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**Auteur direction, collaboration and film music:
Re-imaginings in the cinema of Rodriguez and Tarantino**

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Auteur direction, collaboration and film music: Re-imaginings
in the cinema of Rodriguez and Tarantino

By: Heather J. Raines

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The theory of film music and its terms and categories have not yet been applied to or tested in more recent genres of film, and this study tests the application of the terms auteur and mélomane in the films of Robert Rodriguez (*Once Upon A Time In Mexico*, *Sin City* and *Planet Terror*) and Quentin Tarantino (*Kill Bill V. 1 and 2*, *Death Proof*). Both directors have a distinct musical stance, and through an examination of the abovementioned films, their influences and sonic impact are explored.

The working question of this thesis, in the abstract, is whether or to what extent the terms, concepts and directorial categories of film-music theory apply to this recent repertoire. This study explores the similarities and differences in the relationship between the music in the films of the auteur and mélomane while exploring the fields of musical narrative present in contemporary film.

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Introduction

In selecting the films for this study, the criterion was first and foremost the films of Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino, as the music in their films has become of particular interest to me. Tarantino has always been known as a director who uses music to great impact, and although I did not always appreciate his films, I was struck with his use of music. Tarantino was also of interest because he selects the music for his films, unlike most directors who hire a music supervisor to find music suitable for their vision. After watching my first Robert Rodriguez film and noticing in the credits that he wrote the original music that accompanied his films, I was curious as to his reasoning behind this, his musical background (although he composes the music for his films, I have found no indication of any formal musical training) and finally, the impact that the music had on the films.

The actual selection of the films came down to a few factors; for Rodriguez, I chose films for which he had scored the music and whose story interested me. Although *Once Upon A Time In Mexico* (2003) is the third film in the *El Mariachi Trilogy* (the first two were *El Mariachi* [1992] and *Desperado* [1995]), this is the first adult film that Rodriguez scored. He did write some of the music for his own films as early as the *Spy Kids* trilogy (2001, 2002, and 2003) but he had significant musical assistance on those films, including Danny Elfman, John Debney and the musical group Los Lobos. I selected *Sin City* (2005) as the second film because I was interested to see what type of music he would compose for something other than *latino* inspired stories. It was also an interesting case because this is a film where he did not write the story or the music alone; the story belongs to Frank Miller, a well known

comic book and graphic novel author. The music was written with two other collaborators, John Debney and Graeme Revell. This relationship will be explored at greater length further in this study. I was curious to see if it would have any impact on the music to have Rodriguez participate in collaboration. The final Rodriguez film was selected because it was his most recent film; indeed at the inception of this thesis, *Planet Terror* (2007) was not even in theatres yet. Another reason for the selection of these particular films is that they included the first film Rodriguez scored as well as the final film he has scored to date. The films themselves also present a variation in style of film, and therefore required a variation in musical styles as well. *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*, is as its title suggests, a film set in Mexico thus requires *latino* infused music. *Sin City* follows the Frank Miller novels, which are written in a neo-noir style, and it would be necessary for the music to mimic the world of Basin City. Finally, *Planet Terror* pays homage to old grindhouse and zombie films. The term *grindhouse* can refer to either the type of film or the actual theatre these “B” movies were shown in. Popular in the 1960s and 70s the type of film common to grind house theatres included violence, soft core porn/sex, oddly perverse plots, blaxploitation, and ‘slasher’ films. Usually a double feature, grindhouse theatres faded from popularity with the introduction of the home video in the 1980s.¹ *Planet Terror* was written as the first half of a double feature, with Quentin Tarantino’s *Death Proof* being shown as the second half. These films were presented in theatres as a double feature, but they were released individually on DVD as people did not understand the grindhouse concept;

¹ For more information on the grindhouse genre, go to www.grindhouse.com

however it was the directors' original intention that they be viewed together in one sitting, in the tradition of grindhouse cinema.

The theory of film music and its terms and categories have not yet been applied to or tested in more recent genres of film. The categories of directors seem problematic. One particularity is the definition of the term *auteur*,² a concept that is not new in its application to film, but has never fully been examined to include a director whose control extended to the music as well as the image. This term would apply to Robert Rodriguez, and will be examined at length in Chapter 1 and 4.

The second term that seems problematic is the term *mélomane*. Broken down into its most basic linguistic elements, *mélos* is Greek for song and *maníā* is Greek for madness.

Therefore, a *mélomane* or melomaniac is someone who has a mania (or passion) for music.³ Tarantino is, among other things, a melomaniac for music, particularly older, and more obscure music which he uses to great effect in his films. Not all melomaniacs are concerned with using music that has been previously written; it could be argued that directors who frequently collaborate with the same composers are exhibiting a degree of melomania, since they are consistently choosing to work with a composer whose style they are familiar and find pleasing. Such repeat collaborations are more common in filmmaking than the other two categories of directors previously mentioned. For example, while Tarantino is most certainly still an *auteur*, by extending the definition to include directorial control over the musical composition, he would more likely be categorized as a *mélomane*,

² There are several terms that originate from the French language, such as *auteur* and *mélomane*. They have been accepted into the English, and so I will not be italicizing them past their initial introduction.

³ The World Book Dictionary Volume two L-Z, World Book, Inc. Chicago, IL, 2003.

or a mélomane auteur, as Claudia Gorbman will posit in an article. This distinction between the two types of directors will be explored at length in Chapter 1.

The films of Quentin Tarantino were selected for many of the same reasons as Robert Rodriguez's. Tarantino's first full length feature was *Reservoir Dogs* in 1992, but I chose to start my analysis with *Kill Bill* (2003), since *Reservoir Dogs* contained scenes that I was uncomfortable viewing. While *Pulp Fiction* is referenced in this paper, I chose to devote my analysis to *Kill Bill V.1* (2003) and *Kill Bill V.2* (2004) and *Death Proof* (2007) for the majority of this thesis. I selected the *Kill Bill*'s as they were the first two films by Tarantino that had a significant impact on me, both visually and sonically. After viewing these two films, I began to wonder why the music in his films had more impact than other films that use music in a similar fashion. This became the genesis of my research. *Death Proof* was selected for the same reasons as *Planet Terror*; it was Tarantino's most recent work, and the subject matter and referential material varied greatly from my other selections. The *Kill Bill* films are an homage to, among other things, spaghetti westerns,⁴ old kung fu movies, and Japanese anime films, while *Death Proof* was not only homage to the grindhouse tradition, but also to muscle car movies and slasher films. Tarantino re-imagined the classical horror slasher film; instead of the villain chasing after his hapless female victims with a knife or axe, the serial killer in *Death Proof* would use his muscle car

⁴Spaghetti Western refers to a genre of western themed films made by Italian filmmakers, most notably Sergio Leone.

as the weapon. The music for these films aptly pays respect to the musical conceits of the older films.⁵

Because of copyright restrictions it has not been possible to include scores or transcriptions of the cues discussed in the thesis. The list in the appendix, some lyrics quoted there, and the description of scenes, shots, and cues in the body of the thesis must be sufficient in their stead. The cues are, in the appendix, divided into tracks so that they may be viewed and listened to from a DVD. There were several attempts to contact Robert Rodriguez to discuss his process and to get permission to use his films and music as a part of my thesis but the attempts were unsuccessful. I did not attempt to contact Tarantino, since there has been more scholarship on him and his films, and I did not have as many pressing questions with regards to his films and music.

The result of the selections of films discussed (which grew outward from the Rodriguez films) is a set of films that are re-imaginings of particular genres of films, including but not limited to: western, film noir, kung fu, and grindhouse, using sensational elements and a heavy use of clichés that are a homage to the films the directors grew up loving. The re-imaginings are related in their presentation of these clichés and sensational elements through specific musical and visual references, and accordingly, directorial conceits.

Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's stance towards these older film genres are not the same, although they could both be considered connoisseurs of these types of films.

Since their stance towards these genres is not the same, it begs the questions as to whether

⁵At the time of writing, Tarantino is currently working on *Inglourious Basterds* (sic), his long awaited World War II epic. While the music has not been selected for this film, there is a rumour that Tarantino is trying to enlist the services of Ennio Morricone.

their individual stance towards the music would be the same. For example, would an auteur use music in the same manner that a mélomane would? And one might wonder: in collaborative arts, is the relationship between music and image more coherent and powerful in the work of an auteur like Rodriguez than for a mélomane like Tarantino?

The working question for this thesis, in the abstract, is whether or to what extent the terms, concepts and directorial categories of film-music theory apply to this recent repertoire.

This study seeks to explore the similarities and differences in the relationship between the music in the films of the auteur and mélomane while exploring the fields of musical narrative present in contemporary film.

Chapter 1:

Categories of Relationships between Directors and Composer

There are three categories of film and music examined in the present study. For each category, I will be providing examples from my group of chosen films and demonstrating how each particular scene or song exemplifies what I believe to be an accurate representation of that category. Each example will include support from either the selected literature or accompanying commentaries and interviews from the chosen films.

The Auteur

The auteur theory can be defined as a theory of filmmaking in which the director is considered the primary creative force in a motion picture. This usually includes directing and screen writing but can extend to producing as well. According to Andrew Sarris in his 1963 article “The Auteur Theory and The Perils of Pauline,”⁶ the auteur theory also includes the directors whose individuality of style enabled them to be creators, not simply the tool for the screen writer to project his product onto the screen.

The auteur theory was first mentioned by François Truffaut in his 1954 article “Une certaine tendance du cinéma français”⁷ where he writes, referring to several well known directors: “they are auteurs who often write their own dialogue and some of them themselves invent the stories they direct (pg. 16).” By these criteria alone, Rodriguez (with

⁶ Sarris, Andrew. “The Auteur Theory and The Perils of Pauline”. *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1963) p. 26-33. < <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0015-1386%28196322%2916%3A4%3C26%3ATATATP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-A>>

⁷ First appearing in *Cahiers du Cinéma* 31 (1954). For the sake of this paper, I will be using the translated version which appears in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader* ed. By Barry Keith Grant, Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

the exception of *Sin City*, for which he did not write the dialogue or story) and Tarantino would both be considered auteurs. However, what is different between the traditional list of auteurs (an extensive list which includes Orson Welles, Stanley Kubrick, Charlie Chaplin, Jean Cocteau and Max Ophuls) and my list is that the latter have also selected or written the music that accompanies their films.

André Bazin, one of the founding editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, explores what he calls the *politique des auteurs* in his article “*De la politiques des auteurs*” published in 1957.⁸ In it, he explores the ideas first espoused by Truffaut and expands upon them, applying the idea of the auteur to film in the same way it has been applied to other traditional art forms. In reference to Charlie Chaplin, Bazin argues:

[he] was endowed with further gifts that have little to do with genius and which were precisely the ones that enabled [him] to adapt [himself] to the predicament of film production. Of course, the case of Chaplin was unique since, as both *auteur* and producer, he has been able to be both the cinema and its evolution (pg. 23).⁹

By applying Bazin’s theory onto contemporary directors, both Rodriguez and Tarantino would be called auteurs by even the narrowest definition. These two directors have taken the auteur theory and applied it to the final frontier of film; by controlling the musical output, these directors have been successful in controlling the tone and mood set by the music. In addition to writing, directing and producing, Rodriguez writes the majority of the music that accompanies his films while Tarantino carefully selects the music that features

⁸ The term *politique* literally translated means policy. Sarris shortens the *politique des auteurs* to ‘auteur theory’ in his 1962 article. Perhaps a better term would be the ‘*auteur* approach’. Unless noted, I will use the terms as defined by their respective authors.

⁹ Bazin, André. “*De la politique des auteurs* (1957)”. *Auteurs and Authorship* ed. Barry Keith Grant. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1957.

in his films. To differentiate between Rodriguez and Tarantino, one could argue that technically Tarantino is a *méromane* since he does not write the music for his films, while Rodriguez would be a true *auteur*. I have situated both Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino within the category of the *auteur* based on Truffaut's traditional definition of *auteur*, although I have included a further distinction between the two directors. By applying the *auteur* theory to include music within the film, a further differentiation between the two directors becomes necessary. Rodriguez would be a true *auteur* since he not only writes and directs his films, but he also is the primary composer for the music that accompanies the films, whereas Tarantino selects the music for his films. I will be exploring Tarantino as a *méromane* further in the chapter.

The *politique des auteurs* (shortened to *auteur* theory by Andrew Sarris in 1962) has been a point of contention for cinema critics since Truffaut first mentioned it in 1954. The question of whether a film was good because it was the product of someone designated an *auteur* became moot for some, while other critics maintained a more objective point of view. More recently, Gorbman expressed the conflict well in her essay "Auteur Music":

Auteurism in film studies has led a double life since the 1970s. On one hand, successive waves of theory lapping at the edifice built by the critics at *Cahiers du cinema* and *Movie* have pronounced the *auteur* as a locus of value an unacceptably Romantic construct, a fetishized commodity, dead, or irrelevant. On the other hand, *auteurist* discourses remain remarkably, vigorously resistant (pg. 149).¹⁰

¹⁰Gorbman, Claudia "Auteur Music" from *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema* ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert. University of California Press: Berkeley, 2007.

Gorbman's article continues on to discuss the inclusion of directors who are active in the selection or the writing of the music in their films as part of the auteur theory. She does not mention Rodriguez, however there is little question that he would fall neatly within her definition of auteur.¹¹ As for the theory that auteurism is dead or irrelevant, one needs only to delve into the works of several current film-makers to realize that auteurism is alive and well. That a theory goes out of style with critics has little effect on what someone chooses to do with their films. The gap between the present state of the theoretical literature that Gorbman is citing and the practice of the auteur director could not be wider at the moment. This is exemplified in Rodriguez's films.

When watching a film by Rodriguez, one has only to read the final credits to realize that he is involved in many varied aspects of his films; not only does he direct, write, produce and compose, but he is also involved in the cinematography, the digital effects (through his *Troublemaker Digital Studio*) and editing. In the commentary for *Planet Terror*, Rodriguez said: "It always comes out better when you make your own music" and "It really helps when you have control over your own movie, who you can cast, who you can work with because you have an instinct on who to hire and that instinct is there for a reason."¹² His involvement in his films ensures that the final product meets his satisfaction.

Examples of Rodriguez's auteur approach can be found in all his films. Of the three I have chosen to examine, two of the films could be considered an auteur film. The third film, *Sin City* (2005) varies from Rodriguez's usual *modus operandi* in that he did not write the story;

¹¹ In one of her endnotes, Gorbman acknowledges the contentiousness of the initially vague definition of auteur, as well as the issue of who was an auteur and who was not ("Auteur Music" pg. 161, note 2).

¹² *Planet Terror*, 2007, Dir. Robert Rodriguez

famed graphic novelist Frank Miller wrote the source material that Rodriguez adapted to screen. Miller is given the sole writing credit, and Rodriguez is co-listed with Miller as a director. Rodriguez also enlisted the aid of two other composers for the music of the film, turning this film into a collaborative effort. Regardless, the film still falls into the category of an auteur film, as Rodriguez maintained creative control over the film, the editing, and most importantly, the music. According to many statements made by Rodriguez, he often writes at least a rough version of the music for a film before filming or sometimes, even before writing the dialogue. By writing the music before the film, Rodriguez creates a musical world before he creates the visual world. In doing so, Rodriguez is able to better create the visuals for his films, since he already has an idea of what their world will sound like.

In *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* (2003), Rodriguez is credited for writing the music that accompanies the film. In the “Music and Isolated Soundtrack” commentary on the film, Rodriguez addresses the music and his compositional process. He begins by working out the main themes, and upon Danny Elfman’s suggestion (whom he credits as a “real composer”), Rodriguez will write the big musical numbers first. For *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*, he wrote the music for the second half of the film first, and supplemented the incidental music in the first half of the film with themes that appear later in the film. By composing in this way, Rodriguez is able to tune the listener’s ear to some of the more important thematic material so that when they appear later on, the listener will be able to recognize the themes as they appear in full pieces. According to Rodriguez, “ninety-nine percent of” the rough musical elements that he initially works out at home with his guitar

and synthesizer can be found in the fully completed score. As a side note, Rodriguez does use some source music in this film, usually traditional Spanish folk tunes or Spanish music from the 1990's, which he then re-arranges to suit his needs. He also includes his actors in the music making process. He had Johnny Depp write and perform "Sand's Theme", he had Salma Hayek perform the song at the closing credits and Antonio Banderas was responsible for writing some of the themes that El Mariachi plays.

An important aspect of the auteur as writer, director, and composer is a familiarity with the characters present on screen. Rodriguez's ability to write the music for the characters he wrote dialogue for creates a symbiotic relationship between the character and music. As he states in the above commentary: "If you go to a scene and you aren't sure how to approach it, just figure out whose point of view it is, or what the underlying feeling is and just plug in that person's theme orchestrated to the scene and you've got something that helps tie the movie together."¹³ It could be objected that the above argument for the auteur as director and composer could just as easily be applied to a film score that was done by a composer hired for the film, and indeed, music composed by someone other than the director still usually contains thematic material that makes it possible for the listener to identify point of view, etc. However, when the director is responsible for the music, a greater tie between character and music exists, and the music becomes an intrinsic part of that character. In the case of Rodriguez and *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*, Rodriguez notes in the commentary:

¹³ *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* (2003), Music and Isolated Soundtrack. Unless indicated, all quotes by Rodriguez are from the directors commentary.

A major benefit to doing the score if you've written the movie is that you know your characters so well. I mean, I've been with these characters for the past 10, 11 years,¹⁴ maybe more. You can't say that you know what they're supposed to sound like, but you know it when you hear it right away and you can almost find it right away because it's just inside of you, it came from the same place the dialogue and the characters came from.

A brief explanation on what a mariachi is and their importance in Mexican history is necessary before delving into the film and its music. The current version of the mariachi, with groups of guitars, violins and brass instruments, came into formation in the nineteenth century, although they have their origins in traditional Spanish theatre with their musical roots in popular music of the day called *son*. The lyrics of the music are often a reflection of daily life, but can be satirical, bawdy and at times, political. The mariachi band evolved from groups of common laborers getting together to play traditional folk music to semi-professional or professional groups playing for weddings and other celebrations.¹⁵

One such example of the music growing with the character can be found in *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* in the opening credits, which is also Scene Three. In this scene, El Mariachi is in a small town comprised of guitar makers, where he is hiding out from the law. One of the guitar makers gives El Mariachi (Antonio Banderas) a guitar to test, since he is the most legendary of mariachis. As he picks up the guitar, he begins to pluck out the well known mariachi tune "Malagueña Salerosa". As his character walks across the screen, Antonio

¹⁴ *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* is the third film in the Mariachi trilogy; *El Mariachi* (1992) and *Desperado* (1995) constitute the other films.

¹⁵ For further readings on the history of the mariachi, I suggest Jonathan Clark's website devoted to the history of the mariachi <http://www.mariachihistory.com>.

Banderas continues playing the tune as the music swells and an orchestra joins into the music. Although this song was originally written by Pedro Galindo and Elpidio Ramírez, it embodies one of the aspects of El Mariachi's personality (that of his role of a traditional mariachi), and arises again later in the film. In all its appearances,¹⁶ Rodriguez is able to arrange the well known tune to fit in precisely with the feel of the scene, as well as fit in with the character that is tied to the melody.¹⁷ As the music passes between diegetic and non-diegetic,¹⁸ the melody remains evident, and it remains within the realm of the mariachi's skill. Rodriguez's ability to adapt the music to his needs is a distinct advantage that he has over traditional film composers. His creative and technical control over his films ensures that the final product is analogous with his original vision. Rodriguez was also greatly influenced by the films he grew up watching in Austin, Texas, particularly the films of John Carpenter, himself a composer/director combination. Rodriguez's music does pay homage to these films while still retaining stylistic elements that are solely his own.

Mélomanes

Having previously defined the term *mélomane*, it is time to explore this category of directors. It is in her essay that Gorbman labels Tarantino a *mélomane*, while loosely defining *mélomanes* as "music-loving directors [that] treat music not as something to farm out to the composer or even to the music supervisor, but rather as a key thematic element

¹⁶ It also appears in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*, as performed by Rodriguez's band Chignon.

¹⁷ Here is the Youtube link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hm_qlg0Hw5M.

¹⁸ Both terms are explored at length in Chapter 4. Diegetic refers to music that originates from within the narrative, while non-diegetic is music whose source is not visible or explicable within the confines of the narrative.

and a marker of authorial style (pg. 149).”¹⁹ She further expands upon the *mélomane* by suggesting that perhaps the proper term for a director such as Tarantino would be “auteur melomania”, thus combining the two sides of musical control. Claiming that music can be a marker of directorial style, she rightly asserts that there are other directors deserving of such a title. In the manner of Andrew Sarris, her list includes Stanley Kubrick, Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Allen and Jim Jarmusch, to name a few. It is Tarantino that exhibits “auteur melomania” to the extreme, as evidenced in his use of music in his films which will be examined at length further in later chapters.

Before examining Tarantino’s use of music in his films, a few examples of how and why Tarantino selects his music are in order. In a recent interview at Cannes, Tarantino was quoted as saying, in response to the question of someone else composing the music for his films: “I just don’t trust any composer to really do it. Who the f*** is this guy coming in here, putting his s**t over my movie? What if I don’t like it? And if I was in a situation like that, chances are, I WOULDN’T like it. F**k that!”²⁰ This vehement response, coupled with other statements such as “One of the things I do when I’m thinking about starting a movie is, I’ll go through my record collection and just start playing songs”²¹ indicate that Tarantino is truly a *mélomane*.

An example of Tarantino hearing a piece of music and then including it into his films can be found in *Kill Bill*. During the scene where the big swordfight between The Bride and O-Ren

¹⁹ Gorbman, Claudia “Auteur Music”.

²⁰ <http://blog.spout.com/2008/05/22/cannes-quentin-tarantino-film-lecture-live-blogged/>

²¹ Quentin Tarantino Interview, included on *The Tarantino Connection* (1996), as quoted by Ken Garner in his article “‘Would You Like to Hear Some Music?’ Music in-and-out-of-control in the Films of Quentin Tarantino” from *Film Music: Critical Approaches* ed. K.J. Donnelly. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh: 2001.

Ishii occurs, there is a Japanese girl band performing live music for the patrons of the restaurant. The band is The 5, 6, 7, 8's, and Tarantino first heard their music in a Japanese store as he was scouting locales for his film. Tarantino was so taken with the music that he tried to buy the store copy of the CD. He ended up buying it for double the retail value, including the music in the film and giving the band a role in his *Kill Bill V.1*. This is just one of many examples that demonstrate Tarantino's careful selection of music for his films.²²

Both Gorbman and Garner note that Tarantino's use of diegetic music is unique in that the characters on screen take careful consideration when selecting a piece of music, much in the same manner that Tarantino himself does.²³ For example, in *Death Proof*, as the first set of girls (the movie is divided into two sections, and each section features two different sets of girls) is driving out to the cabin, Jungle Julia can be seen on a cell phone, calling her local radio station to request a song. In true Tarantino fashion, it is a little-known song from 1965 called "Hold Tight!" by British group Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich. Tarantino is able to educate the viewer through his movie; since Jungle Julia is a DJ at an Austin radio station, it is logical that she would have knowledge of obscure music; hence her request is not out of character. As her friends question her selection, she is able to give a little bit of background information on the music that is about to be heard on screen.²⁴ In this way, Tarantino manages to make the song memorable, since it requires a brief musical history lesson.

²² Check Kill Bill commentary/ also <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/28/1083103543046.html?from=storyrhs>

²³ Gorbman, Claudia. "Auteur Music", pg. 152. Garner, Ken "'Would You Like to Hear Some Music?' Music in-and-out-of-control on the Films of Quentin Tarantino" pg. 188.

²⁴ Instead of having to go through the entire film to see this brief segment, I have included a link to the Youtube video of this scene: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9_TNV23HR8&feature=related

Another reason why it is so important that Tarantino selects his own music is that often the music almost serves as another character or as an additional way to flesh out the world that the characters inhabit. Many of his characters are seen selecting the music that makes becomes part of their character, or their character's world. In doing this, Tarantino superimposes attributes of his own personality (cinophile, mélomane, etc) onto his characters. Like Rodriguez, Tarantino allows the music to take on a life of its own, while at the same time heightening or expanding upon the characters in the film. As previously noted, one of the characters in *Death Proof* is a radio DJ, and the music that is represented in the first half of the film is either on the radio or chosen from a jukebox in a bar. This leads the viewer to assume that the music that is playing in the film has been a personal choice of the characters and not just music thrust upon the film to create a best-selling film soundtrack. Tarantino does not select music because of its current popularity, nor does he select very well known pieces. The diegetic music used in Tarantino's films is usually from another era than the current one occupied by the characters in the film. It would seem that Tarantino's characters have the same extensive musical knowledge that he himself possesses, and in actively choosing the music, the characters are selecting their own musical narrative. Garner explores this a little further in his article, although he is discussing the music of *Jackie Brown*. He observes:

What is different about the use of such diegetic music in Tarantino's films is that this act, the actors appearing to take control of the score, is explicitly celebrated. The process of music selection is foregrounded. It is the choice of this-music or that-

music in these particular circumstances, its switching on and off – rather than just the music itself – which is made indicative of character or situation (189).²⁵

What Garner means when he discusses the foregrounding of the musical selection is that showing the act of putting on music (in whatever form it takes) is not a new technique, but Tarantino uses it to a singular effect. While his character is shown to use the music diegetically, there is often some relevant dialogue or action that is included with the selection so that the viewer is made acutely aware that they have entered the narrative world of the character. I will address the narrative levels of film music in the following chapter.

Tarantino's music often references other aspects of popular culture, most often the films that Tarantino grew up loving. Born in Tennessee in 1963, Tarantino was raised in Los Angeles. He dropped out of high school at the age of sixteen to become a film maker. Although he never went film school, he became an avid collector of films while working in a video store. He considers watching old films more important than the formal study of film, and as a result, his films all owe homage to the films he has come to love over the years. Therefore it should come as no surprise that the music in his films is also often a reference to these older films and their music. Almost every selection of music present in both volumes of *Kill Bill* have appeared in either film or television, and the music is used as a

²⁵ Garner, Ken "Would You Like to Hear Some Music?' Music in-and-out-of-control in the Films of Quentin Tarantino".

sonic reference to either the story of that specific film, or a genre that Tarantino's film pays tribute to.²⁶

Garner notes:

All the music Tarantino chooses for his main themes and scoring shares three common characteristics: it is old; it is referential to distinct musical, film or media genres and the opening credit music features what Richard Middleton (1984), developing the ideas of Philip Tagg (1982), has called musematic repetition, rather than discursive or melodic repetition of longer phrases (191).²⁷

Another perfect example of this referencing can be found in the music in the second half of *Death Proof*. While the first half of the film consists of mostly pre-composed diegetic music, the second half of the film not only uses less music, but it is used differently. The music of the second half of the film is primarily non-diegetic but is still pre-composed music. Tarantino gets around his dislike of having other composers score his films by using scored music from other films. For example, during one of the car chases in *Death Proof*, the music that is playing non-diegetically is "Italia a Mano Armata" by Franco Micalizzi from *Italia A Mano Armata*, (1976), one of many Italian *poliziotteschi*, or crime/action films popular in Italy in the 1970's. Another example in *Death Proof* is the music accompanying the opening titles is called "The Last Race" by Jack Nitzsche. An earlier version of the song was used on a 1965 film called *The Village of the Giants*, which was the first film Nitzsche scored. Tarantino often uses music composed by Ennio Morricone, composer of many spaghetti westerns directed by Sergio Leone, a director Tarantino holds in great esteem.

²⁶ It should be noted at this time that the music on the soundtrack that was released for the *Kill Bill*'s is not a complete track listing, as he used much more music than he was able to include on the compact disc.

²⁷ Garner, Ken.

For both volumes of *Kill Bill*, Tarantino relied on music from many genres of film which influenced the making of the movies. *Kill Bill V.1* takes its inspiration mostly from 1970's samurai films and Japanese *anime*; most of the music from this film has appeared in previous films, pulled from Tarantino's own collection of soundtracks. *Kill Bill V.2* takes some of its inspiration from Sergio Leone films and other spaghetti Westerns, as well as old horror films. The musical and visual references are too numerous to go into great detail for every occurrence; however in the following synopsis of the selected films an attempt has been made to highlight several key reference points.

While it is true that Tarantino never hires anyone to be in charge of the music in his films, he does occasionally hire someone to work with him. Such is the case for both volumes of the *Kill Bill* films. For these films, Tarantino worked with RZA from the popular hip-hop and rap group The Wu-Tang Clan. Tarantino stated in the commentary for *Kill Bill V.1* that he worked with RZA because of their mutual admiration for old and obscure films, in particular the old kung-fu movies of the 1970's and 80's. Tarantino wanted RZA to produce the film soundtrack in the same manner in which he had produced the Wu-Tang albums. RZA proceeded to use original music, old sound bites and source music, such as "The Lonely Shepherd" performed by pan-flute artist Zamfir. They used this piece after RZA heard it in a restaurant and thought it was the perfect combination of the sound of samurai music and Sergio Leone/Ennio Morricone spaghetti westerns.²⁸ Tarantino also collaborated with Robert Rodriguez for the second volume of *Kill Bill*. Tarantino asked Rodriguez to score any original music for the film. For the price of one dollar and the

²⁸ From *Kill Bill V.1* commentary.

assurance that Tarantino would guest direct a scene in his next film (*Sin City*), Rodriguez agreed. Any minor collaboration that Tarantino does allow requires Tarantino to put great trust in his collaborator. This brings us to the next level of relationship between director and composer.

Collaboration

Collaborations between director and composer require some exploration. There are various degrees of collaboration, each with strong examples from the film industry. When one thinks of frequent partnerships, the names Steven Spielberg and John Williams come to mind. However, collaborations can take many different forms. There is the frequent alliance between a director and composer that occurs because of a familiarity with each other's work, such as Spielberg and Williams, who have worked together for all but two of Spielberg's feature films, as well as the relationship of Tim Burton and Danny Elfman. There is the type of collaboration that is truly an equal pairing (Joel and Ethan Coen and Carter Burwell), and there is the affiliation that occurs because a director desires the sound that he knows that certain composer can produce. It could be argued, and I would tend to agree, that a director selecting a composer because of a familiarity with their sound is in manner of speaking a *mélomane*. Although the director is not writing the music, nor is he directly selecting the music written for the film, by consistently using the same composer, he is in a way controlling the sonic output that will be associated with the film. For example, just as Tim Burton's films could be described as *noir* (*Batman*, 1989, *Edward Scissorhands*, 1990, *Corpse Bride*, 2005) the music that accompanies these films is required to suit the mood of the film. In collaborating with Danny Elfman repeatedly, Burton

assures that the music will reflect not only what is happening on screen, but will also aid in setting the atmosphere that he requires for his varied films.

On the other hand, John Corigliano, composer for *The Red Violin* (1998) states in an interview:

“Collaboration” implies equality, and I don’t think the situation between composers and directors is one of equality. I think “employee” is more accurate a term. And I don’t think that’s a bad thing, I think you just have to *know* that.

When you write a concert piece, the performers-be they Georg Solti, James Levine, Marilyn Horne-try to do what the composer wants. When you do an opera, they *half* try to do what the composer wants, but the director, the diva, and other people all have their views on how things should be changed because it’s theatre and they feel that the composer is not really a theatrical individual (even though I tend to disagree with them). So they intrude upon the compositional process, make cuts and changes and redo things another way, and don’t necessarily adhere to the composer. Unless he’s *dead-then* they adhere to him! But if he’s alive they really don’t want to have too much to do with him.

The film world is the extreme example of this, in which the director uses music very often as sound effect, sound palette, which reinforces the drama of his film. In fact, the sound effects are much louder than the music is--the simple turning of a doorknob is a major event!--because in the dubbing chamber the composer is not present. I was not a part of any of the dubbings of my films. The sound effects people *are* present, and they have a sound effect for every millisecond of the movie. I was in the dubbing room for a very short time and saw that in fact the sound effects people are very active with the director during the dubbing process but the composer is excluded from that, unless you have a relationship like Steven Spielberg probably has with John Williams.

And then you have people like the Kubricks who basically get in love with the temp [temporary] tracks that they put behind the films, and end up having film scores commissioned and then thrown out and their temp tracks used. See, you really have no control as a composer. They can take your music out, they can put it in other places, they can cut it up, they can add sounds to it; so I really wouldn’t call that collaboration.

A collaboration is when you really do deal collaboratively. I would say *The Red Violin* has been more collaborative than previous films, because the director knows that this film is about a violin, and is musical, and he’s quite willing to listen to

reason; I can talk to him, he can talk to me, and we can come to conclusions (pg. 49-50).²⁹

Corigliano's reaction to composing for films is not surprising, considering that his experience and expertise lie not in collaborative efforts but rather as a composer writing in a more traditionally classical setting. As a renowned American composer of opera, symphony and chamber music, as well as serving on the faculty at the Juilliard School of Music and Lehman College, he is undoubtedly used to being responsible to no-one except himself, so his disdain for the manner in which film music is used is understandable. He does somewhat change his stance in a later interview from the same book. The interviewer asks him about the fact that the director, François Girard had asked Corigliano to compose music around other previously composed violin pieces. He says:

"There's no point in having you play Bach and Paganini and Mozart and me do a background score. First of all, why call me? What's in it for me?" We talked about the business of the original theme being the basis of the études and that I had to write them, and if he had said no to that, I wouldn't have written the score. And second, I think using the violin repertoire is a bad idea because it's not organic --- pieces are all over the place. And I can write music in those other periods, [so] I said that's the only way I would do the film. And he said, "Well, I understand that. As long as it isn't too obvious, that makes sense to me." And then I mentioned only using strings for the background score because it's an obsessive movie about a violin, and he loved that. So what I like about François is he is very musical---he plays the piano, he reads, he's listened to every violin piece ever written, he's done his homework---and you can talk to him. So there were times where he did things that I wasn't crazy about and sometime when he was *right*, but at least he was someone I could talk to. And that's a big difference, a very big difference between that and the kind of film director that says no and just takes your music and throws out this, keeps that, plays something else here. He never did that. I always felt a collaborative aspect, and I respect him for that. And he respects me a lot, and I think

²⁹ Morgan, David ed. *Knowing the Score: Film Composers Talk About the Art, Craft, Blood, Sweat, and Tears of Writing for Cinema*. Harper Entertainment: New York, 2000.

that was part of it, because he came to me wanting something very special, not a traditional film composer thing but something a bit more unusual (pg. 260-261).³⁰

He also mentions that his previous experience composing for film had been over a decade previous to *The Red Violin*, and that it had not been a pleasant experience, and therefore was not inclined to do compose for films again. He was later convinced by reading the script and then meeting the director. Since composing the score for *The Red Violin*, Corigliano has not composed any more film scores, so he would not qualify as a composer who has worked repeatedly with one single director. His level of collaboration is minor compared to other composers examined in this paper, although his stance on collaboration is extremely opinionated.

In the first of Corigliano's interviews, he mentions Kubrick and his unconventional use of music. If Tarantino had a predecessor with regards to using source music as a foreground it would certainly be Stanley Kubrick. I discuss foregrounding of pre-composed music, in particular Kubrick's endeavour at some length in the fourth chapter.

Not all relationships between the director and composer are as contentious as Corigliano's experience; indeed there are variations of this type of relationship. For example, in the days of the Alfred Hitchcock/Bernard Hermann pairing, Hermann was not an employee of the director; rather both director and composer were employees of the studio. The Hitchcock and Hermann collaboration started with *The Trouble with Harry* (1955) a black comedy, and officially ended with a dispute over the score for *The Torn Curtain* (1966). In

³⁰ Morgan, David ed. *Knowing the Score: Film Composers Talk About the Art, Craft, Blood, Sweat, and Tears of Writing for Cinema*. Harper Entertainment: New York, 2000.

the span of that eleven-year relationship, Hermann composed the music for eight other films, producing some of the most memorable music ever written for film, including the music for *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963) and the television program *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*. Their relationship ended when, upon the studio's urging, Hitchcock discarded Hermann's score for *The Torn Curtain* and went with John Addison's more upbeat score.

Even though they were both under the influence of the studio system, the relationship between the two great men could be categorized as collaborative equals, especially in the case of the *Psycho* soundtrack. Hitchcock had wanted to use contemporary jazz music, and had planned for the shower scene to be without music. Thankfully, Hermann convinced the director otherwise after hearing what Hermann had composed for the film, and the result is one of the most recognizable pieces of music ever written for film. The relationship between Hitchcock and Hermann in the years following the breakdown of the studio system (which officially ended with what is called "The Divorcement" in 1946) until their break-up is just one case of a collaboration being broken. A similar case occurred with the now infamous Alex North score for *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). North had been commissioned by the studio to write a score for Kubrick's film, and after both the film and the score were completed, Kubrick decided that he preferred to use a combination of his temporary track and other pre-composed pieces he had selected instead of North's score.

North was not told of this until he attended an actual screening of the film in April 1968.³¹ In his subsequent films, Kubrick used pre-composed music almost exclusively.

An example of effective and long-term collaboration can be found with the pairing of Carter Burwell and the Coen brothers (Ethan and Joel).³² Starting with their first film *Blood Simple* (1984) Burwell has composed all the music for the Coen brothers' films, including the upcoming *A Serious Man* (2009, currently in post-production) *Hail Caesar* (2009, currently in pre-production). He discusses his collaboration with the Coen's in his interview in *Knowing the Score*.³³ At the time that the Coen's were looking for a composer for their first film (a small, independent film), Burwell was a musician in New York with no previous film experience. Burwell saw a reel from the film and subsequently composed a demo for the segment of film he had seen. He gave it to the Coen's, and while they liked what they had heard, the financial backers to the film were hesitant to hire someone with no experience. However, the Coen's decided that someone with no technical experience, just like them, was just what they needed. As Burwell tells it to David Morgan in *Knowing the Score*:

But technically, *none* of us knew how to approach a film score. I paid no attention to what other film composers were doing, and paid no attention to what the technical solutions were to the problems we were addressing --- I knew that there must *be* solutions out there but we just didn't have time to learn them. I'd written those themes early on, but at the point at which they hired me I had three weeks to finish it up.

I didn't know how really to synchronize music to a film, and they didn't know how to do it except after the fact, so we stumbled around with it. We'd say, "Well, I guess

³¹ For further reading on this subject, I suggest Dr. Paul Merkley's article "'Stanley Hates This But I Like It!'" North vs. Kubrick on the Music for *2001: A Space Odyssey*" from *The Journal of Film Music* Vol. 2, No. 1, Fall 2007, pages 1-34.

³² Carter Burwell has also collaborated with Spike Jonze on all his films as well.

³³ *Knowing the Score: Film Composers Talk About The Art, Craft, Blood, Sweat, and Tear of Writing For Cinema* ed. David Morgan, pg. 57-71.

this scene's about a minute and a half long, so I'll just write a minute and a half of music." Joel was an "experienced" editor at that point, so we all kind of assumed that whatever I did he'd be able to edit it into shape. So it was a bunch of people who knew *nothing* about the medium of film music working on it. It's still one of my favorite scores, I think partly *because* we didn't know what we doing --- because unlike everything I've written since then, the music of *Blood Simple* was not really attending that carefully to what was on the screen. The pieces were written as pieces of music, because we thought that we could *make* them fit the movie (pg. 59).

He goes on to discuss the collaborative aspect of the relationship for *Blood Simple* and a few other films, including *The Big Lebowski* (1998), *Fargo* (1996), *Miller's Crossing* (1990), and *Barton Fink* (1991). The function of the music changes according to the type of film for which Burwell is composing. For *The Big Lebowski* Burwell used a combination of pre-composed popular music, classical and original music to create the world that the Dude (Jeff Bridges) inhabited. *The Big Lebowski* was the only Coen brothers' film that used pre-composed songs because, as Burwell says:

I think they knew you would have to have a lot of recognizable songs to capture that feeling of the Dude (Jeff Bridges), this guy who's kind of trapped in the seventies--- "trapped" is not the right word, but in any case is living in his own time and space, and that time and space is certainly *not* the early nineties, which is when the action takes place. So I think using source music [songs which are played "inside" the film, heard by the characters] to do that is a good idea. I think also Joel and Ethan always try to do something that they haven't done before, and in a way working with songs, putting together a song album, is an aspect of the film biz that they hadn't undertaken, so I think just doing that interested them (pg. 69-70).

He goes on to talk about the original pieces he wrote for the film, and his endeavours to make them sound like songs so that they could play as "source" within the film.

He also states that rather than the Coen's having specific musical ideas, Burwell presents them with material and then they decided what they want to keep and what they do not like. The relationship and careers of these three men have developed concurrently with each film the Coen's make and each score Burwell composes.

A Special Case

What happens when a director refuses to be stuck in one particular category? He becomes not a true auteur, nor is he a mélomane. What if said director happens to bridge the gap between all the aforementioned categories? It could be argued that Rodriguez does just this. As mentioned previously, Rodriguez did collaborate with two other composers for *Sin City*. Both Graeme Revell and John Debney are composers in their right: John Debney has been nominated for several awards for his work on such films as *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), *Bruce Almighty* (2003) and the television show *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (1993) and Graeme Revell's music has accompanied such films as *Blow* (2001), *From Dusk Til Dawn* (1996) and *Aeon Flux* (2005), as well as other Rodriguez films. Both composers have worked with Rodriguez in the past, and therefore their work on *Sin City* can be categorized as a collaborative effort, although Rodriguez maintained complete control over the final sonic output. This collaboration varies from the previously used examples of collaboration in that the hierarchy of director/composer relationship, as implied by John Corigliano would not be as prevalent. While Rodriguez was acting as the director and ultimately held control over the film, he specifically chose these two men to collaborate with him on the music, and gave them each one story to work on. Graeme Revell composed the music for "The Hard Goodbye" and John Debney wrote the music for "The Big Fat Kill". In addition to

writing the music for “That Yellow Bastard”, Rodriguez collaborated with each of the other two composers on their given story. Rodriguez also calls Miller an auteur in his method of creating the graphic novels that became the film *Sin City*, since Miller writes and draws his “Sin City” graphic novels. Therefore, the work on *Sin City* (the film) is collaboration between two men, both auteurs in their own fields.

Rodriguez is also guilty of using pre-composed music in some of his films, and most definitely used pre-composed music in the films featured in this study. For *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*, Rodriguez used a combination of his own scored music and some re-orchestrated traditional Mexican music. He also chose a few recordings that he felt suited the film. He says in the liner notes for the compact disc:

I had a few song selections from bands like Juno Reactor, Tito Larriva, Manu Chao, Del Castillo, Patricia Vonne and Brian Setzer that I felt fit the movie’s tone. But for the rest of the movie I felt I had to go orchestral, to really embellish the iconic imagery. I needed several pieces pre-recorded before production could begin, and in preparing those pre-records, I realized I wanted to tackle the composing chores for the movie as well. I wanted a Latin orchestral sound to represent Mexico, as well as the journey of the different characters, infusing it with Spanish guitar and rhythms.³⁴

Rodriguez, like Tarantino has been known to borrow music from other films and insert them into his own films. For *Planet Terror*, Rodriguez had originally wanted John Carpenter (himself a director-composer) to compose the music, but because of scheduling conflicts, he was unable to do it. Instead, Rodriguez composed music that was heavily influenced by Carpenter and included a few of Carpenter’s compositions from *Escape from*

³⁴ *Once Upon A Time In Mexico* Original Soundtrack, 2003 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. 5046-69229-2.

New York from 1981 (“Back to the Pod/The Crazies Come Out”). If Kubrick served as inspiration for Tarantino, John Carpenter provided a similar service for Rodriguez. John Carpenter composed the music to many of his films, and it has been noted in various biographies of Rodriguez that he was greatly influenced by Carpenter when he was a young boy. This influence is easy to follow in Rodriguez’s career path. For the case of *Planet Terror*, there are three pieces of music that were not composed by Rodriguez. One is *You Belong to Me*, and while this piece was originally written by Pee Wee King, Chilton Price and Redd Stewart in 1952, Rodriguez has re-arranged it and had one of his actors record it for this film. The second case of Rodriguez using pre-composed music is discussed in the following chapter, but the final case, and the one most relevant to the current topic is his John Carpenter selection. One of the three pieces not composed by Rodriguez was composed by another director who chose to write his own music; this lends a level of mélomania to Rodriguez that has previously remained unexplored.

Chapter 2:

Tarantino: a mélomane

This chapter is the first of two that seeks to provide the reader with a plot synopsis of the films selected for this study, while also discussing pertinent musical points within the story. The synopsis is fairly detailed, as most readers are unfamiliar with many of the films.

Kill Bill Volume 1 (2003)

After opening with the Shaw Scope (from the Shaw Studios) logo and then moving on to the Keith Mansfield written “Funky Fanfare” feature presentation (which also makes an appearance in the *Death Proof* introduction) Tarantino inserts an old Klingon proverb which states “Revenge is a dish best served cold”.³⁵ Shaw Studios are well known studios in Hong Kong where many of the old kung fu movies and television shows were filmed. Tarantino insisted on shooting part of *Kill Bill* there to remain as authentic in his referencing the kung fu era.³⁶ Tarantino misappropriates this quote which was actually written by Pierre Ambroise François Choderios de LaClos (1741-1803). It was originally found in his 1782 book *Les liaisons dangereuses*.³⁷ The fact that Tarantino credits this quote to *Star Trek* (specifically, from the 1982 film *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*) serves to illustrate where he got his inspiration for the *Kill Bill* films; older cult films, television and other popular culture. Never before has the extended opening credits been so symbolic or

³⁵ Klingons are a fictional race of people from the television and movie series *Star Trek* (roughly 1966 to 2005, with some breaks between series and movies), first created by Gene Rodenberry.

³⁶ More information on the studio can be found at www.shawstudios.hk and www.shawstudios.com

³⁷<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Revenge%20is%20a%20Dish%20Best%20Served%20Cold>, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0266697/trivia>

reverential to the sources that have inspired a director. During the appearance of the Klingon proverb, we hear short, panicked breaths, and the first image of the “The Blood Spattered Bride” is shown on screen in black and white. We see Uma Thurman lying on the floor, covered in blood as footsteps approach. We hear a male voice ask “Do you find me sadistic?”³⁸ As the man reaches down to down to wipe the blood off of the Bride’s face we see a handkerchief with the name Bill embroidered on it. It is then that we learn that it is Bill who is talking to the Bride. At this point, the viewer is not aware of who Bill is, or why he is talking to the Bride, although one would have to assume that this Bill is the titular character of the film. Bill continues: “I’ll bet I could fry an egg on your head right now, if I wanted to. Now Kiddo, I’d like to believe that you’re aware enough, even now, to know that there’s nothing sadistic in my actions. Maybe towards those other jokers, but not you. No Kiddo, at this moment, this is me at my most masochistic.” “Bill, it’s your baby....” as The Bride utters those final words, a gun goes off and she is shot in the head. The screen immediately goes black and as Nancy Sinatra sings “Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)” the main credits are presented. Thus begins the first part of a two-part story of revenge.

Tarantino’s choice of songs for the main credits is motivated principally by the lyrics, as the song tells a story of boy and girl in love, and how their love has changed over the years until the boy “shoots the girl down.”³⁹ Originally sung by Cher in 1966, the Nancy Sinatra version was recorded in 1967. The Sinatra version is more subdued, while Cher’s is more dramatic and energetic in instrumentation and presentation, and the fact that Tarantino

³⁸ All dialogue taken from *Kill Bill V.1 and 2*, written and directed by Quentin Tarantino until otherwise indicated.

³⁹ The lyrics for the song are included in Appendix A.

decided against an original recording in favour of one that refers to the original could be viewed as what type of music is going to accompany the film. While most viewers would have some preliminary knowledge as to what a Klingon is, it is likely that they would not be familiar with “Bang Bang” in either of its recordings. If the majority of the viewers had no previous associations with the song, it allows Tarantino to create a new level of association for a new era of viewers. Included in the opening credits is the “Death List Five”, although at the time, the viewer is unaware of the significance of the numbers. There is another homage present in the opening credits; during the song, the screen changes from an all black screen to a fade in on the image of The Bride lying in a coma in the hospital room, where she is silhouetted against a background of the window of her hospital room. Suddenly, soft lights turn on through the window which mimics Charles Foster Kane at the moment he dies. This homage to *Citizen Kane* (1941) is not surprising, as Tarantino has often said that Orson Welles is a respected and favourite director of his.

In one of his interviews on the CD *The Tarantino Connection*, Tarantino says in reference to finding the perfect song for the opening credits:

Oh, this will be a great opening credits song, you know, cause to me, the opening credits are very important, you know, because that’s sort of like the only mood time that most movies give themselves. A cool credit sequence, with that, and that music that plays in front of it, or you don’t play any music in front of it, and whatever you decide to do, that sets up a tone for the movie that is important for you. So I’m always trying to find what the right opening credit or closing credit sequence should be. You know, early on, when I am just thinking about the story, because once I find it, that really kind of triggers me in to what the personality of this piece should be, what the rhythm of this piece should be.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Taken from the compact disc *The Tarantino Connection*.

Therefore, the opening credits song for *Kill Bill* would indicate that the film is going to reference older films, their dialogue and music, specifically the music from the 1960's. It would also indicate that the story is one of a tragic love affair gone awry, and since it is a woman singing the song, the story is going to be told from the perspective of the wronged female.

While both films tell the same story, the subject matter in each film varies; the first film deals primarily with The Bride's search to kill all of the members of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad (of which she used to be a part), the second film reveals the back story of why Bill shot Beatrix (The Bride's name is finally revealed in the second film), how she became trained to be an assassin, and how she finally killed Bill.

Kill Bill V.1 is not told in chronological order, a tactic that Tarantino uses frequently. After examining the film's actual chronology (as listed in Appendix A) with the actual timeline of the music, it would appear that there is no correlation between the two. Tarantino is as liberal with the chronology of the music he selects as he is with the chronology of the film's narrative. His selection of music spans not only various genres, but also spans many decades, from the 1950's to the music of the present day, as in his choice of the Japanese all-girl band The 5,6,7,8's. Even though he has employed a current band, this group actually performs music influences by the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's, as their name indicates. This makes them a perfect musical group for Tarantino to use, since their musical style is as referential as Tarantino's other musical and visual cues.

After the first two chapters (as indicated by the DVD menu) described above, chapter three begins with the title Chapter One, with a circled number two below it. This chapter deals with The Bride's first attack on one of the members of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad (DVAS). After a brutal fight is halted by the arrival of Vernita Green's (played by Vivica A. Fox) daughter, dialogue and narration begins to fill in some information regarding the past. There is no music present in the first scene, although as The Bride first encounters Vernita Green, there is a brief appearance of the sound clip by Quincy Jones, from his days of writing music for the television show *Ironside*, a detective show from the late 60's-early 70's. This is just another case of Tarantino inserting directorial conceit; according to The International Movie Database, *Ironside* is the story of a San Francisco detective who was paralyzed after an assassination attempt.⁴¹ There are definite parallels between the two stories, although unlike Detective Ironside, the Bride is not permanently paralyzed by her attempted assassination, nonetheless she does lose four years of her life as well as her baby. This sound clip occurs during other confrontation of the DVAS by the Bride. At each conflict, there is a visual flashback to her assault in the wedding chapel, and although the attacker changes with to correlate with each present confrontation. It would be safe to say that this reference would, like so many of Tarantino's references, be lost on the present day viewer. Only a cinephile like Tarantino would have picked up on this musical and plot reference.

⁴¹ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061266/>

For the remainder of the third scene there is no music as the Bride returns to her truck outside the Bell residence, although the dialogue between The Bride and Vernita does contain references to previous Tarantino films, including a reference to *Pulp Fiction*.

After The Bride kills Vernita Green (code name: Copperhead), we are then taken to Chapter Two: The Blood Spattered BRIDE; we move back to when the police discover the massacre at the chapel. The music in this scene is discussed at length in Chapter Four, under the heading “Trans-diegetic: definition and examples”. It is in this scene that we learn that the pregnant Beatrix is not dead after all. Next, Beatrix is seen in the hospital in a coma, and as we hear “Twisted Nerve” whistled diegetically and then moves to non-diegetic orchestral music (a shift in musical narrative that will be examined at length in Chapter Four),⁴² we are introduced to the next member of the DVAS, Elle Driver, code name California Mountain Snake (played by Darryl Hannah). The pacing of the music along with the action on screen for this scene is of particular interest, since it not only has a shift in musical narrative, but also includes several accepted visual codes being juxtaposed with musical codes. For example, the scene begins with Elle whistling “Twisted Nerve” while walking into the hospital. Already, there is juxtaposition between the music, which is somewhat eerie and threatening sounding, and the very fact that it is whistled. Whistling is traditionally a sign of cheerfulness or optimism (“Whistle While You Work” from Disney’s 1937 animated film *Snow White*), but Tarantino uses it to indicate otherwise, in an ironic fashion. Elle has one sole purpose in coming to the hospital, and that is to kill the Bride. The music changes from

⁴² Written by Bernard Hermann for the 1968 film of the same name. As previously mentioned, with the exception of the original music by RZA and the song in the opening titles, all the music in this film had been used in other films. In the first volume, much of the music was taken from old Kung Fu movies, while the second film borrows mainly from spaghetti westerns.

just Elle whistling to a full, orchestral and non-diegetic sound just as Elle disappears into a room. At this point, a harp is playing arpeggios, which is often associated with “heavenly music” and the music still sounds somewhat fanciful, but with foreboding undertone still present. The camera continues down the hospital hallway towards the Bride’s room. Tarantino then splits the screen. One half shows the Bride lying in her coma, while the other shows Elle changing her clothes into a nurse’s uniform. After a held note in the whistle, Elle is finally fully revealed in her nurse’s uniform (complete with the traditional nurse’s hat and a Red Cross symbol on her eye patch) and the music reaches its horrific sounding climax. The flutes are trilling in a high register, pitched percussion is doubling the melody and the brass instruments are playing at a *fortissimo*. Again, this is Tarantino using music to counter the visual while reinforcing the narrative; the image of the nurse is usually one of help, hope and comfort. In this case, Elle is using the costume as a disguise, as she actually intends to kill the Bride with a lethal injection. Both the whistling and the nurse’s uniform are at odd with Elle’s intention. The screen is still split as Elle approaches the Bride’s door. The song stops, and only the diegetic thunder is heard as Elle enters into the Bride’s room. This scene is not only an example of musical referencing and counterpoint between the music, visuals and socially accepted codes; it is also an example of how carefully Tarantino cuts his scenes to align with the musical cues. Tarantino applies all these methods in the next scene with the Bride and Buck, a male nurse in the hospital.

Upon Bill’s instruction, Elle does not kill the Bride. There is a blank screen with the words “Four Years Later” and then we return to the Bride’s hospital room. The Bride is jerked out of her coma suddenly, four years after having been shot by Bill. She wakes up to discover a

steel plate in her head and her baby gone. During this scene, Tarantino uses the song "Seven Notes in Black", written by Franco Bixio, Fabio Frizzi and Vince Tempera for the horror film *Sette note in nero* (1977).

The musical effect of this piece is such that the viewer is aware the action of the film is growing along with the music. The music itself starts with a simple little melody played on the high register of a piano, with a pitched percussion (probably the glockenspiel) doubling the repetitive the melody. There is the addition of human voices and string instruments all building to what seems to be climax, but the music is then reduced to the piano and percussion again, only to slowly build in instrumentation once again. The repetitive nature of the melody and the additive quality of the instrumentation creates an ominous, yet suspenseful mood. Used in this scene, the music begins to build as Buck, a male nurse who has misused the Bride while in her coma, begins walking towards the Bride's room. The climax of the music coincides with Buck realizing that the Bride is no longer in her bed. The camera pans down in slow motion to reveal the Bride lying on the floor, ready to slash Buck's Achilles tendon. The music stops suddenly as Buck collapses in pain. The fact that such ominous music is accompanying the visual of a nurse, who are usually considered helpful and caring, should indicate to the viewer that not all things are as they seem, and that Tarantino gives musical mood indicators that may counter the visual indicators. Most of Tarantino's musical cues are referential to older films, but occasionally Tarantino will use counterpoint between his music and visuals to further engage the viewer in his story, as witnessed in the scene with Elle and her whistling of "Twisted Nerve." The RZA samples

part of "Seven Notes in Black" in his "Ode To O-Ren Ishii", one of the original numbers written for the film.

After getting strength back into her atrophied muscles (chapter 8 "Wiggle your big toe"), Beatrix begins her killing spree.

As the film progresses, Beatrix travels to Okinawa where we meet Hattori Hanzo, maker of the renowned (at least in the film) Hattori Hanzo sword and former mentor to Bill. The final death in the first film is O-Ren Ishii, leader of the Tokyo underground. Before killing her, though, the Bride has to kill all of O-Ren's entourage (the Crazy 88's) and O-Ren's personal body guard Gogo. As each member of the DVAS is killed, the viewer is given more insight into why Bill tried to kill Beatrix and her subsequent mission to search and destroy all those who attacked her. The final scene in the film shows Beatrix in a plane writing out her "Death List Five" as Zamfir's "Lonely Shepherd" plays. The inclusion of the use of Zamfir may at first be either confusing or amusing to the audience, depending on what their association with the pan-flautists music is. There was a time when the music of Zamfir was ubiquitous, but not necessarily respected by serious musicicans. However, in looking for other music written by Ennio Morricone, it was discovered that he used the pan-flute for some of the music from *Once Upon A Time In America* (1984), Sergio Leone's last film before he died. This was the last collaboration between Morricone and Leone. It would appear that Tarantino is then using the music as a tribute to both Morricone and Leone. In the feature "The Making of Kill Bill V. 1", RZA said that he heard this song in a restaurant and thought the sound of the pan-flute playing a tune reminiscent of the music in spaghetti westerns was exactly the kind of referential music Tarantino was looking for.

Tarantino is quoted as saying in reference to music: "And when you do it right and you hit it right then the effect is you can never really hear this song again without thinking about that image from the movie."⁴³ In using Zamfir, Tarantino is again attempting to create new associations with the music, although his target audience may not have any previous associations with Zamfir.

The final scene also shows short scenes from *Kill Bill V.2* and includes the final reveal at the end of the film; The Bride's daughter is still alive.

Before carrying on with *Kill Bill V.2* it is necessary to explain the chronology in the films, as the break in chronology can be somewhat confusing, especially since the film is divided into chapters based on the "Death List Five". To clarify the confusion, included is an appendix that contains a chapter breakdown according to the DVD and a chronology of the film as well as Tarantino's original chapter index.⁴⁴

Tarantino originally intended these two films to be released as one, and so the second volume of *Kill Bill*, released in 2004 is really just the second half of the same story. It provides the back story of The Bride and Bill and at the same time concludes the story that was started in the first film. While splitting the film into two does not seem to have had any effect on Tarantino's selection of the music for the film, it does create a symbolic divide for how the viewer hears the film. There is a significant portion of music from spaghetti Westerns present in the first film; however Tarantino chooses to highlight the Asian influence (from the kung fu films and the presence of Hattori Hanzo) in the first released

⁴³ Partial quote taken from *The Tarantino Connection*. The full quote is used and examined in Chapter Five.

⁴⁴ See Appendix A.

soundtrack. The second soundtrack tends to incorporate more western inspired music, including some pieces by Ennio Morricone, even though the film itself contains several kung fu references, both visually and musically.

Kill Bill Volume 2 (2004)

Kill Bill Volume 2 opens with auditory flashbacks to the first film played over the opening credits. The first images we see are the same as the first images given in *Kill Bill V.1*; that of the bloodied Bride lying on the floor, talking to an off-screen Bill. After Bill shoots the Bride, the film segues into several seconds of black screen, until we first hear, and then see the Bride talking. She is driving a convertible while talking directly to the camera, thus breaking the fourth wall. All the while, Ennio Morricone's *A Silhouette of Doom*, originally from *Un Dollora A Testa* (1966), also known as *A Dollar a Head* or *Navajo Joe* in North America, is playing. Again, Tarantino is using this opening music as a reference, since the story of *Un Dollora A Testa* (dir. Sergio Corbucci) is the story of a sole survivor of a bloody massacre vowing revenge on his attackers and on the men who killed his wife. Unlike the opening music for *Kill Bill V.1*, this music is not motivated by lyrical reference, but rather by the musical (*Navajo Joe* would be categorized as a spaghetti western) and plot reference, more akin to his use of some music from *Ironside*.

The music may reference spaghetti westerns, but the Bride's dialogue is reminiscent of what a *femme fatale* would say in a film *noir*:

Looked dead, didn't I? Well I wasn't. But it wasn't from a lack of trying, I can tell ya that. Actually, Bill's last bullet put me in a coma, a coma I was to lie in for four years. When I woke up, I went on what the movie advertisements refer to as a roaring rampage of revenge. I roared. And I rampaged. And I got bloody satisfaction. I've

killed a hell of a lot of people to get to this point. But I've only one more. The last one. The one I'm driving to right now. The only one left. And when I arrive at my destination, I am going to kill Bill.⁴⁵

All this is done in black and white, also recalling a classic film *noir*. After this brief synopsis of *Kill Bill V. 1* courtesy of the Bride, we start volume two with Chapter Six: Massacre at Two Pines, where the Bride begins narrating the story of the “Massacre at Two Pines”, also referred to as “The El Paso, Texas Wedding Chapel Massacre”. We learn that it was not a massacre at a wedding but rather the wedding rehearsal. After this is revealed by the Bride, the viewer is taken into the scene in the chapel where the Bride, her groom, Tommy Plympton (played by Chris Nelson) and the bride’s friends are listening to the Reverend discuss the details of the wedding ceremony. Part way through, the pregnant Bride signals her need for air and gets up to walk outside. Walking down the aisle, she is alerted to some soft flute music (played on a wooden flute) coming from outside. At almost the same time as the Bride hears the flute music, “Il Tramonto”, composed by Ennio Morricone for Sergio Lenoe’s film *Il Buono, il Buotto, il Cattivo* or *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), begins to play non-diegetically. Tarantino’s use of this music would be categorized as a simple musical reference to spaghetti westerns. The piece itself vacillates between minor and major harmonies, as the expression on the Bride’s face passes through various emotions. She is aware of who is outside playing the flute, and it is as if the music is recalling both the good aspects of the relationship along with the bad. It is as if she has a soundtrack to their relationship in her musical memory. This will be explored in Chapter Four, in the discussion of levels of musical narrative.

⁴⁵ *Kill Bill Volume 2*, dir. Quentin Tarantino.

As the Bride gets outside, we see the source of the flute music; the flautist is Bill (played to perfection by David Carradine).⁴⁶ Almost simultaneously, the diegetic flute music and the non-diegetic Morricone music ends as Bill turns to look at the Bride. This is the first time that Bill's face is completely revealed to the audience. After a conversation between the Bride and Bill that reveals some insight into the depth of relationship the two used to share, the Bride introduces Tommy to Bill (whom she calls her father). Thus, it is nearly eleven minutes into the film that the viewer is properly introduced to the character Bill. Just before the Bride rejoins the wedding party, she has a brief private conversation with Bill. During their conversation, Tarantino inserts a brief reappearance of the "Bang Bang" melody played on the harp. Although no lyrics are included, the lyrics belong with this brief restatement are: "Bang bang, that awful sound. Bang bang, my baby shot me down", a reiteration of the title of the song, and of what is going to happen to the Bride. Not every reference Tarantino uses is obvious or bombastic, as demonstrated in his simple inclusion of two musical lines. Through the quiet plucked notes on the harp, Tarantino has effectively reminded the viewer of the outcome of the film, even though the films were split in two. Although the music is pre-composed, Tarantino's use of "Bang Bang" is similar to that of John Williams' use of the "Empire" motive in *Star Wars* (1977, 1980, and 1983).

The Bride turns to rejoin the wedding party at the front of the chapel and the camera pans out to reveal the five other member of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad walking into

⁴⁶ Although David Carradine was not Tarantino's first choice to play Bill, his casting could not be more perfect, as David Carradine is probably best known as Kwai Chang Caine, a kung fu master from the television series *Kung Fu* (1972-75) and *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues* (1993-1997).

the chapel and beginning the massacre.⁴⁷ The music from this scene is a continuation of the harp reimagining of the “Bang Bang” melody, although as the camera pans out the music becomes a sort of variation on the theme, and is more richly orchestrated than before. It is as if Tarantino is using the music as a theme and variation for his film. In that way, the music is handled in a traditional Hollywood manner, since most film music contains specific themes for certain characters (like a *leitmotif*). In this case, Tarantino is giving the actual massacre its own theme. When the DVAS have done their shooting and all is quiet, the bells of the chapel ring out, and once again, the viewer is reminded of the lyrics from “Bang Bang”; “just for me the church bells rang.”

The rest of the film tells the story of the Bride’s journey from Japan to her encounter with the remaining members of the DVAS. After the first three chapters of flashback, the scenes in volume two are significantly more chronological than *Kill Bill V.1* was. After the back-story told by the Bride, the viewer is introduced to Budd (Michael Madsen), who turns out to be Bill’s brother, in Chapter 4: “That Woman Deserves Her Revenge, And We Deserve to Die”. Reduced to living in a trailer and working as a bouncer in a strip club in California, Budd reasons that the Bride has every reason to exact her revenge, although his actions towards the Bride demonstrate that he has not forgiven her for breaking Bill’s heart. After he shoots her full of rock salt and buries her alive, the Bride relies on her training, shown through another flashback to get her out. During the scene where Budd is nailing the lid on the coffin, “L’Arena” from *Il Mercenario* is playing non-diegetically. The music includes a whistled melody; in a previous examination of Tarantino’s use of whistling, the reader will

⁴⁷ The above scenes are all in black and white, a device Tarantino employs quite regularly as further homage to the older films he grew up loving.

recall that Tarantino uses whistling as a counterpoint to the action. Here, the whistling is again signalling that the Bride is in mortal danger. This style of whistling has been used in many Morricone spaghetti western soundtracks, including *Fistfull of Dollars* or *Per un pugno di dollari* from 1964. The song ends as Budd inserts the final nail in the coffin, as if the music was a part of Budd's narrative, and not the Bride's.⁴⁸ Instead, the Bride is left in total darkness as she is lowered into the grave.

With the introduction into each character and with each flashback, the viewer is given another insight into the Bride's life and training and her relationship with Bill. With this flashback, entitled Chapter Eight The Cruel Tutelage of Pai Mei, we see that the Bride was training with a Kung Fu master in China. Using harsh methods and mockery, Pai Mei teaches the Bride many valuable techniques, which she then uses in her quest for revenge. Tarantino uses "L'Arena" again, although this time it is part of the Bride's musical narrative. Her actions (freeing her tied hands, punching through the coffin, and climbing out of the earth) are echoed in the musical expansion, demonstrated through the large orchestral sound and the inclusion of human voices singing. The music turns from a melancholy whistled melody to a triumphantly sung melody as the Bride is freed from her coffin.

After escaping from the buried coffin, Tarantino briefly shifts the focus from the Bride to Budd and Elle Driver. After Budd has sold his Hattori Hanzo sword to Elle, he tells her what he has done to the Bride. Although Elle and the Bride have clearly been rivals, both personally and professionally, we learn that Elle had great respect for her and mourns that

⁴⁸ Budd is one of the few characters in the film that has a mostly diegetic musical narrative. His musical selections include Johnny Cash's recording of "A Satisfied Mind" and Charlie Feathers' "Can't Hardly Stand It", both of which appear onscreen as having been selected by Budd.

she was disposed of in such a ruthless manner. She in turn kills Budd by poisoning him with a venomous Black Mamba. As Elle prepares to leave the trailer and return to Bill, the Bride enters Budd's trailer in a dramatic fashion. A sword fight ensues, and the Bride emerges victorious, leaving an injured and hysterical (but not dead) Elle. At this point, the Bride has only one last person to confront: Bill.

In chapter 12, Last Chapter Face to Face she travels to Mexico, meets one of Bill's mentors and finds out from him where Bill's exact location is. The musical indicators at this point turn from spaghetti western references to more traditional Spanish music. For the first scene in Chapter 12, Tarantino uses "Tu Mira" performed by the respected flamenco guitarist Lole Y Manuel. The music begins as the Mexican sky line is shown, and continues as the Bride drives through the Mexican landscape until she arrives at the brothel of Esteban Vihao, one of the Bill's father figures. The Bride approaches the aged Esteban, the music fades out as their conversation begins. Esteban tells her that that Bill is located on the road to Salina, a nod to a film from the 1970's of the same name.

From there, the remainder of the film has her meeting her long lost daughter B.B. who has been raised by Bill and told the true story of what happened to her mother. The Bride recounts to Bill what happened when she found out she was pregnant and why she left her previous life. The Bride and Bill have their final conversation, their final sword fight and then finally, the Bride kills Bill using Pai Mei's "Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique". The final chapter, Next Morning, shows the Bride experiencing what we can only assume is satisfaction, gratitude and elation mingled with a little bit of regret over the course of her actions. As the film closes, the Bride and B.B. recline on a bed and the screen

fades to black. Over “Malagueña Salerosa” performed by Chignon (Robert Rodriguez’s band), writing appears on the screen saying “The Lioness has rejoined her cub and all is right in the jungle”. The first set of credits roll, revisiting images from both volumes of the film, and the last image seen is of the Bride and B.B. happily driving away.

As is the case with *Kill Bill V.1*, most of the music in the second volume was sourced from other films, most notably spaghetti Westerns and Sergio Leone/Ennio Morricone collaborations. However, any original music found in the second volume was written by Robert Rodriguez. Rodriguez scored the music for a dollar, as a favour to Tarantino. In return, Tarantino had to promise to direct a scene in Rodriguez’s upcoming film, *Sin City* (2005).

Grindhouse Presents: Quentin Tarantino’s Death Proof (2007)

The film opens with the “Funky Fanfare” by Keith Mansfield played over the “Our Feature Presentation” titles, as in *Kill Bill*. Tarantino’s repeated use of the “Funky Fanfare” becomes self-referential in this case. There is the old school “restricted” panther vignette (also used in *Planet Terror*) and then the opening credits. During the opening credits, Jack Nitzsche’s “Last Race” can be heard. Jack Nitzsche was a composer who wrote many well known pieces for film, including “Up Where We Belong” from *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982). Since Tarantino’s selection of songs for the opening titles indicates what kind of film a viewer can expect, the mood that Tarantino is setting for this film is again one of tribute; it is a tribute to older American muscle car films and the music that accompanied such films. Tarantino included the title and composer of the song in his opening credits, therefore the

viewer is to assume that at some point in the film, one of the characters is going to have their equivalent of a “Last Race”. Vehicles feature prominently in the opening credits; perhaps the allusion to the “Last Race” is literal. Tarantino is notoriously averse to adding a director’s commentary on the DVD releases of his films, hence the above observations are not founded in fact, but rather observations based on Tarantino’s personality and his previous use of music.

The first image we see is a set of women’s feet with painted toenails on the dash of a car. Just before the presentation of the title there is a “scratch” in the reel and an alternate title (*Thunder Bullet*) flashes briefly on screen before presenting the *Death Proof* title. After the title, the camera returns to the woman’s feet on the car dash. The music stops abruptly, as if the needle from a record player was lifted, or as if there was a bit of missing reel. Since grindhouse films were notorious for the poor quality of film and missing reels, it would appear that Tarantino has consciously inserted this abrupt edit as homage to the grindhouse genre. The scene changes to the streets of Austin, Texas. The girls are talking about their plans for the day, men and scoring pot. At the end of the scene, as the girls drive around a bend in the road we see a black car following them and a snippet of “Baby it’s You” by Smith is heard, as if it is playing diegetically on the car radio. The next scene shows the outside of a bar. As the girls enter the bar, Arlene/Butterfly (played by Vanessa Ferlito) stays outside to finish her cigarette. As she does, the black car slowly idles by, pausing in front of the door. Butterfly stares suspiciously at the silhouette in the car before he peels away. As the car drives away, we again hear a piece of “Baby it’s You.” It is as if Tarantino is using this song as a *leitmotif* for Stuntman Mike (Kurt Russell), the antagonist

in the black car. The very title of the song implies that the “you” it references is Butterfly, or the “you” is a plural you, as in he has decided that all the girls are “his” girlfriends, as he says later in the film. At this point, the song is part of Stuntman Mike’s narrative.

The next few scenes follow the girls around Austin, and every where the girls go, the mysterious black car is following them. At one point we see the driver of the black car pull down his visor to reveal photos of the girls. At the same time we see a portion of his scarred face for the first time. Night falls and the girls are at another bar. Inside the bar, “Baby it’s You” is playing diegetically from the jukebox and Jungle Julia (played by Sydney Poitier, daughter of Sidney Poitier) dancing to the music. It would seem that with this appearance of the song, “Baby it’s You” has now become part of the girls’ narrative, indicating that they are familiar with music that most young women their age would have no knowledge of. Tarantino tends to manifest elements of his personality (cinophile, mélomane), in the manner with which he writes his female roles. For example, Julia is a local disc jockey at the radio station, but instead of being familiar with the current top forty, she has comprehensive knowledge of older songs. The decorations in her apartment are almost all posters for older films or older film stars, such as the Brigitte Bardot poster above her couch.

“Baby It’s You” returns once more in the second half of the film, presented in another manner. Upon its appearance, a further examination of Tarantino’s use of the song will be discussed.

The next few scenes take place in the bar where we learn a little bit more about the three girls and we are finally introduced to Stuntman Mike, the man in the black car. We learn that he was a stuntman on many older films, most of which his companion at the bar, Pam (played by Rose McGowan) has never heard of. What may seem like extraneous information at this point becomes important in the second half of the film.⁴⁹ The music throughout these scenes has been mainly diegetic; the girls are in a bar and the jukebox is featured prominently. In the first half of this film, two of the three uses of non-diegetic music has been borrowed from other films, such as "Paranoia Prima" (*Il Gatto a nove code*, 1971) by Ennio Morricone or "Sally and Jack" (*Blow Out*, 1981) by Pino Donaggio. Just as the music from the films of Sergio Leone and other spaghetti westerns featured prominently in the *Kill Bill*'s, for this film Tarantino uses the music from Dario Argento's horror films as his reference. Tarantino self references by inserting the song "Miserlou" by Dick Dale and the Del-Tones as one of the selections in the jukebox. This short appearance occurs in the scenes where Butterfly selects "The Love You Save" by T-Rex on the jukebox. Tarantino used "Miserlou" in his opening credits for *Pulp Fiction* (1994). In reference to using "Miserlou" as his opening credits, Tarantino states that the music says: "You're watching an epic, you're watching this big old movie, just sit back, cause it's so loud and blaring at you. It throws down a gauntlet that the movie now has to live up to, cause it's saying 'We're big.'"⁵⁰ By subtly inserting this reference into *Death Proof*, it is as if Tarantino is echoing those same sentiments in relation to this film.

⁴⁹ Like *Kill Bill*, this film is divided into two parts, although *Death Proof* was released as one film and was never intended to be divided. The beginning of the second half of the film echoes many aspects of the first half, although the outcome of the second half is vastly different.

⁵⁰ *The Tarantino Connection*.

After conversing with Stuntman Mike, the final scene in the bar has a high and drunk (and slightly vulnerable) Butterfly doing a lap dance to “Down in Mexico” by the Coasters for Stuntman Mike (the scene was cut from the theatrical release).⁵¹ The reel is cut (to make it like an old grind house reel) abruptly. The next scene has Stuntman Mike offering Pam a ride home in his “One Hundred Percent Death Proof” car (a stunt car can be made death proof for films so that the stunt driver does not get hurt doing the stunts required of him). As he gives Pam a ride home, he explains that his car is death proof, but it is only the driver’s side that benefits from this feature. At an intersection he turns to Pam and asks, “Well Pam, which way you goin’, left or right?” “Right” she replies.⁵² “Ahh, that’s too bad.” “Why?” “Well, because there was a fifty-fifty shot on whether you’d be goin’ left or right. You see, we’re both goin’ left. You could have just as easily been goin’ left too, and if that was the case, it would have been awhile before you started gettin’ scared. But since you’re going the other way, I’m afraid you’re going to have to start gettin’ scared immediately.” He then proceeds to kill Pam by driving recklessly and having her thrash around in the passenger seat until she is dead. Then he mutters “Now I gotta catch me my other girlfriends” and takes off in pursuit of the carful of girls.

Cut to the other girls, and Jungle Julia is on the phone to a radio station (presumably the one where she works) requesting “Hold Tight (1966)” by Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick, and Tich. Her car-mates question her selection and she proceeds to give them a quick history lesson on this group.⁵³ The song comes on and the girls start dancing to the music. While

⁵¹ The reason for the lap dance is referenced in an earlier scene.

⁵² All dialogue is taken from *Grindhouse Presents: Quentin Tarantino’s Death Proof* until otherwise indicated.

⁵³ Tarantino’s use of this song has been discussed earlier in this paper.

they are preoccupied with the music, Stuntman Mike passes them, turns around, shuts off his headlights and drives full speed towards the girls. Just before he crashes into the girls, he turns on his headlights. Tarantino filmed the impact four times, each time focusing on the demise of a different girl. After fourth and final repeat of the scene, shown through Butterfly's eyes, Tarantino lets the scene continue to show the utter destruction of both vehicles. What is curious in this scene is not only the various levels of musical narrative, but in the fact that for the four views of impact, Tarantino only uses diegetic sound, and does not include any music, diegetic or otherwise. Just before the impact, one of the girls is heard saying "Turn it up! I want to hear this part of the song louder!" Although there are visual cues that the volume is increased, the diegetic volume of the music does not change. The music stops at the first point of impact, and only diegetic sounds of the cars crashing and the girls screaming are heard. For a director so involved in his musical selections, that he chose to not use music for a visually stunning scene indicates that he feels silence can have as much impact as a well chosen piece of music.

The next scene takes place in a hospital room, where Stuntman Mike is being interviewed by two men in suits. Ranger Earl McGraw and his son are discussing the patient and the accident.⁵⁴ McGraw points out that no one is able to press charges since the girls' blood test showed alcohol and drugs, while Stuntman Mike's blood test came back clean. Since there is technically no crime, Ranger McGraw cannot do anything about the situation, but he does say "Just because I can't punish old Frankenstein there for what he's done, I'm

⁵⁴ Dr. Block, Ranger Earl McGraw and his son all appear in Robert Rodriguez's *Planet Terror*, the first half of the grindhouse double feature. Ranger Earl McGraw and his son also appear in *Kill Bill*; Tarantino is self-referencing, as well as referencing Robert Rodriguez. Ranger Earl McGraw actually first turns up in the Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino written/Robert Rodriguez directed *From Dusk Til Dawn* (1996).

gonna tell you what the Lord told John. If he ever does it again, I can make god damn sure he don't do it in Texas."

The next scene begins with a black screen, Willy DeVille's "It's so Easy" and the words "Lebanon, Tennessee, 14 months later" on the screen. Although this is the second half of the movie, Tarantino treats it as if it is a separate entity, and "It's so Easy" is then the opening song. "It's so Easy" could be referring to how easy it was for Stuntman Mike to recover, get a new death proof car made and find another set of women to stalk and terrorize.

Tarantino's stance towards the music in the second half of the film varies from his treatment of the music in the first half. The majority of the music in the first half of the film is diegetic. There are only three cases of non-diegetic music; they are "Paranoia Prima" by Ennio Morricone, "Stinger" by Robert Rodriguez and "Sally and Jack" by Pino Donaggio. In the second half of the film, the music is almost completely non-diegetic, and borrowed from older films, including music from Ennio Morricone again, Stelvio Cipriani, and Franco Micalizzi. Tarantino once more uses older music to reference genres that he was familiar with, as well perhaps using music from other films since the girls in the second half of the film are in the film industry. Two of the four girls in the second half are cinephiles like Tarantino; they favour older television shows and films that feature muscle cars and epic car chases.

The first image presented is of a parking lot with one car in it. An American "muscle" car pulls in and stops in front of a store. There is a close up on Stuntman Mike pulling out a cigarette and lighting it. As he sits in his car smoking, another car pulls up with two girls in

the front seat and a set of women's feet coming out the back seat window. Mike eyes them with interest and it is at that point that we realize he has selected his next victims. He turns off his radio to better hear the girls' conversation. Stuntman Mike gets out of his car, wanders over to the other car, where the girl in the driver's seat is singing along with her iPod. The song she is singing is "Baby it's You" by Smith. This is the fourth and final appearance of the song. At first examination, the song is part the girls' narrative, but upon closer examination Tarantino's use of this song would remind the viewer of the first half of the film, and of the eventual demise of the other four girls. It is being used as a musical reference, but it is himself that Tarantino is referencing. Again, Tarantino is using "Baby It's You" as he used "Bang Bang" or *Kill Bill*; as a signal to the viewer that whenever this song makes its appearance, it not only always means something, but it usually means that Stuntman Mike has chosen his next victims.

He leans in to inspect the feet hanging out of the car, where he pretends to drop his keys so that he can caress the woman's feet. He then gets back into his car and drives away quickly, with Willy DeVille playing on the radio in a repeat reference to the first half of the film. He cruises by again on the street, and once again, one of the girls becomes suspicious of his actions (shadowing Butterfly's suspicion in the first half), while the other two are unaware of the lurking danger.

After a brief pause and cut in the reel, the next scene is from Stuntman Mike's point of view while he is taking pictures of the four girls (they have picked up their friend at the airport) as they laugh and fool around. The next few scenes allow the viewer to get acquainted with

the four women, all friends in the movie industry.⁵⁵ We learn that Zoë's plans for her visit with the girls involve taking a 1970 Dodge Charger like the one in *Vanishing Point* (1971) for a test drive. They leave Lee, the actor, behind as collateral and take the car out for a test drive. During the test drive Zoë and Kim play "Ship's Mast" a trick that involves one of the girls getting onto the hood of the car while someone else is driving. With Zoë on the hood of the car, holding on with two belts looped through the window the girls drive down an abandoned road with Stuntman Mike in pursuit. Mike catches up to them and starts rear-ending them to scare them. A lengthy car chase ensues (with Zoë still on the hood) until both cars veer off the road. Mike gets out of the car, laughs and says "Hey! Ladies! That was fun! Well, adios!" just as Kim shoots at him with her pistol. He drives away quickly, and the girls stare into the bushes they have crashed into, realizing that Zoë has landed somewhere in them. As it turns out, Zoë is fine (she is a stunt person, after all), and the girls decide to go after Stuntman Mike. Another lengthy car chase follows, this time with the girls bearing down on a visibly shaken and scared Mike. The final scene in the film has the three girls beating up Mike, whom they have run off the road. Tarantino shoots this scene in a similar manner to the car crash scene from the first half of the film; with each punch to Mike's face, the camera focuses on the girl punching him. Zoë swings around and kicks Mike in the head and he falls to the ground. The girls celebrate and cheer as "The End" comes on screen, followed by "Written and Directed by Quentin Tarantino" as April March's "Chick Habit" (recorded in 1995) comes on. The final shot is of Abernathy dropping kicking Mike in the face. Roll end credits.

⁵⁵ Abernathy, played by Rosario Dawson is a makeup artist; Lee, played by Mary Elizabeth Winstead is an actor; Kim, played by Tracie Thoms is a stunt person, as is Zoë Bell, played by herself.

Tarantino's treats the final song in his films much in the same way he views the songs for the opening credits. The music gives the viewer a retrospective on the story of the film. Like "Bang Bang", his selection for the closing credits is lyrically driven. The lyrics for "Chick Habit" are included in Appendix A. In the song, the singer is admonishing a man whom she calls "daddy" to hang up (or give up) his chick habit. The words mirror a man's deadly obsession with woman warning that if he does not give up his habit, he will "meet another nurse, she'll be driving in a hearse." Although Stuntman Mike was successful in killing the women in the first half of the film, he was the one that ultimately suffered, and he will never "get another fix."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Lyrics quoted from "Chick Habit", sung by April March.

Chapter 3:

Rodriguez, an Auteur (Most of the Time)

Before delving into the plot synopsis of Rodriguez's films, it is important to note several important differences between Tarantino's stance towards referential music and Rodriguez's stance towards referential music. While there is no doubt that Tarantino's use of music is referential, instead of trying to re-create the sound from the old films, Tarantino just takes the music from the films he is referencing and inserts them into his films. Rodriguez's films are still referential to specific genres, including grindhouse, film noir and westerns, but he takes a very different musical stance. Since Rodriguez is an auteur and not a mélomane, he composes the music for his films instead of using someone else's contributions. The style of music he writes for each film varies according to what genre of film he is referencing, whether it is a Mexican influenced western like *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*, a neo-noir like *Sin City* or a grindhouse film like *Planet Terror*. His use of referencing involves recreating the sound originally associated with those genres instead of borrowing the music from the aforementioned genres.

Another difference between Rodriguez and Tarantino is the way music is used; Tarantino includes many examples of diegetic in his films, while Rodriguez uses mostly non-diegetic music, with only the occasional use of diegetic music. Therefore, there will be less musical discussion in the plot synopsis sections of Rodriguez's films than there was for the Tarantino films.

Grindhouse Presents: Robert Rodriguez's Planet Terror (2007)

As with Tarantino's films, *Planet Terror* opens with Keith Mansfield's "Funky Fanfare" with scratches before and after the "trailer" for *Machete*, a fictional film also done in the grindhouse tradition, complete with scratches and colour fades. Following the trailer is another old "restricted" vignette, although this one differs from the one used by Tarantino for his film. Then there is another presentation of the "Funky Fanfare" feature presentation. Rodriguez's inclusion of the "Funky Fanfare" is his way of creating a reference to Tarantino's films.

Rodriguez's main title music opens over Dimension logo and new RIP logo (Rodriguez International Productions). Even as the main titles are playing, the reels are scratched and melted to make the grindhouse effect more realistic. The first visuals are Rose McGowan as a go-go dancer dancing to main titles. The music is a dirty sounding sax, electric guitar and percussion driven. It would appear that the music in this scene is diegetic, since the dancer is synchronizing her movements to the music. Instead of using popular, pre-composed music, Rodriguez wrote his main titles to set up the sound that would continue throughout the film non-diegetically, as well as writing a tune that would make musical sense diegetically as well.

At the end of the dance there is a close up on Rose McGowan's face and we see that she is crying. The screen fades to black before the next scene, backstage at the go-go club. It is here that we first begin to get to know Cherry Darling, Rose McGowan's character. After being reprimanded by her boss for crying on stage, Cherry quits her job, leaves the club and

sets out walking down a dark street. Military vehicles pass her, knocking her into garbage bins and cutting her leg. The viewer follows the military vehicles to a base where two characters, Abby (played by Naveen Andrews) and Lt. Muldoon (played by Bruce Willis) are in negotiations to buy or sell some sort of “specimens” as well as some sort of chemical warfare. It is unclear at this point in the film what exactly this chemical is, but what is revealed is that exposure to this chemical renders ordinary people to become ill to the point of turning into zombie-type creatures, complete with the need to attack and eat other humans.

The next scene introduces the viewer to the Block family: Bill (Josh Brolin), Dakota (Marley Shelton) and Tony (Rebel Rodriguez, Robert’s son). Both Bill and Dakota are doctors at the same hospital, where they are working the night shift. What Bill does not know is that Dakota is planning on taking Tony and leaving Bill that night. Bill has his son Tony pray for him, saying “No dead bodies for Dada tonight, amen.”⁵⁷

Next we are introduced to El Wray (Freddy Rodriguez), a customer at JT’s (JT is played by Jeff Fahey) Bone Shack. Throughout the next scene, Wray and Cherry converse, and we learn that the two have had a relationship in the past which evidently did not end well. The music in this scene is one of the few times Rodriguez uses diegetic music in his film; he uses a recording of Rose McGowan singing “You Belong To Me” originally written in 1952. Midway through the conversation between Cherry and Wray the music changes to “The Grindhouse Blues” written and performed by Chignon (Robert Rodriguez’s band). This use

⁵⁷ All dialogue is taken from *Grindhouse Presents: Robert Rodriguez’s Planet Terror* until otherwise indicated.

of diegetic music will be examined at greater length in Chapter Four. Just before cutting to the next scene, Cherry asks Wray for a ride, and he accepts.

Prescription: Pain, the first scene in the hospital has Dakota and Bill going their separate ways just before Bill is confronted with the first “sicko” attack victim.⁵⁸ While treating the victim, another doctor reveals photos of similar wounds found on military veterans who had fought in Iraq. This is a bit of foreshadowing on Rodriguez’s part, as we will learn later on in the film that it was a unit in Iraq that was originally exposed to a toxic chemical, and that they were trying to find a cure for the illness produced when the gas was released into the air in Texas. As the film progresses and the presence of the sickos increases, Rodriguez uses more synthesizers and electronic sounds. This use of synthesizer indicates a world that is being taken over by the sickos.

On the drive into town, Cherry and Wray see some sickos tearing apart a body. Moments later he swerves off the road after attempting to avoid a collision with another sicko, who then attacks Cherry and drags her off. Wray goes after them, realizes that they have ripped off Cherry’s leg and shoots at them. He then rushes Cherry to the hospital. There, he is apprehended by the police for carrying a weapon, and the policeman alludes to the fact that Wray is not allowed to carry weapons due to some mysterious circumstance in his past. During his conversation with the Sherriff, Wray observes more infected people walking around in the hospital.

⁵⁸ Rodriguez hesitates to call the infected zombies, since they are not traditional zombies but rather people who have been infected by a chemical released into the air.

The film progresses to reveal more and more people infected by the noxious gas, yet there remain several key players who seem to be immune to its effects. They include Wray, Doctor Dakota Block, who has survived an attack from her husband, Cherry, now sporting a wooden leg, JT, and Abby. The survivors band together and head towards the military base, but not before Cherry and Wray reconcile for one night. At this point, the film reel melts away and breaks. A title card appears saying "Missing Reel; Sorry for the Inconvenience. Theatre Management". When the film resumes, the Bone Shack is on fire and it appears that the mystery behind El Wray has been revealed in the missing reel.⁵⁹

On the way towards the military base, the survivors are intercepted by Lt. Muldoon and his men, who recognize El Wray and incarcerate him along with other survivors. While imprisoned with the scientist Abby, the story behind the noxious gas is revealed, as Abby is the one attempting to sell it to the soldiers. El Wray and Abby break out and find Lt. Muldoon then who explains what it is actually happening. Lt. Muldoon and his soldiers were in Afghanistan and managed to kill Osama Bin Laden. As this was against America's interest, the soldiers got gassed with DC2, a chemical weapon designed to wipe out entire cities. Lt. Muldoon figured that the best way to find a cure was to gas a whole town then take the survivors to extract a cure from them. After killing Lt. Muldoon, Wray and Abby go to rescue Cherry and Dakota who have been taken away by two of the more lecherous guards. Rodriguez includes the second example of diegetic, pre-composed music in this scene. He includes a particularly memorable statement of the song "Too Drunk to F**k" by Nouvelle Vague. The music is cut off abruptly and the presence of Rodriguez's non-diegetic

⁵⁹ The mystery behind El Wray is never revealed to the public, but it appears that he was military at some point, and is a genius with a gun.

music begins. This scene is examined at greater length in Chapter Four. Wray kills the guards and rallies the rest of survivors to escape with the helicopters found on the base. Not everyone makes it to the escape helicopters; Abby, JT, the Sherriff, and El Wray are killed by the sicko soldiers. The remaining survivors head towards the ocean, as per El Wray's dying advice. The final scene happens one year after the events in Texas. The survivors are in Mexico, and while there are still sickos attacking them, the survivors have managed to stay together and thrive. Cherry has become the leader of the group, and she continues to keep El Wray's memory alive by taking care of the daughter they conceived in the Bone Shack.

Even though this film is not a part of the Spanish-infused westerns that Rodriguez has written for in the past, he does include an element of the Mexican guitar sound in his compositions, in particular in the opening title sequence. After a superficial analysis of the titles included on the *Planet Terror* soundtrack, it appears that Rodriguez gives his characters specific sounds, if not specific themes. In the eighteen tracks written by Rodriguez, fifteen of the tracks include some statement, either partial or complete of what I am calling "The Grindhouse theme". Whenever the sickos are present, or their approach is pending, Rodriguez features the synthesizer more heavily, and writes music that is inspired by John Carpenter's writing such as the tracks "Doc Block" and "Hospital Epidemic". When the story is focused on the relationship of Cherry Darling and El Wray, Rodriguez uses a softer, more romantic piano version of the Grindhouse theme as demonstrated in "Cherry Darling" and "The Ring In the Jacket". The track "Grindhouse Blues" is appropriately blues

inspired but also still contains Spanish-infused elements, and is played diegetically when El Wray and Cherry Darling are talking in the bar.

The final song in the film and the final track on the soundtrack is titled "Two Against The World." Its basic musical elements have been heard in previous track (specifically "Useless Talent #32") including the same melody sung by Rose McGowan, but in this final appearance, Rodriguez has changed the instrumentation to reflect the current state of the survivors. In its first appearance, the song contains synthesizer and a driving beat; it is almost a 'dance song' in its sound. "Two Against The World" is playing as the survivors are travelling to their final destination on a Mexican peninsula. The music is completely acoustic, consisting of several acoustic guitars and acoustic rhythm instruments and reflects the current state of the survivors; they have left the world of industry and are now rely completely on horses, their own intuition and whatever the land can provide. In repeating the melody from the previous track, Rodriguez is reminding the viewer why the survivors are where they are, yet in using a different set of instruments Rodriguez has created a new musical world for the survivors to inhabit. Since he writes the music for his film, Rodriguez can create several different yet connected worlds by using his music as the common bond between the disparate spheres.

***Sin City* (2005)**

Sin City is a departure from the usual films that Rodriguez directs in that the stories for the film originate from Frank Miller's graphic novels of the same name. The four stories used in this film are *The Hard Goodbye* (1991),⁶⁰ *That Yellow Bastard* (1996), *The Big Fat Kill* (1994), and *The Babe Wore Red and Other Stories* (1994).⁶¹ Rodriguez admired Frank Miller and wanted him to be a part of the film. To convince him, Rodriguez filmed the first segment of the film titled "The Customer is Always Right" over the course of a weekend and sent the footage to Miller. Miller was so impressed with Rodriguez's work that he agreed to work on the film with him. By working with Miller and crediting him as a writer and director, Rodriguez was breaking the rules of the Directors Guild of America, and was forced to either remove Miller's writing and directing credits, or resign from the DGA. Rodriguez chose to resign rather than remove Miller from the film. Together they planned out each scene using the panels from the graphic novel. The result is a film that looks remarkably like the drawings, which suits the stylized dialogue, story and music. It was shot entirely by digital cameras using green screen technology. It is also almost completely in black and white, although there are segments where colour has been added to create a startling contrast.

The stories in the film are not told in a chronological manner, so I have included a chronology of the stories in Appendix A.

⁶⁰ Originally just called *Sin City*, but later changed to *The Hard Goodbye* when other stories followed the first.

⁶¹ "The Customer is Always Right" was taken from this collection of short stories.

The first scene was created before Miller had agreed to sign on with Rodriguez. In the commentary, Rodriguez says that he wrote the music for this scene before even filming; it was a test for everyone involved. By writing the music for the first scene before writing the music for the rest of the film, Rodriguez was committing to a musical style that was in agreement with the visual style before even developing the film. Rodriguez often composes the music for his film before he has even written the story. In doing this, Rodriguez creates for himself a musical world in which to create his stories. In the traditional way of making a film, the director usually hires a composer to write the music after the film has been completed. Composing the music beforehand allows Rodriguez to also shoot the scene to coordinate with his musical cues, and not the other way around and enables him to be fully immersed in the world of his films. His treatment of the music differs somewhat from *Planet Terror* in that there is no discernable theme that pervades the overall music of the film. Instead, one can discern what type of story is being told based on the timing of the musical cues. Traditionally, the music that accompanies comedic or horror films is cued precisely with the visuals, while in a mystery or suspense film, the music is either anticipatory, so as to set the mood, or reactionary to the actions, as if to permit the viewer to absorb the action before allowing the music to comment on it. Rodriguez uses a combination of the two devices for *Sin City*, based on what the subject matter is for that particular story.

The film begins with a brief view of the studio credits and then goes right into the first scene of "The Customer is Always Right". There is faint street noise and music playing as a woman in a red cocktail dress walks towards a balcony railing. A man's voice (Josh

Hartnett) is heard narrating as he approaches the mysterious woman (played by Marley Shelton). There is a brief dialogue between the two and then The Man (Hartnett) goes back to narrating the action. He embraces her, shoots her and holds her until she dies. Just before shooting her, the music fades out so that at the moment of the woman's death, it is silent. The Man says his final line, and then the music of the title track begins; the camera pans up and out as the lights and buildings of Basin City are highlighted to form the title of the film. The credits on-screen are displayed over Miller's original drawing of the characters. The music accompanying the credits is suitably *noire* sounding, featuring the same growly saxophone stylings found in *Planet Terror*. The music for this film was written by Rodriguez, John Debney, and Graeme Revell. Rodriguez has collaborated with both these composers (Debney worked with him on the *Spy Kids* movies, and Revell worked with Rodriguez on *Planet Terror*).

The music for the first scene was written by Rodriguez. The music begins simultaneously with the first shot of Lieutenant Hartigan (played by Bruce Willis) driving a convertible on his way to a crime scene. The music is suitably frantic, with a repetitive string ostinato marked by muted brass shots and a lower string descending line. It is one of the few tracks where Rodriguez does not feature the gritty saxophone sound that will become a feature of the music for this film. His inner monologue narrates his actions. He meets up with his partner Bob (Michael Madsen) and they reveal through conversation that they are at the scene of a crime where the victim is victim number four, a young girl named Nancy Callahan is being raped and tortured by Roark, the son of a United States Senator. We are briefly introduced to a terrified Nancy as she awaits her punishment and then the focus is

back on Hartigan, who is in the midst of an attack of “indigestion” as he calls it, although it has been revealed previously that he suffers from a heart condition. The first chapter follows Hartigan as he stealthily approaches the warehouse where Nancy is being held. We are also introduced to Roark Jr. (Nick Stahl) as well as several of his henchmen. Hartigan gets shot in the arm by Roark Jr. as he attempts to escape with Nancy. They are cornered on a dock and Hartigan shoots at Roark Jr., blowing his ear, hand, and genitalia off before getting shot from behind by his partner Bob. This is the beginning of “That Yellow Bastard”, whose story will resume later in the film. The music continues throughout the scene, and the final piano notes fade out as Hartigan whispers his last lines. Rodriguez’s treatment of the music would indicate that this story, at least at its inception is closer to a horror story than a suspenseful story.

The next scene introduces the viewer to “The Hard Goodbye”, the story of Marv and Goldie. The music of “The Hard Goodbye” was written by Graeme Revell and Robert Rodriguez. The entry of the music is delayed in this scene; in this way, Rodriguez’s treatment of the timing differs from the first story. It is reactionary music, similar to what one would expect from a thriller or mystery story. It allows the viewer to hear Marv’s narrative and to spend some time with the visuals before inserting the mood music. The visuals for this scene vary also from the first scene in that Rodriguez has inserted some colour into the black and white world; Goldie is shown in saturated colour, as is the bed she lies upon. The first introduction of music is coordinated with the first introduction of colour.⁶² Both cues

⁶² Since Rodriguez filmed the opening sequence as a test, this would qualify as the first use of colour in the full length feature film.

indicate that the music, like the use of colour, belong to the world of Goldie. Her musical theme includes what Rodriguez calls “the haunting Goldie melody.”⁶³

We see Marv (Mickey Rourke) and Goldie (Jaime King) having sex on a red heart-shaped bed as Marv narrates his part of the story. They fall asleep and silently, a mysterious man enters the room. The music stops abruptly and the next thing we see is Marv getting up and realizing that Goldie has been killed while they slept, and Marv is being framed for the murder. Since Goldie is dead, her music is dead as well. The police come to the hotel, but Marv escapes the only way he knows how; through brutish violence and sheer muscle. Vowing to avenge her murder, he makes his way to his Parole Officer Lucille’s (Carla Gugino) house. We learn that Marv has a history of violence, as well as a medical condition that makes him confused at times. He trolls Sin City looking for answers to Goldie’s death, torturing, beating, and killing anyone who gets in his way. He finally finds out from a priest (played by Frank Miller himself) the reason for Goldie’s death, and the information he gathers is surprising to say the least. He learns that Goldie was connected to some of the highest ranking names in both the church and the United States Senate; Goldie was killed because of her affiliation with the Roark family, and because of the secrets that are kept at the Roark family farm outside of Sin City. As he continues his adventure, he is attacked by a woman in a car; due to his medical condition he believes the woman is Goldie. The musical indicators, as well as the fact that this “Goldie” is not in colour should demonstrate to the viewer that this is either an impersonator or truly a manifestation of Marv’s confused brain. The music has a similar wordless line sung by a woman’s voice, but for this scene it is

⁶³Taken from the directors commentary in *Sin City* dir. Robert Rodriguez.

almost masked by the other instruments and the diegetic sound of her car screeching on the pavement.

Arriving at the farm, Marv realizes that it is a place of malevolent death. He sets out to discover what has been going on at the farm. He is attacked by a small, stealthy man (played by Elijah Wood), and just before the man knocks him out, Marv realizes that this man was the one that killed Goldie. He awakens in a prison-like room decorated with the mounted heads of dead prostitutes. A naked Lucille is sitting in the corner of the room, and she explains to Marv what has been happening at the farm; the same man who attacked Marv eats the women and gives the scrapes to his dog. Lucille was forced to watch as the man cut off her hand and ate it. A car approaches the farm and picks up the waiting man, and the viewer is finally given a name. The cannibalistic man is called Kevin. Marv manages to use his brute strength to escape from the cell, but the police are already waiting for him. Lucille attempts to save Marv from being taken by the police, but in the end Lucille is shot dead and Marv has to resort to extreme violence to escape. Returning to the city, Marv continues to narrate his story and the story of the powerful Roarks, all the while attempting to find out more information about Goldie. The Goldie look-alike arrives and shoots Marv until he passes out. For every appearance of the Goldie look-alike, Rodriguez includes a re-imagining of the original Goldie music by using the woman's voice singing a wordless tune. His musical cue is aligned with each appearance of this woman.

As he comes to, he realizes he is tied up and being beaten by Wendy, the Goldie look-alike who turns out to be Goldie's twin sister (also played by Jaime King). Marv reveals that he was not Goldie's killer, and that he has been trying to find the man who killed her and the

other six prostitutes. Wendy, Marv, and a few other prostitutes band together to avenge Goldie's death. They return to the farm after arming themselves and Marv ventures into the woods. He lures Kevin out into his carefully laid trap. They fight until Marv manages to ensnare Kevin with a set of handcuffs after which Marv proceeds to remove Kevin's limbs. After the dog has had his fill, Marv removes Kevin's head.⁶⁴ Marv steals a car and drives to Cardinal Roark's mansion. The two converse, discuss Kevin's cannibalism and Goldie's death, and Cardinal Roark (Rutger Hauer) reveals that he joined Kevin in his eating of the prostitutes. Marv tortures and kills the Cardinal and is then shot by the Cardinal's security detail. After going through extensive surgery to bring him back to health, Marv is tried and sent to death row for the murder of Roark, Goldie, the prostitutes and Lucille. Wendy visits him one more time in prison before Marv is electrocuted. Thus ends "The Hard Goodbye". In this final appearance of the Goldie/Wendy character, Rodriguez does two things; first, he has Wendy appear to Marv in colour, with a brief statement of the "Goldie Theme". However, as she approaches Marv, the music fades out and Wendy fades to black and white. Wendy says "You can call me Goldie" and the music starts with the piano and vocal theme arising again. The camera zooms into Marv's now lifeless eyes, and a reflection of Marv and Goldie on the red heart-shaped bed appears along with the final statement of Goldie's theme. The screen fades to black and diegetic banging is heard, along with a musical transition from Marv and Goldie's theme to the music of the next story which is "The Big Fat Kill". The music for this story was written mostly by John Debney, with some collaboration from Robert Rodriguez. Debney and Rodriguez's music anticipates the visuals, setting a suspenseful mood for this story.

⁶⁴ Throughout the entire film, and even after Marv has finished torturing him, Kevin remains silent.

This story opens with a group of men, led by Jackie Boy (Benicio Del Toro) banging on the door to Shellie's apartment.⁶⁵ They converse through the door, revealing a past history of abuse on Jackie Boy's behalf. Dwight (Clive Owen) comes from another room, encouraging Shellie to let Jackie Boy and his friends in. She does, but only after Jackie Boy threatens to kick the door in. Jackie Boy goes to the bathroom, where Dwight is hiding in the shower. Dwight pulls a knife on Jackie Boy and sticks his head in the toilet until he is unconscious. Jackie Boy revives, and he and his men leave Shellie's apartment. Dwight has been hiding on the exterior window ledge, and just before he leaves, Shellie's implores him not to go after Jackie Boy. Dwight jumps down into his car and follows Jackie Boy into Old Town. Through the voice-over narrative, Dwight reveals that he is actually a murderer with a new face, and if he were to get caught tonight, he would be sent to the gas chamber.

Old Town is a part of Basin City ruled by a group of deadly prostitutes. Jackie Boy propositions one of the young prostitutes named Becky (Alexis Bledel) as Dwight follows them on foot. He is stopped by Gail (Rosario Dawson), who assures him that Becky is fine, as the women of Old Town take care of their own. Among other things, they are protected by Miho (Devon Aoki). At the mention of "Deadly Little Miho" the musical track of the same name begins and the camera pans up to reveal a woman with swords waiting on the rooftops. The music is muted and subdued until Jackie Boy pulls a gun on Becky. At that point, the music escalates with the action, as he and his men are attacked by Miho. Miho has blocked the barrel of Jackie Boy's gun so that when he tries to shoot Dwight, the gun backfires right into Jackie Boy's head. The women proceed to scavenge the dead bodies

⁶⁵ Both Shellie (Brittany Murphy) and Dwight (Clive Owen) make their first appearance in "The Hard Goodbye". Shellie is a waitress at Kadie's Saloon and Dwight is a customer.

until Dwight discovers that Jackie Boy is a cop, and not just any cop but local “hero cop” Jack Rafferty. Miho dismembers the men and Dwight shoves them in the trunk of a car and heads for the oil pits. Jackie Boy doesn’t fit in the trunk, and so he is stuck sitting in the passenger seat next to Dwight. The following scene, directed by Tarantino, has Dwight imagining that a dead Jackie Boy is talking to him. Dwight gets pulled over by a motorbike cop and manages to convince the police officer that Jackie Boy is merely too drunk to drive. As he arrives at the tar pits, Dwight is shot through the shoulder, while in Old Town Gail is captured by Manute (Michael Clarke Duncan), a man who works for someone who wants control of Old Town. The people who shot Dwight are now going through his pockets where they find Rafferty’s police badge and the bullet that was supposed to kill Dwight. He shoots all four mercenaries just before another group blows up the car and sends Dwight into the tar pits. Miho and some of the other women from Old Town rescue him before he completely sinks into the tar pits and they return to Basin City to try and liberate Gail from the mob. Before rescuing Gail they have to retrieve Jackie Boy’s head before the situation in Old Town gets any worse. After another altercation with the mercenaries, Miho and Dwight retrieve Jackie Boy’s head and formulate a plan to rescue Gail from the mob. Dwight arranges for a trade; Jackie Boy’s head (now with an explosive taped into his mouth) for the return of Gail. The exchange is completed, the explosive goes off, but Dwight and Gail are still outnumbered. Then the camera pans up to reveal all the women of Old Town on top of the buildings, pointing guns at the mob and killing them all. The music for the final scene is “The Big Fat Kill” the final track composed by John Debney. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact entry of this specific track as there has been music accompanying the action on screen at all times. There is one specific example of musical

timing that is particularly noteworthy; just before Jackie Boy's head explodes the music changes as the strings have a frantic ascending line. As the head explodes music fades to a faint string tremolo, as if the diegetic sound of the explosion has covered up the music. Then, as the women begin their assault of the mob, the music begins and swells to a full orchestral sound as the men fall. The music dies away at the same time the screen fades to black. The music from "The Big Fat Kill" continues to diminish away to nothing as the next visual appears on screen. This visual is part of the final story, the story of "That Yellow Bastard", which is a continuation of Hartigan's story. Rodriguez scored both parts of the Hartigan story himself, with no collaboration from any of the other composers.

Having survived Bob's gunfire, Hartigan is in the hospital where he is visited by Senator Roark (Powers Boothe). During the visit, Rodriguez starts the next piece of music, again offsetting it so that the viewer is given a few seconds to absorb what is happening on screen before the music adds its own commentary. Roark has paid to keep Hartigan alive so that he can be tried for Junior's crimes. A young Nancy also visits Hartigan, and even though she has to go into the Witness Protection Program, she promises to write him. At the appearance of Nancy, Rodriguez brings back the music from the first scene, as a musical reinforcement of the visual; even though there have been two other stories in between, the subject matter of this story is a continuation of what Rodriguez first presented to the viewer. The music serves as a reminder of what happened, and how much Hartigan has sacrificed for this young girl.

Hartigan spends eight years in solitary confinement because he refuses to confess to the crimes of which he is accused. Careful not to reveal her identity or location, Nancy writes

to Hartigan during his confinement using the pseudonym Cordelia. Then the letters stop and Hartigan has figured that Nancy forgot about him. One day, a man appears in Hartigan's cell, a man who smells like death. He knocks Hartigan out and when he awakes, there is an envelope with a finger in it. Hartigan assumes that it is Nancy's and so he confesses to everything in exchange for his release. Hartigan heads to Nancy's apartment only to find it ransacked. He takes one of the matchbooks from Nancy's apartment, thinking that it might lead him to Nancy. The matchbook is one from Kadie's Saloon, and Hartigan goes there only to discover that his sweet little Nancy is now a beautiful exotic dancer.

The music for Nancy's dance scene is the one of two pre-composed pieces of music that Rodriguez uses. It is called "Absurd" and it is performed by Fluke. Rodriguez makes no comment on his inclusion of this piece, but it could have been selected because of the title. Hartigan finds the fact that Nancy, his "skinny little Nancy Callahan" is an exotic dancer disturbing and at odds with his previous concept of who Nancy was; this new image of Nancy is absurd to Hartigan. This piece is also the only inferred diegetic music in the entire film, although the song starts before Hartigan is in the bar. The song actually begins as Hartigan picks up the matchbook from Kadie's saloon, thus effectively anticipating the mood in the bar before presenting the viewer with an image.

Hartigan has been followed to Kadie's by the misshapen yellow man that was in his cell before. Hartigan tries to leave the bar before Nancy recognizes him, but she jumps off the stage before he can quit the bar. The song ends as Hartigan turns to realize that the yellow man has left, effectively pointing his absence, and the danger it puts the two of them in.

Nancy and Hartigan leave together, but the Yellow Bastard (Nick Stahl) follows them. There is an exchange of gun-fire and the Yellow Bastard is run off the road. When Nancy and Hartigan go examine the car, they discover that the Yellow Bastard's body is missing. They check into a hotel where Nancy confesses her love for Hartigan, and although Hartigan feels the same way, he is reluctant to act on his feelings because of his age. Meanwhile, the Bastard has hidden himself in Nancy's car, and he enters hotel and surprises Hartigan and Nancy. The viewer finds out that the misshapen yellow man is actually Roark Jr., whose appearance is due to all the corrective surgeries his father subjected him to in an attempt to re-grow his genitalia. The Yellow Bastard hangs Hartigan and takes Nancy back to the farm to torture and kill her. Hartigan manages to escape and follows them to the farm where the Yellow Bastard is whipping her, trying to get her to scream. The music for this scene is the second occurrence of pre-composed music in this film; the piece is called "Sensemaya: Chant for the Killing of a Snake" written by famed Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas in 1938.⁶⁶ Rodriguez is using the title as reference for what is about to happen. The music makes use of a full orchestra, with many varied percussion instruments, as well as dynamic brass and strident sounding winds. The music begins as Hartigan is driving towards the farm, and ends on a bombastic note as Hartigan castrates the Yellow Bastard for the final time. Rodriguez goes back to using his own music for when Hartigan is actually killing the Yellow Bastard, although Rodriguez manages to meld to two distinct styles together successfully. Hartigan tells Nancy to go home while he waits for the police to reveal Roark's corruption, but the truth is that

⁶⁶ <http://peermusicclassical.com/composer/composerdetail.cfm?detail=revueltas;>
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/23289>>.

Hartigan has to sever his ties with Nancy if she is going to live free from harm from the Roark family. Just before Hartigan commits suicide the music stops. For his death there is nothing but diegetic sound. The music is halted to allow for the viewer to fully take in the end of the story that began an hour and a half before. The music begins again a few moments later as the camera pans up to the sky. Rodriguez's treatment of the music for this story has been the same treatment that the music for a mystery or suspense movie gets; the music is offset from the action at the points of greatest impact (the death of Hartigan, the death of Yellow Bastard, and the introduction of a grown up Nancy) so that these visual cues seem to have more importance than when the music is continuously playing.

The music, like the visuals for the final scene, seems to grow out of the previous story, which takes place at the Basin City Hospital. Becky talks to her mother, reassuring her that she is fine. The music fades out as Becky walks down the hall. This story, however, does not get its own music. She gets in the elevator and sees The Man (Josh Hartnett). Knowing who he is, she says goodbye to her mother for the last time. This vignette is not part of the Frank Miller's original stories, but Rodriguez wanted something to bookend the movie, so he had Miller write an ending that would bring back the character from "The Customer is Always Right". Perhaps Rodriguez did not write any music for this scene because it was not originally part of the Sin City story. More plausible is that he did not write any music for this scene because we are meant to induce that Becky is going to be killed, and therefore her story did not warrant any music. Or perhaps Rodriguez did not write any music for this scene so that when the screen went black for the final time, the end credit music would be

that much more effective, since the music would belong completely to the end credits, and not have any ties with the final scene. The music for the final scene has elements of the opening credits, but it contains a much more recognizable melody. The music includes the gritty saxophone sound that appeared in the opening credits, as well as elements of other pieces of music that played throughout the film such as the female voice of “Goldie’s theme” and some of the music that accompanies Dwight as he is driving to Old Town and the pervasive use of the saxophone that represents Basin City. In this way, the end theme perfectly represents all four stories, with a squeal from the saxophone ending the piece.

Overall, Rodriguez’s music for this film varies greatly from what he wrote for *Planet Terror*. While the music for *Planet Terror* had themes that Rodriguez played with, *Sin City* does not have such clear themes; instead, there is a pervasive use of a gritty sounding saxophone, which gives the viewer a feeling for the mood of *Sin City*. It is as if the city’s theme is the saxophone, and even though there are four different stories, the overarching main character is Basin City itself. Rodriguez clearly took his inspiration for the music for this film from Frank Miller’s drawings of the femme fatales, brutes and violence that make up Basin City. He also references classic noir film music, although since his film would be categorized as “neo-noir”, the music is much more rhythmic and guitar driven, as would be fitting for a film of the twenty-first century.

Once Upon A Time in Mexico (2003)

Once Upon A Time in Mexico is the third chapter in the *El Mariachi* trilogy. The first two films were *El Mariachi* (1992) and *Desperado* (1995). The film opens with FBI Agent Sands (Johnny Depp) eating in a restaurant in Mexico. Belini (Cheech Marin) walks in and sits down with Agent Sands. Belini proceeds to tell Sands the legend of El Mariachi,⁶⁷ one of the most deadly men in Mexico. As Belini is recounting his story, the flashback plays out on screen, and we learn that General Marquez (Gerardo Vigil), a powerful and dangerous man wants to kill El Mariachi. El Mariachi manages to escape from Marquez with the help of Marquez's former lover Carolina (Salma Hayek). It is because of El Mariachi's relationship with Carolina that Marquez wanted to kill El Mariachi. Carolina shoots Marquez in the heart, but he does not die. Although Belini does not know what happened to El Mariachi, he assumes that Marquez or members of the drug cartel have killed him, since he has now all but disappeared. His story is that of myth and legend. Sands pays Belini for his information (a measly ten thousand dollars) and Belini leaves the restaurant. After Belini leaves, Sands removes his pneumatic left arm, while his real left arm has been holding a gun under the table the entire conversation. This may seem odd at first, but it becomes part of the Sands lore. He leaves the restaurant. This scene is examined in greater musical detail in the following chapter. The plot is convoluted and confusing; a succinct plot synopsis can be found on the International Movie Database.⁶⁸ Instead of going into great detail on the plot synopsis, I will be highlighting particular scenes of musical interest.

⁶⁷ He is called El Mariachi because he travelled with a loaded guitar case.

⁶⁸ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0285823/>

The next scene shows a man in a guitar town giving a guitar to another guitar maker to make sure the final product plays well. It is then revealed that the second man is El Mariachi. He strums a little Mexican melody (Malagueña Salerosa) on the guitar, and as he plays, the music expands to become the music for the opening credits. The music for the opening credits is an orchestral version of the Mexican melody. Much in the same way that Tarantino uses specific music for his opening credits to indicate the mood of the film, so does Rodriguez. Using a re-imagination of "Malagueña Salerosa" as the music for the opening credits alerts the viewer that this film is going to reference Mexican folkloric details. There are many interpretation of "Malagueña Salerosa", as it is a traditional mariachi melody. Rodriguez does include a traditional presentation of the melody, but since he re-orchestrates it for his opening titles, it is his re-interpretation of the melody that is significant to the film. By taking the melody of the "Malagueña Salerosa" and expanding upon it, Rodriguez is indicating to his viewer that there are going to be aspects of traditional Mexican history present, but that this is a new and expanded story, not just a pedantic recreation of the myth of El Mariachi. Having El Mariachi play the melody into the opening credits makes the viewer aware of his importance in the film, as well as the fact that the music, traditional or not is going to have a significant role throughout the story. Unless otherwise indicated, the music is non-diegetic. Both layers of musical narrative are significant for this film, and will be discussed for certain scenes, but for this film, I will be examining the presence of diegetic music in the scenes, since music is a significant characteristic of El Mariachi.

After the song has ended, we see four trucks full of men, lead by Cucuy (Danny Trejo, a Rodriguez favourite). He questions one of the guitar makers, asking for a mariachi. As this is a guitar town full of mariachis, the man responds “Which one?” Cucuy then emphasizes that he is looking for *El Mariachi*. Because the man claims not to know who he is talking about, Cucuy’s men shoot him. Before another man gets shot, *El Mariachi* reveals himself and allows Cucuy to take him away.

The next scene shows Billy Chambers (Mickey Rourke), one of Barillo’s henchmen, taking a young man to see Barillo (Willem Dafoe).⁶⁹ Barillo is learning the piano while watching the television, which is broadcasting a speech by the President of Mexico. The President is claiming that attempts have been made on his life by the cartels. Barillo examines this young man, Señor Blascoe, who happens to look strikingly similar to Barillo. After learning that Blascoe would like to work for him, another man closely examines Blascoe’s face.

Next, we see Sands and Cucuy in conversation. At a table in a restaurant sit *El Mariachi* plucking out a tune on the guitar one of the old men from the guitar town gave him.⁷⁰ The only music accompanying the beginning of the scene is the diegetic music coming from *El*. Sands comments on *El Mariachi*’s song, and *El* replies that it was something that his brother taught him; he also reminds Sands that *El* was responsible for the death of his brother. Sands wants to hire *El* to kill Marquez, since Marquez has been employed by the cartels to kill the President. Sands knows that *El* is likely to accept the proposition, given *El*’s history with Marquez.

⁶⁹ Barillo is the leader of the cartel.

⁷⁰ I will be referring to *El Mariachi*, Antonia Banderas’ character as *El* for the remainder of this chapter.

Rodriguez brings in a counter-story to El's; he introduces Ajedrez (Eva Mendes), a member of the Mexican police force. She is assigned to help protect the President against the Barillo cartel. She will appear later, as Rodriguez through the character Sands, slowly brings all the characters together.

The scene shows the President practicing a speech encouraging peace; his staff advisor is warning him that Barillo has become popular with the people. Rodriguez has included a faint inclusion of a traditional mariachi band playing in the background, as if that sound is a musical representative of the people that the President is talking about. There are also church bells chiming in this scene; these church bells bridge the gap between this scene and the next, which shows El sitting on the steps in front of a grand cathedral. He is playing his guitar, picking out little melodies. The melody that he is playing becomes a part of his flashback to his relationship with Carolina. This melody, simply called "El Mariachi" continues to appear throughout the film; each time it seems to signify something different. Here, it is a melodic tool to help him remember his past love. The music moves from the diegetic realm to the world of his flashback. Shortly after the scene moves into flashback, the guitar music stops for a moment, and then a new tune starts as El and Carolina are being shot at by Marquez and his men. The music that accompanies their daring escape is "Yo Te Quiero" by Marcos Loya. The only lyrics from the song are "Yo te quiero" which translated means "I love you" or "I need you". El and Carolina are being attack by Marquez because Carolina left Marquez for El; Rodriguez uses this love song as an ironic addition to the film. The song stops abruptly as El is shaken out of his reverie. He walks into the cathedral (where Sands had instructed him to go to meet a contact) and as he is walking in,

we hear the first statement of “Coup d’état theme”, a seven note theme that will continue throughout the film. The music continues as El enters the confessional booth. It fades out as El makes his agreement with Sands’ contact (who is actually Sands himself, in disguise). The music changes to “Church Shootout” as El is attacked in the confessional booth. He escapes with his guitar intact, but the assault continues throughout the church. Oddly, he stops to pluck out the “El Mariachi” theme on the guitar, and then starts taping it rhythmically. He kisses the neck of the guitar, whispers an apology and then uses the guitar to smash one of his assailants over the head. He pulls a gun out of the guitar, and at that point we know why he has kept the guitar so close.

The film continues as Sands is shown to be a devious schemer, attempting to manipulate everyone he meets to his own gain.

The next interesting musical transition comes during the scene when Sands is luring ex-FBI agent Jorge (Rubén Blades) into joining the fight against Barillo. Towards the end of the scene there is some non-diegetic music that begins as Jorge takes a sip of his wine. The music transitions into the next scene, which shows three mariachis playing in a bar. At that point, the viewer realizes that the music from the previous scene was actually a musical anticipation, since it is the music of the mariachis that anticipated their visual entrance. The music ends as the mariachis finish their song, and we see El greeting the young mariachi Lorenzo, played by Enrique Iglesias. El is back to pick up his old guitar from his friends, and he enlists Lorenzo and his friend Fideo to help him in his assignment.

The “El Mariachi” theme occurs again as El walks into a hotel room. There is another flashback to when El and Carolina get married. The theme again precipitates El’s flashback; at each appearance, Rodriguez gives the theme more meaning. The actual presentation of the theme varies; sometimes it is played by El, and sometimes it is just a part of his musical memories, but either way, it gives the viewer some indication about El’s past life, and why he has chosen the path he has. Rodriguez’s use of the theme will continue throughout the film, and it will be examined in the following chapter when I discuss the term “meta-diegetic”. The final shot in the scene is one from the present; El opens his guitar case to reveal a guitar full of guns and ammunition. The music stops as he slams the lid of the case down. The sudden ending of the music, combined with the black screen cues the viewer to realize that at this point, El has fully definitively accepted Sands proposition, and that by doing so, he can put to rest the demons from his past that continue to haunt him.

In the following scenes, Sands’ plan to overthrow the Mexican government is clarified through a combination of voice-over narration and actual action on screen. As Sands is laying out his convoluted plan to Ajedrez, the “Coup d’état” theme is presented again. Sands calls El to tell him of his next job; he will be the musical entertainment for a presidential gathering. The scene cuts quickly to reveal all three mariachi (Lorenzo, Fideo and El) entering the presidential compound. The President’s advisor (who, we have learned, has betrayed the President to Sands) lets the mariachis in. Again, the “Coup d’état” theme makes a brief appearance as the mariachi enter the compound. As with the “El Mariachi” theme and El’s flashback, the “Coup d’état” theme signals to the viewer that Sands’ plan is slowly coming to fruition, since the thematic music is being presented with

an increased regularity. In the musical commentary that Rodriguez includes on the DVD, he also points out that Sands has another sonic indicator. Almost every time that Sands is in a scene, there are bells ringing diegetically in the background. The bells will become a large part of Sands' final showdown.

The mariachis play for the President's guests, all the while scoping out the room so that they will have the advantage when the attack on the President comes. They ask him if there is a particular song he would like to hear, he asks for "La Malagueña". They proceed to start the song for him, but after a brief statement of the theme, the scene cuts to the rooftop where the mariachis discuss their plan. Although the statement of "La Malagueña Salerosa" is brief, it reminds the viewer that beneath all the scheming and planning, these men are mariachis, and the music is a nod to all the conventions that surround a mariachi.

The ensuing scenes, including scenes of facial surgery, the mariachis practicing their shooting and several layers of betrayal, continue to bring the threat of the coup d'état closer to the President, and with each scene, Rodriguez neatly weaves the character's stories together. Rodriguez ties the musical themes together in the same manner that he intertwines the stories. The "Coup d'état" theme becomes woven into the "El Mariachi" theme as their stories become more interlinked.

The *Día de los Muertos* or The Day of the Dead has arrived. This is the also the day of the coup d'état. The music begins with a bold statement of the "Coup d'état" theme as the people are having their parade on the streets of Mexico. Marquez and the military are preparing for the attack, the police are preparing for a counter-attack and El is preparing to

kill Marquez. Even though Rodriguez has the music playing non-diegetically over scenes of street celebrations and military vehicles, it becomes clear that the music is that of the street parade, it fades out as the scene shifts to Sands (who has been drugged by Ajedrez) comes out of his stupor and realizes that his scheme has failed. Ajedrez and Barillo, newly out of facial reconstructive surgery, have foiled Sands' plan. Ajedrez reveals that she is actually Barillo's daughter, and has been betraying Sands the entire time. Barillo does not kill Sands, but he does remove his eyes, since Sands has seen too much. The scene cuts to black and then opens with the President practicing his big speech. He is told that Marquez is closing in on them, and that the President should remain where he is, since it is fortified.

Sands, now blind, grabs a young "chicle boy"⁷¹ (Tony Valdes) from the street to help him get to the town centre. They are being followed, but the young boy helps Sands kill the man who is following them. In the town centre, Marquez and his men are wreaking havoc at the parade, and the mariachis are heading towards the President.

Although Rodriguez likes to have control over the music in his films, he does allow his actors to contribute; for example, he had Rose McGowan sing for the *Planet Terror* music, and for this film, Rodriguez had Johnny Depp write a piece of music for the character of Agent Sands. Depp wrote it and performed it, and Rodriguez includes it in the scene where Sands is getting ready to have his final showdown. There is the sound of bells included into the song, which fades out as the scene ends. Rodriguez continues to present the "Coup

⁷¹ The chicle boy, wearing a yellow shirt is a character that appears in all three El Mariachi films. By including him in every film, Rodriguez is self-references as well as tying together all three stories.

d'état" music throughout these scenes of revolution, thus unifying the music presented at the beginning of the film to the current music and action.

For Sands' final showdown, the music that Rodriguez has written is called "The Man With No Eyes". The music includes the use of bells, which have become a signifier for Sands. His music ends as Sands collapses on the ground.

Marquez enters the presidential compound to kill the President, but instead he is confronted by El. El shoots Marquez, Sands shoots Ajedrez, Jorge the FBI shoots Barillo's man, Barillo's man shoots Billy Chambers and El shoots Barillo. The only men who survive the coup are Sands, Jorge, El and the mariachis, who walk away with the President. The final scene shows the people of Mexico celebrating, the President getting into his vehicle and the mariachis walking down a road. The music that accompanies this final scene begins long before we are shown the source of the music. It is El, plucking out his tune on the guitar. We are presented with the final flashback, where Carolina asks El what he wants most in life. He replies "To be free." "Simple" she says, as El shakes his head and whisper "No". The final "El Mariachi" theme fades away as the flashback fades away to the present. The music that Rodriguez has playing over the final credits is a piece he wrote and Salma Hayek sings called "Siente Mi Amor" or "Feel My Love". Rodriguez includes the "El Mariachi" theme into this song, as a final musical tie in for the viewer.

Chapter 4:

Film-Music-Theory Definitions Reconsidered

In opening up the category of auteur to include directors who had previously been missing from the list, and in examining the categories of mélomane and collaboration, one must also revisit the traditionally accepted uses of music in film. The following definitions of the levels of musical narrative have been explored in relation to the films of the above studied directors. There is also an expansion on the term 'meta-diegetic' that has until now been almost completely ignored, as well as an introduction to trans-diegesis, a term developed to suit a level of musical narrative previously unconsidered. The definitions are also examined in relation to the two distinct categories of directors examined in this study. By exploring the terms in reference to an auteur and mélomane, a further differentiation between their distinct musical stance can be observed.

Definitions

One of the first terms encountered in film-music theory is *diegetic*. A term borrowed from literary theory or critical theory, it can be considered first to refer to music arising from within the narrative itself. Claudia Gorbman introduces diegetic in her article *Narrative Film Music* by including the following quote from Etienne Souriau:

Diegesis, diegetic: all that belongs, "by inference" to the narrated story, to the world supposed or proposed by the film's fiction. Ex: (a) Two sequences projected consecutively can represent two scenes separated in the diegesis by a long interval (several hours or years of diegetic time). (b) Two adjoining studio sets can represent locations supposedly hundreds of feet apart in diegetic space. (c)

Sometimes there are two actors (e.g. a child and an adult, or a star and a stuntman or double) to successively depict the same diegetic character (pg. 7).⁷²

As we can see, the term diegetic has been used in conjunction with film theory as early as 1953, but it does not get used in conjunction with film music theory until later on in Gorbman's article, when she defines diegetic as "music that (apparently) issues from a source within the narrative (pg. 197)." Diegetic music can also be defined as *source music* or actual sound. Another definition for source music, according to Irene Kahn Atkins is "music that, whether emanating from a source visible on the screen (such as a musical instrument or ensemble, a vocalist, a radio, a record player, or a television receiver) or not, is assumed to be audible to the characters in the film (pg.13)."⁷³ Atkins points out another level of source music: "Source scoring is music, often a song, that is heard first as source music and subsequently as background music, usually re-orchestrated and in greatly expanded form (pg. 14)." Over the relatively short period of time between Atkin's book and Gorbman's book (1987), the term "source scoring" has been rejected and the term "meta-diegetic" has been accepted instead. Before elucidating on meta-diegesis, an examination of the varied levels of source or diegetic music is necessary.

Source music has already been defined above, and so the next level of music narrative is *underscore*. Also defined as *non-diegetic* music, the underscore is loosely defined as music whose existence is not explicable to the action on the screen or coming from a space outside of the narrative. A perfect example of underscore is John Williams' scores for

⁷² Etienne Souriau, ed. *L'Univers filmique* (Paris, 1953), Translation by Claudia Gorbman. Cf. also Ch. 4, pp. 97ff, of Christian Metz, *Film Language*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

⁷³ Atkins, Irene Kahn. *Source Music in Motion Pictures*, East Brunswick; Associated University Presses, Inc, 1983.

Steven Spielberg's films. This term will be further examined at length further on in this chapter.

The next level of music does not have a term within film theory per se, although *pre-existent* or *pre-composed* music is the term that has been most frequently used.⁷⁴ As the term implies, this is music that has been written for something other than film. While pre-composed scores gained popularity in the 1990's, there is actually a long history of the use of pre-composed music. In the very early days of cinema silent films were accompanied by a catalogue of music, ranging from popular songs of the time to established and recognizable classical pieces. According to Richard Rodman, in his essay "The Popular Song as Leitmotif in the 1990s Film", "The catalogue is notable in that it lists music by effect rather than composer or genre."⁷⁵ This began the tradition of using popular music in films, which would continue with the Elvis Presley films, the films of the Beatles and on to the compilation scores and soundtracks popular today.

Pre-composed music is often used as diegetic music, as in the case of *Easy Rider* (1969) or *American Graffiti* (1973), where the music being used is music that belonged to that specific film world. In her book *Hearing Film* (2001) Anahid Kassabian quotes David Shumway who points out that the music within *American Graffiti* may begin as diegetic, but the volume of the music fluctuates to accommodate dialogue, thus rendering the music "quasi-diegetic [in] origin. Rather, the line between diegetic and nondiegetic is impossible to establish (1999:41) (pg. 43)." As Gorbman states in her 1980 article "Narrative Film

⁷⁴ They can also be called *compilation scores* or *compilation soundtracks*.

⁷⁵ *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell, Ashgate, Jan. 2006.

Music”⁷⁶: “Significantly, the only element of filmic discourse that appears extensively in nondiegetic as well as diegetic contexts, and of the freely crosses the boundary line in between, is music (pg. 196).” Although most pre-composed music used today is used as diegetic music (and often a method for new bands to reach a wider audience), it is not used exclusively for this purpose. Stanley Kubrick’s films are the most notable exception to this. As early as 1964, with his film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, Kubrick used several pre-composed pieces as non-diegetic music. Most remarkable was his use of “We’ll Meet Again” performed by Vera Lynn. The final scene in the film involves several nuclear explosions, all the while “We’ll Meet Again” is played in counterpoint to the death and destruction on screen. Kubrick’s use of the song is not only exceptional because of the stark contrast between music and images, but because he was using pre-composed music non-diegetically, using it as *foreground* music instead of simply background, accompaniment music. Perhaps the best known example of Kubrick’s foregrounding of pre-composed non-diegetic music can be found in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). In a film with little dialogue (a total of eighty-eight minutes without dialogue), the music seems to take on its own character, a technique that Tarantino adopted in his films. Kubrick’s use of *Also Sprach Zarathustra, An der schönen, blauen Donau, op. 314* (The Blue Danube) and music by György Ligeti and Aram Khachaturyan as accompaniment to pivotal scenes in the film instead of the commissioned score by Alex North changed the method with which non-diegetic pre-composed music in films was used. Atkins criticizes Kubrick’s use of music, calling it “a throwback to the clichés of silent theater music, with “tried and true” classics from “the old masters” (pg. 58).” She also misguidedly calls it background

⁷⁶ Gorbman, Claudia, “Narrative Film Music: *Yale French Studies*, No. 60, Cinema/Sound (1980) pp.183-203.

scoring, which might be where she misses the point of Kubrick's brilliant selection of "frozen, congealed-in-aspic (pg. 58)" classical music. Kubrick used music as counterpoint or juxtaposition to his visuals; in *2001* the subject matter is futuristic and belongs in the realm of science-fiction, and the music Kubrick selected belongs to the concert hall of a more genteel time, thus contradicting the mood onscreen. Over the course of his career, Kubrick continued to foreground classical music to juxtapose with the action on-screen to great effect. Gorbman goes as far as to call Kubrick an auteur in his handling of pre-composed music.⁷⁷ Kubrick's use of music, as with Tarantino's, foregrounds the music so that the viewer has no choice but to be aware of what is being played in conjunction to what is happening onscreen.

Diegetic: examples

An example of diegetic music can be found in *Pulp Fiction* (1994). Throughout the diner scene with Vincent Vega (John Travolta) and Mia Wallace (Uma Thurman), there is music playing in the background. Since Jack Rabbit Slim's is a 1950's-themed diner, the viewer assumes that the source of the music is from a jukebox. Later on, during the iconic twist contest, Vincent Vega and Mia Wallace are dancing to "You Never Can Tell" by Chuck Berry. Again, one would assume that the music would be coming from the jukebox. Even though the jukebox is not visible in either scene, one aspect of diegetic includes music which is explainable within the scene; the above referenced scene is a perfectly acceptable example of musical diegesis. Another example of diegetic music can be found in Tarantino's *Death*

⁷⁷Gorbman, Claudia "Ears Wide Open: Kubrick's Music" *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie, Stillwell, Robynn. Ashgate; Hants. 2006, pg. 3

Proof. As mentioned previously, in the first half of the film, the girls are driving towards their lakeside cabin. On their drive there, Julia calls into her radio station to request a song. Shortly thereafter the song comes on the radio and the girls turn up the volume and start dancing in the car. Again, the music in the scene is explicable and therefore completely diegetic.

Non-diegetic: examples

Examples of non-diegetic music are many, since this is generally the preferred usage of music in most Hollywood films. A specific example is the opening scene in Robert Rodriguez's 2005 film *Sin City*. The scene begins with the sounds of a city, with a mournful, *film noir* sounding saxophone playing. As the scene progresses, the saxophone is joined by a piano, although both sound distant, as if the music was coming from a jazz and blues bar down on the street below the two characters. However, there is no indication, either visual or aural that would confirm this supposition, and the viewer is led to believe that the music is simply non-diegetic. At the end of the opening scene (based on Frank Miller's story "The Customer is Always Right") the camera pans up and out and both the scene and the music transition to the title and opening credits.

Another example of non-diegetic music can be found in *Kill Bill V.2*. In the sixth scene "A Satisfied Mind" where the Bride is waiting outside of Budd's trailer, we hear Budd put on a Johnny Cash record. As The Bride is crawling out from under the trailer and getting ready to kill him, Budd stops the music to investigate the sounds of dogs fighting outside. As he is peering out the window, an instrumental re-working of the harmonies of "Bang Bang (My

Baby Shot Me Down)” is heard. The musical significance of “Bang Bang” has been discussed in Chapter Two, although its use in this scene is noteworthy, since Tarantino has inserted it to remind the viewer of why the Bride is stalking Budd. It is a brief appearance of non-diegetic music before Budd starts his diegetic Johnny Cash record again. Tarantino allows for the first line of the song “A Satisfied Mind” to re-play before inserting another small example of non-diegetic music, this time in the form of an electric guitar riff. It almost goes without saying that any instrumental music heard would have to be non-diegetic, since the scene takes place in the middle of the desert, and there would be no source explicable in this location. The scene is also a clear example of non-diegetic (instrumental) music in direct contrast to diegetic music (record player).

Not all non-diegetic music is original score; indeed, Tarantino’s use of pre-composed music originating from other films has already been discussed. Tarantino uses pre-composed “pop” songs as non-diegetic music as well. In his film *Pulp Fiction* Tarantino uses mostly diegetic or trans-diegetic (to be defined further in this chapter) music however he does use some “surf rock music” non-diegetically. While still technically instrumental music, these pieces (which include “Comanche” by The Revels and “Bullwinkle Part II” by The Centurions) were hit song songs on the radio in the 1950-60’s.

The “Fantastical Gap” of Meta-Diegetic and Beyond

The term *meta-diegetic*, as it has been applied in scholarly literature to music, is derived from the definition in literary criticism originally put forth by Gérard Genette (*Discours du recit*, 1972), who purported that there are three levels of narrative: extra-diegetic,

pertaining, that is, to the initial level of narrative (now generally called diegetic/diegesis), intra-diegetic (or what Claudia Gorbman calls non-diegetic), which pertains to the events within the narrative, and finally, the meta-diegetic, which is loosely defined as the narrative within the narrative, or secondary narrative.

Genette discusses the meta-narrative in his differentiation between the various levels of narrative within the novel *Manon Lescaut (Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut)* by French author Antoine François Prévost. Writing from the French literary tradition, Genette defines the meta-narrative (and subsequently meta-diegesis) as narrative in the second degree, or a narrative within a narrative, therefore “the *metadiegesis* is the universe of the second narrative (p. 228).”⁷⁸ Gorbman was the first to actually apply the term to film music theory in her book *Unheard Melodies* from 1987. Gorbman uses Genette’s 1969 definition of meta-diegetic from *Figures II*, while Dennis L. Seager, in his book *Stories Within Stories* (1991) refers to other writings by Genette from 1972. As I will discuss later, my use of meta-diegetic aligns more closely with Genette’s (and then Seager’s) later writing. While Gorbman does not elaborate any further on Genette’s theory, she does include an illustration of what she terms meta-diegetic music. As shown in the example below, Gorbman incorporate the idea of secondary narrative in her use of the term meta-diegetic. In her example, she discusses a hypothetical scenario where:

We witness the great romance of protagonist X, which ends tragically during the war. Years later, while X and his best friend Y sit in a bleak cafe discussing their

⁷⁸ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin. New York: Cornell University Press, 1972.

irretrievable joys, Y brings up the name of X's lost love. This strikes a chord: a change comes over X's face, and music swells onto the soundtrack, the melody that had played early in the film on the night X had met her (pg. 22-23).

This example would still pertain to the secondary level of narrative according to Genette, since he purports that "any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed (pg.228)." Gorbman's use of the term is technically accurate, according to Genette's definition, however I believe that meta-diegetic music can embrace more than the above example. Meta-diegetic music need not always apply to music that has already made an appearance in the film. If meta-diegetic narrative is *any* narrative of the second degree, then any music that pertains to that narratological realm is meta-diegetic music. This definition of meta-diegetic music most closely aligns with the example of the first scene in *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*, discussed in Chapter 1, as well as later on in this chapter. As I will demonstrate in my example below, meta-diegetic music can serve many functions. My examples tend to correspond more closely with Genette's definitions than with Gorbman's more narrow approach to meta-diegesis.

Within the field of film music, the above terms from literary criticism have been applied first in a 'narratological' model set forth by Gorbman and Kathryn Kalinak separately.⁷⁹ Their usage, which, as demonstrated above, does not always correspond to that of the literary critical model, diegetic has referred to music in which the source of it is visible or

⁷⁹ Kalinak, Kathryn, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

explainable within the scene and non-diegetic music is music in which the source is neither visible nor explicable within the setting of the scene.

Meta-diegetic music, according to Gorbman, is music that “pertain[s] to narration by a secondary narrator (*Unheard Melodies*, pg. 22)”. Although her hypothetical example of protagonist X hearing non-existent music that recalls his first meeting with his love goes on to clarify this point, she offers nothing further in the way of definition. One would have to say that this term, while formally defined in literary criticism is not formally defined in the equivalent branch of music studies. In fact, more casually, some authors use the term meta-diegetic to refer simply to music that is heard first as diegetic, then as non-diegetic, with the intention of recalling the first occurrence. This can be seen in the example given above.

While Gorbman does not offer any in-depth explanation of meta-diegetic music, her examples reflect her belief that meta-diegetic music is a revisiting of music that appeared in a diegetic form earlier in the narrative. She likens meta-diegetic music in her example as reading characters’ “musical thoughts”, and as I will demonstrate further on, it is this reading of musical thoughts with which I will apply to some of my own examples.

At this juncture one might ask whether musical studies would benefit from the application of a formal definition of meta-diegetic, one that would reflect narrative subtleties developed in literary criticism. For example, according to Dennis L. Seager, in his book *Stories Within Stories* (1991), meta-diegetic can be explained as “narrative or diegesis...once removed from diegetic narrative (pg.1.)”.⁸⁰ He is writing strictly from the

⁸⁰ Seager, Dennis L. *Stories Within Stories: An Ecosystemic Theory of Metadiegetic Narrative*. Vol. 27, New York: Peter Lang, 1991.

literary tradition; however, in the present thesis, the author will apply his conception to the musical narrative. Seager posits that one function of meta-diegesis “may not be explicitly related to the primary level of narrative at all. In this case, the act of narrating itself is what has a function of the diegesis (pg. 4).” In this case, it could be argued that contrary to what Gorbman has stated, meta-diegetic music would not necessarily have to have appeared within the primary narrative, but could be implied, depending on the situation (as in the case of reading musical thoughts).

While it is beyond the scope of the present thesis to propose and defend a formal definition of the application to music of the term meta-diegetic, in that the term has already been used frequently and widely, if informally, it is noteworthy that, in the following example the use of music is in some ways more nearly analogous to the literary term, as coined by Genette, than to Gorbman’s use. Robynn J. Stilwell has commented on this dichotomy between literary theory and film theory in her article “The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic” from the 2007 book *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*.⁸¹ She sees film music studies as progressing towards a level akin to that of literary theory:

Why are we coming to this questioning of a basic concept just as the relatively new field of film music studies is beginning to reach a coherent and critical mass? I suspect that the state of film music studies is, in fact, the reason for the investigation. Foundations have been laid, basic parameters mapped. We have a sense of where we are, and now we are moving into an area of greater refinement, more focused inquiry. We are also moving beyond a repertoire of classical Hollywood films, European avant-gardes, and documentaries with scores by famous

⁸¹ Stilwell, Robynn. “The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic” *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*. Ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

concert hall composers. The terrain is shifting, and productive analysis will move with it (pg. 185).

Stilwell speaks truthfully, in that film music theory is only now starting to progress to a level that allows for deeper analysis. This has not only proven itself accurate with regards to the examination of meta-diegesis, but it is also true in the respect of broadening current accepted norms of musicology to include a complete and extensive examination of film music theory beyond the classical Hollywood score.

This aside, an example of meta-diegesis, I believe, can be found in Quentin Tarantino's film *Death Proof* (2007). In the second half of Chapter Four of the film, the music is clearly diegetic. We observe characters dancing in front of a juke box in a bar and other characters depositing money and selecting songs. However, midway through the scene, Julia (one of the main characters) leaves the main section of the bar, sits on a table and sends a text to Chris Simonson, a character that never actually appears on screen, but has been referred to as Julia's love interest in a previous conversation. Even though Julia has stepped away from the source of the music the diegetic music is still audible from where she sits. As she texts Chris, the music abruptly changes from T. Rex's "Jeepster" (1971), which is diegetic in this scene, to an instrumental piece of music by Pino Donaggio, first used in the film *Blow Out* (1986). The song is titled "Sally and Jack", and consists of a plaintive melody for piano. Arguably, this music is not simply non-diegetic, as would be the most obvious conclusion, but rather could be called meta-diegetic. The music clearly interrupts the narrative and presents the perceiver with an alternate narrative. The music has not been previously referenced in the film; however, the perceiver is given the distinct impression that the use

of “Sally and Jack” is referencing an (unseen) scene between Julia and Chris. Because it comes from a film of 1986, one clearly known to Tarantino, it acts as a reference and the audience can easily imagine a scene that would have featured this song in the present film. It is as if this song belongs to the narrative pertaining to Julia and Chris, a narrative that is never fully explored within the film, but definitely supplies the viewer with a secondary diegetic level, both musically (with the music of Pino Donaggio) and on a narrative level. Tarantino is selective in his use of non-diegetic music in the first half of his film, choosing rather to use diegetic music to great effect. Just as abruptly as the music moved from diegetic to meta-diegetic, so is the shift back to diegetic music (“Jeepster” still) as Julia finishes sending her text message. The shift from diegetic music to meta-diegetic music and then back again is an abrupt cut, indicating a shift in Julia’s mental state. Her musical thoughts and memories, presented by the Pino Donaggio piece, have ended, and she engaged with the current on-screen activity.

A further argument for the meta-diegetic nature of this song is the very nature of Julia’s feelings towards Chris. Tarantino is known for his skill at writing dialogue, and he once stated in an interview that he writes the dialogue for women based on the way his group of female friends talk. This is the case in *Death Proof*, as evidenced in an earlier scene; the girls are discussing men, relationships, and Julia’s relationship with Chris in particular. In the conversation, Julia dismisses her feelings for Chris, and leads the audience to believe that the relationship is casual, perhaps even merely physical. However, the text message that Julia sends to Chris belies the purported casual nature. The content of the texts are as follows:

JJ: "I cant (sic) wait to see you. Hurry!!!"

CS: Me Too.

JJ: xoxo jj.⁸²

This is not the text of a casual relationship, but rather the text of someone who has a vested interest in the other person. The urgency and depth of emotion present in the text belies the casual front that Julia displays in front of her friends. While Julia may be disguising the extent of her feelings for Chris in front of her girlfriends, the content of the text, plus the way Tarantino uses of the "Sally and Jack" theme in this scene, leads the perceiver to believe that there is more to this relationship than Tarantino is presenting on screen. It is because of this that I believe the music is meta-diegetic, and not simply non-diegetic. The music is also an aspect of Julia's musical thoughts and memories, another indicator of meta-diegetic narrative.

Another example of meta-diegetic music can be found in the very first scene of *Once Upon A Time in Mexico*. As Belini, Cheech Marin's character is telling Agent Sands, Johnny Depp's character about *El Mariachi*, the visuals onscreen go into a flashback. You can still hear Belini's voice narrating the action on screen while the story is being played out. As the story begins, there is musical accompaniment along side of the action. Since the two men are sitting in a restaurant with virtually nothing happening around them, the dramatic music belongs to the secondary narrative being given by Belini. The story revolves around a mariachi, so invariably there is going to be an element of diegesis whenever the character, played by Antonio Banderas, takes out his guitar. However, even the diegetic music

⁸² *Death Proof*, 2007. Directed and written by Quentin Tarantino.

belongs to the secondary level of narrative, or the meta-narrative, both in the original literary sense and the musical definition of meta-diegetic music. The music fades away momentarily as the viewer rejoins Belini and Sands in the restaurant. Just as quickly, the music returns as the story continues on the screen. The actual musical elements of Belini's narrative warrant further exploration, since they are not only meta-diegetic, but could also be classified as *trans-diegetic* (this is the next term that will be analyzed) as well. Rodriguez gives us an example of all of the narrative levels of music in his first few minutes of the film.

The final example of meta-diegetic music reflecting a character's musical thoughts also occurs in *Once Upon A Time in Mexico*. In the scene where El Mariachi is sitting in front of the cathedral softly strumming on his guitar, the music that he plays triggers a flashback to his relationship with Carolina. The music is being played diegetically in the present, but is also heard non-diegetically in the flashback. This occurs more than once throughout the film, and each time it occurs, the actual music is part of the present action. The music is an emotional trigger for El Mariachi and reminds him of a time when he was happy with Carolina. The music is not actually a part of the original flashback narrative, but Rodriguez manages to create a melody that can exist realistically in both levels of narrative, all the while creating music that acts as El Mariachi's musical recollections.

Trans-Diegetic: definition and examples

It should be noted at this time that I have been using the terms diegetic and non-diegetic in accordance with Gorbman's definitions. Where I differ will be in my use of meta-diegetic. I

will refer to Gorbman's use of the term; however I will draw on Genette's definition of the meta-diegetic, as I believe that Genette's terms allow for a more complete and in-depth approach to the subtle nuances possible within the film music genre. I will also be introducing the term *trans-diegetic* to refer to an occurrence in film music that has of yet to be studied or defined in any great detail.⁸³ For the sake of this study, I will use the term trans-diegetic to refer to music that begins as non-diegetic and then moves to diegetic (or vice-versa), all within the confines of one scene. This movement between the accepted levels of narrative can blur the lines of understanding for the perceiver since while watching film we as an audience are generally only familiar with the two standard levels of narrative.

For example, the perceiver sees character X sitting in a room reading a book while the first movement of Brahms's Third Symphony is heard in the background. Upon first assumption, the perceiver would relegate the music as simply non-diegetic music, in standard Hollywood tradition. However, as the scene progresses, character X puts down the book, gets out of the chair and walks towards a stereo and turns off the power. The music immediately stops and the perceiver then realizes that the music has been explicable within the boundaries of the scene all along. This movement between levels of narrative can affect the viewers perception of the characters musical indicators, including the realm that the character inhabits. An example of music moving from diegetic to non-diegetic would be as follows: the scene begins at a masked ball where a small orchestra is playing

⁸³ Trans-, as defined by Merriam Webster. Etymology: Latin *trans-*, *tra-* across, beyond, through, so as to change, from *trans* across, beyond. Definition: so or such as to change or transfer. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

music for the dancers. As the scene proceeds, the camera pans up and out of the room to show party-goers arriving at the front entry of grand hotel. The accompanying music swells and the theme goes through various developments. It is generally accepted that the small orchestra playing inside the room would not be capable of producing enough sound to be heard at the entrance of the hotel. In this case, the music is moving from diegetic to non-diegetic, but would still be considered to be trans-diegetic. Tarantino often uses trans-diegetic music in his films, an example which can be found in *Kill Bill Volume 1*. In the chapter entitled "Chapter Two: The blood-spattered BRIDE", we are given an overhead view of the massacre at Two Pines, with various law enforcement officers milling about the bodies. The heading "Four years and six months earlier in the city of El Paso, Texas" is written on the screen, while bits and pieces of songs and radio announcements are heard. It is evident that someone is playing with radio knobs to try and find a station, but this action is neither seen nor referred to on screen. As a station is chosen, we hear a deejay announce the next song, which is "That Certain Female" by Charlie Feathers (1974). The music begins playing as we are given a long shot of the Texas plains, with a police car driving along. After a close up of the driver (Sheriff Earl McGraw, played by Michael Parks), we are given a point of view shot of the car's dashboard lined with sunglasses. Earl McGraw pulls up to the chapel and as he parks and turns the car off, the music abruptly stops, and we then know that the music has been diegetic. Although the perceiver is always aware that this music is coming from a radio, there is no indication to where the source of the radio originates. Tarantino also plays with dynamics and mixing to further blur the lines between diegetic and non-diegetic. As the car is seen driving along the plains, the volume of the song would indicate that the music is non-diegetic. It is only when the music

is turned off do we realize that the source of the music is referred to on screen. This is what I believe to be one example of trans-diegetic music, although this example is somewhat problematic, since we are aware that the radio station has been selected by someone, thus somewhat, though not entirely eliminating the non-diegetic nature of the music.

Another example of trans-diegesis can be found in Robert Rodriguez's half of the *Grindhouse* films, *Planet Terror*. As the movie begins, the viewer is introduced to "The Grindhouse (Main Titles)", written by Robert Rodriguez. Since all the audience is seeing are the credits, one would assume that the music is non-diegetic. But as the first scene opens, we see that the music is accompanying a go-go dancer as she performs her routine. Her movements are synchronized with the beats of the music, thus shifting the music from non-diegetic to diegetic, although the sound and quality of the music appears larger than a bar of that nature would allow for. The music seems to span the "fantastical gap" that Stilwell was talking about in her article. There is a movement between the two levels of narrative and as Stilwell posits:

The trajectory of music between diegetic and nondiegetic highlights a gap in our understanding, a place of destabilization and ambiguity. The diegetic and nondiegetic are conceived as separate realms, almost like two adjacent bubbles, and there seems to be little possibility of moving from one to the other without piercing the skin that explodes the two "universes", which certainly is one reason for the reliance of the language of "transgression." But perhaps it is a failure of metaphor. It seems a perfect candidate for theorizing.

When that boundary between diegetic and nondiegetic is traversed, it does always *mean*. It is also hardly ever a single moment-one moment we're in the diegetic and in the blink of an eye, like walking through Alice's mirror, we are in the nondiegetic looking glass world. The thickness of the glass, as it were, like any liminal space, is a space of power and transformation, of inversion and the uncanny, of making strange

in order to make sense. That these transitions are *sometimes* transgressions only heightens that liminality (pg. 186).

Stilwell's idea of the two universes of narrative as bubbles lends itself to a classic Venn diagram, included as Appendix B.⁸⁴ The space between the two levels of narrative is where I propose the trans-diegesis occurs. This movement between realms can indeed be disconcerting for the perceiver; however it can also serve to engage the perceiver with the film on a level previously unattainable with simply diegetic and non-diegetic music.

There are two particular scenes in *Planet Terror* that address this passing in between these two levels of narratives, therefore creating the trans-diegetic level of narrative. In chapter 7: Palomita, the non-diegetic underscore plays as Wray pulls up to the Bone Shack. As he passes through the door into the Bone Shack we hear diegetic music coming from the jukebox. The song playing is "You Belong To Me", originally written by Pee Wee King, Chilton Price and Redd Stewart in 1952, this version has been recorded by Rose McGowan, one of the main actors in the film. Rodriguez said in his commentary that for this scene he had wanted to use a Patsy Cline song, but because of budgetary concerns, he used a lesser known song and had his actor record the song. This is one of three examples where Rodriguez does not use his own music. The other two are discussed elsewhere in this study. As that song finishes "The Grindhouse Blues" (written by Robert Rodriguez) comes on. As the scene progresses it become apparent that the music is actually diegetic although the volume is adjusted to accommodate the characters dialogue, lending a non-diegetic element to the music. As the scene ends, the song finishes as well.

⁸⁴ Please refer to Appendix B.

The second example of trans-diegesis in *Planet Terror* appears in chapter 25: Melting Member and chapter 26: Killer Legs. The scene begins with dialogue between Cherry Darling and Dr. Dakota Block. During this scene there is non-diegetic music underscoring the dialogue and action on screen. The music contains classic musical clues that something horrific is going to happen in the near future. Two military characters (credited as Rapist #1 and Rapist #2) in gas masks enter the room and begin a dialogue with the two women being held captive. Rapist #1, played by Quentin Tarantino, grabs Cherry Darling, drags her across the room and pulls her to her feet. He commands his cohort to turn on the radio. The radio gets turned on and Cherry Darling is forced to dance to "Too Drunk to F****" by Nouvelle Vague. As Cherry Darling begins to dance, Rapist #1 tells her to "Break a leg, break it off!" Cherry Darling retaliates and swings her wooden leg around to hit him, and as she does this, the music abruptly changes to non-diegetic, action/horror music that accentuates the ensuing fight scene. The non-diegetic music is Rodriguez's piece "Melting Member" (embedded with a segment of the main Grindhouse theme), which sounds like classic horror/action music, with powerful electric guitar, plodding solid chordal patterns, discordant harmonies, and driving percussion. The scene progresses and the two women are joined by El Wray (Freddie Rodriguez, no relation) and Abby (Naveen Andrews). El Wray gives Cherry Darling her new machine gun leg to replace her now broken wooden one. As he is doing this, he tells her he believes in her and that she could be better (in reference to an earlier conversation between the two erstwhile lovers). As she stands up, the viewer sees Rapist #1 'melting' as he is exposed to the toxic gas. Cherry Darling then opens the door by shooting through Rapist #1, where three more armed guards are ready to gun down Cherry Darling, El Wray Doctor Block and Abby down. Cherry shoots and kills

them with her newly acquired machine gun leg, and only then does the non-diegetic music end and we hear “Too Drunk to F***” still playing diegetically on the radio. Cherry Darling turns around, fires at the radio, thus ending the music, both diegetic and non-diegetic.

This function of the music in these scenes echoes music in the scene from *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) that Stilwell discusses (pg. 191-192). The reversal of non-diegetic music interrupting the diegetic music is opposite of what usually happens, but both cases align with my definition of trans-diegesis. Stilwell uses her example to examine the shift in point of view and the difference between the empathy with the underscore and the anempathy⁸⁵ with what she calls “source music” but what I am calling pre-composed music. She discusses the relative subjectivity found in scores and the objectivity that pre-composed music presents, and the varied alliances of subjectivity, objectivity, empathy, and anempathy. These subtle differences do not factor into my analysis of the music in the scene, except to note that here again, we have a reversal of what is traditional and accepted in the Hollywood system. Her concluding point is that by travelling through what she calls “the fantastical gap” and I call trans-diegesis, a “drawing of the audience to a character by using a trajectory through the fantastical gap between diegetic and nondiegetic, along multiple axes including empathy/anempathy, objectivity/subjectivity, and aural perspective (there/here) (pg. 192-193)” occurs, whether the music is that of an auteur or mélomane.

⁸⁵ Literally, an inability to feel empathy.

One Scene, All Levels of Musical Narrative

As previously mentioned in the definition for meta-diegetic, there is a scene in *Once Upon A Time In Mexico* which actually incorporates all levels of musical narrative as defined in this thesis. Rodriguez manages to include all these levels in the first scene of the film. A detailed analysis of one scene that encapsulates all the definitions will hopefully give my readers a greater understanding of the levels of narrative and how the subtle differences can be seen and heard. I have indicated one example of the various levels of musical narrative in bold.

The scene begins with Agent Sands sitting at a restaurant table in Mexico. In walks another man named Belini. Without greeting each other Belini sits down. Sands says "I've never heard of him."⁸⁶ Belini counters "Who?" "The man you recommended" replies Sands. "The guitar fighter? Whew, wiped out a couple towns single-handedly, a real nut" laughs Belini. "You probably heard about him, just didn't know it was him they were talking about. You should meet him." At that point, a waitress comes to the table with a plate of food for Sands. Belini continues "Just as long as I'm not the guy who has to make the introduction, ok? Were you here in Mexico during the Barillo cartel massacre?" "No." "That's when I first heard about him. He was a legend. They used to say he was the biggest Mexican they'd ever seen. That's total bulls**t. He was 5'9, 5'10 tops. It's no record, but bigger than most of us. But Marquez, that's a different story." As Belini is building the lore of the guitar fighter, the camera slowly draws in closer to his face. During this time, there has been no music, only the sounds of Sands eating his dinner. The story continues, only instead the

⁸⁶ All dialogue taken from *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*, written and directed by Robert Rodriguez.

focus being Sands and Belini, Rodriguez takes the viewer to a flashback of when the guitar fighter and Marquez met in a bar. As the flashback begins, the diegetic sounds change to accompany the secondary narrative (or the meta-narrative) and instead of restaurant sounds, the diegetic sounds are the sound of a helicopter as Belini introduces General Marquez and the drumming of the guitar fighter's fingers on a table. At this point, mixed in with the diegetic sounds, Rodriguez has included a faint drum roll on the bass drum (or timpani, it is unclear) and some lower string vibrato. This music, obviously **non-diegetic**, supports the growing ominous mood, as if there is going to be trouble shortly. As the non-diegetic music builds, Marquez stands up and reveals his gun in the holster. The guitar fighter extinguishes the candle on the table, stands up to face Marquez, knocking over the chair and table at which he was just seated. The non-diegetic music continues, as does Belini's narration of the story of the guitar fighter. As Belini says "They called him El Mariachi because he used to carry this guitar" the visuals briefly return to Sands and Belini, as if to remind the viewer that this is not something that is actually happening, but rather one person's account of the myth of "El Mariachi". Sands replies in disbelief "A guitar?" "Believe me, he really knew how to play it, too." The film returns to the myth of El Mariachi, where he is shown to open his guitar case and pick up a guitar. At this point, the music, which has been non-diegetic within the **meta-diegetic** realm (since it belongs to the secondary level of narrative) stops and changes to **diegetic** as El Mariachi begins to play his guitar.⁸⁷ The men in the bar begin to laugh at El Mariachi as he is playing. Rodriguez intersperses images of El Mariachi playing with shots from around the bar, and finally to

⁸⁷ The guitar is an electric guitar, both aurally and visually. It is unclear as to where El Mariachi has plugged in his guitar as he begins to play.

Marquez pulling the gun out of his holster. As El Mariachi has been playing, the music moves from diegetic (the sound of the lone electric guitar) to non-diegetic, with percussion and other guitars.⁸⁸ This move from diegetic to non-diegetic renders the music to the realm of **trans-diegetic**. El Mariachi stops playing and begins using his guitar for its hidden secondary purpose; he cocks the neck of the guitar, it becomes a gun, and he begins shooting the men in the bar. As the violence escalates, so does the rhythm and energy of the music. After El Mariachi has cocked the neck of his guitar one last time, the music ends on a held guitar note and the focus shifts back to Belini's narration of the story for a moment. It then goes back to the Mariachi story in the bar. By now El Mariachi has pulled other guns from his guitar case and is continuing his assault on the bar. The music has returned to the realm of strictly non-diegetic (while remaining also meta-diegetic, since we are still within the domain of Belini's flashback story), and continues to accompany El Mariachi's attempt to annihilate General Marquez. It finally comes down to a standoff between Marquez and El Mariachi and the music changes to a more orchestral sounding piece. The rest of the music is non-diegetic/meta-diegetic until the very end of the scene, when Belini has already been paid by Sands for his information on El Mariachi but they are still discussing the payment (ten thousand dollars presented in a lunch box). As Belini says "I'm not a greedy man, not looking to get rich quick. Besides, ten thousand is a lot for what you wanted me to find out. You may as just as well put a bullet in my head as cough it up, right?" At this point, the music begins again; this time it is just strings, and they are playing just a few notes. The music itself sounds like something out of *Jaws*, a menacing musical line. Sands smirks grimly, and Belini continues, "But then, ten thousand is, ah, civilized.

⁸⁸ The song that is playing is "Malagueña", a traditional Mexican song redone by Brian Setzer.

Ten is something we both can live with.” “Ten might still be too much” replies Sands, and the expression on his face indicates that this is a man not scared of killing people for less. Belini responds “You’d kill me over ten thousand dollars? You wouldn’t dare.” With this, Belini picks up the lunch box full of money and prepares to walk out of the restaurant. On his way out, he leans over Sands and whispers “You wouldn’t dare”. Sands whispers to himself “Yes I would” and proceeds to ‘dismantle’ his left arm. He removes a fake arm and brings up his real left arm, which has been pointing a gun at Belini for the entire length of the scene. The non-diegetic music of the primary narrative is still playing, but it is very faint and transitions to the next scene.

Most of the music in this scene is meta-diegetic, belonging to the universe that Belini narrates, but even within the meta-diegetic realm, the music moves through all the other three levels of musical narrative. Some of the shifts are subtle, but that is what makes the viewer unaware that the musical focus has shifted. What is left is a cleverly scored scene that allows for a clear example of all the above defined levels of musical narrative.

Chapter 5:

Conclusions: Musical Integration and Sonic Impact

What Stilwell does not examine in her article is what happens when the music used as non-diegetic underscore is actually pre-composed music, such as Tarantino's use of music in his films. Anyone who has seen Tarantino's films knows that his use of pre-composed music and the way audiences connect with said music is hardly anempathetic. As Tarantino said in *The Tarantino Connection*:

That's one of the things about using music in movies that's so cool, is the fact that if you do it right, if you use the right song, in the right scene; really, when you take songs and put them in a sequence in a movie right, it's about as cinematic a thing as you can do. You are really doing what movies do better than any other art form; it really works in this visceral, emotional, cinematic way that's just really special. And when you do it right and you hit it right then the effect is you can never really hear this song again without thing about that image from the movie.⁸⁹

One could hardly argue with Tarantino with regards to the association of music with specific scenes, especially in his films and while people may agree, there are those who do not find this occurrence to be of a positive nature. In fact, further on in his interview, Tarantino states: "I don't know if Gerry Rafferty necessarily appreciated the connotations that I brought to "Stuck In The Middle With You". There is a good chance he didn't (The Tarantino Connection)."⁹⁰ Without even taking into consideration the song writer's opinions and desires surrounding the use of their music in films, Robert Townson states in

⁸⁹ Interviews from 1994 found on *The Tarantino Connection*, 1996. MCASD 80325.

⁹⁰ The scene in question is of a particularly violent and disturbing nature from *Reservoir Dogs* (1992). I saw the film only once and was so disturbed by this particular scene that I have been unable to watch the film again.

relation to Kubrick's use of music in *2001* versus the use of Alex North's original score for the film:

Jerry [Goldsmith, who directed the premiere of the North score] has always said Kubrick's use of music in the film just ruined it for him. The waltz sequence is a great example; the waltz that Alex wrote for the Space Station sequence basically is just so much more fitting and kind of fanciful and highlighted the balletic aspect of it. Inserting "The Blue Danube" into the film brought different baggage; everyone would have preconceived notions of what that piece is to them, where they heard it first and what it is, and those aren't ideas or thoughts that you *want* to have imported into a movie like *2001*, or *any* film, unless you actually make a conscious decision that those are the feelings you *want* there, which is difficult because everyone will have a different association with it (pg. 283-284).⁹¹

While Goldsmith may be correct that in using pre-composed music one runs the risk of previous associations with the music, perhaps this is what Kubrick desired for his films. It could also be said that Kubrick wanted to take this pre-conceived notions and associations and turn them on their head. His use of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (one of the most recognizable pieces of music ever written) in *A Clockwork Orange* certainly changed the way people heard that piece forever. There is little doubt that Kubrick was unaware of what sort of sonic impact it would have on the viewer to hear a piece from the classical cannon used in such a manner. For the most part, Kubrick used music that would have been familiar to at least a small percentage of his audience, whereas Tarantino employs music that is generally unfamiliar to his target audience. He uses music from familiar genres (surf rock, rock classics, etc.) but he selects his music so carefully that there are few who would have previous associations with the music, unless one was a serious a

⁹¹ *Knowing the Score: Film Composers Talk About the Art, Craft, Blood, Sweat, and Tears of Writing for Cinema*, David Morgan.

mélomane as Tarantino. Therefore the music in his films becomes inexplicably linked with Tarantino's images.

All this begs the question: What impact does the director's involvement in the music have on the sonic integration of the music? The first thing is to examine each category of director (auteur, mélomane and collaborative) and which level of musical narrative they employ most frequently (diegetic, non-diegetic, trans-diegetic and meta-diegetic). I will also discuss the type of music each category of director usually employs. A table is included in Appendix B to give the reader an easy overview of the categories, but an in-depth explanation is needed to fully understand the sonic integration and impact.

In applying the concepts and terms discussed in this paper to current film repertoire, this study has demonstrated and expanded upon the similarities and differences in the directorial stance towards the music in the films of an auteur such as Rodriguez and the films of an mélomane, such as Tarantino. It also seeks to clarify the fields of musical narrative in contemporary film, specifically the films of Rodriguez and Tarantino.

Auteur

In the films by Robert Rodriguez, an auteur, it appears that his music is predominantly non-diegetic. His use of diegetic music is selective, although in *Once Upon A Time In Mexico* diegetic music is used with more frequency since the main character in the film is a musician. The other cases of diegetic music usually involve some sort of dancer (Nancy in *Sin City* and Cherry Darling in *Planet Terror*) or the usual occurrences such as radio or jukebox in a bar, for example the songs playing in the Bone Shack in *Planet Terror*.

Rodriguez does also use music meta-diegetically and trans-diegetically, occasionally employing all levels of musical narrative in one scene.

Since Rodriguez is categorized first and foremost as an auteur, it is perfectly logical that the majority of the music is non-diegetic, considering most composers writing music for film still choose to use traditional scoring and orchestral accompaniment. Rodriguez uses more electric guitar, acoustic guitar and other rock or blues instruments, since his films take place in a world in which these instruments are traditionally used. His music still references the films that Rodriguez took as his inspiration, but his re-imagining of these genres (*noir*, *grindhouse*, etc.) applies to the music as well. Even though the music is predominantly non-diegetic, Rodriguez does include diegetic music, as well as meta-diegetic and trans-diegetic music in his films. In composing his own music, it could be said that the transition between the levels of diegesis are more easily passed, since Rodriguez is able to write music that would be recognizable in any situation while still being able to change the music sufficiently to account for the shift between levels. Rodriguez does this to great effect in the opening titles of *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*, when El Mariachi is playing “Malagueña Salerosa” diegetically before Rodriguez expands it to be the opening title accompaniment. He does a similar thing for the opening titles of *Planet Terror* by having music that Cherry is able to dance to, at the time allowing the sound quality of the music to be better than a simple bar sound system would accommodate.

The music in his films is mostly original scoring, although Rodriguez does intermittently use pre-composed music. Even when he does borrow music, he usually finds a way to make it his own, by either re-orchestrating it and having his actors sing it, or by using

traditional music (as in *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*). Rodriguez does occasionally collaborate with other composers as well, although his collaborations have the characteristics of an auteur, since he carefully selects who he collaborates musically with, and he maintains complete control over his films, both visually and sonically.

There are very few directors who take auteurism to include composing the music for the films, therefore I will have to base my conclusion on my discoveries in relation to Robert Rodriguez's method of composition, although both Tom Tykwer and John Carpenter compose the music for their films, and their music is generally scored in a more or less traditional manner.⁹² For the case of the auteur, it could be argued that since the music is written by the same person who develops the character, the music becomes a more organic part of the film.

Mélomane

Quentin Tarantino is definitely a mélomane, and surprisingly, the music in his films is almost equally divided into diegetic and non-diegetic, although he also uses music meta-diegetically and trans-diegetically. His use of music, whether it is diegetic, meta-diegetic, or trans-diegetic certainly has an impressive sonic impact. His music is usually pre-composed, although at times he has called upon collaboration with a composer he trusts, such as RZA or Robert Rodriguez. The difference between an auteur and Quentin Tarantino is evident in their use of non-diegetic music. Since Tarantino almost exclusively uses pre-composed

⁹² Tykwer is best known for *Lola rennt* (*Run, Lola, Run*, 1998), *Perfume: The Story of A Murderer* (2006) and *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* (*The Princess and the Warrior*, 2000) and Carpenter is best recognized for his films *Halloween* (1978), *Escape from New York* (1981) and *Village of the Damned* (1995), although he has been a prolific director.

music for his non-diegetic music, he tends to foreground it in the same way he foregrounds diegetic music. His non-diegetic music still takes on a character in his films, and while this has quite a sonic impact, the music is not fully integrated into the film nor does it support character development as the music composed by an auteur would. For example, the non-diegetic music in the second half of *Death Proof* is borrowed from some older films, and while Tarantino used his selection deliberately, for either the sonic impact or the reference to other films, the music sounds as if it belongs in another era. Again, one can be sure that this is intentional, since the cars are from another era, as are the films that Stuntman Mike has worked on. Tarantino most likely chose music that would be in accordance with cars and Stuntman Mike's films, but to the viewer, the music stands in stark contrast to the other characters on screen. Tarantino selected the music for the *Kill Bill* films for the same reason; his musical decisions are evocative of the films to which he was paying homage. In that way, the music is playing its role dutifully, but the non-diegetic music is such a strong presence that the viewer is always consciously aware of what they are being told to think.

Collaboration

The final category of director left to discuss is that of collaboration. Since the only films that were examined at length from any sort of collaborative level were films where the director belonged firmly in another category, it is difficult to make any conclusive statements regarding the integration and sonic impact of the music. However, an examination of Rodriguez's collaboration with Frank Miller on the story of *Sin City*, as well as the collaboration between Rodriguez and the two other composer who contributed music *Sin City* can be examined for the category of collaboration.

From a simply sonic standpoint, the music for all the four stories had a cohesive sound, although there are subtle differences between the three composers. Whether or not these differences are because the stories themselves are varied and deal with different characters or because they were written by three separate composers is difficult to conclusively ascertain. All three composers include the use of the gritty saxophone which for the purpose of this study has been labelled as the sound of Basin City. Considering that Rodriguez collaborated with each composer for at least one of the tracks for each individual story, and that the music still had to be approved by Rodriguez before he would include it, it goes without saying that the final music presented would have been in accordance with what Rodriguez expected. It remains to be seen if Rodriguez will collaborate with these composers again, although based on his previous experience with these composers, and his willingness to include them in the compositional process for *Sin City*, one would assume that the working relationship was successful and not acrimonious.

In reviewing the selected films, it became obvious that Rodriguez and Tarantino differ in their stance towards the genres they reference. The majority of the divergence was in the music that was used to highlight these genre re-imaginings. Both directors vary in their stance based on the film subject, but the most obvious distinction is their musical stance. Perhaps the easiest comparison would be in the grindhouse films, since both directors were first and foremost influenced by old grindhouse films. The individual film subject differed; *Planet Terror* took its influence primarily from old zombie and horror movies, while *Death Proof* incorporated references to 'slasher' movies and films that incorporated dramatic car chases. Rodriguez was able to create a world where sickos were a viable threat

by writing music that borrowed heavily from John Carpenter and other music from zombie movies. While the visuals and dialogue may contain some tongue in cheek references to these older genres, Rodriguez is more reverential in his stance towards the music that accompanies his films. His music contains traditional elements from these genres, including the traditional mariachi melodies in *Once Upon A Time in Mexico*, but the music also incorporates more current musical elements, such as the inclusion of the electric guitar. His employment of pre-composed music is often referential; he uses a John Carpenter piece in *Planet Terror*, and he borrows traditional Mexican music for *Once Upon A Time in Mexico*, but it also budget-driven. By writing his own music, Rodriguez is able to make his films for a relatively small budget. He selects pre-composed music on that basis; he does not want to spend a lot of money on a song unless it is absolutely necessary. If he cannot get the song he desires, he has the alternative choice of using a lesser known song, or composing something that would sound similar to what he had originally intended.

Tarantino rests firmly on the other side of the spectrum; his films are referential to various genres and his musical stance is just as, if not more so, referential to these genres. Tarantino is extremely well schooled in older films and music. His musical selections almost always refer to the genre which he is referencing, and if they do not directly allude to a film or television show, the sound that is presented still manages to suggest a specific time period. An example of this is his previously discussed inclusion of a track by Zamfir.

His musical choices occasionally reference the world of the character, such as Budd's selection of Johnny Cash and Charlie Feathers, but more often than not, the music reflects Tarantino's musical world. He writes his characters so that they are as much of a

mélomane as he is. In selecting the music from these older genres, Tarantino is adding a deeper dimension to his referencing. It is my belief that Tarantino hopes that viewers will buy the soundtrack to his films, see that he borrowed the music from another films or television show, and seek out either the music or the films to which he refers.

Both of these directors are still active in the industry; Tarantino is currently shooting his long-awaited World War II story, and Rodriguez is listed as having six projects in various states of development, including two more additions to the *Sin City* saga. There is little doubt that either of these directors will alter the way they include the music for their films, considering the level of control both men like to have over their productions.

Appendix A

Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)

Written by Sonny Bono

I was five and he was six
We rode on horses made of sticks
He wore black and I wore white
He would always win the fight

Bang bang, he shot me down
Bang bang, I hit the ground
Bang bang, that awful sound
Bang bang, my baby shot me down.

Seasons came and changed the time
When I grew up, I called him mine
He would always laugh and say
"Remember when we used to play?"

Bang bang, I shot you down
Bang bang, you hit the ground
Bang bang, that awful sound
Bang bang, I used to shoot you down.

Music played, and people sang
Just for me, the church bells rang.

Now he's gone, I don't know why
And till this day, sometimes I cry
He didn't even say goodbye
He didn't take the time to lie.

Bang bang, he shot me down
Bang bang, I hit the ground
Bang bang, that awful sound
Bang bang, my baby shot me down...

Chick Habit Lyrics

Written by Serge Gainsbourg, recorded by April March

hang up the chick habit
hang it up, daddy,
or you'll be alone in a quick
hang up the chick habit
hang it up, daddy,
or you'll never get another fix

I'm telling you it's not a trick
pay attention, don't be thick
or you're liable to get licked

you're gonna see the reason why
when they're spitting in your eye
they'll be spitting in your eye

hang up the chick habit
hang it up, daddy,
a girl's not a tonic or a pill
hang up the chick habit
hang it up, daddy,
you're just jonesing for a spill

oh, how your bubble's gonna burst
when you meet another nurse
she'll be driving in a hearse

you're gonna need a heap of glue
when they all catch up with you
and they cut you up in two

now your ears are ringing
the birds have stopped their singing
everything is turning grey

no candy in your till
no cutie left to thrill

you're alone on a tuesday

hang up the chick habit
hang it up, daddy,
or you'll be alone in a quick
hang up the chick habit
hang it up, daddy,
or you'll never get another fix

I'm telling you it's not a trick
pay attention, don't be thick
or you're liable to get licked

you're gonna see the reason why
when they're spitting in your eye
they'll be spitting in your eye

Kill Bill V.1 (2003) dir. Quentin Tarantino

1. "Do You Find Me Sadistic?"
2. Main Titles: *Bang Bang*
3. Chapter One 2
4. "We'll Have Us A Knife Fight"
5. Chapter Two The Blood Spattered Bride
6. "Word Of Advice !*#@-head, Don't You Ever Wake Up"
7. "My Name Is Buck, And I'm Here To *#@%"
8. "Wiggle Your Big Toe"
9. Chapter Three The Origin of O-Ren
10. Chapter Four The MAN from OKINAWA
11. "Funny, You Like Samurai Swords, I Like Baseball"
12. Chapter Five Showdown at House of Blue Leaves
13. "The 5,6,7,8's"
14. "You Must Be Gogo"
15. The Crazy 88's
16. "That Really Was A Hattori Hanzo Sword"
17. "They'll All Soon Be As Dead As O-Ren"
18. "Revenge Is Never A Straight Line"
19. End Credits

Kill Bill V.2 (2004) dir. Quentin Tarantino

1. "I Am Gonna Kill Bill"
2. Chapter Six Massacre At Two Pines
3. "Are You Gonna Be Nice?"
4. "That Woman Deserves Her Revenge, And We Deserve To Die"
5. Chapter Seven The Lonely Grave Of Paula Schultz
6. A Satisfied Mind
7. "This Is For Breaking My Brother's Heart"
8. Chapter Eight The Cruel Tutelage Of Pai Mei
9. "Ok Pai Mei, Here I Come"
10. Chapter Nine Elle And I
11. "Bitch, You Don't Have A Future"
12. Last Chapter Face To Face
13. "Bang Bang"
14. Emilio's Story
15. Superman Speech
16. Pregnancy Test
17. "You And I Have Unfinished Business"
18. Next Morning
19. End Credits

Actual Chronology (including flashbacks)

1. Chapter Three The Origin of O-Ren
2. Chapter Eight The Cruel Tutelage Of Pai Mei
3. Pregnancy Test
4. Chapter Six Massacre At Two Pines
5. "Are You Gonna Be Nice?"
6. "Do You Find Me Sadistic?"
7. Chapter Two The Blood Spattered Bride
8. "Word Of Advice !*#@-head, Don't You Ever Wake Up"
9. "My Name Is Buck, And I'm Here To *#@%"
10. "Wiggle Your Big Toe"
11. Chapter Four The MAN from OKINAWA
12. "Funny, You Like Samurai Swords, I Like Baseball"
13. Chapter Five Showdown at House of Blue Leaves
14. "The 5,6,7,8's"
15. "You Must Be Gogo"
16. The Crazy 88's

17. "That Really Was A Hattori Hanzo Sword"
18. "They'll All Soon Be As Dead As O-Ren"
19. Chapter One 2
20. "We'll Have Us A Knife Fight"
21. "That Woman Deserves Her Revenge, And We Deserve To Die"
22. Chapter Seven The Lonely Grave Of Paula Schultz
23. A Satisfied Mind
24. "This Is For Breaking My Brother's Heart"
25. Chapter Eight The Cruel Tutelage Of Pai Mei
26. "Ok Pai Mei, Here I Come"
27. Chapter Nine Elle And I (where we finally find out her name)
28. "Bitch, You Don't Have A Future"
29. Last Chapter Face To Face
30. "I Am Gonna Kill Bill"
31. "Bang Bang"
32. Emilio's Story
33. Superman Speech
34. "You And I Have Unfinished Business"
35. Next Morning
36. End Credits

Death List Five

1. O-Ren Ishii AKA Cottonmouth (Lucy Liu)
2. Vernita Green AKA Copperhead (Vivica A. Fox)
3. Budd (killed by Elle Driver)AKA Sidewinder (Michael Madsen)
4. Elle Driver (maybe not dead) AKA California Mountain Snake (Darryl Hannah)
5. Bill AKA Snake Charmer (David Carradine)

Grindhouse Presents: Quentin Tarantino's Death Proof (2007)

1. Our Feature Presentation
2. The City of Austin, Texas
3. "The Infamous Butterfly"
4. Stuntman Mike on the Prowl
5. The Texas Chilli Parlor
6. Icy Hot
7. Six Shots of Wild Turkey
8. "Are You Famous or Something?"
9. The Lap Dance

10. "Looking Good, Cannonball Run"
11. 100% Death Proof
12. Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich
13. Ranger Earl McGraw
14. Lebanon, Tennessee
15. Stuntman Mike on the Prowl Again
16. Zoë the Cat
17. Jasper's Farm
18. Ship's Mast
19. Showdown at 100 MPH
20. The Tables Have Turned
21. End Credits

Grindhouse Presents: Robert Rodriguez's Planet Terror

1. Machete (trailer)
2. Cherry Darling
3. It's Go-Go, not Cry-Cry
4. Where's the Shit?
5. Now That's a Rump Roast
6. No Dead Bodies for Dada Tonight
7. Palomita
8. Prescription: Pain
9. Road Kill
10. One Severed Limb
11. Best Damn BBQ in Texas
12. El Wray Interrogation
13. Cheating, Lying Sack
14. Police Station Assault
15. Infected
16. Dakota's Bad Hand
17. Cherry's New Leg
18. Crazy Babysitter Twins
19. Toothless Buddies
20. Rind in the Jacket
21. Bone Shack Attack
22. Zero to Fifty in Four
23. Project Terror
24. Honorable Discharge
25. Melting Member

26. Killer Legs
27. Cherry's Dance of Death
28. Helicopter Sicko Chopper
29. Two Against the World
30. End Credits

Sin City (2005) dir. Robert Rodriguez

1. The Customer is Always Right
2. Sin City
3. Hartigan
4. "Her Name is Goldie"
5. Lucille
6. Marv
7. The Farm
8. "What if I'm Wrong?"
9. The Hard Goodbye
10. "Is That The Best You Can Do, Pansies?"
11. Shellie
12. Dwight
13. Old Town
14. Deadly Little Miho
15. Warrior Woman
16. Designated Driver (directed by Quentin Tarantino)
17. The Pits
18. Jackie Boy's Head
19. The Big Fat Kill
20. Senator Roark
21. Letters from Cordelia
22. This Guy Smells Awful
23. That Yellow Bastard
24. Kiss of Death
25. Killing of the Snake
26. Fair Trade
27. Becky (not a part of Frank Miller's original stories)
28. End Credits

Actual Chronology of Stories and the Correlating Film Chapters

1. That Yellow Bastard (Hartigan and Nancy's story)
 - a) Hartigan
 - b) Senator Roark
 - c) Letters from Cordelia
 - d) This Guy Smells Awful
 - e) Lucille
 - f) That Yellow Bastard
 - g) Kiss of Death
 - h) Killing of the Snake
 - i) Fair Trade
 - j) End Credits
2. The Customer is Always Right
3. The Hard Goodbye (Marv's story)
 - a) "Her Name is Goldie"
 - b) Mom (not included in the theatrical release)
 - c) Marv
 - d) The Farm
 - e) "What if I'm Wrong?"
 - f) The Hard Goodbye
 - g) "Is that the Best You Can Do, Pansies?"
 - h) End Credits
4. The Big Fat Kill (Dwight's story)
 - a) Shellie
 - b) Dwight
 - c) Old Town
 - d) Deadly Little Miho
 - e) Warrior Woman
 - f) Designated Driver (directed by Quentin Tarantino)
 - g) The Pits
 - h) Jackie Boy's Head
 - i) The Big Fat Kill
 - j) Miho's Practice (not included in the theatrical release)
 - k) End Credits

Once Upon A Time in Mexico (2003) dir. Robert Rodriguez

1. El Mariachi
2. The Man With Three Arms
3. Guitar Town
4. Barillo
5. Shoot The Cook
6. Agent Ajedrez
7. El Presidente
8. Hotel And A Bus
9. Church Shootout
10. Chicle Boy
11. Jorge Ramirez
12. Club Mariachi
13. Bullfight
14. Wedding
15. The Man With One Eye
16. Sands And Ajedrez
17. Presidential Fortress
18. Billy Chambers
19. Pistolero
20. Killing
21. Shooting
22. Flaying
23. Day Of The Dead
24. The Man With No Eyes
25. Coup D'état
26. Taxi Cab
27. Sons Of Mexico
28. Shooting Blind
29. Mariachi vs. Marquez
30. Sands vs. AJ
31. Payback
32. Adios
33. Credits

Appendix B

Venn diagram of Trans-Diegesis

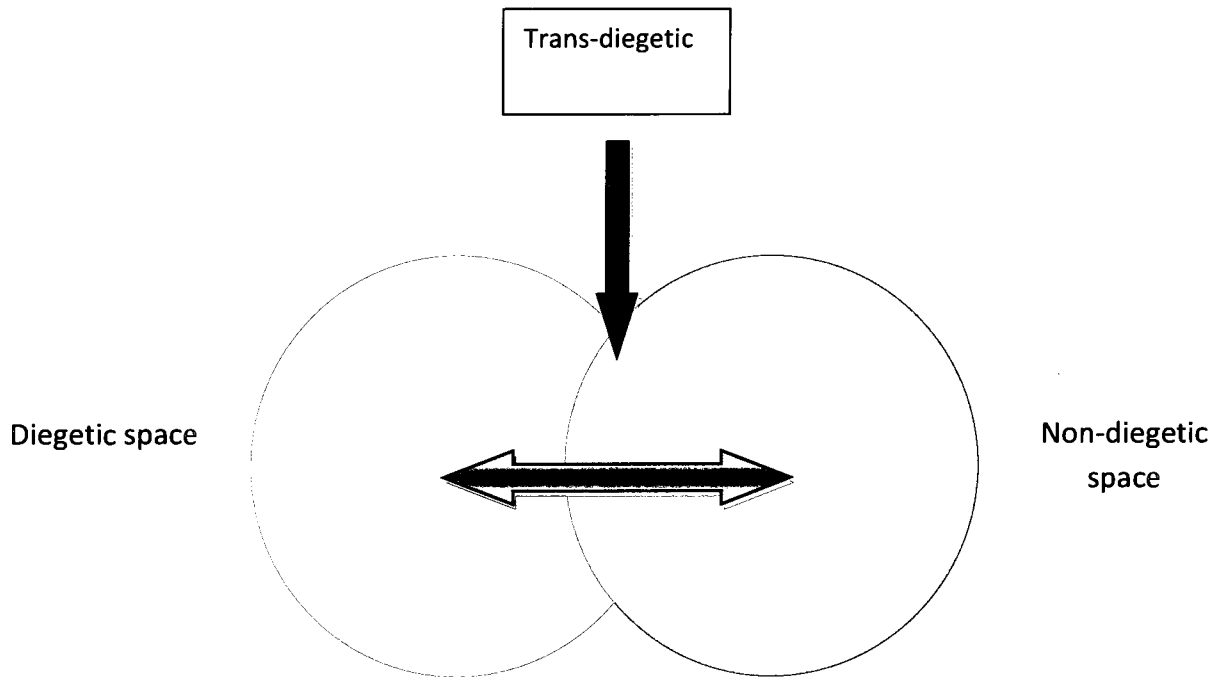


Table 1. Outline of Musical Narratives within the films of Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino

Film and Director	Type of Director	Musical Narrative	Type of Music
<i>Once Upon A Time In Mexico</i> , dir: Robert Rodriguez	Auteur	Non-Diegetic; Diegetic; <i>Meta-diegetic; Trans-diegetic</i>	Source; Pre-composed
<i>Sin City</i> , dir: Robert Rodriguez	Auteur/Collaborative	Non-Diegetic; Diegetic	Source; Pre-composed
<i>Planet Terror</i> , dir: Robert Rodriguez	Auteur	Non-Diegetic; Diegetic; <i>Trans-Diegetic</i>	Source; Pre-composed
<i>Pulp Fiction</i> , dir: Quentin Tarantino	Méломane	Diegetic; Non-Diegetic	Pre-Composed[^]
<i>Kill Bill V.1</i> , dir: Quentin Tarantino	Méломane/ Collaborative	Non-Diegetic; Diegetic; <i>Trans-Diegetic</i>	Pre-Composed*; Source
<i>Kill Bill V.2</i> , dir: Quentin Tarantino	Méломane/ Collaborative	Non-Diegetic; Diegetic	Pre-Composed*; Source
<i>Death Proof</i> , dir: Quentin Tarantino	Méломane	Diegetic; Non-Diegetic; <i>Meta-Diegetic; Trans-Diegetic</i>	Pre-Composed*[^]

Table Legend:

Bold, font size 14 = primary function

Regular, font size 12 = secondary function

Italicized, font size 11 = tertiary function

*Indicates music borrowed from other films, including scored pieces

[^] Indicated music is “popular” music

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