinema and popular music culture across a range of films from a twenty-five year period. The conclusion of this thesis will tie together the various strands that have been running through this thesis, and furthermore will highlight any problems or contradictions that may complicate notions of indieness beyond 2010.

The remainder of this introduction will be spent introducing some of the key terms, concepts, issues and analytical approaches that have been adopted when discussing both film music and independent cinema. Throughout this thesis, I will be referring to various aspects of film music theory, popular music studies and texts on American independent cinema history. The next few pages will review and introduce some of these applicable studies.

iii) Existing film music criticism

The relationship between popular music and cinema dates back to the beginnings of the recording industry itself. As Ian Inglis has noted, both pop music and film have always been stimulated by technological innovation, and both are dependent on the existence of a new kind of mass audience.[28] The first sound films were largely musicals, and some of the earliest mass-produced 33rpm records came from Bell Laboratories as accompanying soundtracks to films such as *Don Juan* (1926) and *The Jazz Singer* (1927).[29] Even before recorded sound arrived in the cinema, it should be noted that 'silent' film was never actually silent.[30] Musical accompaniment formed a huge part of the experience of watching early movies, and while this accompaniment was not often elaborate, usually consisting of a solo pianist or organist (though not exclusively – orchestras did occasionally accompany a film), it still formed a basic function in signifying certain aspects of the narrative (for instance, a high-tempo piece of music signifying a chase scene) and also helped the audience emotionally engage with a film through the use of what Michel Chion describes as 'empathetic music' (a piece of music whose tone

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[28] Ian Inglis, 'Introduction: Popular Music and Film' in Ian Inglis (ed.) *Popular Film and Music* (London: Wallflower Press 2003), p. 1

[29] Jon Burlingame, *Sound and Vision: 60 Years of Motion Picture Soundtracks*, (New York: Billboard Books, 2000), p. 1

[30] Alan Williams, 'Historical and Theoretical Issues in the Coming of Recorded Sound to the Cinema' in Rick Altman (ed) *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 126

matches the onscreen mood).[31] In the 1950s and '60s, pop stars became movie stars, and as Inglis points out, cinema was able to offer audiences a convenient way of watching their favourite artists, almost as an alternative to touring.[32] The exploitation of the youth market meant that many famous films starring Elvis Presley and The Beatles were big hits. Elsewhere, avant-garde filmmakers were also engaging with popular music culture, as seen in the work of Andy Warhol, and notably the films of Kenneth Anger, whose famous *Scorpio Rising* (1965) notoriously eschewed copyright laws to feature a soundtrack of '60s American hits, while his other work included collaborations with rock musicians such as Mick Jagger, Jimmy Page and Marianne Faithful. Into the 1970s and early '80s, a series of musical sub-genres were formed: documentaries and festival films (*Woodstock* [1970]), concert films (*Stop Making Sense* [1984]), rock bio-pics (*The Buddy Holly Story* [1978]), rock operas (*Tommy* [1975]), disco films (*Saturday Night Fever* [1977]), hip hop films (*Wildstyle* [1983]), neo-musicals / dance films (*Flashdance* [1983]), and fiction films set within the music industry (*This is Spinal Tap* [1983]). Musicians such as David Bowie and Sting also attempted to become actors in non-musical films.[33]

A sea change in the relationship between pop music and cinema occurred in the 1980s: the conglomeration of the music and movie industries and an increased focus on the marketing and distribution of popular music soundtracks began to highlight how a single film franchise can help augment the synergistic practices of the new media conglomerates. As Jeff Smith has noted, a film such as *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993) could be financed by Sony's Tri-Star Pictures for theatrical distribution in Sony cinemas across some parts of America, then distributed on VHS via Tri-Star Home Video, and receive a supplementary soundtrack CD, published by Epic Soundtracks, a subsidiary of the Sony-owned CBS Records.[34] The rise of the CD was also important. As Smith points out:

> Unlike records and tapes, compact disks could easily access any track on an album and suffered no degradation from repeated plays… As the dominant consumer format, CDs replaced vinyl records as the most important vehicle by which soundtracks achieved cultural circulation. Moreover, as many consumers replaced their old LPs with CDs, the innovation of the compact disc paved the way for the reissue of several older scores and soundtrack albums in the new format. The more general interest in reissues and catalog albums helped sustain the fortunes of several specialty labels that catered to a coterie of film score connoisseurs.[35]

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31 Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision*, (NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 8
32 Inglis, *Popular Film and Music*, p. 2
33 Inglis, *Popular Film and Music*. pp. 2-3
34 Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 192
35 Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, p. 200

Music videos also played a large role in the promotion of films. After the launch of MTV in 1982 and the subsequent augmentation of the music video, it became essential, for commercial reasons, that pop songs were accompanied by a specially-created image track, while a film such as *Flashdance* could also market itself using a tie-in song off the soundtrack alongside a video comprising of action from the movie.[36] The commercial and industrial concerns of the 1980s, particularly the conglomeration of music labels and film studios, ultimately meant that film and music, on a large scale, were no longer separate industries. Although the biggest-selling soundtracks were undoubtedly from major blockbusters (for instance, Prince's soundtrack for the 1989 film *Batman*), I would argue that the incorporation of popular music, and much larger references to popular music culture, can also be found in smaller films made on the fringes of the Hollywood industry.

Classical scoring

What, then, are some of the ways in which film music has typically been analysed in the past, and how my study will differ from existing examinations of film music? In a letter to *Keyboard* magazine in 1990, the film composer Danny Elfman (and former frontman of the rock band Oingo Boingo) reacted angrily to criticism from a composition teacher from Kenyon College, Ohio, who stated that he wasn't qualified to score films because of his lack of classical training. Elfman has admitted in several previous interviews that, despite being a multi-instrumentalist (playing guitar, piano, drums and trombone among many), he has never been able to read or write music 'properly.' Elfman, who had previously provided some jazzy music cues for his brother Richard's cult film *The Forbidden Zone* (1979), composed his first score for a full orchestra after some ten years playing in a rock band, working on Tim Burton's *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* in 1987. In response to what he sees as the 'snobbery' involved in the film scoring world, Elfman writes:

> Film music is written for no other reason than to accentuate the images on the screen, to underline the emotions of the characters, and hopefully, when we're lucky, to help breathe life into a two-dimensional medium. A film score is not "pure music," and should be judged on its dramatic, emotional, and/or visually enhancing merits. There isn't any one "correct" way to score a film. Each film is a world unto itself, with its own unique strengths and weaknesses which must be addressed.[37]

[36] Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, p. 201

[37] Danny Elfman, 'An Open Letter From Danny Elfman' in *Keyboard*, n. 3 (1990) (url: http://www.bluntinstrument.org.uk/elfman/archive/KeyboardMag90.htm)

Elfman is correct that the primary function of film music should enhance the image. Film music scholars such as Claudia Gorbman and Kathryn Kalinak, as well as film sound theorists such as Michel Chion, have made attempts to identify exactly *how* music (and sound in general) enhances a sequence of images, leading to more academic debates as the years have gone by. Successful scoring, Claudia Gorbman argues, is where music, sound effects, dialogue and the image work together equally to create a '*combinatoire* of expression'.[38] This notion, similar to Chion's proposal of 'added value', states that the filmic illusion is powerfully established by the unique relationship between the sound track and the image track.[39] As I shall discuss, although some scoring practices and processes may differ (some may be classical-based, some may be pop-based), there is one constant: that music must provide suitable emotional accompaniment to the visual image.

Although Elfman notes that there is 'no correct way' to score something, there are certain conventions when it comes to classical scoring. Kathryn Kalinak is one of many film music scholars to have highlighted the narrative value of nineteenth century Romantic music and the impact this had on the classical film composers. Kalinak, as well as contemporaries such as Gorbman and Caryl Flinn, points to the stable linguistic unity of the Romantic idiom as the main reason for its signifying qualities. Fundamentally, music functions with a set of rules that are not unlike linguistic codes, as Kalinak suggests:

> Music is a coherent experience because it is a system of expression possessing internal logic… Like language, music consists of a group of basic units, a vocabulary, and a set of rules for arranging these units into recognizable and meaningful structures, a grammar.[40]

The Romantics' organisation of music around a significant note called the 'tonic' (the focal point of its structure) acts as a kind of equilibrium from which the music can evolve and diverge (using stylistic signatures such as leitmotifs along the way), before returning back to the tonic at the end of the piece. This kind of structure could be likened to a classical narrative structure which also begins and ends with a sense of equilibrium. Furthermore, aside from its semiotic value, Kalinak suggests three particular reasons why the Romantic idiom was employed: 1) Composers were often European émigrés who brought this style with them. 2) The conservative tastes of studio executives meant there was little room for

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38 Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies* (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), p. 16

39 Chion, *Audio-Vision*, pp. 3-25. Here Chion states that the in sound cinema the spectator often bears witness to elements of sound and image that participate in one and the same entity or world. In this entity, a certain sound can enrich an image by lending it expressive and/or informative value.

40 Kathryn Kalinak, 'The Language of Film Music' in *Settling the Score* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 4

experimentation. And 3) Romantic music's strong focus on melody meant it offered a clear sense of continuity.[41]

The influence of the Romantic composers transformed narrative cinema into a symphonic medium. As Donnelly and many others have noted, one of the defining features of the classical score was its use of 'wall-to-wall' music, that of a coherent piece of music that flowed almost continuously for the duration of the film.[42] The score would be fragmented, always playing secondary to the action on screen, but it would be comprised of several movements, it would make use of a full orchestra (with string, brass, wind and percussion sections) and employ Romantic signatures such as leitmotifs, with an overall effect that was almost symphonic in nature.

While Kalinak has emphasised how this influence bore a semiotic framework in which music is used to illustrate narrative content and sustain a structural unity, Claudia Gorbman has outlined a list of psychological impressions that force themselves upon the film spectator. In her book *Unheard Melodies*, Gorbman sets out seven main principles of composing, mixing and editing for the classical film score, which must be adhered to in order to function within the typical stylistic and narrative apparatus of the classical Hollywood film:

1) *Invisibility*: The technical apparatus of non-diegetic music (that of musical instruments or recording/playback equipment) must not be seen on screen.

2) *Inaudibility*: The music should not be heard consciously. Instead, music should subordinate itself to the primary vehicles of the narrative, that of the dialogue and the visual image. Music may only be privileged above the narrative objects if the music is diegetically involved in the narrative. (This principle also ties in with *invisibility*: by hiding the technical equipment, it enables the music to function at a more sub-conscious level.)

3) *Signifier of emotion*: The music should set certain moods and atmospheres, and emphasise particular emotions that are denoted in the narrative.

4) *Narrative Cueing*: There are two types of narrative cueing, the referential and the connotative. Referential cueing indicates a particular point of view, supplies formal demarcations, and establishes settings and

[41] Kalinak, 'The Language of Film Music', pp. 100-101

[42] K. J. 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, 1998), p. 142

characters (it should denote characters and situations). Connotative cueing is music that interprets or illustrates narrative events.

5) *Continuity*: The music should provide continuity between transitions and fill any gaps left by certain edits.

6) *Unity*: Through repetition, variation and progression, film music should aid in the construction of formal and narrative unity. The music should be structured in such a way that unity in the score is perceived (i.e. music that works as a complete piece, almost symphonic in nature).

7) Any of the above principles may be broken, but only if it is at the service of the other principles. (For instance, sometimes the referential function of the music becomes so noticeable [such as a leitmotif that signifies the arrival of a certain character] that it will violate the principle of *inaudibility*. However, this violation is to the benefit of the *narrative cueing* principle.)[43]

Gorbman argues that these basic conventions are enforced in order to uphold the cinematic illusion and ultimately allow the spectator to subsume themselves into the narrative. Fundamentally, in the creation of cinematic illusion, film music should divert the spectator's attention away from the film being a technologically created product.

These studies of classical film music provide an insight into how scoring practices have evolved and become established over the years. As I progress through my study I will point out that, in asserting their *difference* from the mainstream, many independent films deliberately eschew the conventions of classical scoring, such as the seven principles that Gorbman outlines. Many films that utilise a song-based soundtrack lack the unity of a classical score; often independent films will be scored by a selection of songs or distinct instrumental cues that go against the idea of a 'wall-to-wall' soundtrack (although some aspects of it may remain, such as the recurring use of a song as a leitmotif). The next section will examine some of the ways in which critics have approached the compilation score and how it differs from it classical counterpart on both a formal and commercial level.

The pop / compilation score

The emergence of the pop score in the 1950s provided an alternative to classical scoring. Jeff Smith's examination of how pop music has permeated film since the 1950s is a broad study that approaches film music in the context of the ever-

[43] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 73

changing interactions between Hollywood and the music industry, taking into account the work of '60s pop scorers such as John Barry and Ennio Morricone, as well as the compilation score in films such as *American Graffiti* (1973). Smith concludes his analysis by pointing out that pop scores often straddle a boundary between 'commercialism and dramatic necessity, unity and fragmentation, (and) formal prominence and narrative subservience.'[44] While a pop song is often employed to have textual relevance, it is also there to serve the commercial necessities of the record companies and ancillary soundtrack sales. In terms of the structure of the pop score, Smith suggests that original pop scores (by the likes of Barry) need to attain a sense of structural unity, but they also need to be heard as excerpts that are as musically satisfying as individual songs or album tracks.[45]

This is especially important when examining contemporary soundtracks, in part due to the prevalence of compilation scores since the 1990s. As Jon Burlingame has noted, the majority of compilation soundtracks in the 1990s were not necessarily made up of songs included in the film, instead they were often a collection of tracks 'inspired by the motion picture'.[46] The proliferation of 'Music From and Inspired By' soundtracks led to some huge business. There were no limits to the number of songs that could be included on these albums; the compilation score to *Forest Gump* (1994) involves fifty-seven songs across two discs, which resulted in sales of nine million copies and ninety-four weeks on the Billboard 200 album chart, even though most of the songs on the album did not appear in the film.[47] Studios also often released more than one soundtrack album to accompany the CD, notably the two soundtracks to *Batman* (one a collection of songs by Prince, the other Danny Elfman's original music) and three tie-in albums accompanying the release of *Dick Tracy* (1990): a compilation of miscellaneous songs, an album by Madonna called *I'm Breathless*, and an original score, again composed by Elfman. The marketability of these soundtracks also led to more modern styles of music being included on compilation LPs. New urban styles such as rap and contemporary R 'n' B proved bankable on soundtracks to films such as *New Jack City* (1991) and *Juice* (1992), while emerging alternative rock genres such as grunge featured on Cameron Crowe's *Singles* (1992) and Jefery Levy's *S.F.W.* (1994). The majority of soundtracks reaching the Top 20 in the Billboard charts were invariably alternative- and urban-based: *New Jack City* reached number two and spent thirty-eight weeks on the Billboard 200 album chart,[48] while the

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[44] Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, p.231
[45] Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, p. 231
[46] Burlingame, *Sound and Vision*, p. 29
[47] Burlingame, *Sound and Vision*, p. 29
[48] http://www.billboard.com/album/original-soundtrack/new-jack-city/82308

soundtrack to the Hughes Brothers' *Dead Presidents* (1995) spent forty-five weeks in the Billboard Top Hip Hop / R&B album chart, peaking at number one.[49]

The function of a pop soundtrack is very different when compared to a classical Romantic score. Firstly, as Smith has partly noted in his study, a haphazard series of pop songs does not always have the continuous, symphonic quality of a classical score. Pieces of music often arrive unannounced, and a song will sometimes greatly differ in tone from the track that preceded it (see the soundtrack for Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* [1996] as an example, where incongruent pieces of music by Iggy Pop, Lou Reed and J. S. Bach appear within minutes of each other). The lack of a formal unity in a compilation score undermines Gorbman's sixth principle of classical composition: a perceived unity in the score can lead to formal / narrative unity; while disunity may affect the formal qualities of the film.

Secondly, a soundtrack of pop songs can undermine Gorbman's second principle: inaudibility. In an essay on the use of music in David Lynch's TV series *Twin Peaks*, Kathryn Kalinak has noted that an audience may have a physiological response to music through the varying forms of rhythm, tempo and dynamics (volume).[50] Rhythm can be seen as borrowing from primitive human physiology, in particular the heartbeat, pulse rate and breathing patterns, each of which flow in rhythmic patterns. A regular rhythm (for instance, a 4/4 beat) can prove to be hypnotic because of its familiarity. Likewise, a fast tempo (speed of music) may stimulate the body, while dynamics / volume is often judged by the listener in relation to the sounds that are heard in everyday life. Extremes in sound are noticeable because of their pronounced divorce from commonplace sounds. Loud music often startles (or, in extreme cases, can even hurt) the listener, whereas soft music vies for attention by almost dropping out of the range of human perception. Because many pop songs are beat-driven (particularly those within the rock or dance genres) and are often short, sharp surges of energy, they become hard to ignore. As I shall argue later in this thesis, many pop music cues are there *to be listened to*, rather than to act as a subconscious accompaniment to a scene. Furthermore, other qualities of pop songs, particularly lyrics and a slightly more minimal instrumental accompaniment when compared to orchestral music, are very noticeable when compared to a classical music cue.

The third big difference is that while a classical score would be composed in post-production and arranged to fit the image-track, a series of pre-existing pop

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[49] http://www.billboard.com/album/original-soundtrack/dead-presidents/174827

[50] Kathryn Kalinak, "Disturbing the Guests with this Racket": Music and *Twin Peaks*' in David Lavery (ed.) *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks* (Detroit: Washington State University, 1995), pp. 82-85

songs cannot be molded to fit the image. This makes a huge difference when it comes to expressing emotion. The classical film score, in its use of romantic signatures such as leitmotifs, is able to convey emotion subtly, playing secondary to the image. The pop soundtrack differs in that it often has primary placing in the scene, and the lyrical content of a song can verbally convey emotion instead of the music itself.

Finally, a pop score may provide alternative identificatory possibilities when compared to a classical score. In an interesting and provocative study into the function of the compilation score, Anahid Kassabian's *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*, suggests that there are extra-diegetic connotations surrounding certain types of film music. Kassabian argues that certain pieces of music contain stylistic or generic inflections that communicates particular meanings based on cultural understandings. She supports her arguments with an examination of an unpublished research project carried out by sociologists Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, who conducted a listening experiment in which participants were played a selection of film and television themes (that they had not heard before) and were told to write down what they imagined or visualised while listening. After correlating the volunteers' responses with the musical features of each theme, Tagg and Clarida concluded that the participants recognised the connotative value of certain stylistic traits in the music, using words such as 'urban' and 'aggression' to describe the theme to the TV show *Miami Vice*, while words such as 'drama', 'tension' and 'sweat' were used to describe Alex North's theme for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951).[51] Kassabian herself used the results to examine how the participants visualised music in terms of gender. When listening to themes that featured female characters, the participants used words such as 'rural', 'pastoral' and 'romantic.'[52] Kassabian posits that certain subversive, even politically ambiguous narratives (particularly those involving women) could be more suitably scored by a series of pop songs that don't have the significatory value of a classical score. To elaborate on Kassabian's study, in the context of this thesis, independent films often break away from a classical scoring tradition in order to demonstrate the difference of their protagonists (such as through the use of hip hop in New Black Cinema and industrial rock in Gregg Araki's films), and more widely, to communicate a certain political or social concerns difference. The use of more anarchic forms of pop music becomes an apt way of underscoring their progressive political concerns.

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[51] Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 19

[52] Kassabian, *Hearing Film*, p. 20

The films that I will be analysing throughout this thesis regularly stray from classical conventions, with the use of pop music helping to anchor a fundamental formal difference. Throughout this thesis I will be arguing that this 'difference' is a fundamental characteristic of independentness, or indieness. Indeed, in recent years independent cinema has often been categorised by critics and scholars in terms of its opposition to the mainstream; writers on independent film have frequently use terms like 'difference' or 'alternative' in order to differentiate between indie cinema and a perceived Hollywood or 'mainstream' norm or standard. John Berra refers to American independent film as an 'alternative Hollywood,'[53] while David E. James discusses the notion of the alternative in a book chapter entitled 'Alternative Cinemas', noting that, 'any alternative practice… may be understood as a response to three other spheres of activity: the alternative social group, the dominant society, and the hegemonic cinema.'[54] The next section will examine some of the issues surrounding the definitions of independent cinema and how this sense of 'indieness' has been discussed by other scholars.

iv) Notions of independence

How independent is an independent film? The journey that American independent cinema has taken is long and complex, and this history has been chronicled in several publications. One of the more personalised histories of the period, John Pierson's *Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes* (1996), is a helpful tool in understanding the issues surrounding the production and distribution of seminal indie films such as Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), Michael Moore's documentary *Roger and Me* (1989) and Richard Linklater's *Slacker*. Pierson posits that many of the key figures in independent cinema come from a group of 'art-film brats', in contrast to the 'movie brats' who helped to reinvigorate Hollywood cinema in the '70s or the 'multi-brats' who grew up on the early Hollywood blockbusters and have now become part of the Hollywood industry in the 1990s.[55] Pierson recognises the influence of European art cinema in the 1950s and '60s, and also points to the work of American indie mavericks John Cassavetes, John Waters and John Sayles, whom he refers to as 'independent paradigms'.[56] Many independent filmmakers through the 1990s would follow in this tradition. Emanuel

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53 J. Berra, *Declarations of Independence: American Cinema and the Partiality of Independent Production* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008), p. 71

54 David E. James, 'Alternative Cinemas' in *Contemporary American Independent Film: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, eds. Chris Holmund and Justin Wyatt (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 60

55 John Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 6-20

56 Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes*, p. 18

Levy (in *Cinema of Outsiders* [1999]) also acknowledges the influence of art cinema and the importance of personal, artistic sensibilities. He is quick to mention that there are a series of expectations surrounding the 'independent' label, noting that, 'For many, the term "independent" conjures up visions of ambitious directors working for little money and no commercial compromises. Ideally, an indie is a fresh, low-budget movie with a gritty style and off-beat subject matter that expresses the filmmaker's personal vision.'[57] But although Levy sees the importance of the art house sensibility, he notes that there is often a contradiction in the way an independent film is financed. While a film such as The Coen Brothers' *Miller's Crossing* (1990) may be considered an independent vision with artistic integrity, it was distributed and partly financed by a major studio, 20th Century Fox.[58]

Indeed, it should be noted that since the late 1980s, the major studios have made a large contribution to supposedly 'independent' cinema. During a boom period for Hollywood in the 1980s (coinciding with the blockbuster, promotional tie-ins such as toys and soundtracks, and the rise of big-screen multiplex cinemas and cheaper exhibition costs), the major studios drew the attention of entrepreneurs and large multinational companies, meaning that synergy could be maximised. As David Bordwell notes, 'Batman could undergo a makeover in a comic book, then become the hero of a new movie, which yielded soundtrack albums, sequels and an animated TV series, just because Time Warner owned DC Comic, a movie studio and a music company.'[59] At the same time, Hollywood began to notice the success of independent filmmakers such as Jim Jarmusch and Spike Lee, and eventually the media conglomerates established speciality divisions within the film studios. By concentrating on one big 'blockbuster' film with big-money promotional tie-ins, studios could also release smaller, independently-spirited films at the same time to attract an art cinema audience, many of which turn out to be word-of-mouth hits, notably Steven Soderbergh's *sex lies and videotape* (1989), which grossed over $20,000,000 at the US box office.[60] As of 2010, all six major studios own at least one 'indie' subsidiary: 20th Century Fox owns Fox Searchlight and the smaller sci-fi/horror division Fox Atomic; Warner Bros looks after New Line Cinema and formerly Picturehouse and Warner Independent (both closed in 2008); The Walt Disney Company is responsible for indie heavyweight Miramax; Columbia/Sony has Sony Pictures Classics plus the niche company Destination Films; Universal

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57 Emanuel Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), p.2
58 Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*, p. 4
59 David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) p.4
60 Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*, p. 524

owns Focus Features and Rogue Pictures; and Paramount has Paramount Vantage (formerly known as Paramount Classics).

While these industrial factors are important, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define 'independence' in terms of the production, distribution or financing of these films. Indeed, while I acknowledge the importance of industrial imperatives in the production of any film, this thesis will find an analysis of the formal and aesthetic qualities of independent cinema to be more productive in pinning down a consistent definition of 'independentness.'

Geoff King in *American Independent Cinema* also examines some of the more formal and aesthetic qualities of certain films (such as style, narrative and relation to genre) as well as exploring the social, political and ideological aspects of independent cinema in general. In terms of form and narration, he notes that many independent films bridge a 'gap' between classical Hollywood and art cinema.[61] He argues that an independent film may feature a style of filmmaking that departs from mainstream convention, either using a heightened sense of realism (almost documentary style) or employing a hyper-expressive, excessive style of filmmaking, touching on aspects surrealism and European art cinema. This degree of unorthodoxy differs from picture to picture: some films may only use odd flourishes of deviation (perhaps in a stylised moment such as a flashback sequence), while others may be more dedicated to subverting classical techniques. As King says, 'Departing from the mainstream convention, if even only relatively or in certain privileged moments, can provide a means of interrogating the classical style and/or offering a frisson of difference that can be sold to audiences seeking an alternative, if not always radically different to the dominant norm.'[62] Furthermore, in terms of narrative, King notes that some independent productions may attempt to undermine Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger's notion of a persistent classical idiom.[63] While some indie films may feature narration that is slightly oblique and deadpan (such as in the work of Jim Jarmusch) or even accentuated and arty, King (and indeed Bordwell) maintains that the classical narrative is still the prevailing form, but usually with fleeting moments of unorthodox technique.[64] In some cases, budget restraints may influence the narrative style: a film featuring an episodic narrative can be produced in separate fragments when time and money allows, while dialogue-heavy films are often much cheaper to produce than something

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61 Geoff King, *American Independent Cinema*, (London: IB Tauris, 2005) p. 101

62 King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 164

63 Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*

64 King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 70, and see also Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, p. 4. Despite some critics arguing for the rise of a 'postclassical' cinema, and taking into account independent film styles, Bordwell states that the classical Hollywood tradition of visual storytelling is still just as prevalent in 2006 as it was in 1985 when he co-wrote *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*.

action-based.[65]

The introduction of the phrase 'independently-spirited' (consolidated by the establishment of the annual Independent Spirit Awards) is indicative of the vague definition of independent cinema, while the focus on independent films' formal and political concerns instead of their financial origins has led to the term 'Indiewood' being coined, a notion that King has since elaborated on in a book called *Indiewood, USA: Where Hollywood Meets Independent Cinema* (2009). Many of the films that will be analysed in this thesis come from within that vague boundary between Hollywood and the independent industry. However, the most important aspect of this study is a focus on the stylistic, aesthetic and tonal concerns of contemporary independent cinema, and how popular music has embellished certain indie sensibilities. I will argue that many recent indie films share a particular kind of musical expression – one that communicates a sense of difference – regardless of their proximity to Hollywood distributors. This will firstly be explored with the new wave of independent filmmaking in the 1980s.

[65] King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 103

Chapter One

Establishing a blueprint for independent film music

As I have noted, indie films can often assert their independentness by essentially appearing to be *different*, or more specifically by attempting to deviate from the notion of a classical idiom. This first chapter will focus on the work of three independent directors in the 1980s and will detail the ways in which they have used music in order to provide a sheen of difference or subversion in opposition to this perceived classical norm.

The first section of this chapter will examine how David Lynch and his regular composer Angelo Badalamenti have used a variety of genres of music (ranging from Romantic leitmotifs, through jazz and sixties pop to experimental electronica) in order to consolidate the chaos and disorder of the narrative and style of their films. I will argue that by adopting a 'bricolage' style of scoring, the music becomes an object in and of itself, rather than merely an accompaniment. The second section on Spike Lee will consist of an analysis of the music (particularly hip hop) in *Do the Right Thing*, as well as attempting to locate the film and its soundtrack within the context of the boom in late 1980s hip hop culture. I will argue that the film's style (and indeed controversial content) has helped to position it as an oppositional and independent text. The third section will explore the notion of hipness in the films of Jim Jarmusch, examining how Jarmusch's background in underground art and music has helped inform his independent sensibilities, while I will also analyse the use of music in *Mystery Train*, in which diegetic pop songs play a part in cementing the film's atypical narrative structure.

To-be-listened-to-ness and bricolage scoring

In all three case studies I will make an argument that the music is there *to be listened to*, with the degree of *to-be-listened-to-ness* corresponding to the difference or independentness of the films. While I am punning a term that derives from Laura Mulvey's ideas based on visual pleasure, for the purpose of this thesis, the terms *to-be-listened-to* and *to-be-listened-to-ness* will be removed from their psychoanalytic trappings. I should note that these terms have little to do with musical or audiovisual pleasure in a Lacanian sense and more to do with the filmmakers attempting to brand their film with a seal of authenticity and/or a degree of difference from the norms of classical scoring (such as inaudibility). In short, by presenting music as 'to-be-listened-to' it is drawing the audience's attention towards the soundtrack, partly for aesthetic reasons, but also as a way of highlighting its difference or independentness (this will become increasingly

obvious as I move through the decades in Chapters 2 and 3). It should also be noted that to-be-listened-to music is both diegetic and non-diegetic; it perhaps most frequently appears outside the diegesis (as I will discuss with reference to Lynch's work), but diegetic music can also become the centre of attention in a particular scene, as I will explain in my analysis of Jarmusch's *Mystery Train*.

Of course, other film music scholars have written on the notion of prominent or excessive modes of scoring. Referring to the music in Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), K. J. Donnelly in *The Spectre of Sound* notes that prominent sections of a score can be thought of less as 'background music' and more as 'foreground music,'[66] while in a postmodern perspective on film music, Royal Brown notes that music has come to stand as 'an image in its own right.'[67] However, in this chapter, and indeed throughout this thesis, I will note that the to-be-listened-to-ness of a soundtrack is by and large a measurement of a film's independentness. Not only is the audibility or aesthetic quality of the music important, but the choices are too; in a sense, musical selections (particularly obscure or non-mainstream choices) can become important distinctions that contribute toward a film's indie authenticity. Often, these scores contain cues from a variety of musical styles and genres; Donnelly has labelled such an approach as 'composite' scoring, in which different forms of pop and world music exist alongside one another, placing an emphasis on timbre and rhythm in place of the 'melodic cohesion and harmonic movement' found in classical film music (this approach of course undermines the idea of 'unity' that Gorbman presents).[68] I will be referring to such scoring as 'bricolage'; like the composite score, the music in the bricolage score has an 'elevated status',[69] however, parts of the score also can be seen to reflect elements of contemporary popular music culture. The term 'bricolage' has its academic origins in Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological study of people's belief in superstition and magic (he posits that the 'bricoleur' takes whatever signifying structures that come to hand, such a sorcery or myth, in order to create meaning),[70] but has since been used in popular music studies to describe particular production techniques as well as the relationship between popular music culture and its primary youth audience. In a musical context, the word can be used to describe music that acquires characteristics or aspects of other musical forms and rearranges

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66 Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound*, p. 36

67 Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 240

68 K. J. Donnelly, '*Performance* and the Composite Film Score' in *Film Music: Critical Approaches* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 153

69 Donnelly, '*Performance* and the Composite Film Score', p. 153

70 See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

them to create new meaning,[71] while in terms of music cultures, academics such as Dick Hebdige have noted that participants in subcultures frequently become bricoleurs through their adoption of certain fashions and rituals (Hebdige's study of punk subculture being his most famous work).[72] Further into the thesis, this idea of a bricolage score will begin to reflect more closely the construction of certain forms of pop music, with some scores essentially becoming part of a dialogue between film and particular popular music cultures. This first chapter, however, will consider some of the ways in which this bricolage approach and the idea of music as 'to-be-listened-to' has come to typify a particularly indie mode of film scoring.

i. The work of David Lynch and Angelo Badalamenti

As discussed in the introduction, King's study of the formal and narrative approaches employed in independent American film has indicated that indie film style can often be a halfway house between art cinema and mainstream Hollywood. While an independent production will more likely than not stay within the borders of the classical idiom, there is often a lot of room for experimentation, playfulness and unorthodox modes of expression. As I will argue throughout this thesis, independent films use popular music to subvert some aspects of classical form in order to embellish a particular kind of indie aesthetic. This section will focus on the films of David Lynch, which certainly fall into the more extreme category of narrative and stylistic deviation than many other independent productions. Of course, I am not arguing that Lynch's films are representative of a common narrative or stylistic trend that exists across independent filmmaking, but the purpose of this first section of Chapter One is to examine how an extreme example of unconventional filmmaking uses popular music in order to anchor its unorthodox film style. In particular, this section will highlight how music in certain independent films is often there 'to be listened to'.

Although his work may appear mind-boggling and impenetrable to some, many David Lynch fans know what to expect from his movies: a twisted non-linear narrative to re-arrange and make sense of, gross acts of violence and sexuality that provide a confrontational examination of American suburbia, and a certain amount of surreal visual stimulation. Intriguingly, when Lynch's 1999 film *The Straight Story* did not deliver his trademark brain-melting aesthetic, it was met with more

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[71] Niall Lucy, *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 98.

[72] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979)

disbelief from critics and movie-goers than perhaps many of his other films.[73] But it wasn't just the complex narrative and excessive visual provocation that *The Straight Story* lacked, it also departed from the usual excessive soundtrack. Indeed, Angelo Badalamenti's gentle score earned him his first major awards nod with a Golden Globe nomination, proving that the mainstream was perhaps more accepting of a subtle soundtrack than the typical Lynchian racket. Nearly all of Lynch's films feature a hyperactive score, often comprising a mix of classical cues, wistful pop tunes and layers of synthesised noise. The use of sound and music in Lynch's work is of utmost importance, as Lynch has said himself in numerous interviews, and I would argue that his use of music plays the biggest role in delivering his particular sensibility. Throughout this section I will be highlighting the different ways in which Lynch and Badalamenti's music functions; I will begin by providing a history of the collaboration between the two before analysing the music in *Blue Velvet*. Close attention will be paid to how pop music and unconventional scoring techniques can result in a subversive film style, and I will argue that unlike a classically-scored film (in which music works at a subconscious level to suggest certain significatory codes), the pop score is an entity in and of itself and is there *to be listened to*. The second part of this section will be dedicated to an analysis of the soundtrack in Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997). Although this was produced eleven years after *Blue Velvet*, *Lost Highway*'s score carries on the Lynch-Badalamenti tradition of musical bricolage, containing a selection of music cues that brings together a variety of musical styles and scoring methods.

Blue Velvet: The beginning of the Lynch-Badalamenti sound

The partnership between Lynch and Badalamenti is one in a long line of close director-composer relationships. From Alfred Hitchcock's frequent collaborations with Bernard Herrmann, through David Lean's work with Maurice Jarre, to Steven Spielberg's films with John Williams, the working partnership between a director and composer can be one of the most essential relationships in film production, with composers often supplying the director's musical voice.[74] Lynch's collaborations with Badalamenti are as idiosyncratic as a director-composer collaboration can be. While Hitchcock and Herrmann's musical-visual work helped to conjure up a feeling of suspense, Lynch and Badalamenti have forged a successful partnership in creating a unique audio-visual aesthetic that focuses on the absurdities of suburban life, veering from sentimental, dream-like depictions of idyllic neighbourhoods to violent and enigmatically threatening portrayals of the

[73] Chris Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 245-246

[74] This will be discussed at length in the third chapter of this thesis, with particular attention to pop musicians as collaborators.

nightmare that lurks beneath the surface. *Film Score Monthly's* Daniel Schweiger has astutely described their work as 'a musical purgatory, where every style and sound floats about in a beautiful state of dread, all trying to be heard at once.'[75]

Lynch and Badalamenti first started collaborating in 1985 on *Blue Velvet*. For his first three films, Lynch had worked with several musicians and sound artists, including the sound designer Alan Splet and composer Peter Iver on *Eraserhead* (1977), John Morris on *The Elephant Man* (1981) and ambient musician Brian Eno and the band Toto on *Dune* (1984). Although the latter two films were closer to the mainstream than Lynch's other work, they still provided a vivid musical expression, with *The Elephant Man* scored by a spectral, gothic soundscape, and the sci-fi film *Dune* incorporating a more surreal and off-centre soundtrack than John Williams' parodic, often bombastic scores for other sci-fi films of the period. The Dino De Laurentiis-produced *Blue Velvet* was a return to Lynch's independent roots and is perhaps his most important film: it signalled an end to his more commercial ventures, marking a return to his own particular aesthetic and thematic idiosyncrasies, and cementing a working relationship with Laura Dern (with whom he would later work on *Wild at Heart* [1991] and *Inland Empire* [2006]) and, most importantly, Badalamenti. Recalling *Eraserhead's* nightmarish amalgamation of industrial noise, Fats Waller organ pieces and ominous original music, *Blue Velvet* presented a similar mixture of sound design, pre-existing pop songs and a selection of original classical and jazz cues. Badalamenti was recommended to Lynch during filming by the producer Fred Caruso after they encountered problems with Isabella Rossellini's performance of Bobby Vinton's song, 'Blue Velvet'. Initially brought in as Rossellini's vocal coach, Badalamenti's accompaniment on the piano impressed Lynch so much that he scored the film (and even had a cameo as the pianist in the Slow Bar jazz club).[76] While he had previously scored two fairly obscure films (the blaxploitation *Gordon's War* [1973] and the comedy *Law and Disorder* [1974]), it was working with Lynch on *Blue Velvet* that introduced Badalamenti to a new method of film composition. Instead of composing music whilst sitting alone and watching rushes of the film, Lynch and Badalamenti worked closely together in conjuring up a musical landscape throughout the film's production, discussing in detail the emotions and motivations of the characters and the development of the plot. They have worked this way ever since, as Badalamenti explains, '[David] would simply talk to me about his next project verbally and describe what he was thinking about and the characters. We would be next to the

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[75] Daniel Schweiger, 'The Madman and His Muse: Composer Angelo Badalamenti takes another wild ride with director David Lynch for Mulholland Drive' in *Film Score Monthly*, v. 6, n. 8 (September 2001), p. 24

[76] Schweiger, 'The Madman and His Muse', p. 130

keyboard, and I would just start creating and we would record it. And — boom — he would start seeing pictures. We would do hours of it.'[77]

The textures of the Lynch-Badalamenti sound are derived from an array of different musical styles, from Romantic classical music, through an electronic sound recalling experimental composers such as Harold Budd or Tangerine Dream, to jazzy bass riffs and classic '50s and '60s pop. One could say that this eclectic cacophony of different sounds and noises is indicative of film music in the post-classical era: rather than basing their soundtrack on a Romantic sound with Wagnerian signatures, Lynch and Badalamenti take an array of different influences to create a kind of pop-influenced musical bricolage. Roy Shuker notes that through fragmentation, experimentation and repetition, musical bricolage can be understood to be a 'process of semiotic guerilla warfare' that operates within popular culture and different musical subcultures.[78] Although Lynch and Badalamenti's music does not hold any real subcultural value (although this notion will be explored with reference to youth cinema in Chapter Two), their construction of sounds and musical styles can certainly be seen in the bricolage tradition of fragmentation and recontextualisation; their scores often take elements of fifties and sixties pop, classical, jazz and electronic music, strip them of their cultural context, and rearrange them in a unique mode of cinematic expression. Furthermore, Lynch and Badalamenti's sound is based more on pop aesthetic than traditional classical scoring principles. The concoction of different styles is indicative of a contemporary pop sensibility (particularly sample-based genres such as electronica and hip hop, and even contemporary electronically-produced pop music), while each cue exists more often than not as an individual nugget rather than as a part of a continuous piece.

The most striking aspect of Lynch and Badalamenti's score to *Blue Velvet* is the way in which pop songs mingle with other aspects of the soundtrack; each track is not used arbitrarily nor in isolation, instead they often segue in and out of other musical arrangements. A good example is the use of the Bobby Vinton's 1963 hit 'Blue Velvet,' which appears throughout the film (although, it should be noted, is not included on the film's soundtrack CD/LP). There are two pivotal moments where the song can be heard, and in each instance, the song segués into a piece of dark, ominous sound design. Its first appearance comes during the film's opening montage, a parodic sequence depicting a peaceful small-town suburb, full of vivid colours (blue sky, green grass, white picket fences) and clichéd images of suburban idyll, such as children crossing the street and the residents watering their lawns.

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[77] Bryan Reesman, 'Composer Spotlight: Angelo Badalamenti' in *MIX*, January 2006 (http://mixonline.com/mag/audio_angelo_badalamenti)

[78] Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* (London: Routlege, 1998), p.34

The non-diegetic use of Vinton's original song embellishes the wistful sentiment of the sequence, until things suddenly turn darker. The montage turns its focus on the Beaumont household (the home of protagonist Jeffrey), with Mrs Beaumont inside watching a black and white film noir / crime movie (the image of a hand firing a gun is shown on the TV screen), and Jeffrey's dad, Mr Tom Beaumont, outside trying to water his lawn. Noticing that the water pressure has started to drop, Mr Beaumont yanks the hosepipe to free it from some shrubbery. This is followed by a shot of a tap spluttering, while the sound of spraying water becomes audible over the music. The sound of the water is soon accompanied by a wind-like synthesised whirring noise, as Mr Beaumont collapses on his front lawn holding the back of his head. Eventually, the sound of the water and the whirring buzz ascend in volume and begin to drown out 'Blue Velvet's' chorus, ultimately turning into a cacophony of humming and droning. The camera then turns its attention away from the Beaumont garden, and focuses on a dark hole in the earth filled with a swarm of ugly beetles. 'Blue Velvet' fades out, the cacophonous noise reaches a crescendo, and the image of the ravenous bugs becomes a rather obvious metaphor for the perverse, corrupt underworld that lies beneath this American idyll.

The second use of 'Blue Velvet' occurs in The Slow Club, and is performed by Isabella Rossellini's character, Dorothy. Jeffrey and his girlfriend Sandy decide to go and watch Dorothy perform after learning of her possible involvement in recent mysterious events. When Jeffrey and Sandy arrive at the club, there is little sound apart from the slight hubbub of people talking at the bar. Dorothy soon makes her way on to stage and starts to perform a slower, jazzy version of 'Blue Velvet', during which there is no other noise occupying the soundtrack. Although the song takes place diegetically, the lack of background chatter from the audience (or any other background noise), doubled with the hazy soft-focus of the camera and the use of dissolves between shots, permeates the scene with an ethereal, dreamlike quality. After Dorothy has finished singing the first verse of the song, the instrumentation suddenly and strikingly changes. The saxophonist, guitarist and bassist who had started the song disappear, and we are left with Dorothy accompanied solely by the piano. The mood of the song has also shifted from a light jazz number to something much darker, with the pianist performing a series of ominous, low-pitched chords. As Dorothy sings the line 'as lonely as a blue star' almost a-cappella, the pianist plays a series of dischords that eventually segue into an instrumental cue involving low-pitched strings that connote an threatening mood. These two instances highlight the way in which a classic pop song has been essentially 'remixed' by its collision with experimental sound design, and also the tension between classic instrumentation (piano, brass, strings) and electronic

production. Lynch and Badalamenti use this form of unorthodox bricolage in order to instill an unsettling atmosphere.

In both scenes, 'Blue Velvet' is placed in the foreground. Whether it is playing diegetically (as in the Slow Club) or non-diegetically (in the opening sequence), there is no dialogue or action that interrupts it; the song is at the centre of the action. The placement of the song is an example of music that is to-be-listened-to; it is a song that has been specifically positioned in the foreground in both scenes for the audience's attention, and more importantly, was specifically chosen by Lynch. Lynch's fandom of fifties and sixties pop inspired the choice of music in the film, from 'Blue Velvet' to Roy Orbison's 'In Dreams'. Talking to Chris Rodley, Lynch mentioned how the mysterious qualities of Vinton's song inspired the film:

> [There] was something mysterious about [the song]. It made me think about things. And the first things I thought about were lawns – lawns and the neighbourhood. It's twilight – with maybe a streetlight on, let's say, so a lot of it is in shadow. And in the foreground is part of a car door, or just a suggestion of a car, because it's too dark to see clearly. But in the car is a girl with red lips. And it was these red lips, blue velvet and these black-green lawns of a neighbourhood that started it.[79]

It is apparent that the song has a particular nostalgic function; it hints at a past time (and with that, past ideologies),[80] and it is also somewhat self-conscious – the use of 'Blue Velvet' in particular echoes Kenneth Anger's appropriation of the song in his film *Scorpio Rising*, so it is clear that the song already has a place in film soundtrack history. David Shumway has noted that the nostalgic employment of popular music in American cinema is informed by a sense of 'shared identity';[81] through the use of songs by Vinton and Orbison, we are viewing a version of eighties America that is imbued with the collected memories of the fifties and sixties. This is most apparent in *Blue Velvet'*s opening scene; in conjunction with the idyllic image of a timeless suburban American neighbourhood, the use of Vinton's 'Blue Velvet' adds musical value to an already romanticised visual, producing a particularly nostalgic audio-visual imprint. As Paul Grainge has noted, American cinema has long had a fascination with memories of cinema and popular culture.[82] Often, this manifests itself in the form of 'genre memories' in which films such as Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974) or George Lucas's *American Graffiti*

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79 Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, p. 134

80 See Anahid Kassabian's (2001) ideological analysis of film music where she argues that Romantic classical scoring inherently privileges a white, middle class, male ideology, while pop songs can be more subversive, politically-charged and rebellious. P. 19

81 David Shumway, 'Rock 'n' Roll Sound Tracks and the Production of Nostalgia' in *Cinema Journal*, v. 38, n. 2, Winter 1999, p. 40

82 Paul Grainge, 'Introduction' in *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 9

(1973) can deliver a particular nostalgic experience. Furthermore, in an essay on nostalgia in contemporary culture, Fredric Jameson has argued that the narrative experience of films like *Star Wars* (1977) can be likened to the classic adventure films of the 1930s and '40s.[83] Lynch's films do not offer such a fully-rounded nostalgic treatment of a past genre, but they do offer allusions to and parodies of fifties and sixties popular culture (as seen in *Blue Velvet*'s opening montage), while the use of music can provide a certain Proustian rush.

The use of music in Lynch's films is one part of the film experience that has a nostalgic hold on its audience, not just popular music, but also some classical cues. Beyond Jameson's notion of nostalgia (which is firmly rooted in discourses of pastiche in contemporary culture), Caryl Flinn has argued that film music – most notably the use of Romantic music – is already permeated with a nostalgic sensibility. In her book *Strains of Utopia*, Flinn argues that the influence of nineteenth century romantic styles of music (particularly Wagner) on the studio-era composers inherently imbues classical film music with certain Romantic aesthetic ideologies, notably Romanticism's exploration of emotional expression. Thus, Flinn suggests, this style of film music provides something more than a mere semiotic duty: it 'reveals glimpses of a better, more unified world… opens doors to exotic situations or lands… [and] capture[s] the sense of lost integrity and grandeur.'[84] Consequently, Flinn argues that classical film music makes a 'promise of utopia', a promise to escape to an ideal never-place in which one can find solace from the humdrums of everyday life. Furthermore, the abstract, non-representational qualities of Romantic music correlate with the idea of the abstract, non-representational idea of utopia, that of an idealised 'no place' which can only be *alluded* to, not truly represented nor put into practice. Romantic music is the perfect idiom through which to provide this allusion.[85] The utopian promise of classical film music is established through the idea of nostalgia, a word derived from the Greek 'nostos' (to return home) and 'algia' (a mournful condition).[86] The idea that nostalgia is a form of 'homesickness' plays into the notion that classical film music can promise to take the listener to an ideal place. The solace offered by classical film music can be mourned for in the same way that one's home can be mourned for. The desire to return to utopia becomes a desire to return home.

A glimpse of this 'promise of utopia' can be found most explicitly in *Blue Velvet* with 'Mysteries of Love,' a string-based cue by Badalementi that also

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83 Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' in Hal Foster (ed.) *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto, 1985), p. 116

84 Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia and Hollywood Film Music* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 91

85 Flinn, *Strains of Utopia*, p. 10

86 Flinn, *Strains of Utopia*, p. 93

appears in song-form with vocals performed by Julee Cruise. The piece is used at four significant moments in the film:

1) In a scene with Jeffrey and Sandy sitting in a car outside a local church. As Sandy describes a dream she once had, a deviation of the 'Mysteries of Love' melody plays softly underneath.
2) At a dance party where Jeffrey and Sandy declare their love for one another. The Julee Cruise version plays (presumably diegetically) as the couple slow-dance together.
3) An instrumental version plays during a phone conversation between Jeffrey and Sandy, just before Jeffrey revisits Dorothy's apartment.
4) In the final minutes of the film following Frank's death. Cruise's vocal plays non-diegetically against a slow motion montage of images of suburbia (like those in the opening titles).

The recurrence of 'Mysteries of Love' establishes a point of familiarity, with the recurrence of the cue providing a temporary return home. The music's sense of wistfulness – the soft strings, Romantic melody and hushed vocals by Cruise – imbue the action with a dreamlike quality. By using the song in the final section of the film, it provides a degree of resolution;. However Lynch's use of a Romantic signature is unorthodox in that the music does interact with other parts of the score in a unified manner; throughout the film, various forms of music (classic pop, noise, jazz riffs) have been vying for attention, with the melody of 'Mysteries of Love' often becoming lost amongst other cacophonies, and the juxtaposition of the piece with other music cues appearing incongruous. This incongruity undermines the inaudibility of the score, with each cue taking on a to-be-listened-to status.

Occasionally, this nostalgic use of music, both pop and classical, is interrupted by electronic noise, transforming the soundtrack into something more uncanny. The electronic sounds found in Lynch's work cross the boundary between experimentalism and pop musicality. In his work, it is not uncommon to find synthesised sound used in two different ways: firstly as melodic pieces of music (often synthesised strings imitating live instrumentation), and secondly as experimental, abstract sounds and noises, often incorporating sound effects or sound 'design'. As Badalamenti explains, the two are often mixed together in order to create a unique aural ambience:

> David loves to play and experiment with music and sound. He worked very closely on his sound design with the late Alan Splet. Together they created a remarkable and innovative aural experience. They'd play tracks at half- and

> quarter-speed, or even in reverse… On both *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, I gave David multiple music tracks, which we call 'firewood'. I'd go into the studio and record these long 10- to 12-minute music cues with a full orchestra. Sometimes I'd add synthesisers to them. I'd vary the range of the notes, then layer these musical pieces together. All would be at a slow tempo. Then David would take this stuff like it was firewood, and he'd experiment with it. So that's what a lot of the 'musical' sound design stuff it that you're hearing.[87]

This collaborative effort demonstrates how closely Lynch and Badalamenti work together in order to create their soundscapes. The use of so-called 'firewood' is also intriguing because it is reminiscent of several aspects of contemporary pop musical composition: employing a DIY sensibility, merging different types of sound and forms of music together (live orchestral strings and synthesised music, plus additional sound effects) and electronically sampling and remixing sounds to achieve the desired effect (this also applies to hip hop, which will be discussed in the next section).[88]

The primary function of the electronic sounds in Lynch and Badalamenti's work is to produce a dark, haunting atmosphere. As I outlined in the introduction, Kathryn Kalinak has discussed how technical aspects of music (rhythm, tempo, pitch and dynamics) may prompt a physiological response from the listener.[89] In terms of pitch, many of Lynch and Badalamenti's synthscapes resonate at a lower frequency than typical live, orchestral music. In *Blue Velvet*, this reverberation of sound can also mimic and/or stimulate physiological responses (such as the heart and pulse rates, and the stomach), leading to a sound that is much more noticeable than inaudible classical scoring. The uncanny presence of this noise is another example of a form of sound or music in Lynch's work that is there to be listened to. The to-be-listened-to-ness of *Blue Velvet* is even depicted in the film's plot and its focus on listening or eavesdropping. One of the crucial moments in the film occurs when Jeffrey decides to break into Dorothy's apartment to search for clues. The music/sound that accompanies the break-in scene is a mixture of the diegetic sound effects of a generator and some low-pitched string music and synthesised drones, with these drones becoming louder as Jeffrey moves through the apartment. The crux of the scene involves Dorothy returning home earlier than expected, forcing Jeffrey to hide in her wardrobe. The electronic sounds in this scene mimic the human bodily reactions during a time of stress: Jeffrey's own nervous disposition

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87 Schweiger, 'The Madman and His Muse', p. 26

88 See Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy, *Popular Music Genres*, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 120. Borthwick and Moy provide an overview of the 'synthpop' genre that emerged in the 1980s, and posit that part of its sensibility is the fusion of different sounds, styles and influences, ranging from experimental neoclassical work, to punk and glam rock to disco, as well as postmodern production techniques such as sampling and remixing.

89 Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 82-85

suggests that these bodily sensations heard through the soundtrack are mirroring his own. By signifying the impending horror through music, the aural spectator is put in a position of danger. They are experiencing the impending horror through listening, and as such are threatened; while one can close their eyes, one cannot close their ears. This sonic expression can be found in almost all of Lynch's work since, particularly in 1997's *Lost Highway*.

Lost Highway: pop music and the trans-diegetic

Largely financed by the French company StudioCanal and produced independently by the French studio CiBy 2000 in collaboration with Lynch's own Asymmetrical Productions, *Lost Highway* is perhaps one of Lynch's most musically/sonically complex works. It is a film that is built around multiple musical styles, incorporating freeform jazz, electronic drones, seventies rock (Lou Reed), eighties alternative rock (This Mortal Coil), industrial rock (original cues by Nine Inch Nails' frontman Trent Reznor) and a couple of dark, noirish string pieces composed by Angelo Badalamenti. In several interviews, Lynch has described the film as a 'psychogenic fugue,'[90] an ambiguous phrase that could be referring to either a disassociative mental disorder, or, perhaps more obviously, a form of polyphonic music made famous by J. S. Bach. The film's convoluted plot involves a jazz saxophonist named Fred (played by Bill Pullman) and his flirtatious socialite wife, Renée (Patricia Arquette). After Fred receives a bizarre intercom message stating that 'Dick Laurent is dead' (someone whom Fred has never met), a series of threatening videotapes are sent to their house, tapes in which Fred, Renée and the insides of their home are being surveilled. Shortly after this, and without explanation, Fred is arrested for the apparent murder of his wife and sent to prison (presumably on death row). During his time in solitude, he fantasises of another life, this time as a younger man called Pete (portrayed by Balthazar Getty), who is beguiled by a blonde femme fatale named Alice (also played by Arquette). With this plot in mind, it makes sense that the term 'psychogenic fugue' could refer to aspects of the protagonist's psychological condition, but the film's elaborate soundtrack also gives credence to the idea that it is based around a series of musical movements.

Lost Highway's soundtrack can be separated into three different types of sound: slow, soft music; loud, forceful music; and, just as importantly, silence. The latter two often work in contrast to one another, with the level of silence being one the most interesting parts of the soundtrack. Moments of quiet discomfort are often prolonged and almost piercing, particularly early on in the film. As the film begins

[90] Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, p. 239

in the home of jazz musician Fred and Renée, we see a glimpse into their home life and the parties they attend, and with that we ascertain that their relationship is often uneasy, with Fred becoming increasingly agitated by the attention Renée draws from other men. They go about much of their home life in silence, even conversing in hushed whispers that are barely audible. There is little or no musical accompaniment to any of their home scenes except for an occasional droning sound, reminiscent of white noise. These prolonged moments of silence accentuate the presence of music when it finally arrives. One of the first loud bursts of music we hear is the sound of Fred's freeform saxophone solos during his performance at a jazz club. These moments are inserted into the narrative as memories, almost flashbacks, as Fred agonises over the whereabouts of his wife. Including such loud torrents of noise in amongst prolonged periods of silence is the first instance of music in *Lost Highway* that is there to be listened to. While Claudia Gorbman has posited that classical film music functions on a subconscious level and has continuous, 'wall-to-wall' properties,[91] music in *Lost Highway* (and indeed most of Lynch's other work) is explicit. Where a classical score would connote a particular mood or theme subtly, the loud, sharp pockets of noise that appear in *Lost Highway explicitly* connote the malevolent mood in the film, and furthermore, they actually *denote* the short, sharp outburst of violence that appear later in the film.

A unique trait of music in film is that it often straddles a line between the diegetic and the non-diegetic. To clarify, diegetic music is often anchored in three ways: by the characters' interactions with it (for instance, dancing to it), by a visual image of the source of the music (for instance, a shot of a radio or a band playing), or by playing at a certain volume and dynamics that would add value to the scene in which the music was resonating (for instance, music in a nightclub would be very loud and echo-y, whereas music in a concert hall would hold a different set of dynamics). Non-diegetic music cannot be heard by the characters, nor is there any visual sign of the music on screen. However, there are times where it is unclear where music in Lynch's work is originating. This has already been touched upon in *Blue Velvet* as Dorothy sings the title track in the Slow Club, and a notable example of this can be found in *Lost Highway* with the use of soft, slow music, particularly the employment of 'Song to the Siren' by 1980s alternative rock collective This Mortal Coil. A cover of a song originally by Tim Buckley, This Mortal Coil's rendition (originally intended to be used in *Blue Velvet* instead of 'Mysteries of Love') is a slow-paced, reverb-heavy, vocal-driven song with minimal instrumentation, apart from occasional punctuation from dreamy, synthesised chords. The song occurs as Pete and Alice drive out to the desert; before they begin

[91] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 76-79

to make love, Alice switches on the car radio, from which 'Song to the Siren' plays. The scene is shot in an angelic white light, almost so bright that it's hard to see the characters, and the scene plays in slow motion. As Donnelly points out, the song has so much power over the image that it is almost unnoticeable that the scene is actually playing in reverse.[92] And moreover, beyond its signifying purposes and connotations of desire, the power of this scene lies in the soundtrack's transcendence across the diegesis. Although 'Song to the Siren' begins as a diegetic piece, as the images become bathed in white light and as the action descends into slow motion, the music does not continue to match the image from which it is supposed to be emanating. It is unclear where the music is located in the diegesis, whether it is still playing from the radio or emanating from outside the film world. Furthermore, diegetic music often functions on an unconscious level (for instance, in a scene set in a shopping mall the steady sound of piped-in Muzak would not be instantly noticeable – it would merely serve to add value to the image), and as I have already explained, non-diegetic music does too by subtly signifying certain moods (as long as the music is not overblown or too loud). Trans-diegetic music, however, is consciously audible. By exploiting a gap in the diegesis and transcending space it is there to be listened to.

In conclusion, although not all indie films subvert classical form and narration to the extent that Lynch does (in fact, most don't), it is interesting that in films which use a dominant pop score, there is a small residue of atypical scoring strategies that would normally be found in more avant-garde art films. It is the idea of a 'to-be-listened-to' type of music, as well as a juxtaposition of classical narration and unconventional scoring, that helps to form part of the indie aesthetic. The next section on Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* will explore the ways in which hip hop music is used to express a similar kind of atypical sensibility.

ii. Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing* and interactions between cinema and hip hop culture

In October 2003 a landmark was reached in the US music charts. For the first time in history, all the artists in the top ten singles chart were black 'urban' performers.[93] This is perhaps testament to the extent that hip hop has permeated mainstream culture in recent times, shifting from an underground subculture into a global culture within the last two decades. Hip hop has also had a firm presence in cinema in recent years: famous rap artists such as Queen Latifah, Mos Def and Ice Cube

[92] Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound*, p. 28
[93] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/music/3459601.stm

have become Hollywood actors, black music video directors such as Antoine Fuqua and F. Gary Gray have moved into feature film making, and in 2006, the rap group Three 6 Mafia won an Academy Award for best song ('It's Hard Out Here For a Pimp' from *Hustle and Flow* [2005]). In the February 2005 edition of *Sight and Sound* magazine, the music and culture critic Nelson George gave an insightful look at the way in which hip hop has infiltrated American film over the past twenty-five years, pointing to the production of Nicole Kassell's *The Woodsman* in 2004 as a pivotal moment.[94] A drama dealing with the rehabilitation of a convicted child molester, the film is subtly painted with a sheen of hip hop 'flava' – it was produced by the Roc-A-Fella record label owner Damon Dash (through his company Dash Films), and features rappers Mos Def and Eve in prominent roles, even though there are not many explicit references to rap culture.[95]

This is indicative of the extent that hip hop culture has been absorbed into the mainstream. Although there are several factors for this assimilation (S. Craig Watkins suggests that the media becoming increasingly accepting of black music, through of music television and specialist black music magazines such as *The Source* and *The Vibe*, are important aspects),[96] this section will focus on the role that Spike Lee, and in particular his seminal 1989 film *Do the Right Thing*, played in the rise of hip hop and the subsequent New Black Cinema movement of the early 1990s. Of all of Lee's films, *Do The Right Thing* is arguably the movie that has had the biggest cultural impact: as well as being fully intertwined with rap culture, the film was one of the first movies by a new independent black director to receive backing from a major studio (the film was funded partly by Universal and produced independently by Lee's company 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks), leading the way for a new generation of African-American filmmakers. *Do the Right Thing*'s soundtrack is perhaps its most important aspect, as it sits alongside many other hip hop- and soul-based compilation scores that accompanied many films from the mid-1980s through to the 1990s (notable examples include *New Jack City*, *Juice* and *Dead Presidents*).

To begin this section, I will contextualise Lee's work by briefly outlining how black cinematic genres, such as Blaxploitation in the 1970s and the B-Boy films of the early 1980s, used popular music in order to anchor their political concerns, leading up to the arrival of hip hop America and New Black Cinema in the late 1980s. Following this will be an analysis of *Do the Right Thing*'s

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94 Nelson George, 'Boyz in the Wood' from 'Blackworld', an additional supplement in *Sight and Sound*, v. 15 n. 2, Feb. 2005, p. 8

95 George, 'Boyz in the Wood', p. 8

96 S. Craig Watkins, 'A Great Year in Hip Hop' in *Hip Hop Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), p. 56

compilation soundtrack in terms of its place in 1980s/'90s hip hop culture, as well as its textual implications. Through an examination of the film's approach to scoring, I will note how popular music (hip hop and nu-soul in this case) is used to communicate a certain difference.

The birth of hip-hop cinema

The roots of ethnic music in American cinema can be found in one of the first sound films; Alan Crossland's *The Jazz Singer* starred Al Jolson as Jakie Rabinowitz, the son of a cantor who leaves home to pursue his love of music and performance. Further into the classical era, songs, and particularly the use of jazz music in film noirs such as *The Big Combo* (1942) and *Double Indemnity* (1944) helped to signal a character's mood and underscored its psychological emphasis, particularly with sharp changes of rhythm and tempo.[97] More importantly, these jazz riffs had roots in the underground music scene, performed by black and other ethnic musicians. But while popular music from African-American jazz/blues traditions has been used prominently since the 1930s, it should be noted that it was mainly used to score predominantly white narratives and characters; in the main, there was a distinct lack of black narratives and protagonists at the dawn of the post-classical era. In an article for *CineAction*, James A. Hurst has elaborated on the frustrations experienced by African-American communities regarding a lack of roles for black people. He posits that ethnic tensions during Richard Nixon's presidency in the late 1960s and early '70s, particularly during the nationwide riots after Martin Luther King's assassination in 1969, as well as the Jackson State killings in 1970, led to a media backlash against African-American citizens and black culture in general. By the early '70s Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Freddy Hampton and George Jackson had all been assassinated, while Angela Davis and Huey Newton were made political prisoners. Coverage of rioting was kept out of the news on Nixon's demand, while black comedians on TV were encouraged to mock race riots and activism, leading to a rise of what Hurst calls 'the new Black Minstrelsy'.[98] Politicised black comics such as Richard Pryor and Dick Gregory had all but disappeared, and the remaining African-Americans on television were what Hurst describes as 'black clowns' (such as Flip Wilson and Jimmy Walker) who 'provided a sigh of relief for whites who had come to expect all blacks on

[97] See Richard Younger, 'Song in Contemporary Film Noir' in *Films in Review*, v. 45, n. 7/8 (July 1994), pp. 48-50

[98] James A. Hurst, 'Fuck Sal's Pizza: Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* as a Product of the Hip Hop Movement' in *Cineaction* 21/22 (July 1990), pp. 91-92

television to be militant.'[99] Ultimately, one counteraction to this was a new movement in black cinema, the Blaxploitation genre.

Blaxploitation sought to usurp the palatable, white-friendly black man on television with a tougher, more active role model with almost super-human powers. Although some roles were objectionable and were seen as enforcing age-old black stereotypes (notably the focus on drug-dealing, pimping heroes), the abundance of ghetto style in films such as *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) and *Shaft* (1971) – their dialogue, costumes, but most importantly their soundtracks – soon found a market, to the point where, by the end of the decade, all but a few Blaxploitation films were made exclusively by whites. Blaxploitation soundtracks were hugely popular and a very important part of the movement; Michael Murray argues that Booker T. and the MGs' music for *Up Tight* (1968) was instrumental in the evolution of the pop-funk sound of the early '70s, while Isaac Hayes' theme from *Shaft* had become an icon of film music, comparable to the cues of Bernard Herrmann in its ubiquity.[100] This music was inextricably tied to the Blaxploitation characters, with many songs written in tribute to the heroes of the films, much in the same way as the African-American folk legend of Stagger Lee ('Stagolee') had appeared in blues songs of the 1920s, '30s and '40s.[101] [102] These funk- and soul-based soundtracks ultimately provided an alternative to classical film music when scoring black narratives.

Blaxploitation and the contemporaneous funk music it was associated with soon dwindled in the late 1970s. Kodwo Eshun has argued that the end of the era was heralded by Michael Schultz's *Car Wash* (1976), which signalled the beginning of disco.[103] The militant undertones and hustling protagonists had disappeared and the ghetto that the Stagolee-esque hero would roam had shrunk to the size of a garage forecourt. Eshun interestingly notes that disco and the birth of DJ culture would also see the soundtrack fragmented into diegetic snatches heard on car radios and in nightclubs, and, more interestingly, that *Car Wash* can be read to stand as an allegory of the rise and fall of Motown Records: 'The post-Philly sheen of Rose Royce's theme tune is Motor Town music on the verge of a

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[99] Hurst, 'Fuck Sal's Pizza', p. 92

[100] Michael Murray, 'The Blaxploitation Film Soundtracks' in *Film Score Monthly*, December 1995, p. 18

[101] Hurst, 'Fuck Sal's Pizza', p.92. Stagger Lee Shelton was a convicted murderer who came to embody the image of a strong, street-wise, albeit potentially violent black man who fought against white authority.

[102] Furthermore, the rock critic Greil Marcus notes that Stagger Lee's influence on funk and soul was predominantly reflected in the music of Sly Stone, whose musical influence would shape many other bands and several Blaxploitation soundtracks. See the section 'Sly Stone: The Myth of Staggerlee' in *Mystery Train* (London: Faber and Faber), 2000, pp. 71-106

[103] Kodwo Eshun, 'From Blaxploitation to Rapsploitation' in Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton (Eds) *The Celluloid Jukebox*, London: BFI, 1995, p. 53

metranomic mutation,' Eshun suggests. 'The assembly line of Motown pop is about to be superseded by post-Fordist robotics and drum machine-time'.[104]

However, into the 1980s, the hip hop explosion in New York was beginning to make an impact. Hip Hop was a movement that shares a similar lineage with disco and logically followed on from mid-1970s funk movements such as Go-Go and P-Funk, sharing a similar street style, language and very similar basslines and drum breaks (many of which were exact samples, such was hip hop's focus on sampling and re-arranging old songs). Russell A. Potter has noted that hip hop can be seen as an embodiment of postmodern aesthetics: pastiche, a 'cut-up' method of production, references and tributes to past forms of (particularly black) music and culture (both in the lyrics and in the various lifted drum rhythms and bass lines), and ironic representations of gender, nationhood and street culture (although some critics may argue that a lot of hip hop bravado is not, in fact, ironic).[105] As Fredric Jameson has argued with regard to postmodern media, hip hop can be seen as breaking down separations or historical distinctions between high culture and mass/popular culture.[106] Whilst appearing populist through its integration with youth and street culture and in its derivation from other forms of popular music, hip hop's bricolage aesthetic, combining political awareness, satirical intent and social commentary, as well as its artistic, often experimental tendencies (touching on electronic music at times), position it on a terrain that straddles the boundary between high and mass culture.

Black filmmakers were starting to document hip hop culture on film, much in the same way that Pacific coast American filmmakers focused on surf culture and music in the 1960s. Nelson George has noted that part-documentary showcases of hip hop in films such as *Wild Style* and *Krush Groove* (1984) demonstrated 'a rich aroma of a culture on the rise'.[107] *Krush Groove*, made by Michael Schwartz nine years after *Car Wash*, parodies the 'fear of obsolescence' that *Car Wash* embodied, with Run DMC starring as a group of young rappers who rap for their own enjoyment, eventually quitting their job in a car wash to pursue their musical dreams.[108] Run DMC's next project, *Tougher Than Leather* was intended to be a rap/Blaxploitation hybrid that relocated the ghetto narratives of the 1970s to the block parties of the 1980s. With the rise of a new Republican government, many rappers who had grown up watching the black superhero narratives were keen to

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[104] Eshun, 'From Blaxploitation to Rapsploitation', p.56
[105] Russell A. Potter, 'The Future is History: Hip-Hop in the Aftermath of (post)modernity' in Ian Peddie (ed.) *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest* (London: Ashgate, 2006) p. 65
[106] Jameson , 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', p. 116
[107] George, 'Boyz in the Wood', p. 9
[108] Eshun, 'From Blaxploitation to Rapsploitation', p. 56

recreate the anarchic attitude of Blaxploitation. When Run DMC asked Spike Lee, then a young film student, to direct *Tougher than Leather*, Lee declined, stating that he did not want to rehash Blaxploitation themes.[109]

S. Craig Watkins describes Lee's soundtracks, particularly *Do the Right Thing*, as objects that 'consciously tap into the varied popular music cultures of the African Diaspora'.[110] Indeed, Lee's fusion of jazz, folk, blues and rap (and even rock music by The Who on his 1999 film *Son of Sam*) can be seen as drawing on the bricolage tradition of fragmentation and recontextualisation. His scores often take elements of pop, classical, jazz and hip hop music, stripping them of their cultural context (particularly in the use of classical and jazz cues), and rearranging them in a unique mode of cinematic expression. This concoction of different styles is also indicative of the recording practices used in a lot of hip hop music.

Music has played a large role in Lee's life since he was a child. His father, Bill, was a jazz musician, a prominent bassist who has worked with folk singers such as Josh White, Theodore Bikel and Peter, Paul and Mary, soul artists such as Aretha Franklin, as well as being a composer and arranger of several 'folk-jazz operas' in the New York area. In an interview in *Cineaste* in 1991, Lee spoke about listening to jazz music at a young age and how music often informs his ideas.

> I start thinking about the music for my films at the same moment I'm writing the script. It's part of my creative process. I pay as much attention to the music as I do to the cinematography, casting and production design. I'm the son of a great jazz musician, Bill Lee… I was raised with jazz. It was played in the house all the time.[111]

This jazz influence can be seen in all of Lee's early work, often alongside other musical forms. Across his first five films – *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), *School Daze* (1987), *Do the Right Thing*, *Mo' Better Blues* (1990), and *Jungle Fever* (1991) – there is a complex arrangement of different musical styles and conflicting musical traditions. Bill Lee's folk-jazz scores for the first four films (often performed by New York's Natural Spiritual Orchestra) are typically rooted in classical film music conventions: they are subtle and unobtrusive, each music cue fades in and out inconspicuously with each edit, and there is an emphasis on resolving harmonic patterns, with the music returning to its tonal centre. But while Bill Lee's music is grounded in a classical mode, there are several jazzy flourishes in each cue. The non-diegetic score is predominantly an amalgamation of two

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[109] Hurst, 'Fuck Sal's Pizza', p. 92

[110] S. Craig Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 122

[111] Janice Mosier Richardson, 'He's Gotta Have It: An Interview with Spike Lee' in *Cineaste* 18, n.8, 1991, p. 14

musical traditions: a classical, Romantic structure and a folk-jazz style. The intertwining of this music with the diegetic music in each film, from rap to soul to swing, is part of Lee's complete musical expression: *Jungle Fever* juxtaposes Stevie Wonder's original music with Frank Sinatra and a wide range of other performers, *School Daze* uses elaborate production numbers amongst soul songs and a particular use of E.U.'s Go-Go anthem 'Da Butt', and *Mo' Better Blues* is a celebration of jazz music and music as performance. However, perhaps the most striking in terms of hip hop culture are *She's Gotta Have It* and *Do the Right Thing*.

She's Gotta Have It, Lee's first film, is mostly dominated by the jazzy music performed by his father and arguably shows the least variety in terms of musical expression. Nevertheless, the film's hero, Mars Blackmon (played by Lee), is the essence of hip hop style, and one of the first mainstream hip hop icons. Through his dress, voice and appreciation for B-Boy culture, the character 'spoke' to the hip hop community; Tone Loc's 1988 single 'Wild Thing' was inspired by the character and the film, while its music video featured the film's lead actress, Tracy Camilla Johns (Nola Darling) in a prominent role.[112] Off the back of *She's Gotta Have It*, Lee directed a series of commercials for Nike's new Air Jordan sneakers, which starred Lee's alter-ego conversing with Michael Jordan. Not content with filling the space between programmes, Mars Blackmon also began to appear as a guest on several light entertainment shows, particularly on *Saturday Night Live*, where he introduced a performance by Run DMC. By the late 1980s, it was becoming apparent that Lee had made a large contribution in moving hip hop toward the mainstream.

After *School Daze*, and as he began work on his third feature film, Lee put an end to his alter-ego. In the late 1980s, following a series of robberies and even killings over expensive Nike trainers, several newspaper articles suggested that Lee's Nike commercials were to blame in glamorising expensive footwear. In an interview with Elvis Mitchell, Lee angrily derided the reports:

> What about it? It's my fault, it's Michael Jordan's fault that kids are buying those shoes? That's just the trigger. There's more to it than that. Something is wrong where these young black kids have to put so much weight, where their life is tied up – their life is so hopeless – that their life is defined by a pair of sneakers. Or a sheepskin coat. The problem is not the coat or the sneakers.[113]

This 'problem' was to be explored in his next film. Lee's increasingly high public profile and his frustration with criticisms from the American media, but particularly his concerns for race relations in the US, led to arguably his most controversial

[112] Hurst, 'Fuck Sal's Pizza', p. 94

[113] Elvis Mitchell, 'Spike Lee: The *Playboy* Interview' in Cynthia Fuchs (ed.) *Spike Lee Interviews* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002) p. 52

work, *Do the Right Thing*. Racial tension in New York in the late 1980s was high and crime rates were unprecedented. African-American citizens were especially angered when police used excessive force on and eventually shot dead an elderly black woman, Eleanor Bumpers, who was resisting a city-ordered eviction from her Bronx apartment. Another catalyst was the Bernhard Goetz situation. Dubbed the 'subway vigilante', Goetz, a white man, shot and severely injured four black youths on the New York subway, all of whom, he claimed, were trying to rob him.

The themes of inner-city violence, vigilantism and racial tension are all explored in *Do the Right Thing*, intertwined with the impending mainstream boom of hip hop culture. Like *She's Gotta Have It*, *Do the Right Thing* explores the essence of hip hop culture and black street life, only much more overtly. Through the film's diegetic use of music and its promotion of the soundtrack, *Do the Right Thing* can be seen as a key text when examining relations between American independent cinema and popular music culture. The independentness of *Do the Right Thing* can be found in its moments of unorthodox visual style and its sensitive subject matter, both of which are embellished by a close engagement with the music of Public Enemy.

Do the Right Thing: Musical Controversy

As Geoff King notes, within independent cinema there is room to tackle more sensitive issues that would not be sufficiently dealt with inside the mainstream. King particularly sees Lee's work as a 'bright sassy and accessible' brand of cinema that is able to take on board 'complexities and divisions within the black community that undermine any racist ideologies based on notions of essential black characteristics.'[114] Lee's two films prior to *Do the Right Thing* were both marketed as comedies, which Watkins suggests made them more palatable and less threatening to a white audience.[115] With this in mind, Lee was understandably concerned that the frank, controversial nature of *Do the Right Thing* may receive harsh censorship by its distributors. In order to ensure that the film remained 'his,' Lee contractually negotiated to have final cut approval. This was not without its problems: original backers Paramount pulled funding from the film (at the time $10 million) because they felt the ending was 'too volatile.'[116] Lee finally managed to negotiate a deal with Universal, although the budget was much less at $6.5 million. Although the budget was reduced, Universal's deal would prove beneficial in terms of promoting the film: the studio planned to release the film during the peak of the summer, they concocted a campaign to run several TV and radio ads before the

[114] King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 212
[115] Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema*, p. 116
[116] Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema*, p. 116

film's general release, and they even used the black press to help locate a core audience.[117] However, among all the publicity the film received from Universal's marketing campaign, the most widespread publicity came in the form of its soundtrack, and in particular the band at the centre of both the soundtrack and the film – the rap group Public Enemy.

Rather than use a pre-existing track as the film's theme song, Lee contacted Public Enemy about writing a special theme for the film that would sit alongside a selection of other contemporary soul hits on the soundtrack album (many of these songs would also appear in the film itself courtesy of Samuel L. Jackson's disc jockey character, Love Daddy). Lee and the group's frontman, Chuck D, met in a New York restaurant in 1988 to discuss the deal, as Chuck describes in his autobiography. 'I need a theme song,' Lee explained to Chuck, 'an anthem, something to define the rage that's going on right about now.'[118] Chuck D and Public Enemy toured Europe in the autumn of 1988, during which time Chuck began writing 'Fight the Power', a song inspired by 'the fact that black people have heroes too, and our heroes aren't projected as much as the [white] heroes we are forced to bow down to'.[119] The lyrics of the song tie into themes addressed in the late 1960s about the absence of African-American idols in film and television, as well as the apparent white colonisation of black music by attacking Elvis Presley (particularly the line 'Elvis was a hero to most/ but he never meant shit to me'). Soon Lee had the 'anthem' he needed, and the song, as well as the rest of the soundtrack, was released on Motown Records, at the time owned by MCA. 'Fight the Power' was released as a single and was accompanied by two music videos directed by Lee, one featuring a montage of short vignettes from *Do the Right Thing* and another featuring the band on what appears to be a civil rights march through the streets of Bed-Stuy. The artwork for the single also featured the film's logo and photos of several of the characters (Figure 11).

[117] Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema*, p. 120
[118] Chuck D, *Fight the Power: Rap, Race and Reality*, (Edinburgh: Payback Press, 1997) p. 219
[119] Chuck D, *Fight the Power: Rap, Race and Reality*, p. 219

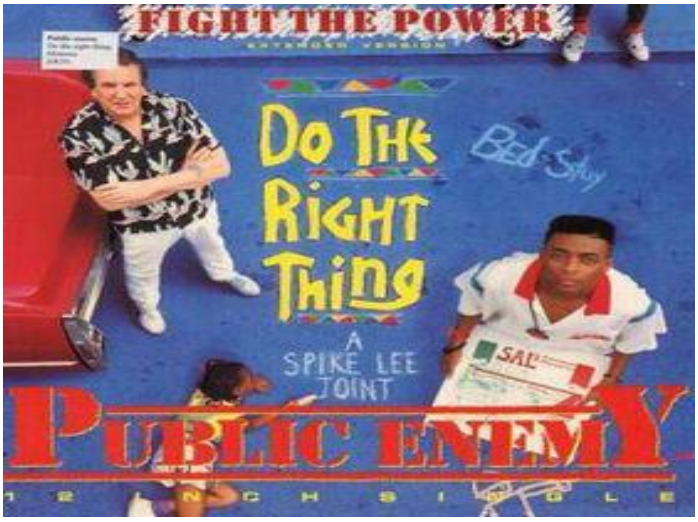

Figure 11

The exposure the song received on radio and MTV was certainly beneficial in raising the profile of Lee's latest work, although the film and the soundtrack received more attention off the back of controversy involving a member of Public Enemy. In May 1989, a couple of months before *Do the Right Thing's* American release, Public Enemy's road manager and occasional rapper, Professor Griff, caused controversy by making anti-Semitic comments, appearing firstly in New York's *Village Voice* in May 1989 and subsequently in *The Washington Times* a couple of weeks later. Griff is alleged to subscribe to a subset of modern anti-Semitism among some black political groups, who blame Jews for the history of American racism and black discrimination. In the interview, Griff asserted that Jews are 'responsible for the majority of wickedness that goes on across the globe', including 'what's happening in South Africa' (Griff's most bizarre assertion was that Jews are financing AIDS experiments on black people in South Africa).[120] Public Enemy eventually denounced the comments, as did Spike Lee. Public Enemy later expelled Griff from the group, although only after much deliberation, and pressure from Motown (the distributor of the *Do the Right Thing* soundtrack album) and MCA (to whom Public Enemy were signed at the time).

The controversy had the potential to be seriously damaging for the picture, primarily because 'Fight the Power' is the backbone of the film, and Public Enemy are arguably inextricably intertwined in the film's narrative, almost characters in their own right. Nelson George has suggested that the recurrence of the song results in Public Enemy appearing as an 'unseen Greek chorus that comments on the film's action.'[121] It is the first piece of music we hear during the opening title

[120] Untitled article in *American Film*, v. 10 n. 14 (July 1989), p. 15
[121] Nelson George, '*Do the Right Thing*: Film and Fury' in David Lee (Ed.) *The Five Films*

sequence, it appears another dozen times throughout the film (both diegetically and non-diegetically), and it is even referenced in the film's screenplay (Buggin' Out asks Radio Raheem, 'Is that the only music you got?'; Raheem replies, 'You don't like Public Enemy?'). The lyrics of the song are also relevant in the context of the themes of the film; Chuck D's words call for a new kind of activism, somewhere between Malcolm X's declaration to actively fight institutional racism and Martin Luther King's encouragement of non-violent resistance, which the film also negotiates ('What we need is awareness/ We can't get careless' and 'Let's get down to business/ Mental self-defensive fitness'). Chuck D's lyrics about a lack of black heroes is also distinctly echoed in the film during the conversation between the black youths of Bed-Stuy and Sal about the absence of black people on his 'Wall of Fame.'

Furthermore, George has suggested that the dynamics of the song – the intensity of the beat and the arrangement of sampled and live instruments – connotes the sound of a black revolt 'that many of the film's critics anticipated.'[122] The beat of the music also intertwines perfectly with the rhythm of the film; its staccato drums and haphazard collage of various sounds (scratching and guitar stings) and chopped-up vocal samples reflect the film's occasional forays into a more atypical film style. There are two appearances of Radio Raheem that provide perfect examples of this. The first is Raheem's introduction, a sequence that begins with a typical 3-shot of three of the Bed-Stut youths sitting on a stairway. The sound of Raheem's ghetto blaster in the distance signals his arrival, and as 'Fight the Power' increases in volume, Raheem approaches the camera and his face is framed in a larger-than-life wide-angle close-up. The juxtaposition of this hyperbolic framing with the traditional framing of the three youths on the stairs demonstrates the disorientating effect Raheem (and particularly 'Fight the Power') has on the film's visual style. The second instance occurs during Raheem's 'story of right hand-left hand' (his 'love' and 'hate' knuckle jewellery). Raheem and Mookie are framed in a typical two-shot, with 'Fight the Power' playing once again (Figure 12). As Raheem begins to tell Mookie his story, the camera moves round and assumes Mookie's position. Raheem addresses the camera directly, breaking the fourth wall and launching punches straight down the lens (Figure 13). When he finishes his tale, the camera moves back to its original position (Figure 14).

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of Spike Lee (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1991), p. 78

[122] George, '*Do the Right Thing*: Film and Fury', p. 78

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

The free movement of the camera (almost in a documentary style) and the close-ups of Raheem are again linked to the staccato rhythms of the Public Enemy soundtrack; the bricolage aspect of hip hop is represented on screen with this series of obtuse camera angles and perspectives in a film style that is an amalgam of

classical framing, a sense of post-classical naturalism and a hint of vérité. The free-roaming nature of the camera and Raheem's delivery of the dialogue straight to camera also echoes the freeform construction of rap music; the camera acts as a constant backing track upon which Raheem delivers his speech. James Hurst describes such scenes as essentially having a 'hip hop perspective' on the action.[123] Furthermore, these flourishes can be seen as part of what King notes as a disruption of classical style that further anchors the independent sensibilities of a film.[124] The disruption is achieved through the strong presence of music; 'Fight the Power' acts as a startling alarm call that demands attention and asserts itself as a piece of to-be-listened-to music.

In contrast to this form of expression is the scoring of Da Mayor, the elderly town drunk. While characters such as Raheem are scored by songs that have a diegetic presence, two of the pieces of music that accompany Da Mayor's scenes ('Da Mayor Drinks His Beer' and 'Da Mayor Loves Mother Sister') are both fairly *inaudible* non-diegetic cues that serves to illustrate his less dominant social status.[125] This is anchored by the framing in each scene. The first cue, used when Da Mayor passes by Mother Sister's apartment, is an upbeat, folky string arrangement (almost celebratory) that highlights Da Mayor as a figure of fun. He is shot from a high angle as Mother Sister looks down on him from her apartment window (Figure 15). The second cue occurs in a later scene where Da Mayor passes Mother Sister's apartment carrying flowers. This cue consists of a wistful, solo clarinet touching on the character's pathos. When talking to Mother Sister, he is pushed towards the edge of the frame, again demonstrating the character's nonalignment in Bed Stuy (Figure 16), further anchored by the juxtaposition with the following scene that features Raheem and his boombox stomping out his territory on the street.

[123] Hurst, 'Fuck Sal's Pizza', p. 95
[124] King , *American Independent Cinema*, p. 165
[125] I use *inaudible* in Gorbman's sense of the word in *Unheard Melodies*.

Figure 15

Figure 16

Bill Lee's folk-jazz cues in these instances imbue the action with a slight nostalgic sentiment; in contrast to contemporary swagger of 'Fight the Power', Bill Lee's music hints at a past era and taps into African American cultural memory. The lightness of the cue 'Da Mayor Drinks His Beer' even points towards the bygone days of minstrelsy, establishing Da Mayor as a buffoonish character in stark contrast to the politicised youth in the film.

When compared with Lynch's negotiation with nostalgia in his use of 'Blue Velvet', *Do the Right Thing* touches on similar notions of cultural memory. It reinforces the theory of cinematic nostalgia put forward by Pam Cook, which posits that representations of cultural memories on screen can be a helpful tool in engaging with the past in order to come to terms with the present:

> Rather than being seen as a reactionary, regressive condition imbued with sentimentality, [nostalgia] can be perceived as a way of coming to terms with the past, as enabling it to be exorcised in order that society, and individuals can move

> on. In other words, while not necessarily progressive in itself, nostalgia can form part of a transition to progress and modernity.[126]

Like in the works of Lynch, Lee's bricolage approach to scoring positions *Do the Right Thing* as a film in which the contemporary is inextricably tied to history and memories of the past. Even though the film is demonstrably anchored by Public Enemy, the juxtaposition of 'Fight the Power' alongside Bill Lee's folk-jazz cues (the 'modern' vs. the 'traditional') serves to present Bed Stuy as an urban space in which the past is contextualised by the present and vice-versa. Whilst Radio Raheem and the youth of Bed Stuy are scored by a contemporary urban soundtrack (heard diegetically), Bill Lee's original pieces are remnants of a bygone era that still exist (non-diegetically) as 'spectres' following characters such as Da Mayor around.[127]

The next section of this chapter will further explore the collision of the past and present by looking at the use of music in the films of Jim Jarmusch. Within Jarmusch's work there is a great deal of attention paid toward how the contemporary is informed by an interaction with cultural history; in particular, the relationship between past and present is explored through the guise of the 'hipster', a being whose identity is informed by an appropriation of classic pop and vintage popular culture. The bricolage approach that Jarmusch adopts, as well as a to-be-listened-to soundtrack of sixties pop and contemporary music, also reflects more widely independent cinema's ongoing fascination with appropriation, recontextualisation and experimentation in its quest to attain a sense of difference. Jarmusch's emphasis on the diegetic rather than non-diegetic is also a crucial factor here.

iii. Jim Jarmusch: hipness and recontextualising pop

> I like Tarantino's sense of how he structures stories. I hate what he's done for soundtracks, though… "Let's buy pop songs by the yard and put them over the film." [Scorsese] does it in a very different way. I don't think he does it to have a marketing tool… it's used very precisely to cue your emotions, your memory, to specific periods by the year. That's different from collecting a bunch of shit and slapping it on and having a good ancillary marketing device.
>
> – Jim Jarmusch. [128]

[126] Pam Cook, 'Rethinking Nostalgia' in *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, London: Routlege, 2005, p. 4

[127] See Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound* for an elaboration of film music as a 'haunting' presence.

[128] Jarmusch quoted in Scott Macaulay, 'End of the Road' from *Jim Jarmusch Interviews* (ed. Ludvig Hertzberg), Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2001. pp. 152-153

The above quote from Jarmusch is a clear example of his disdain for a certain type of pop scoring. While many films utilise a pop soundtrack as an ancillary marketing tool, Jarmusch's use of music greatly differs, to the extent of often eschewing the use of any non-diegetic music. Jarmusch has spoken of his dislike of using music non-diegetically, believing that films which use a pop score too heavily often do so for little more than commercial reasons. His preference is to use pop music as diegetically as possible (although some opening titles are accompanied by a piece of non-diegetic music), as he explains to Luc Sante:

> The pop music or rock 'n' roll in [my] films is always the music that the characters are listening to… What I like about pop music is how it affects your emotions through memory. I like it when characters actually select music to listen to – it somehow deepens your understanding of them.[129]

Jarmusch's attitude towards the use of music is informed partly by his interest in cultural memory and pop culture history, but also by a set of principles that are deeply rooted in his background in underground and alternative culture. This section will explore how the independent value of Jarmusch's work is shaped by both these concerns. Later, I will explore this notion of cultural memory by analysing how the characters in his films relate to pieces of music; furthermore, this analysis will posit that Jarmusch's soundtracks, whilst mostly diegetic, nevertheless conform to the to-be-listened-to nature of similar soundtracks by his contemporaries, Lynch and Lee. But first, the next section will discuss how Jarmusch's artistic background had an influence on his approach to film music; in particular I will explore Jarmusch's position in both the music and film industries, and how his collaborations with various rock and pop musicians (most notably John Lurie and Tom Waits) have brought an extra dimension to his films' explorations of popular music culture.

Jarmusch, New York and the 'No Wave' movement

Jarmusch was fully engaged with art, film and literature during his childhood and teenage years in Ohio. His mother, a film and theatre critic for a local Akron newspaper, introduced him to several B-movies during matinee screenings at the local theatre, while at a later age, he and his high school friends would frequent Akron's art house cinema to view underground films by avant-garde directors such as Kenneth Anger and Andy Warhol.[130] An interest in beat literature and counterculture led Jarmusch to move to New York to study English and American

[129] Jim Jarmusch interviewed by Luc Sante, 'Mystery Man' in *Jim Jarmusch Interviews*, pp. 93 -94

[130] Juan Suarez, *Jim Jarmusch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), pp. 1-11

literature at Columbia University, during which time he edited the undergraduate literary journal, before enrolling at Tisch School of the Arts' film programme alongside other now-famous directors such as Tom DiCillo and Spike Lee.[131]

It was during his time in New York that Jarmusch became involved in the early-1980s post-punk music scene, regularly attending gigs at famous venues such as the Mudd Club and CBGB's, and ultimately formed a band, The Del-Byzanteens, alongside the experimental composer Phil Kline. They were spurred on by punk attitudes and DIY sensibilities at the time:

> In the late '70s, there was a really important spirit, especially in the music scene because the spirit was that you didn't have to be a virtuoso musician to form a rock band. Instead, the spirit of the music was more important than any kind of technical expertise on the instrument… And that influenced a lot of people in other forms as well. The first films of Amos Poe were important. Painters like Jean-Michel Basquiat sort of came out of that scene too, in a way… There was a lot of excitement because you'd go to CBGB's or Max's, and there was a really good spirit of exchanging ideas.[132]

The New York music scene moving into the early 1980s was beginning to diversify: as punk rock had run its course in the late '70s, and with disco beginning to infiltrate the mainstream (with bands from the New York scene such as Blondie and Talking Heads taking a poppier, groove-based direction and signing to major labels in the early '80s), some underground music cultures began to emerge, notably hip hop (as discussed in the prior section), and also a new generation of New York rock bands, collectively categorised under the genre 'No Wave' (the musical and political antithesis to the mainstream 'new wave'). Sneery towards the 'rock legends' that preceded them and distrustful of the now-corporate new wave bands, No Wave's artists attempted to stand apart from the burgeoning MTV culture. Musically, the scene was diverse, as Simon Reynolds notes:

> No Wave was defined less by a sound than by this Year Zero approach. Musically, they range from Teenage Jesus' stentorian dirges to Contortions' jazz-scarred thrash-funk, from Mars' guitar flagellating clangour to DNA's dislocated grooves. Crucially, the No Wave groups staged their revolt against rock tradition using the standard rock format of guitar, bass, and drums. Occasionally they leavened this restricted arsenal with horns or keyboards – always basic, sixties-style organs, though, rather than synthesizers. It was as if they felt the easy electronic route to making a post-rock noise was *too* easy. Instead, they used rock's tools against itself. Which is why No Wave music irresistibly invites metaphors of dismemberment, desecration, 'defiling rock's corpse'.[133]

The No Wave scene also extended beyond music, with band members such as

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[131] Suarez, *Jim Jarmusch*, p. 1
[132] Peter Belsito, 'Jim Jarmusch' in Hertzberg, *Jim Jarmusch Interviews,* p. 27
[133] Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984* (London, Faber and Faber, 2005), p.51

Lydia Lunch (Teenage Jesus and the Jerks) and Arto Lindsay (D.N.A.) also making films, creating art work and appearing in acting roles on stage and on screen. As J. Hoberman notes, the 'existence of a punk bohemia, the cross-fertilization of avant-garde rock and post-conceptual art' enabled musicians and filmmakers to become close collaborators.[134] Echoes of Jarmusch's involvement in the scene, as both ambassador and lead singer of The Del-Byzanteens, can be seen across his work. His films feature cameos from sceners such as the violinist Eszter Balint and former Sonic Youth drummer Richard Edson in *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), and notably appearances and soundtrack contributions from the musician John Lurie (a member of the No Wave band The Lounge Lizards).

Lurie first appeared in Jarmusch's debut feature *Permanent Vacation* (1980) in a cameo role, while also providing music for the soundtrack. In *Stranger than Paradise* and *Down By Law* (1986), Lurie appeared in starring roles and again scored the films, with Tom Waits also contributing to *Down By Law*. Like Lynch and Badalamenti's director-composer relationship, Jarmusch and Lurie work in a similar fashion of arranging and editing the soundtrack together.[135] In terms of bringing their No Wave politics to their scoring practices, Jarmusch explains that he and Lurie have very specific ideas as to how their soundtracks should operate:

> [John] had a crude video of a rough cut of [*Stranger Than Paradise*] so he could compose at home, and make general placements for each piece of the music he wrote… We fought a lot during the filming because John is not used to giving authority up to other people. Especially in his music, he's always in control. For the Lounge Lizards he writes and arranges everything.[136]

Lurie and Waits's presence, both as actors and scorers, help to imbue these films with a sense of 'coolness' or 'hipness.' This notion of 'cool' is frequently brought up in analyses of Jarmusch's work, with Stephen Prince noting that *Stranger Than Paradise*'s visual style is 'cool and distancing,'[137] Emmanuel Levy labelling Jarmusch himself as a 'black-clad neo-hipster,'[138] and Mark Peranson describing Jarmusch's appearance, speaking voice and background in the New York art scene as 'the image of the worldly hipster.'[139] The terms 'cool' and 'hip' are somewhat interchangeable. 'Hip' is closely associated with 'hipster', used originally to describe African-American men involved in jazz and bebop scenes of the early

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134 J. Hoberman, 'No Wavelength: The Para-Punk Underground' in *The Village Voice*, May 1979 (archived online at http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/no_wavelength(1).html)
135 Belsito, 'Jim Jarmusch', p. 45
136 Belsito, 'Jim Jarmusch', p. 46
137 Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 275
138 Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*, p. 188
139 Mark Peranson, 'Jim Jarmusch' in Yvonne Tasker (ed.), *Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 177

1940s. Invariably, the level of hipness/coolness is determined by one's distance from and resistance to the mainstream; in the context of the 1940s, hipster fashion, language and lifestyle was always in opposition to white authority, which, as Scott Saul notes, 'offered a model of tough urban manhood and gave a powerful counter-image to the suburban dad minding his barbeque and commuting dutifully to work.'[140] Furthermore, Thomas Frank points out that the 'transgressive practices of the hipster are innately modes of resistance.'[141] With the white adoption of hipster style, Frank points to Norman Mailer's article 'The White Negro', where he posits that the solution to middle-class conformity is hipness, and that white men began to adopt the style and manner of the African-American hipster in order to separate themselves from middle-class whites.[142] A postmodern appropriation of this sensibility is found in Jarmusch's work. *Stranger Than Paradise* and *Down By Law* reflect the cool hipster ethos, from the characters' dialogue ('It's Screaming Jay Hawkins and he's a wild man, so bug off' in *Stranger Than Paradise*) and costume (recycled suits and trilby hats) to Tom Waits and John Lurie riffs on the soundtrack. Waits's own skewed homages to Tin Pan Alley and blues (some of which are featured in *Down By Law* and *Night on Earth* [1991]) even demonstrate a hipster preoccupation with appropriating thirties and forties cool.

Down By Law illustrates its sense of neo-hipster style in its opening titles; shot deliberately in black and white (echoing Jarmusch's '60s art film influences), the opening montage contains a series of shots of New Orleans' suburbs and is scored non-diegetically by Waits' song 'Jockey Full of Bourbon' from the album *Rain Dogs* (a song from the same album, 'Tango Till They're Sore,' also closes the film). Both the song and the style of the film contain recycled and re-invented icons from the past fifty years of American popular culture; while Jarmusch's visual style echoes the formal aspects of European art cinema (long takes, plain mise-en-scène) and the iconography resembles forties and fifties fashion, Waits' musical style is littered with references to a variety of musical forms. The style of the film is consolidated by this combination of various visual and musical pastiches, while Waits' role also transcends the diegesis, appearing on-screen as Zack and off-screen as a soundtrack artist; we see him diegetically and, in the opening and closing titles, we *hear* him non-diegetically.

Mystery Train contains a similar cross-diegetic form of scoring, in which original music intertwines with pop songs. The next section will explore how the

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[140] Scott Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 33-34

[141] Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counter-culture and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 18

[142] Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, p. 12

music in the film is spread out over the diegesis and how it is used to establish narrative movement and character motivation.

Mystery Train

Mystery Train, Jarmusch's fourth feature, is rich in pop music culture. It features an array of pop music references, notably in the casting of Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Joe Strummer in key roles, plus cameo appearances by Tom Waits and Rufus Thomas (whose song 'The Memphis Train' is played on a jukebox later in the film), and also notably utilises pop songs (most importantly Elvis Presley's 'Blue Moon') almost as leitmotifs (but not quite, as I shall discuss). The use of pop songs in *Mystery Train* cements the film's sense of difference in three crucial ways: 1) it helps to anchor a particular perspective and atypical form of audience positioning, 2) the songs intertwine with the original score to provide to-be-listened-to moments, and 3) it relates back to the notion of nostalgia and cultural memory that also arise during *Do the Right Thing* and *Blue Velvet*. I shall discuss each one in turn.

Firstly, in terms of the use of pop music and gaining a perspective on the action, it should be noted that *Mystery Train* has an atypical narrative structure. Set in Memphis, the film focuses on three sets of characters across three separate vignettes: the first ('Far From Yokohama') is centred on a rock 'n' roll-obsessed Japanese couple who have taken a pilgrimage to Memphis; the second ('A Ghost') on a recently-widowed Italian woman who stops over in Memphis while escorting her husband's coffin back to Italy; while the third ('Lost in Space') focuses on an English criminal, his brother-in-law and his friend on the run from the police after the shooting of a liquor store clerk. Each vignette, although told separately, take place simultaneously during one evening. Although the characters do not interact until the film's coda, they are all located in spatial proximity, sharing a hotel in downtown Memphis. The three vignettes are all linked by a radio playing Roy Orbison's 'Domino' and Elvis Presley's 'Blue Moon', and the sound of a gunshot. These are first heard in 'Far From Yokohama', and then again in 'A Ghost', at which point it becomes apparent that the stories are running parallel. By the time the third segment arrives, a structure of anticipation has been established, where, as Geoff King notes, the audience is cued to look out for any patterns of overlap and the gunshot becomes an enigma to be solved rather than a surprise event.[143]

The uses of 'Domino' and 'Blue Moon' throughout the film function less like a 'traditional' leitmotif, which may exist in order to cue certain characters or emotions, and more of a way of establishing a timeline. Being diegetically placed, the songs are also situated under the action rather than on top of it; instead of

[143] King, *American Independent Cinema*, pp. 94-95

signifying mood or character development like a non-digetic score would, 'Blue Moon' in particular is used primarily as a temporal marker. King discusses the ways in which *Mystery Train*'s narrative structure can be seen as atypical:

> The effect of this [vignette] structure is to create a sense of anticipation and expectation rather different from that provided by more conventional, linear narratives… The gunshot constitutes a more conventional narrative enigma than most of the material presented in *Mystery Train*, although it is handled in an unconventionally non-linear manner.[144]

The way the music acts as a cement for this narrative structure is indicative of a particularly atypical employment of a pop song in a film; unlike 'Fight the Power' or 'Blue Velvet', which, although often used diegetically, are primarily there to signify mood and/or character, 'Blue Moon' acts primarily as a narrative agent.

But while 'Blue Moon' is used as a temporal marker first and foremost, it should be noted that this does not preclude it from being a to-be-listened-to piece. Although the song isn't embellished by mixing with any non-diegetic sound or music (like 'Blue Velvet'), it is still there to be listened to, which is reflected on-screen in the way the characters interact with the song. In 'Far From Yokohama', Jun and Mitsuko spend the evening in bed together in an effort to quell a series petty arguments they have had during the day, such as debating whether Elvis or Carl Perkins was the better singer. After having sex (coincidentally underneath a portrait of Elvis, which hangs above the bed), Jun and Mitsuko still appear somewhat distant from one another. When Jun turns on the radio, 'Domino' plays, followed by 'Blue Moon', at which point the two become contemplative and embrace (in a static shot, with the couple in the centre of the frame [Figure 17]). They lie still and listen to the song, which in turn becomes the focus of the scene.

Figure 17

[144] King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 95

In ‘A Ghost’, Luisa is similarly contemplative when ‘Blue Moon’ plays. Once again, the scene focuses on the character lying still and listening, while the song itself becomes the centre of attention. In the final vignette, ‘Lost in Space’, Johnny, Will and Charlie sit listening to the song as it plays on the radio in their truck, again looking deep-in-thought (although this is probably exacerbated by their drunkenness). The melancholy nature of the song reflects this contemplative mood.

While the to-be-listened-to music in *Blue Velvet* is formed by a hyper-expressive collage of sounds, in *Mystery Train*, the viewer/listener dwells in the music by mirroring the listening habits of each character. As each scene in the three vignettes focuses on the characters actively listening, rather than passively consuming the music like background noise, it helps draw attention to the song itself. The song’s lyrical content also adds to this effect.

Indeed, this again raises notions of nostalgia and cultural memory. Because of Elvis Presley’s inextricable ties to Memphis, the Presley version of ‘Blue Moon’ becomes a song that not only acts as a *temporal* marker, but also helps to establish space and place. The song ties together with images of Elvis (from the pictures on the hotel room walls to Johnny’s D.A. haircut) and stories about him (such as the Sun Studios tour and the hitch-hiker urban myth). There is both a nostalgia for: a) the music itself (its familiar melody and its subject matter), and b) what the song signifies (a particular cultural time and place; a time and place that is familiar yet distant).

Running throughout the film alongside the pop music is John Lurie’s original score. In terms of audibility, there is one particularly loud piece, used to score a section of the film’s third segment during a liquor store shooting. The cue in this scene functions almost like clichéd ‘getaway’ music, featuring a jazzy harmonica solo and loud, odd-metered, syncopated drumming. Of all the original cues in the film, it is the one that is the most audible, and the one that appears to have the most in common with the dramatic synth stabs that occur in Lynch and Badalamenti’s work. It is there to command attention from the viewer. However, the majority of the rest of the score consists of R ‘n’ B-influenced cues that play subtly in the background, often intertwining with the diegetic use of pop songs. Unlike in *Do the Right Thing* or much of Lynch’s work, in which pop music is often contrasted by a different musical style in the main score, the original cues in *Mystery Train* blend in with the series of rock and pop songs that play right the way through. In an early scene in which Jun and Mitsuko arrive at the train station, Elvis’s song ‘Mystery Train’ (which the characters were listening to on headphones, although the song also plays with non-diegetic dynamics over the film’s titles)

segues into a bluesy original cue from Lurie (also titled 'Mystery Train'). While the Presley song was originally being listened to by the characters (and naturally by us, the viewers), the transition into non-diegetic music stops the characters' participation in the listening. The smoothness of the transition means that the cue is largely unobtrusive, although not completely inaudible. Later scenes following Jun and Mitsuko around the streets of Memphis are also accompanied by cues in a similar style, serving to remind the viewer of the characters' music fandom, again functioning in an unobtrusive manner.

The music in *Mystery Train* serves to highlight the fandom of the characters, but also, perhaps more crucially, the musical fandom of the film's director. To conclude this section, I will briefly explore the ways in which the music in Jarmusch's films can be seen as a uniquely 'indie' trait, in which audiences are often invited to indulge in the same music that the director enjoys.

Jarmusch and music fandom

Throughout his career, Jarmusch has regularly collaborated with pop musicians including the aforementioned Waits and Lurie, and also Neil Young on the experimental score for *Dead Man* (1995) and The RZA from Wu Tang Clan on the funk- and hip-hop-influenced soundtrack for *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999). His *Coffee and Cigarettes* project (consisting of two short films in 1989 and 1993, and a feature-length movie in 2004), focuses on series of vignettes taking place in cafés and diners, and feature conversations (some of which are improvised, while several others are scripted) between actors, comedians, and musicians such as Iggy Pop and The White Stripes. The audience is invited to eavesdrop on the participants as they chatter, with in-jokes and references to their real-life work (such as Tom Waits and Iggy Pop's discussions about their music) there to please the more savvy viewers. Outside of movies, Jarmusch has directed music videos for Talking Heads (on the European release of 'The Lady Don't Mind' in 1986) and The Raconteurs ('Steady As She Goes' in 2006), and as a cinematographer on the Neil Young and Crazy Horse film *Year of the Horse* (1997). Despite disliking the commercial incentives of the format and the fast-cut style that traditionally goes with it,[145] Jarmusch's videos are shot in a much more sedate manner. Finally, in perhaps the most explicit statement of his fandom of popular music, in 2010 Jarmusch curated a music festival (All Tomorrow's Parties: New York), featuring many of the bands previously included on his soundtracks, such as Iggy Pop and the Wu Tang Clan's GZA.

[145] Cassandra Stark, 'The Jim Jarmusch Interview' in Herzberg (ed.), *Jim Jarmusch Interviews*, p. 54

Describing his attitudes towards popular music, Jarmusch notes that it is vital for him when it comes to understanding 'what's happening in your life.'[146] Indeed, much of his work is grounded in the idea that memory and music are often inseparable; popular music is a fundamental element in his films that informs the narratives and the motivations of the characters. Indeed, in the construction of these soundtracks, Jarmusch can be seen, like Lynch and Lee, as a musical bricoleur, building soundscapes from a range of musical styles that reflect his ideas and sensibilities. Claudia Gorbman, in an essay on the use of music in films by Stanley Kubrick, Wim Wenders and others, uses the word 'mélomane' – a French term roughly translated as 'music-lover' or 'music-obsessive' – to describe a particular type of auteur who uses music (either in the form of pre-existing music or in collaboration with a trusted composer) as an integral part of their directorial style.[147] In terms of the use of music in independent cinema, this has a big bearing on the indie credence of the films: while these soundtracks solidify Jarmusch's melomania, they are also appreciated by a particular sections of his audience. As Gorbman notes with reference to Quentin Tarantino's films, pop-literate audiences members can participate in the games of spot-the-reference, becoming a 'big club of like-minded collectors and enthusiasts.'[148] This crossover between film cultures and music fandom in Jarmusch's work (perhaps best evidenced by being entrusted to curate an indie music festival such as All Tomorrow's Parties) becomes a key way in which the relationship between popular music culture and independent cinema can be explored. I will continue to discuss this notion through the following two chapters.

Conclusion: Into the nineties

So far in this examination of late-1980s independent cinema, one of the prevailing trends seen in the films of David Lynch and Spike Lee is the idea of a 'to-be-listened-to' soundtrack, a particular *combinatoire of expression* in which sound design, noise, pop songs and original cues intertwine with the narrative in such a way that the soundtrack commands special attention of its audience.[149] As discussed with regard to the use of pop music on Lynch's soundtracks, the folk-jazz referencing in *Do the Right Thing*'s original score and Jarmusch's preoccupation

[146] Stark, 'The Jim Jarmusch Interview', p. 54
[147] Claudia Gorbman, 'Auteur Music' in Daniel Goldmark et al. (eds), *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 150
[148] Gorbman, 'Auteur Music', p. 152
[149] Claudia Gorbman uses the term '*combinatoire of expression*' to refer to the way a film's imagetrack and narrative can be powerfully embellished by a soundtrack. In *Unheard Melodies*, p. 16

with hipness and fandom, independent filmmakers have appropriated certain forms of music and brought them into new contexts. The sense of playfulness in this bricolage approach is one of the indicators of an indie musical style.

Other independent filmmakers of the 1980s and early 1990s have also used popular music in a similarly playful way, with many engaging with the music from the position of a fan. Hal Hartley's films regularly include both original and pre-existing music by alternative rock groups, such as Sonic Youth and Yo La Tengo on *Simple Men* (1992), My Bloody Valentine and P. J. Harvey on *Amateur* (1995), plus collaborations between Hartley himself (under the alias Ned Rifle) and alternative rock musician Hub Moore on *Trust* (1990), *Surviving Desire* (1991) and *Henry Fool* (1998). Indeed, with the incorporation of leftfield rock music alongside his postmodern screwball style, it seems apropos whenever a critic describes Hartley's films with the quasi-musical term 'off-beat.'[150] Allison Anders' work has also always included references to contemporary rock and pop – *Border Radio* (1987, co-directed by Kurt Voss and Dean Lent) features punk bands from the LA underground scene (including musicians Chris D [The Flesh Eaters], John Doe [X] and Dave Alvin [The Blasters] in acting roles), *Gas Food Lodging* (1992) has a score by Dinosaur Jr.'s J. Mascis, and *Mi Vida Loca* (1995) features a soundtrack of hip hop and contemporary R&B – but perhaps the biggest example of Anders' fandom can be found in *Grace of My Heart* (1996), a fictional story of a sixties singer-songwriter modelled on Carole King. The film includes original songs written by Elvis Costello and sixties songwriters Burt Bacharach and Gerry Goffin (Carole King's real-life co-writer), all of which accurately pastiche the style of sixties pop. The inclusion of references to such music is indicative of Anders' musical fandom; in an interview with *Sight and Sound*, she admits that music, not film, was the thing that fascinated her while growing up, and that she is now a 'life-long record fiend.'[151]

Todd Haynes' appreciation for popular music manifests itself in a particularly postmodern sensibility; he plays with pastiches of sixties and seventies iconography, deconstructions of pop music stardom, and, in his student film, *Assassins: A Film Concerning Rimbaud* (1984), applies a bricolage of sixties pop (The Ventures) and seventies experimental electronica (Brian Eno).[152] Haynes' 1987 short, *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*, takes the music (and image) of The Carpenters and counterpoints its sense of innocence and purity with subversive

[150] King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 83
[151] Andy Medhurst, 'Songs from the Heart' in *Sight and Sound*, v. 7, n. 3, March, 1997, p. 12
[152] Joan Hawkins, 'Now is the Time of the Assassins' in James Morrison (ed.), *The Cinema of Todd Haynes: All that Heaven Allows* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), p. 29

undertones; Haynes notes that Karen Carpenter's struggle with anorexia became a metaphorical equivalent of AIDS, while the film was also denounced by Richard Carpenter, who was unhappy with suggestions that he was violent, narcissistic or even gay.[153] Stylistically, its explicit low production values and use of cardboard models exposes its artifice, knowingly presenting itself as an artificial construct. Later films such as *Velvet Goldmine* (1998) and *I'm Not There* (2007) similarly reflect the fandom of the director and attempt to deconstruct the stardom of David Bowie and Bob Dylan respectively.

Perhaps the biggest star director to come from the early nineties boom in independent filmmaking is Quentin Tarantino. He may also be one of the biggest mélomanes in contemporary American cinema; indeed, while Jarmusch's assertion that Tarantino's soundtracks are driven by ancillary marketing ('Let's buy pop songs by the yard and put them over the film') is perhaps correct,[154] they are also driven by an undoubted enthusiasm and an almost obsessive-compulsive form of fandom. Tarantino's first three features, *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Jackie Brown* (1997) are layered with songs and references to popular music, and characters who seem to indulge in the same levels of music fandom as Tarantino himself (the debate about the meaning of Madonna's 'Like a Virgin' in *Reservoir Dogs* being a famous example).[155] The films led to the revival (and indeed the recontextualisation) of certain bands and songs; artists such as Kool & the Gang (*Pulp Fiction*) and The Delfonics (*Jackie Brown*) received renewed commercial and critical attention, while a song like 'Stuck in the Middle With You' by Stealers Wheel has been recontextualised thanks to its counterpointed use in the famous ear-slicing scene in *Reservoir Dogs*.[156]

Although I will not be dedicating an in-depth section to Tarantino's work (such is the abundance of material that already exists), it is worth noting the impact that he had on independent filmmaking and its relationship with popular music. The Tarantino traits in tone (mixing violence, dark comedy and pop culture references), aesthetics (pastiching and homaging '50s, '60s and '70s iconography), narrative structure (typically multi-layered and often non-chronological) and soundtrack (reusing old songs in new contexts) can be found scattered across many

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[153] Jesse Fox Mayshark, 'Todd Haynes' in *Post-Pop Cinema: The Search for Meaning in New American Film*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), p. 44

[154] Macaulay, 'End of the Road', p. 153

[155] For more on the interactions between Tarantino's characters and music, see Ken Garner's 'Music in-and-out-of-control in the Films of Quentin Tarantino' in Donnelly (Ed.) *Film Music: Critical Approaches* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 188

[156] See Phil Powrie's essay 'Blonde Abjection: Spectatorship and the Abject Anal Space In-Between' in *Pop Fiction*: *The Song in Cinema*, eds. Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2005)

later independent films, from the pop-culture-saturated dialogue of Kevin Smith's work through Robert Rodriguez's B-movie pastiches (indeed, Rodriguez and Tarantino are close friends and collaborators) and the style and narrative structure of Doug Liman's *Swingers* (1996) and *Go* (the latter of which will be discussed in detail later).

The next chapter, focusing on independent cinema in the 1990s, will elaborate on some of the ideas discussed in this chapter, such as bricolage and the to-be-listened-to nature of indie film music, as well as expanding more greatly on the notions of coolness, authenticity and difference. Although I will not abandon textual analysis, the next chapter will be more geared towards some of the more contextual issues in the relationship between independent film and popular music, most notably the representations of musical subcultures and discourses surrounding youth culture.

Chapter Two: Youth and Music Culture, 1991-2000

This chapter will examine independent cinema through the 1990s up to the turn of the millennium, with a particular focus on the representations of young people and music scenes. While the first chapter focused on the role of popular music itself in independent film – its bricolage nature and its to-be-listened-to qualities – in this second chapter I will turn my attention more toward the representations of music scenes and subcultures. This will be achieved through a focus on young people and youth culture, specifically the role that pop music (particularly non-mainstream forms of pop such as alternative rock and dance music) and references to various music subcultures have played in consolidating the indieness of these particular youth narratives.

Pop music has always, somewhat unavoidably, been linked with young people and post-war popular youth culture. As the sociologist Rupa Huq has noted in a recent study into youth subculture in Britain, the academic investigation of tastes and trends in popular music has been largely derived from studies of youth culture.[157] Furthermore, the music critic and scholar Simon Frith has noted that the academic history of pop and rock has often been a study of youth styles and attitudes as much as a musicological investigation.[158] The role that popular music plays in both contemporary American independent cinema and youth culture means that it is critical to explore how popular music functions in films dealing with young people. This chapter will explore the ways in which youth culture has been represented on screen by American independent filmmakers in the 1990s, and more importantly, how these filmmakers have used pop soundtracks to bolster these various representations.

Concepts of Youth Culture

Because this study of '90s youth cinema largely deals with popular music culture, it is helpful to examine the concept of 'youth' itself, and particularly in this instance, the notions of 'generation X' and the 'slacker'. This can be traced back through decades of research into adolescents and young adults. In particular, one of the key notions to be put under the spotlight in sociological and cultural studies over the past fifty years is the evolution of the 'adolescent' into the 'teenager', a particular being who is not just in their teenage years, but is also a vital demographic for marketers and advertisers. The foundations of this research into

[157] Rupa Huq, *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth and Identity in a Postcolonial World*, (London: Routlege, 2006), p. 42

[158] Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n Roll* (London: Constable, 1983), p. 9

teen culture can be found in early studies of youth by psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall and Anna Freud in the early part of the twentieth century, and later Erik Erikson and Bruno Bettelheim in the 1950s and '60s. Early studies of adolescence by scholars like Hall and Freud highlighted that beyond pubescent development there was a distinct psychological flux that occurred between childhood and adulthood, not merely in terms of sexual development, but a more complex 'sociopsychological manifestation' that incorporated both internal changes and a new kind of cultural awareness.[159] Furthermore, in the 1960s, studies by a team of American researchers led by Erikson controversially proposed that the behaviour of youth (especially deviant behaviour) was ultimately due to the failings of older generations; recessions, wars, domestic labour conflicts and an inability to present their own culture as desirable ultimately led to the young population's growing dysfunction.[160]

These studies of youth were mainly grounded within the field of behavioural psychology, and focused on more on individual cases than ideas of a shared, collective youth identity. The notion of youth, asides from physical and psychological development, has often been constructed around legal rights and prohibitions (such as drinking age and voting age), as well as social norms regarding rites of passage such as marriage, although in the 1950s and '60s the formation of a mass media helped to define a new generation of young people.[161] In the 1960s and '70s, the expanding discipline of Cultural Studies began to explore the adolescent in terms of the formation of cultural (and by extension subcultural) movements. Influential scholars such as Dick Hebdige and Stuart Hall at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) identified the teenager as a significant demographic that has become immersed in post-war consumerism and popular culture – music, cinema, television, fashion, and more recently, video games and the internet. Teenagers since the 1950s have occupied a curious position in society; simultaneously celebrated as the future and demonised as a problem by many elders, the teen has become the primary target of advertisers and marketers.[162] As Huq elaborates:

> The juxtaposition of youthful expressiveness and an ever-lengthening post-war list of protective youth-centred legislation inherent in Hebdige's (1988) dualism of youth as trouble and youth as fun highlights the contradictory way in which young people are seen as independent in their remit as cultural producers and consumers,

[159] Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 19
[160] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 20
[161] Huq, *Beyond Subculture*, p. 2
[162] Jon Savage, 'Boomers and Busters' in *Sight and Sound*, v. 4, n. 7 (July 1994), p.18

> whilst simultaneously they are held in public esteem as objects requiring the exercise of restraint and control.[163]

Unsure of their place in society, the teenager has typically found solace in popular culture, both as consumers and as wannabe creators. Technological advances since the 1980s have helped young amateurs become more prominent producers: young musicians began to use recordable cassettes to make their own music in their bedrooms (spawning a subculture dubbed 'cassette culture' in the 1980s and '90s), while filmmakers took advantage of video camcorders to produce amateur movies. Later digital technology offered these producers even more freedoms, with computer editing software, digital video cameras, recordable CDs and DVDs, and digital audio and video formats (typically .mp3 and .mpeg/.avi respectively) to record their own music and video at home. Furthermore, popular internet sites such as Youtube and Myspace have recently enabled young producers to showcase their work online. These technological changes have come to highlight how young generations have essentially moved one step ahead of their elder peers in the creation of art, becoming much more literate with digital hardware and software and as a result more prolific producers (which will be explored later in the thesis with an examination of the 'mumblecore' movement).

Youth cinema in the 1990s

Youth films from the nineties span many different genres and subgenres. They are concerned with a wide scope of themes and issues (including familial strife, crime and delinquency, sex, as well as personal, existential musings on the passage to adulthood), and often employ a range of tones (some are dramatic and realist, while others may be romantic, comedic, whimsical or fantastic) when dealing with these concerns. These films include African American crime dramas (also often seen as part of the New Black Cinema movement), Gregg Araki's hyperbolic tales of teenage sexuality and delinquency, Gus Van Sant's slightly softer explorations of queer sensibilities, the stark portrayals of teenage life by Larry Clark and Harmony Korine, the quirky comedies of Wes Anderson and Noah Baumbach, high school comedies such as Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995), gross-out comedies, romantic comedies, teen slasher films, Richard Linklater's slacker stories, and Kevin Smith's slightly more comedic approach to the slacker idiom.

I should make it clear that this chapter will focus on *youth* films (that is films *depicting* youths rather than films aimed at a young audience, although there are inevitably crossovers), but not exclusively *teen* movies. Many of these films involve the transition from teenager into adulthood, and thus it is inevitable that

[163] Huq, *Beyond Subculture*, p. 2

some of these characters will be in their early twenties. The first section of this chapter will elaborate on the notions of taste and coolness discussed in the previous chapter, with an examination of the role that coolness, fashion and music plays in the lives of young characters in the films of Richard Linklater. The second section will focus on Gregg Araki's 'apocalyptic' teen film *The Doom Generation*. In this section, I will examine Araki's hyperbolic style in relation to the prevailing themes of excess and blank style that can be found in other films (and indeed books and songs) from the same period, and in particular how this music is used to reflect both the aimlessness of the young characters and the environment in which they dwell. The third section will focus on the interactions between youth and music subculture with an analysis of the use of dance music in *Go*, looking at the soundtrack itself and representations of rave culture and drug use.

i. Coolness and difference: exploring '90s youth subcultures in the work of Richard Linklater

One of the common traits across all of the films that I shall discuss in this chapter is the role that music plays in anchoring the independent sensibilities of hipness and taste distinction. Invariably, independent youth movies feature soundtracks of bands from indie and alternative rock backgrounds, and generally music that falls outside the charts. These musical choices work in two ways, firstly by representing scenes and alternative music subcultures that are not typically reflected in Hollywood movies, and secondly by imbuing each film with a veneer of coolness that in itself becomes a mark of distinction. Within youth cinema, coolness is claimed through a marked opposition to adulthood; for teens it is the rebellion against the authority of parents and school teachers, and for post-teens it is a reluctance to move into work. The consumption of music, film and television plays a key role in this resistance, with one of the principal markers of coolness being the notion of taste; taste in fashion, TV, art, film, and crucially, music. As Paul Willis notes:

> Popular music can be a conversational resource. The knowledge of lyrics, styles and genres is often used as the coins of exchange in casual talk. By listening to music together and using it as a background to their lives, by expressing affiliation to a particular taste group, popular music becomes one principal means by which young people define themselves.[164]

[164] Paul Willis, *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young* (London: Open University Press, 1990), p. 69

By immersing oneself in a particular form of music, and by becoming knowledgeable and a proper 'fan', one can gain acceptance as part of a peer group. 'Taste' is also an important term, and a curious one to define. While the word has always been associated with the human senses (relating to the tongue or mouth), Raymond Williams notes that the term, like 'touch' and 'feel', became detached from its physiological context within the last couple of hundred years (Williams dates the use of the word back to the eighteenth century).[165] 'Taste,' in this sense, refers to a particular set of preferences surrounding cultural objects. Williams further extrapolates by relating the term taste to discourses surrounding consumerism and the notion of art as a consumer object:

> [The] idea of taste cannot now be separated from the idea of the CONSUMER. The two ideas, in their modern form, have developed together, and responses to ART and LITERATURE have been profoundly affected... by the assumption that the viewer, spectator or reader is a CONSUMER, exercising and subsequently showing his taste.[166]

Of course, practically all American youth films (particularly high school movies), whether Hollywood or independent, focus to some extent on the idea of 'fitting in,' which inevitably touches on notions of taste, consumerism and interactions with popular culture, and by extension issues such as personal identity and performativity.[167] In terms of the relationship between taste and the idea of the consumer, it is important to note that the taste distinctions that are reflected in many independent youth movies often embody anti-mainstream sentiment. As seen in the films of Gregg Araki, which will be discussed in greater depth later in the chapter, interactions with various forms of music and popular culture are frequently informed by their proximity to the so-called 'mainstream.' The characters in Araki's films, while still consumers, live by an anti-consumerist mantra.

This first section will establish some of the ways music subcultures and scenesters have been represented on screen in American independent cinema of the 1990s. Many films from the nineties and into the noughties have explored representations of aspects of popular music culture, including biopics (*The Doors*

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[165] Raymond Williams, 'Taste' in *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1976), p. 313

[166] Raymond Williams, 'Taste', p. 315

[167] Perhaps the most famous publication on performativity is Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990), in which she asserts that gender roles are largely 'performed' as part of an unspoken collective agreement. In terms of coolness and youth culture, Ben Malbon in *Clubbing* (London: Routledge, 1999) points to Erving Goffman's seminal text *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Press, 1969), where, using dramaturgy as a metaphor, Goffman asserts that face-to-face interactions and people's negotiations with everyday spaces take on performative qualities. Malbon extrapolates on this idea, noting that consumers, rather than being passive spectators, are 'embodied actors' who use their consumption as an effort to maintain a personal identity (pp. 29-30).

[1991], *What's Love Got To Do With It* [1993]), films about fictional singers, bands and musicians (such as *Velvet Goldmine* [1998], *That Thing You Do!* [1996], *The Thing Called Love* [1993]), music radio [*Pump Up the Volume* [1990]*)*, working in a record store (*Empire Records* [1995], *High Fidelity* [2000]), and music journalism (*Almost Famous* [2001], *Things Behind the Sun* [2001]), many of which contain reflections on the consumption of pop music and the involvement in popular music culture, exploring notions of taste, style, hipness and fandom. While I will not have room to examine all of these films in detail, this section will mention the role that pop music plays a selection of teen films from the period, with particular attention to the films of Richard Linklater, whose work is engaged with the politics of taste and fandom in popular music. I will begin with an analysis of *Slacker*.

Slacker

After leaving college midway through his course, Linklater drifted between jobs (including working on an off-shore oil rig) and gradually developed his passion for literature and cinema in his spare time. Moving to Austin in 1985, he co-founded the Austin Film Society, where he became what John Pierson describes as an 'art film brat', feeding on films by the likes of Fassbinder and Ozu rather than blockbusters such as *Jaws* or *Star Wars*.[168] Linklater's representations of youth curiously balance this kind of art house sensibility with pop culture references and a distinct disengaged tone. *Slacker*, his début feature, is arguably one of the most influential films of its era; it popularised the notion of disaffected, disengaged youth in the 1990s and inspired many other films of similar themes throughout the decade (such as *Reality Bites* [Ben Stiller, 1993] and *Kicking and Screaming* [Noah Baumbach, 1995]). The film was produced between 1989 and 1990 for around $23,000 and picked up for distribution by Orion Classics in 1991.[169] Focusing on a variety of characters who interact in Austin, Texas, one of the most striking aspects of *Slacker* is its lack of a typically classical narrative structure. Peter Hanson aptly describes the film's structure as ‘a narrative relay race, only without any semblance of a goal or of dramatic tension.’ It consists of a series of vignettes that follow characters as they move from one place to the next, passing on the narrative baton to the next person they happen to walk into.[170] The shambling nature of the narrative helps to connote the aimless nature of the lives of these characters, but it also emphasises a sense of community that exists within Austin's collegiate

[168] Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes*, p. 186
[169] Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes*, p. 187
[170] Peter Hanson, *The Cinema of Generation X*, (London: McFarland and Company, 2002) p. 63

populace. To embellish this, the film is stylistically simple; most scenes are shot using hand-held cameras (although a Steadicam and a crane are used on a couple of occasions),[171] with scenes often taking place in one take, usually in medium- or long-shot, with all of the characters in frame. This choice of style is to a large extent in keeping with the budgetary restrictions of many independent films, but it also serves a stylistic purpose; by using hand-helds, the camera is positioned in amongst the action, with its free movement mimicking the aimless, pottering movement of the characters, while the wide framing and small number of cuts suitably reflect the slow, static nature of campus life in Austin. To add to this, the sound is completely diegetic, with non-diegetic music only appearing over the closing credits. Although there is no score, songs by artists such as Butthole Surfers and Daniel Johnson emanate from radios and stereos as diegetic background music, becoming part of the action and vying for attention amongst the deadpan dialogue and sounds of the city.

Although the aesthetic is low key, and despite the fact that no soundtrack LP was released to accompany the film, music still plays an important role in *Slacker* in representing young bohemianism in the city; it provides a degree of authenticity to Austin's alternative subculture, and cements its location. The list of mostly obscure songs on the soundtrack come mainly from Austin and San Antonio bands, most notably artists on the local Trance Syndicate label, such as Crust, Ed Hall and specifically Butthole Surfers. The Butthole Surfers' role in the film is the most prominent; their drummer, Teresa Taylor, makes a cameo appearance as a baseball-hatted slacker attempting to sell a supposed Madonna pap smear (she also appears on the film's poster), while the group's music provides an apt musical accompaniment in two places. 'Strangers Die Everyday', an eerie, experimental track featuring a solo organ and tape loops of cut-up dialogue, plays over the end credits providing a strangely funereal accompaniment to the feelings of disconnection, inaction and fragmentation of the characters depicted in the film. The song 'Colored FBI Guy' also reflects the film's sensibilities through its lyrical content; the line 'Hope I'm together when I die' echoes the dirge of the closing credits, and it also demonstrates the Gen X adoption of irony and excess when expressing emotion. The film features similarly ironic, excessive dialogue; in one instance, a concert-goer who is refused entry to a nightclub talks to another reveller outside:

> "How's Life?"

[171] Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes*, p. 186

> "All right. Couldn't get in. Universal sadness all around us. The universe is out of hand."
>
> "That sucks."

The ironic sentiment in this exchange is interchangeable with the detached, arch sensibilities of many contemporary alternative rock groups.

Indeed, one of the vital factors in this period is the simultaneous boom of independent filmmaking and rock music. Gen X filmmakers such as Linklater have coexisted alongside young indie music icons such as Butthole Surfers, Sonic Youth and Beck (with some artists crossing between film and music worlds and collaborating) and have forged similar sensibilities based around disengagement and alienation. For instance, Beck's 1994 song 'Loser,' a bricolage of funk, hip-hop, folk and pop-rock, is a famous example of '90s pop reflecting a generation preoccupied with consumer culture and a feeling of political powerlessness ('I'm a loser, baby, so why don't you kill me?'). The song 'Novocaine For the Soul' (1996) by Eels similarly touches on aspects of ennui, social anxiety and helplessness ('Novocaine for the soul; You'd better give me something to fill the hole'). This disengagement can also be found in other films from the period, notably *Reality Bites;* like *Slacker*, the film deals with arty young protagonists (focusing on a filmmaker, Lelaina, and a grunge musician, Troy) and the relationship between life, love, culture and music. As Jon Savage notes, Troy's song 'I'm Nuthin'' sums up the sentiments of a generation of American youth, while the inclusion of songs 'Confusion' by New Order and 'Road to Nowhere' by Talking Heads are also appropriate inclusions on the soundtrack.[172]

This feeling of ennui and powerlessness should not be associated with general idleness or disinterest. Linklater himself has stated that he is somewhat 'bemused' by the negative connotations associated with Generation X culture and the word 'slacker':

> [President Clinton] did this graduate address at UCLA and he was saying "I don't think you're a generation of slackers, I think you're a generation of seekers," but to me that's what slackers *were*: seekers. All these people in the film had their own projects going... but they were outside the consumer culture. That's the cardinal sin: not basing your life around working or buying things. And it does bother me when people who should know better project negativity on that.[173]

The idea that ironic (dis)engagement with the world is not apathetic is shared by Jeffrey Sconce in his essay 'Irony, Nihilism and the New American "Smart" Film.'

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[172] Savage, 'Boomers and Busters', p. 18

[173] Ben Thompson, 'The First Kiss Takes So Long' in *Sight and Sound*, v.5, n.5, May 1995, p. 21

Similar to Linklater, Sconce posits that any moments of ironic excess in the vernacular and a general disinterest in mainstream culture and politics can be seen as an inherently political act:

> Irony is not an essentialized state of (apathetic) being, but a tool to be utilized towards any number of objectives... Irony, in other words, should not be seen as a disengagement from belief, politics and commitment; rather it is a strategic disengagement from a certain terrain of belief, politics and commitment. More precisely, it is a retreat from the moral map of the social formation that so often sits in judgement with such irony.[174]

This sense of political distancing, and its relationship with alternative music culture and musical expression, is one of the key ways in which Linklater's work distinguishes itself from the mainstream. Going back to notions of taste distinction, the use of Butthole Surfers in *Slacker* and the crossover between the indie film and music worlds imparts a sense of coolness and authenticity that indelibly helps to define the indieness of Linklater's films. While formal style and 'decentred and downplayed' narrative structure are also important factors (as noted by King),[175] *Slacker* presents its difference through its 'Gen X' voice and reflection of a specific youth subculture.

Linklater's next film, *Dazed and Confused*, can be seen as an interesting companion piece, continuing his reflections on contemporary youth, albeit against a 1970s backdrop. *Slacker* and *Dazed and Confused* share certain similarities, most notably in their use of an ensemble cast and a narrative that takes place in the space of a day, yet *Dazed and Confused*'s approach to the slacker genre is far more musical. Although *Slacker* is very much honed in on representing youth style and subculture (and by extension, musical style and subculture of the late eighties and early nineties), it is a largely silent film beyond the dialogue and features little non-diegetic music. *Dazed and Confused* takes its title from the Led Zeppelin song of the same name (although the band refused to allow their songs to be used in the film), and its song-based soundtrack – a collection of '70s rock tracks by artists such as Alice Cooper, Deep Purple and Lynyrd Skynyrd – is crucial in establishing the tone of the film. While it was initially feared that the music may have been too mainstream, for Linklater it was a case of trying to consolidate the feel of the time period and the characters: 'I found an energy [with the music] and I used that to drive the movie. That's the major character in the movie – the music.'[176] The music is important in two ways: firstly, and most obviously, it functions as an immediate

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[174] Jeffrey Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the New American "Smart" Film' in *Screen*, 43:4, Winter 2002, p. 369

[175] King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 84

[176] Thompson, 'The First Kiss Takes So Long', p. 21

temporal anchor. Perhaps more than any other tool available to filmmakers (since experiments with 'Smell-O-Vision' have tried and failed), music provides the crucial nostalgic rush in films that seek to represent the past. But secondly, away from the nostalgic quality of the songs, the use of a song-based soundtrack helps to consolidate the aimless, transitional experience of youth. Aspects of indie film style (for instance long takes and blank expression) exacerbates the idea of open, expansive spaces associated with adolescence. Without a unifying score, pop songs appear haphazardly and come to reflect a more disjointed experience of youth.

Dazed and Confused is also tonally different from other youth movies of the same period. This sense of distinction has already been noted by other writers: Robin Wood notes that the film appears much darker than other high school movies, at times feeling almost like a horror film (a point that Linklater agreed with),[177] while Lesley Speed suggests that the its treatment of nostalgia aligns certain aspects of youth (rebellion, anti-authoriarianism) with a more adult perspective.[178]

Following *Dazed and Confused*, *Before Sunrise* (1995) continues Linklater's penchant for short-timespan narratives, with the action taking place in one evening. The film marked a slight change in style for Linklater; instead of working with an ensemble cast, *Before Sunrise* is a love story centring on a chance meeting between a young American man, Jesse, and a French woman, Céline. The plot is minimal, with the focus instead on the couple's long, sprawling conversations, echoing a sensibility more akin to European art cinema (the films of Éric Rohmer in particular) than the archetypal Hollywood romance. Its low-key use of music, provided by experimental guitarist Fred Frith, accentuates the contemplative mood. s*ubUrbia* returns to the more familiar territory of disillusionment within youth culture. Based on the play by Eric Bogosian, it centres on a group of young adults in the fictional suburb of Burnfield, who spend their time hanging around 'The Corner,' a deserted corner of a grocery store parking lot. Like *Dazed and Confused*, *subUrbia* comments on the sense of history repeating itself amongst youth; at one point Jeff (a drop-out with ambition, and arguably the central character in the ensemble) states that other 'generations of suckers' with no idea what to do with their lives will continue to hang around the parking lot long after they've gone. When comparing *SubUrbia* and *Dazed and Confused*, there is a feeling that the seventies' youngsters and nineties' youth could be swapped, and the only thing that would change would be the fashion, music and pop cultural references.

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[177] Robin Wood, 'Party Time, or, Can't Hardly Wait for That American Pie: Hollywood High School Movies of the '90s' in *Cineaction*, n. 58, June 2002, p. 5

[178] Lesley Speed, 'Tuesday's Gone: The Nostalgic Teen Film' in *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, v. 26, n.1, Spring 1998, p. 24

Musical expression in *SubUrbia* is provided by a series of diegetic songs that underscore the scenes. Alongside the cast, a ghetto blaster occupies the space in the parking lot, allowing the slackers to mark their territory with music. In one scene when the shopkeeper, Nazeer, comes outside to yell at the group, Tim turns up the volume on the stereo, symbolically squaring up to Nazeer through the occupation of soundwaves. The film's soundtrack is mostly comprised of songs by alternative acts like Sonic Youth, Beck and Superchunk, which provide another diegetic voice that echoes the Gen X sentiment of the Corner gang. The only exception is the inclusion of Gene Pitney's 'Town Without Pity' which plays over the opening credits; the sequence, shot from a car window as it moves through bleak suburban neighbourhoods, is a rare moment of non-diegetic music in the film, acting as a disembodied voice (an elder statesman, even) commenting on Burnfield.

Music also provides the crux of the film's negotiations with taste and coolness. The centre of the story focuses Jeff's friendship with former Burnfield resident Pony, a musician who has just made it big as a rock star. Pony, who rides in a limousine, wears a flashy leather jacket and is accompanied everywhere by his personal assistant, is simultaneously held up as both cool and uncool; he lives a rock 'n' roll lifestyle and appears stylish, yet he is labelled a 'geek' by the Corner gang, who are obviously unimpressed by his upward mobility and inauthenticity. The relationship between the gang and Pony is both an example of friends drifting apart as the enter adulthood and a somewhat satirical comment on the fickle nature of popular music fandom; Pony, a once-cool, local, independent musician, loses his appeal to the gang once he 'sells out' to a major label. The limo and leather jacket become reminders of what Jeff describes as the 'moshpit of consumerism' that surrounds them.

Across many of his films from the 1990s, Linklater remained focused on engaging with music culture (and popular culture more generally), but without losing sight of political resonance. As Robin Wood has argued, one of the unifying traits across many Hollywood teen films of the 1990s is the lack of political agenda, whether it be global or national politics, or even individual identity politics. The narratives of films like *American Pie* (1999), *She's All That* (1999) or *Ten Things I Hate About You* (1999) are frequently structured around (heterosexual) sex and romance, and leave little or no room for political thought.[179] In films such as *Slacker* and *subUrbia*, the sense of aimlessness and disengagement becomes a political mode of expression.

The next section of this chapter will examine the political intent of nineties indie youth cinema further with a discussion of the work of Gregg Araki. Like

[179] Wood, 'Party Time', p. 10

Linklater, Araki explores the disengagement of youth and utilises a pop soundtrack and interactions with a wider popular music culture to great effect. However, Araki also delves into issues surrounding sexual politics, and offers a much more provocative, often excessive form of cinema, intended to both shock and satirise.

ii. Consumerism, sexuality and musical refuge in Gregg Araki's *The Doom Generation*

Gregg Araki's breakthrough film, *The Living End* (1992), was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance in 1992 and subsequently became a canonised text in Film Studies following B. Ruby Rich's famous 'New Queer Cinema' article in *Sight and Sound* in the same year.[180] Rich posited that the New Queer Wave's 'homo pomo' sensibility (incorporating pastiche and ironic appropriations of gay archetypes) came to embody a new, oppositional form of gay filmmaking, counter to that of the assimilationist cinema that had come before. Musically, *The Living End* is also notable, with a soundtrack comprised of industrial and experimental rock acts such as Coil and Psychic TV, and numerous references (verbal and visual) to other cult alternative bands of the 1980s and early 1990s, such as Dead Can Dance and The Jesus and Mary Chain. (Perhaps not coincidentally, 'The Living End' is also a song by The Jesus and Mary Chain.)

Following *The Living End*, Araki moved into the teen genre with *Totally Fucked Up* (1993), a film about six gay teenagers, in what became the first of his 'Teenage Apocalypse' trilogy of films, continuing with *The Doom Generation* in 1995 and ending with *Nowhere* in 1997. The somewhat archetypal theme of teenage distrust of contemporary society (and the subsequent engagement with popular music as a kind of solace) is reflected strongly in Araki's trilogy. As with *The Living End*, all three films deal with popular music and pop music subcultures, working alongside themes of teen alienation and dejection. In an interview with Chris Chang in *Film Comment*, Chang gave Araki a list of words and phrases that he felt best summed up his films:

> Chang:
> Pointless, boredom, futility, nothingness, hamster wheel, no fucking idea where I'm going, emptiness, no meaning, no future, no past, just a present that's really fucked up, what difference does it make, alienation, stagnation, detached, betrayed, nothing matters, everyone was bored, I was bored, teenage angst, the young and the hopeless, same old same o', eat shit sleep buy CDs.

[180] B. Ruby Rich, 'New Queer Cinema' in *Sight and Sound*, v. 2, n. 5, September 1992, p. 31

> Araki:
> What you've got there is really what my films are about and their sensibility. I used to describe them as Smiths songs; that type of irony and self-consciousness… 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now' is to me the quintessential Smiths song; I see an entire generation crystallized into those feelings.[181]

The above quotes typify Araki's sensibility. The feelings of emptiness and detachment that are portrayed in his films can be likened to the ironic sentiment expressed in Linklater's work, however Araki's films are visually more explicit and stylistically more excessive, at times knowingly parodic and comedic, in keeping with Rich's notion of a 'homo pomo' style. The use of music and references to music culture (from characters wearing band T-shirts, through posters adorning bedroom walls to references to bands in the dialogue) all embellish Araki's excessive style and help cement the sense of difference (indieness) that the film strives toward. I will discuss the functions and properties of Araki's soundtracks in more detail later, but I will begin this section by introducing some of the prevailing themes that can be found throughout his work. Two themes in particular that I will explore are the impact of consumerism on the identities of young people and concerns and fears surrounding HIV and AIDS.

Contextualising the teenage apocoalypse: consumerism and sexuality in the 1990s

In his examination of so-called 'smart films' from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s (which will be discussed at length in the third chapter), Jeffrey Sconce observed that a prevailing theme of this cinema is a focus on the detachment and alienation of the American consumer. Sconce notes that where European art cinema explored alienation through more abstract or philosophical terms, some recent American films (particularly those on the fringes of Hollywood) favour 'a limited investigation of anomie within the narrower constraints of suburban family life, urban courtship and consumer identity.'[182] Through a littering of consumer objects, films such as *Ghost World* and *Fight Club* (1999) reflect particular structures of class identity in modern America, where fashion labels and furniture brands are seen less as functional items and more as signifiers of an aspiration for social mobility.[183] These signifiers mingle with other references to popular culture, generally in the form of homages or pastiches of popular films, television programmes, books and music, and often adopt a particular dark tone which, as Sconce notes, has been criticised as 'nihilistic' and 'grim' in the reviews of writers such as Kenneth Turan and Manohla Dargis. More broadly, the essence of this style can be seen as a form of pastiche that Fredric Jameson saw as symptomatic of art in

[181] Chris Chang, 'Gregg Araki' in *Film Comment*, 30.5, September 1994, p.48
[182] Sconce, 'Irony, nihilism and the new American "Smart" film', p. 364
[183] Sconce, 'Irony, nihilism and the new American "Smart" film', p. 366

the age of capitalism; a 'mimicry of other styles, particularly the mannerisms and twitches of other styles' that demonstrates modern society's inability to engage with its own culture and politics with proper affect, instead having to resort to repeating the work of others who have come before.[184] However, it is clear that there is a particular politics of irony at work here. Across Araki's work in particular, the use of excessive, parodic visual and musical style is used to satirise a particular demonisation of youth.

Examples of this satirical, ironic mode of engagement can also be found across a range of contemporary American independent films, and indeed across other aspects of American culture, particularly in alternative popular music (as discussed earlier with reference to Butthole Surfers and Beck) and also in contemporary American literature. James Annesley's exploration of modern American fiction, *Blank Fictions: Consumerism, Culture and the Contemporary American Novel*, posits that the blank style of many contemporary American writers of the 1980s and 1990s similarly demonstrates an engagement with consumer identity and, moreover, a deconstruction of the relationship between commodification and representations of explicit sex and violence. In the work of authors such as Bret Easton Ellis, Lynne Tillman and Jay McInerney, Annesley notes that through these references to mass cultural objects, this literature speaks a particular commodified vernacular of the period: in Ellis's novels, 'characters don't drive cars, they drive "BMWs," they don't eat in restaurants, they eat in "Spago's."'[185] In terms of their representations of violence, Annesley argues that books such as Ellis's serial-killer novel, *American Psycho* (1991), and Brian D'Amato's satire of cosmetic surgery, *Beauty* (1993), present the image of a brutalised body 'as a metaphor for a society that is being mortified and carved up.'[186]

One of the earliest scenes in Araki's *The Doom Generation* includes a piece of excessive, comedic violence in which a grocery store clerk literally has his head blown off his shoulders by one of the film's gun-toting anti-heroes. The scene can be seen as an encapsulation of the kind of excess found in novels such as *American Psycho* and other films like *Fight Club*, and also as a stamp of Araki's own 'teenage apocalypse' sensibility; his use of dark, surreal imagery, both violent and sexual, is used frequently to highlight the cultural apathy that exists in certain subcultures of early '90s American youth, and also as a parody of society's distrust and demonisation of young people. Jaded by chain stores and big-name brands, and

[184] Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', p. 114
[185] James Annesley, *Blank Fictions: Consumerism, Culture and the Contemporary American Novel*, London: Pluto Press, 1998, p. 7
[186] Annesley, *Blank Fictions*, p. 22

terrified by the prospect of working for one of these chain stores or big brands (in what Douglas Coupland famously labelled, a 'McJob'),[187] the protagonists of Araki's films are often seen indulging in acts of sex, violence and delinquent behaviour in order to mark their territory in mainstream, commercialised '90s America.

Araki's own sexuality and interest in identity politics also shapes his aesthetic and thematic ideas to a large extent. He particularly sees the gay community's struggle with HIV and AIDS (and the public perceptions of it) in the 1980s and early 1990s as one of the most important issues that informs his sensibility:

> I think to be 18 in 1993 is extremely scary. I hang out with a lot of young people and… part of it is just ordinary teen alienation and angst, but the other part is very real. We live in a society where the political system has collapsed and the economy's bad, AIDS… There's just so much shit that these young people face, and they don't see the light at the end of the tunnel.[188]

With his immersion in '90s queer identity politics, Araki developed a reputation as one of the key figures in the emergence of New Queer Ciema. But while he deals with Queer issues, Araki refuses to be lumped into the same movement alongside contemporaries such as Tom Kalin and Gus Van Sant. Araki admits that although his work shares some similarities with the work of other Queer directors, he has a lot in common with other independent filmmakers of the era (such as Richard Linklater) and furthermore, he believes that the themes running throughout his films can be applied more broadly to youth culture in general, rather than exclusively reflecting gay subcultural concerns.[189] Perhaps as an example of this, the opening titles of *The Doom Generation* include a very prominent caption: 'A Heterosexual Film by Gregg Araki.' And indeed, while his frank imagery and formal unorthodoxy may differ from the less graphic work of Linklater, they are both dealing with very similar issues surrounding alienation and youth culture, and particularly a youth subculture informed by popular music, especially in its alternative forms such as grunge, industrial, shoegaze and electronica.

Furthermore, Araki's films show a distinct distrust of popular, middle of the road culture, with his soundtracks often compiled from the work of bands on the fringe of the mainstream. In his interview with Chang, Araki discusses the oppositions and boundaries between mainstream culture and the underground:

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[187] Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (London: Abacus, 1996)

[188] Gregg Araki quoted in Richard Lippe and Robin Wood, 'Totally F***ed Up, but "Things are slowly getting better": an interview with Gregg Araki' in *Cineaction*, n.35, August 1994, p. 19

[189] Lippe and Wood, 'Totally Fucked Up', p. 19

> I taught a class in independent film at my old school in Santa Barbara and we talked about this idea of the 'mainstream' versus ideas of 'the outside' and 'the edge.' We came up with this metaphor of an amoeba or giant blob absorbing everything. Punk culture, which started way out there with The Sex Pistols and safety pins through your nose, all becomes accountants driving around listening to Nirvana. Everything out there eventually comes around… I've always distrusted popular culture, Top 40, hit TV shows, and I don't like being in a huge faceless crowd or mob.[190]

The politics of taste certainly plays a large role in Araki's work. His films appear to attempt to alienate a certain audience by being both gratuitously violent and sexual as well as being distinctly amateurish, featuring stilted delivery of dialogue, poor special effects, and a kind of blank style that can be found in other works of contemporary American fiction, only seemingly more deliberate and excessive.

The rest of this subchapter will examine how Araki communicates these issues through an engagement with popular music culture, with particular attention to *The Doom Generation* and the role that its soundtrack plays. Again, the film's difference or indieness is enhanced by this interaction.

Music in *The Doom Generation*

The Doom Generation was co-produced by the French distributors UGC and Araki's own production company Desparate Pictures. In terms of its narrative, the film can be likened to *Slacker* in its aimless nature, featuring a cast of characters who mill about their city without a goal or direction. But while *Slacker* features a disparate bunch of characters that in turn become the centre of the narrative, *The Doom Generation* focuses on three protagonists: a young couple, Amy (Rose McGowan) and Jordan (James Duvall), and a delinquent drifter, Xavier (Johnathon Schaech), whom they meet during a brawl in a parking lot. Following Xavier's brutal, albeit accidental, killing of a grocery store clerk, the three characters drive across a nameless city on the run from the police, encountering spurned former lovers of Amy along the way, each of whom vow to kill her. In the midst of several violent confrontations, the three characters are drawn together and eventually become involved in a ménage a trois.

Music throughout the film is largely diegetic, often originating from a car stereo, radio or within a bar or club (rarely emanating from outside the scene), and the soundtrack is largely comprised of a selection of pre-existing songs from a number of late eighties and early nineties industrial rock, dream pop and shoegazing bands. These three genres of music all crucially combine a rock structure with electronic, experimental influences; industrial rock balances a punk

[190] Chang, 'Gregg Araki', p. 50

rock aesthetic (electric guitars, bass and live drums) with dissonant electronic noise (influenced by experimental noise artists and the avant-garde), while dream pop and shoegazing are terms used by music critics to describe a particularly textural form of guitar music that emerged in the mid-1980s, characterised by hushed vocals, a slow tempo and prominent use of synth and guitar effects that create a 'dreamy' sound. The intertwining of the masculine quality of rock music and the textural, ethereal properties of the synthesised sounds are analogous of the film's open representations of sexuality and polyamorous relationships.

The Doom Generation is also peppered with references to alternative music culture in the form of band T-shirts, posters, billboard advertisements, cameos from rock stars such as Jane's Addiction's Perry Farrell and the Canadian industrial band Skinny Puppy, references to bands in the dialogue (such as The Smiths) and even in-jokey allusions to songs: in one such scene, as Amy's former lover Peanut attempts to shoot her, he declares 'my pearly dewdrop drops,' a reference to the song 'Pearly Dewdrop's Drops'(1984) by the influential dream pop group Cocteau Twins. Music and pop iconography constantly intertwine with consumer artefacts and excessive acts of sex and violence.

One of the most important functions of music in the film is how it exploits particular urban spaces. As the film's protagonists move across the city, marking their territory with their actions, the music provides a sonic backdrop that establishes certain areas as either a) familiar, friendly and part of their own territory, or b) alien, unfamiliar and part of the territory of others. In his book *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, Lawrence Grossberg highlights the oppositions between youth and adults in terms of the spaces they occupy; while adults are associated with institutional space (such as home and work), teens are often seen *between* institutional spaces in what can be seen as 'spaces of transition'.[191] This is exemplified by teens 'hanging around' certain areas, particularly streets, parks or amusement arcades; these are spaces in which young people form a collective identity that is seen in opposition to the more adult institutional space.

Situated within the 'road movie' genre (although Araki admits that it is a particularly alternative take on the genre; a cross between a road movie and *Last Tango In Paris*, but about bisexual teenagers),[192] *The Doom Generation* re-works its generic conventions, transforming it from a genre film in which people usually have an intended destination into something in which the characters move with no clear direction, but are intending to run away. Going back to Araki's notion of the

[191] Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 1992, p. 179

[192] Lippe and Wood, 'Totally Fucked Up,' p. 20

amoeba, the three protagonists can be seen as running from the blob of consumerism that is ready to engulf them, and moreover, Kylo-Patrick R. Hart suggests that the film is reflective of the mindset of young members of the 'AIDS generation': always being pursued by illness and death.[193] Furthermore, Hart suggests that these three characters use the road in order to occupy a particular 'utopian space' in which they can stamp their territory.[194] The film uses four different types of space, with each one associated with a certain type of music:

1) Industrial space: deserted wasteground in which factories and machinery dominate the skyline.
2) A temporary domestic space: an intimate setting (such as in a hotel/motel room or the backseat of a car) in which sexual desire is momentarily explored before leaving for another destination.
3) Commercial space: most notably the Quickie Mart stores that the threesome shop in. Going back to Grossberg, this is also the most 'adult' of the spaces.
4) Social space: bars and nightclubs.

The music that plays in each location (always diegetically) helps to define each space as either familiar or other.

To begin with, there are several instances of the protagonists 'hanging around' near industrial parks and in deserted areas against backdrops of factories and machinery. It is in these locations that the music intertwines with the landscape most clearly. The mixture of avant-garde electronic minimalism and loud rock riffs from the industrial rock parts of the soundtrack reflect the nature of industrial parks: they sit isolated in desolate spaces, yet dominate the landscape (and soundscape); they are at once both minimal and excessive, deserted yet exuding powerful presence. In one scene, the industrial music that emanates from the car stereo as Amy and Jordan roam in the empty space surrounding large machinery provides an apt audio-visual match (Figure 18).

[193] Kylo-Patrick R. Hart, 'Auteur / Bricoleur / Provocateur: Gregg Araki and postpunk style in *The Doom Generation*' in *Journal of Film and Video* 55:1 (Spring 2003), p. 35
[194] Hart, 'Auteur / Bricoleur / Provocateur', p. 36

Figure 18

The machinery dominates the frame and dwarves Amy and Jordan; it serves to highlight the role that industry and commerce plays in the film: although the characters do their best to avoid it, it always lurks in the background. But while it is an unfamiliar space, it is the music that plays from the car's stereo that helps the protagonists adopt these spaces as their own. What was initially intimidating and other becomes a safe haven for these nomads.

Indeed, in terms of domestic space, the trio have no fixed abode. The three characters all dwell in either motel rooms or in their car, which is possibly the most familiar space that they occupy. Although their motel rooms seem alien at first, like the industrial parks, the characters establish these spaces as their own through the music they play, which in turn often becomes intertwined with their sexual activity. The earliest scene of intimacy involves Amy and Jordan in the front seat of their car; the music that accompanies the scene, 'Alison' by the British 'shoegazing' band Slowdive, is a slow, textural guitar-based song that suitably reflects the intimacy of the scene. Later sex scenes, most of which take place in motel rooms, are accompanied by similar dreamy, laid-back pieces of music. Each song, which always plays diegetically, emanates either from a radio or car stereo and transforms the previously alien space (categorised by their minimal design and bold colours [Figure 19]) to a more familiar one; it is a space that becomes fleetingly domestic.

Figure 19

The familiar, fleetingly domestic nature of this location is later augmented by its juxtaposition with a much more unfamiliar location: that of the commercial space. At one crucial point in the film, a scene of Jordan shopping in the Quickie Mart grocery store is juxtaposed with an intimate scene from the motel room, in which Xavier and Amy have sex while Jordan is absent.

Some of the most important locations in the film are these various Quickie Marts. The first time the characters visit the store, it results in a confrontation with the clerk which leads to his absurdly violent death. Later visits to other Quickie Marts are brief and tinged with memories of said violence. Music plays an important role in marking this commercial space as distinctly 'other'. Unlike the scenes that are accompanied by contemporary alternative music, the Quickie Mart is characterised by generic Muzak, which blends in with the store's ultra-bright lighting and prominent signs for special offers (Figure 20). It is in this environment that the characters cannot adopt a space as their own through the use of music; the ongoing, monotonous tune that plays in the store is a constant reminder of commerce and the commodified world in which they dwell.

Figure 20

Although the protagonists cannot influence this space like they can with others, it is inside the Quickie Mart that one of the only instances of non-diegetic music features in the film. The aforementioned murder scene, in which the store attendant literally has his head blown off, is accompanied by frenetic montage editing comprising a number of shots of items of food and drink, numbers on a cash register being punched, close-up shots of the eye-witnesses' faces, and a severed head flying through the air. As the montage accelerates, the Muzak segues into a pounding, industrial dance track. Although it is not an example of the characters adopting an alien space, the music functions as both a suitable accompaniment for a frenzied scene of violence and a non-diegetic reminder of the protagonists' attempts to mark their territory.

The final type of space the characters often occupy is a social one, that of a nightclub or bar. It is in these scenes that the protagonists are once again immersed in a form of music that they have no control over. One scene in particular that takes place in a bar adorned with garish pink and silver décor (Figure 21). In the scene Amy encounters a scorned former lover who vows to exact revenge on her, which eventually escalates into another violent episode. The music that plays is a contemporary house/disco song, which anchors the camp excesses of the bar's furnishings.

Figure 21

The role of the music in this scene is noteworthy because it serves to remind us about the two sides of film's soundtrack. The industrial rock and dream pop that dominates most of the film - an amalgam of rock and electronic styles - juxtaposes two differently 'gendered' forms of music. While it might be argued that the harsher rock elements of the industrial music on the soundtrack are distinctly masculine, the music that plays in the bar functions by reminding us of a more feminine form. To elaborate, Richard Dyer in his article, 'In Defence of Disco' argues that '[rock music] confines sexuality to the cock, and this is why no matter how progressive the lyrics and even when performed by women, rock remains indelibly phallocentric music.'[195] As Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson explain further, '[rock music's] deployment of timbre is also often limited to a range of distortion effects which are used to create an impression of physical power, and thereby of a masculine authority which can ultimately be guaranteed by sheer physical strength.'[196] For a lot of the film, *The Doom Generation* is configured as fairly masculine through its soundtrack's distinct pelvic drive, but this scene serves as a reminder of a less phallocentric form of music that reflects intertwined masculine/feminine themes that run throughout the film. As Dyer notes, 'Disco is not "anti-cock," instead it seeks to include the penis but as part of a "whole body." It is not simply confined to it.'[197] Dance and electronic music plays an important role in all of Araki's films; in *The Doom Generation* in particular, it provides an interesting contrast to the masculinised loud rock that can be found on the soundtrack, and furthermore, references to club cultures help to reinforce the communal nature of the musical genre (which is often at odds with the characters'

[195] Richard Dyer, 'In Defence of Disco' in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin [eds] *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Writen Word*, London: Routlege, 1990, p.415
[196] Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson, *Discographies: Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound* (London: Routlege, 1999), p. 91
[197] Dyer, 'In Defence of Disco', p. 415

deliberate segregation). I shall elaborate on the communal aspects of dance music later, with particular attention to the role dance music plays in Doug Liman's *Go*.

The four types of space that I have outlined (industrial ground, motel rooms, grocery stores and nightclubs) are characterised by four types of diegetic music (respectively: industrial rock, dream pop/shoegazing, Muzak and dance music). But although this music is diegetic, it is still characterised as to-be-listened-to; dynamically, the music is loud and imposing enough to imbue each scene with a certain quality, while the songs have been specifically chosen by Araki for the audience to hear. Araki, a *mélomane* of alternative music, admitted in an interview with Steve Gdula that he approaches his soundtracks from the point of view of a fan or collector:

> It's almost like I approach soundtracks in my movies as a collector. I don't normally collect soundtracks unless there's something on them that I really, really want. I always try to find things that are either super obscure or that a collector would want.[198]

Araki's objective to make his soundtracks as obscure as possible relates to his concerns over the mainstream amoeba engulfing in its path. In lieu of recognisable bands and songs, Araki has selected a soundtrack of non-household names that is seemingly an attempt to stamp his work with a degree of indie authenticity. The use of this music in relation to the protagonists of *The Doom Generation* helps to characterise them as outsiders with similar tastes, and whose territory is marked by the presence of alternative music.

The third and final section of this chapter will examine further the interactions between urban space, youth and contemporary popular music. Focusing on Doug Liman's *Go*, I will note how a soundtrack of dance and electronic music is used to augment a particular representation of rave subcultures.

iii. Drugs and dance music culture in Doug Liman's *Go*

Go, like the films of Linklater and Araki, also reflects themes of teen alienation and features depictions of young people seeking to mark their territory through their subcultural participation and the exploitation of urban space. While *Go* is not as purely independent as Araki's work in a production sense (it was produced by the independent company Banner Entertainment with funding from Columbia Pictures), the film's style and use of music bears many resemblances to the 'off-centre' nature of other independent features. The film is split into a three-part vignette-style

[198] Steve Gdula, 'A Different Tune: Gregg Araki in all his *Splendor*' in *CMJ New Music Monthly*, November 1999, p. 72

narrative (inevitably compared to *Pulp Fiction* by critics, with Roger Ebert noting that it takes place 'entirely in Tarantino-Land'[199]) and focuses on a group of youths who participate in the underground rave and dance music culture of late-nineties Los Angeles. Set just before Christmas, the three narrative strands unfold over the same twenty-four hour period, all linked by a drug deal gone wrong, and scored by a dance-influenced soundtrack by the electronic producer Brian Transeau (under his recording pseudonym B.T.). The use of dance music as a non-diegetic score is an apt accompaniment to the action for three reasons:

> 1) It provides a common musical thread that embellishes the 'togetherness' and communal spirit of the rave subculture
> 2) It is used to both speed up and slow down the action, not just as a way of building tension, but also reflecting the drug culture that is depicted in the film
> 3) In terms of the film's difference and indieness, the score undermines the 'inaudible' principle of classical scoring (as posited by Gorbman), which helps to reinforce its to-be-listened-to quality.

Above all, the film's visual style and fractured narrative structure is informed by its musical expression, one of the key aspects of an independent sensibility.

Music had played an important role in Doug Liman's previous work. His film prior to *Go*, the black comedy *Swingers*, was also musically rich, focusing on a group of struggling actors and comedians living in '90s Hollywood amongst the swing revival scene. The film pays homage to the swing clubs of the mid-nineties, featuring a soundtrack of old and contemporary swing and jump-blues numbers, with the occasional throwback reference to the 1950s and '60s culture (the male leads in particular at times appear to be a '90s tribute to the Rat Pack). Produced for $200,000, *Swingers* grossed over $4,500,000 at the American box office, while it also spawned two soundtrack albums, *Swingers: Music from the Motion Picture* and *Swingers Too: More Music From Swingers*. Off the back of *Swingers'* success, and somewhat in keeping with his musical style, Liman directed a music video for the track 'Keep Hope Alive' by the American dance band The Crystal Method to coincide with the release of the soundtrack to Antoine Fuqua's *The Replacement Killers* (1998). The video focuses on party-goers in a small basement nightclub (these scenes are intercut with actions scenes from *The Replacement Killers*), featuring fast cutting, rapid camera movements and flashing lights. The

[199] Roger Ebert, *Go* review, http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19990409/REVIEWS/904090304/1023

encapsulation of rave culture, the sense of energy and the anarchic spirit that is captured in the video can be seen as a forerunner of *Go's* aesthetic; the style of the film is informed greatly by dance and electronic music and its culture (notably drug culture). Before I embark on an analysis of *Go*, the next section will briefly elaborate on the various aspects of rave culture that I will touch upon in my analysis.

Contemporary electronic dance music (also colloquially referred to as 'rave,' 'techno,' or 'house,' although these are technically subgenres of the broader dance music genre), is often characterised by its opposition to rock and its distance from the mainstream.[200] As Sarah Thornton notes in her book *Club Cultures*, many clubbers pride themselves on their difference and, by extension, their hipness.

> [The] contrast between 'us' and the 'mainstream' is more directly related to the process of envisioning social worlds and discriminating between social groups. Its veiled elitism and separatism enlist and reaffirm binary oppositions such as the alternative and the straight, the diverse and the homogenous, the radical and the conformist, the distinguished and the common.[201]

It is partly because of this that many clubbers and ravers have sought to separate themselves from the mainstream (even mainstream dance music itself) by becoming involved in numerous dance sub-subcultures and subgenres, ranging from drum 'n' bass, through 'minimal techno' to the somewhat arrogantly named 'Intelligent Dance Music' (also known as IDM), a vague, catch-all term referring to any kind of experimental electronic music, which seeks to literally label itself as separate from the sort of mainstream, presumably 'stupid', dance music that dominates the charts. But although club cultures see themselves as a small, underground movement, separate from the more mainstream, MOR, 'adult' forms of rock music, Thornton notes that this is at odds with how some music and cultural critics have historically viewed dance music (in all its forms, from jazz/swing to disco) as the lowest form of mainstream entertainment and reflecting a kind of collective, sheep-like behaviour. She points to Jean Baudrillard's assertion that disco had led to the 'complete disappearance of a culture of meaning and aesthetic sensibility', and Theodor Adorno's description of 1940s dance cultures as 'coordinated battalions of mechanical collectivity' as two examples of the rough treatment that dance music has received.[202]

Although disparaging, Adorno does identify a familiar trait that exists across all subgenres of dance music, that of collectivity. Indeed, dance music is a bricolage genre, made up of different styles from across a range of subgenres,

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[200] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 2
[201] Thornton, *Club Cultures*, p. 5
[202] Thornton, *Club Cultures*, p. 5

while ravers themselves come from disparate scenes and backgrounds. Dance music features little in the way of singular, unified traits. 'Homology' is a useful term to describe the genre; originally employed by Lévi-Strauss, the notion was later extrapolated by Dick Hebdige in reference to the punk subculture in Britain in the 1970s.[203] While most subcultures are often homologous in nature, sharing very specific, unified traits that run throughout various aspects of the culture, occasionally cultural movements can be heterologous. For instance, Hebdige argues that punk rock was not a homologous subculture because its dress, lifestyle, politics and music were derived from other cultures and movements; its only homology was the idea of chaos. Dance music culture is a similarly hodgepodge subculture: the music itself has its roots in a variety of sounds such as works of experimental electronic music (as varied as musique concrète, John Cage, and German krautrock), the percussive groove of funk and disco, and the cut-up, sampling practice of hip hop; its fashion shares a similar DIY ethos to that of punk, with regular references to cyberpunk culture; the musicianship (DJing as performance) is derived from hip hop; the dancing is freeform and influenced by disco, hip hop, and punk pogoing; and its liberal politics (notably its open attitudes towards race, gender and sexuality) can be traced back to disco.

Whilst its component parts can certainly be seen as part of a varied, heterologous culture, the rave subculture is often characterised by its 'togetherness.' Indeed, the one homology of dance music culture, if anything, is its communal ethos. The communal aspect of the culture is enforced primarily by the music's interaction with space; dance parties (or raves) are attended by hundreds (occasionally thousands) of people, always in a large room or field. Unlike rock concerts, in which the spectators' gazes are focused in one direction, dance events encourage audience interaction. In dance music, the DJ is a star, but, like with disco, the crowd regularly become the performers themselves as well, as dancing often becomes the centre of attention. Indeed, in this respect, the dance soundtrack to *Go* is an ideal way of scoring an ensemble cast in a multi-stranded narrative.

Dance music's practice of taking different elements (samples of old records, cut-up vocals, electronic effects and synthesised instrumentation) and arranging them into a 'mix' inevitably allows for different versions of tracks to be (re)recorded by other artists, commonly known as 'remixes'. *Go* adopts this mix/remix sensibility in terms of both its stylistic approach and narrative construction; the story is told and retold from different perspectives, with the events and characters in the three chapters overlapping and intermingling, while the style of the film blends fast cutting, music video aesthetics (cut to the beat) and at

[203] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, pp. 113-116

times an hallucinatory style (featuring canted angles, crash zooms, blurred images and point-of-view shots) that reflects aspects of the drug culture associated with dance music. The to-ing and fro-ing of the action is unified by the soundtrack; as the plot diverges into different directions, the music is ever present at the film's core.

In an interview with *Filmmaker* in 1999, Liman stated that music has always played an important role in his work, having collaborated with the same editor (Stephen Morrione) and music supervisor (Julianne Jordan) across all his projects, whether they be short films or features.[204] The use of music in *Go* informed the editing process, with both original pieces composed by B.T. and pre-existing songs selected by Jordan having an effect on the action. Parts of the film were edited during filming with some sequences cut specifically to the music, while some other scenes were even altered in order to accommodate new parts of the soundtrack. As Liman explains at length, parts of the narrative changed as they began to construct the soundtrack:

> Music was obviously very critical to *Go*... I have an editor who is very musically inclined, so he's one of the main driving forces behind the use of music in the film... We spent a long time on the music. We finished picture editing basically in August. Then we spent September, October and November doing nothing but recording music for the film. The editing process was stopped. To me, the music was really important to the story-telling, so we kept the editing room open and we didn't cut negative, and as music would come in, we would play it against the picture and we would re-cut the scene to fit the song. Then if we liked it, we would go ahead and actually have the song recorded. And then we'd get to the final recording and finish cutting the picture to it..[205]

The film's music video aesthetic and the prominence of the soundtrack brings out the *to-be-listened-to* quality of the music. The opening sequence of the film provides an immediate example of this approach. As the Columbia Pictures logo appears on screen, the image begins to flicker and is mixed with flashes of people dancing in a nightclub. As the Columbia ident music plays out, music from the nightclub is mixed on top ('Fire Up the Shoesaw' by Lionrock), providing a smooth DJ-like transition between the two images and music cues. The title sequence is a fast, frenetic montage featuring shots of dancing revellers (intermittently sped up and slowed down in almost a timelapse effect), bright neon colours and strobe lighting (reminiscent of the 'Keep Hope Alive' music video), while the Lionrock track continues to play. The music itself takes a curious position in the diegesis; while the juxtaposition with the images of the nightclub would lead one to presume that the clubbers are dancing to the track that is playing, there is no

[204] Adam Pincus, 'Express Lane' in *Filmmaker* v.7 n.3, April 1999, p.65
[205] Pincus, 'Express Lane', p. 65

diegetic sound from the dancefloor to anchor this, while the frenetic images are also out of sync with the pace of the music. The song plays alone, non-diegetically, and its instrumentation – a looped acoustic guitar sample, hip-hop-like scratches, cut-up vocal samples, and most prominently, a loud, crashing break-beat drum loop – is such that it vies for immediate attention. This sequence is indicative of the film's stylistic approach; the sudden interruption of the Columbia logo and the mixing of stylised shots of party-goers with a conspicuous, to-be-listened-to piece of music firmly enforces the frenetic, at times playful, nature of the film's aesthetic.

The scenes that follow the opening montage are relatively calm in comparison, and music is largely absent. After the title sequence finishes, the action cuts to the interior of a diner, where Claire (Katie Holmes) is talking to an unseen friend (this scene, we will later discover, takes place near the end of the story). The scene is ended abruptly by a musical sting (the sound of a record being scratched and a voice shouting 'Go!') as the action cuts to the next scene at a grocery store. The music in the store, varying between light Muzak on the shop floor and Christmas music in the stockroom, provides a contrast to the film's use of dance tracks and electronic score. Similar to the use of music in *The Doom Generation*, the opposition between the bland, piped music of commercial spaces and the dance music of the nightclubs and personal stereos is used to underscore the difference between work (responsibility) and leisure (subcultural participation), and furthermore a separation between youth and adulthood. The opposition in music in these different locations is matched by a contrast in film style. The scenes in the grocery store are formally simple, often slow and contain fewer cuts than scenes in other locations; for instance, a one-minute-long scene involving Ronna serving a stressed mother is comprised of nine shots in one minute (an average shot length of 6.6 seconds), while a later scene of Ronna serving two male party-goers (later revealed to be undercover police officers) consists of twenty-six shots (most of which are counter-shots during dialogue) in one minute and fifty seconds (4.2 seconds per shot). In each scene, the mundanity of the action is underscored by the diegetic sounds of the supermarket (repetitive bleeps from the check-out, the rustling of carrier bags, and the dull music playing over the store's speakers).

The combination of a mundane location (the grocery store), the jaded facial expressions of the characters and the presence of piped Christmas music imbue these scenes with a lethargic quality in which the action appears to slow down. Scenes that take place in the evening in social locations are instead regularly characterised by a combination of busy social interaction (the dialogue is faster and the characters appear more engaged), dynamic, energised spaces (parties, nightclubs) and a soundtrack of fast-paced, beat-driven dance music. These scenes

are also formally different, involving quick cutting, fast camera movement and canted angles. An early example of this can be found immediately after the scenes in the grocery store described above, in which Ronna, Claire and Mannie drive across town to visit Todd, the drug dealer. As the characters meet in Ronna's car, a BT cue plays quietly in the background. Shots of the characters are framed at tilted angles as they discuss their plans (Figures 22 and 23), after which the car leaves and the music rises in volume.

Figure 22

Figure 23

What follows is a nineteen-second montage of Ronna's car driving across the city, incorporating shots of the car itself at canted angles (Figure 24), alongside shots of shop fronts, side streets and other vehicles from the vantage point of the windows of Ronna's car (Figure 25). The action consists of twelve shots in total (1.5 seconds per shot), all cut to the beats and inflections of the accompanying soundtrack. The rhythmic cutting is indicative of a particular 'music video aesthetic'; as Carol Vernallis explains, editing in the music video is 'disjunctive and... seems to have a rhythmic basis closely connected with the song' and is occasionally 'meant to be noticed'.[206] In this segment of action, the close rhythmic relationship between

[206] Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.27

sound and image causes the music to become more noticeable, in a sense *to-be-listened-to*.

Figure 24

Figure 25

The music stops as Ronna reaches Todd's apartment. The following scene involves one of the first instances of drug-influenced style, in which Todd is smoking a joint while 'Angel' by Massive Attack plays on his home stereo. The song, characterised by its slow, heavy drum beat and dub reggae influence, is often categorised by music critics as part of the 'trip-hop' genre, a form of music in which hip-hop influenced instrumentation (drum breaks and cut-up samples) is played at a slower tempo. The psychedelic style of the song, and indeed Todd's semi-stoned manner, is reflected in the wobbly camera movements (the scene is largely shot on handheld cameras) and framing, featuring high angle shots of both Todd and Ronna. The moment when Ronna says she wants to buy some Ecstasy, Todd turns up volume on the stereo. The music plays at a loud, almost non-diegetic dynamic, completely drowning out the dialogue, as Todd whispers in Ronna's ear, asking her to strip in front of him. At this point, the to-be-listened-to quality of the music comes to the fore. Ronna strips to her underwear while Todd watches; her hesitant movement, Todd's laid-back, drug-influenced demeanor and the slow, heavy pace of the drumming in 'Angel' combine to slow down the action, not to a mundane level as

seen in the grocery store scenes, but to an almost dream-like, hallucinogenic state. The volume and dynamics of the song is such that it becomes the driving force in the scene, technically diegetic but almost sounding non-diegetic. Indeed, comparisons could be made to Lynch's use of music in *Blue Velvet* and *Lost Highway* in this respect, as the song takes on similarly excessive, to-be-listened-to properties.[207] After Ronna has stripped to her underwear, Todd turns the music down again. The silence that now permeates the scene sits in stark contrast with the heavy percussion of 'Angel' as the action returns to its regular pace.

The hallucinogenic style in this scene is mirrored in other instances in the film, during which time the music is used to speed up or slow down the action. The effect is clearly reflecting the role that drug use plays in contemporary dance music culture, notably with the use of MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine), commonly known as Ecstasy (or occasionally 'E' or 'X'). MDMA became an increasingly popular recreational drug after psychotherapists prescribed it during trial experiments in the 1960s, and is noted as being a drug that quells aggression and induces empathy. As Simon Reynolds notes, the nickname Ecstasy derives from the Greek 'ekstasis' – 'standing outside oneself':

> MDMA takes you out of yourself and into blissful merger with something larger than the party… MDMA is the 'we' drug. It's no coincidence that Ecstasy escalated into a pop cultural phenomenon at the end of the go-for-it, go-it-alone eighties. Ecstasy is the remedy for the alienation caused by an atomized society.[208]

Ben Malbon in *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality* uses a similar term, 'in-betweenness', to describe the clubbing experience, which is often exacerbated by the use of Ecstasy and other hallucinogens:

> [The] clubbing experience can be understood as a form of togetherness in which a cultural sensation is one of 'in-betweeness' – this is the flux between identity and identification... On the one hand clubbing crowds can 'anonymise' due to the sheer quantity of co-present clubbers and the sensuous overload that can make sight, recognition and communication problematic. Yet, at the same time, clubbing crowds can also 'individualise'... Through, above all, dancing, clubbers can trace unique paths through the clubbing experience, distinguishing themselves as individuals.[209]

*Go'*s depiction of drug taking, particularly Ecstasy, reflects both the communal experience of rave culture and the individual aspects. Occasionally, the individual

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[207] Donnelly notes in *The Spectre of Sound* that much of the music in *Lost Highway* appears to slow down the diegetic time of the action on screen, 'seemingly moving out of the time of film activity and into a place of musically apprehended time.' (p. 26)

[208] Simon Reyolds, 'Preface: Everything Starts with an E' in *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*, London: Picador, 1998, p. xxii

[209] Ben Malbon, *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.73-74

experience spills over into the surreal, sometimes nightmarish effects of a 'bad trip'. There are two scenes in which Mannie, after taking an E, appears to come 'out of himself.' In each instance, the music takes on a prominent to-be-listened-to quality.

In the first scene, shortly after Mannie takes the pill, he and Ronna visit the grocery store in search of some aspirins that they can pass off as Ecstasy tablets. As Ronna searches the aisles of the store, Mannie is standing near the check-outs watching a shop assistant, and becoming increasingly mesmerised and distracted by semi-rhythmic bleeping of the scanners. The action begins in long shot with Mannie in the background and the clerk in the foreground (Figure 26), then cutting to a close up of Mannie (Figure 27). The action appears slow, with each shot lingering for several seconds.

Figure 26

Figure 27

The soundtrack at this point is low-key, consisting of the check-out bleeps and piped-in Christmas music playing over the store speakers. The camera then adopts Mannie's point of view (Figure 28).

Figure 28

This is intermittently interrupted by hallucinogenic flashes from Mannie's point of view. In each flash, the ambient sound of the supermarket becomes inaudible as a brief snippet of percussive dance music plays, while Mannie's hallucinogenic shifts in perspective are highlighted by several jump cuts in which the check-out attendant jumps from medium shot to close up (Figures 29 and 30).

Figure 29

Figure 30

The flashes end as the dance track begins to play in full (an up-tempo, percussive remix of 'Macarena' by Los Del Rio). The music plays non-diegetically, drowning out any of the diegetic sound (the check-out scanners and Muzak) that previously featured in the scene. Mannie at this point hallucinates a scenario in which he is dancing with the female clerk; however the dance moves do not consist of the

rave-like pogoing that takes place in nightclubs, rather a set of ironic moves in which Mannie and the clerk playfully recreate a lambada. The cheesiness of the music (‘The Macarena’ having been a one-hit-wonder and cultural phenomenon during the mid-1990s) alongside the playfulness of the dance routine (with Mannie and the clerk eating pieces of fruit as they dance) breaks from the hipness associated with underground rave culture and becomes comedic. Nonetheless, the prominence of the music (rendering any diegetic sound inaudible) and the cinematographic style are used to illustrate Mannie’s sense of ‘ekstasis’; in contrast to the slow, mundane of the supermarket in prior scenes, rapid editing, jump-cutting and a series of dizzying whip-pans (Figures 31 and 32) are used to speed up the action.

Figure 31

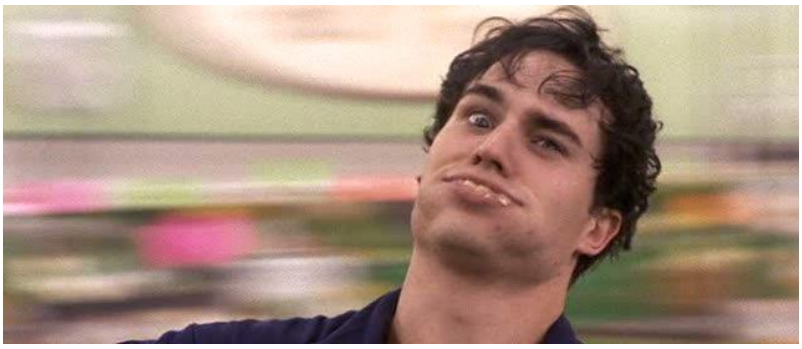

Figure 32

The second scene reflecting drug use involves a still-hallucinating Mannie interacting with fellow revellers at the Mary Christmas dance party. In this instance, the film's hallucinogenic visual style is again enhanced by the music and vice-versa. A number of shots are used to represent Mannie's drug induced state, including close-ups, crane shots hovering over his head, and in particular point-of-view shots, during which we take a first-hand glimpse of Mannie's hallucinations. The adoption of a drug-fuelled gaze speeds up and slows down the action, allowing the music, in diegetic and non-diegetic forms, to become the centre of the scene. The music that features during the rave is 'Believer' by B.T., a fast piece of house music, which

plays diegetically in the club; unlike the music used in the film's title sequence or the prior scene in the supermarket, the music in this instance mixes with other diegetic sounds, such as the chattering of the crowds. When the action moves to Mannie's perspective, the music dips in volume and clarity. Just as the point-of-view shots depict Mannie's hallucinatory vision, the muffled music in this instance is heard through the auditory position of a tripping, perhaps even tinnitus-ridden raver. The hallucinatory quality of this point-of-view (or point-of-hearing) is exaggerated when Mannie spots drug dealer Todd entering the rave. A point-of-view shot shows Todd enter at the back of the warehouse (Figure 33), and a disorientating jump-cut to a close-up of Todd's face (Figure 34) illustrates the dream-like quality of Mannie's trip. The cut creates an abrupt interruption in time, as if Mannie's brain has jumped forward a few seconds; in the second shot, Todd appears to have moved from one space in the warehouse to another in a split second, while his posture and facial expression have changed.

Figure 33

Figure 34

As Todd advances towards him, Mannie runs through the crowd of the party, hiding amongst the patrons as he moves. Upon finding Rhonna, the pair flee the warehouse, using the crowd for cover. In this instance, the communal nature of rave subculture provides a narrative function; as well as depicting the party atmosphere, the crowd is used to shield the characters from danger. The music continues to play a crucial role in the scene; 'Believer' still plays diegetically as

Mannie and Rhonna run, with the propulsive beat providing an apt, albeit unorthodox, piece of chase music.

Go's visual aesthetic and fast-paced rhythm of the cutting play a large role in representing the hedonism and inherent danger of late-nineties rave culture. Indeed, Liman notes that the film became more fast paced than he had originally planned it, with the use of B.T.'s music steering the editing in a more frenetic direction: 'The version I had in my head was slower and more sophisticated. It just was one of these things that started happening as my editor started cutting it together... [The style] was something that evolved with my editor, just watching how things were being cut together.'[210] This unorthodox visual style, together with the to-be-listened-to nature of music, the depiction of drug use and the representations of the communal aspects of rave culture position *Go* as a film that strives toward a sense of indieness and authenticity.

Conclusion: Into the 2000s

Across the work by Linklater, Araki and Liman, there are a number of traits that set them apart from Hollywood youth movies. Linklater's films are thematically influenced by the philosophical undertones of European art cinema, while in the case of *Slacker*, its difference manifests itself in an unorthodox style and narrative structure. Meanwhile, *The Doom Generation* and *Go* are often franker when dealing with sex and drug use, and, particularly in Araki's case, they are also more politically charged, frequently offering a satirical take on aspects of popular culture, taste and consumerism. But, most importantly, at least in the context of this thesis, these films' soundtracks are made distinct by their use of alternative forms of popular music (ranging from alternative rock, industrial and dance). As I have argued throughout this thesis so far, the music in these films is a form of distinction, and the to-be-listened-to qualities of that music is part of an aesthetic difference.

These themes can be found in other independent youth movies from the same era. Outside of Hollywood, perhaps one of the most controversial representations of modern teenage life is Harmony Korine and Larry Clark's independent production *Kids*. The film, written by Korine and directed by Clark, somewhat sensationally frames its characters against a backdrop of sex and drug use, and its representations are far franker and are filmed in more lurid detail than Hollywood teen movies. *Kids*' sense of difference or indieness comes across in both its stark subject matter (adolescents drinking, taking drugs and having sex – topics that mainstream Hollywood would not dare tackle in such explicit detail)

[210] Pincus, 'Express Lane', p. 65

and Clark's verité directorial style; characters are shot in close-up and in natural light, while several scenes are filmed in long takes with Clark's camera panning between characters in lieu of shot-reverse-shot editing.[211] This, coupled with the naturalistic performances of the actors, results in a kind of intimacy that is not usually found Hollywood teen movies. In terms of music, this intimate visual aesthetic is embellished by a non-diegetic soundtrack of lo-fi indie rock by Lou Barlow (frontman of the bands The Folk Implosion and Sebadoh). In opposition to a standard score, or even a selection of mainstream pop songs, Barlow's songs eschew the high quality stereo production of most contemporary music in order to pursue a more 'authentic' musical style. The properties of Barlow's music (quiet, tinny, slightly distorted – almost sound as if it is being produced live) helps to embellish the sense of intimacy in the film, and more importantly, helps to inform the 'difference' of the film's style. Other films of Korine and Clark also feature music that offer a sheen of otherness; Clark's soundtrack to *Bully* (2001) consists of late nineties electronic and hip hop artist such as Tricky and Fog, while Korine's *Gummo* (1997) includes a number of sludge-metal tracks by bands such as Spazz and Bethlehem (which sit incongruously next to pop songs such as Madonna's 'Like a Prayer').

Many of the artists included on these soundtracks come from underground scenes and independent labels. The form and tone of artists such as Butthole Surfers and Lou Barlow is unorthodox, lacking the high production gloss and melodic cohesion of chart pop music, while the DIY political sensibilities of the bands echo the independent spirit of filmmakers such as Araki, Korine and Linklater. The use of this music allows an extra veneer of alternative value permeates these films through the soundtracks. However, as we move into the 2000s, it will become clear that the distinctions between independent/mainstream and underground/commercial are becoming slightly muddied. While distinctions between independent and mainstream can be based on notions such as industrial location, a particular form/style, or political/ideological traits, in many films (and indeed pieces of popular music) from the 2000s, it appears that this separation is starting to be less defined in those terms.

The next chapter, focusing on Jeffrey Sconce's notion of a 'smart cinema' (which I have already touched upon in relation to Linklater and Araki), will examine how certain films of the 2000s have used popular music in order to anchor a particular 'tone'. 'Tone', rather than form or narrative, is a nebulous quality that Sconce uses to separate 'smart cinema' (which is invariably formed from independent or Indiewood productions) from a more mainstream one. There is an

[211] King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 118

inevitable crossover between the themes discussed in this chapter on youth culture and the next chapter on smart cinema. As I have mentioned already, the work of Richard Linklater and Gregg Araki contains a particularly ironic mode of engagement (exacerbated in Araki's films by an excessive, parodic visual style), and this too can be found across smart cinema in films that don't exclusively deal with teenagers or young characters.

Chapter Three

Irony, ennui and the 'smart film: aspects of pop music in independent cinema since 2000

Smart films and smart soundtracks

In many ways a logical extension of the teen 'slacker' film that came to prominence in the 1990s, 'smart' cinema relies heavily on pop-culture literacy. Noted by Sconce for its use of irony, black humour, relativism, fatalism and occasional nihilism, 'smart cinema' can be traced back to the early work of directors such as of Linklater and Hal Hartley in the 1990s. Sconce begins his essay by referring to two film critics, the *Los Angeles Times'* Kenneth Turan and *LA Weekly*'s Manohla Dargis, and their criticisms of a series of films in the late nineties that appeared to be, in Turan's words, 'pointlessly and simplistically grim.'[212] Mentioning films such as Todd Solondz' *Happiness* (1998), Peter Berg's *Very Bad Things* (1998) and Neil LaBute's *Your Friends and Neighbours* (1998), Turan's review was embraced by the cultural Right and used by Christian evangelicals as evidence of America's moral lapse, while Dargis describes the sentiment of these films as 'the new nihilism', suggesting that they are reflective of people's own apathy and lack of concern for world issues and other human beings.[213] But while these texts were attacked for their depictions of questionable moral acts, Sconce notes that they have been very popular among certain 'bespectacled' audiences, suggesting that this cinema has 'become a particularly active battleground within a larger moral and artistic war' between the irony-savvy Left (the 'smart') and the conservative Right.[214]

There are two key elements of Sconce's argument. The first crux of his thesis posits that 'smart' films are often found in symbolic opposition to what could be described as 'dumb' fodder (such as the big-budget blockbusters by James Cameron or Michael Bay) by both audiences and marketers. Not art cinema in the '60s European auteur sense, not Hollywood in the big-budget multiplex sense, nor strictly independent in the DIY spirit of pioneers such as Cassavetes, it incorporates elements from all three and deliberately exploits the gap between the mainstream and the independent, attracting the attention of a more 'bohemian' audience. The second big term that Sconce uses, and indeed one that I have occasionally used

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[212] Jeffery Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film' in *Screen*, 43:4, Winter 2002, p.349

[213] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 349

[214] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 350

throughout this thesis, is ‘sensibility’. While films as disparate as Todd Solondz’ *Happiness*, Todd Haynes’ *Safe* (1995) and Alexander Payne’s *Election* (2001) do not share much in common stylistically or generically, all the films share a particular mood or tone, one that attracts a common target audience of irony-savvy, so-called ‘smart’ individuals. Sconce compares his use of the word ‘sensibility’ with Raymond Williams’ notion of a ‘structure of feeling’ and the term ‘tone’ as used in narrative poetics. Williams’ ‘structure of feeling’ refers to the formation of cultures at a particular historic moment (a ‘structure’) through an ineffable and non-tangible experience of ‘being’ in the world at a particular time and place, while ‘tone’ is used to describe a certain quality of a text that cannot be properly analysed in terms of narrative, style, genre or authorial disposition. Rather, a work may be imbued with a certain mood or atmosphere that come from within delicate idiosyncrasies, subtle linguistic traits or, more importantly, a specific understanding of the piece from within a narrow historical moment.[215]

The largest aspect of the ‘smart’ sensibility is the notion of irony. Perhaps one of the most discussed terms in critical theory, irony can be separated into the verbal kind (in which something is conveyed by words whose literal meaning is the opposite [this form of irony is prominent in satire and parody]) and the dramatic (an utterance or situation that, unbeknownst to the people involved, has a significance for future events; or a situation in which a person or character is seemingly mocked by fate). In the smart sensibility, it is an extension of verbal irony that is most prevalent, where parodic playfulness inhabits the text through satirical dialogue, blank performance, or tone of voice. Sconce notes that the split between the smart audience and its opponents can be put down to understanding and accepting the ironic. As Sconce notes:

> [Irony], beyond existing as some ineffable cultural condition, is also a strategic gesture. To speak in an ironic tone is instantly to bifurcate one’s audience into those who “get it” and those who do not. The entire point of ironic address is to ally oneself with sympathetic peers and to distance oneself from the vast ‘other’ audience, however defined, which is often the target of the speaker’s or artist’s derision.[216]

In terms of this thesis' overarching question of how to define 'independence', much of the ‘smart’ canon is produced within the vague boundary between Hollywood and the independents. Formally, these films adhere to a classical structure, but contain stylistic flourishes and arty idiosyncrasies that would be found in art cinema:

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[215] Sconce, ‘Irony, Nihilism and the new American “smart” film’, pp. 351-352
[216] Sconce, ‘Irony, Nihilism and the new American “smart” film’, p. 352

> While previous forms of art cinema concentrated on formal experimentation with film style and narrative structure as a means of critiquing 'bourgeois realism' and/or 'bourgeois society', the new smart cinema has for the most part re-embraced classical narrative strategies, instead experimenting with *tone* as a means of critiquing 'bourgeois' taste and culture.[217]

In terms of the formation of smart cinema, Linklater's *Slacker* is once again a pivotal film; not only was it a big influence on the teen genre through the 1990s, but Sconce argues that its sensibility emphatically reflected (perhaps even prophesised) the university/college student 'subculture of irony' that has prevailed for the past fifteen years.[218] This subculture – noted for embracing camp or retro artefacts (kitschy bric-a-brac, cute badges, or T-shirts with jokey slogans), ironic engagement with retro films and TV shows (such as '70s and '80s cartoons and family blockbusters), use of sarcastic/ironic vernacular and 'air quotes', and a knowing consumption of camp contemporary cinema such as Jerry Bruckheimer action blockbusters – is an irony-savvy, pop-literate audience, but it is also an audience that is critiqued for being apolitical and disengaged. Sconce traces this back to a so-called Generation X demographic; as touched upon in Chapter Two, the Gen X-ers' left-leaning principles and general distrust of politicians in an era of Reagan-era yuppieism and Cold War politics had left them unwilling to assimilate with their older generations.[219] Instead, the Gen X-er chose to co-exist with their elders through ironic disengagement and, as discussed in the previous chapter, emphasised their separation through subcultural participation (often in music scenes) away from the mainstream. The ironic sensibility of the generation, Sconce argues, would find itself integrated in mainstream culture, particularly in popular TV shows such as *The Simpsons* (1989-) and *Seinfeld* (1988-1998), but also more divisively in non-mainstream American films.

Smart music?

So a key question for this thesis is: if smart cinema exists, can smart music too? As I noted earlier, the sentiment expressed in the music of artists such as Beck and Butthole Surfers appears to present a particular disenchanted sensibility, often through an arch, ironic tone. Throughout this thesis I have examined films that use alternative rock or dance music to emphasise their otherness or difference. Could the sensibilities of a smart film, therefore, be accompanied by a smart soundtrack?

Since the 1980s, the label 'indie music' has become a catch-all umbrella term for music produced outside the mainstream. In an article entitled 'What is

[217] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 352
[218] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 350
[219] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 355

Indie Rock?', Ryan Hibbert notes that indie music is 'mostly typified by its authenticity and otherness.'[220] It is a definition that sounds eerily similar to descriptions of independent cinema. Industrially, indie rock doesn't even have to exist on independent labels, as a variety of indie acts have signed to subsidiaries of majors; notable examples include bands such as Phoenix (signed to V2 / Universal Music Group), The Decemberists (Capitol Records / EMI) and The Yeah Yeah Yeahs (Interscope / Universal). Instead, indie rock can be understood as 'independent' more by its intangible qualities, such as style and tone, particularly a mood that captures a certain contemporary hipster essence (I shall discuss various forms of indie rock as I move through this chapter). Hibbert, like Sconce, bases part of his definition of indie rock on Bourdieu's notion of distinction, noting that, 'indie rock marks the awareness of a new aesthetic (and) it also satisfies among audiences a desire for social differentiation.'[221] Moving into the 2000s, this desire has most probably been satisfied by the abundance of music online. The internet has become a major tool for distributing and consuming music; one-click purchases on online stores such as iTunes or via file sharing software (Napster, Audiogalaxy, BitTorrent) allows users to both receive and distribute files quickly and en-masse. The general decline of print media has seen music websites such as *Pitchfork, Stereogum* and *Tiny Mix Tapes* become influential tastemakers, while a proliferation of blogs and messageboards dedicated to pop music has also given music fandom a prominent online presence. With this has come a new form of taste-based stratification among music consumers; any binary opposition that previously existed between mainstream and non-mainstream artists has been complicated by new degrees of mainstream-ness or indie-ness. With easier access to new music via the internet, new artists can become word-of-mouth hits in a very short space of time, with their degree of (sub)cultural capital fluctuating depending on how much hype they have received from the online press or how popular they have become among music fans (regular barometers of popularity range from the number of records sold to how quickly a concert sells out). A band can move through various stages of indieness, ranging from relative obscurity (unsigned, largely unknown outside of their local music scene), to semi-obscure (receiving some word-of-mouth buzz and some attention in the music press), to semi-mainstream (receiving substantial praise in the music press and a large fan following) to mainstream (appearing in the music charts, playing large venues such as arenas, even receiving regular radio play). Of course, these are not absolute categories, and there are nebulous boundaries that exist between them. Within

[220] Ryan Hibbert, 'What is Indie Rock?' in *Popular Music and Society* (v.28 n.1, February 2005), p. 56

[221] Hibbert, 'What is Indie Rock', p. 56

smart cinema, however, it is common to find soundtracks featuring bands in the semi-obscure to semi-mainstream camps. This often has an effect on the film's sense of indieness.

Many contemporary independent/Indiewood films have included songs by indie bands on the soundtrack, and in some cases, in the trailers. Below is a list of selected recent films whose trailers contain the prominent use of an indie rock/pop song.

Film	**Artist/Song**
Thumbsucker (2004)	The Polyphonic Spree – 'Move Away And Shine'
Broken Flowers (2005)	The Greenhornes – 'There Is an End'
Me and You and Everyone We Know (2005)	Blonde Redhead – 'Messenger'
Half Nelson (2006)	Broken Social Scene – 'Stars and Sons'
Little Miss Sunshine (2006)	The Flaming Lips – 'The Yeah Yeah Yeah Song'
Shortbus (2006)	Scott Matthew – 'In the End'
In Search of a Midnight Kiss (2007)	Shearwater – 'My Good Deed'
The Savages (2007)	Spoon – 'They Way We Get By'
Sunshine Cleaning (2008)	The Decemberists – 'The Crane Wife Part 3'
Away We Go (2009)	Alexi Murdoch – 'All My Days'

The use of such songs is notable for two reasons; firstly, it is apparent that these bands occupy an equivalent industrial location as the films that they are accompanying (they err towards major-level distribution, but are not quite as wide-reaching as mainstream artists and films), and secondly, the bands and the films also share a similar sensibility (not quite mainstream, yet not arty or avant-garde) as well as a kindred bohemian audience. This crossover is evidenced through the online music press's coverage of various 'indie' soundtrack albums,[222] while there is also correspondence between aspects of online music and film journalism, such as *Stereogum*'s relationship with its film and television sister-site, *Videogum* (a regular champion of various Indiewood films) and their similar bohemian/hipster-friendly modes of address. With this in mind, it cannot be coincidence that many independent/Indiewood films have chosen contemporary indie bands and musicians

[222] *Pitchfork* have reviewed several indie soundtrack albums, including *Thumbsucker* (http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/7897-thumbsucker-ost/), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/7890-eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind/) and *There Will Be Blood* (http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/11007-there-will-be-blood-ost/)

to appear on their soundtracks or trailers; there appears to be a direct correspondence between their demographics, and furthermore, the aesthetic qualities and sensibilities of the music (its arch lyrics, quirky melodies, at times complex instrumentation and occasionally lo-fi production) echoes the tonal and stylistic properties of smart cinema, as well as a quest for a kind of authenticity.

The object of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the role that music (notably indie rock) plays in helping to cement a 'smart' aesthetic or tone. The effect of a 'smart' soundtrack, I will argue, is responsible for helping to anchor the bohemian ideals of the films, plus, in some cases, also enhancing their peculiar, hyperbolic style. This chapter will be split into three sections. The first part will explore how a collection of independent comedy films produced since 2000 have engaged with a wider pop music culture (notably indie-pop or 'twee-pop') in order to emphasise their themes of kitsch, camp and the ironic. I will examine how these films relate to this culture and how music is used to underscore ironic sentiment and kitsch design in films such as Jason Reitman's *Juno* and Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World*. The second section will examine the work of three pop musicians turned composers – Jon Brion, Jonny Greenwood and Clint Mansell – whose scores have provided a suitable aural accompaniment to the 'smart' aesthetic of many films of the late 1990s and into the 2000s. I will analyse several of these films – most notably *Pi* (1998), *Magnolia* (1999), *Requiem for a Dream* (2001), *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002) and *There Will Be Blood* (2007) – by looking at the composers' pop beginnings, their emergence as film composers and their relationships with their directors (predominantly Darren Aronofsky and Paul Thomas Anderson), and finally how their work can be seen as an embodiment of a particular indie form of film music, taking into account previously discussed ideas such as 'to-be-listened-to-ness'. The third part will move away from the 'excessive' and 'quirky' forms of smart cinema to focus on a range of new low-budget independent films produced since 2000, notably the mumblecore movement and the films of Kelly Reichardt. These films, although more focused on attaining a sense of naturalism, engage with popular music culture in a similar way, both in their approach (a DIY method of production) and in the way music is used to embellish particular smart themes and sensibilities such as social/cultural alienation and ennui.

i. Twee cinema: pop music, irony and kitsch

This section will explore fascinations with kitsch and the ironic, and young people's engagement with pop music culture in films of the 2000s. As noted in the second chapter, aspects of consumerism, 'the politics of taste' and subcultural

participation in '90s youth films such as *Slacker*, *The Doom Generation* and *Go* are often embellished through these films' interactions with a wider pop music culture, either in their scoring practices or through proper depictions of music scenes and subcultures. These themes can also be found in several 'quirky' comedies of the 2000s.

As Sconce has noted, there are many varieties of 'smart' film. From the black comedies of Todd Solondz and Neil LaBute, through the '"cold" melodramas' of Atom Egoyan and Todd Haynes, the satirical comedies of Alexander Payne, and the absurdist comedies of Charlie Kaufman and David O. Russell, to the ambitious, flamboyant work of P. T. Anderson and Darren Aronofsky, Sconce recognises that the disparity of these films only goes to prove the vague and untidy nature of 'art cinema' when treated as a genre.[223] 'Smart cinema' exists as a nebulous category which absorbs a number of irony-savvy, independently-spirited American films that share a similar bohemian audience.

However, when examining the role that popular music plays across the smart canon, it is apparent that there is a particular group of films that exhibit their song-based pop soundtracks more prominently than others, and also often employ a distinct visual aesthetic, drawing from kitsch, retro style. The combination of a kitsch visual style, a distinct pop soundtrack and a whimsical, ironic voice imbues such films within the smart canon with a particularly 'twee' sensibility. Notably, this can be seen in the films of Wes Anderson (*Bottle Rocket* [1996], *Rushmore* [1998], *The Royal Tenenbaums* [2001], *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* [2004] and *The Darjeeling Ltd.* [2007]), and also extends to movies such as *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004), *Thumbsucker*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, *The Squid and the Whale* (2006), *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Juno*, *Lars and the Real Girl* (2007), *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* (2008) *Adventureland* (2009) and *(500) Days of Summer*. These films share several familiar traits:

1) An emphasis on kitsch objects, occasionally garish design, and regular use of bold primary colours
2) Very little experimentation in terms of film style; no deviation from the classical norm, although the artifice is often more pronounced in order to highlight the kitsch aesthetic
3) A slightly dead-pan style of delivery; dialogue is comedic but is played down rather than up, usually in contrast to the exaggerated kitsch aesthetic/design

[223] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', pp. 350-1

4) Characters (often male) who appear regressive and childlike

5) An emphasis on love and romance, but usually from an innocent, childlike perspective. Often avoids explicit references to sex (unless it involves a comedy of embarrassment)

6) Most importantly, a melodic, song-heavy soundtrack, often comprising a selection of guitar-based, jangly indie-pop songs

Straddling the line between independent (alternative) and populist (mainstream), it seems appropriate that these films' musical expression comes in the form of 'indie-pop' (occasionally referred to as 'twee' pop), a musical genre that also balanced independent spirit with pop melodies. Indie-pop (as opposed to 'indie-rock' which often leans more towards the aggression of rock music as opposed to the purer melodies of radio-friendly pop music), plays a large role in embellishing the other more 'twee' sensibilities of these films.

Pop music scholars Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy note that indie-pop began in the mid-1980s after the first wave of post-punk bands had dissipated, particularly after the music magazine *New Musical Express* gave away a free compilation tape called *C86*, which featured a range of so-called 'shambling' indie bands such as The Pastels and The Wedding Present.[224] The term 'indie pop' has generally prevailed since 1986, however some critics and music fans have taken to using other labels such as 'anorak pop', 'cutie' and most notably 'twee pop.' Although the word 'twee' may appear to be a slightly derogatory term, in this context it is used to describe a brand of music that is knowingly light, fluffy and almost childlike; it refers back to the fey pop of '60s musical icons such as Syd Barrett and Nick Drake, but cranks the cutesiness up to eleven. In an article for *Pitchfork*, Nitsuh Adebe notes on how the twee sensibility has spawned its own underground subculture:

> [Indie pop fans] have their own names for themselves (popkids, popgeeks) and for the music they listen to (p!o!p, twee, anorak, C-86). They have their own canon of legendary bands (Tiger Trap, Talulah Gosh, Rocketship) and legendary labels (Sarah, Bus Stop, Summershine). They have their own pop stars, with who they're mostly on a first-name basis: Stephen and Aggi, Cathy and Amelia, Jen and Rose, Bret and Heather and Calvin. They've had their own zines (*Chickfactor*), websites (twee.net), mailing lists (the Indie pop List), aesthetics (like being TWEE AS FUCK), festivals (the International Pop Underground), iconography (hand drawings of kittens), fashion accessories (barrettes, cardigans, t-shirts with kittens on them, and t-shirts reading TWEE AS FUCK), and in-jokes (Tullycraft songs and the aforementioned TWEE AS FUCK)-- in short, their own culture.[225]

[224] Borthwick and Moy, (2004), p. 176

[225] Nitsuh Adebe, 'Twee As Fuck: The Story of Indie Pop' at http://www.pitchforkmedia.com/article/feature/10242-twee-as-fuck

Twee iconography (hand-drawn pictures) and colours (often bright) can be found in the artwork for many indie-pop bands, such as the album art by twee bands The Boy Least Likely To and Beat Happening below (Figures 35 and 36 respectively).

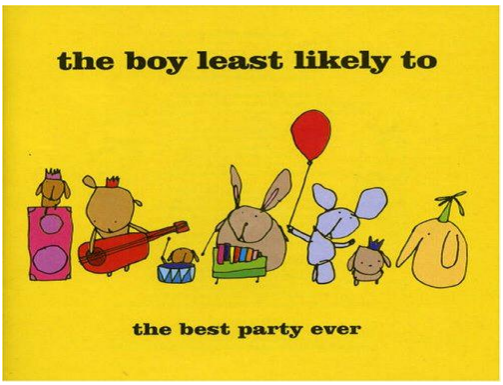

Figure 35

Figure 36

The twee subculture is also strangely asexual in its fashion and sense of style. In an analysis of the C86 movement in the 1980s, Simon Reynolds describes the typical sartorial choices that dominated the movement: '[The] scene's signature garment was an anorak of the sort that a child might have worn in 1961. Cutie fashion was so stridently virginal, it had to be some kind of statement.'[226] The fashion and the music itself reflected a particular attitude towards love and sex, in which carnal love songs and the 'earthy sexuality' of funk and soul were rejected, and instead shambling, melodic pop dealing with puppy love and holding hands was adopted.[227] The songs are childlike in their sentiment, but not apolitical, as Reynolds notes: 'these kids were staging a revolt against '80s values. Rejecting hypersexual chartpop and aspirational adulthood alike, the cutie shamblers harked back to both their own lost innocence and to pop's childhood (the '60s), creating a new bohemia based around purity rather than debauchery (even though, contrary to this puritanical image, these cuties were actually at it like knives).'[228] The twee scene has always referred back to the past as a way of distancing itself from consumerist modern society. The music is unashamedly DIY, influenced by the simplicity of punk, and is also subtly political, particularly in its configuration of gender and sexuality, as *The Guardian*'s music critic Michael Hann explains:

> The very things the critics objected to - the childishness, the complete absence of testosterone, the Luddism - were political acts. What better way to reject the phallocentrism of rock than to deny masculine values? And why not invest the

[226] Simon Reynolds, 'The C86 Scene is Back!' in *Time Out*, 23 October 2006, http://www.timeout.com/london/music/features/2167.html
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.

> tired concept of the "generation gap" with some actual meaning by adopting badges of childhood rather than incipient adulthood? The indiepop bands went back to the lyrical themes of the earliest rock'n'roll, the music that first invented "teenage": boy meets girl, boy and girl hold hands, boy and girl are happy. But the indiepoppers were not using holding hands as a metaphor for sex: they meant it literally. By taking the sex out of pop, they were creating their own concept of "teenage" utterly unlike those that had come before: teenage as a state of mind, rather than an age group.[229]

The influence of twee-pop on contemporary American twee cinema can be found within the six traits I earlier. The most prominent feature is the soundtrack itself, with many films within the twee canon being scored by indie-pop musicians, such as Dean Wareham and Britta Phillips (of Luna) on *The Squid and the Whale*, Tim De Laughter (The Polyphonic Spree) on *Thumbsucker* and Kimya Dawson (The Moldy Peaches) on *Juno*. There is also frequently an emphasis on childhood and regression: *Thumbsucker* focuses on a teenager who attempts to overcome his thumb-sucking problem; the titular characters in *Napoleon Dynamite* and *Lars and the Real Girl* appear shy, socially awkward and childlike; while Joel in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* in one scene literally regresses to five-year-old version of himself. Similarly the focus on love in these films is often childlike and asexual: Lars in *Lars and the Real Girl* imagines a completely platonic relationship with a sex doll, while at the end of *Napoleon Dynamite* the relationship between Napoleon and Deb is consummated by a game of swingball.

One interesting treatment of sex comes in *(500) Days of Summer*, a sleeper hit from 2009. Although the film is concerned with relationships, sex, although not completely absent, is mostly played down, with the focus instead more on kinship and play. Produced independently by Sneak Preview Entertainment and Watermark Pictures (and picked up for distribution by Fox Searchlight), the film focuses on Tom Henson (Joseph Gordon Levitt), a twentysomething wannabe architect who is stuck in a dead-end job with a greetings card firm, and his relationship (and subsequent break-up) with his co-worker, Summer Finn (Zooey Deschanel). The film wears its musical influence on its sleeve with a prominent song-based soundtrack, frequent in-film references to indie bands such as Belle & Sebastian, Pixies and The Smiths, and a flashy, occasionally whimsical music video style from video director Marc Webb. The film's musical sensibility reflects the recurring twee themes of puppy love and imagination, with the songs emphasising the characters' romantic feelings, hipness, and often their childlike sense of play. The title sequence (scored by a melodic, piano-led song by Regina Spektor, entitled 'Us') consists of a collection of photos and super-8 film clips of Tom and Summer

[229] Michael Hann, 'Fey City Rollers' in *The Guardian*, 13 October 2004, http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,11710,1325674,00.html

as children, chronicling their lives from infant through to teenager. By using home-video footage, it captures a 'memory' of childhood within the photographic image; in this sense, images of young Tom and young Summer playing in the playground or learning to ride a bike act as the first example of the film's on-going focus on the nature of childhood and play. Later events in the film recapture this essence of play; Tom and Summer's childlike behaviour ranges from small games such as seeing who can shout 'penis' the loudest in public, through Tom fantasising a Hollywood musical dance routine, to one notable example of a role-playing game in IKEA, in which the couple imitate a husband and wife in a stylish kitchen (they are essentially pretending to be 'grown-ups'), parodying the 'home sweet home' idyll and antiquated clichés of matrimony seen in 1950s and '60s television and advertising (Figure 37).

Figure 37

The music used to underscore the IKEA scene (Doves' 'There Goes the Fear') contains a poppy, chiming guitar melody and lyrics associated with growing up and the fears of growing old ('You turn around and life's past you by'). The musical choices throughout the film play both a role in embellishing the indie-pop sensibility of the film (reflecting the transition between adolescence and adulthood), driving the narrative forward (the songs were chosen by the screenwriter, Scott Neustadter, and included in the screenplay),[230] and branding the film with indie credence.

(500) Days of Summer, along with many other twee films, also contains a twee iconography. The colours and font styles used in the titles reflect the hand-drawn aesthetic of the twee bands mentioned above, while this style also often

[230] Peter Clines, '*(500) Days of Summer*' in *Creative Screenwriting*, v. 16, n. 4, July 2009, p. 55

drifts over into the mise-en-scène. The style can also be found in the promotional materials of certain films; *Thumbsucker*, directed by music video maker and graphic designer Mike Mills, uses a distinctive twee iconography (designed by Mills) in the in its poster (Figure 38) and promotional images (Figures 39 and 40).

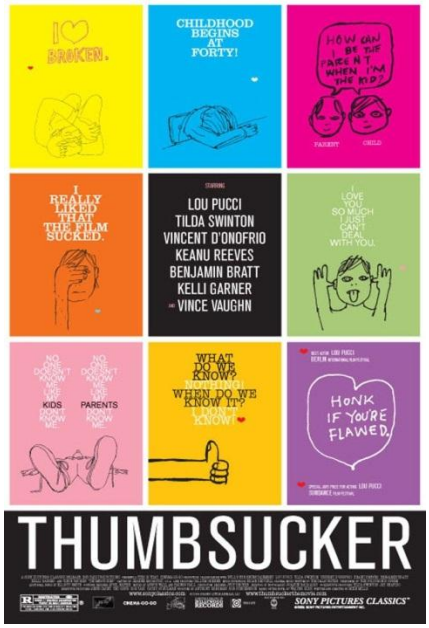

Figure 38

Figure 39

Figure 40

The child-like promotional artwork is complemented in-film by a mise-en-scène containing kitsch artefacts. Some may call this camp; indeed, 'kitsch' and 'camp' are to an extent related and often regarded as interchangeable, however, I will tend to use the term 'kitsch' over 'camp' as I feel this best reflects the political intent of these films. In 'Notes on "Camp,"' Susan Sontag distinguishes between 'naïve' and 'deliberate' camp; the former being unaware of its camp value and with the latter being intentionally or knowingly 'bad taste'.[231] Campness in twee cinema tends to

[231] Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"' in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New

drift between these two variations (often leaning towards 'deliberate camp') and isn't always what Sontag would describe as the 'pure camp' of the naïve variety. Moreover, the term 'kitsch' tends to refer to artefacts which are mass produced or imitations; Adorno, writing about the idea of 'kitsch music', posits that kitsch differentiates itself from individually-produced art by the virtue of the fact that it is 'constructed in types.'[232] Kitsch items are those that were once mass-produced and, years later, have become 'remote from [their] immediate context.'[233] In this sense, unlike camp objects which are often spawned from individual creativity (see Sontag's note 57), the ironic use of a *kitsch* style is more indicative of the wider critique of consumerism (and by extension homogenisation) that is reflected across smart cinema. The use of kitsch objects in twee cinema is part of its ironic sensibility, and can be seen as a deliberate breaking-down of distinctions between high and low culture.

For the rest of this section, I will examine this twee sensibility in more detail. Starting with *Juno*, I will analyse how its soundtrack and the use of kitsch objects intertwine to consolidate this twee sensibility. Moving on from *Juno*, I will discuss how *Ghost World's* soundtrack deals with notions of camp and kitsch in a different manner; instead of the music complementing the film's array of kitsch objects, the use vintage blues songs in the film provides a sincere counterpoint to the ironic engagement of the film's protagonist, Enid.

Juno

Jason Reitman's *Juno* was one of the breakout films of late 2007 and early 2008. Co-produced by independent studios Mandate Pictures and Mr Mudd (with the distribution backing of Fox Searchlight) and a budget of around $7.5million, the film has taken in a worldwide gross of over $231million at the box office.[234] Its star, Ellen Page, earned several award nominations for Best Actress, while the screenwriter Diablo Cody also received significant recognition, including an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. The film focuses on Juno MacGuff (Page), a confident, quick-witted 16-year-old girl who lives with her ex-military father, stepmother (her real mother, Juno tells us, lives on a reservation in Arizona with a 'replacement' family) and younger half-sister. After a drunken one-night-stand with her on-off boyfriend and bandmate Paulie Bleeker (played by Michael Cera, and usually referred to merely as 'Bleeker'), Juno discovers she is pregnant.

York: Doubleday, 1990)

[232] Theodor Adorno, 'Kitsch' in Richard Lippert (ed.), *Adorno: Essays on Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 503

[233] Adorno, 'Kitsch', p. 501

[234] http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=juno.htm

Although she considers having an abortion at one stage, Juno decides to keep the baby and put it up for adoption, choosing thirty-something suburbanite couple Mark (a former rock musician, now freelance composer of advertising jingles) and Vanessa (a career-driven businesswoman) as the adoptive parents. During her pregnancy, Juno forges a strong friendship with the father-to-be, Mark, during which time they discuss their mutual love of music, horror films and other minutiae of popular culture.

Juno is an interesting example of a 'smart' film. Rather than dividing audiences as Sconce suggests smart films are likely to do, *Juno* manages to balance mainstream appeal with an indie (twee) sensibility. It also manages to make a compromise on the prominent ideological/ethical issue of abortion: Juno at one point seriously considers having her pregnancy terminated, but ultimately decides to put the baby up for adoption (the film does not take a clear political position on the issue of abortion). The film's dedication to the teen genre also distinguishes it from many generically ambiguous smart films. From the trailer there are noticeable traits of the teen genre: an obvious focus on young people, a high school setting (with the character tropes that inhabit it, such as the jock and the cheerleader), references to sex and relationships, sassy dialogue, as well as apparent tensions and conflicts in relationships and the family.[235] But, although its generic form may seem familiar to the mainstream, it also retains many qualities of the smart film that Sconce puts forward. Sconce identifies that there are various types of smart film, and although they are fairly disparate, they all seem to share five common traits:

> 1) a 'blank' style and incongruous narration; 2) a fascination with 'synchronicity' as a principle of narrative organization; 3) a related thematic interest in random fate; 4) a focus on white middle-class family as a crucible of miscommunication and emotional dysfunction; 5) a recurring interest in the politics of taste, consumerism and identity.[236]

The fifth trait is the most commonplace here. Juno's obsession with '70s punk acts, Dario Argento movies and a fondness for kitschy bric-a-brac (a hamburger phone, for instance), as well as her forthright opinions (such as the scene where she argues vehemently with Mark about the golden age of music) configures her character as

[235] For a study of the teen film's focus on the chaos / disorder of youth, see Jon Lewis's *The Road To Romance and Ruin* (London: Routlege, 1992), while Roz Kaveney's *Teen Dreams* (London: IB Tauris, 2006) argues that many contemporary teen films are creative responses to John Hughes' films of the 1980s, and generically are concerned with the politics of the suburban high school playground and the configuration of key types (the jock, the cheerleader, the nerd, etc.)

[236] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 358

someone who is always involved with the politics of taste. Parts of traits 1 and 4 can also be found in the film. There are moments that deal with mild familial conflict within Juno's own family (such as her occasional frustration with her stepmother, although their relationship is ultimately strong), and also in the homelife of Mark and Vanessa (a couple who are slowly drifting apart). Although Juno's family is not presented as being as dysfunctional as families in other smart films (such as *The Royal Tenenbaums* or Sam Mendes' *American Beauty* [1999]), the focus on relationships is a key aspect of the narrative. In terms of a 'blank' style, this can be found in both the film's formal aspects and in its screenplay. Much of *Juno*'s hip dialogue conveys an appearance of blankness, particularly in the exchanges between Juno and her friend Leah. In a scene where Juno phones Leah to inform her of her pregnancy, each line is both written and delivered in a deadpan comedic fashion that imbues the scene with what Sconce describes as a kind of 'dampened affect':[237]

> LEAH
> Well, are you going to go to Havenbrooke or Women Now for the abortion? You need a note from your parents for Havenbrooke.
>
> JUNO
> I know. Women Now, I guess. The commercial says they help women now.
>
> LEAH
> Want me to call for you? I called for Becky last year.
>
> JUNO
> Eh. I'll call them myself.

Asides from the verbal, there are also moments of stylistic blankness. The costumes are noticeably underplayed: Juno's attire of checked shirt, zipped-up hoodie and blue jeans rarely changes, while Bleeker's sports outfit appears slightly comical, yet it is played down rather than up. His skinny body is accentuated by an attire consisting of short yellow running shorts, red t-shirt and yellow headband; it invites mockery, and yet it is not made fun of. There are also shots, particularly two-shots consisting of Juno and Bleeker, that feature the characters in the centre of the frame with little action surrounding them. In the final scene of the film, Juno

[237] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 359

and Bleeker are positioned in the centre of the shot (Figure 41), while a dolly-mounted camera slowly tracks out as they play a song together (Figure 42).

Figure 41

Figure 42

While *Juno*'s smart sensibility can be found in its visual style and parodic dialogue, one of the most important components of its smart voice is its soundtrack. Instead of being overly 'smart' and alienating audiences, the film subtly conveys its ironic tone through a series of music cues, particularly through the 'blank' vocal delivery of many of the songs that mimics the film's moments of stylistic and verbal blankness.

The soundtrack consists of a mix of incidental music written by the film composer Mateo Messina, a selection of original twee-esque songs by Kimya Dawson (an American singer who was previously involved with the band The Moldy Peaches) and a miscellaneous assortment of alternative pop songs, ranging from '60s and '70 bands such as The Velvet Underground and The Kinks, to contemporary alternative acts such as Belle & Sebastian. At first glance it would

appear that these artists come from different eras and scenes, and have very little in common. The Velvet Underground were a New York-based art collective who aspired to bring artistic sensibilities and experimentation to melodic popular music; The Kinks were an English rock band who found success in the late 1960s with witty pop songs; Mott the Hoople came from a glam rock background that emphasised performance and excess; The Moldy Peaches formed in the late 1990s and played a big role in New York's emerging 'anti-folk' movement – a scene that, despite its name, was inspired by (and aspired to retain) the folky sensibility of '60s acts such as Bob Dylan and Fairport Convention, while updating its political and musical mood to something more contemporary;[238] while Belle & Sebastian are a Glasgow-based, 1990s art school band who aspired to follow in the tradition of '80s indie bands such as The Smiths and The Cure. These are bands from different eras and scenes, but they all share a common artistic goal: to make music that is unashamedly pop, but with arty, bohemian aspirations. In short, they could be seen as musical equivalent of the smart filmmakers. The music of these more contemporary bands is performed with a kind of knowingness; deadpan (often slightly out-of-tune) vocal delivery, jangly guitars, whimsical lyrics, and a cute, bashful stage presence are all common traits within the twee subgenre.

The musical irony at the heart of *Juno* is that its asexual soundtrack is in opposition to the film's topic of teenage pregnancy. This childlike sensibility is established at the very beginning of the film in the opening titles: it is an animated sequence featuring vivid colours (reds and yellows) and credits that appear in scribbly lettering (Figure 43), while the song that plays is 'All I Want Is You', a fairly obscure number by the children's songwriter Barry Louis Polisar. The song's simple, catchy melody and cute lyrics ('If I was a flower growing wild and free / All I'd want is you to be my sweet honey bee'), as well as the fact that Polisar's music is principally aimed at children, already permeates the action with a somewhat naïve, innocent tone in contrast to its more serious, adult subject matter.

[238] Chris Parkin, 'Secret Scenes: Anti-folk' in *Time Out*, http://www.timeout.com/london/features/1971.html

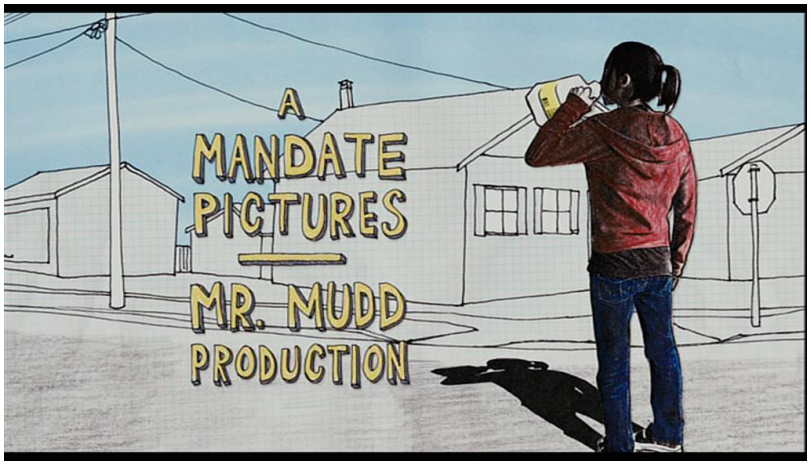

Figure 43

Most of the non-diegetic music in the film are cues by Mateo Messina and Kimya Dawson. This music functions in three ways: firstly, it provides a musical interlude between scenes, giving the end of each scene a sense of closure (much like a classical music score would); secondly, Dawson's deadpan vocals mimic the occasionally understated delivery of the 'blank' dialogue; and thirdly, the cutesy nature of the songs intertwines with a lot of the kitsch set design. As well as employing a twee soundtrack, *Juno* also focuses on kitsch objects as part of its iconography. In a montage near the beginning of the film, Dawson's song 'Tire Swing' is used to underscore shots of Juno's bedroom, which prominently features several kitsch and camp objects on display, many of them from Juno's childhood, such as dolls (Figure 44) and a hand-made, cat-shaped mobile (Figure 45).

Figure 44

Figure 45

The music intertwines with the fetishisation of these kitsch objects, presenting a complete musical-visual presentation of a twee sensibility.

The song ‘Tire Swing’ is in itself especially twee: it is sung with deadpan delivery, features minimal instrumentation (an acoustic guitar and some whistling), while its lyrics focus on the innocent, almost childlike aspects of fledgling romance such as sharing books (‘Scotty liked all the books that I recommended / Even if he didn’t I wouldn’t be offended’) and playing outdoors (‘Paul Baribeau took me to the giant tire swing / gave me a push and he started singing’), and deliberately avoids mentioning sex, conflict or other more ‘adult’ relationship issues. The song reappears on two other occasions later in the film: the first is during a scene outside the Women Now abortion clinic in which Juno converses with one of her classmates, Soo-Jin, a pro-life campaigner. Dawson’s jaunty strumming plays during their brief discussion about abortion issues, complete with comedic dialogue and blank delivery, and intriguingly fills the scene with a playful atmosphere. The final appearance of the song comes at the end of the film a couple of months after Juno has delivered her baby, underscoring a short sequence in which Juno rides her bike to Bleeker’s house. By using ‘Tire Swing’ in the final scene of the film, the song ultimately functions in achieving a sense of narrative unity; it takes on a leitmotivic quality, providing a point of familiarity, musically affirming the film’s themes of youthful romance and ultimately providing a sense of closure.

Through its twee sensibility, *Juno* presents an interesting study of young relationships in hip, consumer society; a reflection of ironic (dis)engagement that in many ways is the antithesis to the more excessive, nihilistic approach as seen in films like *Fight Club* or Gregg Araki's work. Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World*, on the other hand, provides an interesting third approach; it is a film that, like *Juno*, deals with aspects of the kitsch and camp without the violent hyperbole of other smart

films, although it falls short of twee status in its more incisive (almost 'grown up') critique of consumer culture and the 'generation of irony'.

Ghost World: The antidote to twee?

Based on Daniel Clowes' comic book of the same name, *Ghost World* presents a commentary on irony and hipness in modern popular culture through its vintage blues soundtrack, ultimately depicting the triumph of 'sincerity' over the ironic, camp and kitsch. The film primarily focuses on recent high school graduate Enid (played by Thora Birch) as she attempts to adjust to post-school adulthood, both in seeking part time employment and attending remedial art classes at a local art school. The film follows Enid's various relationships with her father (a single dad who is about to restart a relationship with an old flame), her best friend Rebecca, with whom she spends time seeking out the oddballs and eccentrics who live in their town (they refer to them as 'our people'), and ultimately Seymour, a forty-ish, occasionally world-weary jazz / blues fanatic and record collector. It is Enid's relationship with Seymour that becomes the film's core.

There are similarities between the characters of Enid and Juno: they are both fashion-conscious and culturally savvy, they come from a home without a mother (or biological mother in Juno's case), and, importantly, they both form strong relationships with older men based on their cultural (particularly musical) consumption. However, while *Juno*'s naïve fondness for the kitsch is only subtly satirical, *Ghost World* is more adamantly critical of consumer society. In his analysis of the film, as well as other films from the same period such as *Fight Club* and *Being John Malkovich* (1999), Sconce notes that *Ghost World* is an example of a movie that deals explicitly with 'the "politics" of constructing one's identity from the resources of consumer capitalism.'[239] Although *Ghost World* is not as nihilistic in tone as more extreme films like *Your Friends and Neighbours*, it still engages with the futility of cultural consumption in the age of shopping malls, chain stores and global brands. In order to co-exist with 'stupid' people, Enid is seen indulging in camp media and kitsch artefacts as a means of detaching herself from the vacuous world in which she must dwell.

At the beginning of the film, prior to meeting Seymour, Enid spends most of her time with Rebecca making wisecracks about their town and the odd characters who inhabit it. The two characters are similar in that they share a vernacular consisting of ironic colloquialisms and sarcasm, but they are slightly differently configured in terms of their consumption of pop culture. This can be found in their costume: while Enid dresses with an individual style (black horn-

[239] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 366

rimmed glasses, dyed black [and at one point green] hair, kitschy butterfly-shaped hair clips and short skirts with tights), Rebecca is much more conservatively dressed through much of the film, wearing plainer clothes with no accessories – the only item she shares with Enid is the occasional adornment of a short skirt. Later in the film, as Rebecca and Enid's friendship begins to drift apart, Rebecca's difference becomes even more accentuated, wearing blouses, trousers and tying her hair back. Furthermore, while Enid is portrayed as a music consumer throughout the film, very little is shown of Rebecca's pop consumption. Their differences demonstrate that although *Ghost World* is a film dealing with kitsch and ironic sentiment, most of it is communicated through Enid's character. Enid participates in what Sconce would describe as a 'subculture of irony' as a way of dealing with her disillusionment and ennui. Various shots of Enid's bedroom (Figures 46 and 47) demonstrate this consumption of kitsch paraphernalia.

Figure 46

Figure 47

Objects such as mannequin heads, dolls and ornaments, as well as brightly-coloured furniture (stark yellows, blues and reds) illustrate Enid's similar fondness for kitsch as Juno. However, *Ghost World*'s biggest difference is that its soundtrack is not so closely intertwined with this bric-a-brac. The original music in the film is a subtle, largely unobtrusive instrumental score composed by the film composer and orchestrator David Kitay that is used sparingly compared to *Juno's* original music. Kitay's cues do not impede on scenes, instead merely acting as segues between them and occasionally scoring dialogue-free exterior scenes featuring Enid walking around her town. The music that has the biggest impact on the film's negotiation of kitsch is a series of jazz and blues songs, particularly the Skip James number 'Devil Got My Woman.'

James's song plays a crucial role in the film; it functions as something that undercuts the ironic sentiment, and also acts as a narrative agent that helps to establish a bond between Enid and Seymour. Enid is first introduced to the record by Seymour at his garage sale. As Seymour talks her through his collection of LPs, Enid lets out a sarcastic 'Wow!' before buying the album for little more than a dollar. Returning home, Enid initially discards the record, instead preferring to indulge in '70s punk rock: in her bedroom, she listens to The Buzzcocks' 'What Do I Get' as she dyes her hair green and dresses up in a leather jacket and punky short skirt, hoping to find some solace in this anarchic subculture. However, after coming on the receiving end of a wisecrack for the first time in the film (a man in a comic book store quips, 'Who are you supposed to be? Cyndi Lauper?'), Enid returns home and disavows her new-found punkdom by throwing aside her Buzzcocks cassette and washing the dye from her hair. At a loose end, she puts Seymour's record on her turntable. The first song is a ragtime number that has little effect on her, but the following song, 'Devil Got My Woman', immediately grabs her attention. The camera focuses on Enid's muted expression as she listens to the song (Figure 48); it's the first time in the film that Enid connects to something without any ironic or camp value, and as Jason Gross noted in an essay in *Film Comment* this is a moment where Enid's sarcastic swagger and hipness 'visibly drains from her body'.[240] As the song continues to play, the camera slowly swings around Enid as she contemplates the song's lyrical emotion (Figure 49).

[240] Jason Gross, 'The *Ghost World* Soundtrack' in *Film Comment*, March 2002, p.16

Figure 48

Figure 49

The next day Enid revisits Seymour at his garage sale and asks if he has any similar records. Seymour remarks that there are not many records like 'Devil Got My Woman', but he offers to show her an original copy of the song, one of only five in existence. With her sarcasm somewhat dissipated, Enid responds with the word 'Wow!' yet again, although this time with much more sincerity.

Their relationship grows from this point forward; Enid discovers a kind of sincerity in Seymour that she hasn't experienced with Rebecca or anyone her own age, and ultimately her own embracing of kitsch begins to ebb away. This can be seen as a form of trans-generational solidarity between a disillusioned Gen-X-er (originating from a hippy past and angered by a consumerist, yuppie present) and a Generation Y kid who seems to have been born in the wrong era. The first instance of this is at a yard sale Enid has organised herself. Although she initially insists that 'everything must go', Enid finds it hard to part with some of her belongings. Her attachment to her possessions become less of an ironic engagement with kitsch,

and more of a sincere nostalgia for her childhood. In one of the last scenes in the film, Enid is in her bedroom packing away some old toys and finds an old children's record, 'Ribbon in My Hair'. Listening to the record while holding a stuffed toy rabbit (Figure 50), Enid is once again struck by a sincere wistfulness and is once again 'stripped of her cool'.[241]

Figure 50

Ghost World's critique of overtly bourgeois and capitalist culture ends with a degree of pessimism: as Seymour loses his job and faces moving back in with his mother (which, as Sconce notes, presents the 'ultimate Gen-X nightmare'),[242] Enid takes a bus out of town in an attempt to start a new life. The final piece of music in the film, a cue by Kitay, is a slow, minor-key piece that drips pathos; it expresses the desire to move on, but ultimately retains a degree of sadness that reflects the Enid's ennui existing in a 'stupid' world.

Unlike *Juno*'s use of twee music, the soundtrack to *Ghost World* acts as a counterpoint to the fascinations with kitsch objects. With *Juno*, and indeed other twee films such as *(500 Days of Summer)* and *Thumbsucker*, the indie-pop soundtrack and the kitsch mise-en-scène form an audio-visual unit. But although there may be disparity between *Ghost World*'s soundtrack and the other twee films mentioned in this chapter, they all use music in order to highlight smart cinema's (and indeed independent cinema's) ongoing preoccupation with consumer identity and ironic (dis)engagement with contemporary society and culture. The prominence of the music and references to music culture again inform a particular sense of indieness; in contrast to the flashy production of some Hollywood films, twee iconography, and indeed the sensibilities of indie-pop music, imbue the twee

[241] Gross, 'The *Ghost World* Soundtrack, p. 16
[242] Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the new American "smart" film', p. 366

films with almost a DIY quality. The hand-drawn imagery, the deadpan vocal performance in the music and the innocent, childlike attitude towards sex and relationships can be seen as a deliberate attempt to counterpoint the more spectacular qualities of Hollywood cinema – bombastic soundtracks, beautiful bodies and glossy production values.

In the next section of this chapter, I will move away from the comedy films from this decade and explore the more dramatic work of Paul Thomas Anderson and Darren Aronofsky. Like twee cinema's bold, playful visual style, the films of Anderson and Aronofsky similarly adopt a more pronounced artifice in order to convey a 'smart' tone. The soundtracks of these films, scored by original music rather than a selection of songs, are also important; they help to embellish a hyper-expressive, 'excessive' visual aesthetic, while the directors' collaborations with pop musicians consolidates the notion of the mélomane discussed in the first chapter.

ii. Pop musicians as film composers: the work of Jon Brion, Jonny Greenwood and Clint Mansell

This section will focus on the 'graduation' of pop musicians to film composers and the particularly hyper-expressive mode of scoring of some films. In his book *Overtones and Undertones*, Royal S. Brown made mention of the number of musicians from a pop background who dabbled in film scoring during the 1980s and into the '90s, pointing to Toto's music for David Lynch's *Dune* and the rootsy cues by Ry Cooder in Walter Hill's *The Long Riders* (1980) and *Johnny Handsome* (1990) as examples of a postmodern music that exists as an object in and of itself.[243] K. J. Donnelly has also suggested that the relocation to film scoring was a 'natural progression' for many pop musicians, and that it often showed a desire to be taken seriously as composers.[244] But one could also look at this from the other angle and suggest that, perhaps, it is was a natural progression for filmmakers to ask their favourite pop musicians for assistance in scoring their latest feature. Indeed, I would argue that a filmmaker's voice or tone could be neatly embellished by a score from a musician who shares these artistic sensibilities. In the first chapter, I noted how several indie directors have shown their 'melomania' through their musical referencing on film,[245] and indeed throughout this thesis I have referred to collaborations between directors and musicians based on a mutual appreciation of one another's work. However, since the around the mid-1990s it is fair to say that there has been a proliferation of popular musicians working in

[243] Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, pp. 238-239
[244] Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound*, p. 162
[245] Gorbman, 'Auteur Music', p. 150

soundtrack composition, particularly those from an alternative or indie background. Below is a table illustrating a selection of key independent films from the last two decades with original music by a popular musician or group. Some of these soundtracks may be a series of original songs, while some may be pop/rock-inspired instrumental cues. (The band of the composer appears in brackets.)

Film	Director	Composer / Original music by
*Night on Earth (*1991)	Jim Jarmusch	Tom Waits
Singles (1992)	Cameron Crowe	Paul Westerberg (The Replacements)
Gas Food Lodging (1992)	Allison Anders	J. Mascis (Dinosaur Jr.)
Jungle Fever (1993)	Spike Lee	Stevie Wonder
Even Cowgirls Get the Blues (1994)	Gus Van Sant	kd lang
Heavy (1995)	James Mangold	Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth)
Kids (1995)	Larry Clark	Lou Barlow (Sebadoh)
Bottle Rocket (1996)	Wes Anderson	Mark Mothersbaugh (Devo) [subsequently scored all of Anderson's films apart from *The Darjeeling Ltd* (2007)]
Walking and Talking (1996)	Nicole Holofcener	Billy Bragg
Lost Highway (1997)	David Lynch	Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails)
High Art (1998)	Lisa Cholodenko	Craig Wedren (Shudder to Think)
American Psycho (1998)	Mary Harron	John Cale
*Boys Don't Cry (*1999)	Kimberley Pierce	Nathan Larson (Shudder to Think)
The Virgin Suicides (1999)	Sofia Coppola	Air
Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai (1999)	Jim Jarmusch	The RZA (Wu Tang Clan)
Magnolia (1999)	Paul Thomas Anderson	Aimee Mann / Jon Brion
Go (1999)	Doug Liman	Brian Transeau (BT)
Manic (2001)	Jordan Melamed	Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth)
Storytelling (2001)	Todd Solondz	Belle & Sebastian
Requiem for a Dream (2001)	Darren Aronofsky	Clint Mansell (Pop Will Eat Itself) [subsequently scored Aronofsky's next two features, *The Fountain* (2006) and *The Wrestler* (2008)]
Things Behind the Sun (2001)	Allison Anders	Sonic Youth
Punch Drunk Love (2002)	Paul Thomas Anderson	Jon Brion
Kill Bill (2003)	Quentin Tarantino	The RZA
Pieces of April (2003)	Peter Hedges	Stephin Merritt (The Magnetic Fields)
Lost In Translation (2003)	Sofia Coppola	Kevin Shields (My Bloody Valentine)
The United States of Leland (2003)	Matthew Ryan Hoge	Jeremy Enigk
Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)	Michel Gondry	Jon Brion
Mysterious Skin (2004)	Gregg Araki	Robin Guthrie (The

		Cocteau Twins) and Harold Budd
Stranger Than Fiction (2005)	Marc Foster	Britt Daniel (Spoon)
*Thumbsucker (*2005)	Mike Mills	Tim De Laughter (The Polyphonic Spree)
Junebug (2005)	Phil Morrison	Yo La Tengo
Nacho Libre (2006)	Jared Hess	Beck (with Danny Elfman)
Old Joy (2006)	Kelly Reichardt	Yo La Tengo
The Squid and the Whale (2006)	Noah Baumbach	Dean Wareham and Britta Phillips (Luna)
Little Miss Sunshine (2006)	Jonathan Dayton & Valerie Faris	Devotchka
Dan In Real Life (2007)	Peter Hedges	Sondre Lerche
There Will Be Blood (2007)	Paul Thomas Anderson	Jonny Greenwood
*The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (*2007)	Andrew Dominik	Nick Cave and Warren Ellis
*Half Nelson (*2007)	Ryan Fleck	Broken Social Scene
Juno (2007)	Jason Reitman	Kimya Dawson (The Moldy Peaches)

From looking at this table, it is noticeable that many of these artists belong to fairly esoteric bands that have not had much mainstream exposure. Groups such as Sonic Youth, Spoon and Yo La Tengo are alternative rock acts that have gained coverage in publications such as *The Village Voice* (all three have received a place in their influential end-of-year 'Pazz and Jop' critics' list) and trend-setting music websites such as *Pitchfork*, as well as airplay on American college radio. However, they are not exactly household names. The proliferation of leftfield pop musicians scoring films is important for two reasons: firstly, each musician/band can embellish the style or tone of a film with their own particular musical sensibility, and secondly, each band can bring a certain kind brand value to a film. Particularly within the 'smart' canon of the 2000s, pop scorers with alternative/non-mainstream (i.e. 'smart') credence can play a role in the providing a sense of distinction.

This section will focus on the work of two directors and their collaborations with musicians who have made the transition from popular music to film scoring; I will consider Paul Thomas Anderson's relationship with Jon Brion (*Hard Eight*, *Magnolia*, *Punch-Drunk Love*) and Jonny Greenwood (*There Will Be Blood*), and Darren Aronofsky's work with Clint Mansell (notable credits include *Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *The Fountain*, *The Wrestler*). Each musician's work is indicative of a particular hyper-expressive, often 'excessive' form of cinema, while in terms of the wider context of popular music culture, these scores, particularly the collaboration between Anderson and Greenwood, reinforce the notion of certain directors as indie 'mélamanes'.

One trait of the scores that I will be analysing in this section is their

'excessive' quality. The terms 'excess' and 'excessive' have been used in Film Studies in different ways. Both Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell have written about 'excess' in classical cinema, particularly in terms of incongruous or unnecessary elements of a film that do not fit into a particular pattern. Bordwell points to Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) as an example of a film containing, in its opening scene, 'random colors, gestures, and sounds... utterly unjustified, even by aesthetic motivation.'[246] Thompson, in her analysis of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* (1944), defines excess as a series of incongruous stylistic parts which stand out and do not form any specific stylistic or narrative patterns.[247] Justin Wyatt elaborates that excess implies a 'gap in the motivation of the work,' and is something that is often found in advertising aesthetics.[248] To clarify, excess in this respect is a fleeting dissonance in style or a momentary lapse in stylistic consistency; it is a disconnect between the voice of the filmmaker and what is presented on screen. In terms of a more intentional form of excess, Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland have commented on the nature of a postclassical American cinema that is both classical and 'classical-plus'; while many postclassical films still adhere to the basic tenets of classical film form, their 'excessive' and occasionally 'knowing' nature often privileges spectacle above narrative.[249] Excess in this respect is a deliberate attempt to enhance the sense of spectacle; in terms of music, this may also be linked to Donnelly's discussion of the parodic, dominating nature of some post-classical scoring (in reference to Danny Elfman's *Batman* scores), in which some pieces of music appear to lack any 'direct interface with the action'.[250] The hyper-expressive aspects of scoring found in certain independent/Indiewood films similarly privileges the integrity of the music over the action itself, however the one fundamental difference is the nature of the music. Instead of pastiching classical film music, the scores of Brion, Greenwood and Mansell are more in touch with alternative forms of music, ranging from rock, through electronic to modern classical, minimalism and avant-garde. This focus on contemporary music is one way in which they communicate their sense of difference or indieness. Their scores are intentionally dissonant, intrusive and excessive; they bear a lot of similarities with the idea of to-be-listened-to music that appears in many other independent films that have been discussed throughout

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[246] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 53

[247] Kristin Thompson, 'The Concept of Cinematic Excess' in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984)

[248] Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 27

[249] Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland, 'Classical / post-classical narrative (*Die Hard*)' in *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis* (London: Arnold, 2002), pp. 27-79

[250] Donnelly, 'The Classical Film Score Forever?' p. 146

this thesis.

Although the work of Brion, Greenwood and Mansell is orchestral in its instrumentation, it is notable that their soundtracks contain a distinctively 'pop' structure; as Jon Brion explained in an interview with *Film Score Monthly*, his soundtrack for *Punch-Drunk Love* was intentionally composed as both a piece of film music and as an album that could be listened to at home.[251] This section will explore some of the ways in which these scores are related to forms of popular music and in touch with popular music culture, and by extension, help to provide a sheen of difference that separates these films from the mainstream. To begin with, I will examine some of Anderson's work, notably *Punch-Drunk Love* and *There Will Be Blood*, and their pop-like, allusive approach to scoring. I will then move on to look at Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream*, noting the composition of its score and how the music relates to wider aspects of popular music culture. This section will include some textual analysis, and will also attempt to locate these scores within a context of contemporary popular music culture. I shall map out various histories of contemporary film and pop music as I go along.

Paul Thomas Anderson

All of Anderson's films involve collaborations with popular musicians. His début feature, *Hard Eight* (titled *Sydney* in the US), a story of a down-and-out young man who is mentored by a seasoned professional gambler, is scored by a series of cues composed by LA-based musicians and producers Michael Penn and Jon Brion. Both musicians are veterans of LA's music scene, with Penn having performed as a guitarist and singer-songwriter since the late 1980s, and Brion having been a member of power-pop bands The Bats and The Grays, as well as a producer for other California-based artists such as Rufus Wainwright and Fiona Apple. Penn and Brion have also had residencies at the LA comedy and music club Largo, a venue that also regularly features other Anderson collaborators such as the actors and comedians John C. Reilly, Maya Rudolph, Paul F. Tompkins and Patton Oswalt. Anderson and Penn continued their working relationship on *Boogie Nights* (1997), with Brion appearing in a cameo role as a member of an awards ceremony band. However, it is *Magnolia*, Anderson's third feature, that is perhaps the most explicitly musical; it is an ensemble drama of disparate characters brought together through 'chance' (touching on some of the fatalist ideas that Sconce discusses) and features a soundtrack of original music by Brion and songs by Aimee Mann (some pre-existing and some original), many of which were co-written and/or produced

[251] Jeff Bond, 'Memory Bars' in *Film Score Monthly*, Vol. 9, n. 3, March 2004, p. 13

by Brion. Mann's songs provide mostly a non-digetic accompaniment, with the lyrics of romantic disappointment reflecting the themes of the film.[252] There is one instance of trans-diegetic music; in the middle of the film, Mann's 'Wise Up' begins to play non-diegetically, before the action cuts to each individual character singing along to the song. Pauline Reay notes that the presence of Mann's songs provide a thematic backbone to the film; lyrically they relate to the characters (with the original song 'Deathly' inspired by the story of Claudia), while musically they provide a sense of continuity as the action cuts across several different stories.[253] Although the music in Anderson's first three films certainly serves a formal purpose, what is curious is the way that Anderson's own fandom, of both film and music, has played a part in informing his artistic decisions.

Before becoming a filmmaker, Anderson, like Tarantino, worked in a video store, watching several films a day and becoming obsessed with the work of certain maverick directors (particularly Martin Scorsese, Jonathan Demme and Robert Altman). Mark Olsen in *Sight and Sound* suggests that this has ultimately led to Anderson becoming a part of a 'cinema of referencing' in which references to other movies (visual and aural) and deliberate casting (such as the inclusion of Altman regular Henry Gibson in a small role in *Magnolia*) mark out his films as the work of not just an auteur, but a cinephile.[254] Within Anderson's films, much of the mise-en-scène, iconography, and particularly the music, appear to refer to other works. These touches are not outright parody nor pastiche, and the music is often too consistent in style to be considered a hodgepodge or bricolage. The key term here is 'allusion', a nod or reference to a particular work that has been remodelled and reworked in order to fit a new context. In his essay 'The Future of Allusion', Noël Carroll posits that allusion is a common 'expressive device' among post-classical filmmakers, allowing them to 'make comments on the fictional worlds of their films.'[255] Although the essay was originally published in 1982 and Carroll was writing about 1970s American cinema, the process of cinematic allusion can still be seen in contemporary film, perhaps even more explicitly now. Anderson's films refer to other movies in a way that, to borrow Mary Orr's notion of allusion, 'eschews simple before-after hierarchies, for it is neither an original, a copy, a plenitude, nor the part for the whole, but connected parallels that take meaningfulness forward, and differently.'[256] In other words, in Anderson's work,

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[252] Pauline Reay, *Music in Film: Soundtracks and Synergy* (London: Wallflower, 2004), p. 60

[253] Reay, *Music in Film*, p. 60

[254] Mark Olsen, 'Singing in the Rain' in *Sight and Sound*, v. 10, n. 3, March 2000, p. 26

[255] Noël Carroll, 'The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies and Beyond' in *Interpreting the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 241

[256] Mary Orr, 'Quotation' in *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity Press,

allusion does not define the film as a whole, rather it exists to enable further embellishment of its style, tone and sensibility. Furthermore, as Linda Hutcheon has argued, the allusive qualities of a work allows for correspondence between two texts, but in a way that is distinct from parody or pastiche, which both have a stronger 'bitextual' foundation.[257] To use a musical phrase, Anderson's films can be seen 'remixes'; not outright pastiches nor parodies, but films that refer to and take on aspects of musical works, and indeed elements of other films by directors such as Scorsese (a long SteadiCam shot in *Boogie Nights* in particular appears to echo a famous long tracking shot in *Goodfellas* [1990]) and most notably Altman. Altman's influence has been noted by several critics; James Mottram points out that, narratively speaking, Anderson has been 'remaking Altman's films one by one', comparing *Boogie Nights* to *The Player*'s Hollywood insider narrative, and *Magnolia*'s multi-threaded plotlines with that of *Short Cuts*,[258] while Andrew Syder also notes that Anderson idolised Altman since becoming interested in filmmaking.[259] Indeed, as Anderson himself said in an interview with *The Guardian*: 'If people want to call me Little Bobbie Altman, then I have no problem with that at all.'[260] In this sense, his films and their soundtracks should not be seen as outright imitations, but rather original films which allude to other works and, in the case of the music, sample and rework pre-existing soundtracks and compositions.

A musical form of this allusion can be found in *Punch-Drunk Love*. The film, which follows a tormented businessman, Barry Egan, and his fledgling relationship with his sister's friend Lena, contains a score by Brion that is centred around variations of a melody derived from Harry Nilsson's 'He Needs Me' from Altman's live action adaptation of *Popeye* (1982).[261] Rather than being an empty reference, the allusions to Nilsson's song serves a purpose, with the refrain from *Punch-Drunk Love*'s score (titled 'Punch-Drunk Melody') becoming the film's tonal centre. As the film progresses, the melody takes on a leitmotivic quality and comes to signifies romance, while deviations from the theme (mostly consisting of audible, 'excessive' percussion-based cues) are used to express a sense of chaos.

2003), p. 139

257 Linda Hutcheon, 'Defining Parody' in *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 42-43

258 James Mottram, *The Sundance Kids: How the Mavericks Took Back Hollywood* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2006), p. 131

259 Andrew Syder, 'Paul Thomas Anderson' in *Contemporary North American Film Directors: A Wallflower Critical Guide* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), p. 14

260 Xan Brooks, '"I can be a real arrogant brat"' (interview with P. T. Anderson) in *The Guardian*, http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2003/jan/27/artsfeatures1

261 *Punch-Drunk Love* is also the second film in which Anderson has used music by Nilsson: *Magnolia*'s opening title sequence is scored by an Aimee Mann cover of Nilsson's 'One'.

It should be noted that while Brion's score plays a large role in underscoring the film's themes of love and chaos, the first eight minutes take place in relative silence, with no non-diegetic musical accompaniment. It begins in the protagonist Barry's office with a dimly-lit, long static shot of Barry on the phone, his desk positioned in the top left corner of the frame. Following an awkward phone conversation, the scene begins to move into chaos as Barry steps outside of his office on to the forecourt outside. A slow tracking shot moves away from the forecourt towards the road, where a car in the distance slowly moves into the foreground before spectacularly flipping over. A van then speeds past the accident scene, stops outside the forecourt where Barry is standing and deposits a harmonium on the side of the street before driving away. This two-minute sequence (involving a SteadiCam and only three detectable cuts) features no non-diegetic sound, with the sense of chaos going unscored. Six minutes later, after a frenzied Barry runs to retrieve the harmonium from the street, the opening chords of the melody begin to play (in a cue called 'Overture') as Barry examines the keyboard in his office. The cue is briefly interrupted by some percussion as workmate Lance enters the building (foreshadowing the percussive cues that arrive in later scenes), before building to its crescendo as the opening titles play.

Later reprisals of the 'Punch-Drunk Melody' come to signify romance and Barry's contentment. The motif occurs a further three times in the film, all in scenes featuring Barry and Lena together. Meanwhile, in contrast to the melody, a series of frenetic, percussion-based cues are used to express a sense of chaos. The first instance of this occurs immediately after the opening credits. As the titles finish, 'Overture' segués into another piece, 'Tabla,' in a smooth transition. 'Tabla' is used to score a chaotic scene in which Barry is serving customers whilst being distracted by phone calls from his sisters. The scene is again shot in a series of long takes, with the camera following Barry as he moves back and forth from his position at the front desk to the back of the room where the telephone is located. The music bubbles underneath the action, with a succession of electronic buzzes and drum crashes scoring Barry's agitated behaviour. However, the excesses of the music – it rises and falls in volume seemingly at random, while it is rhythmically erratic – underpins its to-be-listened-to quality. A later cue, titled 'Hands and Feet' is similarly used to underscore chaos in opposition to the love-based leitmotif. The piece is first used to score another frenzied scene at Barry's workplace in which he has to deal with a series of nuisance phone calls as well as an impromptu visit from one of his sisters. As he becomes increasingly flustered, an intrusive non-diegetic flurry of snare drums and cymbal crashes dominates the soundtrack, in one instance drowning out the dialogue between Barry and his sister. Elements of

‘Hands and Feet’ and ‘Tabla’ recur at various points throughout the film, often during moments of stress.

The allusive properties of Brion’s soundtrack position it within a pop music tradition of recycling, remodelling and remixing; as well as the recurrence of the ‘Punch-Drunk Melody,’ the original Nilsson song ‘He Needs Me’ appears midway through both the film and the soundtrack album, while the LP ends with Brion’s original song ‘Here We Go’, a piano-led pop ballad that uses the Punch-Drunk refrain as its main hook. The transition between the cues is also where Brion's pop sensibility approach comes to the fore. His quote that, 'I want an album that you can listen to as an album' is echoed in the musical structure of *Punch Drunk Love*'s soundtrack album.[262] 'Overture' and 'Tabla,' which appear alongside one another in the film, are Track 1 and Track 2 on the album, and the transition between the two pieces acts purely as a musical segué that brings attention to the flow and continuity of a CD. A similar juxtaposition can be found with the use of Nilsson’s ‘He Needs Me.’ An extended version of the song (running at seven minutes as opposed to the original’s three-and-a-half minutes) is used to score a section in which Barry visits Hawaii to meet up with Lena; the music plays over a series of scenes as Barry tries to locate Lena’s hotel, and finishes as the couple embrace in a hotel lobby. As the lobby scene dissolves into the next scene, the track segués into ‘Waikiki’ by the Hawaiian group Ladies K, a slow ballad featuring a slack-key guitar. Just as with ‘Overture’ and ‘Tabla’, ‘He Needs Me’ and ‘Waikiki’ are located next to one another on the soundtrack CD (tracks 8 and 9 respectively), again emphasising the pop-based continuity of Brion’s score.

A similar pop structure can be found in *There Will Be Blood*. However, unlike *Punch Drunk Love*, *There Will Be Blood* lacks any recurring motifs, consisting instead of roughly thirteen cues that appear individually and do not reappear again; the soundtrack album mirrors this, with eleven tracks and no repetitions or reprives. The next section will examine the function of *There Will Be Blood*’s soundtrack in presenting a sense of excess, while I will also discuss its ties with popular music culture.

There Will Be Blood is Anderson’s first feature adapted from a pre-existing source. Based on Upton Sinclair's novel *Oil*, the film is set in 1890s California and focuses on the rise of an oil tycoon, Daniel Plainview, and his relationships (and conflicts) with his adopted son H. W. Plainview and the local preacher Eli Sunday. Once again, *There Will Be Blood* is an allusive film – the film's iconography and general reworking of the western genre echoes Altman's *McCabe and Mrs Miller*, while comparisons have also been made between Daniel and *Chinatown*'s Noah

[262] Bond, ‘Memory Bars’, p. 14

Cross,[263] but in terms of soundtrack, it differs slightly from the allusion found in *Punch-Drunk Love*. While *Punch-Drunk Love* explicitly refers to and samples Nilsson's music from *Popeye, There Will Be Blood* alludes to the past work of the film's composer, Jonny Greenwood, in particular his score for the 2003 documentary *Bodysong* and an orchestral work entitled 'Popcorn Superhet Receiver.' For the next few paragraphs I will firstly give a brief overview of the production history of the film and the collaboration between Anderson and Greenwood before analysing parts of the score in terms of their excessive qualities.

There Will Be Blood was filmed during late 2006 with Anderson going into post-production in early 2007. With no composer to work with at the time, Anderson edited rushes of the film with pre-existing pieces taken from Greenwood's 'Popcorn Superhet Receiver', a 2004 commission by the BBC Concert Orchestra.[264] Again, like with Aimee Mann on *Magnolia*, the decision to use Greenwood's music as a temp score was partly informed by Anderson's own fandom; he has noted in interviews that he is a follower of Radiohead's music,[265] while he was also an admirer of Greenwood's score for *Bodysong*, and even gave a quote for the film's publicity:

> I remember seeing *Bodysong* and feeling like I was in a trance. A wonderful collection of the two simple things a film has to work with; pictures and music. I hope to think this is a new kind of movie; emotion through the basic tools of movies – some sound and some pictures.[266]

After experimenting with Greenwood's pieces during the initial stage of post-production, Anderson contacted the composer to ask if he would be interested in adding some new original music.[267] For preparation, Greenwood researched American church music from the late 1800s and early 1900s, and limited himself to only working with instruments from the period, with the intention of producing a score that sounded 'as if something had gone slightly wrong with it.'[268] Pointing to Stanley Kubrick's use of Krzysztof Penderecki in *The Shining*, Greenwood noted that it was possible to include music that sounded 'wrong' without having to resort to modern instrumentation: 'Even though you know the sounds you're hearing are coming from very old technology, you can do things with the classical orchestra that unsettle you, that are slightly *wrong*, that have some kind of sinister

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[263] Nick James, 'Black Gold' in *Sight and Sound*, v.18, n.2, February 2008, p. 32
[264] James Bell, 'Interview: Jonny Greenwood' in *Sight and Sound*, v.18, n.2, February 2008, p. 34
[265] Chris Willman, 'There Will Be Music' at *Entertainment Weekly* (http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20158721,00.html)
[266] From a list of *Bodysong* press quotes at http://www.hotpropertyfilms.com/press/
[267] Bell, 'Interview: Jonny Greenwood', p. 34
[268] Bell, 'Interview: Jonny Greenwood', p. 34

undercurrent.'[269] The result is a score of dissonant strings and arrhythmic percussion, comprised of a mix of original cues and pre-existing pieces from previous compositions *Bodysong* and 'Popcorn Superhet Receiver'. Within the score itself is a good deal of allusion to other classical works and other pieces of film music; as well as being influenced by music from *The Shining*, throughout the composition Anderson sent Greenwood pieces of Max Steiner's score for *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*,[270] while Greenwood's solo compositions have been inspired by the works of minimalist composers such as Penderecki (whose string composition, *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* was one of the main influences on 'Popcorn Superhet Receiver') and Arvo Pärt.[271] This referencing and layering has the effect of altering the relationship between the soundtrack and the image. The score has no consistent tonal centre or leitmotivic structure, and is comprised of thirteen individual pieces, none of which are reprised or repeated. Each piece is used to score a particular scene, with many scenes shot in a series of long takes.

The first music cue to arrive is an excerpt from 'Popcorn Superhet Receiver' (the specific piece is unnamed and is not included on the soundtrack album). The cue arises during the opening scene of the film in which a young Daniel is seen alone mining for silver. For the first five minutes of this scene, the only sounds that can be heard are the diegetic rattles and hammerings of Daniel's mining tools. After Daniel falls and breaks his leg, he winches himself out of the pit, accompanied by very quiet, high-pitched, string-like drone (performed on an Ondes Martenot, an electrical musical instrument from the 1920s). The drone rises in volume once Daniel clambers to the surface, and for the next eight minutes of action (a selection of scenes in which Daniel's silver mining company acquires more land and begins searching for oil), the drone recurs intermittently.

A scene from the middle of the film featuring the explosion of an oil derrick is also partly scored by a pre-existing piece by Greenwood. In this scene, two separate tracks play on top of one another: an original string-based cue entitled 'There Will Be Blood' plus another piece called 'Convergence', a percussive cue originally from *Bodysong*. By using a part-pre-existing cue, the scene is pinned to the music rather than vice-versa; however, unlike other films that fix the image track to the music, this scene is not edited on the beat, instead containing very few cuts and several long tracking shots. The music begins as Daniel rushes away from the derrick carrying an injured H.W.; the action is filmed in a single wide shot, with Daniel running towards the camera in the foreground as the oil spurts out of the

[269] Anonymous article, 'OK Composer' in *Empire*, January 2008, p. 28
[270] Anonymous, 'OK Composer', p. 28
[271] Willman, 'There Will Be Music', http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20158721,00.html

ground in the background (Figure 51).

Figure 51

In this instance, the chaos of the action is not reflected in the visual composition; the relative stillness of the scene, the lack of close-ups and the absence of any fast cutting allows the action to unfold almost in real time. The sense of chaos is entirely conveyed by the music, with the two cues playing throughout. 'There Will Be Blood' is a two-minute cue consisting of droning dissonant strings – in an attempt to make the piece sound 'slightly wrong', Greenwood detuned the orchestra's lower strings, resulting in a high-pitched 'throbbing effect'.[272] Meanwhile, 'Convergence' revolves around a repetitive, clattering drum beat in 2/4 time, sounding almost like an irregular heartbeat; this is soon accompanied by more percussion as the piece builds, with drums, tambourines, cymbals and wooden blocks being struck in irregular rhythms. The quiet dissonant strings play underneath, at first drowned out by the percussion before rising in volume; the strings and the percussion eventually build into a cacophony. The static nature of this section, with no cutting, allows the music to dominate the scene. The music is deliberately excessive.

The excessiveness of the music in this instance almost detaches it from the image. Indeed, with this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that the soundtrack album has had as much attention as a standalone piece of music as the film itself. The release and reception of *There Will Be Blood*'s score gained the attention of the popular music press and the online fan community. Greenwood's involvement, also obviously sparked interest amongst the press, and particularly fans of Radiohead. The Radiohead fansite, ateaseweb.com, followed the collaboration between Anderson and Greenwood closely, posting regular new updates and links to

[272] Bell, 'Interview: Jonny Greenwood' p. 34

interviews, previews and reviews, with hundreds of enthusiastic comments from the fan community.[273] The soundtrack album contains ten tracks, each of them original pieces, with the sections of *Bodysong* and 'Popcorn Superhet Receiver' left off.

This discussion of pop musicians as film composers will continue with a study of Darren Aronofsky's collaborations with Clint Mansell. Like the work of Brion and Greenwood, Mansell's compositions are similarly excessive and dominate the diegesis.

Darren Aronofsky and Clint Mansell

The working relationship between Aronofsky and Mansell began during the production of Aronofsky's début feature, *Pi.* After originally scoring his film with a selection of techno and electronica pieces, Aronofsky brought in Mansell when he and his producers were unable to clear several of the tracks.[274] Mansell had previously had no formal musical training or experience in classical composition, and during the 1980s and '90s was most 'famous' as the frontman of the cult British dance/rock group Pop Will Eat Itself (PWEI). Named after a phrase coined by the NME journalist David Quantick (describing the constant referencing and recycling in 1980s pop music), PWEI's sound was grounded in punchy guitar riffs and industrial dance beats, while the band's political stance was closely affiliated with left-wing, at times anarchic, sentiment. Mansell's cues on *Pi* remain grounded in that industrial, electronic style, mostly composed on old keyboards and sequencers from his days in the band.[275]

Requiem for a Dream was their first film together in which the soundtrack was composed during filming. Instead of using a traditional temp score of pre-existing music, Mansell provided Aronofsky with a series of original cues composed on his electronic equipment, with musical ideas being incorporated into the design of the film.[276] In *Film Score Monthly*, Mansell details their working relationship and the ideas behind their soundtracks:

> The way Morricone works with Sergio Leone, the way Angelo Badalamenti works with David Lynch... these directors built relationships with their composers which allowed more things to come through than just music and visuals. They developed

[273] A list of articles relating to Greenwood's *There Will Be Blood* score can be found at http://www.ateaseweb.com/tag/there-will-be-blood/

[274] Anonymous author, 'Dark Dream: Behind the Score to *Requiem for a Dream*' in *Film Score Monthly,* Vol. 5, n. 8, September 2000, p. 17

[275] Anonymous, 'Dark Dream', p. 17

[276] Anonymous, 'Dark Dream', p. 17

> relationships that were really intertwined. On top of that they had specific themes within their films that were repetitive and helped to tell the story... We felt that a lot of film music these days was very bland and had big sweeping orchestras but did not really say anything beyond, 'Oh, this is supposed to be tense' or, 'Oh this is supposed to be sad.' There were no recognizable themes.[277]

Both the film and the soundtrack album is split into four rough segments: 'Summer', 'Fall', 'Winter' and 'Spring'. Across all movements, one recurring motif, titled 'Lux Aeterna', plays at regular intervals and becomes the 'backbone' of the film (and indeed, it has since gone on to become one of the most recognisable themes in contemporary film music, used in re-orchestrated form in trailers for *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, as bumper music for Sky Sports News and in countless other TV spots and trailers).[278] The piece was composed by Mansell on Roland JV-880 synth module, and later orchestrated and recorded as a string version by the Kronos Quartet. The balance between synth elements and strings was an attempt by Mansell to achieve a sense of 'extra rhythm and drive... and a certain thickness of sound', while the Kronos Quartet's pieces act almost as a Greek chorus, appearing at regular intervals to provide emotional underscoring. Mansell notes that an early scene involving Harry stealing Sara's television is scored by a sequence of dissonant strings that was recorded while the Kronos Quartet were 'tuning up', almost as if they are about to participate in a live performance.[279] The reprises of 'Lux Aeterna' at the beginning of each movement are performed slightly differently. Beginning in 'Summer', the cue plays softly, with the strings playing solely without any other noise. As the characters begin to fall into addiction, later reprises of the theme become more twisted; at the beginning of the 'Winter' segment', the cue plays accompanied by a looped whipping noise. The music plays underneath a sequence in which a drug-dazed Sara flees her apartment and runs down the street; the scene is visually surreal, shot at a high angle and incorporating time-lapse photography. Sara moves down the street in slow motion, almost in time with the gentle pace of 'Lux Aeterna"s strings, while ghostly figures rush past her at speed, mirroring the frenetic, more rhythmic pace of the looped electronic noise (Figure 52).

[277] Anonymous, ‘Dark Dream’, p. 17
[278] Anonymous, ‘Dark Dream’, p. 17
[279] Anonymous, ‘Dark Dream’, p. 19

Figure 52

Cues involving the collision between synths and strings drive most of the action in the later part of the film, helping to foreground the film's excessive qualities. Quiet, minimal electronic cues pulsate in the background of some scenes, while in others, particularly in the more dramatic moments, loud string stabs and electronic percussion accentuate the overblown aspects of the action. Indeed, the content of the film itself is excessive; the suffering of the characters and the general air of pessimism (some, like the critics Sconce mentions, may even call it 'grimness') occasionally seems overblown. Characters are offered no hope nor redemption; the film is so relentless in its portrayal of suffering that it verges on the ridiculous, with a series of 'grim' events that snowball into a finale that Xan Brooks in *Sight and Sound* describes as a 'rush for destruction.' The film ends with the various characters meeting a range of grim fates, including turning to prostitution to fund their habit, receiving electro-shock treatment in an asylum, or having a needle-tracked arm amputated.[280] The film has a strangely ambiguous tone; the performances are completely straight and the film's central message appears very serious, but the excessiveness of it, described by Brooks as a 'queasy blend of sentiment and cruelty,' means that the film occasionally drifts into something more parodic. Perhaps as a comment on its excessive grimness, fans of the film on YouTube have posted videos of the film's trailer ironically re-cut to resemble a romantic comedy.[281]

The film's sense of smartness can be found in its excessive qualities. While

[280] Xan Brooks, *Requiem for a Dream* review in *Sight and Sound* (v.11, n.2, February 2001), p. 49

[281] See 'Requiem for a Dream... the chick flick!' at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NCB1TnFzFY [accessed 11/09/2010] and 'Requiem of a Dream "Recut" Trailer' at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8Fy6ErlsXs [accessed 11/09/2010]

Sconce notes that a unifying trait across many smart films is a sense of 'dampened affect' (in which there appears a disconnect between the 'grim' subject matter and its deadpan delivery), in *Requiem for a Dream* there appears to be a *heightened* sense of affect, or excess. The film's frenetic style, featuring numerous hyperbolic techniques such as fast cutting, crash zooms, point-of-view SnorriCam shots and time-lapse photography, moves away from what Sconce describes as a form of stylistic 'blankness' and becomes the polar opposite. However, the result is actually the same; while some smart films appear underplayed (resulting in an ironic distance from the often unpleasant subject matter), *Requiem for a Dream* overplays to the point of excess, resulting in a similar disconnect, albeit from the other side. The use of music anchors this sense of separation; the excesses of Mansell's score (loud in volume, fluctuating between extreme high and low pitch sounds, and occasionally atonal or arrythmic) allows for an exploration of emotion that is not naturalistic, but rather heightened and subjective. While the music roughly matches the emotion on screen (for instance, panic is signified by pulsating drum beats and high-pitched synth effects), the use regular of discordant sounds and chaotic rhythms (which play prominently in the diegesis) provide a form of expression that frequently moves beyond a naturalistic reflection of emotion and into an expressionistic and dream-like aesthetic.

The aesthetic that Aronofsky adopts involves a unique relationship between the cinematography, editing and music. In a Deleuzian analysis of the film, Anna Powell has mentioned that the effects of drug use on the characters' bodies are explored aesthetically by the use of a Snorri-Cam. Like the nightclub scene in *Go*, the use of the Snorri-Cam accentuates the out-of-body sensations of the drug user, resulting in a splitting of subject and object, as Powell notes: 'Aronofsky's intention to split the subject and object is realised, expressing affective disjunction between narcosis and normal perception. The film's visualisation of such skewed perspective relativises relations between actual and virtual.'[282] Powell's breakdown of the film focuses mainly on its cinematography and the cinematic visualisation of addicted bodies, providing an astute exploration of the film's negotiations with subjectivity. While it is not my intention to expand upon a Deleuzian analysis of *Requiem for a Dream* and its score, Powell's analysis also provides some insight into the 'excessive' nature of the film. The surreal visuals and hallucinatory cinematography exaggerate the film's grim traits, with Mansell's score serving as a vital musical component. Scenes are occasionally accompanied by pulsating drums and sequences of electronic bleeps, mirroring the heartbeats and the rushing

[282] Anna Powell, 'Pharmacoanalysis' in *Deleuze, Altered States and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 76

nervous sensations of the drug-addled bodies.

This expression is most apparent in the closing section of the film where music plays a vital role; the score intertwines with an accelerated montage sequence – the music growing in volume as the cutting accelerates – before culminating in a crescendo. This sequence is music video-like in its rhythmic structure, with each cut coming on the beat and changes in the rhythm of the music corresponding to changes in the pace of the montage. In this sense, and in light of the film's subject matter of drug use and addiction, the musical sensibility can be likened to *Go* in terms of its hallucinatory style, or indeed *Spun* (2002), directed by music video specialist Jonas Åkerlund, that also features hypnotic visuals and a sense of drug-addled surrealism. However, the closing sequence in *Requiem* has a visceral quality that aims to disorientate the viewer through the intensity of its action. The five-minute sequence contains more than one hundred cuts, all edited rhythmically in order to mirror the mindset of drug addiction.[283] Such is the frequency of the cuts, David Bordwell notes that the sequence helps brings the average shot length for the whole film down to less than two seconds.[284] The section is scored by a piece called 'Meltdown', performed largely by the Kronos Quartet but pinned by a driving synthesised beat from Mansell, and incorporating pieces of cut-up dialogue that are looped in time with the music. The strings play in sharp, staccato bursts (at times echoing Bernard Herrmann's famous string stabs in *Psycho*), with a disorientating juxtaposition between low-pitched drones and dissonant high-pitched string stabs; as the piece progresses, loud, high-pitched bursts of synth are layered on top of the strings to provide extra dissonance. The music video essence of the sequence is found in the editing: as Mansell notes, all of the cuts were mathematically determined, with each acceleration in the montage shortening the shot-length by half. 'Meltdown' was composed with this in mind, with Mansell ensuring that the piece was rhythmically consistent.[285] The effect of this is twofold: firstly it places the music at the foreground of the sequence, heightening the affect, accentuating its to-be-listened-to properties and driving the visual aspects of the montage, while secondly it highlights the pop influences at work in *Requiem for a Dream*'s score.

There is a pop sensibility in the construction of Mansell's soundtracks; although his scores do not contain pop songs, several of the cues are influenced just as much by contemporary electronica and the avant-garde as classical music. Furthermore, the involvement of the Kronos Quartet, whose work is grounded in

[283] Anonymous, 'Dark Dream', p. 18
[284] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, p. 122
[285] Anonymous, 'Dark Dream', p. 18

the modern rather than classical (taking their influence from minimalists such as Steve Reich rather than pre-twentieth century composers) helps to bring the soundtrack away from Romantic traditions and into a more contemporary realm. Mansell's approach of mixing aspects of rock, electronica and modern classical can be likened to a movement of indie rock music known as 'post-rock' in which conventional pop song structures are eschewed in favour of a longer, more elaborate, almost 'progressive' style. Ryan Hibbert describes the ideals of post-rock as aiming to distinguish itself from pop or generic rock music; it plays up its artistic value and downplays ironic engagement to assume a kind of 'loftiness associated with high art' and to secure a 'cultural value predicated on exoticism and grandeur.'[286] In terms of its style and instrumentation, post-rock is often non-vocal and rejects a typical verse-chorus form in favour of slower, more complex structures, with multi-layered instrumentation, occasionally irregular time signatures and alternating quiet/loud dynamics. As Hibbert notes:

> Post rock music aims for depth and drama, and demands long, unbroken periods of listening to be rewarding. In contrast to the short, raw, rather preclusive tunes of the previous generation, post-rock bands very patiently elaborate on a simple, monotonous strain, thus establishing the 'song' as something that slowly develops... Classical instruments, particularly strings but winds too, help make the argument for post-rock as high art, imbuing the musicians with a dignified orchestral aura rather than the flashier, more juvenile one of a rock band.[287]

The cues in Mansell's scores, partly because of their mixture of 'organic' and 'synthetic' instrumentation, appear to fall between pop/rock and classical minimalist traditions. The fact that Mansell's score to Aronofsky's *The Fountain* (again in collaboration with The Kronos Quartet) features contributions from the Scottish post-rock band Mogwai also lends credence to the post-rock sensibilities of these soundtracks, and indeed this is further supported by the soundtrack albums receiving critical attention in the online pop music press.[288] Mansell has even performed his film music live in a gig context; his band line-up complements the idea of a bricolage sensibility, with Mansell on keyboards, synths and a MacBook, a drummer with live percussion and electronic drum pads, electric guitarists and bassists and a string quartet. This bricolage of rock, electronic and classical in one setting bridges a void between art music and rockist performance styles. The post-

[286] Hibbert, 'What is Indie Rock?', p. 65
[287] Hibbert, 'What is Indie Rock?', p. 66
[288] See Brandon Stousy's review of *The Fountain* soundtrack at Pitchfork (http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/9726-the-fountain-ost/) and Nick Greer's review at Sputnik Music (http://www.sputnikmusic.com/review/10435/Kronos-Quartet-and-Mogwai-The-Fountain-OST/)

rock-esque quiet/loud dynamics of *Requiem*'s score also helps to foreground the excessive elements of the film.

In striving toward a form of film music that balances the contemporary with the classical, Mansell and Aronofsky's soundtracks have become musical objects in and of themselves. Both *Requiem for a Dream* and *The Fountain* were published by the Californian record company Nonesuch Records, a specialist label that promotes contemporary classical (including many releases by or featuring the Kronos Quartet), world music and rock and folk. The involvement of a label such as Nonesuch once again highlights the niche market that these soundtracks have carved out; while classical scores have found a home on labels such as Varèse Sarabande, the role of Nonesuch (who have also released the soundtracks for *Pieces of April*, *Punch-Drunk Love* and *There Will Be Blood*) has been to promote film soundtracks involving modernist, avant-garde or pop composers such as Philip Glass and Bill Frisell.

The interactions between the films of Anderson and Aronofsky and popular music culture play a large role in informing the independent spirit of these productions. As well as the alternative value of employing former pop musicians such as Greenwood and Mansell, with *There Will Be Blood* and *Requiem for a Dream*, the tone of the drama is transformed by their relationships with their soundtracks; while a classical score would enhance the action through the use of subtle narrative cueing,[289] the work of Anderson and Aronofsky uses excessive pieces of music to exaggerate the artifice and enhance their off-centre, idiosyncratic forms of spectacle, in effect informing these films' sense of difference. In the next section of this chapter, I will explore how this sense of difference can manifest itself in the opposite way. By looking at a more naturalistic approach to filmmaking, I will examine a selection of low budget films that use music to convey a sense ennui through the use of a lo-fi, indie soundtrack.

iii. Pop music and lo-fi sensibilities in low budget independent film since 2000

While the excessive works of Anderson and Aronofsky and the collection of 'twee' films discussed earlier epitomise a certain type of 'Indiewood' filmmaking – in terms of both their construction (a 'knowing' artifice) and position within the industry (distributed by major studio subsidiaries) – the antithesis can be found in a collection of lower budget films made in the same decade. Films from the 'mumblecore' movement (to be discussed in greater detail later) as well as other low-budget movies such as Gus Van Sant's *Paranoid Park* (2007), Kelly

[289] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 73

Reichardt's *Old Joy* and *Wendy and Lucy*, Alex Holdridge's *In Search of a Midnight Kiss* (2007), and to an extent John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* (2006) reflect the smart sensibilities and wide themes of alienation and social anxiety that can be found throughout American independent cinema, although their style, and indeed production and distribution processes, differ greatly. In place of the multicoloured, camp style of twee cinema, or the dramatic excess of Aronofsky, these films utilise a naturalistic performance style (almost mumbled speech, frequently punctuated by long silences) and often a verité-esque visual sensibility (long takes, bare artifice and frequent use of close-ups) to reflect the growing isolation and alienation of their protagonists. Compared to the hyper-expressive audio-visual aesthetic of Aronofsky and P. T. Anderson, these films are also much quieter, but although their aesthetic styles and production methods may differ, their interaction with music culture and their position within a greater pop cultural context is similar.

This section will explore the work of some new independent directors who have come to the attention of festival-goers and critics since 2000. I will firstly explore the 'mumblecore' movement: a collective of low-budget filmmakers using new digital technology to produce and distribute films that reflect common themes of isolation and ennui amongst American post-college twentysomethings. I will examine their approach to the soundtrack as well as the movement's interactions with local music cultures, paying particular attention to the aesthetic function of the music in Andrew Bujalski's *Mutual Appreciation* (2005). The second part of this section will focus on the naturalistic films of Kelly Reichardt, examining her employment of pop musicians (Yo La Tengo, Will Oldham) and the use of folk-influenced acoustic cues to underscore a sense of separation that exists between her protagonists and contemporary society.

Mumblecore

As lines between Hollywood/independent and mainstream/alternative continue to become increasingly blurred, it is essential to note the changes that have taken place in terms of technology, production and distribution outside the Hollywood system. While critics such as Geoff King and J. Berra note that mainstream indie cinema (which has been the focus of the bulk of this thesis) is essentially 'dependent' on some form of corporate studio sponsorship,[290] independent

[290] James Berra, *Declarations of Independence* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008). In an recent economic study into contemporary US indie cinema, Berra posits that through their conception, production, marketing and distribution, the majority of 'independent' American films are actually unavoidably 'dependent' on some form of negotiation with a corporate giant. Berra, like King, notes that while the issue of co-production muddies the waters in debates surrounding indie-ness, there is still often a thematic/aesthetic deviation from commercial Hollywood cinema.

filmmakers away from the commercial industry (along with other artists and musicians) have enjoyed increased productivity and easier access to distribution channels thanks to technological advances. Digital cameras, home editing software and access to various forms of new media communication (notably user-generated websites such as YouTube, Myspace and Twitter) have allowed new young filmmakers to conveniently produce work with very little financial input, and promote it conveniently.

This new approach to low-budget filmmaking began to attract the attention of film festival programmers in the mid-2000s, notably the South By South West (SXSW) film festival in Austin, Texas. Following the screenings of three films at SXSW in 2005 – *The Puffy Chair* (2005) by Mark and Jay Duplass, *Mutual Appreciation* (2005) by Andrew Bujalski, and *Kissing on the Mouth* (2005) by Joe Swanberg (a film made 'in response' to Bujalski's previous feature *Funny Ha Ha* [2002]) – a group of like-minded, digi-savvy independent filmmakers started to network and exchange ideas.[291] After further networking opportunities at other film festivals, as well as a mutual appreciation (so to speak) for each others' work, directors like Bujalski, Swanberg and the Duplasses, along with other low-budget filmmakers such as Aaron Katz (*Dance Party USA* [2006], *Quiet City* [2007]), Ry-Russo Young (*Orphans* [2007]), Lynn Shelton (*We Go Way Back* [2006], *Humpday* [2008]) and Todd Rohal (*The Guatemalan Handshake* [2006]) began collaborating on a number of various projects, taking on acting, cinematography, editing and co-writing roles in each other's films. The coalescence of this wave began to attract the attention of journalists and festival-goers at subsequent SXSW events and other international film festivals, being ascribed a variety of names by different film critics: notable examples include Generation DIY, MySpace Neo-Realism,[292] The New Talkies, the Slackavetes wave,[293] and 'postgraduate naturalism',[294] although the term that seems to have stuck the most is 'mumblecore,' a word coined by the sound mixer Eric Masunaga during post-production of the 2002 film *Funny Ha Ha*.[295] It is interesting to note that, despite these films' noticeably poor visual aesthetic (often shot in natural light on DV or occasionally on cheap 16mm film stock), the term 'mumblecore' derives from the films' lo-fi aural qualities. The

[291] J. Hoberman, 'It's Mumblecore!' in *The Village Voice*, Aug 14 2007 (available online at http://www.villagevoice.com/2007-08-14/film/it-s-mumblecore/)
[292] Hoberman, 'It's Mumblecore!'
[293] Amy Taubin, 'All Talk?' in *Film Comment* 43.6 (Nov. 2007), p.45
[294] Nick Pinkerton, *Nights and Weekends* review in *The Village Voice*, Oct 8 2008 (available online at http://www.villagevoice.com/2008-10-08/film/joe-sawnberg-and-greta-gerwig-attempt-to-tell-the-truth-in-nights-and-weekends/)
[295] Michael Koresky, 'DVD Re-Run Interview: The Mumblecore Movement? Andrew Bujalski on his *Funny Ha Ha* from *indieWIRE* (http://www.indiewire.com/article/dvd_re-run_interview_the_mumblecore_movement_andrew_bujalski_on_his_funny_h/)

mumbliness of the soundtrack comes from a lack of top range sound recording/mixing equipment and also, as Amy Taubin observes, through a particularly naturalistic performance style. The use of non-professional actors in many of these films often results in an off-key, stilted delivery; as Taubin notes, many of these actors end up 'swallowing their words.'[296] Obviously influenced by other maverick independent filmmakers like John Cassavetes and the Dogme 95 Collective, the mumblecore films feature a minimalistic directorial style, loosely improvised dialogue and a rather frank reflection of the lives of white, middle-class, quasi-bohemian twentysomethings. In terms of their distribution, the festival circuit is key, as well as promotion via independent film websites such as *indieWIRE*. Support from the IFC in the United States also helped these bring these films to a wider non-festival audience through their cable on-demand video service.

As regards their musical expression, these movies mostly feature diegetic music, often in the form of bands and musicians either rehearsing or performing live, or songs being played on a radio or home stereo. It is interesting to note that many of these films contain little in the way of musical soundtrack beyond diegetic performance, such is the filmmakers' aspirations towards naturalism and minimalism. However, it is very clear that despite the relatively quiet musical soundscapes of their work (which separates them from some of the more artifice-laden indie films of the same decade), the mumblecore canon does engage fully with wider popular music culture, just like all of the other indie films and filmmakers discussed throughout this thesis. Several members of the collective are either musicians or in touch with their local music scene in one way or another: Joe Swanberg plays in a band called The Ice Cream Floats (alongside regular mumblecore actress Tipper Newton); aforementioned soundman Eric Masunaga is a member of the Boston-based band Dambuilders, and had met Andrew Bujalski through the local circuit; musician Keegan DeWitt (singer of the group Roman Candle) is a regular collaborator with director Aaron Katz; and the singer-songwriter Justin Rice (of the band Bishop Allen) has a lead role in two notable mumblecore films, Swanberg's *Alexander the Last* (2009) and Bujalski's *Mutual Appreciation*, while Christian Rudder of the same band has also appeared in a large role in Bujalski's *Funny Ha Ha*. Given that the mumblecorers circulate in such creative hubs, it should come as no surprise that the characters in their films are often failed or struggling artists, writers, musicians and actors. Self-reflexive themes of creativity and performance, and issues of balancing 'real life' with fictional art form the basis of many of these films' plots.

[296] Taubin, 'All Talk?', p. 45

This section will investigate how these directors have brought a particular musical sensibility to their filmmaking. Like the indie youth films of the '90s and the twee films of the 2000s, the mumblecore filmmakers also choose to negotiate the 'smart' themes of generational angst, notions of coolness, and ideas of the alternative versus the mainstream. This is informed by a particular immersion with popular culture, in particular the role of alternative/indie popular music. I will begin by mapping a musical-cultural history, situating these films in a wider cultural context: that of part of a movement of DIY culture that has expressed itself through art, music, film and politics since the 1980s. In terms of music, these films, both in their production style and political/thematic agendas, reflect similar trends in underground genres of independent rock music during the nineties, notably lo-fi and cassette culture.

As noted, the films of the mumblecore wave have come to fruition through developments in technology; indeed the prolificness of directors like Swanberg (who has made five films in four years) and Lynn Shelton (three films in three years) is a direct result of the ease of access to new digital hardware and software. The effect that this has had on the aesthetics of these films is clear to see, with almost all shot on digital video in real locations (such as apartments and offices belonging to the cast and crew, and public spaces), with minimal artificial lighting. Most of the sound is recorded live during filming, with little or no dubbing in post-production. Directors like Swanberg and Bujalski, while clearly influenced by the sensibilities of other independent filmmakers, have taken on an approach to filmmaking that is very much informed by an interaction with and an appreciation of the kind of DIY production seen in popular music culture since the 1990s. Often dubbed 'lo-fi', DIY indie rock during the '90s was born out of artists' desires to both take control of their music, retain independence from major record labels, and to find an approach to music-making that counteracted the excess and opulence of 1980s culture. 'Overproduced' pop music, stadium rock, and a reliance on synthesisers and MIDI sequencers were spurned by new independent artists, while the decadent political culture of the era was also repelled. Positioned within a wider political agenda – political protest and environmental activism[297] – DIY music culture has often favoured both a proactive, almost anarchic approach ('if you don't like something, do it yourself') and low-fidelity (lo-fi) recording techniques (usually utilising old, inexpensive or even damaged equipment) that result in a more 'authentic' aesthetic.[298] Notable musicians such as Daniel Johnston, Lou

[297] See George McKay, 'DIY Culture: Notes Towards an Intro' in *DIY Culture: Party and Protest inn Nineties Britain*, London: Verso, 1998, pp. 1-27

[298] Amy Spencer, *DIY: The Rise of Lo-Fi Culture*, London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 2008, p.12

Barlow (Sebadoh, The Folk Implosion), Will Oldham (Palace Brothers, Bonnie Prince Billy) and Jon Spencer (Pussy Galore, The Blues Explosion) all emerged from underground music scenes that embraced the punk sensibilities of DIY culture and produced music that featured a rough, distorted, technically imperfect sound.[299] The use of cassettes was also common, as a convenient way of both recording and distributing music (whether 'legitimately' selling cassettes via indie labels and independent record stores or unofficially circling them amongst friends). The pluralistic value of this emerging 'cassette culture' and the distribution of local music zines helped to inform lo-fi's DIY sensibilities even more greatly.

As technology has moved from analogue to digital, production techniques and distribution practices have changed. Affordable recording software and digital audio formats have eradicated the need for cassettes, while the internet provides both a convenient distribution tool and marketing platform. The proliferation of music blogs and the rise of microblogging has largely replaced zine culture and face-to-face word-of-mouth as a processes of communication, in some ways moving lo-fi music from out of a local scene into a more global realm. However, DIY sensibilities have remained in place. The plurality of new media has garnered new freedoms for artists who seek to distribute their music, while the stylistic concerns have more or less remained unchanged (digital recording allows for added lo-fi/distortion effects to be added if required).

In light of these new technological developments in music, mumblecore's DIY approach becomes even more apparent. Through its production and distribution, its visual (and aural) aesthetic, its engagement with greater pop music culture (particularly underground DIY culture) and even in the career aspirations of some of the filmmakers, the mumblecore wave retains a sense of independence that separates it from the more 'Indiewood' approach to independent cinema. In terms of the training and career trajectories of its directors, Bujalski notes that the film schooling he received while at Harvard was particularly non-career orientated: 'you don't really learn what an AD does or what a UPM does – instead you learn to do it all yourself.'[300] Swanberg has also stated that his role as a filmmaker is equally all-encompassing, taking on writing, directing, cinematography, editing and acting roles (with friends filling in the gaps), while his films are often funded off of his own credit card.[301]

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[299] Furthermore, much of these lo-fi musicians' music has appeared in films: Lou Barlow scored Larry Clark's *Kids*, Will Oldham has worked with Kelly Reichardt on several projects, and Daniel Johnston's songs appear on *Slacker, Empire Records, Before Sunrise* and *Kids*.

[300] Scott Foundas, 'Mutual Appreciation Society: The World of Andrew Bujalski' in *Cineaction* n.24, Oct 2005, p.41

[301] Joe Swanberg interviewed by Donal Foreman, 'In (ternet) dependent' in *Film Ireland*,

Furthermore, the role of the internet in the promotion and distribution of these films is paramount. As Swanberg notes:

> The internet has been incredibly helpful, not just in the way I make films, but in the way my work has found an audience. *Kissing on the Mouth* came to the attention of the SXSW film festival because I posted a 10-minute clip of the film online. With *LOL* we actively used the internet in the production of the film. I was collaborating with many of my fellow filmmakers long distance, and we were sending files back and forth throughout production and post-production.[302]

As a freelance web designer, Swanberg has also developed individual websites and MySpace and Facebook pages for each of his films, where trailers, production stills and screening information can be found. Producing, marketing and distributing these films without relying on a major studio is very much part of the DIY spirit; the ease of production and distribution together with the staunch independence of the filmmakers can be seen in similar terms to the 'culture of immediacy' that typified DIY culture during the 1990s.

As for mumbelcore's aesthetic concerns and its interaction with popular music culture, the next few pages will outline the ways in which music functions in *Mutual Appreciation.*

Mutual Appreciation

Mutual Appreciation is Bujalski's second feature after his 2002 début *Funny Ha Ha*, which earned him a 'Someone To Watch' award at the 2004 Independent Spirit Awards. Shot on 16mm, *Funny Ha Ha*, like many other films from the mumblecore wave, focuses on a twenty-something graduate trying to adapt to her life after college. While there is no explicit pop soundtrack, the film's engagement with Boston's wider popular music culture is evident in costume (band t-shirts), the mise-en-scène (band posters on walls, guitars propped up in the corners of bedrooms) and the occasional blast of indie-rock on a stereo (Bishop Allen provide the diegetic songs). *Mutual Appreciation* continues Bujalski's preoccupation with awkward social interaction, although its references to Boston's indie music scene are even more explicit. The film stars Justin Rice (Bishop Allen's lead singer) as a struggling musician, Alan, who has moved to New York following the break-up of his previous group, The Bumblebees. The story intertwines Alan's musical ambitions as he searches for new bandmates with his personal life, which mostly revolves around a will-they-won't-they relationship with his best friend's girlfriend, Ellie.

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n.113, November 2006, p.23

[302] Foreman, 'In(ternet) dependent', p. 23

Although the film features much more music than *Funny Ha Ha*, all the songs in the film are still always diegetically placed, either through Alan's live performances or his music being played on the radio or a CD player. No non-diegetic music features at all. There is very little artifice elsewhere in the film; most of the scenes are shot in long takes on a single camera, while the lighting is merely functional. The closest the film gets to a sense of stylisation is its employment of black and white cinematography, which is partly due to budgetary concerns (Bujalski again choosing to shoot on 16mm film stock), but is also very much a deliberate aesthetic that recalls underground rock movies and No Wave filmmaking of the late 1970s and early '80s (albeit less excessive). Indeed, the simplicity of the film's style and Bujalski's approach to filmmaking is mirrored in the film's dialogue, with Alan's philosophy of music being particularly apropos: 'People who are into really obscure beats and time signatures, and who really want to overplay – I hate that shit.'

Like much of Jim Jarmusch's work, the music in *Mutual Appreciation* is there to be listened to by the characters; by eschewing non-diegetic sound, Bujalski instead places the music within the scene for the characters to interact with. Michel Chion has labelled this *screen music*, that of a piece of music that can be 'located directly or indirectly in the space and time of the action,' often seen emanating from a particular device.[303] Like Jarmusch, the use of this *screen music* frequently results in the songs embellishing the characters' feelings and emotions, and ultimately places them at the heart of the scene. There are two notable examples of this kind of 'listening' that take place during the film; one instance that concerns listening to a recording (playback listening), and another that features listening to and interacting with a live performance.

The first example of playback listening takes place in a radio studio as Alan plugs his new song to local hipster DJ Sara. Following a brief conversation between the two, Sara plays the track and the pair of them listen to the first few bars of the song as it plays in the radio studio. The dynamic and timbre of the music (coming through in a tinny and muffly quality) suggest that the sound is emanating from the speakers in the studio. As the song plays, Bujalski chooses to cut between Alan and Sara's expressions as they listen.

[303] Chion, *Audio-Vision*, p. 80

Figure 53

Figure 54

Avoiding eye contact, Alan and Sara gaze downwards. Sara bobs her head up and down in time to the music (Figure 54), while Alan remains relatively still, giving off a slightly embarrassed smile as Sara listens to his song (Figure 53). This sense of awkwardness between the characters in many ways typifies the ill-at-ease social interaction that occurs in the mumblecore genre. By focusing on the characters interacting with and listening to diegetic sound, Bujalski exploits gaps in the dialogue to further embellish this sense of social embarrassment. Unlike in *Juno*, where the vocal performance in the music mirrors the deadpan delivery of its actors, Bishop Allen's songs in *Mutual Appreciation* provide a contrast to the awkward dialogue. The songs are strident and energetic (as Alan describes them to a friend: 'It's like pop. You know – concise, catchy, up-beat'), in opposition to the mumbly, lethargic performances of actors.

Alan and Sara remain static while listening to the playback. A later scene featuring Alan rehearsing with his new drummer, Dennis, provides a different example of listening, that of a more interactive, participatory mode of engagement. It begins with Alan playing Dennis a CD of his music (the track featured is 'Things Are What You Make of Them' by Bishop Allen), describing the various drum rhythms to Dennis as he drums along. Again, like the previous scene, listening takes a central role, however this mode of listening focuses on a musician attempting to comprehend the song's rhythm. Rather than showing his appreciation for the music as Sara does, the expression on Dennis's face is alert and attentive. As Dennis plays along with the track, the role of listener switches to Alan; unlike in the previous scene where he was awkwardly watching Sara listen to his song, his role here is more active, listening to Dennis's drumming and critiquing his performance. It is a case of both characters listening to each other's work in the same situation.

Listening in *Mutual Appreciation* is active rather than passive. In his article 'Listening to Popular Music', David Riesman identifies two different types of listener groups: the majority and the minority. The majority have a fairly undiscriminating taste – they listen to mainstream radio stations, 'star' artists and the current hit parade – which is coupled with a 'lack of concern about how hits are actually made,' instead taking an interest in the singers as personalities. The minority, on the other hand, are more concerned with the technical aspects of composition and production; they appear rebellious, have rigorous standards of judgement, and dislike mainstream, commercial pop; they are active listeners who take listening to music seriously.[304] This sense of dedication to music, and perhaps elitist separation from the mainstream, classifies the characters in *Mutual Appreciation* as 'authentic' music lovers; the characters, and the film itself, takes the processes of songwriting, performing and listening with a degree of seriousness that is in keeping with the 'honest aesthetic' that the mumblecore films are defined by. The lack of non-diegetic music further pushes the role of listening into the fore; by focusing solely on the diegetic, the role of listening is always present.

The privileging of the diegetic above the non-diegetic is a crucial way in which *Mutual Appreciation* distinguishes itself from other indie pictures; the absence of non-diegetic sound and the less artificial aesthetic helps to embellish the sense of authenticity. Non-diegetic song in *Juno*, for instance, functions as a disembodied voice, almost chorus-like; the singing style reflects the tone of the characters' own speaking voices, meaning that the twee expression is prominent on

[304] David Riesman, 'Listening to Popular Music' in Frith and Goodwin (eds) *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 8-9

both sides of the diegesis. Although the characters in *Juno* do not interact with this particular music (the non-diegetic is never acknowledged, and there is no self-reflexivity), through the film's artifice there is a consistency in tone. In *Mutual Appreciation*, the absence of non-diegetic music means that the characters interact with song within the diegesis through active listening and participation. It is interesting, therefore, that the musical style does not really match with the voices of the characters. Music in *Mutual Appreciation* is used as a more confident form of self-expression than dialogue; characters who struggle to converse make up for that through musical performance. This is what separates twee from naturalism: twee cinema bridges a gap between the diegetic and non-diegetic, with a continuity of tone (as expressed verbally or musically), whereas naturalistic film, in particular mumblecore, does not employ artifice in this way. However, what the two groups of films share is a particularly close interaction with music which helps to inform characterisation and narrative progression, as well as a soundtrack that is there to be listened to.

The generic traits of mumblecore from its lo-fi sensibilities to its predominant themes of relationship anxiety and social alienation can also be detected in Kelly Reichardt's two feature films, *Old Joy* and *Wendy and Lucy*. Moving away from the role of listening, I shall discuss the use of music in *Old Joy* in relation to the themes of naturalism and lo-fi that have been explored so far through this section.

Music and melancholy: Kelly Reichardt's cinema of separation

> I was interested in making a film about this exact moment in time and the sort of disillusionment... about what it is to live in America and the feeling of loss of hope and the death of liberalism.[305]

Reichardt had been making films for over a decade before the release of *Old Joy*, producing a Super-8 feature called *River of Grass* in 1994 and a short film *Ode* in 1999. Although not part of the mumblecore clique, Reichardt's work is grounded in naturalism, minimalism and a sense of documentary realism that uses subtle music cues in order to embellish a certain feeling of ennui and isolation among its twenty- and thirty-something characters. Reichardt's visual style is formally simplistic and emphasises the sparseness of suburban Oregon. Both *Old Joy* and *Wendy and Lucy* are punctuated by bare shots of grey, desolate suburban landscapes juxtaposed with the greens and browns of the surrounding woodland, while sound also plays a prominent role in *Old Joy* in particular, with moments of silence frequently interrupted by the sounds of home appliances such as lawnmowers, vacuum-

[305] Carol Murphy, 'Old Friends, New Paths' in *Film Ireland*, n. 114, January 2007, p. 17

cleaners, and food processors, as well as the constant hum of traffic. This juxtaposition of nature and machinery becomes a recurring expressive tool in Reichardt's exploration of human relationships and the interrelationships between body, space and place.

Old Joy focuses on two male friends (and former bandmates) in their mid-thirties, Mark and Kurt, who travel into the Cascade mountains of Oregon for a camping weekend. The film explores Mark and Kurt's relationship and the differences in their lives; Mark is married and a soon-to-be father, while Kurt is seemingly still stuck in the neo-hipster/slacker lifestyle that he lived throughout his twenties. As they retreat into the mountains, their reminiscences of the past and uncertainty of the future, coupled with moments of awkward silence emphasises the growing drift between them. Reichardt herself sees the film as a story of two liberals travelling into the woods in order to become one with it, while more broadly the film deals with the lost ideals of liberalism in the middle of George W. Bush's presidency.[306] This is most explicit during car journeys in which Mark listens to political debates on NPR; occasional cuts to Mark's wearied face express his silent discomfort with the current cultural and political era. The setting also plays a key role, with the contrast between the disquiet of Portland's city streets and the untouched beauty of the surrounding mountains further stressing the sense of alienation and separation. Reichardt shoots these rural landscapes through a moving car window, serving to highlight, as Dave Kehr suggests, a sense of separation between a caged human animal in a moving metal box with the unspoiled natural world outside.[307] Music is used most prominently during these car journeys; in two lengthy sequences, Reichardt cuts away from Mark and Kurt's conversations to montages of the passing landscapes, during which all diegetic sound is replaced by cues by Yo La Tengo.

Yo La Tengo formed in the mid-1980s and gained a large cult following during the alternative rock boom of the late-eighties and early-nineties. In amongst their studio recordings, the group have regularly dabbled in film scoring, their first notable feature being Hal Hartley's *Simple Men* in 1992. The band's eclectic style (ranging from garage rock through Krautrock-influenced experimental riffing to lo-fi country) has allowed them to provide music for a wide range of projects as diverse as a TV movie, *Alchemy* (1995), a series of documentary shorts by the French filmmaker Jacques Plainlevé (performed live by the band in a series of screenings in 2001) and recent independent features such as *Junebug* (2005), *Game 6* (2005), *Shortbus* and *Adventureland*. Even though none of these scores received

[306] James Ponsoldt, 'Sound of Silence' in *Filmmaker*, Fall 2006, p. 99
[307] Dave Kehr, 'End of the Road' in *Film Comment*, v. 42, n. 5 (September 2006), p. 52

individual album releases, music from the latter three films plus *Old Joy* were compiled on the album *They Shoot, We Score*. Although occasionally disparate in style, one common trait across all of their scores is the inclusion of quiet, slow, soft instrumentation, the with gentle plucking of guitars and light percussion taking precedence over rock riffs and driving drums. This is particularly evident in *Old Joy*; the two pieces of music used to score each montage move at a gentle pace and

The first car journey sequence in *Old Joy* is scored by a track called 'Leaving Home,' and runs for two minutes and thirty-six seconds, almost the entire length of the song (the CD version runs at two minutes and forty-four seconds). The first minute of the cue involves two acoustic guitars playing arrhythmically and creating a textural soundscape that aptly accompanies the passing landscape. After one minute, percussion starts to build and the track gradually gains structure, eventually evolving into a gentle folky riff. This break in the action offers an almost dreamlike solace from the tension and weariness found in the scenes with Mark and Kurt. The non-diegetic cues come to reflect the disconnection between the protagonists and the world; as Mark and Kurt look to reconnect with the past (and themselves), the present continues to resonate. As they sit silent in the car, the voices on talk radio acts as constant reminders of the politics of Bush-era America. Yo La Tengo's music appears deliberately timeless as a result; the cues are grounded in a slow country tradition, at times echoing the work of roots guitarists such as Ry Cooder, and appear to attempt to reconnect with the traditions of folk music. Towards the end of the film when Mark and Kurt make their way home, the music that accompanies the car journey (the aptly titled ‘Driving Home’) once again serves to highlight the disconnection between the pair by functioning as a diversion from the action. The cue, in the same rootsy, acoustic style as ‘Leaving Home,’ also provides a sense of repetition, suggesting that the protagonists’ feelings of ennui and isolation has not been cured since leaving Portland.

Wendy and Lucy's soundtrack is less musical, but just as important in crafting a melancholic atmosphere. Forgoing a musical score like in *Old Joy*, the film uses a collage of diegetic sounds that at times appears to transcend the diegesis, in particular the clattering and whistling of passing freight trains (which echoes the title of Jonathan Raymond's short story on which the film is based, 'Train Choir').[308] One recurring tune is 'Wendy's Theme', a melody written by Oldham that Wendy occasionally hums to herself. A Muzak version of the tune composed by Smokey Hormel also plays inside a supermarket, with the melody effectively haunting

[308] Kristin M. Jones, 'Time Out: *Wendy and Lucy*' in *Film Comment*, v. 44, n. 6 (November 2008), p. 45

Wendy as she moves from location to location.[309] Reichardt's treatment of disillusionment and ennui is inherently musical in this regard; sound and music (diegetically and non-diegetically) becomes a constant reminder of the 'loss of hope' during Bush-era America.

While the music in the naturalistic films of directors like Reichardt and Bujalski bears little resemblance to the prominence of either the twee pop soundtracks or excessive scores of Brion, Greenwood and Mansell, they are still used to anchor a particular smart sensibility (in this case social awkwardness, detachment and ennui) and provide a degree of alternative value. The lo-fi aural qualities of bands such as Yo La Tengo, Bishop Allen and Shearwater (whose songs feature on *In Search of a Midnight Kiss*) also cements these films' quest toward independent authenticity, standing in contrast to the high quality production of contemporary mainstream pop.

This, however, may be complicated heading beyond 2010. While many of the low-budget filmmakers discussed in this section have stood in opposition to Hollywood (or even Indiewood), several of the mumblecore filmmakers are now gradually making inroads towards a more mainstream cinema. As of 2010, Bujalski is developing a project for Paramount, while Swanberg's *Alexander the Last* was produced by Noah Baumbach and is his first film to feature professional actors (Jess Weixler stars in the lead role). The Duplass Brothers' *Cyrus* (2010) features a cast including John C. Reilly, Marisa Tomei and Catherine Keener, an original score by Michael Andrews, and is produced by Ridley Scott collaborator Michael Costigan. The film was picked up for distribution by Fox Searchlight at the Sundance Film Festival.

To conclude this thesis, I will examine some of the complications that have arisen in defining some very recent American independent films. While it is true that a close interaction with alternative popular music culture continues to partly define independent cinema, changes in the film industry and recording industry (plus wider shifts in the consumption of film and music) have made for some intriguing new developments.

[309] Jones, 'Time Out: *Wendy and Lucy*', p. 45

Conclusion: into 2010 and Beyond

As I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the persistence of the relationship between popular music and American independent cinema means that this study could have continued beyond 2010. As we move into the next decade, it is already apparent that many American independent films from late 2009 through to 2010 are continuing to interact with pop music and popular music culture in the same manner as some of the films explored throughout this thesis. I will begin this conclusion by first summarising and tying together ideas that have been discussed throughout, noting the longevity of this particular musical-indie style. Towards the end of this conclusion, I will work towards a consideration of where independent cinema is in 2010, noting how its interactions with popular music culture continues to produce intriguing works, and how some problems or complications have arisen in the past couple of years.

In the first chapter, I examined the use of popular music in the work of three key indie directors – David Lynch, Spike Lee and Jim Jarmusch – and as of 2010, Lynch and Jarmusch's musical expression has remained rather consistent, while Lee's work has become more varied. Although he has maintained a regular working relationship with Terrence Blanchard, the role of pop music in Lee's films has become less prominent as he has branched out into various other styles and genres, ranging from Hollywood crime thrillers (*Inside Man*, 2006), through World War Two epics (*Miracle at St Anna*, 2008), to politicised documentary (*When the Levees Broke*, 2006; *If God is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise*, 2010). The Spike Lee brand has become less determined by its interactions with music culture and more defined by its political engagement, with Lee's appearances on TV news and current affairs programmes after the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe in particular garnering much attention. Lynch and Jarmusch, on the other hand, have not changed much in terms of their style or their soundtrack choices; indeed, it could be argued that their sense of musical bricolage has been heightened, with their most recent films featuring an even wider selection of music from disparate genres. The notion of music as *to-be-listened-to* is a recurring trait continues to define independent cinema, and this can be seen in the most recent work of both Lynch and Jarmusch. Lynch's 2006 film *Inland Empire* is an interesting case, not least because it marks the first time in twenty years that Lynch has not collaborated with Angelo Badalamenti. The film features little original music beside pieces of sound design by Lynch (indeed, the question about where noise ends and music begins is debatable), and instead the score is characterised by pre-existing choices, incorporating sixties pop (Little Eva's 'The Locomotion'), jazz (Nina Simone's

'Sinnerman'), contemporary rock (Beck), and a selection of classical pieces by Krzysztof Penderecki. The film punctuates its discombobulated narrative with surreal episodes, such as a nightmarish TV soap opera involving giant rabbits (based on Lynch's internet-exclusive *Rabbits* series) and a couple of dance routines performed by a group of Polish prostitutes; the lack of Badalamenti's music or anything resembling a unifying, leitmotivic score, and the fusion of different forms of music augments the film's chaotic structure. It is a patented 'Lynchian' soundtrack.

Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers* (2005) and *The Limits of Control* (2009) have also demonstrated a more factious form of scoring. *Broken Flowers*' mix of soul (Marvin Gaye), drone metal (Sleep), contemporary garage rock (The Brian Jonestown Massacre) and jazz pieces by the Ethiopian percussionist and bandleader Mulatu Astatke provide a similar feeling of disorder, this time more closely associated with Jarmusch's deadpan style. As the scenes remain static and the monotone voices of the characters mumble, drawl and whisper in irregular patterns (or, for long periods, even stay silent), the music functions almost as a swirling wind bringing in pieces of tumbleweed, drawing attention to the sense of nothingness. Of course, this also brings the music into the foreground, vying to be listened to. *The Limits of Control* takes this sense of nothingness a notch further, with longer static scenes and even more irregular, drawn-out sections of dialogue. The musical choices in this film are more concentrated than *Broken Flowers*, with Jarmusch choosing several stoner metal tracks (including cult bands such as Boris, Sunn O))), and Earth) to heighten the pensiveness, with the loud, textural droning of the music taking on even greater wind-like properties.

To clarify, the notion of *to-be-listened-to* music is not necessarily defined by volume or its place within the diegesis, it is its alternative value, its 'cultural capital' and its otherness or alien-ness that makes it distinctive. Many contemporary blockbuster soundtracks, such as Danny Elfman's score for *Terminator Salvation* (2009) or Hans Zimmer's music for Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010), contain moments of muscular and excessive scoring, in which the visual spectacle is anchored by correspondingly loud, visceral sounds. However these should not be thought of along the same lines as the *to-be-listened-to* music in independent film; music in indie cinema is often anti-spectacle, in which the stillness of the action and blankness of the performances is, in most cases, ruptured by very specific pieces of music. This music is very carefully and specifically chosen by the director to correspond with the thematic and stylistic intent of the film and to stamp a mark of difference on the finished product.

In the second chapter I extended this notion of *to-be-listened-to* music to examine how independent sensibilities are not just defined by music itself, but also interactions with wider popular music culture and music subcultures. By representing alternative music subcultures on screen, independent cinema is able to explore sensibilities not tackled by the mainstream, and furthermore, the choice of the director to examine particular aspects of alternative culture can lend a film a certain amount of hipster credence. When discussing the work of Richard Linklater, I noted that the notion of youth and music is always intertwined; from the subtle use of alt rock bands such as Butthole Surfers in *Slacker* to the use of seventies hard rock in *Dazed and Confused*, the experience of youth is treated by Linklater as a series of complicated interactions with peers, adults, institutions (whether it be school or the prospect of work) and popular culture. In the examination of the relationship between youth and popular culture, particularly music, Linklater portrays young characters at the centre of pop culture; their fashion, voice, outlook and friendships are determined by their consumption of music, TV and other pop artefacts. Although, Linklater, like Spike Lee, has also branched out into other genres; his most recent film *Me and Orson Welles* (2009) is a period piece set in 1930s New York, although it similarly presents its young protagonist, 17-year-old Richard, as being at the centre of thirties pop culture, music and the creative arts.

As discussed in relation to the films of Gregg Araki, teen/youth characters and their interactions with music become a useful conduit through which ideas of identity, sexuality and consumerism can be explored. Following *Mysterious Skin* (2005), one of his less anarchic films that explored child abuse, and the screwball comedy *Smiley Face* (2007), Araki's 2010 film, *Kaboom*, is an interesting revival of the teenage apocalypse sensibility that he established through the mid-nineties. The film follows eighteen-year-old college student Smith through a series of sexual adventures and bizarre encounters with telepathic witches and sinister cults, and also features Araki regular James Duvall in a role as a guru. *Kaboom* echoes the excesses of Araki's previous films; just as the nineties teenage apocalypse films were politicised (taking on board concerns over HIV and AIDS, gay rights and gender equality), *Kaboom* too rejects notions of heteronormativity and a contemplates (and indeed celebrates) living outside the norm. In terms of its musical expression, it is perhaps not coincidental that *Kaboom*'s revival of the teenage apocalypse sensibility comes at the same time as a revival in shoegaze music. The film is aptly matched by a soundtrack featuring contemporary 'shoegaze revival' artists such as The Horrors, The Pains of Being Pure at Heart and A Place to Bury Strangers, all of which take the thrust and drive of rock and mix it with ethereal melodies and textural, electronic soundscaping; the resulting

correspondence between the masculine and feminine portions of the film (featuring male and female characters of all sexual orientations) and the tough/soft dynamics of the soundtrack demonstrates the persistence of Araki's musical expression. Like in *The Doom Generation* and *Nowhere*, the references to music culture are writ large and the music is there to be heard.

Kaboom and other recent films representing youth culture and music subculture have inevitably crossed over into the terrain of smart cinema. Since Jeffrey Sconce's essay was published, there has been a proliferation of independent/Indiewood productions that take on board the sensibilities discussed by Sconce (indeed, some of them perhaps more knowingly than others, such as the suspiciously-titled *Smart People* [2008]). In the third chapter, I discussed how smart films have been accompanied by 'smart soundtracks' that anchored the cynical (occasionally nihilistic), fatalist, ironic, and occasionally quirky tone with similarly quirky scores, most regularly composed by pop musicians. As of 2010, relationships between directors and pop musicians are continuing to conjure up smart soundtracks. The somewhat excessive and allusive score for Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* (2010) is again composed by Clint Mansell, with the parts of the soundtrack featuring remixed and 'screwed with' elements of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, alongside a selection of experimental electronic pieces by dubstep musicians such as Sepalcure and Alteretz.[310] A plethora of other smart Indiewood films released since 2009 have featured quirky soundtracks by alternative rock musicians, notably:

- *Away We Go* (Sam Mendes, 2009): featuring music by the British singer-songwriter Alexi Murdoch
- *The Social Network* (David Fincher, 2010): scored by Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor and producer Atticus Ross
- *I Love You Philip Morris* (Glenn Ficara and John Requa, 2010): including music by DeVotchKa's Nick Urata
- *The Kids Are All Right* (Lisa Cholodenko, 2010): featuring music by Nathan Larsson and Craig Wedren (Shudder to Think)
- *Greenberg* (Noah Baumbach, 2010): including original music by James Murphy (LCD Soundsystem)
- *Somewhere* (Sofia Coppola, 2010): featuring songs by the French band Phoenix

[310] James Wright, 'Clint Mansell interview' at http://www.littlewhitelies.co.uk/interviews/clint-mansell-8937

- *Blue Valentine* (Dick Cianfrance, 2010): scored by Brooklyn-based band Grizzly Bear
- *It's Kind of a Funny Story* (Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2010): scored by Canadian indie group Broken Social Scene

These films, dealing with issues of introspection (*Somewhere*), erratic or dysfunctional characters (*Greenberg, I Love You Philip Morris, It's Kind of a Funny Story*) or unconventional stories about relationships and sex (*Away We Go, The Kids Are All Right, Blue Valentine*), are appropriately scored by series of disjointed, non-classical cues; the resulting audibility of many of the cues and the overall lack of unity (undermining two of Gorbman's classical principles) enhances the indie aesthetic of these films. Baumbach's *Greenberg* is perhaps the most curious example on that list. The score is produced by James Murphy (best known as an electronic musician and frontman of the dance band LCD Soundsystem), who has assembled what on the surface sounds like 'compilation score' of various artists, but what in actuality consists of original compositions by himself and various collaborators. Murphy has composed a selection of original cues in disparate styles that essentially sound like songs by other artists: 'Bones' pastiches minimal compositions by Philip Glass and Michael Nyman, 'Please Forgive Me' references the sleepy bass-driven groove of Yo La Tengo, and 'If You Need a Friend' combines the optimistic funk of War (with its vocal refrain clearly echoing War's song 'Why Can't We Be Friends?') with the happy-clappy folk-pop of The Polyphonic Spree. While this is clearly symptomatic of elements of allusion and pastiche in pop scoring, such disparity among the tracks (along with the fact that none of the compositions sound like Murphy's dance project, LCD Soundsystem, his most famous work) results in an original score that has even less musical unity than some of the other smart films listed above.

While the function of the music is noticeably indie in its aesthetic traits, it is also the musical branding of these films that further helps to cement their position as independent features. The theatrical trailers for *Somewhere* (see Figures 55 and 56) and *Greenberg* (Figures 57 and 58), both advertise their composers alongside their directors at the end of the trailer. While film trailers have often used a director's name in order to provide a sense of branding and authorship, the display of the composer's name further embellishes the independent/alternative identity of a particular film, and furthermore, for the first time it explicitly suggests that these films may exist in order to be listened to as much as be watched.

Figure 55

Figure 56

Figure 57

Figure 58

As of 2010, it is clear that these interactions between independent film and popular music are showing no signs of stopping, and are perhaps becoming more explicit. What is beginning to change, however, is the industrial location of many of these movies. While there is no doubt that these films' associations with alternative popular music is a vital way of communicating their difference and authenticity as 'independent' works, this identity is being muddied as a quasi-indie musical expression encroaches on Hollywood cinema, and indeed, as several independent films (and studios) begin to attract much wider audiences beyond their Indiewood niche market. Over the past couple of years, several Hollywood films have started to borrow aspects of the indie sensibility and aesthetic, while indie films are even starting to resemble Hollywood.

The *Twilight* Effect: further blurring distinctions

The recent multi-million dollar *Twilight* franchise provides perhaps the most prominent example of a blurred line between Hollywood and independent cinema. Of course, many independent films have found their way into the mainstream, but not to the extent of *Twilight*, solely produced and distributed by the independent studio Summit Entertainment. While the series' immense popularity is no doubt in part attributed to the fandom surrounding the teen novels on which the films are based, Summit's marketing strategies – coupled with the tabloid hysteria surrounding its two stars, Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson – means the franchise could be, and indeed regularly is, mistaken for a major studio product. Vast amounts of money have been spent on billboard and poster campaigns, teaser trailers play before major blockbuster releases, merchandise (toys, calendars, stationery, lunch boxes, backpacks and more) is available in abundance, and its stars appear on primetime and late night talk shows. The first in the series, *Twilight*

(2008), grossed almost $392m in worldwide box office (more than ten times its $37m budget), with the second in the series, *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (2009), taking in $709m, and the third part, *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* (2010) grossing $690m.[311] The enormous success of the films at the box office make it the most successful film franchise not produced by a major studio. And despite its multiplex appeal, within *Twilight*'s seemingly mainstream anatomy is a strangely indie heart: festival favourites such as Catherine Hardwicke (*Thirteen*) and David Slade (*Hard Candy*) have been hired as directors, while its indie soundtrack shares more common ground with the likes of *Juno* and *(500) Days of Summer* than blockbuster fare such as the AC/DC-soundtracked *Iron Man 2*. Popular indie bands such as Muse and Radiohead rub shoulders alongside more esoteric, slightly experimental artists like Grizzly Bear, St Vincent and Battles. All of the *Twilight* soundtrack albums were compiled by music supervisor Alexandra Patsavas, responsible for sourcing music on hit teen television series such as *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl*, and released on Patsavas' own label Chop Shop Records (a subsidiary of Atlantic Records, under the Warner Music Group umbrella), a specialist label set up in order to establish new and emerging 'indie' bands and musicians. The idea of 'cool' musicians interacting with an 'uncool' mainstream franchise has led to some rather frosty reactions in the popular music press; the *NME* commented on the apparent contradiction between the soundtrack's 'intelligent' content and the 'rabidly commercial' intentions of a franchise aimed at 'kohl-eyed young consumers',[312] while *Pitchfork* expressed incredulity over the news that Radiohead's Thom Yorke had written a special track for a 'ridiculous teenybopper vampire romance.'[313] These tensions seem to derive from an animosity towards the films' perceived target demographic; despite its independent production history and the independent spirit of its musical content, the fact that the film is primarily aimed at a young, female, presumably 'uncool' and 'mainstream' audience has a huge detrimental effect on its indie credence. Indeed, as this thesis has posited, the soundtracks of independent films are used to help establish a separateness or distinction from the mainstream; in most cases, these films reinforce this distinction by targeting (and mostly appealing to) what Sconce calls 'bohemian' audiences. It appears that when a similarly alternative soundtrack is attached to a mainstream product, and by

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[311] *Twilight* (2008) takings: http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=twilight08.htm
New Moon takings: http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=newmoon.htm
Eclipse takings: http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=eclipse.htm

[312] Ben Patashnik, 'Album Review: Various Artists – *The Twilight Saga: New Moon, Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* at http://www.nme.com/reviews/various-artists/10928

[313] Tom Breihan, 'Thom Yorke to Contribute Music to *Twilight* Sequel Soundtrack?' at http://pitchfork.com/news/35962-thom-yorke-to-contribute-music-to-itwilighti-sequel-soundtrack/

extension targeted towards a 'teenybopper' demographic, this sense of distinction is lost.

Twilight is not alone in trying to balance independent and mainstream sensibilities. In the past couple of years, there have been cases of filmmakers attempting to strike a compromise between mainstream appeal and hipster kudos in major studio productions. The Warner Bros-distributed, Spike Jonze-directed *Where the Wild Things Are*, an adaptation of the famous children's story by Maurice Sendak is another curious case of indie/Hollywood no-mans-land cinema. The film features a crew with fairly strong indie accreditation; a 'smart' director (Jonze) from a music video background, a cinematographer (Lance Acord) also from a music promo tradition, an editor (Eric Zumbrunnen) who has collaborated with Jonze on all his projects as well as on videos for the US rock group Jane's Addiction, and original music by Karen Orzolek, best known by her stage name Karen O and her work with the US band The Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Recording under the name Karen O and the Kids, Orzolek's songs feature instrumentation by members of other esoteric indie acts such as Deerhunter, The Greenhornes and Liars, and in contrast to The Yeah Yeah Yeahs' art punk, the songs are performed in a folk-pop manner, with jangly acoustic guitars, chimes, sing-along choruses and, most prominently, a children's choir. The songs sit alongside incidental cues by Carter Burwell, and function as a child-like non-diegetic voice, imbuing the action with a sense of innocence and melancholy. The film is in somewhat risky territory, attempting to balance a children's narrative with a certain amount of neo-hipster appeal. Wes Anderson's 20th Century Fox-backed adaptation of the Roald Dahl story *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2009) similarly contains pop music culture references (including a cameo and song by Jarvis Cocker) and a smart sensibility that seems at odds with the typical conventions of a family film. Indeed, compared to the runaway success of their fellow literary adaptation *Twilight*, both *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Fantastic Mr Fox* may not be considered commercial triumphs, with each film only just breaking even on their respective $100m and $40m budgets in their worldwide box office takings.[314]

Where the Wild Things Are and *Fantastic Mr Fox* both are both intended family films that happen to have an indie edge to them. A more curious case can be found with big budget, studio-financed films that are attempting to mimic the sensibilities of particular brands of indie cinema. One notable example is Edgar Wright's *Scott Pilgrim vs the World* (2010), which could easily be identified as an indie film in the same vein as many of the twee films discussed in the third chapter;

[314] *Where the Wild Things Are* takings at http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=wherethewildthingsare.htm; *Fantastic Mr Fox* box office details at http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=fantasticmrfox.htm

it has a geeky male hero (Michael Cera), a romance driven by puppy love rather than sex, an emphasis on play (the characters interact with the world as if it were a video game), a deadpan, ironic mode of engagement, and most importantly, an obsession with music. The songs by Scott's band, Sex Bob-Omb, are provided by Beck, the original music is composed by Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich, and the film features original songs by dance and electronic artists such as Cornelius and Dan the Automator. Yet, behind Scott Pilgrim's indie exterior is a $60 million budget provided by Universal Pictures (not, it should be noted, NBC Universal's 'indie' subsidiary Focus Features). The film was released in 2820 theatres in the United States in its opening weekend, a much wider release than the average indie picture, yet grossed less than half its budget on its US release.[315]

Disney's *Tron Legacy* (2010) provides perhaps the most extreme case of Hollywood/indie blurring so far: a multi-million dollar sci-fi blockbuster with a soundtrack by the French dance producers Daft Punk (who are prominently credited on the film's trailer, see Figures 59 and 60). They do not seem an obvious choice; the duo are more popular among dance music fans than the mainstream, regularly gaining more success on the specialist Billboard Club charts than the main charts, while the band's previous scoring experience extends to special audio-visual projects of their own (such as the animated *Interstella 5555* [2003], a visual realisation of their album *Discovery*), and bandmember Thomas Bangalter's series of disorientating music cues and soundscapes for French director Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible* (2002) and *Enter The Void* (2009). While indie/alternative pop musicians have become commonplace in independent film, their migration into mainstream Hollywood represents a shift in the mindset of Hollywood producers. Traditionally, scoring duties for sci-fi/action blockbusters had been left to heavyweight composers such as Hans Zimmer and Danny Elfman, with the additional music ('From and Inspired By...') provided by mainstream, chart-friendly artists; in the case of *Tron Legacy*, it appears that its existence is partly down to the futuristic audio-visual aesthetic of the film, in which electronic sounds are fused with orchestral accompaniment (echoing Wendy Carlos's score for the original *Tron* [1984]), and largely due to the fandom of the director, Joseph Kosinski, who noted that he is a 'huge electronic music fan'.[316]

[315] http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=scottpilgrim.htm

[316] Josh Horowitz, '*Tron Legacy* director Joseph Kosinski raves about 3-D and Daft Punk' at MTV Movie News: http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1630055/20100120/daft_punk.jhtml

Figure 59

Figure 60

Are films such as *Scott Pilgrim* and *Where the Wild Things Are* examples of independent filmmaking even though they are thoroughly studio-financed? Can *Twilight* be seen as a *major Hollywood* product even though it is independently produced and distributed? And to what extent can the score of *Tron Legacy* be heralded as a form of independent/alternative musical expression? The line between Hollywood and independent has been blurry for some time, but this distinction now appears even foggier. Somewhat appropriately, a correlation may be found with the world of popular music. Indie music – a term popularised in the 1980s, coincidentally around the same time as the boom in independent filmmaking – originally referred to records that were published by independent labels, but has since become short-hand for almost any guitar-based alternative pop, regardless of the independence of the record company. As mentioned in the third chapter, indie bands such as The Decemberists and Band of Horses are signed to major labels (Capitol and Columbia respectively), and to look at it from the other side, independent record labels have produced mainstream pop music; artists such as Kylie Minogue, Rick Astley and others produced by the Stock Aitken Waterman stable in the late 1980s were signed to the independent PWL, while a more

contemporary example would be the Simon Fuller-owned 19 Entertainment, responsible for singers from the *Pop Idol* and *American Idol* franchises. As the music industry diversifies and becomes transformed by new distribution models (digital sales and downloading being the most notable), sales at major labels have begun to decline and some media conglomerates have parted with their music publishing arms; Time Warner sold off Warner Music Group in 2004, Universal Music Group became dissociated from NBC-Universal following General Electric's decision to sell their remaining shares to Vivendi in 2006, while EMI were acquired by the Terra Firma equity group following substantial losses in 2007, and later sold to Citigroup in early 2011. In the film industry, this is perhaps mirrored by the fall of once-major studios such as MGM and the rise of big independent players such as Lionsgate (producers of the *Saw* franchise plus family-friendly films such as *The Spy Next Door* [2010] and *Alpha and Omega* [2010]) and the aforementioned Summit.

As I noted in the introduction, in the quest to define the notion of independence, scholars on independent cinema have often found it problematic that 'indie' subsidiaries of major studios play a large role in the production of contemporary independent cinema. This has since been accompanied by a new problem: that independent studios are now becoming major players. As independent companies grow bigger and as synergistic franchises are spawned, this appears to consolidate the notion that the independent-ness of a film (or indeed a pop record) is less likely to be determined by its industrial location and more in terms of its content. Indeed, the progression of the mumblecore filmmakers, with the continued backing of the IFC, can be seen as an attempt to 'reclaim' indie; as discussed in the final chapter, by incorporating improvisation and adopting a more naturalistic approach, these films value the diegetic and the active role that the characters play in listening to music, rather than a reliance on stylisation, artifice and the non-diegetic. There is a bold stylistic difference between them and the Indiewood films that share the same exhibition space at festivals and art cinemas, but with this strident anti-artifice, anti-mainstream sensibility (aptly mirrored by the lo-fi rock aspects of its soundtrack), there is a further issue of cultural elitism; mumblecore's agenda to be seen as separate from the mainstream throws up another bracket of cultural distinction in which its 'indier-than-thou' nature can be seen as less to do with its industrial position or aesthetic and more to do with the taste and sense of cultural separateness of its audiences, or even the filmmakers themselves.

Indeed, across the whole of contemporary American cinema there exists a stratification in which Hollywood films (with the bigger budgets, the bigger stars

and the bigger audiences) contain the most mainstream music, Indiewood films (medium-sized budgets, not-quite-A-list stars, and smaller audiences) use artists on the fringes of the mainstream (Phoenix, Broken Social Scene), while the low-budget films from small independent studios incorporate a soundtrack of unknown (or barely known), sometimes unsigned musicians. This of course relates to the amount of money available for filmmakers to spend on their soundtracks, but it also anchors the notions of distinction and authenticity, in which the music's proximity to the mainstream reflects the film's position in a wider taste-culture. In this sense, American independent cinema's interactions with music and a wider popular music culture can be a useful barometer for gauging just how independent a film really is. Whether this strata will be disrupted by the continued blurring of the lines as American cinema moves into the next decade will be for another study.

Appendix

Soundtrack album details

(N.B. This section comprises a list of the soundtrack albums for the key films mentioned within the text of this thesis, detailing their tracklistings and production details. For a list of specific songs that I have mentioned, see the discography.)

(500) Days of Summer

Original release date: July 14, 2009
Label: 20th Century

Tracklisting:
1. Michael Danna and Robert Simonsen – 'A Story of Boy Meets Girl'
1. Regina Spektor – 'Us'
2. The Smiths – 'There is a Light That Never Goes Out'
3. Black Lips – 'Bad Kids'
4. The Smiths – 'Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want'
5. Doves – 'There Goes the Fear'
6. Hall and Oates – 'You Make My Dreams'
7. Temper Trap – 'Sweet Disposition'
8. Carla Bruni – 'Quelqu'un m'a dit'
9. Feist – 'Mushaboom'
10. Regina Spektor – 'Hero'
11. Simon and Garfunkel – 'Bookends'
12. Wolfmother – 'Vagabond'
13. Mumm-Ra – 'She's Got You High'
14. Meaghan Smith – 'Here Comes Your Man'
15. She and Him – 'Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want'

(Bonus Tracks [iTunes version])
16. Joseph Gordon Levitt – 'Here Comes Your Man'
17. Zooey Deschanel – 'Sugar Town'
18. Kevin Michael – 'At Last'
19. Spoon – 'The Infinite Pet'

Blue Velvet

Original release date: September 19, 1986
Label: Varèse Sarabande

Tracklisting:
1. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Main Title'
1. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Night Streets / Sandy and Jeffrey'
2. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Frank'
3. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Jeffrey's Dark Side'
4. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Mysteries of Love (French Horn Solo)'
5. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Frank Returns'
6. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Mysteries of Love (Instrumental)'
7. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Blue Velvet / Blue Star'
8. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Lumberton USA / Going Down to Lincoln'
9. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Akron Meets the Blues'
10. Bill Doggett – 'Honky Tonk Part 1'

11. Roy Orbison – 'In Dreams'
12. Ketty Lester – 'Love Letters'
13. Angelo Badalementi featuring Julee Cruse – 'Mysteries of Love'

Broken Flowers
Original release date: August 2, 2005
Label: Decca

Tracklisting:
1. The Greenhornes – 'There is an End'
2. Mulatu Astatke – 'Yegelle Tezeta'
3. The Tenors – 'Ride Your Donkey'
4. Marvin Gaye - 'I Want You'
5. Mulatu Astatke – 'Yekermo Sew'
6. The Brian Jonestown Massacre – 'Not if You Were the Last Dandy on Earth'
7. Holly Golightly – 'Tell Me Now So I Know'
8. Mulatu Astatke – 'Gubelye'
9. Sleep – 'Dopesmoker'
10. Oxford Camerata – 'Requiem Op. 48 (Pie Jesu)
11. Dengue Fever – 'Ethanopium'
12. The Greenhornes – 'Unnatural Habitat'

Dazed and Confused

Original release date: September 28, 1993
Label: Warner

Tracklisting:
1. Rick Derringer – 'Rock and Roll, Hoochie Koo'
1. Foghat – 'Slow Ride'
2. Alice Cooper – 'School's Out'
3. Black Oak Arkansas – 'Jim Dandy'
4. ZZ Top – 'Tush'
5. Nazareth – 'Love Hurts'
6. Ted Nugent – 'Stranglehold'
7. The Runaways – 'Cherry Bomb'
8. Sweet – 'Fox on the Run'
9. War – 'Low Rider'
10. Lynyrd Skynyrd – 'Tuesday's Gone'
11. Deep Purple – 'Highway Star'
12. KISS – 'Rock 'n' Roll All Nite'
13. Black Sabbath – 'Paranoid'

(***Even More*** **Dazed and Confused** [October 25, 1994])
1) Edgar Winter Group – 'Free Ride'
1. Alice Cooper – 'No More Mr Nice Guy'
2. The Steve Miller Band – 'Livin' in the USA'
3. Head East – 'Never Been Any Reason'
4. War – 'Why Can't We Be Friends'
5. Seals and Crofts – 'Summer Breeze'
6. Dr John – 'Right Place, Wrong Time'
7. ZZ Top – 'Balinese'
8. Black Oak Arkansas – 'Lord Have Mercy On My Soul'
9. Foghat – 'I Just Want To Make Love To You'

10. Peter Frampton – ‘Show Me the Way’
11. Peter Frampton – ‘Do You Feel Like We Do’

Do the Right Thing

Original Score

Original release date: June 30, 1989
Label: Sony
Producer: Spike Lee

All pieces composed by Bill Lee

Tracklisting
1. ‘Mookie Goes Home’
6 ‘We Love Roll Call, Y’all’
7 ‘Father to Son’
8 ‘Da Mayor Drinks His Beer’
9 ‘Delivery for Love Daddy’
10 ‘Riot’
11 ‘Magic, Eddie, Prince Ain’t Niggers’
12 ‘Mookie’ (Septet)
13 ‘How Long?’
14 ‘Mookie (Orchestra)’
15 ‘Da Mayor Loves Mother Sister’
16 ‘Tawana’
17 ‘Malcolm and Martin’
18 ‘Wake Up Finale’

Original soundtrack

Original release date: December 1988
Label: Motown Records
Producers: Spike Lee, Gregory Elliot, Ted Hopkins, Mark Kibble, Johnny Mercer

Tracklisting
1. Public Enemy – ‘Fight the Power’
1. Teddy Riley feat. Guy – ‘My Fantasy’
2. E.U. – ‘Party Hearty’
3. Steel Pulse – ‘Can’t Stand It’
4. Keith John – ‘Why Don’t We Try It’
5. Perri – ‘Feel So Good’
6. Take 6 – ‘Don’t Shoot Me’
7. Lori Perry & Gerald Alston – ‘Hard to Say’
8. Perri – ‘Prove to Me’
9. Al Jarreau – ‘Never Explain Love’
10. Ruben Blades – ‘Tu y Yo / We Love’

The Doom Generation

Original release date: October 24, 1995
Label: American Recordings

Tracklisting:
1. Intro

1. Curve – 'On the Wheel'
2. Love & Rockets – 'This Heaven'
3. Cocteau Twins – 'Summerblink'
4. The Wolfgang Press – 'Christianity (Adrian Sherwood Mix)'
5. Meat Beat Manifesto – 'Paradise Now (Remix)'
6. The Verve – 'Already There'
7. The Jesus and Mary Chain – 'Penetration'
8. MC 900 ft Jesus – 'But If You Go'
9. Lush – 'Undertow (The Spooky Mix)'
10. Babyland – 'Double Coupon'
11. Medicine – 'Slut'
12. Pizzicato Five – 'Groovy is My Name'
13. Extra Fancy – 'Violator'
14. Slowdive – 'Blue Skied an' Clear'

Down By Law

Original release date: March 8, 1985
Label: Strange and Beautiful

All tracks composed by John Lurie

Tracklisting:
1. 'What Do You Know About Music, You're Not a Lawyer
2. 'Strangers in the Day'
3. 'Promadade du Maquereau'
4. 'The Invasion of Poland'
5. 'Please Come to My House'
6. 'Are You Warm Enough'
7. 'The Swamp Part 1'
8. 'The Swamp Part 2'
9. 'The King of Thailand, The Queen of Stairs'
10. 'A Hundred Miles from Harry'
11. 'Nicoletta Can't Cook'
12. 'Fork in the Road'
13. 'Variety Theme'
14. 'Porno Booth'
15. 'Porno Booth II'
16. 'Car'
17. 'Million Dollar Walk'
18. 'Anders Leaps In'
19. 'Garter Belt'
20. 'End Titles'

The Fountain
Original release date: November 20, 2006
Label: Nonesuch Records

All tracks composed by Clint Mansell and performed by Kronos Quartet and Mogwai.

Tracklisting:
1. ‘The Last Man’
2. ‘Holy Dread!’
3. ‘Tree of Life’

4. ‘Stay With Me’
5. ‘Death is a Disease’
6. ‘Xibalba’
7. ‘First Snow’
8. ‘Finish It’
9. ‘Death is the Road to Awe’
10. ‘Together We Will Live Forever’

Ghost World

Original release date: August 14, 2001
Label: Shanachie

Tracklisting:

1. Mohammed Rafi – ‘Jaan Pehechan Ho’
1. David Kitay feat. Vanilla, Jade and Ebony – ‘Graduation Rap’
2. Skip James – ‘Devil Got My Woman’
3. Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks – ‘I Must Have It’
4. Lionel Belasco – ‘Miranda’
5. Blueshammer – ‘Pickin’ Cotton Blues’
6. Mr Freddie – ‘Let’s Go Riding’
7. Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks – ‘Georgia on My Mind’
8. Lionel Belasco – ‘Las Palmas De Maracaibo’
9. Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks – ‘Clarice’
10. Craig Ventresco – ‘Scalding Hot Coffee Rag’
11. Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks – ‘You’re Just My Type’
12. Lionel Belasco – ‘Venezuela’
13. Joe Calicott – ‘Fare Thee Well Blues’
14. Pink Anderson and Simmie Dooley – ‘C. C. & O. Blues’
15. McGee Brothers – ‘C-H-I-C-K-E-N Spells Chicken’
16. Robert Wilkins – ‘That’s Not the Way to Get Along’
17. Dallas String Band – ‘So Tired’
18. Little Hat Jones – ‘Bye Bye Baby Blues’
19. David Kitay – ‘Theme From *Ghost World*’

Go

Original release date: December 23, 1999
Label: Sony

Tracklisting:

1) No Doubt – ‘New’
2. Len – ‘Steal My Sunshine’
3. Philip Steir – ‘Magic Carpet Ride’
4. Natalie Imbruglia – ‘Troubled By the Way We Came Together’
5. Fatboy Slim – ‘Gangsta Trippin’’
6. Jimmy Luxury and the Tommy Rome Orchestra – ‘Cha Cha Cha (*Go* Remix)’
7. Esthero – ‘Song For Holly’
8. Lionrock – ‘Fire Up the Shoesaw’
9. Goldo – ‘To All the Lovely Ladies’
10. DJ Rap – ‘Good to Be Alive’
11. BT – ‘Believer’
12. Eagle-Eye Cherry – ‘Shooting Up in Vain (T-Ray Remix)’

13. Air – ‘Talisman’
14. Leftfield – ‘Swords’

Greenberg
Original release date: March 23, 2010
Label: Virgin Records

All tracks composed by James Murphy except tracks 2, 5, 9, 10, 13 and 14

Tracklisting:
1. 'People'
2. Nite Jewel – 'Suburbia'
3. 'Sleepy Baby'
4. 'Thumbs'
5. Albert Hammond – 'It Never Rains in Southern California'
6. 'Plenty of Time'
7. 'Photographs'
8. 'Gente'
9. Galaxie 500 – 'Strange'
10. LCD Soundsystem – 'Oh You (Christmas Blues)'
11. 'Birthday Song'
12. 'Dear You'
13. The Sonics – 'Shot Down'
14. Duran Duran – 'The Chuaffeur'
15. 'If You Need a Friend'
16. 'Please Don't Follow Me'
17. 'Photographs (Piano)'

In Search of a Midnight Kiss

Original release date: August 30, 2008
Label: 1610 Recordings

Tracklisting:
1. Shearwater – ‘The Kind’
1. Shearwater – ‘A Hush’
2. Shearwater – ‘My Good Kind’
3. Shearwater – ‘Wedding Bells Are Breaking’
4. Paleo – ‘Wilson’s Theme’
5. Paleo – ‘Lost Shoes’
6. Paleo – ‘Sky Pilot’
7. Asylum Street Spankers – ‘Walkin’ and Whistlin’’
8. Mendoza Line – ‘The Queen of England’
9. Brian McGuire – ‘Uncle Science’
10. Brian McGuire – ‘Driving Music’
11. Sybil – ‘Discolite’
12. Sybil – ‘Mocha Queen’
13. Okkervil River – ‘Lines’
14. Sybil – ‘Winds of Change’
15. The Family Band – ‘Auld Lang Syne’
16. Okkervil River – ‘Mermaid’

Inland Empire
Original release date: September 11, 2006

Label: David Lynch Music Company

Tracklisting:
1. David Lynch – 'Ghost of Love'
2. David Lynch – 'Rabbits Theme'
3. Mantovani – 'Colours of My Life'
4. David Lynch – 'Woods Variation'
5. Dave Brubeck – 'Three to Get Ready'
6. Boguslaw Schaeffer – 'Klavier Konzert'
7. Kroke – 'The Secrets of the Life Tree'
8. Little Eva – The Locomotion'
9. David Lynch – 'Call From the Past'
10. Krzysztof Penderecki – 'Als Jakob Erwachte'
11. Witold Lutoslawski – 'Novelette Conclusion (Excerpt)'
12. Beck – 'Black Tambourine (Film Version)'
13. David Lynch – 'Mansion Theme'
14. David Lynch – 'Walkin' on the Sky'
15. David Lynch / Marek Zebrowski – 'Polish Night Music No. 1'
16. David Lynch / Chrysta Bell – 'Polish Poem'
17. Nina Simone – 'Sinnerman (Edit)'

Juno

Original release date: January 8, 2008
Label: Rhino Entertainment

Tracklisting:
1. Barry Louis Polisar – 'All I Want Is You'
2) Kimya Dawson – 'My Rollercoaster'
3) The Kinks – 'A Well Respected Man'
4) Buddy Holly – '(Ummm, Oh Yeah) Dearest'
5) Mateo Messina – 'Up the Spout'
6) Kimya Dawson – 'Tire Swing'
7) Belle & Sebastian – 'Piazza, New York Catcher'
8) Kimya Dawson – 'Loose Lips'
9) Sonic Youth – 'Superstar'
10) Kimya Dawson – 'Sleep'
11) Belle & Sebastian – 'Expectations'
12) Mott the Hoople – 'All the Young Dudes'
13) Kimya Dawson – 'So Nice So Smart'
14) Cat Power – 'Sea of Love'
15) Kimya Dawson and Antsy Pants – 'Tree Hugger'
16) The Velvet Underground – 'I'm Sticking With You'
17) The Moldy Peaches – 'Anyone Else But You'
18) Antsy Pants – 'Vampire'
19) Michael Cera and Ellen Page – 'Anyone But You'

Kids

Original release date: July 24, 2005
Label: London Records

Tracklisting:
1. Daniel Johnston – 'Casper'
1. Deluxx Folk Implosion – 'Daddy Never Understood'
2. The Folk Implosion – 'Nothing Gonna Stop'

3. The Folk Implosion – 'Jenny's Theme'
4. The Folk Implosion – 'Simean Groove'
5. Daniel Johnston – 'Casper the Friendly Ghost'
6. The Folk Implosion – 'Natural One'
7. Sebadoh – 'Spoiled'
8. The Folk Implosion – 'Crash'
9. The Folk Implosion – 'Wet Stuff'
10. Lo-Down – 'Mad Fright Night'
11. The Folk Implosion – 'Raise the Bells'
12. Slint – 'Good Morning Captain'

Lost Highway

Original release date: February 18, 1997
Label: Interscope Records

Tracklisting
1. David Bowie – 'I'm Deranged (Edit)'
2. Trent Reznor – 'Videodrones, Questions'
3. Nine Inch Nails – 'The Perfect Drug'
4. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Red Bats With Teeth'
5. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Haunting and Heartbreaking'
6. Smashing Pumpkins – 'Eye'
7. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Dub Driving'
8. Barry Adamson – 'Mr Eddy's Theme 1'
9. Lou Reed – 'This Magic Moment'
10. Barry Adamson – 'Mr Eddy's Theme 2'
11. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Fred and Renée Make Love'
12. Marilyn Manson – 'Apple of Sodom'
13. Antonio Carlos Jobim – 'Insensatez'
14. Barry Adamson – 'Something Wicked This Way Comes (Edit)'
15. Marilyn Manson – 'I Put a Spell On You'
16. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Fats Revisited'
17. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Fred's World;'
18. Rammstein – 'Rammstein (Edit)'
19. Barry Adamson – 'Hollywood Sunset'
20. Rammstein – 'Heirate Mich (Edit)'
21. Angelo Badalamenti – 'Police'
22. Trent Reznor – 'Driver Down'
23. David Bowie – 'I'm Deranged (Reprise)'

Lost in Translation
Original release date: October 3, 2003
Label: Emperor Norton

Tracklisting:
1. 'Intro / Toyko'
2. Kevin Shields – 'City Girl'
3. Sebastian Tellier – 'Fantino'
4. Squarepusher – 'Tommib'
5. Death in Vegas – 'Girls'
6. Kevin Shields – 'Goodbye'
7. Phoenix – 'Too Young'
8. Happy End – 'Kaze Wo Atsumete'
9. Brian Reitzell & Roger J Manning Jr – 'On the Subway'

10. Kevin Shields – 'Ikebana'
11. My Bloody Valentine – 'Sometimes'
12. Air – 'Alone in Kyoto'
13. Brian Reitzell & Roger J Manning Jr – 'Shibuya'
14. Kevin Shields – 'Are You Awake'
15. The Jesus and Mary Chain – 'Just Like Honey'

Magnolia

Original score
Original release date: March 14, 2000
Label: Reprise Records

All pieces composed by Jon Brion

Tracklisting:
1. 'A Little Library Music / Going to a Show'
1. 'Showtime'
2. 'Jimmy's Breakdown'
3. 'WDKK Theme'
4. 'I've Got a Surprise For You Today'
5. 'Stanley / Frank / Linda's Breakdown'
6. 'Chance of Rain'
7. 'So Now Then'
8. 'Magnolia'

Original soundtrack
Original release date: December 7, 1999
Label: Reprise Records

All songs by Aimee Mann, except tracks 10, 11 and 12

Tracklisting:
1. 'One'
1. 'Momentum'
2. 'Build That Wall'
3. 'Deathly'
4. 'Driving Sideways'
5. 'You Do'
6. 'Nothing Is Good Enough (Instrumental)'
7. 'Wise Up'
8. 'Save Me'
9. Supertramp – 'Goodbye Stranger'
10. Supertramp – 'The Logical Song'
11. Jon Brion – 'Magnolia'

Marie Antoinette

Original release date: October 10, 2006 (US) / November 2, 2006 (UK)
Label: Verve Forecast / Polydor

Tracklisting:
Disc 1
1. Siouxsie and the Banshees – ‘Hong Kong Garden’
1. Bow Wow Wow – ‘Aphrodisiac’

2. The Strokes – Whatever Happened
3. The Radio Dept. – Pulling Our Weight
4. New Order – ‘Ceremony’
5. Gang of Four – ‘Natural’s Not In It’
6. Bow Wow Wow – ‘I Want Candy’ (Kevin Shields Remix)
7. Adam and the Ants – ‘Kings of the Wild Frontier’
8. Brian Reitzell – ‘Concerto in G’ (Antonio Vivaldi)
9. Windsor for the Derby – ‘The Melody of a Fallen Tree’
10. The Radio Dept. – ‘I Don’t Like it Like This’
11. The Cure – ‘Plainsong’

Disc 2
1. Brian Reitzell – ‘Intro Versailles’
1. Aphex Twin – ‘Jynweythek Ylow’
2. Dustin O’Halloran – ‘Opus 17’
3. Air – Il Secondo Giorno
4. The Radio Dept. – ‘Keep On Boys’
5. Dustin O’Halloran – ‘Opus 23’
6. Brian Reitzell – ‘Les barricades mystérieuses’ (Francois Couperin)
7. Bow Wow Wow – ‘Fools Rush In’ (Kevin Shields Remix)
8. Aphex Twin – ‘Avril 14’
9. Brian Reitzell – ‘K. 213’ (Domenico Scarlatti)
10. Squarepusher – ‘Tommib Help Buss’
11. William Christie – ‘Tristes Apprêts, Pâles Flambeaux’ (Jean-Philippe Rameau)
12. Dustin O’Halloran – ‘Opus 36’
13. The Cure – ‘All Cats Are Grey’

Mystery Train
Original release date: November 7, 1989
Label: Milan Records

Tracklisting:
1. Elvis Presley – 'Mystery Train'
2. Junior Parker – 'Mystery Train'
3. Elvis Presley – 'Blue Moon'
4. Otis Redding – 'Pain in My Heart'
5. Roy Orbison – 'Domino'
6. Rufus Thomas – 'The Memphis Train'
7. Bobby Blue Band – 'Get Your Money Where You Spend Your Time'
8. The Bar-Kays – 'Soul Finger'
9. John Lurie – 'Mystery Train'
10. John Lurie – 'Tuesday Night in Memphis'
11. John Lurie – 'Girls'
12. John Lurie – 'Italian Walk'
13. John Lurie – 'A Lawyer Can Take You to Another Planet'
14. John Lurie – 'Dream Sun King'
15. John Lurie – 'Chaucer Street
16. John Lurie – 'Tuesday Night in Memphis'

Nowhere
Original release date: March 25, 1997
Label: Mercury

Tracklisting:

1. 'Intro'
2. 311 – 'Freak Out'
3. Radiohead – 'How Can You Be So Sure?'
4. Elastica – 'In the City'
5. Hole – 'Dicknail'
6. The Chemical Brothers – 'Life is Sweet (Daft Punk Remix)'
7. Massive Attack – 'Daydreaming (Blacksmith Remix)'
8. Coco and the Bean – 'Killin' Time (Qureysh – Eh? 1 Remix)'
9. Catherine Wheel – 'Intravenous'
10. Curve – 'Nowhere'
11. Lush - 'I Have the Moon'
12. Ruby – 'Flippin' tha Bird (Ceasefire Remix)'
13. James – 'Thursday Treatments'
14. Chuck D – 'Generation Wrekkked (Danny Saber Rock Remix)'
15. Marilyn Manson – 'Kiddie Grinder'
16. Suede – 'Trash'

Pi

Original release date: March 1, 1999
Label: Silva Screen

Tracklisting:
1. Clint Mansell – 'πr^2'
2. Orbital – 'P.E.T.R.O.L.'
3. Autechre – 'Kalpol Intro'
4. Aphex Twin – 'Bucephalus Bouncing Ball'
5. Roni Size Reprazent – 'Watching Windows (Ed Rush and Optical Remix)
6. Massive Attack – 'Angel'
7. Clint Mansell – 'We've Got the Gun'
8. David Holmes – 'No Man's Land'
9. Gus Gus – 'Anthem'
10. Banco de Gaia – 'Drippy'
11. Psilonaut – 'Third From the Sun'
12. Spacetime Continuum – 'A Low Frequency Inversion Field'
13. Clint Mansell - '$2\pi r$'

Punch-Drunk Love

Original release date: February 3, 2003
Label: Nonesuch Records

All pieces composed and produced by Jon Brion, except tracks 8, 9, 12 and 17

Tracklisting:
1. 'Overture'
1. 'Tabla'
2. 'Punch Drunk Melody'
3. 'Hands and Feet'
4. 'Le Petit Chateau'
5. 'Alleyway'
6. 'Punchy Tack Piano'
7. Shelley Duvall – 'He Needs Me'
8. Ladies K – 'Waikiki'
9. 'Moana Chimes'

10. ‘Hospital’
11. Conway Twitty – ‘Danny (Lonely Blue Boy)’
12. ‘Healthy Choice’
13. ‘Third Floor Hallway’
14. ‘Blossoms and Blood’
15. ‘Here We Go’
16. Shelley Duvall – ‘He Really Needs Me’

Requiem for a Dream

Release date: November 20, 2000
Label: Nonesuch Records

All tracks composed by Clint Mansell and performed by The Kronos Quartet

Tracklisting:
1. ‘Summer Overture’
1. ‘Party’
2. ‘Coney Island Dreaming’
3. ‘Party’
4. ‘Chocolate Charms’
5. ‘Ghosts of Things to Come’
6. ‘Dreams’
7. ‘Tense’
8. ‘Dr Phil’
9. ‘High on Life’
10. ‘Ghosts’
11. ‘Crimin’ and Dealin’’
12. ‘Hope Overture’
13. ‘Tense’
14. ‘Bialy and Lux Conga’
15. ‘Cleaning Apartment’
16. ‘Ghosts Falling’
17. ‘Dreams’
18. ‘Arnold’
19. ‘Marion Barfs’
20. ‘Supermarket Sweep’
21. ‘Dreams’
22. ‘Sara Goldfarb Has Left the Building’
23. ‘Bugs Got a Devilish Grin Conga’
24. ‘Winter Overture’
25. ‘Southern Hospitality’
26. ‘Fear’
27. ‘Full Tense’
28. ‘Beginning of the End’
29. ‘Ghosts of a Future Lost’
30. ‘Meltdown’
31. ‘Lux Aeterna’
32. ‘Coney Island Low’

Scott Pilgrim vs the World
Original release date: August 10, 2010
Label: ABKCO

Tracklisting:

1. Sex Bob-Omb – 'We Are Sex Bob-Omb'
2. Plumbtree – 'Scott Pilgrim'
3. Frank Black – 'I Heard Ramona Sing'
4. Beachwood Sparks – 'By Your Side'
5. Black Lips – 'O Katrina'
6. Crash and the Boys – 'I'm So Sad, So Very, Very, Sad'
7. Crash and the Boys – 'We Hate You Please Die'
8. Sex Bob-Omb – 'Garbage Truck'
9. T. Rex – 'Teenage Dream'
10. The Bluetones – 'Sleazy Bed Track'
11. Blood Red Shoes – 'It's Getting Boring By the Sea'
12. Metric – 'Black Sheep'
13. Sex Bob-Omb – 'Threshold'
14. Broken Social Scene – 'Anthems for a Seventeen Year Old Girl'
15. The Rolling Stones – 'Under My Thumb'
16. Beck – 'Ramona (Acoustic Version)'
17. Beck – 'Ramona'
18. Sex Bob-Omb – 'Summertime'
19. Brian Lebarton – 'Threshold (8 Bit)'

Shortbus
Original release date: November 7, 2006
Label: Team Love Records

Tracklisting:
1. Scott Matthew – 'Upside Down'
2. Azure Ray – 'If You Fall'
3. Yo La Tengo – 'Wizard's Sleeve'
4. Animal Collective – 'Winter's Love'
5. Scott Matthew – 'Surgery'
6. Sook-Yin Lee – 'Beautiful'
7. Gentleman Reg – 'It's Not Safe'
8. John LaMonica – 'Kids'
9. Scott Matthew – 'Language'
10. Jay Brannan – 'Soda Shop'
11. Anita O'Day – 'Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby?'
12. The Ark – 'Kolla Kolla'
13. The Hidden Cameras – 'Boys of Melody'
14. Scott Matthew – 'Little Bird'
15. The Ark – 'This Piece of Poetry is Meant To Do Harm'
16. Jasper James – 'This House'
17. Scott Matthew – 'In the End (Long Film Version)'
18. Scott Matthew – 'In the End (Acoustic)'

subUrbia
Original release date: Feb 4, 1997
Label: Geffen

Tracklisting:
1. Elastica featuring Stephen Malkmus – 'Unheard Music'
1. Sonic Youth – 'Bee Bee's Song'
2. Girls Against Boys – 'Bullet Proof Cupid'
3. Beck – 'Feather in Your Cap'
4. U.N.K.L.E. – 'Berry Meditation'
5. Boss Hog – 'I'm Not Like Everyone Else'

6. Skinny Puppy – 'Cult'
7. Superchunk – 'Does Your Hometown Care?'
8. Sonic Youth – 'Sunday'
9. Butthole Surfers – 'Human Cannonball'
10. Sonic Youth – 'Tabla in Suburbia'
11. Flaming Lips – 'Hot Day'
12. Thurston Moore – 'Psychic Hearts'
13. Gene Pitney – 'Town Without Pity'

There Will Be Blood

Release date: December 18, 2007
Label: Nonesuch Records

All pieces composed by Jonny Greenwood

Tracklisting
1) 'Open Spaces'
2. 'Future Markets'
3. 'Prospectors Arrive'
4. 'Eat Him By His Own Light'
5. 'Henry Plainview'
6. 'There Will Be Blood'
7. 'Oil'
8. 'Proven Lands'
9. 'HW / Hope of the New Fields'
10. 'Stranded the Line'
11. 'Prospectors' Quarter'

(Bonus Tracks [download version])
12. 'HW / Hope of the New Fields (Orchestral Version)'
13. 'Prospectors' Quarter (Orchestral Version)'
14. 'Detuned Quartet'

Thumbsucker

Release date: September 13, 2005
Label: Hollywood Records / Good Records

All tracks composed by Tim De Laugher and performed by The Polyphonic Spree, except tracks 8, 12 and 15

Tracklisting:
1. 'The Crash'
2. 'Scream and Shout'
3. 'Slow Halls'
4. 'What Would You Let Go'
5. 'Empty Rooms'
6. 'Wonderful For You'
7. 'The Rebecca Fantasy'
8. Elliot Smith – 'Thirteen
9. 'Pink Trash Dream'
10. 'The Green Lights'
11. 'Debate Montage'
12. Elliot Smith – 'Trouble'
13. 'Skinny Dip'

14. ‘Sourness Makes It Right’
15. ‘Some of the Parts’
16. ‘Matt Schraam’
17. Elliot Smith – ‘Let’s Get Lost’
18. ‘Justin’s Hypothesis’
19. ‘The Call of the Wind’
20. ‘Wait and See’
21. ‘Move Away and Shine’
22. ‘Acceptance’
23. ‘Move Away and Shine (In a Dream Version)’

Twilight
Original release date: November 4, 2008
Label: Chop Shop / Atlantic Records

Tracklisting:
1. Muse – 'Supermassive Black Hole'
2. Paramore – 'Decode'
3. Black Ghosts – 'Full Moon'
4. Linkin Park – 'Leave Out All the Rest'
5. Mutemath – 'Spotlight'
6. Perry Farrell – 'Go All the Way (Into the Twilight)'
7. Collective Soul – 'Tremble for My Beloved'
8. Paramore - 'I Caught Myself'
9. Blue Foundation – 'Eyes on Fire'
10. Robert Pattinson – 'Never Think'
11. Iron and Wine – 'Flightless Bird, American Mouth'
12. Carter Burwell – 'Bella's Lullaby'

Twilight: Eclipse
Original release date: June 8, 2010
Label: Chop Shop / Atlantic Records

Tracklisting:
1. Metric – 'Eclipse (All Yours)'
2. Muse – 'Neutron Star Collision (Love is Forever)'
3. The Bravery – 'Ours'
4. Florence + the Machine – 'Heavy in Your Arms'
5. Sia – 'My Love'
6. Fanfarlo – 'Atlas'
7. The Black Keys – 'Chop and Change'
8. The Dead Weather – 'Rolling in on a Burning Tyre'
9. Beck & Bat for Lashes – 'Let's Get Lost'
10. Vampire Weekend – 'Jonathan Low'
11. U.N.K.L.E. – 'With You In My Head'
12. Eastern Conference Champions – 'A Million Miles an Hour'
13. Band of Horses – 'Life on Earth'
14. Cee Lo Green – 'What Part of Forever'
15. Howard Shore – 'Jacob's Theme'

Twilight: New Moon
Original release date: October 16, 2009
Label: Chop Shop / Atlantic Records

Tracklisting:
1. Death Cab For Cutie – 'Meet Me on the Equinox'
2. Band of Skulls – 'Friends'
3. Thom Yorke – 'Hearing Damage'
4. Lykke Li – 'Possibility'
5. The Killers – 'A White Demon Love Song'
6. Anya Marina – 'Satellite Heart'
7. Muse - 'I Belong to You'
8. Bon Iver & St Vincent – 'Rosyln'
9. Black Rebel Motorcycle Club – 'Done All Wrong'
10. Hurricane Bells – 'Monsters'
11. Seawolf – 'The Violet Hour'
12. OK Go – 'Shooting the Moon'
13. Grizzly Bear feat. Victoria Legrand – 'Slow Life'
14. Editors – 'No Sound But the Wind'
15. Alexandre Desplat – 'New Moon (The Meadow)'

Where the Wild Things Are
Original release date: September 29, 2009
Label: Interscope Records

All tracks by Karen O and the Kids except track 10

Tracklisting:
1. 'Igloo'
2. 'All Is Love'
3. 'Capsize'
4. 'Worried Shoes'
5. 'Rumpus'
6. 'Rumpus Reprise'
7. 'Hideaway'
8. 'Cliffs'
9. 'Animal'
10. Carter Burwell – 'Lost Fur'
11. 'Heads Up'
12. 'Building All Is Love'
13. 'Food Is Still Hot'
14. 'Sailing Home'

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Punch Drunk Love, Dir. Paul Thomas Anderson, US, 2003

Quiet City, Dir. Aaron Katz, US, 2007

Rachel Getting Married, Dir. Jonathan Demme, US, 2008

Reality Bites, Dir. Ben Stiller, US, 1993

Rear Window, Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, US, 1954

The Replacement Killers, Dir. Antoine Fuqua, US, 1998

Requiem for a Dream, Dir. Darren Aronofsky, US, 2001

Reservoir Dogs, Dir. Quentin Tarantino, US, 1992

River of Grass, Dir. Kelly Reichardt, US, 1994

Roger and Me, Dir. Michael Moore, US, 1989

The Royal Tenenbaums, Dir. Wes Anderson, US, 2001

Rushmore, Dir. Wes Anderson, US, 1998

S.F.W., Dir. Jefery Levy, US, 1994

Safe, Dir. Todd Haynes, UK/US, 1995

Saturday Night Fever, Dir. John Badham, US, 1977

The Savages, Dir. Tamara Jenkins, US, 2007

School Daze, Dir. Spike Lee, US, 1987

Scorpio Rising, Dir. Kenneth Anger, US, 1965

Scott Pilgrim vs the World, Dir. Edgar Wright, US, 2010

sex, lies and videotape, Dir. Steven Soderberg, US, 1989

Shaft, Dir. Gordon Parks, US, 1971

She's All That, Dir. Robert Iscove, US, 1999

She's Gotta Have It, Dir. Spike Lee, US, 1986

The Shining, Dir. Stanley Kubrick, UK/US, 1980

Short Cuts, Dir. Robert Altman, US, 1993

Shortbus, Dir. John Cameron Mitchell, US, 2006

Simple Men, Dir. Hal Hartley, US, 1992

Singles, Dir. Cameron Crowe, US, 1993

Slacker, Dir. Richard Linklater, US, 1991

Sleepless In Seattle, Dir. Nora Ephron, US, 1993

Smart People, Dir. Noam Murro, US, 2008

The Squid and the Whale, Dir. Noah Baumbach, US, 2005

The Social Network, Dir. David Fincer, US, 2010

Somewhere, Dir. Sofia Coppola, US, 2010

Son of Sam, Dir. Spike Lee, US, 1999

Spun, Dir. Jonas Åkerlund, US, 2002

The Spy Next Door, Dir. Brian Levant, US, 2010

Star Wars, Dir. George Lucas, US, 1977

Stop Making Sense, Dir. Jonathan Demme, US, 1984

Storytelling, Dir. Todd Solondz, US, 2001

The Straight Story, Dir. David Lynch, US, 1999

Stranger Than Fiction, Dir. Marc Foster, US, 2005

Stranger Than Paradise, Dir. Jim Jarmusch, US, 1984

subUrbia, Dir. Richard Linklater, US, 1996

Sugar Town, Dir. Allison Anders, US, 1999

Sunshine Cleaning, Dir. Christine Jeffs, US, 2008

Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song, Dir. Melvin Van Peebles, US, 1971

Swingers, Dir. Doug Liman, US, 1996

Terminator Salvation, Dir. Joseph McGinty Nichol, US, 2009

That Thing You Do!, Dir. Tom Hanks, US, 1996

There Will Be Blood, Dir. Paul Thomas Anderson, US, 2007

The Thing Called Love, Dir. Peter Bogdanovich, US, 1993

Things Behind the Sun, Dir. Allison Anders, US, 2001

Thirteen, Dir. Catherine Hardwicke, US, 2003

This Is Spinal Tap, Dir. Rob Reiner, US, 1983

Thumbsucker, Dir. Mike Mills, US, 2005

Tommy, Dir. Ken Russell, UK, 1975

*Totally F***ed Up*, Dir. Gregg Araki, US, 1993

Tougher Than Leather, Dir. Rick Rubin, US, 1988

Trainspotting, Dir. Danny Boyle, UK, 1996

Tron: Legacy, Dir. Joseph Kosinski, US, 2010

24 Hour Party People, Dir. Michael Winterbottom, UK, 2002

Twilight, Dir. Catherine Hardwicke, US, 2008

The Twilight Saga: Eclipse, Dir. David Slade, US, 2010

The Twilight Saga: New Moon, Dir. Chris Weitz, US, 2009

The United States of Leland, Dir. Matthew Ryan Hoge, US, 2003

Up Tight, Dir. Jules Dassin, US, 1968

Velvet Goldmine, Dir. Todd Haynes, UK/US, 1998

Very Bad Things, Dir. Peter Berg, US, 1998

The Virgin Suicides, Dir. Sofia Coppola, US, 1999

Walking and Talking, Dir. Nicole Holofcener, US, 1996

Watchmen, Dir. Zack Snyder, US, 2009

We Go Way Back, Dir. Lynn Shelton, US, 2007

Wendy and Lucy, Dir. Kelly Reichardt, US, 2008

What's Love Got To Do With It, Dir. Brian Gibson, US, 1993

When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts, Dir. Spike Lee, US, 2006

Where the Wild Things Are, Dir. Spike Jonze, US, 2009

Wild At Heart, Dir. David Lynch, US, 1991

Wild Style, Dir. Charlie Ahearn, US, 1983

The Woodsman, Dir. Nicole Kassell, US, 2004

Woodstock, Dir. Michael Wadleigh, US, 1970

The Wrestler, Dir. Darren Aronofsky, US, 2008

Your Friends and Neighbours, Dir. Neil LaBute, US, 1998