



FILM'S MUSICAL MOMENTS

Edited by
Ian Conrich
Estella Tincknell

MUSIC & THE MOVING IMAGE SERIES

FILM'S MUSICAL MOMENTS

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I INTRODUCTION

Estella Tincknell and Ian Conrich

This book is about musical performance on film, about the use of music within film and it is about film musicals: a triple focus that articulates the complex relationship that exists between music and the cinematic text. The different ways in which musical performance and the diegetic or non-diegetic use of music overlap, intersect or operate in distinction, has been the focus for a range of academic debates and discussions since the mid 1990s. It was with these considerations in mind that we developed this collection of essays.

The book has its origins partly in the work we undertook as colleagues teaching an undergraduate Cultural Studies module on the film musical at Nottingham Trent University, and partly in our wider interest in the role music has played on film. These two foci directed us to explore the function and presence of musical performances in cinema. What we found was that while the film musical has always been seen as the main vehicle for cinematic musical performance, it is by no means the only place where singing, dancing, jazz bands or even on-screen orchestras are featured. Indeed, the sheer range of musical performances or what we call ‘musical moments’ that have appeared throughout cinema history, together with the extraordinary procession of featured stars and performers is remarkable. Here, on one level, the notion of the musical moment expands the range of examples to include not just the conventional song and dance number in musicals, but also the novelty or romantic song within comedy, musical performance in animation, or the biopic and the lip-synching musical parody in many post-classical films. On another level, as will be discussed below, the idea of a musical moment is further viewed within this collection as a

particular point of disruption, an isolated musical presence in a non-musical film which is most notable for its potential to disturb the text through its unexpectedness or at times excessiveness. This book's use of the musical moment as its organising idea represents, then, a considered attempt to recognise the breadth and diversity of music's role in cinema. It also signals a distinctively cultural approach to the subject, in which the wider social meanings and determinations referenced by musical performance may be seen as equally important, even though some of the chapters included here are relatively formalist in their consideration of the film text.

GENRE AND ENTERTAINMENT

Research into music in film has for many years largely been confined to the genre of the US musical and, often, to its classical phase from the 1930s to the 1950s. Writers such as Rick Altman, Jane Feuer and Richard Dyer pioneered serious analysis of the film musical as a popular genre during the 1970s and 1980s, and any consideration of musical performances on film must acknowledge their work and the critical tradition they established. In particular, Feuer's exploration of the entertainment tradition in *The Hollywood Musical* (1982) and Altman's rigorous taxonomy of the genre's characteristics and historical development in *The American Film Musical* (1987) stand out as canonical texts. None the less, the relative lateness of the emergence of such work in the context of film and cultural studies more generally is significant, as is the tendency of genre study to cast musical performance within neatly categorised boundaries.

The musical has tended to be marginalised in film studies and cinema scholarship, despite the fact that it was for several decades an important genre and that its stars frequently figure as the most familiar and iconic signifiers of the 'golden age' of Hollywood. One reason for the critical devaluation of musicals seems to be their feminised status within film culture, together with their association with the most 'excessive' aspects of popular culture more generally. The prominence of female stars, the popularity of musicals amongst female audiences and the genre's foregrounding of what are deemed specifically feminine interests and competences, such as fashion, all mark musicals in this way. As Andreas Huyssen observes, popular mass cultural forms – including popular film – have been consistently represented in political, psychological and aesthetic discourses in overwhelmingly gendered (and pejorative) terms: mass culture is feminine 'while high culture, whether traditional or modern . . . [is] the privileged realm of male activities'.¹ The musical has, then, been doubly problematic: not only because of its unapologetic celebration of entertainment as culture but because it offers a clear space for the elaboration of feminine pleasures and directly solicits a female audience.

In addition, the tendency of musicals to be identified with an idea of ‘pure’ entertainment, unsullied by profundity or by a wider social relevance is linked to Hollywood’s own (disingenuous) representation of itself. This, too, has contributed to a problematic status. ‘Entertainment’ is a conceptual category that continues to defy attempts at definition while simultaneously troubling cultural critiques from elitists and democrats alike. On the one hand, it tends to be seen as self-explanatory or transparent and therefore ‘trivial’, on the other it is clearly sufficiently important to have warranted the full force of Marxist criticism in the form of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s denunciatory essay about the dishonesty of the ‘culture industry’, ‘Entertainment as Mass Deception’.² The film musical’s status as the primary locus of Hollywood versions of entertainment thus marks it also as the site of anxieties about what entertainment is supposed to be. For this reason, one of the most important contributions to the study of film and popular culture made by critical work on the musical has been the recognition of the centrality of pleasure to culture – and its value.

The framework of the traditional genre study, although essential to the establishment of critical discourse around a film canon, has not always addressed the ways in which pleasure is experienced by audiences, and does not allow fully for the exploration of the relationship between film and the wider context of popular culture. The emergence of ‘big band’ musicals in the 1930s, for example, or the brief flowering of the ‘beach party’ film in the 1960s, clearly owed their development to cultural forces outside as well as within the film industry. Yet work on musicals and on music in film had been, until the mid 1990s, split between genre analyses, cultural studies and a version of musicology, which has intensified any tendencies to exclude discussion of material deemed to lie outside the specific focus of a particular discipline while also leaving important issues unaddressed. For example, the work of writers such as Caryl Flinn and Claudia Gorbman, while offering a systematised and philosophically complex framework for understanding the musical score has neglected styles of musical performance associated with ‘popular’ rather than ‘high’ culture, such as the ballads and show songs characteristic of musicals.³

This has meant that the relationship between the film score and diegetically performed musical numbers has, until recently, remained relatively unexplored. As Kay Dickinson observes, too often the scholarly emphasis has been on the ‘formal distinctions between music and the moving image – their physical and spatial properties, their wildly divergent modes of reception’, as though film musicals and music on film are a curious anomaly.⁴ Similarly, auteurist studies of particular directors working within the Hollywood system and specialising in musicals, such as Vincente Minnelli or Stanley Donen, while offering detailed discussion of directorial style and interests, have often struggled to take account of the wider cultural, economic and technological influences that helped to shape musical performances and their reception by audiences. As Steven Cohan

points out in his analysis of *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), attempts to ascribe authorship of the film in a simple sense either to Stanley Donen or to Gene Kelly consistently come up against the problem that such an account is not enough: not only does it fail to address the specifically collaborative character of the film's production under the Freed Unit at MGM, it cannot successfully situate the film's place in the history of postwar Hollywood.⁵

Such relatively purist approaches are also potentially problematic in the context of the long-standing and close relationship between the contemporary music and film industries. Indeed, Hollywood's control of significant parts of the music industry and its cross-promotion of particular film songs or theme tunes in the form of sheet music goes back to the 1930s at least. By 1942, as Jeff Smith points out, 'a Peatman survey showed that Hollywood and Broadway together accounted for more than 80 percent of the most-performed songs'.⁶ While the majority of these clearly originated in musicals a significant number were also featured in non-musical films, especially as the opening or title number, a factor that became increasingly common in the 1950s and 1960s, according to Smith.⁷ By the 1980s, the close relationship between the two industries and their increasingly globalised structures was being deliberately exploited through the use of film soundtracks tied to performers under contract to media conglomerates and the use of music stars in feature films that foregrounded musical performance (such as Whitney Houston in *The Bodyguard* (1992)). 'Selling' a film and selling a particular piece of music has always been closely related, it seems, but the complex economic and cultural factors involved are only now being considered extensively.

Since the late 1990s, critical work on music in film has capitalised on the increasingly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to cinema to address these relationships. John Mundy's study, *Popular Music on Screen* (1999), Jeff Smith's *The Sounds of Commerce* (1998), Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell's edited collection, *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond* (2000), Pamela Robertson Wojcik and Arthur Knight's edited collection *Soundtrack Available* (2001), K.J. Donnelly's *Film Music: Critical Approaches* (2001), Ian Inglis's *Popular Music and Film* (2003), and Kay Dickinson's *Movie Music: The Film Reader* (2003) are exemplary of the ways in which work in this area has extended both the definition of the 'object of study' to include popular music and performers and the critical frameworks being used to explore the material.⁸ All of these studies, in their different ways, have contributed to the increasingly interdisciplinary emphasis of scholarship on music and musical films.⁹

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE BEYOND THE MUSICAL

It would be a mistake, therefore, to assume that the musical genre constitutes the only discursive space in which musical performance has been foregrounded in

film. In an earlier analysis of the Marx Brothers' films, one of us explored the way in which a specific version of musical moments involving singing, dancing and the virtuoso playing of particular instruments became a common feature of many early Hollywood comedies, which drew directly from the vaudeville tradition as well as making conspicuous use of the new sound technologies in their inclusion of novelty songs or even operatic-style performances.¹⁰ Such 'moments' punctuate *Monkey Business* (1931) and *Duck Soup* (1933) and are a more erratic feature of the later Marx Brothers comedies. However, the performance of song and dance routines in these films does not simply disrupt the narrative flow, it represents an eruption of anarchy and disorder that condenses the film's own refusal of convention. Music in this context is thus both a momentarily disruptive force *and* integral to the overall coherence of the text: it helps to articulate the underlying values or ideas in a new way.

This sense of a double articulation is what underpins our understanding of the development of the 'musical moment' in films which are very far from the vaudeville aesthetic. Indeed, it is possible to go further and identify similar 'moments' in more unusual sources, including film noir, melodrama and the thriller. Lauren Bacall's husky rendition of 'Her Tears Flowed like Wine' in Howard Hawks's *The Big Sleep* (1946) and Doris Day's performance of 'Que Sera Sera' in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) are two examples of unlikely musical interludes that underpin a film's wider themes. Such moments condense textual meaning by offering thematic concerns within a specific musical articulation: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is, after all, a film whose plot hinges on destiny, while Bacall's song is an opportunity for her character's mischievous sexiness to be displayed more fully. In both cases, the musical moment represents a temporary crossing of genre boundaries and expectations.

One-off performances of a key song can also be found in later films such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), where Audrey Hepburn's wistful version of 'Moon River' is an iconic moment, and *Blow-Up* (1966), which, in a gesture that would become characteristic of many films set in 'Swinging London' during the 1960s, features a cameo by The Yardbirds. Nobody would mistake such films for musicals, but their use of staged musical performance to underline meanings about character and plot are not wholly unlike the function of song or dance in the classical version of the genre. Furthermore, such moments are integrated into the narrative. However, in more recent films dating from the 1980s and 1990s, such as *The Breakfast Club* (1985) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994) the impact of the 'music video aesthetic' identified by Mundy, has meant that musical moments (and the music soundtrack) not only break narrative continuity, they are also frequently self-consciously non-realist in style, using montage editing and an aesthetic that defies continuity to produce textual disruption.¹¹

This deliberately anti-integrational use of music has become an interesting feature of post-classical cinema, where it incorporates an avant-garde device

(the breaking of conventions and the manipulation of form) in order to ultimately broaden rather than restrict the possible audiences for the film. The musical moment in these films seeks to secure audience engagement, not only with the film itself but also with the particular recordings featured in these brief eruptions of aural and visual spectacle; this in turn may be used as a form of cross-promotion in which the music and the film are culturally synthesised. The 'meaning' of *Titanic* (1997), for example, was not confined to the film itself, but was also articulated by the circulation of Celine Dion's unforgettable 'My Heart Will Go On', the film's love theme which quickly entered into popular culture. What this suggests is that the foregrounded presence of musical numbers in non-musical films has become a way of articulating emotions, desires, even fears that exceed narrative motivation.

As we have emphasised, this is not a book about the Hollywood musical in its classical period, nor is it generically specific. If anything, as editors we have avoided looking for contributions that make such a focus their primary concern. That is because we wanted to make critical space for exploring the sheer richness and diversity of musical performance and style in film as well as recognising the importance of different national traditions and approaches to the genre. For this reason, the chapters range across the topic, while being marked by a shared emphasis on history, context and cultural impact. Rather than approaching the musical as an isolated genre or considering the development of different styles of film music and star performances as decontextualised phenomena, this book brings together a range of contributions that are careful to situate films within specific historical and cultural contexts, whether these are of the former West Germany in the postwar period, Australia in the 1970s or Britain during the 1930s.

Equally importantly, alternative traditions in music on film, such as the Danish singing films of the 1930s, which feature their own musical moments, and the explicitly politically motivated development of socialist musicals in the former East Germany, are explored here not as imitative versions of Hollywood models but as significant in their own right. The impact of such films, and their complex relationship both to specific national cultures and to popular culture more generally, has been an important aspect of research since the 1990s. The dominance of Hollywood cinema has not only helped to marginalise other versions of the film musical produced in Europe during the classical period and rarely screened beyond specific national boundaries, it has also tended to limit access to knowledge about such films.

THE CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL FILM

Although the classical film musical appears to be in long-term decline as a Hollywood genre (notwithstanding occasional successes such as *Evita* in 1996

and *Chicago* in 2003, and attempts to repeat their success with other theatrically-derived films such as *Phantom of the Opera*, 2004, and *The Producers*, 2006), this does not mean that musical performance or even alternative versions of musical stories are themselves unpopular. The increasingly global impact of the Hindi film industry, for example, has led to Bollywood styles of song and dance appearing in Western-produced films such as *Moulin Rouge* (2001), and the non-musicals *East is East* (1999) and *The Guru* (2002). The phenomenal growth of the soundtrack as a separately marketed element of such apparently 'non-musical' films as *Batman* (1989), *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Trainspotting* (1995) is also significant. These developments, together with the recent recasting of diegetic musical performance in various ways on film in texts such as *Zero Patience* (1993), *Muriel's Wedding* (1994) and *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), suggest that music remains central to the pleasures and the meanings that popular cinema offers. In fact, in contrast to the 'unheard melodies' of the orchestral score that Claudia Gorbman identifies as subtly shaping and underpinning the affective experience of the classical film, new sound technologies ensure that the contemporary post-classical film soundtrack contributes powerfully to the immediate aural texture of a film as well as its wider cultural impact.¹²

Furthermore, as John Mundy has pointed out, the impact of new technologies in the production of sound, together with the emergence of multiple music television channels has helped develop the music video aesthetic in which the marriage between screen images and sound performance is a feature of a whole range of media forms. For Mundy

what is significant about the Hollywood musical, music on television, pop musicals and music video . . . is that they employ specific representational strategies which in part draw upon music and musical performance, and that they make specific appeal to an audience precisely because of the way in which music and singing are privileged.¹³

The 'Hollywood musical' may have declined in terms of production, then, but the basis for its appeal has not. The recent revival in the late 1990s of *The Sound of Music* (1965) as a kitsch cult experience – however ironically it is received and recast – indicates not only that there is nostalgia for the genre but that musicals are robust enough to withstand parody. Moreover, the continuing presence of the musical biopic, from Barbra Streisand as Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl* – produced in one of the last great years of the Hollywood musical in 1968 – through to Joaquin Phoenix as Johnny Cash in *Walk the Line* (2005) points to the continuing centrality of diegetic performance, or the idea of such performance, as well as the figure of the musical star to popular cinema.

Music's affect – its impact upon the senses and the non-cognitive parts of the mind – has become increasingly a focus for the understanding of music's place

within culture. As Marshall and Stilwell observe, one of the curiosities about the way in which film musicals have tended to be analysed academically is the relative lack of consideration of the music itself.¹⁴ Shaping the form and style of performance as well as the 'content' – that is, the song or dance number – music is central to a text's meaning, and also to its emotional impact. This book appears, then, in the wake of shifts and changes in music's function in film and in critical work on the musical tradition. We bring together a collection of critical explorations, all of which consider music on film in relation to specific social and cultural contexts, with the wide range of musical styles and traditions examined here presented as symptomatic of music's importance to cinema.

ORGANISATION

We have divided the book into four sections. Part One – 'Music, Film, Culture' – is historical in focus, and concerned with the complex cultural, social and economic relationships between music and cinema. It begins with 'Jazz, Ideology and the Animated Cartoon', Barry Keith Grant's contribution, which explores the emergence of the jazz cartoon of the 1930s and 1940s. Although jazz has had a significant presence in the movies from the arrival of sound onwards (during 'the jazz age' itself in the late 1920s) its ideological connotations have been a source of struggle and considerable tensions, especially around race. For Grant, Hollywood's casting of 'sweet' – that is mainstream – jazz as primarily a white musical form in feature films such as *The King of Jazz* (1930) is problematically paralleled by the use of 'hot' jazz in animations such as *Jungle Jive* (1944), in which racist stereotypes of black men as sexually predatory 'zip coons' preying on white women prevail. Rather than dismissing such films as ephemeral because of their status as programme fillers, Grant reminds us that they were often the site of an aggressively asserted insistence on black primitivism in which jazz is the primary signifier.

A development of jazz was the emergence of the big band sound, which was largely consumed by white audiences. The big band musical's brief success between the mid 1930s and late 1940s, a moment when bandleaders became household names, is considered by James Chapman in his contribution 'A Short History of the Big Band Musical'. Unusually, British cinema pioneered a trend with a Henry Hall film called *Music Hath Charms* (1935). As Chapman shows, however, the British and US versions of the big band film tended to be very different in terms of the strategies adopted for incorporating musical performance, with the British films relying on a revue-style format and the US films drawing more extensively on the conventions of existing genres such as the backstage musical. But by the early 1950s the big band musical was already seen as dated, with new styles of musical performance emerging such as rock 'n' roll and the pop ballad.

Rock 'n' roll itself rapidly diversified into a range of musical styles of which the Twist was one of many brief crazes. In 'Television, the Pop Industry and the Hollywood Musical', John Mundy examines the rise of the twist-dance and the role played by *American Bandstand* host, Dick Clark, in the career of 'Twister in chief' Chubby Checker. For Mundy, Clark's power to promote Checker and the Twist represents a fascinating example of cross-promotion between the increasingly dominant popular music industry, television and Hollywood. The postwar encounter between film and music was not confined to US cinema. In national cinemas beyond Hollywood, cultural identity has been articulated with equal importance through representations of musical performance. The final chapter in Part One, Ulrike Sieglöhr's 'The Operatic in New German Cinema', is an analysis of the way in which opera has been used in three German films: Werner Schroeter's *Eike Katappa* (1969), Alexander Kluge's *Die Macht der Gefühle* (*The Power of Emotion*, 1983) and Hans Jürgen Syberberg's *Hitler, Ein Film aus Deutschland* (*Our Hitler*, 1977). Sieglöhr considers Schroeter's mobilisation of an emotionally-charged and performance-driven style which radically reworks German operatic traditions, and examines Syberberg's use of Wagnerian opera to articulate the complex and contradictory meanings attached to West German identity in the pre-unification period. A particular concern is Schroeter's repeated return to the opera singer Maria Callas, a subject of many of his films, who offers an important reminder of the way in which star images are intertextual.

Part Two – 'Stars, Performance and Reception' – explores those meanings circulating around particular stars, including those produced intertextually and 'unofficially', through fan cultures. The first chapter here, Andrew Spicer's 'Jack Buchanan and British Musical Comedy of the 1930s', considers the relationship between performance and star persona in the films of Jack Buchanan, one of the most successful British male stars of the period. Focusing on the way in which the crossing of social barriers in order to romance a heroine from a different class was a regular trope in the British films of the 1930s, Spicer argues that such stories offered audiences fantasies of success and social esteem without overtly challenging the status quo. The debonair, upper-class 'man-about-town' was an important figure in British popular culture during the interwar period but, surprisingly, continued to appear well into the postwar years up to the early 1960s, despite the emergence of youth culture in the 1950s. Moreover, Buchanan's star persona was remarkably consistent throughout his career and was strikingly close to his presence as an actor.

These concerns are developed by Bruce Babington in 'Star Personae and Authenticity in the Country Music Biopic', the second contribution to this section. Focusing on a range of Country music films, from theatrically released productions such as *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980), to the wave of made-for-television biopics that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s, Babington explores

the ways in which they all emphasise the discursive tropes of authenticity and sincerity in their narratives of stars' lives. As Babington points out, the Country music film works to negotiate the relationship between these concerns and the celebration of country's increasingly mainstream appeal by insisting on the 'lived' nature of country lyrics about heartbreak, divorce and loss.

The musical biopic's complex articulation of the relationship between 'life' and 'art' raises issues also presented by the tradition of the rockumentary. For Jonathan Rayner, in 'Stardom, Reception and the ABBA Musical', *ABBA The Movie* (1977) helped to circulate star meanings attached to the band as well as being a way for the fans to have a form of access to their heroes. Rayner's focus on the camp and ironic aspects to ABBA's Australian reception leads him to a discussion of two Australian feature films, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *Muriel's Wedding* (both 1994), which he also considers as texts that seek to reconcile music with experience.

The issues of reception and the fan of the musical film continues into Part Three – 'The Post-classical Hollywood Musical' – where Ian Conrich's chapter 'Musical Performance and the Cult Film Experience', addresses the specific ways in which some classical screen musicals have acquired a devoted following through nostalgia. However, of the many factors that assist in the creation of a cult text, the challenging of expectations and the violation of both film and social conventions features prominently. With the cult musical this can be observed in one way in the subversion of the classical film's utopian narrative. In this context, Conrich focuses on a subgroup of the cult musical, the horror-musical and films such as *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1986) and *Joe's Apartment* (1996), where he is concerned with the depictions of a screen dystopia.

The relationship between musical performance and popular culture, where nostalgia can be central to the construction of meaning, is further explored in the following chapter, 'The Soundtrack Movie, Nostalgia and Consumption'. Here, Estella Tincknell considers some of the cultural implications of the emergence of the soundtrack as a vital element in contemporary popular cinema. With specific reference to three films from the 1990s, *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Boogie Nights* (1998), she examines the ways in which such films mobilise their soundtrack to produce particular cultural associations and a preferred history of the late twentieth century. As she points out, the soundtrack film has been part of a wider process whereby the canon of 'classic' pop has been raided and repackaged. She argues that borrowed music can create meanings that exceed the initial level of the narrative.

The pop soundtrack is also a focus of Scott Henderson's 'Youth, Excess and the Musical Moment', in which he explores the ways in which specific pop musical styles or numbers are used as markers of cultural identity. Henderson explicitly compares the importance of musical numbers featuring youthful expression found in the classical musical, *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), with the

post-classical films *Tank Girl* (1995) and *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999). He suggests that in contrast to the former the highlighting of excessive elements in *Tank Girl* and *10 Things I Hate About You* works to accentuate resistance rather than community belonging.

Questions of cultural identity are equally important to ‘Music, Film and Post-Stonewall Gay Identity’, in which Gregory Woods and Tim Franks pose an awkward question: why has the AIDS epidemic apparently spawned films that have an affinity with the musical? Woods and Franks consider the relationship between the notion of a specifically gay ‘lifestyle’ and a particular set of musical tastes and cultural preferences (grand opera, Broadway/Hollywood musicals, disco). The chapter considers camp culture as both a subcultural aesthetic and as a lexicon of signs with which post-classical films such as *Jeffrey* (1995), *Beautiful Thing* (1995) and *In and Out* (1997) have represented gay lifestyles. In such films, they argue, disco also stands in for the unfilmable – gay sex.

‘Beyond Hollywood’, the aim and title of Part Four, also shows a concern with the themes of love and desire which are explored first in Niels Hartvigson’s chapter ‘Early Danish Musical Comedies, 1931–9’, in which he foregrounds both the ‘Danishness’ of such films and the importance of international influences. Hartvigson undertakes a detailed taxonomy of the structural elements of a number of films, including *Nyhavn 17* (*17, Harbour Canal*, 1933), *Mille, Marie og mig* (*Mille, Marie and Me*, 1936) and *7–9–13* (*Knock on Wood*, 1934), all highly successful musical romantic comedies that not only downplay romance in favour of an emphasis on community values but also foreground character actors in the leading roles rather than the young lovers.

This slightly unusual approach to the conventions of the musical is, however, equalled by the extraordinary development of film musicals in the former East Germany in the postwar period. As Andrea Rinke shows in her chapter ‘Film Musicals in the GDR’, the communist authorities in East Germany attempted to compete with Western popular culture by producing socialist musicals that celebrated factory life and farm collectives in the period between 1958 and 1968. They even made, in 1968, a pop musical, *Heißer Sommer* (*Hot Summer*). Interestingly, as Rinke points out, the conventions of escapism and fun remained central to these films, although Western ‘decadence’ was rejected in favour of a strong emphasis on women’s emancipation, especially the right to work. The films died out largely because there were insufficient film directors able to produce light entertainment in the GDR, and the speed with which Western popular culture changed made such musicals seem increasingly old-fashioned.

The final chapter in Part Four goes beyond Europe as well as Hollywood and looks at a cinema industry where musical performance is central to film production. In ‘Music in the Bollywood Film’, Heather Tyrrell and Rajinder Dudrah present a detailed analysis of the highly successful Hindi film, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . !* (*Who am I to You . . . !*, 1994), that also situates it

within the context of Bollywood's emergent global importance. For Tyrrell and Dudrah, the enormous popularity of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . !* can be partly ascribed to its successful combination of ingredients. As they write, all Hindi films incorporate music and spectacle into their narratives, although they do not necessarily integrate them in the style of the classical musical, since in Bollywood cinema music plays an 'organic' role that exceeds Western conventions in important ways. The appeal of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . !* seemed to lie in the particular way in which it achieved this, while also addressing contemporary anxieties around the relationship between tradition and modernity in Indian culture. For Tyrrell and Dudrah, the belated if now widespread recognition of Hindi cinema as a cultural form of global significance offers an opportunity to celebrate diversity – especially when it comes to music in film. The traditional Western forms of the film musical no longer dominate and the diversification of the musical performance in film therefore suggests the need to expand the range of critical approaches to particular modes of popular culture. This book demonstrates the ways in which new debates can be opened up around music and cinema as cultural forms and practices which have tended to be treated as bounded rather than interrelated.

NOTES

1. Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass culture as woman: modernism's other', in Tania Modleski (ed.), *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987): 191.
2. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 'The culture industry: enlightenment as mass deception', in James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woolcott (eds), *Mass Communication and Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977): 361–95.
3. See Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (eds), *Music and Cinema* (Hanover, New England: Wesleyan University Press, 2000) and Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: British Film institute, 1987).
4. Kay Dickinson, 'General introduction', in Kay Dickinson, *Movie Music: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003): 4.
5. Steven Cohan, 'Case study: interpreting *Singin' in the Rain*', in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000): 53–75.
6. Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 31.
7. *Ibid.*: 31–42.
8. John Mundy, *Popular Music on Screen: From the Hollywood Musical to Music Video* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell (eds), *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond* (Exeter: Intellect Books, 2000); Pamela Roberts Wojcik and Arthur Knight (eds), *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); K.J. Donnelly (ed.), *Film Music: Critical Approaches* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001); Ian Inglis (ed.), *Popular Music and Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003).
9. Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell, 'Introduction', in Marshall and Stilwell: 2.

10. Ian Conrich, 'Merry melodies: the Marx Brothers' musical moments', in Marshall and Stilwell: 47–61.
11. Mundy: 221–47. For a discussion of the music video aesthetic see E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture* (New York: Methuen 1987): 33–48; and Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 3–53.
12. Gorbman: *passim*.
13. Mundy: 227.
14. Marshall and Stilwell: 2.

PART ONE:
MUSIC, FILM, CULTURE

2 JAZZ, IDEOLOGY AND THE ANIMATED CARTOON

Barry Keith Grant

In some ways, jazz and the movies have parallel histories. Both developed around the turn of the last century on the margins of polite society – film as a novel working-class *divertissement* in peep shows and in vaudeville; jazz as a rough, improvised march music played by downtown New Orleans blacks. They met, as Charles Berg notes,

in the darkened, smoke-filled chambers of Bijou Dreams during the first decade of this century. Sitting beneath cataracts of flickering images, pianists ragged and riffed through the pop and standard tunes of the day. Sometimes their efforts help underscore the drama. Mostly, however, their improvised medleys served to fill up the aural void and cover up the wise-cracks and whirs from the projector.¹

The improvised musical accompaniment for silent films was as important to the development of jazz as the Storyville brothels (and is thus deserving of more attention in official jazz histories than has been acknowledged hitherto). Today, some consider jazz and movies to be the USA's unique contributions to the history of art. Such a claim is certainly debatable, but there is no denying that together the two forms came to define the vibrant essence of US popular culture in the 1920s – the so-called Jazz Age – and have been central to US culture ever since.

Heralding the arrival of sound in 1927, as the Jazz Age wound down into the depression, was Warner Bros.' *The Jazz Singer*. It may be true that the film

featured no jazz music as we understand the term today, but, as Krin Gabbard has shown in some detail, 'jazz' was already a resonant term for the archetypal dramatic conflict in the movie's narrative between 'serious' and popular forms of music (embodied in *The Jazz Singer* as traditional Hebrew prayer singing and blackface entertainment, respectively).² One might say that the idea of jazz, if not the authentic music itself, worked comfortably into the musical genre which, as Jane Feuer notes, has employed this conflict between highbrow and lowbrow art as one of its central animating tensions.³ Thus, from the inception of the film musical, jazz has had a considerable presence in the movies, and has signified on a number of levels: as background music and as theme music (both diegetically and non-diegetically), as narrative verisimilitude and as a symbol of Otherness – whether racial, sexual or merely as an indication of a bohemian as opposed to bourgeois lifestyle.

A cursory glance at film history after the arrival of sound reveals the consistent presence of jazz, both within the musical genre and beyond. In the 1930s many Hollywood musicals featured performances by such prominent jazz stars as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong (although, because of the racist conventions of the day, they functioned more as supporting characters or were simply themselves in performance rather than featured as protagonists). After the Second World War came a cycle of Hollywood biopics about white swing bandleaders such as *The Fabulous Dorseys* (1947), *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954) and *The Benny Goodman Story* (1955), their conservatism bespeaking the dominant mood of the Cold War.⁴ In the 1950s a number of Hollywood arrangers and composers – who as a group typically employed the Romantic tradition of musical expression with its reliance on thematic leitmotifs – began creating film scores that contained elements of jazz; Leonard Bernstein's score for *West Side Story* (1961), featuring such jazz musicians as trumpeter Pete Candoli and drummer Shelly Manne, was one of the most notable. Genuine jazz composers also began scoring for films, a distinguished early example being Ellington's score for Otto Preminger's prestigious *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959). By the 1960s such major jazz figures as saxophonists Stan Getz (*Mickey One*, 1965) and Sonny Rollins (*Alfie*, 1966) were composing and playing for important mainstream films, and the prolific pianist/composer/arranger Quincy Jones was providing music for movies ranging from edgy thrillers (*In the Heat of the Night*, 1967) to tepid comedies (*Cactus Flower*, 1969). By the beginning of the 1980s David Meeker had identified almost 4,000 films that employed jazz in one way or another.⁵

Of course, the representation of jazz in film, as with everything in the cinema, is an expression of ideological functions. As Gabbard asserts, '[m]ost jazz films aren't really about jazz' – like the music itself, he writes, the representation of jazz in the movies is about 'race, sexuality, and spectacle'.⁶ Jazz, like much popular US music, is always already entangled in the complex history of race

relations in the United States. Spirituals, gospel music, minstrelsy, ragtime, rock 'n' roll and dance crazes from the cakewalk to the twist – all developed out of a shuttling network of cultural appropriations and reappropriations by both races. This is certainly true of jazz as well, but because it was dominated by black musicians, Hollywood movies conventionally tinged the music with negative connotations. This attitude to jazz was to a large extent shaped by the music's historical development: its association with the New Orleans brothels, the nightclubs and speakeasies of New York and Chicago, the corrupt Pendergast government in Kansas City in the 1930s and the well-publicised use of drugs by such jazz luminaries as Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday.

According to Claudia Gorbman, 'jazz during the studio era often conveyed connotations such as sophistication, urban culture, nightlife, decadence'.⁷ Kathryn Kalinak concurs, using the same words to describe how jazz was used in Hollywood movies, and she also discusses the association of jazz with the depiction of female desire in a phallogocentric cinema as illicit and transgressive.⁸ Of course, the very name 'jazz' (originally 'jass'), like so many other phrases in popular music ('rock 'n' roll', 'in the groove'), originally had meanings that were sexual in character. By the late 1950s these connotations had become so diffused that, according to jazz critic Gary Giddens, jazz clearly had come to signify a vague sense of 'sleaziness'.⁹ Beginning with Alex North's music for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and Elmer Bernstein's brassy score for Otto Preminger's *The Man With the Golden Arm* (1955), jazz has to a large extent been marginalised as music suited to particular (that is, seedy) subjects such as drug addiction (*The Man With the Golden Arm*; *The Connection*, 1961) and urban lowlife (*Panic in the Streets*, 1950; *Odds Against Tomorrow*, 1959).

Paradigmatic of the knotty issues of race and representation that inform the history of jazz in the movies is *The King of Jazz* (1930), one of the first feature film musicals, which appeared just three years after *The Jazz Singer*. The royal moniker of the title belongs to the fortuitously named Paul Whiteman, known among jazz fans, since his famous Aeolian Hall concert of 1924, for appropriating elements of jazz for a sweeter band sound aimed at white audiences. Whiteman at various times employed several important (white) jazz musicians in his orchestra – trumpeters Bix Biederbecke and Frankie Trumbauer, vibraphonist Red Norvo and guitarist Eddie Lang among them – all of whom left the band rather quickly because they were given little room for a solo or for improvisation. *The King of Jazz* makes it clear that Whiteman is responsible for the music: in an early scene, he 'unpacks' his orchestra by opening a case out of which step matted diminutive versions of the musicians. The film's treatment of jazz is consistent with Whiteman's approach to the music.

The King of Jazz purports to show the historical evolution of jazz, yet, amazingly, it does so by virtually erasing the music's roots in black experience. With the exception of an early sequence in which each instrument is introduced and

each musician riffs for several bars, virtually none of the music in *The King of Jazz* could be classified as jazz. Instead, most of the music in the film is rather tepid pop material, sung by matinee idols like John Boles. The film's final sequence, entitled 'The Melting Pot of Music', shows how different ethnic and cultural musical influences combined to produce jazz. Scottish bagpipers, Irish tenors, Russians with balalaikas and so on perform before an immense symbolic bubbling cauldron. African and Afro-American influences are noteworthy only by their absence. Later, introducing an abbreviated performance of Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' (which his orchestra had premiered at the Aeolian Hall concert), Whiteman explains that the piece contains both 'primitive and modern musical elements' and that 'Jazz was born in the African jungle with the beating of the voodoo drums'. The music begins with a drum introduction, played by a dancer in a black body suit (rather than a black dancer) dancing on a giant drum.

The effacement of the black contribution to jazz, as it appears in *The King of Jazz*, is an ideological operation – like its softening of jazz music itself – designed to make it more acceptable to a mainstream white audience. (The same strategy was at work in the early rock 'n' roll era when major record labels had their white pop singers cover black rhythm and blues songs.) This is the trajectory that Gabbard traces in many movies using jazz, and in the developing 'non-phallic' personae of black jazz performers such as Nat King Cole who have managed to achieve significant crossover success with white audiences. So the film's music, like its very title, denies the blackness of jazz by valorising the entirely white orchestra – just as LeRoi Jones noted of Benny Goodman's nickname 'The King of Swing'.¹⁰

The King of Jazz features an animated sequence at the beginning of the film. The first animated cartoon using the Technicolor process and created by Walter Lantz (subsequently better known as the animator of Woody Woodpecker), it purports to recount how Whiteman became the King of Jazz. A narrator explains that the story takes place 'in darkest Africa', and we see a cartoon caricature of Whiteman loping along in pith helmet with rifle in hand. Whiteman tussles with a lion, but then plays his violin (he began his career as a violinist), soothing the savage beast, who proclaims 'mammy'. As the music plays, caricatured African natives, strong black shadows behind them, strut to the beat. We even see a black rabbit – 'a jungle bunny' – enjoying the music. Whiteman is struck with a coconut hurled by a mischievous monkey, and a huge bump rises on his head – thus he is 'crowned' with his royal nickname.

The sequence is particularly revealing in its racism and its operation of cultural appropriation. Gabbard persuasively argues that when they employ jazz, mainstream films typically seek to repress what Michael Rogin has called the 'surplus symbolic value of blacks'.¹¹ But it may be that, as the animated

sequence in *The King of Jazz* suggests, contemporary cartoons are the site of the return of the repressed. In their dependence on exaggeration and simplification in both imagery and narrative, they create a clear and fundamental language. Warner Bros.' Roadrunner cartoons, for instance, present a pared down essence of 'the chase', not unlike the surreal kinetics of Buster Keaton or Mack Sennett's Keystone comedies.

The music in animated cartoons – at least until the 1940s, according to Roy M. Prendergast – tended, like the cartoons' narratives, toward the simple.¹² In the words of animator Chuck Jones, cartoon music was comprised of 'the hackneyed, the time-worn, the proverbial'.¹³ Indeed, to a large extent cartoon scores were little more than pastiches of popular and folk tunes easily recognisable by the viewer/auditor. As Scott Bradley – an important and innovative cartoon composer – has remarked, '[i]t seemed to me that almost anybody could collect a lot of nursery jingles and fast moving tunes, throw them together along with slide whistles and various noise makers and call that a cartoon score'.¹⁴ And so a musical score for a feature film that merely reinforced the emotional tone of the images was called – derogatorily – 'Mickey-Mousing'.

It is no surprise, then, as Prendergast observes, that '[i]f the neglect and misunderstandings about music in feature films has been unfortunate and unwarranted, the total inattention given music in cartoons verges on the criminal'.¹⁵ Such neglect is indeed curious, given the proliferation of Silly Symphonies (Disney), Swing Symphonies (Walter Lantz), Screen Songs and Car-Tunes (Fleischer), Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies (Warner Bros.) in the history of the US animation cartoon, and since a considerable number of cartoons – from Disney's *The Band Concert* (1935) and *Fantasia* (1940) through Chuck Jones's *The Rabbit of Seville* (1950) and *What's Opera, Doc?* (1957) to Ralph Bakshi's *American Pop* (1980) – exist entirely for the purposes of providing animated images to accompany music.

Many cartoons, interestingly, featured jazz.¹⁶ In the early 1930s, the Fleischer Studio released a series of Betty Boop cartoons combining Betty, her friends Bimbo and Ko-Ko and jazz artists such as Armstrong, Cab Calloway and the Boswell Sisters through the technique of rotoscoping (a method of animation in which the photographic image of a live figure is projected and traced frame by frame). The Fleischer Brothers developed the technique, using it to full advantage in their jazz cartoons for Paramount Pictures, particularly those featuring the unique and charismatic jive choreography of bandleader Calloway. The next decade saw the appearance of popular short animated loops, of about three minutes, for jukeboxes employing rear-projection, featuring such artists as Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton and Fats Waller, but they were eventually withdrawn because of pressure from theatrical distributors who viewed them as competition.¹⁷

Perhaps jazz was featured in so many cartoons because the two forms are similar in certain ways. Just as jazz escapes the constraints of melody and notation, so the cartoon is the one type of mainstream cinema that has frequently been able to break away from the tyranny of narrative. It might also be said that the transformation of objects and the visual surprises typical of cartoons are analogous to the unpredictable musical potential extracted from standard pop tunes by jazz musicians, or like the common jazz device of interpolating unexpected phrases of one song into another. The fiction film offers no experimental uses of jazz soundtracks equivalent to, say, George Pal's short pixilated Puppertoons fantasies (1941–7), which often incorporate a jazz soundtrack (by such luminaries as Charlie Barnet, Peggy Lee or Duke Ellington), or Norman McLaren's abstract visual tracks accompanying the pianists Albert Ammons in *Boogie Doodle* (1948) or Oscar Peterson in *Begone Dull Care* (1949). With the rare exception of synthetic scores for such films as *Forbidden Planet* (1956) or *The Birds* (1963), mainstream cinema has stayed away from this abstract music, which McLaren, referring to it as 'animated sound',¹⁸ experimented with in his short films *Neighbors* and *Two Bagatelles* (both 1952), or which the Whitney Brothers employed in their *Five Abstract Film Exercises* (1943–4).¹⁹

The racial and sexual connotations of jazz, which mainstream feature films sought to minimise if not erase, are uncomfortably excessive in many animated cartoons. Walter Lantz's *Scrub Me Mama With a Boogie Beat* (1941), for example, seemingly employs every racist stereotype about blacks of the period. In this animation, as in so many others – even those ostensibly celebrating jazz by featuring it on the soundtrack – black characters are little more than, in the words of Donald Bogle, 'toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks'.²⁰ The short is set along a southern levee in Lazy Town, a place inhabited by shiftless coons and uninspired mammies. Caricatured blacks loll about snoring and uttering laconic moans when bitten by slow-moving mosquitoes. But the town is enlivened when a sexy black woman disembarks from a docked steamboat and infuses everyone with 'rhythm'. When she sings 'Boogie Woogie Washerwoman', the men now eat watermelon speedily while 'shoeshine boys' enthusiastically buff up bare black feet.

Similarly, *Boogie Woogie Man* (1943) employs as its main joke a gag that serves to legitimise the use of a racist insult. The narrative concerns a convention of 'spooks' in a Nevada ghost town who are meeting to solve the problem that their traditional way of scaring people with sheets and chains has become passé. Some of the ghosts, the more shadowy ones, are clearly those of black folk, but in case we miss the point, the convention delegate from Lenox Avenue steps up to the podium complete with a panama hat, zoot suit sheet and thick lips. He makes a speech, telling the assembled spirits that they need to 'get hep' and find new ways to scare people and encourages them to boogie, which they do, accompanied by the music of the Spook Jones band. Through humour, apparently, the

cartoon was able to get away with referring to blacks as ‘spooks’, at the same time suggesting that boogie woogie is a ‘frightening’ musical style.

But even less obviously objectionable jazz cartoons employed similar representational strategies and mobilised similar meanings. In the 1930s several cartoons featuring jazz soundtracks were made by Hugh Harman and Rudolf Ising, who instituted both Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies for Warner Bros. Their *Swing Wedding* (1937) has been called ‘one of the finest one-reelers in all of animation’, yet while it may be an excellent example of the animator’s art, its racism nevertheless remains objectionable.²¹ The setting of the cartoon is a swamp; four frogs with exaggeratedly thick lips sing ‘Beat Your Feet on the Mississippi Mud’. Numerous other frogs follow, several of which are caricatures of specific black performers: there are, among others, frog versions of Josephine Baker, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller (complete with bowler and cigar), Bill Robinson and Cab Calloway (wearing tails but no trousers). Others are straightforward racist stereotypes: there is a Zip Coon or Dandy Jim, the stereotype of the citified black with exaggerated elegance (formalised in minstrelsy), and a group of amphibian chorines modelled on those of the Cotton Club. A ‘Smokey Joe’ frog appears, a clear caricature of Stepin Fetchit, the black actor whom Bogle calls ‘the arch-coon’, ‘the embodiment of the nitwit coloured man’.²² This frog, with his drawled ‘Yowza’ and ‘Who dat?’, is nothing less than a caricature of a caricature. Throughout the cartoon there is much emphasis on signifiers of sexuality – breasts, buttocks and shaking bodies, as all the creatures boogie to the music.

Tin Pan Alley Cats (1943, directed by Bob Clampett) similarly caricatures blacks as (‘hep’) cats rather than frogs. They have the same inevitable thick lips, complemented this time by the rolling eyes that became so familiar during the minstrel era, and in film by such burnt-cork performers as Al Jolson and Eddie Cantor, and there are similar feline caricatures of Armstrong, Waller et al. The cartoon establishes an opposition between Uncle Tomcat’s Mission, where ‘Give Me That Old Time Religion’ is played in a leisurely manner, and The Kit Kat Klub, where the real cool cats go for hot jazz. The cartoon, though, takes an overtly moralistic tone: the Kit Kat Klub becomes a surreal nightmare, what Patrick McGilligan calls a ‘jive pell-mell frenzy’, with the freaked out protagonist fleeing at the end to the security of the Mission.²³ The point is clear that jazz is a music that is wild and sinful, unleashing the nightmarish and chaotic impulses of the mind as well as the body; it is better to remain within the orderly calm of religion and polite music.

As in the cartoon sequence of *The King of Jazz*, a jungle setting is used in *I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal You* (1932), by Max and Dave Fleischer. It begins, as most of the Fleischer cartoons do, with a filmed segment, here of Louis Armstrong performing the title tune. Betty Boop inexplicably finds herself in the jungle, complete with pith helmet and garter. The images of

the black natives, waiting for Bimbo and Ko-Ko to cook in the cauldron, are reminiscent of Lantz's Africans in *The King of Jazz*. And again Armstrong appears, but now as an animated drawing, which dissolves into a photographed image of his head singing, and then into a stereotyped black native pursuing Bimbo and Ko-Ko while singing the title tune. Betty is tied to the stake, a delicious treat for the natives. Armstrong sings some rather risqué lines ('You bought my wife a bottle of Coca-Cola/ So you could play on her Victrola'). But, ultimately, the threat of black sexuality that even a genial persona like Armstrong might engender, a fear which has been presented so hysterically in movies since D. W. Griffith's infamous *Birth of a Nation* (1915), is defused, as the natives are shown to be comic figures with polka-dot underwear rather than phalluses beneath their grass skirts.

Most of these cartoons feature numerous sight gags about the hot style of jazz playing – drums or bass slapped with feet, for example, or thermometers rising rapidly. This visual aspect of the cartoons is generally enjoyable, and jazz fans in particular are likely to be delighted by some of the in-jokes. But it is significant that these narratives are located in swamps, jungles and alleys – that is to say, black landscapes and ghettos. (Perhaps it is not insignificant that in 1929 Harman and Ining also created the infamous Bosko, a black character featured in a series of cartoons, who even by the 1960s was an embarrassing caricature.) These spaces provide a remarkably consistent cluster of visual iconography that ascribes to jazz and blackness the characteristics of sexuality, animalism, poverty, illiteracy and primitivism.

Rotoscoping, with its more faithful, realistic rendering of live action, befits the cartoon world of the Fleischer Brothers, which is often not only emphatically physical (Ko-Ko the Clown often moves through a filmed rather than animated world) but downright kinky – as summed up in the image of Betty Boop's garter and white underwear visible beneath her shockingly short dress. In *Minnie the Moocher* (1932), Betty runs away, only to be confronted immediately upon doing so by the sexual desire out there in the world beyond the insulated comforts of home. She enters a vaginal-like cave where a walrus figure with menacing phallic tusks – actually a rotoscoped Calloway – sings the erotically charged title song ('she was a real hot hoochie coocher') and then pursues her lustfully. The cartoon climaxes in a wild chase, the music degenerating into novelty chase music reminiscent of the barnyard cheapening of jazz in 'Livery Stable Blues', the first recorded jazz tune (1917) by the white Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The cartoon may be seen as an animated tale about entering puberty, and, significantly, the confrontation with sexuality takes the form of a creature who 'mutates' out of a black jazz musician.

The Fleischers's *The Old Man of the Mountain* (1933) also uses a rotoscoped Calloway in a lascivious pursuit of Betty in a cave. A handicapped man looks her up and down and tosses his crutches away; Betty tugs provocatively at the

old man's beard, and he responds by literally pulling her dress off. She ducks behind a tree but is pushed up by a tumescent root grown from the ground. The cartoon is a riot of sexual symbolism, all the while underscored by Calloway's lowdown brand of jazz. Betty and Calloway were also teamed in the Fleischers's *Snow White* (1933). In this cartoon's plot, the wicked Queen learns she is no longer the fairest in the land because of Betty, and the seven dwarfs look like diminutive 'Old Men of the Mountain'. But the fairy tale narrative, which eventually disappears entirely, is really a thin excuse for the images of bondage and sexual pursuit of Betty. We see her encased in a block of ice and, more sexually resonant, tied to a suggestively arched tree trunk. Ko-Ko, normally a pal of Betty's, transforms into a ghost-like creature (its whiteness connecting it to Calloway's distinctive white zoot suit) who sings 'St. James Infirmary Blues'.

In all three of these cartoons Calloway morphs into a pronounced sexual threat to pure-as-snow Betty. This is consistent with such racist responses to jazz generally and to Calloway specifically. For instance, Daniel J. Leab reports that Lloyd T. Binford, head of the Memphis censorship board, excised Calloway's appearance in an unidentified 1945 film because Calloway was, as he put it, 'inimical to public health, safety, morals, and welfare'.²⁴ The live action sequences of Calloway, which begin each of the Fleischer cartoons, and the rotoscoping technique make even a viewer otherwise unaware of Calloway's striking persona and performance style, conscious that he is associated with the sexual threat to white womanhood as represented by Betty.

Jungle Jive (1944), to conclude, depicts a riotous anthropological pastiche of Otherness. The cartoon is set on a jungle island, its inhabitants an uneasy combination of Africans and Polynesians living in grass huts and throwing boomerangs. But just as the natives begin to grow restless, they find a box of musical instruments in the sea. They experiment with the instruments, tentatively at first, but then they become 'infected' with the jazz rhythms they produce until a full-blown hot swing arrangement emerges from their efforts. The typical bunch of sight gags follow, such as the bass player who slaps his instrument too hard, snapping a string that wraps around his neck and makes him look like an exaggerated Ubangi. According to Lantz, of the twenty-six musical cartoons he made, about ten featured black characters, none of which he considered racially questionable.²⁵ The fact that he could make such an assertion, however, only emphasises how pervasive such racist imagery is.

Most histories of black American film fail to take serious account of the treatment of blacks in animation, even of such cartoons as Clampett's *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs* (1942).²⁶ Film scholars have focused, quite logically, on mainstream feature film, where the treatment of blacks by dominant white culture has had more obvious visible impact. But as this discussion has demonstrated, cartoons using the culturally charged music known as jazz, repay close analysis as well. Black writers such as Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) have focused

on jazz as an authentic black contribution to the culture of the US and have polemicalised about its co-optation by white culture. Perhaps the jazz cartoons have been critically neglected because they were programme fillers and may seem more ephemeral, more trifling, than mainstream cinema.

Whatever the reason, it is important to remember that all the leading cartoon production units, like all the Hollywood studios, were owned and operated by white men. (Indeed, some of these units, like the one at Warners', may have had relative freedom but they were nevertheless part of the company and its overall production profile.) The musical directors of these cartoons, moreover, tended to be white. For this reason, and because movies, whether live-action or hand-drawn, inevitably articulate the dominant ideologies of race, even well-intentioned cartoons like *Song of the South* (1946), Disney's treatment of the Uncle Remus stories, cannot avoid a racist dimension. Perhaps, because of their apparently benign status as 'entertainment', they are in some ways even more insidious than mainstream films – and for that reason are no less deserving of serious analysis.

NOTES

This is a significantly revised version of an essay that appeared originally in *Popular Music and Society* 13: 4 (Winter 1989): 49–57.

1. Charles M. Berg, 'Cinema sings the blues', *Cinema Journal* 17: 2 (Spring 1978): 1.
2. Krin Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 35–63.
3. Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
4. For more on this group of films see James Chapman, 'A short history of the big band musical', in this volume.
5. David Meeker, *Jazz in the Movies, 1917–1977* (London: British Film Institute, 1977).
6. Gabbard: 1.
7. Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London and Bloomington: British Film Institute/ Indiana University Press, 1987): 86.
8. Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992): 167, 120.
9. Gary Giddens, 'Jazz is back on films too', *Village Voice*, 31 October 1977: 53.
10. LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* (New York: William Morrow, 1968): 214.
11. Michael Rogin, 'Blackface, white noise: the Jewish jazz singer finds his voice', *Critical Inquiry* 18: 3 (1992): 417.
12. Roy M. Prendergast, *Film Music: A Neglected Art* (New York: Norton, 1987) 172. Of course I refer here specifically to cartoons from the US, for the animated film in Europe has consistently been regarded as a legitimate form of artistic expression. From the early films of Viking Eggeling in France, and Hans Richter, Lotte Reiniger and Oskar Fischinger in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, New Zealander Len Lye's work in England and the postwar work of Jan Lenica and Walerian Borowczyk in Poland, Jiri Trinka in Czechoslovakia and the Zagreb animators of Yugoslavia, to the cartoons of Italy's Bruno Bozzetto in the 1960s and the contemporary animation of the Quay Brothers, Americans who live and work in England,

animation outside the US has been consistently informed by political and aesthetic seriousness.

13. Jones: 365.
14. Quoted in Prendergast: 170.
15. Prendergast: 168. The two notable exceptions are Ingolf Dahl, 'Notes on cartoon music', *Film Music* 8 (May–June, 1949): 3 and Chuck Jones, 'Music and the animated cartoon', *Hollywood Quarterly* 1: 4 (1945–6): 364–70.
16. For a further discussion of animation and jazz see Daniel Goldmark, *Tunes for Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 77–106; and Jake Austen, 'Hidey hidey hidey ho . . . boop-boop-a doop!: the Fleischer Studio and jazz cartoons', in Daniel Goldmark and Yuval Taylor (eds), *The Cartoon Music Book* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2002): 61–6.
17. Berg: 5.
18. See McLaren's essay 'Notes on Animated Sound', *Hollywood Quarterly* 7: 3 (1953): 223–9.
19. Perhaps this affinity also explains the motif of cartoon art for jazz LPs: Dave Brubeck's *Dave Digs Disney* (Columbia, 1959), Phil Napoleon's *Two Beat* (Columbia, 1955) and *Imagine My Surprise* by the fusion group Dreams (Columbia, 1971) are only three of the many albums featuring the work of noted cartoonists such as Arnold Roth and Gahan Wilson. Interestingly, the theme of the television animated series *The Flintstones* has been recorded by a number of jazz artists, and Vince Guaraldi has recorded the music for the numerous animated *Peanuts* specials. Perhaps the most frequently recorded song from an animated film is 'Someday My Prince Will Come' from Walt Disney's *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs* (1937), which was recorded several times by trumpeter Miles Davis and pianist Bill Evans, becoming something of a jazz standard as a result.
20. Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Bantam, 1974).
21. Tom Bertino, 'Hugh Harmon and Rudolf Ising at Warner Brothers', in Gerald Peary and Danny Peary (eds), *The American Animated Cartoon: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1980): 109.
22. Bogle: 55.
23. Patrick McGilligan, 'Robert Clampett', in *The American Animated Cartoon*: 156.
24. Quoted in Daniel J. Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974): 134.
25. Danny Peary, 'Reminiscing with Walter Lantz', in *The American Animated Cartoon*: 196.
26. In addition to the books by Bogle and Leab, see also Thomas Cripps, *Black Film as Genre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979) and James Murray, *To Find an Image: Black Films From Uncle Tom to Superfly* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973).

3 A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BIG BAND MUSICAL

James Chapman

Cinema's period of greatest mass popularity during the 1930s and 1940s coincided with the heyday of the big band era in the United States and Great Britain. The popularity of the dance bands rivalled even that of stars of the silver screen as dance halls and airwaves on both sides of the Atlantic resonated to the combination of swing, blues and ballads that characterised big band music. The most successful bandleaders became celebrities in their own right: Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Harry James, Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw in the United States, and Ambrose, Geraldo, Henry Hall, Jack Hylton and Joe Loss in Britain. All these, and many others besides, appeared in films, often in supporting roles but sometimes in star vehicles that were designed to showcase the musical talents of the bandleaders and their orchestras. This cross-over between film and popular music has, however, been almost completely ignored by film and cultural historians. Normative histories of the classical Hollywood musical of the 1930s and 1940s have privileged the backstage musical and the integrated musical, while interest in the British musical has focused primarily on stars such as Jessie Matthews and on the musical comedies of Gracie Fields and George Formby. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a contextual history of the big band musical in US and British cinema, focusing especially on the strategies which filmmakers adopted for combining moments of musical performance with classical narrative formulas.¹

It is impossible to understand the context of the big band musical, of course, without first understanding the context of big band music. The dance bands (sometimes referred to as swing bands and in Britain, confusingly, as jazz bands)

were a phenomenon of the interwar period which emerged from a particular set of historical circumstances. The dance bands of the interwar years were very different from those before the Great War, which had played waltz, tango and foxtrot music for audiences in respectable dance halls. After the Great War smaller dance bands began appearing in nightclubs, restaurants and hotels, specialising in faster, more frenetic music such as the quick-step, the hoochy-coochy and the Charleston. The popularity of the new dance bands, especially in Britain, is surely attributable to the sense of relief and release felt by many young people after the war. 'People are dancing as they never danced before, in a happy rebound from the austerities of war', the *Daily Mail* observed in February 1919, 'But the dancing is not quite as it was in the dim old years before 1914'.² The success of the dance bands was enhanced by the emergence of cabaret, a craze which started in New York at the end of the war and came to London during the winter of 1921–2. Cabaret evolved from vaudeville or music hall, in that it involved comedians, novelty acts, dancing girls and musicians, but it was a late-night activity that only started after the theatres had closed. What is clear is that while the dance craze was a phenomenon on both sides of the Atlantic, the original impetus came from the United States, and as such it provides an early example of the 'Americanisation' of popular culture that has been such a cause of concern for British cultural commentators since the 1920s.

It is important to distinguish between dance music and jazz, for, although the two were undoubtedly related, drawing upon some of the same influences and sharing some common practitioners, they do represent different traditions and styles of popular music. Jazz, which itself evolved from ragtime, is usually taken to refer to a type of American popular music originating in New Orleans around 1914 and associated, initially at least, with black musicians. Jazz was characterised by heavy syncopation and strong rhythms; it also foregrounded improvisation ('jamming'). A jazz band comprised five key instruments: clarinet or saxophone, cornet, trombone, drums and piano. It was a predominantly (though by no means exclusively) black idiom, with Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington being the foremost US jazz musicians of the 1920s. The dance bands, however, were predominantly (though, again, by no means exclusively) white, which might account for their more broadly based popular appeal, at least in the segregated southern states of the US. Dance music was more formalised than jazz; it was orchestrated and offered little scope for improvisation. By the 1930s the dance band, or dance orchestra, was generally established as being comprised of three sections: reed instruments (saxophones and clarinets), brass (trumpets and trombones) and percussion (drums, double-bass played pizzicato and piano). The distinction between jazz and dance bands, however, was not a rigid one: Count Basie, the black American pianist–bandleader, would fit easily into either category. And after the Original Dixieland Jazz Band played a season at the Hammersmith Palais in 1919 and introduced jazz to British audiences,

many British dance bands began calling themselves jazz bands, even though they would not have been recognised as such across the Atlantic.

The big band era coincided with technological changes in the music industry which undoubtedly helped in disseminating their music and thus enhancing their popular appeal. The two key innovations were the gramophone and radio. Hitherto, the dissemination of music (both popular and classical) had been through the sale of sheet music. The technology for musical recording had already existed for a generation: Thomas Edison had patented the phonograph, a machine for dictation, in 1877, the Berliner Gramophone Company had been established in Philadelphia shortly afterwards, and Columbia Records was formed in 1887. The first commercial on-disc musical recordings were available by the turn of the century, and they gradually increased in popularity so that by the early 1920s the first million-selling records appeared in the US (the first is usually reckoned to have been the dance tune 'Dardanella' recorded by Ben Silvin and His Orchestra). By the late 1920s over a hundred million records were being sold each year in the United States. Moreover, recorded music was heard not only in the home but also, following the invention of the juke box, in ice-cream parlours, social halls and other public places.

The rapid development of radio broadcasting during the 1920s also assisted immeasurably in the dissemination of dance music. The first commercial radio broadcasts in the US took place in 1920; by 1927 there were 708 commercial radio stations across the country. The first nationwide radio network, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), was established in 1926, quickly followed by another two, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). The first remote radio broadcast of a dance band took place in 1921 when Vincent Lopez and His Orchestra performed from the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York. Exposure through the airwaves was of enormous benefit to the bands, and is no better exemplified than by the case of Glenn Miller. Miller had spent over a decade as a trombonist and arranger before forming his own band in 1937. It was only when Miller's orchestra was heard on coast-to-coast radio, first from the Raymore Ballroom in Boston and later from the Glen Island Casino in New Rochelle, that its popularity took off and record sales soared.³

The situation was rather different in Britain, where the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), formerly the British Broadcasting Company, enjoyed a monopoly. Unlike the US radio companies, the BBC eschewed commercial sponsorship and advertising and was funded instead by licence fees. The number of licence holders increased from just over two million in 1927 (when the Corporation was founded) to some nine million by the outbreak of the Second World War, when it was reckoned that 98 per cent of the population could listen to a wireless set.⁴ Until 1937 the policy of the BBC was inextricably connected with

its first Director-General, Sir John Reith, who believed zealously that the medium should be used to educate, inform and entertain (in that order) and who turned broadcasting into a personal mission to bring moral and social uplift to the masses. Although Reith's own preference was for classical music – in August 1927 the BBC began broadcasting Sir Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts, probably the single most important development in bringing classical music to a wide audience – dance music received a perhaps surprising boost during his tenure at the BBC. Indeed, Reith approved of dance music (though not of jazz), which featured prominently in schedules throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1928 the BBC Dance Orchestra was created, directed first by Jack Payne (whose signature tune, 'Say It With Music', quickly caught on with the public) and then, from 1932, by Henry Hall (whose signature tune was 'Here's To The Next Time'). Hall quickly became a popular radio personality, extending the horizons of his appeal through a series of 'guest nights', some of which were rebroadcast in the United States.

It would be no exaggeration to say that by the 1930s a cult of the bandleader had emerged. The most successful among them were capable of earning lucrative salaries: when the British bandleader Ambrose moved to the Mayfair Hotel at a personal salary of £10,000 a year he became reputedly the highest paid bandleader in the world. The popularity of the bandleaders is evident, moreover, through the ways in which they permeated into other areas of cultural production, appearing, for example, in magazines and on cigarette cards. Given that the film industry has never been slow to exploit the popularity of musical artists, it was surely only a matter of time before bandleaders appeared in the movies.

British bandleaders began appearing in films during the early 1930s. The usual trajectory was to appear first in short items for one of the newsreel topical magazines, typically performing one number, before graduating to supporting roles in feature films. For example, Geraldo (English by birth, though sometimes assumed to be Argentinian due to his Latin looks and exotic stage name) appeared with his 'Gaucho Tango Orchestra' in a series of Pathetone and Pathe Pictorial items throughout 1931 and 1932. He then made his feature debut in *Road House* (1934), a musical melodrama directed by Maurice Elvey, based on a play by Walter Hackett about a music-hall star who falls on hard times following personal tragedy. Similarly, Joe Loss and His Orchestra appeared in no less than seven British Lion Varieties during 1936, before graduating to feature films with *Let's Make A Night Of It* (1937). This film, directed by Graham Cutts, was a comedy musical starring the Americans Buddy Rogers and June Clyde as a husband and wife who run competing nightclubs, and which also featured Sidney Lipton and His Band. The strategy of these feature films for incorporating the musical numbers was similar to Hollywood's backstage or show musicals in that a diegetic space (such as a music hall or a nightclub) would be created where it was natural for performance to take place. The narrative would

be interrupted temporarily by moments of musical performance, but the films were not structured around the bands, who remained essentially supporting attractions.

Another strategy which British filmmakers, especially, followed in their attempts to showcase musical performance was through the vehicle of the revue musical. This typically consisted of a series of 'turns' (in the language of British music hall) featuring different performers (singers, dancers, comedians, novelty acts) strung together with the flimsiest linking narrative (typically revolving around putting on a show or making a radio broadcast). The arrival of talking (and singing) pictures at the end of the 1920s had led to a short cycle of virtually plotless revue musicals from the Hollywood studios, such as MGM's *The Hollywood Revue* (1929), Warner Bros.' *The Show of Shows* (1929), Fox Movietone *Follies* (1929) and *Paramount on Parade* (1930). As so often, British cinema imitated Hollywood, but did so with lower budgets and inferior production values. The British equivalent of Hollywood's all-star revues was *Elstree Calling* (1930), produced by British International Pictures (BIP), which consisted mainly of musical and comedy items from stage shows of the day introduced by compere Tommy Handley. Lacking the lavish production values and visual spectacle of its Hollywood equivalents, *Elstree Calling* is now something of a curio item interesting chiefly for two reasons: Alfred Hitchcock (then contracted to BIP) was one of several directors employed on the production; and the film is quite possibly the first ever to refer directly to television (the linking narrative concerns a television broadcast of the revue, some six years before the BBC began regular television transmissions). Unlike Hollywood, however, which soon developed more sophisticated ways of integrating performance and narrative, the revue musical remained a feature of British cinema throughout the 1930s. As Stephen Guy points out

it is tempting to assume that this kind of stagey film was a convenient and cheap stop-gap in the early 1930s when studios were struggling to find enough sound material, but they are quite evenly distributed over the whole decade. While there was undoubtedly a percentage of tiresome, unpopular quota quickies, such as the 'Revudevilles', the continual production of this type of variety film suggests they remained crowd-pullers throughout the entire decade, a point borne out by numerous positive reviews.⁵

The revue musical offered a ready-made vehicle for dance bands in that there was no need to write them into a dramatic narrative structure. Indeed, the format of the revue musical was such that the bands simply performed their numbers in the same manner as they did in short topicals for the newsreels. One of the better examples of the genre was *Calling All Stars* (1937), produced and

directed by Herbert Smith, which featured Ambrose and His Orchestra alongside a host of other performers including the harmonica player Larry Adler (now best known for having written and played the theme tune for *Genevieve* in 1953), the American vocalist Elisabeth Welch and the music-hall comedy act Flotsam and Jetsam. The linking narrative revolved around a gramophone company that was making recordings of the acts, though the film avoids too many dull scenes simply of the band performing its numbers by including some unusual novelty acts, such as ‘Gimble and his Cymbal’, which provide bizarre visual comedy to accompany the music. But while Ambrose and His Orchestra are featured prominently (they perform six numbers), within the context of the film they are still essentially attractions or ‘turns’; the narrative is not structured around the band.

Films that made bands the focus of narrative interest were less common, though there were some attempts to foreground the bandleaders themselves as stars rather than as supporting attractions. Producer Julius Hagen paid Jack Hylton and His Band over £1,000 a week, plus a percentage of the profits, to star in *She Shall Have Music* (1935).⁶ The film is a pleasantly amusing romantic musical in which Hylton becomes involved in the romantic affairs of an American heiress (played by June Clyde) while working on an ocean liner. There are a total of thirteen musical numbers, with different vocalists, though the staging and performance becomes rather repetitive and tiresome as the various romantic trysts and misunderstandings are continually interrupted for yet another musical moment. Nevertheless, the film is interesting for the way in which it plays upon the romantic appeal of the bandleader (one of the numbers is called ‘Why Did She Fall for the Leader of the Band?’), and in this sense might be compared to the altogether more polished Astaire – Rogers musical *Swing Time* (1936) in which a bandleader, played by Victor Moore, is Fred’s rival for Ginger’s affections.

The most unusual of the British big band musicals was *Music Hath Charms* (1935), produced by BIP and designed as a star vehicle for Henry Hall and the BBC Dance Orchestra. It was supervised by Thomas Bentley, a former Dickensian impersonator, who in the previous year had directed Will Hay’s first starring feature, *Those Were the Days*, a nostalgic recreation of the music-hall culture of the 1890s. The film adopts an innovative strategy for incorporating music and narrative. Opening with a quotation from seventeenth-century dramatist William Congreve (‘Music hath charms/To soothe the savage breast/To soften rocks/And bend a knotted oak’), the film explores the influence that music has on the wider world.⁷ Hall plays himself, and the film begins with his orchestra singing ‘Many Happy Returns’ on his birthday. Driving to work, Hall is recognised by another motorist, but instead of wanting an autograph, as Hall assumes, the man declares ‘You’ve ruined my daughter!’ This causes Hall to ponder the effect that his music has on people’s lives. The film then juxtaposes

scenes of Hall and the orchestra rehearsing at Broadcasting House with numerous subplots which dramatise how his music affects people in both trivial and important ways. Rather than ruining people's lives, music is shown to remedy problems. Thus, a young man who is facing a breach of promise case brought against him by a former fiancée realises that he is still in love with her after listening to Hall's music; a married woman on an ocean liner contemplating an affair decides not to do so because of the music; a pair of lost mountaineers are brought to safety when they hear radio music through the fog which guides them to a mountain hut; and, most bizarrely, a native uprising in a remote colonial outpost is averted when tribesmen on the warpath hear radio music and start dancing to it.

Music Hath Charms is difficult to categorise in generic terms, combining as it does elements of music, comedy and drama, and as it follows multiple lines of narrative. This point was made by *Film Weekly*, which nevertheless was quite favourably disposed towards the film:

Here is one of the problem pictures of 1935. It is difficult to place, for it contains music, comedy, farce, fantasy and even a mild thrill or two; and, in presenting these ingredients, it breaks all the rules of film construction, slipping from one mood to the next with engaging nonchalance.

It is best regarded as a screen revue built upon unconventional lines, since, at this valuation, it has the recommendation of originality, and offers good light entertainment.

The best moments are a commendable attempt to present a popular bandleader and his 'boys' in a different way. There is, perhaps, too strong an aura of the 'B.B.C.' about the incidents, as well as some of the settings, yet there is much that is amusing in the basic idea of showing the possible effects of Mr Hall's music upon varying types of people in odd corners of the world.⁸

The comment about the 'aura of the BBC' is interesting, for, in hindsight, *Music Hath Charms* exhibits what can only be described as a very Reithian ideology. The theme of the film is the social utility of music. It asserts that music provides more than mere entertainment, and has the potential to act as a force for social cohesion and moral uplift. Personal tragedy, divorce and even colonial unrest, are averted through the power of music. Moreover, this music is broadcast to the world by the BBC. The film emphasises the varied social composition and geographical spread of the BBC's audience ('All kinds of people listen to us, from the North Pole to the Equator', Hall remarks at one point). The film needs to be seen against the background of a BBC that broadcast to a wide audience not only at home but also abroad: the first broadcasts of the BBC's Empire Service had begun in 1932 and a Foreign Service was to follow. It is tempting,

therefore, to regard *Music Hath Charms* as nothing less than cultural propaganda for the BBC.

Hollywood, for once, followed the trend set by British studios in recruiting American bandleaders into films during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Although bandleaders had been making short films from the early 1930s, it was not until later in the decade that they appeared regularly in feature films, again usually in supporting roles. Benny Goodman appeared in *Hollywood Hotel* (1938), directed by Busby Berkeley for Warner Bros. Based on a radio programme of the same title, it followed the tried-and-tested narrative strategy of a troubled radio broadcast in which the bands performed their music on air. Goodman's trumpeter Harry James, who was also featured in the film, formed his own band in 1939, and Artie Shaw appeared in MGM's *Dancing Co-Ed* (1939), a star vehicle for the 19-year-old Lana Turner about a college girl who succeeds in show business.⁹

RKO made a concerted attempt to turn radio personality Kay Kyser into a film star. Kyser had formed his first band in 1926, but it was not until 1938 that he achieved national fame when NBC began broadcasting his *Kollege of Musical Knowledge*, a one-hour musical quiz show which Kyser presided over in the persona of 'the old professor'. NBC had strong corporate links with RKO, which sought to exploit Kyser's appeal as both a musician and a comedian. The five films in which Kyser starred for RKO between 1939 and 1943 comprise the most varied screen repertoire of any of the bandleaders who appeared in movies, as they followed different generic formats. His first vehicle, *That's Right – You're Wrong* (1939), was an amusing spoof of the film industry which ingeniously acknowledged the problems faced by film studios in devising appropriate vehicles for bandleaders.¹⁰ Kyser signs a film contract on the basis of his radio fame, but the studio bosses then have second thoughts about his box-office potential and a conniving producer (played by Adolphe Menjou) tries to force Kyser to break his contract by forcing him to undergo a series of ludicrous screen tests (in Shakespearean costume and as a Venetian gondolier). Kyser's second film, *You'll Find Out* (1940), was a comedy thriller in the style of Paramount's Bob Hope – Paulette Goddard vehicles *The Cat and the Canary* (1939) and *The Ghost Breakers* (1940), set in a spooky old house and featuring horror stars Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi and Peter Lorre. *Playmates* (1941) co-starred John Barrymore, shortly before his death, in a bizarre comedy about a has-been actor trying to make a comeback by adapting Shakespeare to dance music. *My Favorite Spy* (1942), produced by Harold Lloyd, was a topical wartime thriller in which Kyser becomes involved with a spy ring and which bears comparison to Paramount's Bob Hope comedy *My Favorite Blonde* (1942).¹¹ Finally, *Around the World* (1943) was a fictionalised account of Kyser's real-life tour to entertain Allied troops in Australia, India and North Africa, which again featured him tangling with Nazi spies. After leaving RKO,

Kyser made films for MGM and Columbia before retiring from showbusiness in 1950 and becoming a Christian Scientist.

Undoubtedly the most successful of the American bands by the early 1940s was the Glenn Miller Orchestra. The famous Miller 'sound' – achieved by having a clarinet playing above but in harmony with four saxophones – brought a new romanticism to familiar standards such as the swing favourite 'In the Mood' as well as Miller's own themes, including his signature tune, the ballad 'Moonlight Serenade'. One commentator has even described the Miller Orchestra as 'the greatest pop band the world has known'.¹² The Miller Orchestra appeared in two films for 20th Century-Fox in the early 1940s. The first of these, *Sun Valley Serenade* (1941), directed by studio journeyman H. Bruce Humberstone, was essentially a star vehicle for Sonja Henie, the Norwegian ice skating star who had won gold medals at the 1928, 1932 and 1936 Winter Olympics before embarking on a film career in Hollywood and becoming an American citizen in 1941. Henie was to ice what Esther Williams was to water, and she had become one of Fox's leading box-office attractions in the late 1930s in a series of films, such as *Thin Ice* (1937), *Happy Landing* (1938) and *My Lucky Star* (1938), which used light romantic storylines as vehicles to showcase her displays of skating. By the early 1940s, however, Henie's star was on the wane, and the introduction of another non-film attraction in *Sun Valley Serenade* might be seen as an attempt to bolster its box-office potential.

The plot of *Sun Valley Serenade* is built around a romantic triangle in which the arrival of a Norwegian refugee, Karen Benson (Henie), disrupts the putative romance between pianist Ted Scott (John Payne) and vocalist Vivian Dawn (Lynn Bari, who sings her own songs). Ted and Vivian are both members of a band led by Phil Corey (Miller), which is playing a winter season at the luxurious Idaho ski resort of Sun Valley. The setting locates the film in the sub-genre of what Rick Altman has termed 'the fairy-tale musical', one which is 'set in distant aristocratic locales (palaces, resorts, fancy hotels, ocean liners) treated in travelogue fashion'.¹³ Although the story is little more than an excuse to showcase the talents of the performers (Henie has two ice-dance routines, the Miller Orchestra performs several of its hits as well as new numbers written for the film such as 'It Happened In Sun Valley'), this was seen as an asset rather than a weakness by Bosley Crowther, senior film critic of the *New York Times*:

Too often a musical picture is all cluttered up with plot. But this time the wily producers have found the blessing of simplicity. They have constructed no more of a story than you could hang a pair of ice skates upon – nothing more than a tiny triangle which sets Miss Henie as the refugee ward of the piano player with the Sun Valley orchestra and thereby brings her into conflict with the beautiful singer in the band. The rest is just music and snowflakes – Glenn Miller's orchestra playing frequently and

well, some truly extraordinary skiers, doubling for Miss Henie and John Payne, chasing one another down the hills, and, last but not least, a beautiful ice ballet in which Miss Henie and a glittering chorus perform enraptured dances upon a sheet of dark mirror ice.¹⁴

For Crowther, therefore, the attractions of the film (the music and the skating) were sufficient to make it work as entertainment – an interesting observation given that much critical writing on the musical has generally seen the integration of narrative and performance (as in the classic Astaire–Rogers films) as representing the genre’s artistic maturity.

For their second film, *Orchestra Wives* (1942), directed by Archie Mayo, Miller and his orchestra were allowed a more prominent narrative role. This was different from the fantasy musical environment of *Sun Valley Serenade*, bearing more relation to the show musical in that it offered a glimpse behind the scenes of a successful touring band. Connie (Ann Rutherford) marries Bill Abbott (George Montgomery), the star trumpeter of a band led by Gene Morrison (Miller), but finds it difficult to adjust to life on the road and falls out with the wives of other band members. Crowther was rather less impressed with this film, complaining that ‘once more the Hollywood tailors have draped the shivering shoulders of a popular band with a trifling little story which is as ridiculous as a zoot suit and has no more shape or distinction than one of those forbidden garbs’.¹⁵ Unlike *Sun Valley Serenade*, Crowther felt there was insufficient spectacle to compensate for the thin plot. Moreover, the elevation of the orchestra from supporting attraction to being central to the narrative did not succeed. ‘Mr Miller and his assorted virtuosos are killers when it comes to making jive’, Crowther remarked, ‘but it takes more than wind and willingness to support a ninety-seven minute film’.¹⁶

By the mid 1940s there were signs that the heyday of the big band era was over. Two events in particular seem, in hindsight, highly symbolic. On 14 December 1944 Glenn Miller, who had joined the US Army to entertain troops, was lost when an aeroplane carrying him across the English Channel disappeared in fog. If Miller’s death represents the symbolic end of the big band era, events put in train in the United States a few years earlier were of longer-term consequence. Hitherto the bandleaders themselves had been the stars, but their ascendancy was challenged in 1942 when Frank Sinatra, a singer first for Harry James and then for Tommy Dorsey, decided to embark on a solo career and became the most successful recording artist of his generation. The slow demise of the big bands was largely a generational thing: those who had grown up on the dance music of the 1920s and 1930s were now approaching middle age, while their children responded to different styles of popular music. The bands persisted into the postwar period, but faded away during the 1950s when they were displaced by other types of music, first rhythm and blues and then

rock 'n' roll. Jazz, which to some extent had been displaced by the big bands, enjoyed a boom in the 1950s and has continued to maintain its own following long after the demise of dance music.

With the big band era coming to an end, the vogue for films featuring band-leaders also ceased. They still appeared occasionally in supporting roles – Ted Heath and His Band appeared in Ealing Studios' *Dance Hall* (1950), for example – but the heyday of the big band musical had passed. And yet, paradoxically, the most successful films about the big bands were still to come.

From the mid 1940s, and for another decade, there was a vogue in Hollywood for musical biopics, films based (often quite loosely) on the lives of real musical artists. The trend was started by the phenomenal success of Columbia's *The Jolson Story* (1946), a lavish Technicolor biopic charting the rise to fame and fortune of Al Jolson, which earned \$8 million in domestic rentals and became one of the biggest box-office hits of the decade.¹⁷ *The Jolson Story* established the formula for the showbusiness biopics to follow: it provided a sentimentalised, sanitised account of its subject's career, presenting Jolson as a pioneer who creates his own style and who triumphs over adversity, effectively retelling his life story as a fulfillment of the American Dream in which individualism and self-confidence bring about career success. The film revived Jolson's own career and led to an almost equally successful sequel, *Jolson Sings Again* (1949). United Artists was the first studio to produce a biopic of bandleaders with *The Fabulous Dorseys* (1947), directed by Alfred E. Green. Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey played themselves in the film, which presented them as falling out with each other and spending their lives bickering until being reunited by their father's death.

Probably the most fondly-remembered of musical biopics, however, is Universal's *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954), which was both a critical and a popular success. The film was directed by Anthony Mann and starred James Stewart, a director and actor better known for the series of tough Westerns they made during the 1950s: *Winchester 73* (1950), *Bend of the River* (1952), *The Naked Spur* (1953), *The Far Country* (1954) and *The Man From Laramie* (1955). Mann directed with an eye for period detail, especially during the first half of the film which charted Miller's years as a struggling musician, while Stewart achieved a good visual likeness of Miller (his trombone playing being dubbed by Joe Yukl). The narrative ideology of the film is again the fulfillment of the American Dream: that anyone can become successful through hard work and self-belief. 'I'm not going to be a side man all my life, a trombone player. I'm going to have a band all of my own, I'm going to play my own kind of music', Miller tells his fiancée Helen (June Allyson). 'It's hard to explain, but a band – a band ought to have a sound all of its own, it ought to have a personality'. This theme was recognised by Bosley Crowther, who observed that the film 'follows the customary lines of a rags-to-riches story in the "typical American" vein'.¹⁸

Figure 1 James Stewart in *The Glenn Miller Story* achieved a good likeness of the celebrated bandleader

The Glenn Miller Story mythologises Miller's life and career, showing him playing in a jam session with Louis Armstrong and Gene Krupa (appearing as themselves) in a New York nightclub on his wedding night, and making the discovery of his famous 'sound' a happy accident when a trumpet player splits his lip and Miller rescors the part for clarinet. The second half of the film focuses on Miller's years of success and his wartime service. Mann experiments with different ways of staging musical numbers: 'String of Pearls' and 'Chattanooga Choo-Choo' are presented as straightforward performances (the former at the Glen Island Casino in 1939, the latter in an aircraft hanger in wartime Britain), while 'Tuxedo Junction' is imaginatively presented as the Miller Orchestra records a film soundtrack.¹⁹ The sequences of Miller in the army are further examples of myth-making, with incidents such as Miller playing blues rather than martial music at a passing-out parade and the band carrying on with 'In the Mood' when a buzz bomb explodes nearby. The ending of the film has Miller's family and friends at home shortly after his death listening to a live broadcast by the band, which is carrying on without him. The ending twists historical fact to bring the film to a tidy conclusion as Miller's wife listens to a broadcast of 'Little Brown Jug', her favourite song. In the film Miller had

disliked the song and had refused to record it, whereas in reality the tune had been one of his first big hits. The reason for this change in the film is that the song becomes a device for linking the public narrative (Miller's success) with the personal narrative (his relationship with Helen): the public broadcast carries a personal message.

Other biopics of bandleaders followed, including *The Benny Goodman Story* (1955), in which newcomer Steve Allen played the bandleader, and *The Gene Krupa Story* (1959), with Sal Mineo in the title role, though none of them quite matched the popular appeal of *The Glenn Miller Story*. In these films the big band era already belongs to the past, and is being looked upon through the distorting lens of affectionate nostalgia. The bandleader biopics, and *The Glenn Miller Story* especially, therefore provide an appropriate coda to the history of the big band musical.

NOTES

1. The backstage musical, or show musical, is one where the musical numbers are motivated by stage conventions in that they are presented either as rehearsals or as performances. During the 1930s this form was represented by the films of Busby Berkeley at Warner Bros. The integrated musical is one where musical numbers are used to further the narrative through situations where characters break spontaneously into song and dance. It is exemplified pre-eminently by the Fred Astaire – Ginger Rogers vehicles of the 1930s and by the Arthur Freed – Gene Kelly productions at MGM from the mid 1940s.

Normative histories of the musical include Rick Altman (ed.), *Genre: The Musical* (London; New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) and Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London; Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1982). It is symptomatic of the neglect of the big band musical that Feuer's filmography includes the biopic *The Glenn Miller Story* but not the two feature films in which Miller appeared with his orchestra, *Sun Valley Serenade* and *Orchestra Wives*. What little has been written about American bandleaders in films is to be found in fan and nostalgia magazines. See, for example, Hal Erickson, 'Glenn Miller: the man, the music, and the movies', *Classic Images* 213 (March 1993): 44–7, and 'Kay Kyser: the old professor in Hollywood', *Classic Images* 217 (July 1993): 28–C6. For the British musical, see Stephen Guy, 'Calling all stars: musical films in a musical decade', in Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An Alternative History of the British Cinema 1929–39* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998): 99–118. Guy, however, makes only passing mention of the bandleaders Ambrose, Jack Payne and Henry Hall.

The big bands themselves have attracted little attention from either a musicological or a social history perspective. In the historiography of twentieth century popular music, significantly more work has been forthcoming on jazz and rock 'n' roll than on the dance bands. For much of the background information in this chapter I have referred to general music histories, particularly David Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977) and Ronald Pearsall, *Popular Music of the Twenties* (Newton Abbot; London; Vancouver: David & Charles, 1976), which deals with Britain. Anecdotal, interview-based histories of the US and British bands can be found in two volumes by Sheila Tracy, *Bands, Booze and Broads* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream Publishing Company,

- 1995) and *Talking Swing: The British Big Bands* (Edinburgh; London: Mainstream Publishing Company, 1997).
2. Quoted in Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940): 34.
 3. Ewen: 326–7.
 4. Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume II: The Golden Age of Wireless 1927–1939* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1965; 1995 edn): 235.
 5. Guy: 103–4.
 6. Linda Wood, ‘Julius Hagen and Twickenham film studios’, in Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s*: 48.
 7. The quotation is from Act I, Scene 1 of Congreve’s *The Mourning Bride* (1697), which is misquoted as *The Morning Bride* on the title card of the film.
 8. *Film Weekly* 376, 28 December 1935: 26.
 9. Shaw and Turner were briefly married in real life (1940–41). Harry James later married Betty Grable (1943–65).
 10. The title of the film was one of Kyser’s radio catchphrases, in which he presided over a comedy quiz where contestants won if they gave the wrong answers.
 11. Kyser’s *My Favorite Spy* should not be confused with a Bob Hope film of the same title in 1951, which was the third instalment in a loose trilogy that also included *My Favorite Blonde* (1942) and *My Favorite Brunette* (1947).
 12. Anon., *Thousand Eyes: The Magazine of Repertory Cinema* 11 (June 1976): 17.
 13. Rick Altman, ‘The musical’, in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed.), *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 300.
 14. *New York Times*, 6 September 1941: 20.
 15. *New York Times*, 24 September 1942: 23.
 16. *Ibid.*
 17. Clive Hirschhorn, *The Columbia Story* (London: Pyramid Books, 1989): 141.
 18. *New York Times*, 11 February 1954: 33.
 19. Intriguingly, this number had not featured in either of the films in which the Miller Orchestra appeared. The sequence takes place in a recording studio with a monochrome film projected on a screen of two male dancers and one female dancer performing a staged routine against a stylised railroad station set. This routine, performed in the film by the Archie Savage Dancers, is clearly modelled on the routines performed by the Nicholas Brothers in the two Miller films. It is particularly similar to the sequence in *Sun Valley Serenade* where the brothers dance with a young Dorothy Dandridge to the tune of ‘Chattanooga Choo-Choo’. The most likely reason for having a different number in *The Glenn Miller Story* is that it was made by a different studio than the films in which the Miller Orchestra had appeared. However, there is another intriguing possibility. ‘Chattanooga Choo-Choo’ was usually performed with a vocal by sax player Tex Beneke in conjunction with the singing group the Modernaires, and, indeed, Beneke had sung it in *Sun Valley Serenade*. However, Beneke does not appear in *The Glenn Miller Story*, having fallen out with the continuation Glenn Miller Orchestra, which kept on performing after its leader’s death. In the film, ‘Chattanooga Choo-Choo’ is performed by Frances Langford with the Modernaires. Similarly, in *Orchestra Wives* the Nicholas Brothers dance to the tune of ‘I’ve Got A Gal in Kalamazoo’ which features a vocal by singer Marion Hutton, who does not appear in *The Glenn Miller Story* either.

4 TELEVISION, THE POP INDUSTRY AND THE HOLLYWOOD MUSICAL

John Mundy

Though the enormous box-office success of 20th Century-Fox's *The Sound of Music* (1965) may have suggested otherwise, by the early 1960s the era of the so-called classical integrated large budget musical was largely over. This is not to suggest, as many have, that the musical genre ceased to have significance. On the contrary, musicals that essentially replicated the revue formula characteristic of the genre's beginnings in the late 1920s formed an important, if low budget, staple item for both the British and US film industries throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Like early revue musicals, such as William Fox's *Movietone Follies of 1929* and MGM's *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, these films were concerned to exploit the popularity of entertainers and artists whose success had been constructed through other media sites. In the 1920s, that success had been built largely on Broadway, the West End or in vaudeville and the music hall. In the late 1950s and 1960s, musical films, now largely made for a younger, segmented market, reflected the growth in importance of the popular music industry and attempted to exploit the success of popular music recording artists. Often rushed into production, lacking in storyline and acting performances of any real merit, the appeal of such films centred around the visual presentation of artists who were currently enjoying success in the popular music charts and who were being marketed energetically in promotional and fan-based magazines.

Though there was nothing new in this relationship between different sectors of the entertainment industry, in the 1950s and 1960s the role both of the record industry and of television as influences on film production became

increasingly significant. While perhaps lacking the intensity with which contemporary cultural products are marketed, the alliances forged between the film, television and popular music industries attempted to exploit to the full commodities and fashions whose ephemerality was assumed. Following the success of *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955), films such as *The Big Beat* (1957), *Girl's Town* (1959) or *Go Johnny Go* (1958) attempted to exploit, promote and sustain the appeal of record stars as diverse as the Del Vikings, Paul Anka and Chuck Berry, and at the same time helped restore some of the film industry's market share among an increasingly affluent teenage audience that had been turning its back on Hollywood product in the mid 1950s.

A significant enabling factor in this trend was the growing influence of independent production companies, both within the US film industry and the record industry. In these industries, the exploitation of the independents' entrepreneurial responsiveness to the teenage market was used by the majors to reduce risk at a time when it must have appeared to them that the established rule-book for success had been suddenly thrown away. At the same time and in a similar way, the emerging power of the television networks in the US was to an extent dependent on successes developed in local television.

However, as this chapter, which forms a case study centred around the dance craze of the twist, attempts to illustrate, the successful promotion of cultural products across a range of media sites often depended on complex negotiations not only with powerful ideological and institutional forces, but with the aspirations, ambitions and alliances of determined, often opportunistic, individuals working within media organisations. Yet ironically, despite the apparent transparency of both film and television, none of this is visible to those who watch. In the act of showing, so much is not disclosed; in making visible, so much remains invisible. Despite the fact that these films often make self-reflexive use of a show business background, the last thing they do is to show the business behind the product. The four feature-length films that articulated and contributed to the twist craze, *Twist Around The Clock* (1961), *Don't Knock The Twist* (1962), *Twist All Night* (1962) and *Hey Let's Twist* (1962), as well as Richard Lester's *It's Trad, Dad* (1962) which featured a sequence with Chubby Checker, need to be understood not as isolated texts or events, but as elements in a complex and interdependent process of cultural production and consumption which remain hidden from view.

For a few brief years in the early 1960s, Britain and the United States experienced a cultural convulsion centred around the music and dance craze 'the twist'. At its peak in 1961 and 1962, the craze dominated all aspects of popular cultural life. In those two years, nineteen twist records reached the US Top 40 and fourteen featured in the British charts.¹ A host of other twist singles were released and a rash of twist albums went on sale, including the unlikely 'Twistin' The World Around' from Berry Gordy's Motown label. In addition to the four

Figure 2 Promoting a craze: The US poster for *Twist Around the Clock*.

feature-length twist films distributed by the major studios, a host of film shorts attempted to instruct people how to do the dance. The twist dominated what music shows there were on television and made it on to programmes as diverse as *'The Dick Van Dyke Show'*, *'The Flintstones'* and, in Britain, the BBC's *'Television Dancing Club'* hosted by aging bandleader Victor Sylvester. Dance clubs such as the shabby Peppermint Lounge in New York attracted socialites infatuated by the twist. Endorsed by the stuffy but prestigious Arthur Murray School of Dance, the twist briefly colonised commercial and domestic cultural spaces in ways that were hard to ignore.

One of the most significant aspects of the twist craze was its broad appeal to a range of socio-cultural groups normally characterised by their structural distinctions. At its height, the phenomenon constructed a chimeric community resonant of those images of sustainable utopias which mark the classical Hollywood musical. Everybody it seemed, young and old, black and white, rich and poor, male and female, was doing the twist. Clearly, whatever complex pleasures it delivered, the phenomenon was far from being what Hebdige termed the subcultural 'noise', or a 'mechanism of semantic disorder' which characterised rock 'n' roll briefly some six or seven years earlier.² On the contrary, the twist craze illustrates those powerful but complex processes by which the mainstream commercial interests in the entertainment industry attempt to drive popular cultural production and consumption. This involved, as far as both film and television were concerned, a quite specific construction of the contribution of black artists to popular music culture which carefully negotiated its way around the dominant racial discourse of the mid-century US.

Simply to assert the power of commercial determinants in the construction of popular culture and its consumption is, however, to ignore the intricate, sinewy and often shadowy ways in which the business of entertainment works. In particular, it fails to recognise the lubricity which can characterise individual contributions within and between business organisations and activities. In looking at the cultural phenomenon which centred around the twist and at the business interests and activities of Dick Clark, host of the US networked television show *American Bandstand*, who played a central role in the promotion of Chubby Checker and his recording of 'The Twist', this chapter examines not just the commercial synergies that existed between the radio, television, film and popular music industries in the late 1950s and early 1960s but, significantly, ways in which these alliances were strengthened and articulated through the exploitation of positions of personal power within influential media organisations. The essential paradox between, on the one hand, the seeming transparency of television as a medium of shows such as the enormously popular youth-orientated *American Bandstand* and, on the other, the invisibility of business networks and deals and the opacity of audience and consumer understanding of the importance of these, is something that may have significance as

we inhabit what is being heralded as a new web-based information, communication and entertainment age.

In the late 1940s, the record industry in the United States was enjoying an unprecedented sales boom, fuelled in part by the growth in the number of independent radio stations able to play a greater variety of popular music, including rhythm and blues and country music.³ The extent to which this boom depended on radio broadcasting and on the 'top 40' format was evident in the formation in 1947 of the National Association of Disk Jockeys. It rapidly became common practice for record companies to plug their product by sending disc jockeys free copies of records. Song plugging had, of course, been commonplace in the music industry in the 1920s and 1930s when sales of sheet music predominated. However, the power of broadcasters to promote product was readily acknowledged by the record companies and was to become the centre of concern about commercial probity in the late 1950s.

While the powerful alliance between radio and the record industry was firmly established at the beginning of the 1950s, television was, initially, another matter. Though most conventional histories of television in the United States emphasise the hegemonic power of the networks, this tends to underplay the formative role of local, regional and non-network television in the early 1950s. As Mark Williams reminds us, 'Every network and non-network television station was necessarily a local station. Local stations negotiated the role TV would play in their communities, coordinating the new medium to local rhythms, interests, sentiments and ideologies.'⁴ Although the development of network television was facilitated by the opening of the coaxial cable link across the United States in November 1951, local television companies remained important, not least because they were initially quicker to show profit than the networks were. As Russell and David Sanjek point out, a single independent television station such as WBKB-TV in Chicago was making as much profit in 1952 as the entire NBC and CBS networks were that year.⁵ The importance of the complex relationships between local television stations and the networks is evident in what became the celebrated television show *American Bandstand*, which was first transmitted in September 1952.

Bandstand was originally a radio show broadcast by Philadelphia's WIP-AM station and hosted by Bob Horn, who moved with the show to rival station WFIL in 1951. Founded in 1922, WFIL was purchased in 1945 by Triangle Publications Inc., owned by Walter Annenberg and publishers of, among other things, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *TV Guide* and of *Teenager*, which it launched in 1944. In 1947, WFIL-TV became the city's first commercial television station and one of the first local stations to affiliate to the fledgling ABC-TV network. Philadelphia was a city of nearly four million people and already had a reputation as an important centre for popular music. This was reflected not only in the number of independent record labels operating in the city, but in the popularity of radio pop shows such as WPEN's *950 Club*.

Like *950 Club*, *Bandstand* emphasised its local connections by featuring teenage dancers from Philadelphia high schools, though it excluded black teenagers. The show proved successful immediately. In 1953, the impact on young people in Philadelphia was evident not just in the show's ratings, but in the queues of would-be studio dancers which besieged the WFIL-TV building and in the 12,000 fans who attended the *Bandstand* picnic in Philadelphia's Woodside Park that summer.⁶ Bob Horn's success as the front man for *Bandstand* was perhaps always threatened by his untelegenic looks, but it was ultimately his appearance on vice and drunken driving charges in 1956 that made his removal inevitable and he was replaced in July that year by 26-year-old Dick Clark, who had been hosting WFIL's musically staid *Caravan of Music* radio programme. In the context of widespread condemnation of the new youth-orientated rock 'n' roll, much of it racist in tone and origin, and of the perceptible shift in advertising and sponsorship away from radio towards television, it is clear that Clark was chosen for a number of key reasons, not least his potential to render the programme and its music acceptable to a wider audience and, as a consequence, to boost ratings in an attempt to attract advertising and sponsorship. As Clark rather disingenuously put it later:

I wasn't that knowledgeable about rock 'n' roll when I first became the host of *Bandstand*, because I hadn't been allowed to play rock on my radio show. I had to stick to 'adult' pop music, playing songs by artists like Perry Como and Rosemary Clooney. But hosting *Bandstand* was like taking a crash course in a new culture.⁷

In fact, Clark's initiation into what really mattered to him had begun some years earlier, as he began to exploit contacts in the radio, television and record business.

In addition to his radio show at WFIL, Clark had also been employed to front commercial and sponsorship announcements for WFIL-TV. Through these activities he met Bernie Lowe, who was musical director for *TV-Teen Club*. Lowe was an important figure on the Philadelphia music scene. As well as being a musician, songwriter and bandleader, Lowe had made several attempts to start a record label before founding Cameo Records with fellow songwriter Kal Mann in 1956. Though based in the Philadelphia music scene, Lowe's aspiration for Cameo was to turn local success into something much wider, just as another Philadelphia independent label, Essex, had done in 1953 when Bill Haley's 'Crazy Man, Crazy' achieved some national chart success.

Clark's contacts, such as the one with Bernie Lowe, were to prove mutually beneficial as the success of *Bandstand* snowballed, attracting 65 per cent of the daytime audience in Philadelphia.⁸ Clearly, much of the success of *Bandstand*, both as a local and subsequently a networked programme, depended on its use

of local teenagers, drawn especially from the large Italian-American community in Philadelphia, who danced to the music in the studio. As early as 1952, Bob Horn's *Bandstand* studio dancers had propelled Ray Anthony's 'Bunny Hop' into a local and then national hit through the dance craze spawned by the record. For Clark, it was the dancers who articulated the distinctions surrounding a newly-emerging youth culture:

As important as the artists and music were, one of the elements most responsible for the long-lasting success of *American Bandstand* was the kids who danced on the show. All over the country, teenagers rushed home from school to watch other teenagers do the newest dances, wear the hippest fashions, and rub shoulders with the most popular artists of the day. Watching *Bandstand* was like having a window on to a daily party that let you in on the latest trends and music.⁹

Clark had taken over *Bandstand* at a period when record sales were increasing significantly. Since the introduction of the 45rpm disc in 1949, record sales in the United States had grown steadily, but between 1954 and 1956 they doubled to an unprecedented 377 million. Moreover, it was becoming clear by 1956 that record sales were increasingly dependent on the visual appearance of the group or singer. To an extent, this was being driven by popular music shows on television, as the success of *Bandstand* in Philadelphia was replicated by local TV stations in other major cities such as New York, Detroit and Chicago. This in turn forced mainstream entertainment programmes such as *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Milton Berle Show* to book rock performers including, most notably, Elvis Presley.

It also reflected a major change in Hollywood which, having previously reinforced prevailing social criticism of 'youth-as-problem', attempted to address the much more real problem of its declining share of the leisure market by making a direct appeal to the youth market through the exploitation of popular music and its performers. Much of this was driven by the independent production companies that had emerged following the 1948 Supreme Court decision separating the major's control over both distribution and exhibition. As with independent labels in the record industry, independent production companies such as that owned by Sam Katzman were to prove effective in exploiting the potential of the youth market.

While the 1948 Supreme Court decision expressly barred the Hollywood majors from television broadcasting, by the mid 1950s they had moved into television production in a significant way, moving the centre of US television production from New York to Los Angeles. This growing convergence between the US film and television industries was matched by Hollywood's interest in music publishing and record sales. The value of these were such that for Loew's

in 1956, it was only the revenues from music publishing and sales through MGM Records that kept the parent company in profit.

With hindsight, and given this backdrop of industrial and commercial realignment, it perhaps seems inevitable that WFIL-TV's *Bandstand* should have been networked in 1957, but there was nothing inevitable about the success and influence of what became *American Bandstand*. That needed working at and Dick Clark was both prepared and in a position to do such work. Clark deliberately set out to make *Bandstand* respectable. At a time when the influential disc jockey Alan Freed was being pilloried by many for his promotion of black artists, Clark was concerned to manage *Bandstand* in a way that exploited demand for music by both white and black artists but that did not alienate the older generation or – and this was more significant – potential commercial sponsors. Clark simply kept the format for the show that he had inherited from Horn, but insisted on a strict dress code among the dancers in the studio and banned smoking and the consumption of alcohol on the set.

This cautious strategy was important in Philadelphia at a time when Horn was standing trial on vice charges. It was also a key factor in achieving network status, as was Clark's equally cautious approach in building upon *Bandstand*'s reputation among Philadelphia's black teenagers as basically a white show. While admitting some black youngsters as studio dancers in 1957, Clark was well aware that Philadelphia at that time was one of the north's most 'southern' cities in its attitude to racial desegregation, and carefully managed the pressures towards racial integration on the show in ways that reflected powerful local white sensibilities. As we shall see, this sensitivity towards localised racial politics was to have an impact on the ways in which the twist craze was managed and developed.

While adopting this cautious approach, Clark was helped by a policy decision taken by newly-appointed ABC executive Ollie Treyz that reflected the changing demographics of US society. Treyz argued strongly for more youth-orientated programming in a bid to attract part of the juvenile market estimated to be worth some \$30 billion in 1957. As Grossberg writes about the so-called teenage market,

this was the first generation of children isolated by business (and especially by advertising and marketing agencies) as an identifiable market; despite the sociological differences within the generation . . . the economic strategies were surprisingly successful in constructing a rather coherent generational identity and a singular marketing cluster.¹⁰

In fact, *Bandstand* had already been rejected by NBC as a possible network programme in 1956. Even though WFIL-TV was an ABC affiliate, ABC executives

had taken the same decision. However, with only the slightest encouragement, Clark flew to New York and persuaded ABC executives to give *Bandstand* a network trial, committing WFIL-TV to deliver the programme for no cost. The programme was first broadcast on the network to ABC's forty-eight affiliated stations on 5 August 1957. Its success was both immediate and long lasting, whether measured by audience ratings, by the growing number of affiliates who signed up with ABC to take *Bandstand*, or by its ability to attract major sponsors including General Mills, 7-Up and Clearasil. Clark's generosity in offering *Bandstand* for no cost was more illusory than real, since he had already begun to put in place a personal network and financial structure which promised real financial benefit.

In 1956, even before the networking of *Bandstand*, Clark had been approached by Bernie Lowe of Cameo Records to promote the record 'Butterfly' by local singer Charlie Gracie. At a time when it was still common practice for cover versions of records to be put out by labels with national distribution and 'big-name', usually white, singers, Lowe was keen to promote his original version. As a consequence of promoting the Cameo record on *Bandstand* and with national disc jockeys, Clark was assigned 25 per cent of the publishing rights of the song and *Bandstand*'s producer, Tony Mammarella, was credited as the songwriter. 'Butterfly' did well and lessons were learnt about the power of *Bandstand* to promote record sales. It was this link between *American Bandstand* and record sales that was noted by industry analysts and the trade papers. *Variety* commented on 7 October 1957 that *American Bandstand* was 'the greatest stimulant to the record business ever known'.¹¹

As the national importance of *American Bandstand* became apparent by late 1957 and early 1958, Clark continued to expand his interests in local record, entertainment and media businesses, to the point where he had become a pivotal figure in the Philadelphia music industry: 'With an interest in two music publishing companies . . . three record labels, a record distributorship, a record pressing plant (Mallard) and a share of a talent management agency, Clark was now "vertically integrated" within the music business.'¹² Though Clark's supremely influential position within the popular music business in the late 1950s was the most obvious result of his commercial manoeuvrings, it was not the only one. Though never as important as his television work, Clark's involvement with independent film production began the same year as *American Bandstand*. An approach came from Bob Marcucci who owned Chancellor, a small Philadelphia record label whose product was distributed by Am-Par. With Marcucci and Bernie Binnick (co-owner with Clark of Swan Records) Clark formed the Binlark Company to provide finance for the film *Jamboree*, produced for and distributed by Warner Bros. in 1957. Clark appeared in the film alongside a number of other disc jockeys, together with musical performers as diverse as Frankie Avalon, Carl Perkins, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis and

Count Basie and a number of lesser artists who recorded with Chancellor. Cameo Records' Charlie Gracie was also in the film. Like many similar films at this time, *Jamboree* was little more than an excuse to exploit and promote known and less-well-known recording artists. With the thinnest of self-reflexive plots revolving around the efforts of two agents to promote a hit-making duo, the film's revue structure privileges the promotion of a succession of artists in whom Marcucci, Clark and others already had a financial interest.

Clark's interest in film production was consolidated in 1958 with the formation of his Drexel Pictures Corp, which produced *Because They're Young*, distributed by Columbia Pictures in 1960, a film in which Clark plays a high-school teacher in a role not unlike Glenn Ford's in the 1955 *The Blackboard Jungle*. With another company, Drexel Films Corp, Clark had a two-picture deal with United Artists and appeared in the 1961 film *The Young Doctors*. Ultimately, Clark's involvement with film was to merge with his interests in television production, as Dick Clark Productions became a sizeable player in Hollywood in the 1970s.¹³ The extent of Clark's power and influence throughout and beyond the USA's 'pop village' was to become evident in the role he played in the development and promotion of the twist craze in 1960.

Though it is possible to see the origins of the twist in black dance music dating back to the beginnings of the twentieth century, a contemporary version called 'The Twist' recorded by Hank Ballard and the Midnighters reached the R&B chart in 1958.¹⁴ With their reputation for somewhat raunchy lyrics in numbers such as 'Work With Me Annie' and with their hard gospel edge, Ballard and the Midnighters were unlikely to be able, or be allowed, to widen their appeal to white audiences. Impressed by the local success of the record, Clark decided to record a cover version using Ernest Evans, a young man who, while working in a poultry shop in Philadelphia, had already recorded four unsuccessful singles under the name of Chubby Checker for the Parkway label, a subsidiary of Bernie Lowe's Cameo Records. Checker's version of 'The Twist' was given a prime slot on *American Bandstand* in August 1960, with Checker demonstrating the dance while lip-synching to the record. Following the promotion on Clark's show, Checker's version of the song on Parkway achieved cross-over success, making number one on both the Billboard and Cash Box charts.

The promotion of Chubby Checker singing and demonstrating 'The Twist' on *American Bandstand* was the catalyst for the craze that swept the US and, subsequently, Britain. Dick Clark's extensive business connections with local record industry friends such as Bernie Lowe, built up over a period of years, provided the infrastructure for the success not just of 'The Twist', but of Cameo-Parkway records, which enjoyed unprecedented commercial success between 1961 and 1963.¹⁵

Equally important was Clark's ability to negotiate with powerful ideological forces and their influence on the reception of popular music. The nationwide

craze for the twist was not immediate and, building upon Checker's success, depended to some extent on the popularity of Joey Dee and the Starlighters at the Peppermint Lounge with the East Coast celebrity set. Of course, white appropriation of black artistic material has a long history in the United States, but so too has the notion of 'passing' (where light-skinned black Americans were able to 'pass' and be accepted as white) and its consequences even within the black community. Noting that much of the antagonism between W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey in the 1920s was expressed in terms of skin tone, Adam Lively comments,

'passing' shades into the wider issue of colour prejudice, a prejudice that can take in the black community itself. If one is unable to pass as white, one can at least distance oneself from the bottom of the racial heap and obtain membership of a distinct 'blue-vein' caste.¹⁶

Arguably, Clark's avowed intent to 'play safe' extended to his sensitivity concerning the racial politics surrounding popular music and its consumption. His promotion of good-looking, light-skinned Chubby Checker reveals an understanding of the cultural importance of 'passing' and its implications for appealing to a mass, white-dominated, commercial market. Interestingly, there is not one black face on Paramount's poster for their film *Hey Let's Twist*. Checker does feature prominently on Columbia's poster for *Don't Knock The Twist*, but apart from him and Gene 'Duke of Earl' Chandler, wearing evening suit, top hat and monocle, all the artists depicted are white.

The reissue of Chubby Checker's single in 1961 coincided with a sustained campaign to merchandise Checker and the dance, including the Chubby Checker twister dance kit, a fold-out plastic map on which was printed guidance footprints.¹⁷ In January 1962, 'The Twist' reoccupied the number one slot in the Billboard chart. By that time, three twist films had been rushed into production, two of them starring Checker. Even before that, a filmed insert of Checker singing 'The Lose-Your-Inhibition Twist', specially shot in New York, found its way into Richard Lester's *It's Trad Dad*, a film featuring mostly British pop and 'traditional jazz' talent.¹⁸

The plot of *Twist Around the Clock*, directed by Oscar Rudolph and released in 1961, revolves around the thwarted ambitions of a band named 'The Twisters' who, because of romantic complications, find success eludes them until they are booked into a club where Chubby Checker and Dion are appearing. Success breeds success and 'The Twisters' achieve the ultimate recognition when, in implicit acknowledgement of the power of major entertainment alliances, they are signed onto a nationwide television programme. Though the film does share structural and thematic concerns readily associated with the musical genre, not least the dual narrative centred around the drive for professional

Figure 3 The pleasures of *Twist Around the Clock* were centred on the performance of chart-toppers such as Dion.

showbiz success and for heterosexual romance, its pleasures are centred on the reprise of chart-topping performances from Checker ('Twistin USA'), Dion ('Runaround Sue', 'The Wanderer') and The Marcells ('Blue Moon').

This symbolic recognition of the power of television to promote popular musical success was more than matched by the economic realities within the entertainment business. Specifically, the importance of business connections constructed by Clark was in evidence with *Don't Knock the Twist*, also directed by Oscar Rudolph. With Checker being promoted extensively on *American Bandstand* in 1961, it should come as little surprise that Sam Katzman's associate producer on *Don't Knock The Twist* was Cameo-Parkway's Kal Mann. As Dawson writes:

Don't Knock The Twist was barely more than a shill for Cameo-Parkway, which controlled most of the artists and the movie's thirteen songs, and for the dozen or so merchandisers who had signed lucrative deals with Checker's manager-producer Kal Mann.¹⁹

Like the earlier *Twist Around The Clock*, the plot has a show business background. *Don't Knock The Twist* is centred around a television station, and reinforces the importance of television appearances as the key promotional tool in obtaining a hit single. Checker, appearing as himself, is key to television

executive Ted Haver's (Lang Jefferies) ability to beat off competition from a rival station. In this way, the film constructs a highly mythologised view of the 'work' undertaken in cultural production in a manner that the classical backstage musical had been doing throughout the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s. Like that subgenre, the film makes self-reflexive use of a show business background, and the last thing it actually does is to reveal the reality of the business behind the product. Whatever its surface transparency, the film actually has the effect of denying the complex commercial factors which lie behind its production. It simultaneously acknowledges the importance of programmes such as *American Bandstand* in the promotion of popular music and culture and yet denies the material practices that this influence entails.

Like so many similar musical films of the period produced on low budgets and designed to appeal to the youth market, the four feature-length twist films were subjected to carping critical reviews that were almost universally dismissive. Paul V. Beckley, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune* for example, dismissed *Twist Around The Clock* as 'unreviewable'.²⁰ While Chubby Checker's performances in *Twist Around The Clock* and *Don't Knock The Twist* were acknowledged for their energy, professional critics more familiar with mainstream narrative cinema had problems dealing with thin plot lines whose purpose was to enable a string of musical performances to take place. Such criticism, then as now, misses the point. Films such as these, operating at the margins of the Hollywood canon, lived with and acknowledged their ephemerality. In a sense, that very ephemerality was the justification for their existence. Like contemporary music video, these films are amenable to critical and aesthetic evaluation but, like music video, can only be fully understood if their economic and promotional function is recognised. Like them, they are the product of cultural and commercial convergence, of a complex interplay between institution and agency of the type this chapter has outlined. Perhaps when we try to make sense of contemporary popular culture, of popular music, popular cinema or popular television, we need to engage with the specific material practices that drive cultural production and influence its consumption. It may also be salutary to remember that the twist craze owed much to an individual who, in high school, was voted as 'The Man Most Likely To Sell The Brooklyn Bridge'.

NOTES

1. This figure excludes the first appearance in the US chart of Chubby Checker's 'The Twist' in 1960 and discounts his 1988 reprise hit with the Fat Boys. The reference to the British chart excludes later hits such as 'Twisting By the Pool' by Dire Straits (1983) and 'Twist and Shout' by Salt 'N' Pepa (1988).
2. Dick Hebdige, *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979): 90.
3. There were 1,517 independent radio stations in the US compared to 627 network affiliates in 1950. See Donald Clarke, *The Rise and Fall of Popular Music* (London: Penguin Books, 1995): 256.

4. Mark Williams, 'Introduction: U.S. regional and non-network television history', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 16: 3–4 (1999): 222.
5. Russell Sanjek and David Sanjek, *Pennies From Heaven: The American Popular Music Business in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996): 312.
6. John A. Jackson, *American Bandstand: Dick Clark and the Making of a Rock 'n' Roll Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 19–20.
7. Dick Clark with Fred Bronson, *Dick Clark's American Bandstand* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997): 14.
8. Jackson: 51.
9. Dick Clark with Fred Bronson: 15.
10. Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992): 173.
11. Cited in Jackson: 79.
12. Jackson: 131.
13. Clark produced three films for American International Pictures (AIP) in the 1960s: *Psych-Out* (1968), *The Savage Seven* (1969) and *The Killers Three* (1969). Dick Clark Productions made *Birth of the Beatles* in 1979.
14. Jim Dawson, *The Twist: The Story of the Song and Dance That Changed the World* (Boston: Faber & Faber, 1995): 1–13.
15. Jackson: 222.
16. Adam Lively, *Masks: Blackness, Race and the Imagination* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998): 189.
17. Dawson: 64.
18. Andrew Yule, *The Man Who 'Framed' the Beatles* (New York: Donald I. Fine Inc., 1994): 68–70.
19. Dawson: 111.
20. Jan Stacy and Ryder Syvertsen, *Rockin' Reels: An Illustrated History of Rock & Roll Movies* (Chicago: Contemporary Books Inc., 1984): 118.

5 THE OPERATIC IN NEW GERMAN CINEMA

Ulrike Sieglöhr

The non-commercial, government subsidised West German films of the late 1960s to the early 1980s, popularly known as the New German Cinema, gained an international reputation as exciting and stylistically eclectic, with a preoccupation with the operatic a part of their idiosyncratic approach to narration.¹ This chapter will explore the operatic within the confines of New German Cinema: its formal structures, its modes of narration and its emotional appeal. Crucially, the choice of films is related to the uses of operatic elements as part of a quest for cinematic innovation, rather than with filmed opera performances.

The excessiveness of operatic emotions has been deployed by a range of New German filmmakers in a variety of ways and for different purposes. While Werner Schroeter takes opera as a template for cinema, with his oeuvre originating from his obsession with the diva Maria Callas, Hans Jürgen Syberberg's preoccupation with Wagner in *Hitler, Ein Film aus Deutschland* (*Our Hitler*, 1977) can be seen as a highly controversial strategy for probing the German psyche and one that contrasts interestingly with Alexander Kluge's film essay *Die Macht der Gefühle* (*The Power of Emotion*, 1983) which also deals with German history by deconstructing the seductive pull of opera.²

WERNER SCHROETER

Schroeter's cinema has been as much criticised as acclaimed for its stylised excess and overblown theatricality, and the operatic conception is evident in the way in which he relies on an intensity of performance and of *mise-en-scène*.

Characters are often framed in bizarre tableau compositions and a highly manipulated post-synchronised soundtrack underscores the visuals; images, music and sound are non-synchronised, and in his early films performers mime exaggeratedly to pre-recorded arias or pop songs.

In Schroeter's films the music is to a great extent drawn from nineteenth-century Italian *bel canto* opera. He prefers this because

opera is probably the most debased and craziest form of expression . . . I have always preferred the sung word to the spoken word, because a new level is constituted thereby. It is a heightened form of expression. The combination of dance, speech, music and image – all the arts are contained in it.³

However, Schroeter looks to opera not just for its musical intensity, its theatricalisation of emotions and its quality of aesthetic artifice, but also for its themes (madness, love and death) and its cult of the diva. Although further discussion is possible of the way Schroeter's interest in opera engenders a highly emotive but stylised mode of narration, in this chapter I want to focus on the figure of the diva, as personified and immortalised by the voice and myth of Maria Callas.⁴ She haunts all of his work; indeed, all of Schroeter's female figures are versions of her. His first 1968 experimental films had Callas as an explicit subject and comprised footage of her: *Callas Walking Lucia* (1968), *Callas Text mit Doppelbeleuchtung* (*Callas Text with Double-Exposure*, 1968), *Maria Callas Porträt* (*Maria Callas Portrait*, 1968), *Maria Callas Sings* (1968). In the later films Callas is evoked more indirectly: in *Macbeth* (1971) through the use of costume that is a copy of the one she wore in *Tosca*; in *Eika Katappa* (1969) in which her presence is constantly invoked through lip-synching to her voice and the re-enactment of her famous scenes, and through the many photos of her that the camera holds and explores through slow zooms; and in *Der Tod der Maria Malibran* (*The Death of Maria Malibran*, 1972) the tragic life of the nineteenth-century opera diva, Maria Malibran, engenders a dense network of allusions and references to Callas, her voice and her roles. This film, which is sublime and bizarre, is paradigmatic for Schroeter's engagement with the operatic, and it proposes the notion that artistic perfection is only attainable in death. The fragmentary and opaque narrative is conveyed through an intense stylisation of gestures, postures, tableaux and music, thereby relying predominantly on non-verbal affective strategies to produce meaning. Malibran's life is condensed into metaphorical and imaginary situations that reflect on an artist's existence beyond the boundaries of historical reality and gender identity. The life, or rather the death, of the singer is refracted audio-visually through pre-recorded operatic arias (many featuring Callas's voice), pop songs and literary citations. Scenes and performances range from the passionate suicide of two

female lovers, moments of ineffable longing, despair and madness, pastoral musical interludes and, finally, the ecstatic death of the diva.

Schroeter's take on Tosca, one of Callas's most famous roles, in *Eika Katappa*, exemplifies the manner in which his parodic camp appropriation of nineteenth-century opera scenes achieves radical reinterpretation. *Tosca* is quoted and condensed into ten minutes of highlights. The soundtrack features the famous recording of the voice of Callas and Tito Gobbi as Scarpia (the chief of police). Staged outdoors near Heidelberg castle, Schroeter's Tosca wears a nineteenth-century costume but Scarpia is played by a young man in contemporary jeans. She stabs him to death, and then gesticulating wildly, she walks through the woods to witness the death of Mario, her lover. Believing it at first only to be a mock execution she continues with her histrionics until she realises that her lover is dead; she then throws herself off the fortress wall. The sequence finishes with a fast zoom and rapid camera movements showing a precipice, to which is added the final sound of ecstatic applause. Effectively, Schroeter relies on the spectator's knowledge of the opera to make sense of this scene, and the intense drama of Callas's vocal anguish is undercut by an explicitly dilettantish 'home-movie' approach to the image – underlit and grainy with shaky shots, histrionic performances, low-budget costumes and recognisable 'tourist' settings.

The presence of Callas, explicit and implied, provides the link between Schroeter's formal strategies and the gay sensibility that one can identify in his work. Wayne Koestenbaum's book *The Queen's Throat* traces the special appeal the opera diva has for many gay men and provides an interesting and detailed analysis of the diva cult.⁵ Koestenbaum's book describes the forms whereby the 'fan's' cult is ritually expressed, through gazing at the photo of an adored diva, by collecting mementos, by lip-synching to the recording, by impersonating, by enacting famous moments and by repeating over and over again favourite musical pieces. These strategies of the 'fan' are deployed by Schroeter in all his early films, and would therefore seem to be motivated, at least in part, by his own adoration of the diva, a motivation which in turn would appeal to other gay opera fans.

Koestenbaum's examination of the Callas cult illustrates in particular how she speaks to a gay subjectivity. He locates the ambiguity of Callas's appeal within her excess. The uniquely emotive singing and the intensity of her performance has the power to disturb, and even the 'technical' imperfections of her voice in the upper register also work to a complexly disunifying effect.

When Callas's voice broke down, her appeal to gay men became even stronger. The fascination here is similar to that of the ageing movie diva, such as Gloria Swanson, Bette Davis and Judy Garland. In Richard Dyer's analysis of female stars he identifies the emotional intensity of Garland's voice, but also her many come-backs with an increasingly ravaged voice, as an important element in

Garland's appeal to gay men, suggesting that this can be related to their experience in a homophobic society.⁶ Koestenbaum makes a similar argument when he draws a fascinating parallel between Callas's 'vocal crisis' and gay experience:

Homosexuality isn't intrinsically an interruption; but society has characterised it as a break and a schism, and gay people, who are molded in the image of crisis and emergency, who are associated with 'crisis'. . . may begin to identify with crisis and to hear the interrupted voice as our echo.⁷

In a balancing act familiar to many gays, Callas's performance challenged the division between the beautiful and the grotesque as she flaunted her imperfection rather than trying to hide the breaks in register.

Michael Bronski suggests that 'gay men's identification with female stars is a celebration of their own feelings and a means to experiencing them in an exalted context'.⁸ Imitating extravagant diva conduct is also 'to dramatise the problematic of self-expression', since it allows gay men to invent an identity by staging it and making fun of it.⁹ This obsession and identification with the diva may involve affectionate pastiche, but also parody and irony.

Although Schroeter mostly eschews explicit gay subject matter, instead favouring an aesthetic approach, his operatic films are best understood from a gay perspective insofar as his hallmarks – musical excess, parody and dissonance – are frequently characteristics of a gay sensibility. Furthermore, gay men's imagination is often defined as characteristically both melodramatic and operatic in the same manner in which female suffering and yearning is represented. In Schroeter's work such representation is conveyed through the figure of the diva. For him the operatic diva and her voice has the potential to achieve perfect fusion between the idea and its representation. It is her emotional force which inspires Schroeter's stylised mode of narration.

HANS JÜRGEN SYBERBERG

Anybody familiar with Schroeter's films will notice that Syberberg's famous 'German Trilogy' – *Ludwig – Requiem für einen jungfräulichen König* (*Ludwig – Requiem for a Virgin King*, 1972), *Karl May* (1974) and *Our Hitler* – is heavily influenced by Schroeter's aesthetic style, particularly his form of operatic excess and theatricalisation of externalised feelings.¹⁰ However, in Syberberg's hands, these strategies lack parody and irony, and are employed for very different purposes.¹¹

Syberberg's *Our Hitler* is the most controversial film produced in post-war West Germany, partly because its central thesis (and title) proposes that Hitler is within all of us.¹² As Anton Kaes expresses it: 'If myth is a principal means for defining and securing the collective identity of a nation . . . then an

understanding of the National Socialist arsenal of myth is indispensable'.¹³ Syberberg attempts very consciously in this work to illuminate 'the German soul' and German myth. The film is radically anti-realist in style, relying on hyperbole, stylisation and montage. For example, at one point in the film, just following on from a tableau of Doré's famous illustration for Dante's *Inferno*, a toga-clad Hitler emerges from Wagner's grave surrounded by billowing smoke, his hand raised in the infamous salute as the soundtrack plays fragments from Wagner's *Rienzi*, Hitler's favourite opera. Through the dialogue this sequence explicitly constructs Hitler as the narcissistic projection of the German people's desires: 'I gave them what they put into me, what they wanted to hear, wanted to do, things they were afraid to do'. While the people identify with Hitler, he in turn identifies 'with a Wagnerian operatic hero, Cola di Rienzi, the last Roman tribune', and is presented in the film as a reincarnation of Wagner.¹⁴

In general, Syberberg's aesthetic conception fuses such apparent oppositions as Romanticism and Modernism, imbricating the seductive Wagnerian ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a work of art uniting all the arts) with the didactic Brechtian notion of the Epic Theatre. The Romanticism is evoked through Wagner's music and visual references to his operas, and through the depiction of yearning and ecstasy in the form of visions of renewal, paradise and hell.¹⁵ Modernism is constituted through strategies of estrangement and distancing. History is produced as a gargantuan spectacle, a circus show where famous figures such as Caligula and Napoleon parade as Hitler. Against a background of huge projected slides (including Hitler's Chancellery and his house in Berchtesgarden and Wagnerian opera sets), puppets, cut-out doubles and dummies are used to portray the social imaginary of Nazi Germany, and Wagner, invoked through acoustic and visual references, becomes a key figure in the aesthetic seduction of the German psyche. Syberberg advocates that 'Hitler is to be fought not with the statistics of Auschwitz or with sociological analyses of Nazi economy, but with Richard Wagner and Mozart.'¹⁶

Although *Our Hitler* is regarded even by detractors as a stunning tour de force¹⁷ – not least for its intricate sound tapestry – what may come as a surprise to those who have seen the film and remember its extreme length (seven hours) as 'Wagnerian', is that, in fact, this challenging work features only some brief orchestral quotations from Wagner, alongside fragments of Mozart, Mahler, Haydn and Beethoven. What is significant for Syberberg is not so much the recurring Wagnerian *leitmotifs*, but the status of Wagner's work in German culture as the culmination of Romanticism. The irrationalist tendency of German Romanticism is perceived to be the genesis that led to the kernel of Nazism and even a few bars of music can invoke the haunting spectrum of Wagnerian Teutonic mythology ranging from *Parsifal* through *Die Götterdämmerung* to *Rienzi*. Syberberg's film, then, offers us the operatic, not primarily through its

musical fragments, but in the film's complete fabric, its underpinning as a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* through its overall fusion of narrational elements and through its monumental imperative. Thus the operatic quotations – which co-exist with visual and other acoustic references such as original historical documentary sound material – are simply elements in Syberberg's ideological project to confront Germans with the discredited social imaginary of fascism.

'We will show the world Hitler in the form of projections, fantastic dreams, projections of the will that gave shape to these visions'.¹⁸ Given such a stated ambition Syberberg is proposing here nothing less than a counter-projection which takes the form of a cinematic exorcism, designed to enable the necessary 'Trauerarbeit' (the toil of mourning). This Freudian concept¹⁹ refers to the process by which an individual can come to terms with the loss of a beloved person by engaging in a repeated, painful remembering, that works through and simultaneously grieves over the past and then accepts guilt and loss.²⁰

'Allegories of grieving' is Eric L. Santner's apt designation for Syberberg's films, and his discussion reveals what is at stake in the director's attempt to initiate 'the toil of mourning'.²¹

Allowing his actors to reenact the kitsch fantasies of the Third Reich, to recall, with carnivalesque irony, the lethal pathos of the Nazi ideology, Syberberg effectively displays the inner gears of the most powerful politico-cinematic machinery ever known. Indeed, Syberberg wants us to believe that Hitler himself, consciously or unconsciously, conceived the Third Reich as just such an apparatus, as one vast cinematic *Gesamtkunstwerk*.²²

Santner also suggests 'an indirect complicity between Wagner and Hitler',²³ in so far as Syberberg's genealogical line from Wagner's phantasmagoric special effects to Hitler as collective projection is much more than 'Hitler's enthusiasm for Wagner's music'.²⁴ Against this view, it should also be noted that it has been argued that the operatic musical quotations may play a therapeutic part in the film's aspiration to initiate the 'toil of mourning'. Thomas Elsaesser argues that the film sets up 'associations, networks of cultural references, emblems, historical signposts and musical echoes which appeal to memory and conscious recognition'.²⁵ So, by 'remembering' the musical passages within the dense network of Nazi allusions, their seductive appeal recedes and, instead, the musical quotations reveal the associative abject memories. Given the extreme length of the film, the duration of the monologues in static tableau compositions, and the structures of repetition, the viewing and listening experience becomes a painful 'working through'.

Although Syberberg achieved his aspiration for film to 'translate inner worlds and irrational impulses into a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, uniting opera, theatre, painting, literature, historical reality and scholarly analysis', this very achievement

seems to be the crux of the problem.²⁶ Convinced of the vitality of mythology, he attempts to demystify its fascination by laying bare its ideological mechanisms, while simultaneously accepting 'creative irrationality' as the essence of German identity. As Kaes notes, 'his film, which *explored* irrationalism and the fascination of fascism, was accused of being irrational itself'.²⁷ Indeed, the mainly hostile German reception argued that his film leads to further mystification, connecting too unproblematically to Nazi mythology, and that Syberberg's approach to politics borders on aestheticisation of Nazism. Syberberg's subsequent work, including his writing, reveals more clearly his cultural criticism of the postwar consumer society, a criticism that had been more ambivalent in the film trilogy.²⁸ One could argue that although a brilliant work of cinema, *Our Hitler's* intention to coerce Germany into performing 'the toil of mourning' could only be a failure.

ALEXANDER KLUGE

If Syberberg's seductively Wagnerian approach eclipses his avowed Brechtian stance, Alexander Kluge's didactic use of opera is wholly Brechtian. In this sense his appropriation and incorporation of operatic elements is boldly emancipatory. Given the variety of Kluge's raw material in *The Power of Emotion* it is difficult to offer a 'synopsis' for readers who may not have seen the film. Additionally, it should be noted that, as with any montage-based cinema, the effect of the constructed intellectual meanings is linked to shot duration and editing rhythm and consequently a verbal description of the discrete elements is even less adequate than a description of the cinematic narrative sequence.

None the less, in order to give a broad indication of Kluge's use of the operatic elements it should be noted that *The Power of Emotion* is organised through both combining and juxtaposing found footage, dramatic scenes and re-enactments of war with filmed opera fragments, including *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Tosca*, *Die Sache Markropulos* (*The Markropulos Affair*), and the overture to *Parsifal*. The montage editing juxtaposes sounds and images from old opera recordings and contemporary rehearsals at the Frankfurt Städtische Bühnen with documentary war footage, Nazi feature film-clips from *Stukas* (1941), and *Morgenrot* (*Morning Red*, 1933) and references to Fritz Lang's *Die Nibelungen* (1924). In his re-presentation of operatic moments Kluge goes backstage, so that his perspective is literally never frontal but usually from behind the curtain, revealed only through gaps in the scenery and through strange perspectives, such as from the heights of a stage pulley, thus effectively marginalising the big dramatic moments. Moreover, by taking account of various contributions to the production of effects – including a discussion with the famous opera director Michael Gielen, and a chat with the wardrobe lady who explains the logistics of changing the clothes of the corpse in *Rigoletto* – Kluge never glamorises and

always demystifies. He foregrounds the labour of performance, and emblematic of this approach to the operatic is a moment caught in rehearsal when the corpses in *Tosca* suddenly break out of character, rise up and become busy stagehands, who are concerned merely with moving the scenery rather than in involving the spectator.

Kluge's conception of *The Power of Emotion* is best described as kaleidoscopic and associative rather than linear. His editing, which constructs the meaning of his narration, is reminiscent of Eisenstein's dialectical 'montage of attraction', in as much as the oppositional aspects of image and music engender a critical dynamic, both within the operatic sequences and between them and the other filmic material. The film is also littered with intertitles, and frequently droll commentaries provided by Kluge himself through a softly-spoken voice-over.

The title is an allusion to Verdi's *Force of Destiny*, and Kluge argues, along with T. W. Adorno, that whereas in the twentieth century cinema was 'the power house of emotions', opera fulfilled this function in the nineteenth century:

The sum of emotions, their concentration interested me. Only two art forms can cope with this: the opera – which starts out with heightened emotions and then counts its dead in the last act – and the cinema – which builds up the emotions slowly until its happy end. Because the emotions always want a happy outcome.²⁹

Kluge's polemical but perhaps over-simplistic characterisation and differentiation of opera and cinema, suggests that although cinema and opera cater to different emotional needs both art forms hinge on the inevitability of emotional dramatic development. *The Power of Emotion*, however, concerns itself only explicitly with the deconstruction or 'disarmament' of the tragic fifth act in opera,³⁰ and only implicitly with its reversal, the happy ending of many Hollywood films: 'The film . . . a variation on a single theme, asks how can you arrive at a happy ending without lying?'³¹ In one scene a singer is asked how, after eighty-four performances, he can still have the spark of hope in the first act when he knows the outcome of the fifth?

In *The Power of Emotion*, Kluge also tries to establish a correlation between war and opera. He posits a specifically German historical development of explosive emotions fuelled by nationalism as analogous to the feelings produced by opera (predominantly Italian nineteenth-century *bel canto* opera). In an interview, Kluge explains how this configuration is employed in the film:

Take the year 1933. It starts with heightened emotions, with the so called movement, and in the end you have the ruin. Then you have seen a transformation of an atrocity in reality that also occurs in dramaturgy of

opera. They start out in the first act with heightened emotions and nobody knows how dreadfully it will end.³²

In his book of essays, also entitled *The Power of Emotion*, Kluge reflects further on the film but from a broader perspective:

There *really* is such a power, and there are also *real emotions*. War poses the greatest challenge to emotions. And incidentally it comprises the greatest challenge facing all power-based projects for such a time as it can prove that no power can hold it in check; and historically hitherto no power has been able to arrest it. I *wish* to tell stories of why emotions are not powerless.³³

Kluge goes on to argue that opera and war, with their fatalistic dimensions and their all consuming grand passions, do not allow for the power of *real* emotions – those that co-exist with reason and that do not lead to a fatal outcome.

For Kluge, “disarmament of the fifth act” through distanciation devices in *The Power of Emotion* works against the catastrophic and (self)-destructive tendencies of emotional frenzy.³⁴ As a rationalist in the spirit of the Enlightenment, Kluge distrusts fatalism and the melancholic tendencies that have been so deeply embedded in German culture since the nineteenth century. Like Adorno he differentiates between authentic and commodified emotions, regarding the former as necessary for constructing an empathetic utopian yearning for social justice in the face of a socio-political reality of relentless commodification. The ‘disarmament’ of the fifth act requires the defusion of emotional charge of the operatic force before its climactic explosion, which usually entails the death of the heroine as a sacrifice to the hero’s redemption.³⁵ In *The Power of Emotion* we never get ‘enough’ of an opera – be it plot or music – to engage our emotions, the melodic fragments especially are too brief for this, although the aural and visual associative montage may prompt intellectual recognition. Gertrud Koch makes a similar point:

As in his stories and films, Kluge approaches opera by means of a consistent policy of minimalisation and atomisation. He selects details from the plot or the music and attempts to radicalise their intrinsic logic to such a point that they ultimately explode the overall architecture of the closed art work.³⁶

Kluge’s approach is to implode dramatic unity, to disturb the seduction of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* and to counter any illusionist tendency, such as when the expected serenity of *Tannhäuser* is disturbed by fast motion and accelerated music overlaid with the unpleasant thudding of a sledgehammer.

He also ridicules 'feelings' by taking them literally and by conferring upon them a material dimension. For instance, in a documentary sequence (probably regional television news footage) an unexploded 38-year-old bomb is dug out to be defused. Kluge's voice-over comments ironically that 'all emotions presume a happy ending', and then a technician explains at some length, in a wonderful Frankfurt dialect, how you need to tighten – but not too much – a screw 'with feeling' (*Gefühl*). For Klaus Zehelein, director of the Frankfurt Opera, this sequence captures the logic of the film.³⁷ He explains that to 'screw' with precision is also a perceptive metaphor about developing the right pitch of operatic intensity, and consequently understanding the mechanics that lead to the fatalities in the fifth act becomes a counter-strategy which disarms its inevitable outcome.

In the episode entitled *Das Reich*, which features Syberberg's rehearsal of *Parsifal* (1981/2) the mythical Holy Grail is exposed as a mere stage prop. Kluge juxtaposes film of soldiers in the First World War, and of a fireman in the Second World War attempting to protect the Frankfurt Opera House, with contemporary 'guestworkers' white-washing the opera house's facade. During this sequence Kluge's associative montage, which is overlaid with Wagnerian music and Haydn's *Kaiserquartett* (which became the German National Anthem), generates a critical chain of associations that intertwine grand operatic emotions with German history and war. Haydn's music and Wagner's singing Knights of the Holy Grail link Germany's Imperial Reich to the Third Reich, and then its remnants in the Federal Republic. Best of all is Kluge's ironic comment on the mighty German Eagle, which he diminishes to a close-up of a twittering little bird while the German National Anthem plays on the soundtrack. Koch notes:

Opera thus becomes for Kluge a pile of ruins left by the fatalistic course of the story, which he sets out to rearrange. Once exploded into atomised details – ruins – the power of fate dissipates, as does the efficacy of any narrative closure.³⁸

Within the context of this chapter, it seems to me that Kluge's *The Power of Emotion* implicitly negotiates the 'toil of mourning' far more successfully than Syberberg's *Our Hitler*. This is done in the rather limited sense that Kluge's approach dismantles and questions the unity of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* while Syberberg succumbs to its seduction.

CONCLUSION

With the exception of Schroeter's work, the films discussed here are not necessarily representative of their directors' general approach. Instead, these examples demonstrate the formal and ideological diversity of the operatic in New

German Cinema. Within the context of this national cinema these specific case studies indicate that the operatic can be used to convey a critical understanding of the construction of identity, be it from a gay or from a national-historical perspective. As an aesthetic strategy, the operatic points towards avant-garde practices that are critical while, nevertheless, allowing for sensual pleasures. Crucially, since cinema tends to be dominated by the visual register, in the examples employed in this chapter, filmic seduction, albeit highly ambiguous and fractured, frequently favours the sound register.

NOTES

I am very grateful to Jim Cook and Martin Shingler for their helpful comments.

1. For a short overview see my chapter 'New German Cinema', in Pamela Church-Gibson and John Hill (eds), *Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 466–70.
2. It should be noted that the operatic is manifest in a much wider range of films than I can explore here. For example Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*, (1981) turns to opera as a metaphor for impossible dreams. Herzog has also directed various stage operas. For a discussion see Paul Cronin (ed.), *Herzog on Herzog* (London: Faber & Faber: 2002): 253–4, 258–60. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's films should be mentioned (see Caryl Flinn's illuminating essay 'Music and the melodramatic past of New German Cinema', in Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook and Christine Gledhill (eds), *Melodrama: Stage Picture Screen* (London: BFI, 1994): 106–17), as should Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet's *Moses und Aron*, 1975, even though it is a filmed opera, albeit austere avant-garde as befits Arnold Schönberg's modernist compositions. An engagement with opera and the operatic is, of course, not limited to New German Cinema. Luchino Visconti's *Senso*, 1954, Bernardo Bertolucci's *La Strategia del Ragno* (*The Spider's Stratagem*, 1970) and Humberto Solas' magnificently experimental *Cantata de Chile*, 1976 are just a few other examples. See, for example, Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); Richard Fawkes, *Opera on Film* (London: Duckworth, 2000) and David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum, 2002). For a sustained discussion on the imbrication of music and history in New German Cinema see the following two books: Caryl Flinn, *The New German Cinema: Music, History, and the Matter of Style* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2004) and Roger Hillman, *Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music, and Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
3. Die Oper ist sicherlich die allerabgeschmackteste und verrückteste Ausdrucksform überhaupt . . . Ich habe das gesungene Wort immer dem gesprochenen vorgezogen, weil damit eine neue Ebene erreicht wird. Das ist einfach eine gesteigerte Ausdrucksform. Das ist die Verbindung von Tanz, Sprache, Musik und Bild – da sind gleichsam alle Künste drin erhalten. Heinz W. Koch and Uwe Künzel interview, 'Werner Schroeter: Brüche und Widerhaken sind absolut notwendig', *Theater und Cinema* (October 1987): 11.
4. For a detailed analysis see my PhD thesis, 'Imaginary Identities in Werner Schroeter's Cinema: An Institutional, Theoretical, and Cultural Investigation', University of East Anglia, 1995; or my chapter 'Excess and yearning: the operatic in Werner Schroeter's cinema', in Jeremy Tambling (ed.), *A Night in at the Opera – Media Representations of Opera* (London: John Libbey/The Arts Council, 1994): 195–218; or Timothy Corrigan, 'Werner Schroeter's operatic cinema', *Discourse* 3 (1981): 46–59.

5. Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1993).
6. Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London: Macmillan/ British Film Institute 1987): 152–3.
7. Koestenbaum: 129.
8. Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash: The Making of a Gay Sensibility* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984): 94.
9. Koestenbaum: 133.
10. Fassbinder even accused Syberberg of plagiarism, see Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 'Klimmzug, Handstand, Salto mortale – sicher gestanden', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24 February 1979.
11. In this context it is revealing that Schroeter's *The Bomber Pilot* (*Der Bomberpilot*, 1970), a grotesque satire on the fascist revue show, was probably the first film that engaged with the 'cultural myth' of Nazism.
12. Significantly, while the German title refers to the German national context, the English title goes beyond the national. Initially, Syberberg wanted to use the following title: 'Hitler in Us: A Film from Germany, The Land of Progress'. Ian Christie (ed.) 'The Syberberg Statement', *Framework* 11: 6 (Autumn 1977): 13–14.
13. Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat – The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1989): 63.
14. Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects – Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press): 136.
15. The film uses laboured intertitles such as: 'The Cosmic World Ash', 'The Goethe Oak' and 'The Beeches of Buchenwald'.
16. Hans Jürgen Syberberg, *Hitler, A Film from Germany*, translated by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982): 9; cited in Kaes.
17. See Susan Sontag's influential essay, 'Syberberg's Hitler', in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Vintage, 1981).
18. 'The Syberberg Statement': 15.
19. See Sigmund Freud 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917 ('Trauer und Melancholie' German edition) or 1925 (English translation)), in *On Metapsychology: Theory of Psychoanalysis*, The Pelican Freud Library vol. 11, Angela Richards (ed.), trans by James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984): 247–68.
20. In the 1960s Alexander and Margaret Mitscherlich turned to psychoanalysis to understand why many Germans seemed to feel neither remorse nor loss after the defeat of Nazism. They argued that although Germans had lost their 'beloved' Führer (or, psychoanalytically speaking, their collective ego-ideal), they could not publicly acknowledge their loss, and instead they identified with the victors and rebuilt Germany. The victors' imposed process of de-Nazification had led to the years of denial and historical amnesia or, in other words, the German economic miracle years were the symptoms of repression. As a consequence, the Germans were suffering from self-alienation, and only by undergoing 'the toil of mourning' would the German psyche be delivered from its repressed fascism (still evident in the structures of institutions), and be able to embrace new values and let go of lost ideals. See Alexander and Margaret Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich: R. Piper, 1967) (English edition: *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. by Beverley R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975).
21. Eric L. Santner, 'Allegories of grieving: the films of Hans Jürgen Syberberg', in *Stranded Objects*: 103–49.
22. *Ibid.*: 143.
23. *Ibid.*: 142.

24. Ibid.
25. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Filming Fascism: Is History Just an Old Movie?' in *Sight and Sound* 5: 1 (1992): 21.
26. Kaes: 68.
27. Ibid.: 69.
28. See Hans Jürgen Syberberg, *Freudlose Gesellschaft* (Munich; Vienna: Hanser, 1981).
29. Diese Summe von Gefühlen, diese Ballungen haben mich interessiert. Damit umgehen können nur zwei Kunstformen: die Oper – die mit gesteigerten Gefühl beginnt und im letzten Akt die Toten zählt – und das Kino – das die Gefühle langsam aufbaut bis hin zum Happy-End. Denn die Gefühle wollen immer einen glücklichen Ausgang. Frauke Hanck, 'Alexander Kluge zum Film *Die Macht der Gefühle*', *Abendpost*, 22 September 1983. cited by Eva Viktoria Ballin, 'Happy endings im Fernsehzeitalter. Über Operndramatik und Kinoverständnis in Alexander Kluge's *Die Macht der Gefühle* und Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*', in Volker Roloff, Helmeut Schanze and Dietrich Scheunemann (eds), *Europäische Kinokunst im Zeitalter des Fernsehens* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1998): 204.
30. Maja Rocovic interview with Alexander Kluge, *Filmbeobachter* 14: 20 (1983): 8.
31. 'Der Film. . . ist eine Kette von Variationen über ein einziges Thema: Wie kommt man zu einem glücklichen Ende ohne zu lügen'. Ibid: 9.
32. Sie haben das Jahr 1933. Es beginnt mit gesteigerten Gefühlen, mit der sogenannten Bewegung. Uns [sic] Sie haben am Ende Ruin. Dann haben Sie etwas Grausames in Wirklichkeit verwandelt, gesehen, was in der Oper als Dramaturgie auch vorkommt. Sie fangen im ersten Akt mit gesteigerten Gefühlen an und keiner weiß, wie elend es endet. Rocovic, *Filmbeobachter*: 8.
33. Alexander Kluge, *Die Macht der Gefühle* (Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins, 1984) preface, cited by Gertrud Koch, 'Alexander Kluge's Phantom of the Opera', *New German Critique* 49 (Winter 1990): 85.
34. "Abrüstung der fünftften Akte" heißt in *Die Macht der Gefühle*, katastrophalen Amokläufereien eines (selbst)mörderischen Gefühlsrausches entgegenzuarbeiten. Wolfram Schütte, *Frankfurter Rundschau* 219 (21 September 1983). Schütte points out that in Kluge's film the mythical fascination of unreflected emotions is neither broken by the people or a class.
35. See also for a relevant discussion of the heroine's treatment in opera: Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans by Betsy Wing (London: Virago, 1989).
36. Gertrud Koch: 81–2.
37. Interview by Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich, 'Bilder produzieren. Berührungen zweier Medien von ähnlich hoher Professionalität/Gespräch mit Klaus Zehlein (Frankfurter Oper)', in Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich (ed.), *Oper – Film – Rockmusik; Veränderungen in der Alltagskultur* (Kassel; Basel; London: Bärenreiter, 1986): 62.
38. Gertrud Koch: 84–5.

PART TWO:
STARS, PERFORMANCE AND
RECEPTION

6 JACK BUCHANAN AND BRITISH MUSICAL COMEDY OF THE 1930s

Andrew Spicer

The figure of the man-about-town, the leisured British, West End gentleman whose easy-going charm is equal to any situation, is now either nostalgically redolent of a vanished and more ‘innocent’ age, or a symbol of outmoded class privilege. Yet, historical analysis reveals the type to be both complex and highly significant as the central image of British masculine consumption and modernity from the 1880s through to the late 1930s. The focus here will be on the star Jack Buchanan, who dominated the interwar period, establishing himself as an international icon through his musical comedies on stage and screen. Buchanan’s performance style will be explored through an analysis of his film roles, concentrating on the function of the song and dance routines. Although his films were designed for both the UK and US markets as competition to Fred Astaire, Buchanan’s manner and mode of address were highly distinctive, as his films retain a strong element of burlesque. In this he resembled his British competitors, who will be considered briefly. The reasons for Buchanan’s rapid decline in popularity towards the end of the 1930s will also be explored – with a glance forward to postwar revivals – as part of a wider discussion of the cultural construction of the man-about-town.

The modern incarnation of the man-about-town – whose ancestry can be traced back to the Renaissance gallant, the Restoration beau and the Regency buck – can be dated from the mid-Victorian period. The figure achieved widespread social diffusion by the 1890s when, as Christopher Breward argues, a culture of cosmopolitan masculine consumption and display celebrated the style and mores of the leisured, unencumbered urban bachelor in a range of fashion

guides and periodical literature, including *The Smart Set* and *The Modern Man*.¹ As Breward documents, the man-about-town offered a way for males to enjoy being fashion conscious and hedonist without connotations of effeminacy or guilt. Developments in cheap tailoring allowed the lower classes to emulate the style of their 'betters'. Unlike the 'sober citizen' – the middle-class businessman or professional who espouses the austere virtues of civic responsibility – the man-about-town embraced the varied pleasures of modernity, including leisure, having a good time and a legitimate concern with sexuality and personal fulfilment.² The man-about-town was not a figure of anomie or alienation, but of successful adaptation; the man who could not only cope with the bewildering variety of metropolitan life, but was at his ease in this world.

The man-about-town became a central male type in light entertainment as variously, 'the blade, the dandy, the tiger, the swell, the snob, the toff, the masher, the blood, the fellah, the chappie, the johnny, and the dude'.³ As the proliferation of names indicates, the type was widely imitated and the subject of jokes and parodies, a key factor in its cultural assimilation in music hall, revue and musical comedy. As Peter Bailey has shown, as soon as the man-about-town became the social norm, he was imitated by music-hall entertainers including George Laybourne in the 'swell song', as 'Champagne Charlie' who gloried in drinking exploits and fashionable display.⁴ The combative swell was always both celebratory and parodic, a lower class appropriation of gentility that mirrored the man-about-town's style and élan, but suggested that it was open to anyone: 'The stage swell conducted a drama of masculine display, a form of collective narcissism, that of men showing off to other men . . . showing how the type might be lived out through a specific repertoire of behaviour, appearance and manner.'⁵ Male impersonators, like Vesta Tilley, also burlesqued the type.

Both revues and musical comedies were light-hearted cultural forms that tried to be lively, mildly satirical and topical, aimed at a more sophisticated and refined public than the music hall.⁶ These entertainments attempted to woo female audiences by refining the essentially masculine appeal of burlesque through developing the romantic elements. In addition to the lavish decor, both revues and musical comedies specialised in sumptuous costumes that, for males, consisted of the 'immaculate evening dress, superbly cut lounge suits, or form-flattering uniforms' of the man-about-town.⁷ The first musical comedy – George Edwardes' production of *In Town* at the Gaiety Theatre in 1892, an up-to-the-minute affectionate satire of London life – starred the comedian Arthur Roberts as Captain Coddington, the volatile, ready-witted, but impecunious modern masher whose 'dress has influenced the fashion of the moment, and [whose] witticisms have become proverbial'.⁸ George Grossmith enjoyed great success as 'Beautiful, Bountiful Bertie Boyd, the johnny who trots 'em round' in *The Shop Girl* (1893), or as the genially good-natured blood singing 'I'm an awf'ly simple fellow' in *The Toreador* (1901). Basil Hallam, in his

white tie, top hat and tails, achieved fame as Gilbert, the Filbert in the revue *The Passing Show* (1914), singing:

I'm Gilbert, the Filbert, the Knut with a 'K',
The pride of Piccadilly, the blasé roué.
Oh Hades! The ladies who leave their wooden huts
For Gilbert, the Filbert, the Col'nel of the Knuts.

JACK BUCHANAN – 'MR MAYFAIR'

Buchanan was raised in this rich, interconnected tradition of popular entertainment with its mocking but affectionate celebration of the man-about-town. He was born into a middle-class family in Helensburgh near Glasgow, but spent a hard professional apprenticeship in the rough world of the northern music hall as 'Chump Buchanan, patter comedian'.⁹ After coming to London, he took pains to observe Roberts, Grossmith, Hallam and others, but his most important model was the American Eugene Stratton who worked the halls as the 'Dandy Coloured Coon' in a black-face minstrel show from the 1880s to 1912. Stratton, noted for his languid elegance and an air of being oblivious of the audience as if acting for himself, performed in a black frock coat, silk top hat and bow-tie, singing melodies such as 'Lily of Laguna': 'Towards the end of his song, he would drift into a soft-shoe dance, full of delicate grace.'¹⁰ Wyn Clare, a chorine in several of André Charlot's revues in which Buchanan first made his name, recalled

he used to wear midnight-blue tails. They looked perfect in the hard white spot. Then, of course, he had his silk top hat and a beautiful black malacca cane. He sang without a movement holding the stick in front of him with his hands folded over the silver top. He sang it very, very quietly until he came to the last line when he gave that little breathy giggle of his on the words 'and her mother came too'. Then he went into a lovely soft shoe dance. Not a tap dance – a lovely soft shoe which fitted perfectly with his image.¹¹

It was this immaculate but throwaway elegance that constituted the trademark Buchanan style, and his signature tune, Ivor Novello's 'And Her Mother Came Too', expressed a facetious and light-hearted view of life, a refusal to take himself, or romantic love, too seriously. It was one of many tunes that were 'easy to hum' which could be successfully repackaged as sheet music or gramophone records. Through starring roles in revues and musical comedies in the West End and on Broadway, often at the head of his own troupe, Buchanan became an international icon, a byword for masculine elegance on both sides

Figure 4 Jack Buchanan, British cinema's 'man-about-town'.

of the Atlantic. As an important society figure, the 'Beau Brummell' of his age, Buchanan advised the Prince of Wales on the latest fashions, thereby assisting the creation of a cult of 'Buchananism' in the interwar period.¹² This 'drama of masculine display' showed men not only how to wear formal evening attire, but also how to lounge. He was an incomparable loungeur, one hand draped in the trouser pocket of a light suit and wearing a pearl grey trilby, or in loose white flannels complemented by the monogrammed blazer and a cravat. Indeed, part of his romantic appeal was the persistent myth that he was fighting tuberculosis, the reason why this most eligible of bachelors could never marry: 'So every woman in the audience, while outwardly laughing and applauding, would be

inwardly choking a sob.’¹³ The secret of Buchanan’s real-life marriage was carefully preserved, part of his legendary privacy as the ‘male Garbo’.

There was a persistent tension in Buchanan’s British screen career between producers’ desire to exploit his good looks and charm by using him as a romantic lover and Buchanan’s own preference for comedy:

It has always been my desire to make out and out comic films, but it has been my fate . . . to enact the sentimental hero, which candidly has never appealed to me. I have yielded and endeavoured to introduce as many smiles as possible. I have noticed, however, when the picture has been screened, that these have been carefully cut out.¹⁴

He played the sentimental hero in *Confetti* (1927) for First National’s satellite British studio; in *Man of Mayfair* (1931) for Paramount British and in the operetta *Goodnight Vienna* (1932) for Herbert Wilcox’s British and Dominions. The last, with its memorable signature tune and a svelte Buchanan in his Hussar’s uniform, was extremely popular. It does contain one funny scene that was left, in which he tries to disguise his lack of funds in a fashionable restaurant, a favourite Buchanan comic turn, but for the most part he looks slightly uncomfortable in a role whose passion and pathos would have been better suited to the performance style of Novello. The success of *Goodnight Vienna* led to a long-term contract with Wilcox, and Buchanan’s status seems to have given him a large measure of control over his screen roles. His next film, *Yes, Mr Brown* (1933), although set in Vienna, was a thoroughly modern musical comedy in which Buchanan co-starred with his long-term partner Elsie Randolph. *That’s a Good Girl*, released eight months later, and also directed by Buchanan, was a straightforward adaptation of his 1928 West End success that retained Randolph and most of the stage cast. He made a third musical comedy with Randolph, *This’ll Make You Whistle*. Its transfer to the screen was so rapid that when the film was first released in February 1937 at the Empire Leicester Square ‘for a week Jack and Elsie fans had the choice of seeing their favourites live at Daly’s or on film just along the square, in the same show’.¹⁵

Both the stage adaptations use the generic staple of a rambling plot: a first ‘act’ in London in which a number of problems arise, a second on the Riviera in which they are resolved. Buchanan appears in his most characteristic guise as the impecunious bachelor playboy who has a cool line in avoiding his creditors and is loyally assisted by his pals. Always affable, his solo numbers express an overflowing *joie de vivre*. ‘Let Yourself Go’, from *That’s a Good Girl*, was the best of these. Reviewers praised the technical ingenuity of this turn as a serious attempt to open out the stage show by using the resources of cinema; here the camera follows Buchanan throughout the sequence without cutting. The number begins with a casually elegant Jack Barrow (Buchanan) singing on

the hotel balcony before gently promenading, hands in pockets, along the verandah. As a 'gay blade' he takes out his pocket book when he encounters a bevy of pretty girls, but his whole mode changes into burlesque as he joins in the dance of another group of women who are dressed as Grecian Bacchantes. He mirrors their fluttering and twirling movements as he skips on the balls of his feet through the formal gardens. When interrupted by one of his pals, Timothy (William Kendall), who asks, 'What's up old boy?' Jack replies, 'Nothing. Just enjoying life, that's all'.

This camp, burlesque element is prominent in both films. In *This'll Make You Whistle* Buchanan wanders around the hotel swimming pool clutching an outsize rubber frog, spends a considerable period disguised as a bearded *gendarme* and appears in drag to escape detection. *That's a Good Girl* contains a bravura set piece in which he stumbles into playing a man-at-arms in an Italian opera, with much made of his ill-fitting buskins and bent pike. A reviewer for *The Times* saw an interesting tension between these wild, almost anarchic moments and the 'conventional and genteel personages of musical comedy'.¹⁶ They exemplify musical comedy's mixed origins, derived from both operetta and music hall, its capacity to offer refinement and slapstick through Buchanan's versatility. As Steven Cohan has argued, the male singer-dancer can authorise the 'feminine' tropes of narcissism, exhibitionism and masquerade, licensing a display of style and dandified costuming as well as multiple personifications.¹⁷

The high points for 'Jack and Elsie fans' are when the pair dance together. Elsie Randolph is ambivalently positioned sexually and socially. In *Yes, Mr Brown* she plays Buchanan's secretary temporarily disguised as his wife, who has walked out on him. In *That's a Good Girl* she is a female detective who falls for Buchanan but spends most of the film in disguise as the adenoidal daughter of the local postmaster. In *This'll Make You Whistle* she plays an artist's model who is married off to one of Buchanan's pals, Archie (David Hutcheson), though he seems to know little about how that happened. Unlike the encounters between Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, those between Jack and Elsie are therefore not courtship rituals but light, flirtatious meetings. In their first meeting in *That's a Good Girl* they drift into a dance together – intimate, cosy but graceful – while singing 'Fancy Our Meeting', which celebrates the joys of chance encounters. When they finally get together at the film's end, the moment is marked by a brief duet which expresses not romantic passion but a wry recognition of their durable compatibility: 'Things Don't Seem So Bad Now You're Here'. In *This'll Make You Whistle* an amused Elsie watches Jack's fleet-footed avoidance of his fiancée, the formidable county horsewoman Laura (Marjorie Brooks), quipping: 'What do you do when you run out of excuses?' He replies, 'Well, I usually go into my dance'. Singing one of Douglas Furber's most appealing tunes 'Birds of a Feather' – 'I'm in a dancing mood/ A gay romancing mood/ Whenever I'm with you' – they drift into a stroll which develops into a light tap

dance across the hotel lobby whose tempo quickens as each responds to the other's enjoyment of rhythm and movement. At the end they shimmy off together, showing their delight in each other's company. It was this casual, curiously uninvolved, intimacy that audiences most enjoyed about the pair. It does not subvert heterosexual courtship – in *This'll Make You Whistle* Buchanan is married off to the pretty ingénue Joan (Jean Gillie) – but adds a complementary dimension of male–female friendship and accord.

Wilcox and Buchanan were anxious for their films to succeed in the US and both *Come Out of the Pantry* (1935) and *When Knights Were Bold* (1936) used an American female lead, Fay Wray. Although Buchanan's film relationships with Wray are straightforwardly romantic, these adaptations of popular farces preserve a light, facetious touch. In both he is a moderniser, an attractively liminal figure who can move effortlessly between classes, suggesting that class barriers were not insuperable and that society was becoming less rigid, more permeable. In these films he rescues the Wray character from a dour and cheerless marriage with the traditional stuffy aristocrat. *Come Out of the Pantry* used a common trope of interwar fiction, the aristocrat in disguise – also used in *Confetti, Toni* (1928), *Man of Mayfair* and in the final 'act' of *Goodnight Vienna* – to generate the possibilities of interclass romance and emphasise the man-about-town's easy cordiality with those 'below stairs'.¹⁸ In *When Knights Were Bold* he inherits a title but immediately breaks with convention by motoring down to his estate and by treating the assembled villagers to a drink in the local. His relaxed sociability there contrasts with the coldness, disapproval and petrified etiquette he encounters from his own relatives ensconced in the ancestral seat. He gradually charms his cousin Lady Rowena (Wray) by his egalitarian affability (including the ditty 'Let's Put Some People to Work'), and his graceful, limber dancing which radiates fun and laughter, but also the need to move with the times. *When Knights Were Bold's* medieval fantasy contains a wonderful Buchanan burlesque of the heroic swashbuckler. His helmet looks like an upturned saucepan, he defeats his attackers through liberal use of a giant magnet and he goes to the joust with his rival Sir Brian (Garry Marsh) riding on a circus bicycle.

Come Out of the Pantry and *When Knights Were Bold* were hampered by Jack Raymond's pedestrian direction, unsophisticated design and slow pace. In *Brewster's Millions* (1935) Wilcox tried to rectify these deficiencies by spending lavishly. The film had a budget of 'over £100,000 . . . dresses designed by a top couturier, large and lavish sets and unusually ambitious dance numbers'.¹⁹ Wilcox imported talent from the US, Thornton Freeland, to direct, in an effort to match his Hollywood rivals. In interview Freeland commented that his job was to 'assist in imparting the international touch (call it the American touch if you like) to the picture . . . We tried to keep the essentially English humour . . . but to put it over in the quick-fire manner of Hollywood'.²⁰ The film begins with a rapid montage of West End theatreland and continues at a brisk clip

throughout as Jack Brewster (Buchanan), the impecunious man-about-town living in seedy lodgings, is transformed into the free-spending swell who has to squander £500,000 in six months in order to gain a £6 million inheritance. Even though his schemes to lose money keep backfiring, Jack retains his customary good humour, breaking into a soft-shoe dance to the strains of 'Never Forget that One Good Tune Deserves Another' as yet another sure-fire loser proves to be profitable. After many changes of location, including the Riviera, Brewster's travelling company move on to Sicily, the setting for an exuberant fiesta which includes a dance sequence – 'The Caranga', clearly modelled on the Carioca sequence in *Flying Down to Rio* (1933) – elaborately choreographed by another American, Buddy Bradley.²¹ But the burlesque element is also retained, in this case a bravura sequence consisting of Buchanan's tribulations as the back half of a carnival dragon, pursued by the front half, a grim faced cutthroat, part of the gang that is trying to abduct him for ransom money. *Brewster's Millions* was not only Buchanan's most popular film, but the one that garnered most critical praise, for its scale, spectacle, 'Hollywood tempo', 'first-class slapstick' and its appropriateness for Buchanan: 'No one could spend a fortune more gaily or with more superb abandon than our hero'.²²

When Wilcox experienced financial difficulties, Buchanan struck out on his own in 1937 with Jack Buchanan Productions, backed by Rank and C. M. Woolf. His own starring vehicle was *The Sky's the Limit* (1937), with an original screenplay by himself and long-term collaborator Douglas Furber. Buchanan plays an aircraft designer, of a piece with the film's determined pre-war topicality, but the social responsibilities of his position are dropped whenever they become inconvenient. It is really another guise for his customary part as a hard-up bachelor – this time in love with a Viennese soprano Isobella (Maria Losseff) who has become imprisoned in a round of performances and official functions and who needs the release of fun and laughter. The central scene in a fashionable restaurant contains some of Buchanan's most inspired mugging as he watches the bill rise to epic proportions, but also his most developed dance sequence to the tune of 'Montreal', with lyrics by the American team of Silver, Sherman and Lewis, unmistakably indebted to 'The Continental' from *The Gay Divorcée* (1934). As Losseff is not a dancer, it is a solo number that is an unusually overt seduction ritual celebrating the new international dance that will make the male 'More than an ordinary hit/Once he has mastered it'. Buchanan's singing and dancing are intercut with shots of Isobella's approving and desiring gaze as he glides fluidly down the steps of the orchestra's podium and on to the dance floor, completing a succession of light taps and turns, but with hands still in his pockets to complete the image of effortless, nonchalant grace. As he rejoins Isobella at their table, the stuffy restaurant has been transformed into a modern carnival where she and the other diners join in a general rumba to end the scene. Cut to Isobella waking

up the next morning, her appetites restored, having enjoyed, in full measure, the pleasures of sublimated sex.

The elaboration of 'Montreal' is singular and may indicate Buchanan's determination to compete directly with Astaire.²³ However, his dancing still conformed to his fans' expectations: 'not showy or acrobatic . . . just Jack Buchanan, leisurely, effortless, and exactly right'.²⁴ The characteristic Buchanan number drifts into movement, demonstrating a studied casualness which shows the gentleman's superiority to any kind of dedication or training. The effect was a curious combination of remoteness and intimacy, 'a casual event in which he invited you to participate at your leisure'.²⁵ Buchanan's singing was also enjoyed, the *diseur's* light tenor voice with its slight huskiness making him one of the most popular British male stars.²⁶ For the middle classes, his films were judged to be 'among the best of British productions . . . funny without being slummy'.²⁷ But, the extent of their popularity indicated that their appeal was broadly based.²⁸ Working-class audiences also responded to his urbanity, polish, sophistication, assurance, nonchalant ease and lack of self-consciousness; he 'reflected every man's vain dream of himself'.²⁹ The young couples who went from cinema to dance hall could try to reproduce the style which offered fantasies of pleasure, success and self-esteem.³⁰

BUCHANAN'S COMPETITORS

Although Buchanan's incarnation of the man-about-town was iconic, there were several important competing versions. His nearest rival was Jack Hulbert. In their early days both vied for the same roles: Buchanan replaced Hulbert as 'Reckless Reggie from the Regent Palace' in André Charlot's stage revue *Bubbly* (1917), when the latter was called up to fight in the First World War. However, Hulbert's screen persona in his Gainsborough musical comedies, was strikingly different. He reconstructed the man-about-town as a breezy, upwardly mobile eager beaver, a figure that fitted snugly into the liberal, self-help ideology of studio head Michael Balcon.³¹ Hulbert starred in ten films beginning with *Jack's the Boy* (1932), which opens with the young blood Jack Brown (Hulbert) returning home drunk in the small hours after a night's roistering on the town with his pals. He is shamed by his Police Commissioner father into making something of himself and he is determined to show that he can 'stick it' as a policeman and become a force for progressive change: 'I'm going to put new life into the Force and speed things up'. Hulbert's films combine slapstick comedy – sometimes with his wife and frequent stage partner Cicely Courtneidge who plays a madcap frump – with more lyrical moments where he woos the *ingénue* with his pleasant singing and dancing, always more athletic than Buchanan's, expressive of the effort and industry that imbue his whole screen persona. Hulbert's incarnation of someone for whom success comes from boundless

enthusiasm and trying harder than anybody else, was appealing to British audiences, offering a figure with whom they could identify, 'feeling that he is just one of them . . . An ordinary sort of bloke with whom we could have a drink without feeling in the least patronised or overawed'.³² In Britain, Hulbert's films were even more popular than Buchanan's – but he held no attractions for Americans.³³ Their preferred image of the ordinary trier was Fred Astaire.

Gene Gerrard was also popular as the man-about-town. He starred in a series of musical comedies, including *There Goes Susie* (1934), as 'a sort of lower-middle-class suburban equivalent of Jack Buchanan'.³⁴ In *Such Is Life* (1936) he played a millionaire who falls in love with a typist and helps her to become a singer. Other music-hall comedians, notably Stanley Lupino, reproduced the lower-class impersonation of the man-about-town, the swell, in their films.³⁵ Lupino made a series of adaptations of his stage musicals for British International Pictures/ Associated British Picture Corporation beginning with *Love Lies* in 1931 and including *Hold My Hand* (1938), directed by Thornton Freeland. The best was *Over She Goes* (1937) in which Lupino plays one of three young rips involved in intricate entanglements with their respective fiancées. The other stars who embodied the man-about-town were Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn who starred in eight faithful adaptations of Ben Travers' Aldwych farces for Gainsborough from 1933 to 1936. They were not musicals, but relied on cross-talk between Walls as the predatory masher and the rambling idiocy of Lynn's silly-ass, the buffoon version of the type.

THE DECLINE OF THE MAN-ABOUT-TOWN

I have shown that the man-about-town was the central male cultural type in this period, which makes the rapid decline of the figure towards the end of the 1930s all the more striking, part of what Stephen Guy has shown was a steep drop in the popularity in Britain of musicals and musical comedies.³⁶ Guy speculates that these productions were the victims of a changing taste among audiences who started to prefer 'realistic' films and were more critical of the often mediocre quality of these pictures.³⁷ I would add that they were also victims of an increasingly nervous and uncertain industry in which it became impossible to maintain a stable basis of contract performers and production units.³⁸ Fundamentally, however, the demise of the man-about-town was caused by the broad ideological shift in which British culture and society responded to an increasingly fraught international situation and prepared itself for the onset of war. The affability of the man-about-town, his ability to overcome obstacles in an easy-going manner seemed both trivial and inappropriate in wartime, belonging to a vanished, more innocent and carefree age. The demand for realism implied a preference for the sober citizen, a renewed commitment to the virtues of civic responsibility.³⁹ Hulbert's figure of the plucky trier became

incarnated by John Mills, the hero of the People's War, whose persona jettisoned the now useless patrician baggage of the man-about-town. The debonair hero could survive, but only if, like John Clements in *Convoy* (1940) or *Ships With Wings* (1941), the insouciant playboy is redeemed through gallant sacrifice.⁴⁰ Buchanan's persona was too well established to make that shift and his contribution to wartime British cinema was slender: one morale boosting comedy thriller *Bulldog Sees it Through* (1940). But wartime audiences preferred the broader comedy of music-hall stars to cheer them up in times of adversity, and Buchanan returned to stage shows.

There was a brief revival of the man-about-town in postwar austerity Britain where elegance, gracious living and frothy romance seemed a welcome escape from the drabness of rationing and utility clothing. Wilcox's *Spring in Park Lane*, which remade *Come Out of the Pantry* with Michael Wilding in the Buchanan role, was the most successful British film of 1948. Heroically, Wilcox even tried to update the figure in two films starring Frankie Vaughan, *The Lady Is a Square* (February 1959) and *The Heart of a Man* (June 1959), but neither was particularly successful as a burgeoning youth culture was busy creating its own styles and fashions. Vaughan reverted to cabaret, a cultural form that could continue to accommodate the singer-dancer in top hat and tails. Buchanan's career still flourished on stage, radio and the new medium of television, and his eight-part radio series *Man About Town* (1955) was very popular with older audiences. He had a final flourish on-screen as the man-about-town in Raymond Stross's *As Long As They're Happy* (1955), an adaptation of his stage success as a harassed suburban stockbroker. As the father of three mutinous daughters, he manages to retain his fabled affability in the face of mounting domestic crises, breaking into a trademark song and dance at the end. Two years earlier, he had starred alongside Astaire in MGM's *The Band Wagon* (1953), directed by Vincente Minnelli. Characteristically, while Astaire plays his customary role as the ordinary guy, the decent hooper trying to 'earn his keep', Buchanan's role is a camp parody of the histrionic actor-manager who yearns to produce 'great art' rather than popular entertainment. They are reconciled through his conversion to the need for giving the public what they want and performing together in top hat and tails 'I Guess I'll Have to Change My Plan'. The number revealed the essential differences between Buchanan's aristocratic nonchalance and Astaire's technical precision. It was a fitting finale to the fast-vanishing charm of the figure of the man-about-town, which had to be comprehensively overhauled in the postwar period as James Bond in order to function in a world that had profoundly changed.

NOTES

1. Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life 1860–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999): 170–85, at: 173.

2. See James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: Athlone Press, 1999): 95–119.
3. 'The metamorphosis of the "masher": social types on the lighter stage', *The Times*, 20 October 1954 (clippings file, Theatre Museum, London, no page number).
4. See Peter Bailey, 'Champagne Charlie: performance and ideology in the music hall swell song', in J. S. Bratton (ed.), *Music Hall: Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1986): 49–69.
5. *Ibid.*: 62–3.
6. See Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Revue* (London: Peter Davies, 1971); Dave Russell, *Popular Music in England 1840–1914: A Social History* 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997): 81–3.
7. Ronald Pearsall, *Edwardian Popular Music* (London: David & Charles, 1975): 45.
8. From a review in *The Players*, quoted in Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Musical Comedy* (London: Peter Davies, 1969): 14.
9. Details of Buchanan's career are drawn from Michael Marshall, *Top Hat and Tails: The story of Jack Buchanan* (London: Elm Tree Books/Hamish Hamilton, 1978).
10. Roy Busby, *British Music Hall: An Illustrated Who's Who from 1850 to the Present Day* (London: Paul Elek, 1976): 165–6.
11. Quoted in Marshall: 29.
12. See W. Macqueen-Pope, *The Footlights Flickered* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1959): 167–72. Maud Miller identified Buchanan's 'unusually large and loyal public – a public who follow him from film to film with unswerving affection'. *Film Pictorial*, 1 June 1935 (Jack Buchanan special collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no page number).
13. Sandy Wilson, 'Jack, Bobby and Ivor', in Anthony Curtis (ed.), *The Rise and Fall of the Matinée Idol* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974): 76–7.
14. Quoted in Marshall: 72.
15. Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Volume 2 1915–1984* (London: Macmillan, 1986): 446.
16. *The Times*, 2 October 1933 (British Film Institute microfiche on *That's a Good Girl*, no page numbering).
17. Steven Cohan, "'Feminizing" the song and dance man: Fred Astaire and the spectacle of masculinity in the Hollywood musical', in Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (eds), *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993): 46–69.
18. For the importance of this device see Stephen C. Shafer, *British Popular Film 1929–1939: The Cinema of Reassurance* (London: Routledge, 1997): 56–146.
19. Rachael Low, *Film Making in 1930s Britain* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985): 148. The typical budget for a Wilcox film was around £50,000.
20. *Film Weekly*, 16 November 1934 (Buchanan special collection).
21. For a celebration of the ambitiousness and skill of this sequence, see 'Here's the Caranga!', *Popular Music and Dancing Weekly*, 19 January 1935: 7. The anonymous writer predicted that 'its gay Latin touch will sweep the ballrooms' and included a six-step guide.
22. *Sunday Times*, 3 March 1935; BFI microfiche on *Brewster's Millions*.
23. Buchanan had ambitions to sell his films in the US. See his comments quoted in Marshall: 82.
24. Macqueen-Pope: 169.
25. Wilson: 77.
26. For star popularity in this period see John Sedgwick's, 'The comparative popularity of stars in mid-1930s Britain', *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 2 (1999): 121–7; his 'Cinema-going preferences in Britain in the 1930s', in Jeffrey Richards

- (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An Alternative History of the British Cinema 1929–1939* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998): 16–21; and his *Popular Filmgoing in 1930s Britain: A Choice of Pleasures* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000), ch 8. See also, Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930–1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984): 160.
27. Frank Reynolds, *Off to the Pictures* (London: Collins, 1937): 159.
 28. ‘Jack Buchanan’s films have topped the £100,000 in takings in Britain alone. That means that 8,000,000 people think it worthwhile going to see his pictures’. *Daily Mail*, 22 November 1937 (Buchanan special collection).
 29. Marshall: 242.
 30. See David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-earners in Interwar Britain* (London: Woburn Press, 1995): 93–137.
 31. Sue Harper, ‘“Nothing to beat the hay diet”: comedy at Gaumont and Gainsborough’, in Pam Cook (ed.), *Gainsborough Pictures* (London: Cassell, 1997): 81–2.
 32. Hubert Cole, *Film Weekly*, 6 April 1934, quoted in *ibid.*: 82.
 33. See note 26 above and John Sedgwick, ‘Michael Balcon’s close encounter with the American market, 1934–1936’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 16: 3 (1996): 333–48, at: 339.
 34. Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*: 211.
 35. For comment on Lupino see David Sutton, *A Chorus of Raspberries: British Film Comedy 1929–1939* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000): 168–9.
 36. Stephen Guy, ‘Calling all stars: musical films in a musical decade’, in Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s*: 99–118.
 37. *Ibid.*: 113.
 38. See John Sedgwick, ‘The British film industry’s production sector difficulties in the late 1930s’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 17: 1 (1997): 49–66.
 39. Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*: 223.
 40. For further discussion see my *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), ch. 1.

7 STAR PERSONAE AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE COUNTRY MUSIC BIOPIC

Bruce Babington

CONTEXT: A LATE DEVELOPING SUB-GENRE

With the decline of the classical song and dance musical in the 1960s the genre's most persistent mode of survival has been the biopic. This survival is, however, embodied less in accounts of the lives of the performers or composers of the traditional mainstream popular music of the US musical than of stars of alternative forms, such as Rock (in films like *The Buddy Holly Story*, 1978, and Oliver Stone's *The Doors*, 1992); Jazz (*Lady Sings the Blues*, 1978, and Clint Eastwood's *Bird*, 1988); and Country music (three major cinematic biopics – of Hank Williams, *Your Cheatin' Heart* (1964), of Loretta Lynn, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, 1980, and of Patsy Cline, *Sweet Dreams*, 1985 – and an independent film, *Hank Williams: The Show He Never Gave*, 1981). These changes show how competing music styles fragmented the dominance of Broadway-centred popular music, and how the musical biopic has retained some prominence because of the wider biopic's continued popularity, reflecting Western culture's complex investment in ideologies of individuality. They also suggest that if popular desire for the musical endures, the biopic most easily satisfies it on several counts: built-in ideological appeal, realism in an age when the classical musical's fantasy elements signify unrecapturable optimism and, crucially, given the crippling expense of the last super-scale musicals of the 1970s, production numbers with minimal dancing and simple shooting of small ensembles.

To constitute a new source for biopics a musical form must shift from the margins to the centre of mass culture. Country music's move into the

mainstream from its regional (Southern) and socio-economic (working-class) base, was signalled from the early 1940s by numerous 'crossover' Country hits, whether cover versions by non-Country singers of 'hardcore' songs (such as Tony Bennett's recording of Williams's 'Cold, Cold Heart'), or songs by singers with 'softshell' Country associations (Patti Page's 'The Tennessee Waltz'), or songs by major Country artists – like Cline – achieving success in the Pop charts.¹ In the early 1950s MGM signed Williams to a contract, which included making a biopic, though nothing came of this. When the film came out in 1964, well after Williams's death, its shooting in monochrome indicated MGM's guardedness about a style of music still identified as 'hillbilly'.² By the 1980s a complex combination of factors – changed demographics, the economic renaissance of the South, folk and 'rockabilly's' input into mainstream pop, together with the 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' attached to Country music that will be discussed below – constituted a wider, cross-regional, cross-class, even international audience for Country music and films based around its performers.

In the 1970s and in the 1980s, Country music increasingly featured on Hollywood film soundtracks, such as the use of 'Stand By Your Man' in *Five Easy Pieces* (1970). Narratives employed 'Country' milieu and stressed 'Country' over metropolitan values (as in Eastwood's *Every Which Way But Loose*, 1980, and *Any Which Way You Can*, 1980, *Honky Tonk Man*, 1982, *Tender Mercies*, 1983, and *Pure Country*, 1992). Country performers such as Kris Kristofferson, Kenny Rogers, and Dolly Parton achieved super stardom. However, in the 1990s the musical biopic largely emigrated to television where the wider biopic genre proliferated energetically. Though it has been plausibly argued that made-for-television biopics exhibit less interest in stars than in 'ordinary people' suddenly elevated into fame, the musical biopic has flourished on television with filmic lives of such stars as Josephine Baker, Little Richard, Frankie Lymon, Frank Sinatra and Liberace.³ Any taxonomy of the Country music sub-genre should therefore include four of these made-for-television films, centring on Tammy Wynette, Dottie West, Naomi and Wynonna Judd and John Denver – *Stand By Your Man* (1981), *Big Dreams and Broken Hearts: The Dottie West Story* (1994), *Naomi and Wynonna: Love Can Build a Bridge* (1995) and *Take Me Home* (1999), respectively. Despite encompassing harsher material than the classic 1940s Hollywood models, television biopics exhibit delimiting constraints such as television soap opera and tabloid news narrative conventions, the use of 'lookalike' actors rather than major stars, and cheapness and speed of shooting. Where living subjects are featured, their often heavy involvement with the projects means that hagiography can overcome the genre's apparent commitment to scandal. With the made-for-television musical biopic the cheapness of production numbers leads to a retreat from musical performance as a

site of transcendence. Nevertheless, such narratives still depend on the powerful idea that Country music is the last repository of 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' in popular music, and figure here as important additions to the sub-genre, the taxonomy of which includes at its margins three 'rockabilly' biopics: *The Buddy Holly Story*, the film about Jerry Lee Lewis, *Great Balls of Fire* (1989), and the made-for-television biopic, *Elvis* (1979). Lastly, the whole sub-genre is shadowed by one of the great contemporary film musicals, Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975), with its sardonic challenge to the central values of the Country ethos.

Emerging as late as 1964, the sub-genre of the Country music biopic incorporated the inflection of classic hagiographies such as *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) and *Night and Day* (1946) into the more melodramatic and/or realistic forms exemplified by *The Eddie Duchin Story* (1956) and *Love Me Or Leave Me* (1955).⁴ The Country music biopic, with its typical focus on rural poverty, its authenticity derived from suffering, its presentation of heterosexual relations as central but often difficult and violent, its protagonists' tendency to an incapacity for dealing with success, and their propensity for early deaths, is linked to the wider demystifying history of the biopic. Also it emerged in a period when 'women's issues' were increasingly highlighted in film and television, and the female protagonists who feature in five of the seven films explored here reflect this, as well as the growing number of female Country singing stars. Such emphases are observable in the mother-daughter relationship in the Judds' biopic, in the involvement of all the heroines with both careers and motherhood, and the incipient and erratic feminism of Lynn and West in *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Big Dreams and Broken Hearts*, respectively. Formally, however, the Country music biopic's narratives are conservative, less inventive than a high-art music biopic like *32 Short Films About Glenn Gould* (1993), than Stone's *The Doors* with its drug fantasy numbers, than Eastwood's *Bird*, or Paul Schrader's unmade Hank Williams project, which was to have escaped the biopic's chronological tyranny by its division into six moments in its subject's life.⁵ Perhaps the sub-genre's single formal innovation – shared with other contemporary musical biopics – is a shortening and fragmentation of performance numbers, which often metamorphose, after stage-based beginnings, into extra-diegetic music to montage sequences, paralleling the use of songs as background to sequences in many contemporary Hollywood narratives. Beyond the economic factors, this can be understood as a way of overcoming one of the problems of the musical biopic – the relative poverty of options for staging performance numbers. However, here the technique works to consolidate the relationship between art and life, important in all musical biopics, but perhaps most of all in those with a Country focus.

'SINCERITY', 'AUTHENTICITY', 'CROSSOVER'

In a much-quoted statement, Hank Williams claimed that

Country Music can be explained in just one word: sincerity. When a hillbilly sings a crazy song, he feels crazy. When he sings 'I laid my Mother away', he sees her alaying right there in the coffin. He sings more sincere than most entertainers. You got to know about hard work. You got to have smelt a lot of mule manure before you can sing hillbilly. ⁶

That Williams was speaking to *Nation's Business* sharply registers the paradox that a form of music deeply integrated into the commodification of entertainment simultaneously claims – to use Lionel Trilling's definition of 'sincerity' – a 'congruence between avowal and actual feeling' thought impossible within the popular music industry.⁷ Williams's statement, echoed endlessly by other performers, fans, and audiences, encapsulates the fundamental belief of Country music. More deconstructive approaches have analysed the music's 'fabrication of authenticity',⁸ but the use of the term 'authenticity' here both evokes memories of a less commodified communal art, and what Trilling defines as 'a more exigent conception of the self and what being true to it consists in than sincerity does'.⁹ It is unprovable that 'hardcore' Country performers have a different relation to 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' in their performances from urbane singers such as Frank Sinatra, but it is often felt that they do: and it is a mark of the believer in Country music's 'difference' to feel such a relationship. A more guarded formulation would be that this is acted out in a circle of agreement made up of performer, audience and critics. For example, in the finale of the film *Stand By Your Man*, when Annette O'Toole as Tammy Wynette sings the famous title song, she apologises for the discrepancy between its sentiments and her divorces, by telling her audience that the song expresses a conviction she still subscribes to, 'at least I believe it's the way it should be'. It is difficult to imagine other kinds of singers doing this – Sinatra, say, preambing 'Our Love is Here to Stay' with a discussion of his divorces. Only Country singers, and Blues singers, are believed to have such a transparent relationship with their material.

However, the Country singer as biopic legend is necessarily a performer who has 'crossed over' from harder core styles to those acceptable to a mass audience. Here complications arise, since, as insertion into the commodification process of the recording industry is usually dramatised as part of the films' success-narratives, 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' are endangered. All the films discussed here inescapably deal with this problem of 'crossover'. *Sweet Dreams* partly solves it by emphasising the late 1950s as a time when many kinds of music became popular. When Patsy (Jessica Lange) and Charlie (Ed Harris)

date, his car radio plays Sinatra's 'Young at Heart', followed by the soul singer, Sam Cooke's 'You Send Me', to which they dance outside the Rainbow club. Earlier they had jived to Gene Vincent's 'Be Bop a Lula', and later they dance again outside the Rainbow to Acker Bilk's jazz-pop instrumental, 'Stranger on the Shore'. After Patsy's death when, in Charlie's fantasy, they dance there again to her song 'Crazy', the implication is that Country music has become as culturally central as the other genres. In *Naomi and Wynonna: Love Can Build a Bridge*, something similar happens when Wynonna sings Joni Mitchell's 'Clouds' and 'Don't Be Cruel', and Naomi hears a streetsinger's version of Bob Dylan's 'Blowin' in the Wind', moments demonstrating the compatability of 'rockabilly' and 'urban folk' with traditional but evolving Country music. Elsewhere, explicit statements may be made, as when the producer Randy Hughes, pushing the heroine towards pop balladry, calls Patsy's honkytonk songs 'yodellin' and growlin' (a view that the audience is surely meant to see as partial), and in *Your Cheatin' Heart's* extended debates about who constitutes Hank Williams's audience. It is only in *Take Me Home*, in which Chad Lowe's John Denver has 'crossed over' so far that his relation to 'hardcore' country – symbolised by his identification with Colorado rather than the South – is radically diminished, that there is no real tension. We should see, then, these biopics as structured both by movements towards 'crossover' (justified as preserving 'oldtime music' in the modern world, but threatening authenticity) and by conservative markers that prohibit the spectre of inauthenticity. The following is a brief consideration of the most important areas in which such markers function across the sub-genre.

'HARDCORE' NOT 'SOFT SHELL'

This terminology is applied by Richard A. Peterson. To be accepted by core audiences as authentically Country, the artist needs certain markers to indicate 'hardcore' status – the most important of these are regional affiliation, association with the country rather than the city, origins in poverty, lack of education, 'southern' speech and dress, particular musical and performing styles derived from within the country tradition rather than from outside it and songs with 'autobiographical' connotations that suggest the performer's lived experience. That these signifiers are heavily inscribed across Country biopics is clear, but the process is particularly revealing where key elements seem to be lacking. If Denver is counted as an anomaly – the film about him being a non-condemnatory (though occasionally ironic) account of a wholly 'softshell' singer – the Judds' biopic is the most interesting, especially given its framing device of an extravagant rock-style concert that might well suggest the duo's distance from their origins. However, this final concert balances its terpsichorean rock-performance style with tradition-alluding songs like 'Grandpa,

Tell Me 'Bout the Good Old Days', Naomi's seemingly lower middle-class upbringing is compensated for by her fall into poverty as a single mother, and though she spends time in California, the film ends with the family living in rural Tennessee. The influence of rock in the film is also tempered by traditional elements such as the recording by the influential duo, Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, of 'The Sweetest Gift', the record that Naomi buys Wynonna, which reaches back, through the female artists with their special relevance for mother and daughter, to the archetypal close harmony duo of the Blue Sky Boys.¹⁰

DISORDER, EARLY SORROW, PREMATURE DEATH

Initial poverty (with fathers often absent) defines the lives of some of the most 'authentic' Country performers, who tend also to be marked by the traumas of alcoholism and divorce and lifestyles of excessive sexual and material indulgence. Such tragedy becomes itself a marker of authenticity – life lived at an intensity different from bourgeois norms. The stars also tend to live out and articulate the contradictions of their peer-audience (for instance, Jessica Lange's wonderful embodiment of Patsy Cline's contradictory desires for domesticity and instability), but what binds them so intimately to their auditors can also destroy them. Williams, Cline and West all died prematurely, the last two in accidents, but the crashes are offered as the logical resolution to turbulent lives. (With Denver, whose problems are the career-marriage difficulties of traditional musical biopics uninflected by Country elements, his early death registers simply as a cruel accident.) Where the protagonists survive (Lynn, Wynette, the Judds) they bear the survivor's marks of their experience, further authenticating their art as digging deeper than much popular culture.

AUDIENCES, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

The Country music biopic represents the Country performer's 'special relationship' with his or her audience, at least to the degree that the star, however successful as a recording artist, stays on the road giving live concerts, as when Loretta Lynn and Patsy Cline duet 'Back in Baby's Arms Again' at a small fair in Connecticut in *Coal Miner's Daughter*. In such sequences the camerawork also declares that Country music audiences are different from others as it shows an extended community, or even a hugely extended family, middle-aged, old and young. In contrast, in *The Buddy Holly Story*, in which a new form of music is validated at the expense of traditional Country styles, Holly's performance at an ice rink splits the young rock 'n' roll audience from their elders. The audience that the camera pans across in *Coal Miner's Daughter*, and which is paralleled in other Country music biopics, reminds the viewer of the primary audiences for whom the protagonists play in their local medicine show, church

Figure 5 The broken performer: Loretta Lynn (Sissy Spacek)'s breakdown on stage in *Coal Miner's Daughter* is linked to her loss of relationship to the Country music community.

fair, dance hall or amateur talent show beginnings, and beyond that of the audience of family, friends and neighbours for whom Naomi and Wynonna first perform 'The Sweetest Gift'. The audience shown at the Country singer's professional performances is thus presented as an extension of the family, community and region with which the performer seeks constant interaction, and into which the wider audience for Country music, feeling the loss of such community, taps affirmatively. Hence the trauma if this relationship is ruptured, as it is, for instance, when Lynn in *Coal Miner's Daughter* suffers a breakdown on stage, babbling incomprehensibly to an audience that seems notably lacking in empathy – a scene from Lynn's real life that was wickedly parodied in Barbara Jean's on-stage collapse in *Nashville*.

BECOMING THE TRADITION

Where the protagonists of other musical biopics claim to break with convention, the Country artist joins a tradition in which innovation is most often the rediscovery of older values. There are three ways in which this is typically

dramatised. First, the protagonist is embraced by the tradition, as when the veteran singer Ernest Tubb (playing himself) introduces Lynn at the Grand Ol' Opry, or when Cline admires Lynn's recording of her own song, 'Walkin' after Midnight'. Secondly, there is radio, the medium through which, almost invariably, the young protagonist first experiences the Country tradition. In this trope, commercial radio is pastoralised into the voice of community, as in *Coal Miner's Daughter* in which the impoverished family listens, in a poignant scene, to live performances broadcast from the Opry. Thirdly, reflecting the historical displacement of live performance on radio by the broadcasting of recordings, the contact with the tradition is often made through broadcast records, as when Wynette at the opening of *Stand By Your Man* listens to George Jones's 'White Lightnin''. The sense that the recording is an alienation of live performance is countered by Country's commitment to the personal. The latter overpowers the former when they are intertwined in various conceits, as with Lynn's inability to make her first recording until her babies are set in front of her, and Naomi's and Wynonna's insistence on doing a demonstration recording as a live duet, not as remixed solo tracks. The recording becomes the repository of living tradition itself, as Naomi gives her daughter a record of 'The Sweetest Gift', and the posthumous playing of 'Crazy' in *Sweet Dreams* seems to ask how else but on record could we still hear Patsy Cline?

GOSPEL MUSIC AND THE BLUES

Country music biopics further demonstrate their subjects' authenticity with the meaningful use of Gospel music and the Blues. The films' many allusions to church music emphasise the spiritual and communal elements of the Country ethos, while references to the Blues play on the authenticity granted to that mode and suggests a kinship between it and the 'White Blues' (a name sometimes given to Country music), invoking parallels of deprivation, suffering and artistic sublimation usually obscured by racial difference. In the first case representative examples are the communal singing of 'Amazing Grace' at Loretta's father's wake in *Coal Miner's Daughter*, and the performance of 'He Walks With Me' in the Judds' biopic, underlining those elements of suffering and religious hope that are a strong part of Country music. As the sardonic emphasis on the Sunday church services – both black and white – in *Nashville* suggests, this religious ethos is another, often unrecognised parallel, between black and white 'Southern' music. A black presence in the Country biopics is less usual, but is highly worked in *Your Cheatin' Heart*, in which the influence of Williams's black childhood mentor, 'Teetot' (the itinerant musician Rufus Payne), is forcefully dramatised. Two of the 'rockabilly' films, *The Buddy Holly Story* and *Great Balls of Fire*, link their heroes explicitly to black musical roots, but both films do this at the cost of denying their protagonists' Country origins,

which they are shown as abandoning for the newer mode of rock. In fact, Lewis returned to Country music, while Holly's style was always as much Country as Rhythm and Blues, so that both films' apparent surface rejection of Country projects is contradicted through song style.

PLAYING FOR LOVE

In the Elvis Presley documentary, *Elvis: That's the Way it Is* (1970) there are moments when the King and his troupe relax backstage, looking genuinely happy amidst all the hype, singing their Southern Gospel heritage. A similar idea of the commercial musician fundamentally playing for love is suggested in the country biopics, importantly modifying the drama of material success, and this trope is exemplarily acted out in *Sweet Dreams*. In a key scene, the band sprawl exhaustedly backstage, joking about their tiredness. One starts casually to sing 'Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms' and the others join in non-hierarchically, with the star, Cline, in a subsidiary role. No audience, no payment and the song with its multiple variants constituting a microcosm of tradition.¹¹

MALE AND FEMALE

The sexual ethos of Country music is conservative. Even where there is a critique of gender relations – as in Lynn's proto-feminist songs – it is protest in the context of necessary heterosexual relationships, and sexual ambiguity comes no closer than Charlie's threat in *Sweet Dreams* to declare himself 'a homo' in order to evade military service. On the one hand, this is presented as a pastoral quality, which is an enviable departure from urban gender confusion. On the other, though, these deeply held identities promote tension as the violent instability of the 'ramblin' man' conflicts with the female star's desire for domesticity (Cline's 'house with yellow roses'), rendering sexual relationships tumultuously precarious. Sexual need is accompanied by sexual antagonism, as in Patsy's mother's schooldays confession of sticking a pen into a boy's genitals. If the traditional roles are reversed and the woman is the star, then the men are likely to feel emasculated. Ironically, the women are incorrigibly attracted to 'ramblin' man' figures like Doo (Tommy Lee Jones) in *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Charlie Dick – whose surname symbolises his phallic assertiveness – in *Sweet Dreams* and George Jones in *Stand By Your Man*, with whom sustained relationships are almost impossible (though Doo, in marked contrast to Charlie, manages to convert his wildness into domesticity). Both male and female characters, while finding self definition in extremes of masculinity and femininity, are fractured by further contradictions; the women acquire an economic power traditionally associated with masculinity while simultaneously demanding both subordination and aggression from their men, with the latter torn between need

of, and an often violent flight from, domesticity, exhibiting masochistic passivity, alcoholism and disintegration. In *Big Dreams*, for example, traumatised by an abusive father and poverty, Dottie West exhibits a multitude of distorted ultra-masculine as well as ultra-feminine traits. This is at once torment and an occasion for critique, but also a type of authenticity, offering sexuality as tragic Opry melody rather than the optimistic tune of most popular music.

THE SHADOW OF NASHVILLE

Altman's film *Nashville* famously assaulted the mythos of Country music to reveal its commercialism, inauthenticity, right-wing populism and ersatz sentiment – a crushing indictment that also exposes all the biopics dealt with here. Yet, for all its force, *Nashville's* assault is only meaningful because of the survival, however compromised, of belief in the authenticity of the best Country music. Furthermore, *Nashville*, consciously or unconsciously, cannot but allude to the values of Country music even as it satirises them. Take the extreme example of Haven Hamilton's oleaginously insincere number 'For the Sake of the Children', in which a father tells his girlfriend the 'three reasons why' she must 'unpack [her] bags, and try not to cry' – his three children, glutinously eulogised. One could wince at the lyrics, but should do so less, I suggest, than may at first appear, since within the burlesque there are traceable elements of a song which deals – unoccluded by cynicism, euphemism, or irony – with a narrative of broken love, duty and desire, pain and renunciation, those ur-Country structures of feeling that are powerfully restaged even in made-for-television biopics.

SINGING A LIFE: TITLE SONGS PERFORMED

Tammy: Do you know 'Your Cheatin' Heart'?

Musician: 'Honey, we live it every day'.¹²

In the independent Canadian film, *Hank Williams: The Show He Never Gave*, the star is imagined extending the Country performer's rapport with his audience into an explicit statement of his song's autobiographical sources.¹³ If, as he and his audience believe, Country music is a form of autobiography, it is unsurprising that five of the seven biopics discussed here are titled after their subjects' most famous songs, which, as synecdoches for their lives and art, are given a privileged place. Indeed in the Lynn, Cline and Wynette films, they become the culminating performances. Such a conflation – an obviously tempting strategy for popular artistic biography – is not restricted to the Country music biopic, but the trope's pre-eminence in this form of the sub-genre is very

striking. Three such numbers are used here to explore moments of performance: George Hamilton's acting (with Hank Williams Junior's singing) of Hank Williams's 'Your Cheatin' Heart', Sissy Spacek's acting and singing of Loretta Lynn's 'Coal Miner's Daughter' and Jessica Lange's acting and miming (to Cline's own recording) of Patsy Cline's 'Sweet Dreams'.

Unlike the two songs in the other films, 'Your Cheatin' Heart' is sung halfway through the biopic, not at its end, a finale which stages both Williams's non-professional performance in a local store and the audience at the auditorium spontaneously singing his gospel number 'I Saw the Light' after his death has been announced. This double finale asserts Williams's meaning to both his original and wider audiences, though in ways still dominated by hagiography, since in the scene in the store Williams (an unreformed alcoholic) implausibly refuses drinks, while factual accounts of the death announcement note that the 'spontaneous' singing was stage-led, and that some present laughed at the announcement, thinking that it was a joke in bad taste excusing another drunken non-appearance.¹⁴ Typically, the earlier performance of 'Your Cheatin' Heart' comes after narrative material which links the song to Williams's life. Unable to deal with the contradictions of his fame, he arrives at the theatre late and drunk, and watches unseen the cancellation of his concert; but, recognised by the audience, he is cheered to the stage. There he jokes about his alcoholism and his wife – topics which emphasise his status as the articulator of his audience's tensions and desires – before singing the song. Typical of the sub-genre, the number is performed and shot simply. Williams, in a relatively restrained Nudie Cohen designed suit (a glitzed-up version of a Southern working-man's Sunday best), appears in medium shot with the band and in close-up alone, images that are combined with shots of the audience and of his wife, Audrey, watching from the wings.¹⁵ This simplicity foregrounds Williams's face, the song's lyrics and the music as well as the significance of Audrey, about and to whom the song is being sung.

Beginning with a laconic comment to the band – '“Cheatin' Heart”, boys' – Williams retreats to allow his guitarist a brief opening solo, a reminder of the communality of the Country tradition. Williams then moves forward and sings with restrained bodily gestures, little ducks towards the mike, a canter backwards, a buckling at the knees. Like other Country singers, his facial expressions convey checked emotion, occasional strain in reaching the male singer's 'high lonesome' sound and intimations of emotional intensity through the brief closing of his eyes. Williams's actual recorded performance, nasal and hooting against a piercingly whining steel guitar, teeters stoically on the abyss of tears invoked by 'Cheatin' Heart's lyrics – 'crave your love', 'make you weep', 'tears come down like fallin' rain' – which are only fragilely covered by the lyrics' attempts to deflect the narrator's grief into a fantasy of future payback for the cheat. The film does not use Williams's own vocals, but appears to do the

next best thing by employing his son, Hank Williams Junior. Despite the fact that the latter's singing is a relatively authentic imitation, the softened musical arrangement, including pop-styled background vocals, makes the number the most musically altered of the three considered here. Although George Hamilton manages a strong embodiment of Williams's man-child aspects, 'Sneezy' Waters's impersonation in *Hank Williams: The Show He Never Gave*, manages to catch more of the star's contradictions: his 'Luke the Drifter' religious monologues that spiral down from sentimentality into nihilism and his unstable combination of macho assertiveness and feminised suffering, religion and hedonism.

Like *Sweet Dreams, Coal Miner's Daughter* closes with the title number. In this case, the song restates for a last time the narrative's dual trajectory: Lynn's rise from poverty to success and the doubling back in which her art affirms the continuity of her origins. This is the most self-consciously referential of the three songs, its lyrics explicitly meditating on the meanings of Lynn's art and of Country music itself. The number has further narrative significance as the moment of Lynn's comeback after her breakdown. As such, it rearticulates her bond with her audience, a bond which had disintegrated in periods of panic as, for instance, when a female fan had torn at her hair.

The large-scale success of both the song and the film is grounded in an enactment of the 'American Dream' journey from poverty to success. But this journey is not a simple cancelling of the past. Lynn's progress, escaping from, but also preserving, her roots, reworks not just the material aspirations of the USA in general but its nostalgia for pure origins in the agrarian republic. The film's recalling of this pastorate is impressively bleak, for unlike West's arcadia of country girls, green grass and sunshine, Butcher Holler (Lynn's home town) is a pastorate of Wordsworthian harshness, a puritan realm of virtuous poverty amid exploitation and violence, with 'Daddy' working all night in the mine, all day in the fields, and 'Mommy' scrubbing until her fingers bleed, all intensely depicted in the film's use of impoverished winter light. The song's simple Christianity, with its family centredness and emphasis on work and sacrifice, is especially powerful in a time of perceived moral relativism and confusion, but is also harsh enough to make affirmations ambivalent. Butcher Holler, commemorated in spirit, is pragmatically escaped. Loretta is proud to be a coal miner's daughter, but she would not be equally happy to be a coal miner's wife or mother.

There are further ambivalences. In this performance a Country band is abetted by big acoustics and a wordless Nashville chorus, while Spacek's close imitation of Lynn's voice, though full of Country markers, is less 'hardcore' than Williams's. As Lynn's fame grows throughout the narrative, Spacek's costume transforms from that of a country waif or cowgirl to ringleted Southern belle in full-length white gown, mediating images of poverty with an antebellum graciousness. This points, via the historical allusion, to the ascendant South of

the 'sunbelt boom' of the 1970s and 1980s whose regained prestige helped the mainstream popularity of Southern music. Some gestures mediate not just between two images of the South, but of femininity. Coming onstage, Spacek lifts the front of her gown in ladylike fashion, but then holds the cord of her hand mike like a lariat. Aureoled by photographers' flashlights, the star binds past and present, poverty and wealth and country and city. Filmed restrainedly, the number is divided between shots of the performer (in long-shot and close-up), her audience and her husband Doo. Closing, the number moves into over-voice to images from Loretta's past, changing then to a medley of her other famous numbers. The final image is of the old family house. Shown here as sturdily intact, it suggests an enduring foundation.

Unlike Lynn and Williams, Cline was no songwriter, but a 'vocal auteur' metamorphosing songs by others into personal statements. A moment in *Sweet Dreams* enacts this when Cline resists recording Willie Nelson's song 'Crazy', but is then persuaded to make it hers – 'Just like you always do it, your way'. The film's climactic performance of 'Sweet Dreams', a song only released after her death, contains heightened autobiographical connotations from being read as a kind of last testament. The sense of it relating intimately to her life is underwritten by the preceding moment in a recording studio where she tells Charlie she cannot answer the question of whether she will take him back. As Cline gestures wearily, the number's introductory string cascade plays over her image.

'Sweet Dreams', like 'Your Cheatin' Heart', is a paradigm of the 'hurting' aspects of Country music, embracing loss more deeply than any other popular music except the Blues. Lynn's song transforms past tribulation into national example, but 'Sweet Dreams' luxuriates in unappeasable loss, spiralling down obsessively to an unmendable past: 'Why can't I forget you and start my life anew / Instead of having sweet dreams about you?' The apotheosis of loss, the number is also Cline's apotheosis as the 'Goddess of Crossover'. She appears as a white-gowned icon, performing with a quasi-symphonic orchestra banked up behind her against a stage décor of red and black, which plays in its opening string cascade sounds never heard by any Rose of San Antone. All this contrasts with her earlier costumes, such as the blue-and-white checked shirt, golden bomber jacket, pale blue neckband and sky blue skintight trousers she wears to sing 'Blue Moon of Kentucky' at the stock car derby, or the red-and-yellow cowgirl outfit in which she sings the same song at the film's beginning. Underneath a carefully made-over hairstyle, makeup covers the bruising round her eye which was evident in the scene before, and her sequined gown and glittering earrings render her ethereal, although Jessica Lange retains even here vestiges of big-boned rawness. Like Lynn, but unlike Williams, Cline has abandoned her guitar, and even the hand mike that Lynn carries, and stands alone now like a diva. Glorifying her metamorphosis, the number, however, retains hardcore characteristics amid the softshell, with Country vocal

Figure 6 Prior to her transformation into a mainstream star, Patsy Cline (Jessica Lange)'s cowgirl costume codes her as a Country performer in *Sweet Dreams*.

markers deeply embedded in the catches in her throat, the swoops in register, and her 'masculine' forcefulness even in a slow ballad. These are matched by gestures crossing her new status and her old. While some are near operatic, as when she stretches arms out to the side, palms outward, others anchor her more earthily as she runs her hands down her thighs, and sways restrainedly, as if caught up in the honky tonk reminiscences of the piano within the string orchestration. As she finishes, the audience is seen to rise, applauding, standing

against the auditorium's church-like stained glass windows – a rare allusion to religion in a very secular film, which also echoes the Carnegie Hall finale of some earlier popular music biopics.¹⁶ But such allusions are counterpointed by Cline's casual waves to the audience and her 'Tha' Yew', which suggest the essential Country performer. And, leaving the stage, she passes a traditionally dressed Country band, a brief intersection that reminds us not only of what has been lost in her ascent, but also of essential links retained.

NOTES

1. The terms 'hardcore' and 'softshell' are used by Richard A. Peterson to describe the range of Country music in his book, *Creating Country Music: The Fabrication of Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 150–5.
2. Williams died on New Year's Day, 1953, aged 29.
3. George F. Custen, *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Conceived Public History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992): 216–23.
4. *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is a biopic of George M. Cohan, *Night and Day* is a biopic of Cole Porter and *Love Me Or Leave Me* is a biopic of Ruth Etting.
5. Kevin Jackson (ed.), *Schrader on Schrader* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990): 127.
6. Quoted in Roger M. Williams, *Sing a Sad Song: The Life of Hank Williams* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981): 107.
7. Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972): 2.
8. See Peterson: passim.
9. Trilling: 11.
10. Reprised on *The Blue Sky Boys in Concert*, 1964 (Rounders CD 11536).
11. On 'Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms' see Nick Tosches, *Country: Living Legends and Dying Metaphors in America's Biggest Music* (New York: Scribner's, 1985): 200–1.
12. Dialogue in *Stand By Your Man* (1981).
13. *Hank Williams: The Show He Never Gave* (Drifter Film Productions, directed by David Acomba: White Star Video, 1644).
14. See George William Koan, *Hank Williams: A Bio-Bibliography* (Connecticut: Westport, 1983): 52.
15. Nudie Cohen was a well-known designer of stage outfits for Country performers.
16. See the Allen Reisner directed biopic of W.C. Handy, *St. Louis Blues* (1958).

8 STARDOM, RECEPTION AND THE ABBA ‘MUSICAL’

Jonathan Rayner

Two notable Australian feature films of the 1990s – *Muriel’s Wedding* (1994) and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) – foreground the music of ABBA in self-conscious ways, connecting the films’ narratives with the group’s popularity. In particular, ABBA’s significance to Australian popular culture is encapsulated in the feature film that centres on their tour of Australia in the 1970s: *ABBA The Movie* (1977). The reappraisal of the band and its renewed fashionable status in ironic or parodic terms in the 1990s may have distracted attention from the distinctly self-reflexive nature of the 1977 film. In *ABBA The Movie* both the songs and the band members themselves are brought to the fore in the film’s examination of a range of relationships and representations, linking the creation and the performance of the music, its significance for its makers and listeners and the subsequent appropriation of band and music alike by fans who endow both with particular meanings. Where ABBA’s ongoing fashionability negotiates notions of good and bad taste, nostalgia and chicness with the knowingness of retrospection, *ABBA The Movie* displays a similar awareness of the construction, circulation and currency of images and texts within popular culture. The ironic stance towards ABBA fandom in the 1990s was prefigured in the paradoxical attitude to stardom, and the fans’ ownership of band, music and meaning, seen in *ABBA The Movie*.

Rather than offering an unproblematic advertisement for the band and their songs, *ABBA The Movie* deploys the numbers seen in the concerts in the fashion of a generic musical. As in a musical narrative, the film emphasises the significance and interpretation of the numbers in specific and personal terms, anticipating the

use of ABBA's music in later productions. The recurrent usage of ABBA's music within these Australian feature films suggests a move around the cultural formation of identity from the personal to the national scale in the 1990s.

MOCK-ROCK-DOC: *ABBA THE MOVIE*

Lasse Hallstrom's *ABBA The Movie* follows the Swedish super-group through their Australian tour schedule, and includes footage of the concerts held in Sydney, Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne. From the ecstatic reception of the band at the airport in Sydney, to their civic reception and triumphal departure at the tour's conclusion, the film emphasises the group's considerable commercial success and broad, family-based appeal. However, the film functions neither as an unequivocal celebration of ABBA's music and popularity, nor as a narrow denunciation of the commercialised media. The mixture of scripted and spontaneous interviews with ABBA's fans and detractors, edited concert sessions and pop video-like sequences, and the fictive frame of a radio presenter pursuing the group across country for an interview, combine to form a critique of the currency and consumption of popular music, and of the nature of stardom. The selection of the band's 1977 tour of Australia for the film is significant in this regard, since it presents ABBA as de facto stars (after mainland European success, but before breaking into the US market) and represents the reaction of the Australian audience to this pre-packaged and pre-existent star positioning.

The inclusion and editing of the concert footage, alongside the mock-documentary's parallel structure of tour and pursuit, gives the clearest indication of the film's ambiguous stance towards its subject. Images from a stage performance of the song *Money, Money, Money* are intercut with shots of the buyers and sellers of multifarious merchandising products (books, mugs, hats and T-shirts). This meaningful juxtaposition recalls Benny's response to a journalist's question about the band's earnings in their first press conference. In defending the millions ABBA have accrued, he insists that they work for personal satisfaction rather than money. In the same session, Agnetha confesses that she lost track of which country they were in during the European leg of the tour, and Björn states frankly that touring 'kills creativity'. The music might be made initially for their own satisfaction, but the record sales are strictly commercial. By contrast, the touring, despite its potential for merchandising and additional sales, seems to benefit the fans more than the band. This notion is picked up by the repetition of the chorus of the track 'I'm a Marionette' ('I'm a marionette/Just a marionette/Pull the strings/I'm a marionette/Everybody's pet/Just as long as I sing'). This is accompanied by shots of the group's members in interviews, photo-sessions and press conferences. The continual reversing and repetition of these images (alongside Frida's and Agnetha's stiff, doll-like movements on stage) suggest that the stressful schedule and loss of privacy are the accepted price of fame.

The sincerity of Benny's response to the journalist's question underlines ABBA's reputation for candour. This is epitomised by the emotional tone and lyrical detail of the group's later work, which articulated frankly the stresses of work and divorce that followed their success. This degree of honesty clearly contributes to the fans' identification with them, since the music expresses the emotional circumstances affecting listeners and performers alike. However, publicity materials and fanzines for stars (of music and film) proffer privileged and intimate information about their subjects in order to assert precisely this absence of difference between private and public personae. The illusion of the unmediated star personality is, thus, ironically, the crucial component in the construction and consumption of star images. The performance is valued as authentic, as in the case of ABBA the repertoire of songs is perceived as autobiography as much as a creative oeuvre. *ABBA The Movie* accommodates and negotiates these assumptions and contradictions formally and structurally, through recourse to the pop video format and the paradoxical combination of documentary footage and fictional narrative.

Figure 7 Constructing images of stardom: Authentic documentary footage of ABBA's stage shows were presented alongside a mock documentary narrative in *ABBA The Movie* (Source: Polar Music/ Reg Grundy Prods/ The Kobal Collection).

The presence of pop video sequences within a concert film may suggest that the authentic live performance is inferior to or in conflict with the perfected, controlled image pedalled in other promotional forms. In *ABBA The Movie*, the song sequences that evoke the imagery and editing of the pop video do so in order to draw attention to the artifice and superficiality of the format and (almost prophetically for the 1970s) to its central role in the establishment of the fans' relationship with the pop idol. When the radio presenter Ashley Wallace (Robert Hughes) dreams about the interview he must obtain from the band, the imagined, idealised meeting assumes the look of a pop video (an episodic narrative progression, through idyllic or conventionalised locations shot in soft focus) accompanied by the ABBA song 'The Name of the Game'.

In the dream, Ashley is seen to be picked out from the crowd of reporters for preferential treatment and exclusive access, particularly to the female members of the group who sing the number directly to him. Ashley moves from basking in reflected glory (being favoured by the stars in being granted personal contact with them) to a status equal to or greater than that of the band themselves (enjoying the adoration of Frida and Agnetha, and being applauded by the band when he joins them for a candle-lit dinner). For the would-be interviewer as for the fan, immersion in the star image offers the illusion of reaching the real person behind the image and, in Ashley's case, leads to the endowment of the ordinary person with seemingly comparable stardom.

The irony of this sequence is signalled by the insistence of Ashley's boss that his 'ABBA radio special' should be 'in-depth, with warmth and sincerity', and he wants the radio feature to allow 'every listener to share ABBA with you and me and all of us – privately'. The shifting of star status from the band's members to the interviewer is indicative of the fan's zealous appropriation of the group and its image. It also highlights how the ideas and attitudes of the group members themselves are often irrelevant to the fans' personal use of their music and image, in a neat reversal of Benny's elevation of the personal above the commercial. As a Country and Western DJ, Ashley is chosen for the interview because he is not 'slick and commercial' like the station's pop-show host. Because of his hectic travels along the tour, Ashley never receives his press pass, and so never really becomes the stereotypical, cynical, commercially-oriented media commentator. Instead, as his purchases of ABBA merchandise before his flight to Perth indicate, he moves from being a sceptic to a fan, who is therefore worthy of preferment. Through Ashley's narcissistic idolisation in the video sequence, the dream suggests the fan's ownership of the band through wholehearted adoption of the promoted image.

This interpretation of the unanticipated video sequence is strengthened by some of the concert scenes, in which the live performances (of 'Dancing Queen' and 'Rock Me') are nearly drowned out by the screaming and shouting of the crowd. It is also strengthened by Ashley's eventual completion of his mission.

Having failed to gain access to the group for his interview at any of the tour venues, he manages to converse with them in a serendipitous meeting in a hotel lift. This meeting goes unseen, as the doors close on the space and block the camera's view. Similarly, Ashley's final broadcast, assembled at the last minute in a cab from the airport, is not heard within the film. The excision of these scenes (which in a more conventional narrative would represent the anticipated goals) evinces the conspicuous and unconventional construction of the film. Perhaps the interview goes unseen because it is presumed to consist of the same clichés and evasions as any other publicity event. Alternatively, if the 'chance' meeting provides a genuine, personal insight, it would appear inappropriate or meaningless against the dominant, international conceptualisation of the group's music and image.

The film's self-conscious play with degrees of accessibility to, and authenticity of, star information concentrates its commentary on the nature and perception of stardom, music and the cinema. The film viewer is able to observe Ashley's vain efforts to reach the group's first press conference, but is also privileged with access to the question and answer session that Ashley misses. The discussion of the group's stresses on tour is compared with Ashley's frustration at missing the press conference because of a traffic jam. Similarly, the viewer enters the group's hotel rooms and overhears their rehearsals through documentary scenes, sight of which is denied to Ashley. Such partiality of access both reinforces and undermines the group's mystique and prefigures the unseen interview and unheard broadcast. The establishment of these links and parallels between Ashley and the band, and particularly between Ashley's activities and the songs the group perform on stage, reveals how music's usage within the film transgresses the limitations of a simple, commercial concert document.

Ashley's frenzied preparations before catching the plane for Perth are intercut with Benny's piano solo on stage. Here, and elsewhere during the reporter's odyssey, the concert performances become adjuncts to Ashley's narrative, rather than the primary material and *raison d'être* of the film. Surprisingly perhaps, and more in accordance with the conventions of a pop compilation soundtrack, the score of *ABBA The Movie* 'retains a certain measure of structural unity and integrity' (through the motivation of the band's concert series) but facilitates and elaborates on the narrative progression like the arrangement of numbers in the conventional musical.¹

The later sequences, which mimic the pop video format (and which accompany the tracks 'Eagle' and 'Thank You for the Music'), propound this self-conscious approach. In the former example, the balanced visual compositions of both female singers adhere closely to the band's image and its vocal and visual emphases. This sequence replaces the expected scenes of the interview in the lift. The central superimposed image of the eagle in flight is juxtaposed with a representation of the ascending lift itself. Ashley is raised, literally and spiritually, by his chance

encounters with the group (being given the unlikely assignment and completing it through an accidental meeting) and the extension of their stardom to him.

In the video sequence for 'Thank You for the Music', the concluding images of the film are given over to documentary and staged images of the band in the recording studio, again suggesting the personal behind the songs and star personae. A collage of scenes presents the band's flight back to Sweden, and the rehearsal of the track in the studio. The faked studio scenes, taken together with those in dressing rooms and hotel rooms during the tour, again suggest the film's likeness to the 'backstage' format of the Hollywood musical in which perfect rehearsals of the numbers precede stage performances elucidating and advancing the narrative. This sequence ends with the camera withdrawing entirely from the fan's domain to an aerial shot of the specific (and highly personal) source of the group's creativity: the private cottage on an island where most of their songs were composed. As such, the film ends with an acknowledgement of the distinction between the group as musicians with personal motivations and the band as stars marketed and interpreted on communal (commercial) and individual (private) bases.

This final acknowledgement of the great physical and personal distances between fans and their idols reaffirms another implicit distance: that of Australia from Europe and the band's origins in Scandinavia. The favourable but conservative and mainstream response to the ABBA tour of Australia is reflected by the uniformity of the comments Ashley elicits from the parents and children attending the concerts. The band's 'clean cut' and 'tidy' image and their 'nice costumes' receive the approval of mothers, fathers and young offspring alike, although middle-class modesty is mildly offended by the use of 'too many clothes and too much make-up'. Noticeably, the lyrical content of the songs themselves is hardly discussed at all. This suggests a hierarchy of influential elements, with the music and interrelated visual image predominant and the actual song *content* (the words and music themselves) less important in the fans' overall absorption of the group's *concept*.

In interview, the Australian director Stephan Elliott has asserted that Australia's eager adoption of ABBA was important in terms of the definition of national identity in the 1970s.² The choice of Australia for the tour that was intended to build on European success but precede the penetration of the North American market, and the enthusiastic reception of the band and their music before the tour took place, were taken as sources of national pride and distinction (Frida is seen to have been 'naturalised' during the tour, as she exercises with her trainer before the Melbourne concert in a T-shirt which declares 'I'm a *Q*antastic Bird!'). The contemporary re-emergence of the Australian feature film industry provided a similar cause for celebration. In this respect the specific titling of *ABBA The Movie* is significant. Ashley's boss is adamant that the radio special is 'not a documentary, but an event', and similarly the film

itself evades simple classification as a documentary, a record of the concerts or a promotional video for the group. The particular, pertinent and allusive usage of ABBA's music within the film, which sees the songs related directly to aspects of characterisation and the narrative progression, suggests *ABBA The Musical* may be more appropriate. However, given the editing of the concert numbers, the fashioning of music video-like sequences and the linkage of both to the narrative of Ashley's mission, the film also evokes comparison with movies incorporating a compilation soundtrack.

Such an evaluation is reinforced by recognition of the narrative's similarity to the rites of passage (in this case Ashley's, from neutrality to fandom and personal stardom) generally associated with the nostalgic, soundtrack film. Viewed in this way, the developmental aspect of the narrative coincides with Elliott's view of the significance of the band and this tour, and echoes other rite of passage narrative feature films made in Australia during the 1970s and 1980s.³ It also anticipates the phenomenon of 'retro ABBA' in the 1990s and the use of the band's songs in the stage musical *Mamma Mia!*⁴ Rather than being a documentary about the group, *ABBA The Movie* expresses the significance of the band and the tour for fans, in particular Australian fans, as personified by Ashley. The *Movie* subtitle is crucial to the recognition of the film's emphasis on fictionalisation in the media's construction of stardom, and the fans' consumption of image. The significance of pop music on an individual basis and the fans' utilisation of star images also occurs in a later generation of Australian features which display an ABBA effect through their moments of music.

MURIEL'S BRILLIANT CAREER

The heroine of *Muriel's Wedding*, Muriel Heslop, is afflicted with disappointment and self-loathing, because she does not conform to the expectations of her family and peer group. She is victimised by her friends and her father because of her failures in employment, relationships, education and fashion. Consequently she seeks to remake herself and recast her life, abandoning her background and identity as 'Muriel' and assuming the name of 'Mariel'. As the typical youthful outsider, Muriel is seen to retreat from depressing social and familial circumstances into popular music, which provides entertainment and solace. Significantly, Muriel's music of choice is ABBA, in particular the track 'Dancing Queen'.

Muriel's preference for 1970s pop is not, however, simply a means of distinguishing herself from her peers through the espousal of retro chic. She chooses ABBA in particular because of the positive, romantic and aspirational qualities of the group's songs. The seventeen-year-old starlet described in 'Dancing Queen' embodies Muriel's desires for popularity among her peers, sexual attractiveness and concomitant control of her destiny. Since her peer group and relatives

reiterate Muriel's inability to attain these distinctions, she concentrates her desires on marriage. Being married would represent social acceptance and literally confer a new identity. The idealised vision offered by the music is thus reconfigured as a conservative, realisable goal.

Her fantasy life does not mimic the ideals of ABBA's songs, even though it is fuelled and articulated by them. The first example of Muriel's use of the music for personal escape and mood management is seen when, following allegations that she has shoplifted the dress that she later wears to a wedding, Muriel hides in her bedroom and puts 'Dancing Queen' on her stereo. The music and lyrics do not so much offer a goal or end in themselves, but connect with the concretisation of Muriel's fantasy: the cuttings from bridal magazines and catalogues that decorate the walls of her room and represent the height (or limit) of her aspiration. As this scene links the music heard in the room with the images that decorate it, so the associations of the ABBA image connect with the goal of marriage. Once she has escaped the insularity of her home town and established herself in Sydney, she reflects that her life is 'as good as an ABBA song', and so she no longer requires the music as an emotional support.

Muriel's retreat to her bedroom and recourse to music for solace are the first indications of her dissatisfaction with 'Muriel Heslop' and her obsession with the transformation of her identity. This is accomplished by her wedding and the assumption of an 'exotic' married name, 'Mariel Van Arkle'. The desire for solitude, personal space and music have been identified as consistent with the period of 'increased self-reflection and the emergence of a conscious distinction between one's public and private selves' that teenagers undergo.⁵ However, having experienced a prolonged adolescence (through the denial of meaningful status in her social and familial circles) Muriel now wishes to distinguish between present and future selves. She only requires the music (and the dream of marriage) when she is dissatisfied with herself and her circumstances. She listens to 'Dancing Queen' at home in Porpoise Spit and in Sydney when the demands of her family's disgrace and the illness of her friend Rhonda again prompt her to desire a sanctuary from pressing responsibilities. In between times, the free, shared life with Rhonda requires no further idealisation and she feels no need to play the music. Conversely, her emancipation is signalled by dancing in costume and lip-syncing to the ABBA song 'Waterloo' with Rhonda during the Hibiscus Island holiday. Once she has abandoned her attempt to fit in with Tania and her friends, and has established a new connection with Rhonda, the music is shared but recuperated through its performance at a kitsch, self-conscious level. It only returns and re-acquires its absorbing and obsessive significance when Muriel's marriage promises escape from her family's demands, Rhonda's needs and her own despised identity.

The occurrence of other ABBA songs on the soundtrack reinforce this interpretation of the music's significance to Muriel. 'Fernando', a song redolent of

the recollection of past conflict, is associated with Muriel's return to the family home from Hibiscus Island and Sydney. The playing of 'I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do' in place of the bridal march for Mariel's entrance to the church on her wedding day signals her ecstasy at the culmination of her fantasy; the song's lyrics state and restate her vows even before the ceremony has begun. Mariel's accomplishment of marriage combines several strands of social aspiration: she gains the married status she has always desired, and her athlete, 'green card' husband also endows her with wealth and celebrity. The ostentatious wedding reconciles Mariel to her fickle friends and gives her the temporary glamour of stardom. As in the case of Ashley Wallace, the heroine's immersion in the image leads to a transformation of the self and the acquisition of comparable stardom. Mariel has willingly submerged Muriel and commodified herself as a star-bride in order to acquire an otherwise unattainable social status. In her case, the adolescent's distinction between private and public selves is upgraded and made comparable with the gap between the constructed/projected and genuine/hidden personae of the star.

Mariel's success is achieved, like the star's, at the cost of authentic identity, and the benefits of her acquired status are fleeting. Robert Yates equates the melodramatic improbabilities of Muriel's life and her discovery of her 'true self' with 'prime time confessional' television as the filmic heroine epitomises the contemporary public's assumption of ephemeral celebrity in the mass media.⁶

In another Australian film, *Starstruck* (1982), Jackie Mullins's ascent to stardom also utilises media manipulation but builds towards a national and personal affirmation. Despite the roots of her aspiration lying in adolescent rebellion, the performances of Jackie's numbers achieve unity across familial and generational divides. Individual success is also tied to communal, utopian goals as in the conventional Hollywood musical. Jackie's bedroom anticipates Muriel's in being decorated with cut-outs of Hollywood stars, and her career essays an indigenisation of such images. Her first successful gig begins with her emergence from a kangaroo suit in emulation of Marlene Dietrich's stage entrance in *Blonde Venus* (1932), and the penthouse swimming pool number parodies Busby Berkeley's choreography. The climactic performance takes place on the stage of the Sydney Opera House, under a lighting rig in the shape of the Harbour Bridge.

In comparison, Muriel's fabrication of her own stardom, her 'skill . . . at being a certain sort of person', reflects the conformist pressures exerted by both society and media upon adolescents, and young women in particular.⁷ However, ABBA and their music emerge blameless from this morality tale, as the return of Muriel to Porpoise Spit and the resumption of her friendship with Rhonda are accompanied by the climax of 'Dancing Queen' on the soundtrack. Their rejection of the provincial life and their future existence in Sydney are marked by the track's triumphal self-assertion.

FAKING IT: PERFORMING OTHER PEOPLE'S SONGS

As a combination of musical and road movie, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* takes as its theme (and ironises) the nature of performance and personal growth through travel and shared endeavour. ABBA's music is incorporated into an eclectic disco soundtrack that reflects its adoption (and reinscription with new meanings) by the gay community. Where Muriel's preference for 1970s music suggests not bad taste or retro-chic but the attribution of a private significance to popular media texts, the drag queens' adoption of disco numbers (performed by female artists and exhibiting feminist, emancipatory lyrics) reflects their confrontational attitude to social and gender roles.

Identity and self-definition are problematic for the three performers. As they embark on the journey to Alice Springs from Sydney, the odyssey assumes a national relevance as it stretches from the unofficial capital to the geographical and metaphorical heart of the country. For Bernadette the trip offers an interlude in which to come to terms with grief and ageing. For Felicia/Adam it consists of a series of increasingly dangerous encounters with prejudice. For Mitzi/Tick, the journey prompts a reappraisal of his sexuality and identity, since his ex-wife has hired the drag act and expects him to take over the parental care of their young son. This reassessment of values, conduct and appearance forms the basis of *Priscilla's* road movie narrative.

While the comic artifice of the drag queens' garish costumes and 'faked' lip-sync routines seem divorced from the sincerity and transparency of performance in the conventional musical, these facets emphasise the roots of prejudice in a response to appearance rather than character. The mis-match between music, performer and image is transformed into a coherent enunciation of difference. The drag artists' acquisition of stardom (borrowed via the tracks from Charlene, Village People and Gloria Gaynor) en route is confirmed by the perfect performance (of Ce Ce Peniston's 'Finally') at Alice Springs. The muted reception for this climatic number underlines the fact that it is not public adoration but personal progression that has been achieved via travel and performance. The 'Finally' routine integrates indigenous signifiers (a backdrop of Aboriginal art works and costumes emulating native frilled lizards) and therefore reinforces the film's utopian aspiration for tolerance of social, cultural and gender diversity within contemporary Australia. Yet the scant applause it receives highlights the inherent unsuitability of popular media for such a task.

Similarly, the uselessness of symbolic, unifying journeys of national significance is signalled within *Priscilla* by the sporadic appearance of a lone female explorer apparently circumnavigating the continent. As such, the drag troupe's journey is significant only in individual terms, in relation to the personal development each member experiences because of it. This is stressed by the film's final number, the promised performance of 'Mamma Mia' for Tick's

son and a partisan crowd back in Sydney. This enshrined routine receives a more enthusiastic reception than any other performance in the film. Bernadette's angry dismissal of all the clichéd queer topics of conversation (including ABBA) during the road trip belies the pervasive and persistent popularity of the group and their songs within the gay community. Rather than compensating for the distance and difference between rural, conservative and metropolitan, unconventional Australia, this concluding scene stresses Tick's and Adam's joy and relief at being back home. As Bernadette has noted, the 'grey wall of suburbia' exists 'to stop them getting in' as much as 'us getting out'. The ABBA number represents a particular acknowledgement of connection and communal identity on the return home.

The reward for each character in the conventional resolution of the musical narrative qualifies but maintains the utopian perspective of the genre. This optimistic closure accords with both the expectations of popular cinema and the significance of disco music itself, which lies behind its adoption by peripheralised individuals and groups. Richard Dyer stresses the promise of utopia and transformation contained within disco music and fashion, which underpins the attractiveness of this popular music substream, and previews the convergence of cinema and pop in the ABBA musicals:

Romanticism is one of the major modes of leisure in which this sense of an alternative is kept alive. Romanticism asserts that the limits of work and domesticity are not the limits of experience . . . Disco's combination of romanticism and materialism effectively tells us – lets us experience – that we live in a world of materials, that we can enjoy them but that the experience of materialism is not necessarily what the everyday world assures it is.⁸

Alternative uses of and the conferment of oppositional significance to popular media texts forms a crucial part of the postmodern ironies of retro chic and the postcolonial relevance of the ABBA musical in Australia. The self-conscious stance in relation to popular music established in *ABBA The Movie* resurfaces in the Australian tribute/cover band Björn Again and in the bathetic pop parodies of the Australian comedy duo Supergirly. The most extreme examples of this trend are the stardom conferred on Agnetha's bottom by media coverage of the tour in *ABBA The Movie* and on the actual 'ABBA turd' acquired by Adam and treasured for its private significance in *Priscilla*.

This subversive and reflexive mode stands in stark contrast to the unabashed recapitulation of ABBA staples by pop performers in Britain in the 1990s. An ABBA EP released by Erasure featured four cover versions accompanied by promotional videos closely modelled on the originals. The Brit Awards for Music 1999 were marked by an ABBA tribute medley performed by Steps, Cleopatra,

B*witched, Billie and Tina Cousins, and later in the year Westlife gained a number one single in the UK with a cover version of 'I Have a Dream'. Alongside the stage production of *Mamma Mia!*, this commercial remobilisation of ABBA's stardom in the service of other acts bears comparison with the (ironic) conferment of stardom on the ordinary seen in *ABBA The Movie* and *Muriel's Wedding*. Just as a 'pop song is ordinary language put to extraordinary use',⁹ stars are 'embodiments of *typical* ways of behaving',¹⁰ and both represent resources for the fabrication of individual status and derivation of private significance, conferring stardom on their consumers within limited parameters. Within the Australian films explored in this chapter, ABBA's songs are celebrated, cast within the texts because of their original and subsequent interpretation and relevance in popular cultural terms. Their recruitment to the cause of problematising Australian national identity (metaphorically in the case of Muriel's development, literally in that of the *Priscilla* drag troupe and its odyssey) foregrounds the importation of culture experienced by a postcolonial society and its subsequent indigenisation through reflexive reconfiguration.

The utopianism of the musical genre is asserted in these Australian examples in narratives of individual, rather than communal success. The importation and reconfiguration of film genres (such as the Western and the road movie) that have marked the Australian cinema since its revival lead, in the case of these ABBA films, to a celebration of subjective, intertextual responses to external media influences: Ashley's accumulation of interview material, Muriel's use of the ABBA/'Dancing Queen' touchstone for her life, and the drag troupe's challenge to social mores embodied in transmuted, camp performance. Unlike other genres within the Australian film revival, in which personal and national identity are continually conflated and undermined, the ABBA films exhibit a cautious and hard-won optimism about the question of national definition. The adoption and indigenisation of the musical form, and the qualified union of its utopian ideal to the emotive and formative narrative tropes of soap operas and road movies, reflect its national significance in Australia, suggesting the 'reconciliation of narrative and number, wherein life aspires to the condition of music'.¹¹

NOTES

1. Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 155.
2. Stephan Elliott interviewed in *The ABBA Story: The Winner Takes It All*, UK tx, 15 May 1999, ITV. Programme marking the 25th anniversary of ABBA's winning of the Eurovision Song Contest.
3. For example, *The Mango Tree* (1977), *Monkey Grip* (1982), *The Year My Voice Broke* (1987) and *Secrets* (1992).
4. Songs by Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson of ABBA.
5. Reed Larson, 'Secrets in the bedroom: adolescents' private use of the media', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 25: 5 (1995): 540.
6. Robert Yates, *Sight and Sound* 5: 4 (April 1995): 49.

7. Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1998): 17.
8. Richard Dyer, 'In defense of disco', in Corey K. Creekmur and Alexander Doty (eds), *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian and Queer Essays on Popular Culture* (London: Cassell, 1995): 414–5.
9. Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 168.
10. Dyer: 22.
11. Stuart Cunningham, 'Hollywood genres, Australian movies', in Albert Moran and Tom O'Regan (eds), *An Australian Film Reader* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1985): 241.

PART THREE:
**THE POST-CLASSICAL
HOLLYWOOD MOVIE**

9 MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AND THE CULT FILM EXPERIENCE

Ian Conrich

The cult film is generally seen as a development of postwar cinema, and includes a range of texts that can be used as sites for nostalgia, cultural allegiance and amplified pleasures, and which tend to be associated with camp, low culture, subversion, excess, the unexpected, the absurd, the eccentric, the extreme or the forbidden. Cult films effectively create communities of avid audiences who respond in ways that carry personal meaning yet are familiar and ritualistic. Most commonly, the film becomes a celebration of a pleasure gained from revisiting and re-experiencing a known text. And sometimes the viewing experience leads to direct interaction with the film, an active participation through a verbal response to screen events, the recital of dialogue, or the replication of costumes and props in a space beyond the screen.

As a site of extreme or enhanced viewing pleasures the cult film shares certain characteristics with the film musical, a genre which repeatedly offers performances of extravagance and exuberance, obvious energy and ability, open emotions, fantasy and sudden explosions of spectacle. It is, then, rather surprising, that the cult film and the musical have been treated in isolation, with only the occasional production such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) appearing to expose any real common ground. In fact, the cult film musical is more pervasive than is believed. Moreover, a fuller understanding of musical performance in the cult film needs to include the musical moment in the non-musical film – that moment when a celebrated song or dance functions as an extraordinary and renowned textual event. I have written previously on the presence of a vaudeville aesthetic and what I termed ‘musical moments’ in the Marx

Figure 8 The happy family, survivors of the horrors of their mountainside chalet, celebrate in the style of *The Sound of Music* in the Japanese horror-musical *Katakuri-ke no kôfuku*.

Brothers films.¹ While the subject of that article is musical performance as an unexpected and often excessive element of the narrative in what are essentially comedies, here, the musical moment works to disrupt the text and challenge narrative order. Moving beyond this into post-classical cinema, where genre conventions are regularly challenged and increasingly an MTV aesthetic can be seen to exist, the eruption of a musical performance within the non-musical film continues to have the potential to present a striking screen moment, particularly when it is making reference to the spectacle of the classical musical.

This chapter explores both the cult musical and musical performance as a component of the cult film, and will suggest that in post-classical cinema the classical form of this particular genre of production has been largely subverted. Musical performance in the cult film frequently works as a deliberate and knowing perversion of the cultural values, performances, subjects and utopian aspects of the classical musical film, which used to be so central to movie production at many of Hollywood's studios. Perhaps most striking here is the depiction of a screen dystopia, which will be explored in relation to the horror-musical hybrid and movies in which horror and the musical among other genres combine, and which has led to such cult films as *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1986), *Joe's Apartment* (1996), *Alfred Packer: The Musical* (aka, *Cannibal! The Musical*, 1996), *Katakuri-ke no kôfuku* (*The Happiness of the*

Katakuris, 2001), *Corpse Bride* (2005) and *Poultrygeist: Attack of the Chicken Zombies!* (2006).²

KARAOKE CINEMA

In a period of post-classical cinema the screen musical has, with just a few exceptions – most notably, since the mid 1990s, films such as *Evita* (1996), *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and *Chicago* (2002) – exhibited declining popular appeal and commercial value. Its identity as a genre has in fact become fragmented and stretched.³ So now, for example, musical performance appears mainly as a key component of box office successes such as the romantic-drama *The Bodyguard* (1992) and the comedy *Sister Act* (1992), family films such as *The Lion King* (1994) and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), dance exploitation films such as *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo* (1984) and *Lambada, the Forbidden Dance* (1990) and as MTV-style musical moments in movies such as *A Knight's Tale* (2001).

As contemporary versions of the traditional film musical have declined, the classical musicals have acquired, in many instances, greater nostalgic value. Since the early 1980s, the use of new media technologies has allowed for the easy storage and the revisiting of an archive of memorable cinema. These factors, combined with constant broadcasts on television (in particular on cable channels), mean that some musicals from Hollywood's classical period have acquired a cult status, including *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Some Like it Hot* (1959) and *The Sound of Music* (1965), productions which have become especially notable for their camp following.

This has led to *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Sound of Music* being placed at the centre of a vast sing-a-long industry that emerged in 1999, when the latter was reinvented as a karaoke-style event at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. This highly successful screening, called *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music*, has now expanded and has gone on tour in the UK, the US, Australia and beyond. At these events the films are screened to audiences in fancy dress who sing along as the relevant lyrics appear at the bottom of the film print, complete with an appropriate emphasis on each word, in an attempt to unite the audience in their singing of the songs: 'Irresistible FUN!' according to the UK flyer for *Sing-a-Long-a Wizard of Oz*, 'the classic film with on-screen lyrics so EVERYONE can join in!'⁴ The publicity describes the experience as 'Interactive' and asks

Have you ever watched a favourite musical film and had the irresistible urge to burst into song? Well this is your chance to be the star of the show and unleash your vocal talent with several hundred audience members dressed as DOROTHY, TINMAN, SCARECROW and the COWARDLY LION.⁵

Audience participation is aided, even orchestrated, by fancy dress competitions and 'fun bags', which provide material support to the screened experience. For instance, at *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music*, at which the audience is encouraged to 'Boo the Nazis! Hiss the Baroness!',⁶ participants are able to purchase a bag of props that include plastic edelweiss (to wave in the air), party poppers, a head scarf and a foam cut-out of a nun complete with finger holes for manipulation, all to employ at the appropriate moments in the film. Significantly, while *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music* has seemingly become the contemporary model of the cult film musical experience, the event is highly staged, manufactured, packaged, and controlled. Beyond the core venues, such as London's *Prince Charles* cinema, the film is often consumed in a conservative manner, the apparent conformity of the audience members challenging the notion that at such screenings the audience is essentially spontaneous and transgressive.

At *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music*, hosts are present at the start of the film and during the interval to 'help you get in the mood', and fancy dress is urged with publicity stating 'you are strongly encouraged to get into the habit and don a wimple or anything creative made of old curtains'.⁷ Screenings are promoted as 'the perfect night out for all the family', and participants have been described as including 'off-duty cab drivers, schoolchildren and husbands'.⁸ This raises the question of whether a film that is so popular and able to attract what would appear to be a mainstream audience can be regarded as a cult. The *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music* phenomenon has attracted widespread press, with the important publications the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker* and *The Weekend Australian* devoting a spread of pages to the film's impact.⁹ If the *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music* concept was in any way perceived to be operating on the social and cultural margins, its coverage by the mainstream media, which celebrated the film's ability to be all-inclusive with its karaoke-style performances and encouragement to 'party', recuperates the film as a 'popular' text. Yet, within these articles, the film was still being viewed as a cult.

Anthony Lane, writing for *The New Yorker*, saw *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music* as a cult experience: 'All nonsense is pleasure . . . what lends particular spice to "The Sound of Music" is that it is known nonsense, remembered and revered.'¹⁰ Comparing the film to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Lane concludes, 'that film is already armoured by a sense of camp; nothing you can throw at it will dent its knowingness, whereas "The Sound of Music", the most unwitting of cults, is blissfully up for grabs'.¹¹ *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music* and *The Sound of Music*, have become sites of cultural conflict, films that appear as both cult and non-cult. For here, multiple audience sectors are competing for a text that is in its original form a musical blockbuster and one of the highest grossing films of all time, the winner of five Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director, and a notoriously repeated Christmas television

Figure 9 Karaoke cinema: A UK-produced handbill for the interactive film *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music*

event on the BBC in the UK and NBC in the US. It has also been reinvented as a lesbian and gay film festival hit, a long-running sing-a-long at inner city cinemas catering for hardcore audiences, and a sing-a-long on tour, taken to provincial cities and towns, where it acts as a family outing and a worthy opportunity to dress-up. Each situation offers a different experience, and shows how one film, albeit later modified, can appeal to so many in such a variety of different screening contexts. This raises the question as to what constitutes a cult film.

THE CULT FILM

Bruce Kawin writes that 'the cult film can be defined primarily in terms of its acceptance: it is a movie with a following'.¹² But the cult film can incorporate a vast range of texts and a difficulty with the definition is the differences or disagreements in interpretation. Barry Keith Grant argued in 1991 that 'the problem' with the cult film is that 'its disparate generic affinities make the category even more unwieldy than conventional genres; and, second, the lack of a substantial body of cult criticism provides little help in establishing a cultural consensus'.¹³

Grant's work, like Kawin's, appeared in a collection, edited by J.P. Telotte, on the cult movie, a book which remains the most important for defining and questioning the form and status of these films. Subsequent collections, *Unruly Pleasures: The Cult Film and its Critics* (2000) and *Defining Cult Movies: The Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste* (2003), are in places little more than a gathering of focused studies of favoured films or filmmakers and are almost as disparate as the subject itself.¹⁴ Jeffrey Sconce's seminal article on what he terms 'paracinema' engages with the issue of cult movies, but the texts with which he is concerned are only an element of the cult film, even though they are a substantial body by themselves. For Sconce, paracinema is subcultural and exists in opposition to the institutions of Hollywood industry and standards of popular taste.¹⁵ This is an argument that also appears as a definition of the cult film in the Telotte collection, where Timothy Corrigan considers midnight movies, productions that are defined by their late-night screenings, to be 'after-hours films in every sense'.¹⁶ One of Telotte's own contributions to the book sees the cult film as a 'boundary crossing', a transgression or 'territorial "violation"', that the viewer accepts as part of a particular cinematic pleasure.¹⁷ For Telotte this becomes the cult film experience:

[the] crossing evokes a kind of loving experience, it is because we thereby sense something special in the cult film . . . we celebrate a most pleasurable transgression, as we vicariously cross over into taboo territory – the self's *terra incognita* – and then emerge to tell of it.¹⁸

Telotte's edited collection divides the cult film into two dominant types: the midnight movie and the classical cult film (though he does recognise these are not the only categories and a third could be identified within the art film).¹⁹ The classical cult film covers texts such as the much discussed *Casablanca* (1942) and the musicals *The Wizard of Oz*, *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), movies made within the classical period of the studio system with the expected budget and level of technical expertise, but also released initially to an extensive theatrical reception. Kawin labels these productions 'inadvertent cult films' as opposed to the self-conscious 'programmatically cult film', which sets out to be a cult text.²⁰ Over time, the classical cult film acquires a new appreciation, a heightened following based on nostalgia or the discovery of a previously unobserved or latent quality. As Telotte writes,

in sum, a form that has found extra life outside the old patterns of presentation – as in the cases of repertory cinemas and, more recently, specialised cable channels – and that can continue to live on, partly because of the very conditions that often seem to limit the appeal – and life span – of other cult films.²¹

Here an example is the gay following and sing-a-long appreciations associated with the new audiences for *The Wizard of Oz*. Consider also the 2005 Volkswagen Golf Gti television advert that revisited the famous 'Singin' in the Rain' number with an effects-driven update depicting 'Gene Kelly' break-dancing and body-popping as part of his dance performance.²²

For Telotte, the classical cult film is 'unstuck in time'. This argument could be applied to Gene Kelly and *Singin' in the Rain*, and Judy Garland and *The Wizard of Oz* since the films appear both as timeless productions, and present timeless performers.²³ However, the cult film is marked most by difference and an opposition to the mainstream, or the classical form. Interestingly, Gene Kelly's performance of 'Singin' in the Rain' is both a cult text in its classical form and in its postmodern advert reinvention, despite operating in different media and establishing contrasting cult experiences. The manipulation of Kelly in the television advert, which shows him performing hip hop, is a challenge (to some even a violation) of the classical form of the number. It is, however, precisely because of its unconventionality and its depiction of a hyperreal Kelly that it has become a cult advert (even though it has been designed for widespread television consumption).

The screening context is an important factor in understanding any cult text. The cult film is appreciated for its transgressions and commonly celebrated in the marginalised spaces of film exhibition, in grindhouses, or repertory cinemas, festival screenings or midnight movie shows, as opposed to matinees and evening performances at the multiplex, located on the high street, in the retail park or in the local mall (though this should not ignore the fact that multicinemas and

mall cinemas also programme weekend midnight movies). Similarly, cult films appear on post-midnight television or specialised cable channels and video labels, as opposed to prime-time or day-time television and the premier DVD releases. Telotte sees these spaces for reception as part of the 'boundary crossing', with the screening, existing like the text itself, 'in a realm of difference – from normal film viewing practices and from marketing customs'.²⁴ The boundary sites for many of these cult film screenings – after hours or in the specialist or repertory cinema – creates a venue for (re)discovery. In the context of these exhibition spaces, and perhaps with an audience with a shared aesthetic sensibility, a viewer can undergo a transformative experience or reach understanding that a film is indeed exceptional or deserving of appreciation.

A film neglected, forgotten, censored, under-distributed, isolated for its content, or critically mauled and quickly removed from circulation can therefore develop a cult following. Cultists can share expectations for a rarely seen film, or disseminate information via gatherings, specialist magazines, and especially the Internet, prior to or following a screening. But it is the 'discovery', the chance to connect and generate a personal attachment to a given film that can, across a community, turn it into a cult. Here, as Danny Peary observes, 'cultists believe they are among the blessed few who have discovered something in particular films that the average moviegoer and critic have missed – the something that makes the pictures extraordinary'.²⁵

One particular way in which the cult film is extraordinary is in its containment of a discordant and incongruous text. Umberto Eco suggests that the cult film presents a 'hodgepodge of sensational scenes strung together implausibly', combines ideas or representations into a 'glorious incoherence' and is 'a disconnected series of images, of peaks, of visual icebergs . . . It should not reveal a coherent philosophy of composition'.²⁶ It is a point taken up by Grant, who, while noting the hybridised form of a film such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which is at once musical, horror, comedy and science-fiction, argues that this can be observed in mainstream cinema where the collage effect combines many film forms into one.²⁷ True, but the cult film knowingly defies conventions, actively creating a stitched together body – that is like Frankenstein's monster – uniting disparate but connecting forms, albeit dramatically revealing the scars, to produce an unnatural 'creature' in front of which some will look in awe. The horror-musicals that will be discussed below will be approached within this context. Of course, the horror-musical is just part of the cult musical film and it is this wider range of texts which will be identified first.

THE MUSICAL AS CULT

As argued earlier, the musical film has been a significant part of the development of the cult film phenomenon. Yet, the types of movies most associated

with the cult film tend to fall primarily into the horror, science-fiction, action and comedy genres, perhaps most notably *Pink Flamingos* (1972), *Enter the Dragon* (1973), *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), *Eraserhead* (1976), *Kentucky Fried Movie* (1977) and *Mad Max 2* (1982). Gregory A. Waller conducted a market study of the midnight movie screening patterns that occurred during 1980–5, in his home city of Lexington, Kentucky (population then of 200,000, with 20,000 students at the University of Kentucky), and he noted that films identified by a music component were a popular offering.²⁸ However, Waller's categorisations identify 'rock movies', ignoring non-rock musical films, generic hybridisations and non-musical films that as an attraction feature the musical moment.

These concerns aside, Waller's study is a valuable starting point. Within the grouping of the rock movie, Waller subdivides films into the rockumentary (rock documentaries most commonly containing concert footage), the 'teen musical' (such as *Footloose*, 1984), rock concept movies, or rock operas, fiction films based on music albums (such as *Tommy*, 1975, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1978, *Quadrophenia*, 1979, and *Pink Floyd: The Wall*, 1982), rock star dramas (such as The Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night*, 1964 and Prince's *Purple Rain*, 1984), and rock music adventures (such as *The Rose*, 1979 and *Streets of Fire*, 1984). Fifty-one such films accounted for 246 of the total 1,216 Lexington midnight movie playdates recorded by Waller – a figure of just over 20 per cent.²⁹ Of these, *Pink Floyd: The Wall* had the most screenings (30) followed by Led Zeppelin's 1976 film *The Song Remains the Same* (24) and The Who's 1979 film *The Kids Are Alright* (20), while the most popular type of rock movie was the rockumentary with 144 playdates.³⁰

Waller's study is, of course, controlled by a specific period, something which he acknowledges when he states that he is interested in 'the midnight movie *after* what we may be tempted to take as its Golden Age in the 1970s'.³¹ It does therefore mean that other popular screenings prior to 1980 and post 1985 are absent, while certain films are over-represented within the 1980–5 period when, for instance, Prince was emerging as a major star, and 1984 films such as *Footloose* and *Streets of Fire* were more immediately relevant. Cult films can rise and fall (and rise again) among audiences, and certainly musical styles can change, with movies being associated with different cultural moments: punk and *Rude Boy* (1980), reggae and *The Harder They Come* (1972), disco and *Thank God It's Friday* (1978) and heavy metal and *Attack of the Phantoms* (1978). Waller's study is also highly influenced by the locality of Lexington, with movies catering to the local population (which Waller sees as 'rather typical, especially for Middle America') and reflecting particular tastes.³² Films that showcased performers that failed to move beyond national boundaries – such as Slade's UK made *Flame* (1972), and the French made *D'Où viens-Tu, Johnny* (1963), starring Johnny Hallyday – were, as expected, absent despite as Waller noted,

a dominance of films presenting music within the canon of British rock (The Who, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, The Clash and The Rolling Stones).

Common to these and other cult music films is the idea of youth, youth culture and protagonists in cultural situations of interest or relevance to a youthful audience. The beach party films, often starring Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello, such as *Muscle Beach Party* (1964) and *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965), are a subgroup of the cult musical, as are the films of Elvis Presley from *Love Me Tender* (1956) to *Change of Habit* (1969). Cult films such as The Monkees' *Head* (1968), *Performance* (1969) and Frank Zappa's *200 Motels* (1971) have become noted for both their use of music and a counter-cultural focus. Transgression and excess can be found in the surreal *Yellow Submarine* (1968) and an eccentric film such as *Xanadu* (1980), with its performances by the Electric Light Orchestra and Olivia Newton-John and Gene Kelly at sixty-eight dancing in his last movie, in a story about Greek gods incarnated on Earth and inspiring the building of a vast disco roller rink. *Xanadu's* excess has also led to it being seen as a 'bad' movie, a label that has been applied to other cult musicals such as *Gonks Go Beat* (1965), a British science-fiction comedy in which the comic actor Kenneth Connor is sent from the planet Gonk to reconcile a group of warring Beat bands in a Romeo and Juliet plot.

There are other factors that determine why certain films become cult musicals. Beyond its music, *Pink Floyd: The Wall* became a cult film because of its combination of different narrative forms that utilise animation, fantasy and symbolism, together with moments of harsh realism. The animated *Fritz the Cat* (1971), based on the cartoons of Robert Crumb, is notable for its adult themes, while pornography and the film musical combine for the cult productions *Alice in Wonderland* (1975), with its musical numbers during the acts of hard core pornography, and *The First Nudie Musical* (1976), with songs such as 'Let 'em Eat Cake (And I'll Eat You)', 'Lesbian Butch Dyke' and 'Dancing Dildos'. *The First Nudie Musical* also parodies Busby Berkeley and the classical musicals of the 1930s, something that can be observed in the otherwise very different muppet films *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984), with its story of a backstage musical and the struggle to put on a Broadway show, and the television movie *The Muppets' Wizard of Oz* (2005), with Kermit as the Scarecrow and Fozzie Bear as the Cowardly Lion.

Films originally produced for a family audience, for instance *Mary Poppins* (1964) and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968), have also succeeded as cult films through their mixture of fantasy, humour, kitsch, cult performers, nostalgia and memorable songs. Nostalgia can operate with cult film musicals across generations from *Top Hat* (1935) and *Calamity Jane* (1953) to *Grease* (1978) and *Dirty Dancing* (1987). In addition, memorable song performances can be found in non-musical films such as *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), with its violent rendition of 'Singin' in the Rain', and *Wayne's World*, a movie that has become

celebrated for a head-banging rendition of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' in a car tightly packed with rock fans. These films are not musicals, but contain moments of musical performance that have acquired a cult appreciation for the immoderate or transgressive nature of the numbers. These and other factors can be found within the horror-musical.

THE HORROR-MUSICAL

Arguably, the most celebrated screen union of the horror film and musical performance occurs in Mel Brooks's cult comedy *Young Frankenstein* (1974). Though in no way a film musical, *Young Frankenstein* presents a musical moment in which Dr Frederick Frankenstein (Gene Wilder) and The Monster (Peter Boyle) perform in top hat and tails the number 'Puttin' on the Ritz', in front of an audience of the wealthy and the esteemed at the Bucharest Academy of Science. 'Puttin' on the Ritz', an Irving Berlin composition most associated with Fred Astaire – who first recorded the song in 1930, and famously performed the number in *Blue Skies* (1946) – promotes sophistication and style, and conveys a public statement of an individual's affluent intentions. Furthermore, as a performer, Astaire is an iconic figure within the screen musical noted for his elegance and dance ability. In contrast, the figure of The Monster, who is revealed on stage wearing reinforced metal boots, and who initially struggles to execute even rudimentary walking movements, appears as a lumbering grotesque.

The performance of 'Puttin' on the Ritz' in *Young Frankenstein* is an unexpected though welcome diversion for the on-screen audience. The same could be said for the film viewer, despite the fact that *Young Frankenstein* is a Mel Brooks comedy and an extreme musical moment is a recognised part of his humour.³³ When Dr Frankenstein first reveals his creation to the startled audience the movie is operating within the conventions of the Gothic horror film. This dramatically alters, however, with a sudden musical number largely constructed around the incongruous performance of The Monster as an unlikely debonair figure who incredibly has the ability to dance and entertain. This musical performance, a song and dance partnership between the doctor and his creation, begins with Dr Frankenstein hailing The Monster as a 'cultured, sophisticated man-about-town'.³⁴ The smartly-attired Monster reinforces the doctor's claim as he performs the number with some grace, dancing nimbly in his heavy boots, though he is unable to disguise his lack of a singing voice as he bellows out his solo line, 'Puttin' on the Ritz'. The classical Hollywood musical is subverted by this performance, in which even though the original number is respectfully referenced, the deliberate combining of the horror film and the musical – a song and dance moment celebrating refinement and class, together with a primordial Gothic creation, a monstrous body of stitched-together parts of corpses – functions as a direct challenge to genre boundaries.

The deliberate violation of conventions associated with the film musical can also be observed in the neglected comedy-horror *Joe's Apartment*, a co-production between the music corporations MTV and Geffen. The latter was the producer of the previously successful horror-musical hybrids *The Little Shop of Horrors* and *Beetlejuice* (1988), which must have partly inspired the decision to make *Joe's Apartment*, a production that had begun as a short film screened on MTV. *Joe's Apartment* presents a series of musical numbers that range from Country and Western, a cappella and swing to surf music and breakdancing. However, the surprising element is not the film's diversity of music styles, but the fact that each number is performed by a swarm of anthropomorphised cockroaches (a mixture of puppetry, stop motion and computer animation and live insects) that inhabit Joe (Jerry O'Connell)'s decrepit and largely derelict New York apartment. 'You can talk!' exclaims a startled Joe on making this amazing discovery; 'Talk! We can sing!', comes the reply from the cockroaches.

For instance, in a parody of songs by groups such as The Beach Boys and The Surfaris, a group of cockroaches 'surfing' down a sewer system, performs the musical number 'Sewer Surfing' – 'wipe out!', they declare in high-pitched voices.³⁵ Earlier, in perhaps the film's most inspired moment, the cockroaches perform a Busby Berkeley-style musical number centred around a toilet bowl. This number, which is first a rap song, 'De la F.U.N.K.Y. Towel', is a bizarre celebration of the bathroom that begins by building rhythm from the repeated squeaking of a faulty tap and the bubbling fetid water in the toilet bowl and follows with the cockroaches singing an introduction, 'Welcome to Joe's toilet!' The cockroaches are shown lined up around the toilet rim, and then, in a synchronised and graceful manner, they dive, in turn, into the bowl in a style reminiscent of an Esther Williams water ballet choreographed by Berkeley. In the water, the cockroaches (who say they are 'having a party') are filmed from both above and below as they organise themselves into a series of kaleidoscopic patterns and shapes including the symbol for peace. Alas, mid-performance, they are discovered by Joe, who destroys the 'spectacle' and in disgust flushes the toilet – 'Joe!', declares one cockroach, 'you just washed the rhythm section out to Coney Island!'³⁶

The cockroaches perform within the tradition of the classical musical incorporating harmony and choreography into their numbers, as well as the idea of putting on a show and the notion of bricolage (a crinkle chip, for instance, is transformed into a washboard as part of a skiffle band).³⁷ Yet, this film also challenges the traditional musical with extreme parodying and the surreal imitation of recognisable musical performances and motifs. The opening credit sequence of *Joe's Apartment* begins, like many other films, with a reverence for New York City, as a crooner sings about the metropolis and the camera, from an aerial position, flies around the cityscape. The camera moves on to the Statue of Liberty, a symbol of freedom, democracy and hope, and then homes in on the top of the

Figure 10 A moment of bricolage as the cockroaches in *Joe's Apartment* form a skiffle band.

torch on which sits a cockroach who continues the song in a high-pitched voice. Musical performances by animals beyond cartoons are few – the singing mice in *Babe* (1995) and *Babe: Pig in the City* (1998) and the apes in *George of the Jungle* (1997) are some of the notable examples. It is, however, the connotations of grime, impurity and decay associated with cockroaches that makes this particular introduction to New York City unusual and a form of contamination of the urban ideal, a pollution of the American dream. Joe arrives in New York from the country, the clichéd naive outsider who steps off his coach carrying a bag printed with 'I Love NY'. But within seconds he is mugged and his journey through to the East Village, the location of his apartment, reveals a farcical concentration of city problems: street crime, police shootouts, dereliction and abandonment and the harassment of the elderly. The film soon after shows children playing with disused syringes, and the first few songs established include 'Rotten Apple' and 'Garbage in the Moonlight'; this is clearly no *On the Town* (1949) with its excited musical declarations of 'New York, New York, a helluva town'.

On the Town is a utopian musical in the city. In fact, for a writer such as Richard Dyer, the musical in general is seen in relation to utopianism with

entertainment offering a wish-fulfilment or an escape, and a presentation of 'what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organised'.³⁸ Dyer develops his ideas of entertainment and utopia in the musical with notions of energy, abundance, intensity, transparency and community (or togetherness), with, for instance, the musical's displays of spectacle and a vibrant use of colours an example of abundance (or a 'conquest of scarcity').³⁹ Applied to *Joe's Apartment*, such values may at first appear lacking, though they are very much present if considered mainly in relation to the cockroaches. For, despite the destitution within New York, the urban decay offers an immediate space of satisfaction and it is the musical numbers, all performed by the cockroaches, and celebrations of the city from their perspective, that create the film's most explicit moments of entertainment. This can also be seen in Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* (2005), in which the Land of the Dead, an underworld, is depicted as a utopian space in which skeletons and corpses perform the film's most joyous musical numbers.

Elsewhere, Dyer has argued that 'musicals are discourses of happiness . . . These happinesses can be readily categorised – love, yearning, fun and so on'.⁴⁰ In a footnote to the article Dyer does state that 'there are exceptions to this, numbers which do not express happiness in some form, but these are rarer than one might think . . . they take some digging out – virtually all numbers in musicals are about happiness in one form or another'.⁴¹ Dyer's footnote considers as the exceptions musical numbers in the films *South Pacific* (1958), *West Side Story* (1961) and *The Wiz* (1978), but even then he seems reluctant to allow these to move free of his view that musicals are about happiness. Actually, I would contest that Dyer's argument has not been sufficiently extended due to the perceived challenge to 'dig' for examples that prove the alternative.

Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), admittedly produced after Dyer's article was published, is, according to Brian McMillan, a possible 'anti-musical'.⁴² McMillan in fact settles on *Dancer in the Dark* as being a post-modern text and is concerned with several moments in the film, in particular the end number. In this final scene, Selma Jeskova (played by Björk) takes the slow walk along death row to her place of execution. Here she is hanged (most dramatically in mid song) and while it may be argued that she is singing beyond her death over the film's end credits (a song that is read by McMillan as Selma's 'epiphany' her 'utopian moment of release' into 'a new world'), the number she performs en route to her execution is far from being utopian or a discourse on happiness.⁴³ This execution song is both sparse in its musical style, a simple rhythm that is aligned to the counting of the steps to the scaffold, and in the *mise en scène* of the performance – a cold and grey corridor past a row of prison cells.

Similar dystopian songs can often be found within the horror-musical and the cult films *The Little Shop of Horrors*, *Alfred Packer: The Musical*, and *Katakuri-ke no kôfuku*. In the former, Steve Martin plays a sadistic dentist,

Orin Scrivello, who performs unnecessary surgery on his patients while singing 'I get off on the pain that I inflict' and 'I'd find a pussycat and bash in its head'.⁴⁴ Perhaps there is happiness here as regards Martin's satisfaction of his dark desires, but surely this musical performance is presented as a transgression and a subversion of the values of utopia. Martin is soon after fed to Audrey II, a plant from outer space that becomes the star attraction at Mushnik's Flower Shop. Audrey II needs fresh blood to sustain its system and instructs flower-shop assistant, Seymour Krelborn (Rick Moranis) to kill people so its insatiable demands can be met. 'Feed Me!' sings the giant exotic plant (voiced by Levi Stubbs of The Four Tops) in a duet with Krelborn.

Alfred Packer: The Musical is also concerned with humans as food and is a loose interpretation of the true old frontier story of Colorado cannibal Packer who allegedly ate his travelling companions. This Western-comedy-horror-musical hybrid ends with Packer being hanged (although saved at the very last moment) and a musical number featuring the cast ensemble (and the University of Colorado at Denver choir) who sing 'Hang the bastard; Hang 'im high; Hoist his body to the sky', 'When his neck bone snaps we'll know; That cannibal won't be killing anymore' and 'His veins will pop out all over his head'.⁴⁵ The hanging brings the community (moreover, it seems, the entire cast) together, in their rejoicing over an imminent death (which is mimicked within choreography that incorporates the violent jerking of their bodies at each mention of the hanging). Death is also the subject of several songs in *Katakuri-ke no kôfuku*, Takashi Miike's absurd melange of ideas that focuses on the challenges met by a family attempting to run a mountainside chalet, in film that is in places inspired by *The Sound of Music*. A guest at the chalet who successfully commits suicide becomes the subject of a musical number performed by the hotel owners upon their discovery of the body. Later, the corpse, accompanied by several other unfortunate dead and buried visitors to the chalet, returns from the grave to perform a group zombie musical number.

Katakuri-ke no kôfuku, like *Alfred Packer: The Musical*, and *The Little Shop of Horrors* emerges from the combination of a number of genre conventions, not least those of the classical Hollywood musical. All three post-classical films establish Hollywood-style musical numbers, but knowingly adjust the content and subject matter to produce a cult performance that draws on the horror genre. The utopian aspects of the classical musical film are challenged with songs marking suicide, hanging, murder and pain. Taken from certain perspectives, the utopian nature of the musical can be seen to exist, though only through the pleasure and entertainment associated with such transgressive performers as cockroaches or a sadistic dentist. Musical performance in each cult film needs to be placed in context where, most commonly, the programmatic cult text can be seen as a violation of conventions. The horror film and the musical are genres that are reasonably related, with each exhibiting emotional excess, extreme

physical situations and using the body as a site of performance and aesthetic expression. Yet, the horror-musical is an exceptional generic hybrid as the two genres separately tend to appeal to different audiences. Combined, the horror-musical represents one aspect of the cult film, and the cult film experience, in which the unlikely union of the two genres appeals to an audience looking for sites of cultural allegiance, and amplified pleasures where subversion, excess and the absurd exist.

NOTES

I would like to thank Roy Smith, Henry Swindell, Tom Craig and, in particular, Niels Weisberg for their help, comments and suggestions.

1. See Ian Conrich, 'Merry Melodies: the Marx Brothers' musical moments', in Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell (eds), *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond* (Exeter: Intellect Books, 2000): 47–54.
2. Related films include the science-fiction monster movies *The Creature Wasn't Nice* (1983) and *The Purple People Eater* (1988) in which music and musical numbers are associated with alien creations.
3. In contrast, it should be noted that since the 1980s the stage musical has experienced a renaissance.
4. Original UK publicity leaflet. See also <www.singalonga.com>.
5. Original UK publicity leaflet.
6. Original UK publicity leaflet and poster.
7. Original UK publicity leaflet.
8. <<http://www.singalonga.com/information/>>; Kristin Hohenadel, 'All together now: the hills are still alive . . .', *New York Times* 27 August 2000: 9.
9. Hohenadel 9, 16; Anthony Lane, 'The Maria problem', *The New Yorker* 14 February 2000 30–4; Susan McCulloch-Uehlin, 'There's something about Maria', *The Weekend Australian* 4–5 August 2001: R6–8.
10. Lane: 31.
11. Ibid.
12. Bruce Kawin, 'After midnight' in J.P. Telotte (ed.), *The Cult Film Experience: Beyond All Reason* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991): 18.
13. Barry K. Grant, 'Science fiction double feature: ideology in the cult film', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 123.
14. Xavier Mendik and Graeme Harper (eds), *Unruly Pleasures: The Cult Film and its Critics* (Guildford: FAB Press, 2000); Mark Jancovich, Antonio Lázaro Reboll, Julian Stringer and Andy Wills (eds), *Defining Cult Movies: The Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).
15. Jeffrey Sconce, '“Trashing” the academy: taste, excess, and an emerging politics of cinematic style', *Screen* 36: 4 (Winter 1995): 371–93.
16. Timothy Corrigan, 'Film and the culture of cult', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 31.
17. J.P. Telotte, 'Introduction: mapping the cult', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 2.
18. J.P. Telotte, 'Beyond all reason: the nature of the cult', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 16.
19. Telotte, 'Introduction': 1.
20. Kawin: 19.
21. J.P. Telotte, 'The classical cult film', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 39.
22. See the Nick Downes *Wizard of Oz* cartoon originally published in *The New Yorker*, 16 March 1998, and later printed as a NobleWorks 'Happy Birthday' card, which

- depicts Dorothy, with Toto, the Scarecrow, the Tinman and the Lion, making their ultimate request to the Wizard: 'And please sir, would it be too much, to ask for a large and devoted gay following' (sic). The cartoon is available at <http://www.thenewyorkerstore.com/search_results_category.asp?sitetype=1&artist=Nick+Downes§ion=prints&advanced=1&title=Nick+Downes>. See <http://www.aymnetwork.com/singingintherain_vw> for the video and information on the Golf GTi advert.
23. See, Wade Jennings, 'The star as cult Icon: Judy Garland', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 90–101; and Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London: British Film Institute, 1982): 113–22.
 24. Telotte, 'Beyond All Reason': 7.
 25. Danny Peary, *Cult Movies* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1981): xiii.
 26. Quoted in J.P. Telotte, 'Casablanca and the larcenous cult film', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 43; quoted in Corrigan: 28; quoted in Grant: 125.
 27. Grant: 125.
 28. Gregory A. Waller, 'Midnight movies, 1980–1985: a market study', in Telotte, *The Cult Film Experience*: 167–86.
 29. Ibid: 169.
 30. Ibid.
 31. Ibid: 167 (*italics in original*).
 32. Ibid: 168.
 33. See, for instance, 'Springtime for Hitler' in *The Producers* (1968), 'Jews in Space' in *History of the World: Part I* (1981) and 'Men in Tights' in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993).
 34. For further discussion of the 'man-about-town' see Andrew Spicer's article in this collection.
 35. The majority of this number can be downloaded from the official *Joe's Apartment* website at <<http://joesapt.warnerbros.com/cmp/pipes.html>>.
 36. The majority of this number can be downloaded from the official *Joe's Apartment* website at <<http://joesapt.warnerbros.com/cmp/towel.html>>. The song's lyrics can be found at <<http://joesapt.warnerbros.com/cmp/funkysong.html>>.
 37. For a further discussion of bricolage and the musical see Feuer: 3–7.
 38. Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and utopia', reprinted in Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1992): 18.
 39. Ibid: 20–1.
 40. Richard Dyer, 'The space of happiness in the musical', *Aura: The Film Studies Journal* 4: 1 (1998): 31.
 41. Ibid: 45.
 42. Brian McMillan, 'Complicitous critique: *Dancer in the Dark* as postmodern musical', *Discourses in Music* 5: 2 (Fall 2004): 1. Available at <<http://www.discourses.ca/v5n2a1.html>>. For a discussion of the Sex Pistols film *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* (1980) as an anti-musical see K.J. Donnelly, 'Entertainment and dystopia: the punk anti-musical', in Marshall and Stilwell: 171–9.
 43. McMillan: 10.
 44. For the full lyrics see <<http://www.lyricsondemand.com/soundtracks/l/littleshopofhorrorsmovielyrics/dentistlyrics.html>>.
 45. For the full lyrics see <<http://www.cannibalthemusical.net/songs.shtml>>.
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10 THE SOUNDTRACK MOVIE, NOSTALGIA AND CONSUMPTION

Estella Tincknell

This chapter explores the music soundtrack as a central element in contemporary popular films. It argues that the classical film musical's use of diegetic musical performance to express dramatic developments or emotional intensity has been effectively replaced by a 'postmodern' model of the film score in which a pre-recorded soundtrack is foregrounded, a soundtrack which may also be ironised through parody and distanciation. In exploring the relationship between music, performance and affect the discussion will focus on three important films made in the 1990s, *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Boogie Nights* (1998), all of which deploy popular music as a way of evoking the cultural moments of 'the sixties' and 'the seventies'.¹ While each in quite different ways effectively revisits and remakes the past for the present, all achieve this through the affective dimensions to pop music's address – its emotional discourse. The chapter therefore considers the cultural implications of this practice and its significance for the musical as a genre, as well as the ways in which it has contributed to the production of a 'preferred' history of the mid to late twentieth century.

THE END OF THE MUSICAL?

The apparent decline of the film musical as a popular genre needs to be understood in the context of wider shifts in popular music and in film production during the late twentieth century and in the early twenty-first century. Although musicals are no longer a regular feature of mainstream cinema, occasional

examples of explicitly nostalgic versions of the genre, such as *Pennies from Heaven* (1981), *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996) and *Chicago* (2002), as well as self-consciously spectacular movies, such as *Evita* (1996) and *Moulin Rouge* (2001), have continued to secure audiences.² Equally importantly, films exploiting popular new music and dance styles such as rap (*Krush Groove*, 1985) and the lambada (*The Forbidden Dance*, 1990) appeared throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This suggests that the relationship between popular music and popular cinema remains central even if it is differently mediated. Moreover, the tradition of the musical's affective use of music – to produce and organise an emotional response that is overtly presented as part of the film text – retains its importance in cinema. However, in place of (and sometimes as well as) the diegetically produced and visibly *performed* numbers of the traditional musical, the cinema audience now increasingly encounters a film soundtrack composed of discrete and previously released pop songs. This represents an important shift not only in the production of films, but also in their formal aspects, the configuration of the cinema audience and modes of reception – and in the *idea* of performance itself.

The use of the music score as a central element in a film's reception and marketing has its origins in the changing place of music in the history of popular culture as well as in specific cinema traditions. The retailing of song-sheets linked to mainstream feature films, for example, was part of Hollywood's marketing strategies from the 1930s onwards, and led to early versions of the soundtrack album as the major studios moved into the music business in the 1950s.³ Another significant factor was clearly the development of 'pop' music as a distinct genre separate from its older sibling, popular song. The arrival of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s rapidly led to its identification by Hollywood as an exploitable commodity in the production of films for the emergent teen audience, although Thomas Doherty notes that attempts to incorporate rock and pop music into the existing traditions of the musical, such as in those films that starred Elvis Presley, struggled to combine performance and narrative.⁴ In many cases, the musical performance was dealt with as a relatively discrete 'moment' outside the development of the story, as it had been in early sound films. It was not until the mid 1960s that the pop soundtrack became more fully integrated into film texts in terms of narrative as well as spectacle, but this process brought with it a clear shift away from the conventions of the integrated musical, a shift that would inform the ways in which the soundtrack film produces meaning. It was *The Last Picture Show* (1971) and *American Graffiti* (1973), both of which featured an early example of what Jeff Smith calls a 'compilation score' of recordings from the late 1950s and early 1960s, that would be most influential in developing the soundtrack as an alternative to standard orchestration, and in shaping its dominant cast as a vehicle for nostalgia.

Later, the cultural impact of *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), together with the increased integration of the entertainment industry, helped develop the use of the musical soundtrack as part of the cross-promotional 'packaging' of a film.⁵ In the 1980s, productions such as *The Breakfast Club* (1985) and *Stand By Me* (1986) were marketed in this way, while the fortuitous choice of Roy Orbison's song, 'Pretty Woman', as the title and soundtrack to the central montage sequence in the eponymous 1990 film further secured the relationship between the film score and pop nostalgia. The growth of the music video as a cultural form during this period – aided by cable-based music television channels such as MTV – shaped the development of a video-derived aesthetic of stylised images directly matched to the structure of a song in a way that clearly influenced the use of music in film. As 'the musical' with its live and immediate performance of feeling through song and dance declined, then, the cultural mediation of powerful images with music diversified. For Smith, the soundtrack film 'emerges as a curious hybrid of the musical and the traditional classical Hollywood score', offering both diversity and unity while also extending the frame of reference beyond the conventions of classical Hollywood to the wider arena of popular culture.⁶ It is this deployment of pop music to produce what Smith calls 'extramusical allusions' that is central to the power of the soundtrack film.

Musical soundtracks have become pivotal to the circulation of a film's extra-textual meanings, both in terms of marketing and at the different moments of reception. As David Shumway points out,

whereas the goal of the traditional film score was to cue an emotional response in the viewer without calling attention to itself, recent soundtracks, consisting mainly of previously recorded material, are put together on the assumption that the audience will recognise the artist, the song, or, at a minimum, a familiar style.⁷

As Shumway goes on to argue, the affective experience of popular music is intensely powerful. By condensing meanings already in circulation through their intertextual relationship to a particular style of music, performer or historical moment the soundtrack can evoke emotions and associations without having to produce those elements directly through narrative. The 'back catalogue' of popular music thus becomes a cultural bank with (apparently) instant access.⁸

Like Smith, Shumway also identifies *American Graffiti* as the main precursor of the nostalgic soundtrack film and argues persuasively that its romanticised evocation of a 'lost era' of American innocence helped to shape the particular ideological cast of later texts.⁹ The score here, and in one of my case studies, *Forrest Gump*, operates as a quasi-ironic musical commentary on the public history of the US. It exploits the nostalgic pleasures and transgressive promise of pop music while also offering a narrative trajectory that is profoundly

conservative. The use of music specifically to produce and organise the affect of nostalgia is hardly new, as Caryl Flinn notes in relation to the score of *Star Wars* (1977), which explicitly invokes Erich Korngold's romantic compositional style for adventure movies such as *The Sea Hawk* (1940).¹⁰ In the soundtrack movie, however, music is often overtly linked to a lost golden age, even if this is as relatively recent as the late 1980s.

The centrality of the compilation soundtrack therefore has particular significance when it comes to films which seek to tell or re-tell events from the 'just remembered past' (in Roger Bromley's phrase) of the years since the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹ It is not coincidental that so many soundtrack films depend on nostalgia for much of their emotional impact, nor that the primary 'moments' for such nostalgia are the decades when youth culture was itself young. It is, significantly, the years of the 'long sixties' (identified by the historian Arthur Marwick as 1958 to 1974) that have been raided most regularly by films from the 1980s to the present.¹² Such films are symptomatic of the wider cultural valorisation of youth in Western societies, as well as examples of a hard-headed desire to maximise the cinema audience by appealing to teenagers and their parents. The nostalgic tone of many of these texts is also symptomatic of contemporary anxieties about the present and future, marked by a tendency to mythologise the youth culture of more recent decades as well. It is noticeable that soundtrack movies produced during the 1990s such as *Grosse Pointe Blank* (1997) and *The Wedding Singer* (1997), for example, use the same techniques to commemorate the 1980s.¹³

Fredric Jameson has argued that nostalgic texts render a period, or more generally, a 'pastness', through a process of stylistic connotation in which meanings are invoked through cultural references.¹⁴ In its use of musical quotation and pastiche, in its knowingness about textuality and the relationship between texts, and above all, in its restructuring of the past at the level of style, I would add that the soundtrack film's nostalgia may be read as close to instant – and depoliticised – history.

The repackaging of pop music's back catalogue as nostalgia may therefore be understood to involve its emptying out as an expressively radical or oppositional form, something that has been impelled by pop's journey from the cultural margins and its current dominance in contemporary life. As Larry Grossberg argues, '[rock's] public and discursive existence has been transformed from a crisis of social rhetorics and shared historical events to a powerful and pervasive popular sensibility, infiltrating many of the spaces of social and everyday life'.¹⁵ For Grossberg, this process has involved 'rearticulating many of the possibilities of people's cultural investments'.¹⁶ I want to go further here, however, to argue that it is because popular music has increasingly become part of the processes and pleasures of commodification that the idea of 'cultural investment' becomes crucial. The cinema audience's investment in

the pleasures offered by a particular film is intensified and extended by the soundtrack. Indeed, where a film's narrative discourse is incoherent or fractured the musical soundtrack can 'fill the gaps' by speaking to the audience in ways in which the narrative cannot. It is quite possible that without its score of classic pop numbers *Forrest Gump*, for example, would not have had the degree of critical and popular success it enjoyed, and would certainly have been a very different kind of film.

PERFORMANCE AND IRONY

Importantly, the increasing dominance of the soundtrack in contemporary film is not just a matter of stylistic or formal shifts in film production, it is also implicated in changing notions of musical performance. In the classical musical, performance is usually transparent and expressive of sincere emotions or it is linked to the theatrical presentation of 'talent' or star charisma; often, it may draw on a combination of these elements, but regardless of the specific musical sub-genre, the performance itself is represented as authentic. One of the most interesting features of the way in which the soundtrack film developed during the 1990s was its recovery and recasting of a version of diegetic performance that also drew on the use of pre-recorded music. While retaining the soundtrack score a number of films also included a 'moment' or moments of performance within the diegesis that clearly referenced the traditions of the musical.

One example of this is the British social comedy, *The Full Monty* (1997), which, like the other films discussed here, offered a nostalgically-tinted selection of mainly 1970s recordings on its soundtrack but also featured scenes in which its characters literally performed to diegetically-produced music. The most notable of these is not the striptease that ends the film but a much earlier scene set in a welfare office in which it gradually becomes clear that the 'soundtrack' music (Donna Summer's 'Hot Stuff') is actually diegetic: it is being played over a tannoy to the waiting claimants who include the six main characters. As the music plays, and in a highly comic development, the men find themselves irresistibly drawn into a full-scale performance of their dance routine, emerging one by one from the queue to perform together. Yet even while this is a pleasurable moment in the film, it is clear that the combined factors of the unlikely setting, the even more unlikely performers and Summer's 'sexy' song are being offered ironically rather than through the musical's traditional tropes of sincerity and emotional authenticity.¹⁷

When diegetic performance is absent from the narrative altogether the soundtrack may operate to distance the viewer from the events on-screen or to comment on the characters or their actions through ironic juxtaposition. It may, for example, work to invoke ideas or ideals that are supposed to belong more properly to a past, 'more innocent' or 'more romantic' age, as in the use of

swing and ballads from the 1940s and 1950s in *When Harry Met Sally* (1989). In the soundtrack movie the meaning of 'performance' is thus transformed and fragmented. Instead of the 'real' visible and immediate presence of the 'author' or performer of the music – the singer or group – we are offered 'absent performances' that, in their uncoupling of originary production and authentic meaning may also recast the connotations produced by the music.

FORREST GUMP'S 'VIETNAM': RECUPERATING RADICALISM?

Forrest Gump is more than usually dependent on its soundtrack of vintage popular music to organise textual meaning. The film's use of recordings that span the period from the late 1950s through to the mid 1970s helps to signal narrative chronology and 'benchmark' major historical events as Forrest tells his life story to various listeners while sitting at a bus stop – a story that appears throughout most of the film in flashback. The use of such rock and pop 'classics' to punctuate and effectively comment on the narrative offers an extra layer of textual meaning, making the relationship between Forrest's interpretation of the events he witnesses and the audience's prior knowledge of that history more explicit.

The soundtrack also works to secure the film's particular status as a mainstream text through the range of recordings used and the nostalgic associations they mobilise. *Forrest Gump's* success is closely bound up with this process of recognition since the musical cues are explicitly linked to major events in the postwar history of the US, and iconic figures such as President John F. Kennedy, Elvis Presley and John Lennon are, through clever editing, represented 'meeting' the fictional Gump. However, it is the film's aural rather than visual foregrounding of sources from the high point of pop music's engagement with counter-cultural politics in the late 1960s – allied to its profoundly conservative morality – that makes it such a curiously polysemic text.

Indeed, while the film's narrative politics are, arguably, deeply reactionary, there are more radical possibilities in a musical soundtrack that stitches together the gaps in the story through popular recordings that interpellate the affective sensibility of the counter-culture. Quite simply, *Forrest Gump* is far from being an ideologically coherent text. This lack of coherence is especially evident in the 'Vietnam' scenes and montage sequences that make up the structural and ideological heart of the film, and in which its contradictions are played out through the disjunctions between narrative and soundtrack. The central sequence of these scenes opens with the sight of whirling helicopters and the instantly evocative guitar introduction to Jimi Hendrix's 'All Along the Watchtower', a song whose prior configuration as a 'Vietnam' text has 'always already' been produced, leaving the audience in no doubt as to where we are supposed to be. In addition, the film's referentiality, especially to *Apocalypse*

Now (1979) through its familiar semantic codes of helicopters and jungles, and to other 'Vietnam' films whose iconography is recognisable, intensifies this process. The earlier film had itself used a 'vintage' collection of hits from the late 1960s to produce a similar range of counter-cultural and 'Vietnam' references, as Robb Wright argues.¹⁸ Vietnam thus becomes 'Vietnam' – a play of signifiers as well as a 'real' event.

Yet it seems unlikely that the cinema audience is being invited to assume that the non-diegetic music is somehow also 'playing' in Forrest's mind, even though the relationship between diegetic tunes and the music overlaid on the soundtrack is sometimes deliberately blurred in this sequence. The Beach Boys' 'Sloop John B', for example, is initially heard broadcast from a radio visibly located within the diegesis at a military camp and then overlaps onto the soundtrack as the scene changes. The soundtrack acts instead as an additional form of commentary on the events being represented, and is particularly important to this film precisely because its narrator, Forrest himself, is rendered incapable of making wider political or social observations: he perceives the world largely through the narrow spectrum of his immediate experiences and interprets historical events only by reference to those parameters. The soundtrack thus returns the on-screen images to a wider cultural context while helping to organise the film's affect. This device enables the film to distance itself from the futility of the Vietnam adventure while simultaneously emphasising its hero's virtuous conformity. It also suggests, however, that the audience's understanding of the 'meaning' of *Forrest Gump* may not be circumscribed by the conservatism of its narrative, but may instead be shaped by a cultural investment in the values of the counter-culture and its emphasis on personal political agency.

The representational strategies of narrative may thus be destabilised through the use of a soundtrack 'commentary' because there is a discursive difference between the rhetoric of narrative and textual affect. The apparent movement of the film towards the reassertion of a conservative patriarchal order through narrative closure cannot wholly erase the way in which most of its central section effectively celebrates 'the sixties' aurally through its soundtrack. For some audiences, then, cultural investment in the *soundtrack* rather than the story may produce a rather different – more radical – reading of the film's politics.

None the less, it is the film's referentiality and stylisation about the 'history' it offers – whether political or cultural – that links *Forrest Gump*'s use of its compilation score to that of other soundtrack films. The musical tracks are often used inconsistently: sometimes played almost at full length, sometimes intermittently returned to (as in the main theme of a traditional film orchestration) as devices to emphasise plot significance, emotional intensity and narrative development. By manipulating its musical sources in this way *Forrest Gump* effectively makes them more central to the film's meaning, precisely because they seem to address the audience so directly.

PULP FICTION: PUTTING ON THE STYLE

Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* has largely been read as a postmodern thriller, with its refusal of linear narrative and its knowing referentiality to cinematic traditions and tropes. Like *Forrest Gump*, the film foregrounds its soundtrack, although the specific combination of classic and obscure recordings from the 1960s and 1970s, particularly the surf-rock of Dick Dale, the Centurions and the Tornados, works to produce *Pulp Fiction* as a self-consciously 'cool' text. This use of the mono-tracked, beat-heavy style of early 1960s US 'underground' pop mixed with 'classic' ballads such as Dusty Springfield's 'Son of a Preacher Man' is crucial to the film's postmodern knowingness. Even the (re)deployment of the music of the rock 'n' roll musician, Chuck Berry, as a master of 'the twist' in a key scene in the film suggests a playful refusal to fix references. Most importantly here, however, it is noticeable that the version of 'the sixties' offered by *Pulp Fiction*'s musical soundtrack is certainly not that of the publicly recognised counter-culture featured in *Forrest Gump*, but is, rather, a more genuinely marginal form of sub-culture based around a lifestyle – surfing, 'hanging' – that is resolutely apolitical. In contrast to the latter's address to a clearly defined mainstream audience, *Pulp Fiction* explicitly solicits a younger, cinematically knowledgeable spectator, through its shock tactics and its cultural referencing. The soundtrack thus becomes another form of suture, stitching together divergences of story, plot and meaning.

As Jeff Smith observes, the film effectively uses the surf-rock instrumentals as its score, mobilising the particularity of their 'modal twang' to underline the film's dramatic shifts.¹⁹ For Ken Garner, the eclectic character of the selection of music used for this particular version of the score is fundamental to the emotional intensity produced by these shifts.²⁰ In addition to this underlying musical emphasis in the film, however, *Pulp Fiction* contains one extraordinary 'musical moment' of performance that is curiously redolent of the classical film musical: the twist contest that is entered – and won – by Vincent Vega (John Travolta) and Mia Wallace (Uma Thurman). This scene occurs in the text (although not in the story's chronology) shortly after a brutal execution, and marks an apparent shift in mood and focus as Vega is shown reluctantly taking his gangster boss's wife out for an evening's entertainment. 'Jack Rabbit Slim's', the setting for the contest, is a 1950s-themed restaurant staffed by Hollywood, pop and television lookalikes and serving over-priced versions of America's popular gastronomy. This location, with its pastiche staff and dependence on cultural trivia (Mia Wallace is able to identify one of the waitresses as 'Mamie van Doren', a celebrated B-movie actress), seems to offer a condensed and empty history of the popular culture of the US, its ambience produced by a flattening out of temporality and a stylised and parodic nostalgia that is both excessively knowing and, in Jameson's sense,

'schizophrenic', occupying the present and the past simultaneously and with a heightened intensity.²¹

Tarantino effectively invites this reading by exposing the emptiness of the charade: 'Marilyn Monroe' coos into a microphone unconvincingly, 'Buddy Holly' waits at tables and 'Ed Sullivan' hosts a twist contest rather than a primetime television show. Vega, when asked his opinion of the place, even describes it as a 'wax museum with a pulse'. Furthermore, while the diner setting seems to be a simulacrum of a 'fifties' restaurant – all chrome and plastic – the twist contest is a musical sequence which evokes 'the sixties', while Travolta's dance performance inevitably references 'the seventies' and his appearance in *Saturday Night Fever* in ways that are similarly condensed. 'The past' thus becomes a more general 'pastness' in which the stylistic signifiers of various decades are loaded into a single moment.

It is when the twist contest begins (to the diegetically produced music of Chuck Berry's record, 'You Never Can Tell') that *Pulp Fiction* briefly shifts from its habitually ironic discourse to one that references the conventions of the classical film musical and in so doing makes it possible for the film to inhabit an affective space that goes beyond stylistic allusion. A stage is cleared for the two dancers (Travolta and Thurman), an 'audience' is produced out of the other diners and an energetic and intense performance is presented, a performance that is, momentarily, wholly centred on by the film. For the duration of the dance, the camera – and the attention of the viewer – is completely focused on Travolta and Thurman, just as though they were a dance partnership like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Yet its continuous movement – panning up and down the bodies, isolating them as individuals not a couple – is radically different from the tradition of the classical musical, and helps to destabilise any expectations of a romantic or sexual climax. While in the classical musical such a dance would perhaps signal the awakening of desire and would be followed by a scene in which the romance was developed, in *Pulp Fiction* it is followed by one of the most graphically shocking moments in the film, in which Thurman's character overdoses. Moreover, while the dance itself is represented as a peculiarly intense performance, an intensity that is partly produced by the camera's focus on the stars' apparently mutual gaze, it is unclear what this intensity is 'for' or 'about', or even whether it is genuinely directed by the two characters at each other or is simply a further element in the postmodern play of signifiers and the intensification of the present that Jameson describes.

It is, however, the use of Chuck Berry's music for this scene that briefly disrupts the deployment of the compilation score as a part of the film's randomised stylisation of history in the most powerful way. Where the tinny electronic sound of surf-rock emphasises *Pulp Fiction*'s artifice as a constructed text, reminding the audience of its studio-based production, Berry's authentic – as opposed to 'authentic' – bluesy rock and the song's honky-tonk piano emerge

as a relatively transparent and unmediated style of popular music. Its deployment at the only point in the film where narrative and music are fully integrated means that its dramatic function is rather different to that of the other soundtrack recordings, working to suggest that this is the one moment in the film when the affective discourse of the music may overturn the disaffective knowingness of the narrative.

Crucially, *Pulp Fiction* is too strongly marked by a discourse of emotional detachment for this affective moment to extend beyond its immediate performance, and the film resists the more conventionalised tropes of nostalgia that mark other texts discussed here. But this does not mean that its soundtrack is ‘innocent’, as I have indicated. Perhaps most importantly, the film explicitly allies its ironic discourse to the performance of masculinity, both in its narrative emphasis on different kinds of male power and in its use of iconography allied to specific musical numbers. In the final scene, having successfully routed an armed robber in a coffee shop, Vega and his partner, Jules Winnfield (Samuel L. Jackson), stroll outside and into the end credits to the sound of ‘Surf Rider’ by The Lively Ones; their jaunty swagger a significant reassertion of masculine power that is all the more potent because we have seen Vega gunned down an hour earlier in the film in a scene that takes place – chronologically – a day later.

In the end, *Pulp Fiction* is about style as well as being stylised. Its deployment of the cultural signifiers of the recent past and especially in the use it makes of its soundtrack to invite a ‘knowing’ response from the audience means that it evacuates the wider social context from the text. In this way, Tarantino’s manipulation both of time and genre in the film, and the indeterminacy of scenes such as the twist contest, not only subvert the possibility of linear meaning, they amplify the text’s concern with the surface of history. Where the soundtrack of *Forrest Gump* struggles with the narrative to produce a ‘preferred version’ of the 1960s – either as the decade of personal emancipation and social revolution or the period of unprecedented moral decline – the score of *Pulp Fiction* floats away from a specific chronology or historical context, because the linearity of ‘history’ is too limiting.

BOOGIE NIGHTS: THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO

With a different cultural agenda but a very similar deployment of its soundtrack of vintage disco hits, Paul Thomas Anderson’s sympathetic account of the film pornography industry’s heyday and decline, *Boogie Nights* (1997), uses music to evoke the ‘feel’ of a historical period – the mid to late 1970s. The film deploys the music of The Commodores, The Emotions, Marvin Gaye and other soul-inflected performers to emphasise a very particular reading of ‘the seventies’ in which the disco becomes the site of a kind of innocent excess. Paradoxically, in

Figure 11 The disco as a site of innocent excess where sex and dancing are disconnected in *Boogie Nights*.

Source: (New Line / The Kobal Collection / Lefkowitz, G).

a narrative about a part of the film industry whose sexual explicitness had, until the 1970s and the mainstream success of *Deep Throat* (1972), made its history fairly obscure, Anderson suggests that the relative frankness of seventies pornography's representation of sex transforms other kinds of social relations.

Indeed, the link between disco dancing and sex that is evoked in *Saturday Night Fever* is neatly and engagingly reversed. Rather than going to the disco in search of sexual partners, Jack Horner's 'family' of porn stars go to enjoy themselves without any additional agendas: to dance. In a central montage sequence that, in its own way, resembles the intensity of the twist contest in *Pulp Fiction* as well as its 'knowingness' about the cultural artefacts of the past, the main character, Eddie (or 'Dirk Diggler' as he is styled in the porn films in which he stars – played by Mark Wahlberg) is shown getting ready to go to the disco: blow-drying his hair and choosing a Travolta-like patterned silk shirt. These shots are paralleled with moments from 'Dirk's' increasingly successful performance as a porn star. This montage then segues into a full-blown pastiche of the seminal disco-dancing sequences in *Saturday Night Fever*. Eddie, surrounded by his friends from the porn industry, performs an energetic and characteristically 'seventies' disco dance at the centre of a light-studded dancefloor, ending with a finger-pointing pose clearly imitative of Travolta's. This is a moment of spectacular performance that briefly invokes the late film musical's use of an exhibitionist solo dance by the male star to signify virility and a new kind of masculinity (such as Kevin Bacon's in *Footloose*, 1984, for instance). Eddie's performance on the dance floor is linked to his ability as a sex star, and the spectacular aspects of the latter are signified by the success of the former. Curiously, for a film that wants to romanticise the 'traditional' (cinematic) version of the porn industry, *Boogie Nights* here seems to require dance to represent the jouissance of sex.

At the same time, the film's narrative nostalgically invokes the 1970s as a moment in which sex is omnipresent, 'safe' and overwhelmingly heterosexual. Not only is the sole significant gay male character represented as a podgy misfit with a crush on 'Dirk', the centrality of Latino and gay culture to disco style and the hedonism of the 1970s is ignored. The film also largely evades the seamier aspects of the pornography industry (including its control by the mafia) and never fully addresses the problematic issues of sexual power and consent or the production of desire. The version of 'the seventies' that is produced by *Boogie Nights* is, therefore, curiously similar to the one nostalgically evoked in *The Full Monty*, a past apparently before feminism as well as before AIDS, in which phallic masculinity can be celebrated rather than problematised. These tensions and contradictions, between narrative and discourse and the overt production of meaning on the one hand and the utopian possibility of exceeding meaning – or reconfiguring it in new ways – through the jouissance of music on the other, are characteristic of the soundtrack film's struggle to rework the past.

CONCLUSION

Crucially, the repackaging and re-presentation of pop's musical history for contemporary consumption has involved the recasting of other kinds of history too. The soundtrack film has been part of a wider cultural process whereby the canon of classic pop has been raided and redeployed as part of postmodernism's voracious approach to the past. Television advertising during the 1980s and 1990s, for example, did something very similar with Motown soul and early rock 'n' roll recordings, and more recently increasingly instant nostalgia has been evoked through the use of 1980s and early 1990s pop recordings in films such as *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion* (1997).

Yet because the films explored here are not concerned to 'sell' a single product so much as a particular understanding of the cultural significance of past events, their soundtracks are available to a wide range of cultural investments on the part of the audience, investments that may diverge quite radically from the ideological trajectory of the narrative. The representational strategies of narrative may even be destabilised through the soundtrack because of the significant discursive difference between the rhetoric of narrative and textual affect. Jameson's argument that 'the pseudohistorical' has displaced 'real' history may therefore be seen to be too totalising, and too concerned with cognitive rather than affective responses to texts.²² The affective power of the music may offer a source of resistance to the meanings offered by the narrative by escaping the discursive practice of storytelling, or may even work to transform its significance through the soundtrack equivalent of the musical's moment of performance.

NOTES

1. 'Affect' has come to be used in cultural studies and is deployed here as a noun to describe an intensification of bodily drives or physical sensations that may arise in response to a particular cultural form or mediation, and that differs from the directly cognitive processing of meaning. For example, Eric Shouse argues that 'music provides perhaps the clearest example of how the intensity of the impingement of sensations on the body can 'mean' more to people than meaning itself'. 'Feeling, emotion, affect', *M/C Journal* 8: 6 (December 2005), <<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>>.
2. *Pennies from Heaven* began life as a Dennis Potter-penned series for BBC television in 1976. Interestingly, both the film and the series, like Potter's later masterpiece, *The Singing Detective* (BBC, 1986) feature lip-synched performances of classic songs from the 1930s in a way that prefigures some uses of the soundtrack discussed here.
3. For a detailed discussion of this process see Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York and Chichester, Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1998).
4. See Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Youth in the 1950s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988): 82.
5. For example, Jeff Smith points out that one of the first soundtrack films to integrate music and narrative effectively, *Footloose* (1984), using the principles of what he

calls the 'jukebox musical', depended heavily on performers signed to Columbia's music subsidiary, CBS, to provide the music: 203.

6. Smith: 155.
7. David R. Shumway, 'Rock 'n' roll sound tracks and the production of 'nostalgia', *Cinema Journal* 38: 2 (Winter 1999): 36–7.
8. Importantly, copyright restrictions as well as the specific economic relationship between performers, record labels and the global corporations that own them actually considerably limit what may be accessible. The Beatles, for example, have never allowed any of their own recordings to be used in compilation albums or for soundtracks to films other than their own productions.
9. Shumway: 42.
10. Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992): 153.
11. See Roger Bromley, *Lost Narratives: Popular Fictions, Politics and Recent History* (London: Routledge, 1988).
12. Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958–c.1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Films that draw explicitly on this 'moment' using a soundtrack of vintage pop include: *American Hot Wax* (1978), *The Big Chill* (1984), *Dirty Dancing* (1987) and *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987).
13. See Lesley Speed, 'Together in electric dreams: films revisiting 1980s youth', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 28: 1 (Spring 2000): 22–9.
14. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991): 19.
15. Larry Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 209.
16. Ibid.
17. For a discussion of this film and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) see Estella Tincknell and Deborah Chambers, 'Performing the crisis: fathering, gender and representation in two 1990s films', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 29: 4 (Winter 2002): 146–55.
18. Robb Wright, 'Score vs song: art, commerce and the H factor in film and television', in Ian Inglis (ed.), *Popular Music and Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003): 14.
19. Smith: 223.
20. Ken Garner, '“Would you like to hear some music?”: music in-and-out-of-control in the films of Quentin Tarantino', in K. J. Donnelly (ed.), *Film Music: Critical Approaches* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001): 198.
21. Jameson: 26–7.
22. Ibid.: 21.

II YOUTH, EXCESS AND THE MUSICAL MOMENT

Scott Henderson

The 1999 film, *10 Things I Hate About You*, opens with a sweeping panorama of a Seattle setting, while on the soundtrack The Barenaked Ladies' song, 'One Week', is heard emanating seemingly from a non-diegetic source. This assumption is soon corrected as a car full of teenage girls pulls up to a stop sign; they are all bobbing their heads in time to the tune, which is now identified as coming from the car's stereo. However, this sound is quickly drowned out and replaced by Joan Jett's rendition of 'Bad Reputation', which blasts from the car stereo of Kat Stratford (Julia Stiles), the film's main character, and the 'Shrew' in this filmic updating of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Significantly, within this opening shot the nature of these characters and their relationship has been established without a single word of dialogue.

Music is foregrounded as the primary marker of character in *10 Things I Hate About You*, as it so often is in teen films. Kat's 'bad reputation' is contrasted with the conventional identities of the other girls, marked as they are by the mainstream pop of The Barenaked Ladies. This band's sensibility, and its audience, is identifiable from a comment by lead singer Steven Page, who is 'troubled by the current rap-metal trend, because it feeds and fuels alienated youth'.¹ The film's use of The Barenaked Ladies' music, combined with the uniformity of the girls' response to that music, suggests a mainstream conformism against which Kat's behaviour and identity is cast. Issues of identity construction are often central to teen films, as producers attempt both to address the youth audience and to use popular culture to construct dominant ideals of behaviour. This chapter explores the function of music within those constructions. Key to this is

the relationship between youth identities that can be constructed – and hence ‘contained’ – by the narrative and those musical moments, the unexpected explosions of musical performance in a non-musical film, in which youth identity becomes part of what may be described as cinematic excess. Given that *10 Things I Hate About You* derives the issue of containment or ‘taming’ from its dramatic source, this is an important focus for examining the construction of youth identity within the film. Through a comparison with a classical Hollywood musical, *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), which is also concerned with love and social roles, it will be possible to see how *10 Things I Hate About You* illustrates how shifts in popular music style, and the growing impact of music video, have altered the relationship between music and identity in the post-classical musical. Similar shifts will be considered in relation to *Tank Girl* (1995), where the incorporation of music video techniques is evident and where again identity and gender construction become bound up in the film’s musical moments. Through their use of textual excess in the construction of these ‘musical moments’, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Tank Girl* may be positioned as progressive texts in terms of their construction of femininity. The links between music and identity position their main female characters in opposition to the conventional feminine role rather than providing the social integration so central to both the classical musical and to the contemporary teen film.

Barry Keith Grant has noted that rock music quickly became part of Hollywood’s representation of youth, despite its apparent codification as oppositional. As Grant points out, rock’s ideology of resistance and rebellion was part of Hollywood’s efforts to attract a teenage audience: ‘rock ‘n’ roll, which initially was antithetical to both the musical’s themes and conventions, was rather quickly fitted to its generic strategies’.² It is evident that this use of rock music has continued into contemporary youth films. This should not be surprising, for rock music, despite its apparently oppositional nature has been ‘generally patriarchal, heterosexual, and romantic, thus reinforcing (at least until some New Wave music) traditionally sexist distinctions between masculine sexuality as aggressive and dominant, and feminine sexuality as passive and submissive’.³

In *10 Things I Hate About You* Kat is presented as preferring music that is independent or ‘alternative’, a sub-genre in which female artists have sometimes flourished. Additionally, Kat expresses a desire to sing and play the guitar herself, aspirations that mark her desire to control her subjectivity. At one point in the film, following a search of Kat’s bedroom by her sister, Bianca (Larisa Oleynik), and ‘new boy’ Cameron James (Joseph-Gordon Levitt), looking for clues as to her interests so that Patrick Verona (Heath Ledger) can seduce her, Kat is identified as having a preference for ‘angry girl music of the indie rock persuasion’. This is echoed in the film’s depiction of the ‘riot grrl’ venue, Club Skunk, in which shots of Verona’s point of view as he enters the club allow us

to see a predominantly female clientele, dressed in aggressive riot grrl style and defiantly returning the 'gaze' of the camera. The nature of the music and its relation to female identity is thus underlined. Verona uses his knowledge about the music as a means of attracting Kat's interest: referring to the band performing at the club, he notes that they are 'no Bikini Kill or The Raincoats'. Much of the film's soundtrack is performed by 'indie' artists, particularly the band Letters to Cleo, which, while never named, is identified as being Kat's favourite. The performances include covers of Nick Lowe's 'Cruel to Be Kind' and Cheap Trick's 'I Want You to Want Me', both songs in which an aggressive male identity had been foregrounded in the original versions.

It is in the displacement of this musical identity, through female performances of these traditionally 'masculine' songs, that the film's excess is located. Certainly, it is indicative of the impossibility of Kat's identity being fully contained by the romantic narrative. Just as the musical performances refuse to align with traditionally gendered generic boundaries, so Kat's identity is never fully consumed by the conventional representations of gender or sexuality. The film ends with Kat re-establishing her relationship with Verona, but also with her being presented with a guitar in order to pursue her musical ambitions just as she has arranged to pursue her academic ambitions. Grant describes the incorporation of rock 'n' roll into Randall Kleiser's film *Grease* (1978), where 'in the end the romance of pop wins out over the sexuality of rock'.⁴ At the end of *10 Things I Hate About You* the opposite occurs, as Kat's rock credentials are reaffirmed in her possession of the phallic guitar, and then underlined by the rooftop performance of 'I Want You to Want Me' that closes the film.

Unlike the classical Hollywood musical, *10 Things I Hate About You* does not provide the restoration of social stability. Musical numbers in the classical musical are often about controlling and channelling sexual energy. As Grant observes, 'narrative closure is attained when the couple's differences are somehow resolved, usually through the mediating power of musical performance'.⁵ This affirmation of social norms is also emphasised by Jane Feuer, who notes that 'successful performances are intimately bound up with success in love, with the integration of the individual into a community or group'.⁶ This use of music as a means of social integration in the contemporary teen film is evident in *She's All That* (1999), in which, at the high school prom, a group of teenagers comes together, apparently spontaneously, into one cohesive unit, dancing to Fat Boy Slim's 'Rockafeller Skank'. Unsurprisingly, *She's All That* is a film that validates social integration, as the seemingly unattractive outsider gains acceptance into the mainstream culture of the school. This conforms to the conventions of the teen high-school film in which the individual ultimately finds a way to become part of the community, as exemplified in John Hughes's *The Breakfast Club* (1985) and *Pretty in Pink* (1986).⁷ In each of these films social outcasts find ways to fit in with mainstream sensibilities. While the social order may seem alienat-

ing and cruel at times, the message seems to be that the individual must find ways of ‘making do’, and it is often through music that this understanding evolves. *The Breakfast Club*’s library dance scene, in which youths of very different identities bond through dance, and *Pretty in Pink*’s use of the slow dance at the prom clearly demonstrate these tendencies. That each film’s most memorable songs – Simple Minds’ ‘(Don’t You) Forget About Me’ in *The Breakfast Club* and Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark’s ‘If You Leave’ in *Pretty in Pink* – sum up the film’s messages of social integration should come as no surprise.

The way in which music is incorporated into *10 Things I Hate About You* is decidedly different. Rather than functioning as a supplement to or commentary upon the narrative, music in this film is a main concern of the central character. As such, the potential to read these as musical moments is much greater. Ian Conrich has identified such moments as ‘short passages of musical performance’ that appear in ‘non-musical classical Hollywood films’.⁸ Here, describing the films of The Marx Brothers, Conrich identifies ‘musical performance as a moment of energy and escapism’⁹ and suggests that these disruptive moments, displaying a vaudeville aesthetic, are seemingly at odds with ‘the established conventions of a classical Hollywood cinema concerned with narrative coherence and causality’.¹⁰ The musical moments in *10 Things I Hate About You* work in a slightly different manner because despite Kat being the locus of the narrative’s moments of disruption she is a defined character as opposed to a star performer like Groucho or Harpo Marx. Rather than structuring Kat into the seemingly coherent social realm of the narrative, these disruptive moments crucially help to locate her as individual and separate. The closest she comes to social integration is in a drunken tabletop dance at a party. But here the communal value of music is represented negatively, for while Kat’s performance may make her the centre of attention at the party, it diminishes the control over her identity that she has exhibited throughout the film. Immediately after this dance she is ‘rescued’ by Verona and this leads to what looks like a conventional romantic scene. But Kat has lost control, and this is represented by her vomiting onto Verona’s shoes. What is interesting here is that this stereotypical scene of romance, on a lawn swing under a starlit sky, does not become a classical moment of union in which differences between characters are resolved by the powers of music and musical performance. Instead, it demonstrates the perils of such moments when the control over identity exhibited by the female lead is lost. By the time Verona drives her home, Kat has recovered enough of her self-control to shun the norms of romance by rejecting him. The formation of the couple will not take place here in the classical manner of the musical or the teen film; instead, it is to take place under Kat’s terms in the later scene in which she is presented with a guitar.

It is in Kat’s relation to music and to the performances within the film that a correspondence to Conrich’s ideas of musical moments is most evident. Kat

expresses a desire for independence throughout the film: in her choice of college, in her relationships with her peers and in her musical taste. Her social critique focuses on mainstream culture's patriarchal character. This is shown in a scene in an English class, where she challenges being given an assignment on Hemingway as an indication of the patriarchal nature of the course of study. It is also evident in Kat's home life, in which her overbearing father insists on her attending a college close to home, because he fears losing his daughter. The father's efforts to control his daughters' dating habits are the impetus for the narrative and serve to heighten the significance of the film's examination of the problem of patriarchal control. Kat's identification with women's rock music and rock performance is therefore bound up in these concerns. The first time she is seen at home, and in a scene in which her troubled relationship with her father is introduced, Kat is reading Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* while the soundtrack (Spiderbait's 'Calypso') offers us another clue to her feelings.

Unlike the central figures of both the classical folk musical and the teen romance, Kat expresses no desire to belong to the community; such belonging implies a conformity that is seen here as restrictive, particularly to the establishment of social identity.¹¹ In the scene in which Cameron is escorted around the school he has just joined, a variety of schoolyard cliques are pointed out to him, each of these represents an established teen stereotype, and the members of these groups are represented as conformist characters who are unable to break from their identities. Even the idiosyncrasies of teen romance are shown as absurd when, at the party, a chance meeting between two peripheral characters leads to a party-long amorous kiss. Teen romance is thus represented as comic, and as socially sanctioned but lacking any depth of feeling. It is the nonconformist main characters, Kat and Patrick, who experience personal growth in the film.

The classical folk musical conventionally shows a community unified or harmonised. In teen films, too, unity is expected, as teenagers are constructed in a manner that makes space for them in mainstream society. The musical number in the teen film is part of this process of writing youth into the dominant culture. This is apparent in a classical folk musical such as *Meet Me in St. Louis* in which the actions of Esther (Judy Garland) and Tootie (Margaret O'Brien) threaten the family structure and must eventually be dealt with by the narrative. A dual pairing of sisters – Rose (Lucille Bremer) and Esther, and Agnes (Joan Carroll) and Tootie – situates Esther and Tootie as the younger in their respective pairings, and their resistance to the norms of family and society are thus paralleled. Tootie's childish transgressions correspond with Esther's social ones. While Rose is willing to wait for a proposal from her absent boyfriend, Esther more actively pursues John Truett (Tom Drake). Similarly, in the younger pairing, Agnes is able to control her emotions and behaviour while Tootie acts on hers, including hitting John, an act that overlaps with Esther's own romantic aggression. *Meet Me in St. Louis* is thus an example of a film that makes music crucial to its unifying structures.

For example, the performance of 'The Trolley Song' leads to the restoration of the relationship between Esther and John, the boy next door. While none of their differences or the reasons for his absence at the outset of the trolley ride are dealt with in the narrative, the restorative powers of musical performance are enough to resolve this crisis. As Esther and the other riders spontaneously perform the song, John leaps onto the trolley and joins Esther, both physically, by sitting beside her, and in performance. Similarly, towards the end of the film, John is unable to attend a dance because he lacks an appropriate suit. Esther's grandfather steps in with the promise of a solution that the narrative implies will mean he will let John borrow one of his suits. Instead, the grandfather accompanies Esther to the dance. As they move about the floor in the midst of a dance number, their steps take them behind a Christmas tree and, when Esther re-emerges, she is accompanied by John. (How he managed to get the suit, and how he has managed to appear so magically are concerns the narrative does not deal with, nor should it.) It is the power of musical performance that allows for the coupling to occur effortlessly and wordlessly. As Grant argues, through both dancing and musical performance, 'courting and mating seem considerably less problematic than they often are in reality'.¹²

Meet Me in St. Louis deals with the issues of coming of age, romance and community acceptance. Furthermore, the film uses its setting in the St. Louis of 1903/4 – on the eve of the World's Fair – as a form of ideal small-town community, which is threatened by the big city values of New York (where the family may be moving), and by the youthful female independence displayed by Esther and Tootie. *Meet Me in St. Louis'* reification of the ideals of community is echoed in the film's reliance on the classical structure of the musical, which, Grant stresses, '[has] been concerned with articulating a sense of community and defining the parameters of sexual desire'.¹³

The musical moments described by Conrich are periods in which convention and the cohesion of the text are overtly broken down. Conrich identifies the work of The Marx Brothers as representative of anarchistic comedy, a form 'distinguished by a joining of vaudeville's disruption, fragmentation and impulsiveness'.¹⁴ Given the level of 'energy and escapism' that Conrich describes in such moments, it is their function as spectacle or as set pieces, not as narrative, that is significant for the film. Indeed, these musical moments seem more likely to disrupt the narrative and resist containment within the film's overall system of meaning. This is precisely the way in which *10 Things I Hate About You* employs its elements of musical performance. The most notable of these is Verona's rendition of 'Can't Take My Eyes Off of You'. Here, he manages to co-ordinate a stadium filled with student athletes and an impromptu musical accompaniment by the school's marching band. Commandeering a microphone and gaining access to the stadium's public announcement system, while successfully eluding security guards, Verona performs his song as a means of

expressing desire for Kat. This suggests a nod towards the function of such performances in the classical Hollywood musical, but its unexpectedness, elaborateness, and the absurdity and excessiveness of the performance combined with the choice of musical style negate any possibility for the moment to become fully contained by the narrative, despite its role as an element of that structure. The song and the performance, while appropriate to a romantic musical, are 'out of place' in the film, and out of character for Verona, who up to this point has been depicted as an anti-social 'tough'. Rather than fitting seamlessly into the film, then, the performance draws attention to the text's distance from the norms of musical integration within the genre.

This kind of musical moment might best be seen in relation to the growing presence in post-classical cinema of a disruptive aesthetic associated with the music video, which seemingly allows for a sudden musical performance presented within a form that breaks continuity and is anti-narrative, or linked to the notion of cinematic excess. Of course, it is possible to argue that Hollywood's formulaic system is one in which excess is encouraged. Narratives have a tendency to be obvious in their construction, particularly in genre films. Richard Maltby and Ian Craven cite Rick Altman's assertion that 'the similarity of Hollywood happy endings "reasons backward"'. A movie's beginning must be "retrofitted" so that it appears to lead logically to the predetermined happy ending'.¹⁵ Audiences can be expected to know what will happen via generic convention, making the actual narrative less important than the manner of its presentation. It is these pleasures of presentation that make such moving pictures cinematic. Kristin Thompson suggests that other excessive pleasures are normally contained within the framework of the film's system of meaning, but given the ontological nature of film this may not always be possible. In this regard, she cites Stephen Heath's notion that 'the excess arises from the conflict between the *materiality* of a film and the unifying structures within it'.¹⁶ The battle between the film's narrative meaning and its system of representation often leads to the incorporation of images of excess. As Thompson points out, for classical Hollywood, the reliance on an established value system and repeated aspects of narrative causality (the sort of 'happy ending' structure identified by Maltby and Craven), obscures moments of excess by keeping the viewer 'on track': 'strong realistic or compositional motivation will tend to make excessive elements less noticeable'.¹⁷ This is evident in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, in which, despite the unanswered questions, the desire for romance foregrounded by the genre and the importance of family and of community articulated by the film, allow us to overlook the moments that counter this ideal.

Thompson argues that while classical Hollywood films attempt to minimise excess through narrative and thematic motivation, 'other films outside this tradition do not always try to provide an apparent motivation for everything in the film, and thus they leave their potentially excessive elements more notice-

able'.¹⁸ Excess provides potential for 'meaning' to escape the bounds of the filmic system, and the less rigidly coded or structured a text is, the more potential there is for this escape. Youth films, with their use of popular music with both a textual function and extra-textual resonance, are as likely place as any for these moments of excess. As John Hill has noted, 'the "meaning", then, of a film is not something to be discovered purely in the text itself (into which the spectator may or may not be bound) but is constituted in the interaction between the text and its users'.¹⁹ This is precisely where the role of music and musical performance can come into play in youth films. The meanings drawn from the music and the identities constructed through music are based on relations that exist outside the filmic text (unlike the fully diegetic use of music and performance in so many classical Hollywood musicals).

In her work on the role of the soundtrack and the impact of the 'MTV aesthetic' on teen films in the 1980s and 1990s, Kay Dickinson has identified the importance of the role played by music video conventions as part of the construction of youth identity. Dickinson underlines the important role that music plays as part of the construction of youth identity: 'while pop songs may seem transitory, base or mindless to certain filmgoers, to a teenage audience they often play a vital role in both self-definition and micro-cultural satisfaction'.²⁰ The key connection between this formation of identity through music and the incorporation of styles borrowed from music video is the speed and impact of the editing process. Despite its relation to the commercial side of youth culture, the visual style associated with music video provides a space that is accessible and familiar primarily to a youth audience. Dickinson notes how 'as each generation must demarcate its space, the lure of speed is a perennial favourite'.²¹ Speed of editing in post-classical cinema is aligned with the energy of youth. The link between this style and the actions of the teenage characters within a film may then be seen as aligning those characters with a refusal of conventional expectations. Culturally, their world is set apart from the adult world. While specific music genres may have lyrical and stylistic significance, such as that of indie rock in relation to *Kat*, the wider effect of these musical moments functions to create resistance – as opposed to the integration of the classical musicals. If there is any integration in the post-classical teen film, it is in the youth culture shared between text and audience. This is aided by the inter-textuality produced by the cross promotion of soundtrack albums, the use of clips from films within music videos, familiarity with the performances on the soundtrack and the connotations created by their respective genres. It is interesting to consider how the more integrative youth films (*Pretty in Pink* and *She's All That*) make the prom and the slow dance an integral moment in their representation of female social acceptance. Such moments cross generational boundaries and counteract the significance of speed by referring to established cultural traditions. That *10 Things I Hate About You* does not end on such

a traditional note is a marker of its more complex representations of feminine identities.

Another text in which music and a music video aesthetic functions as a means of marking resistance is Rachel Talalay's *Tank Girl*. The film explicitly addresses issues of gender representation, using music as a means of coding the heroine's opposition to the patriarchal control of the mega-corporation, Water and Power. Just as Tank Girl (Lori Petty) refuses to surrender her independence despite constant threats and attacks from Water and Power's military forces, so the film's soundtrack refuses to unify with the narrative. It is often very loud and songs, or musical moments, regularly break narrative development through the employment of styles drawn from music video and animation – particularly montage – involving the insertion of comic book images in place of moments of live action. This is evident in the scene where Tank Girl remodels the military tank she has stolen from Water and Power. Here the soundtrack, together with a montage of comic strip images, establishes her appropriation and transformation/feminisation of the vehicle. While this is a moment linked to the development of the narrative, the means of its presentation, like so many other musical moments in the film, offers a point of detachment from recognised conventions. The spectacle is emphasised for the duration of the song; representation becomes excess, and this underlines the film's efforts to break from the conventional structures of female representation, a concern that itself drives the film.

The character of Tank Girl, sometimes also called Rebecca, provides an example of what Kathleen Rowe has identified as 'the unruly woman'. In her excess, both in image and action, Rebecca offers a contrast to the ordered military world of Water and Power. By drawing attention to her sexuality and her sexual desires, Tank Girl provides a variation on the 'grotesque body'. Rowe argues that such a body 'exaggerates its processes, bulges and orifices' rather than concealing and conforming to the dominant model of acceptable femininity.²² As an example, Rowe cites Judith Williamson's arguments about the Jim Henson Muppet, Miss Piggy, in that 'Miss Piggy's unabashed hedonism subverts the ideologies of both capitalism and patriarchy'.²³ Through her own 'unabashed hedonism', Tank Girl offers an attack on the capitalist and patriarchal systems that threaten to contain her, both figuratively and literally throughout the film.

The narrative of *Tank Girl* is organised around the control of representation. Rebecca discovers that her body has been bugged by Kesslee (Malcolm McDowell) so that her apparently subversive actions have actually worked to his advantage. The control she has exhibited throughout much of the film is undermined by this revelation, and her battle with Kesslee provides a means for Rebecca to regain control over her self and her own body. However, while the film provides a strong female character, Tank Girl was originally created – and thus controlled – by two male comic book writers and artists, Jamie Hewlett and

Alan Martin. Imelda Whelehan and Esther Sonnett point out that ‘*Tank Girl* clearly does not offer a narrative portrayal of female experience, but rather remains bound up with the masochistic pleasures of male fantasies of powerful female figures’,²⁴ but they also acknowledge that the comic’s self-conscious approach allows for examples in which ‘the character also offers moments of contradiction and resistance to the culturally dominant mode of representation’.²⁵ By making similar struggles for control part of the narrative, the film seems to find a means of addressing these concerns. An earlier battle has led to Kesslee having his head amputated and replaced by a holographic projection. Through her ability to destroy his projection, Rebecca demonstrates her ultimate control of the means of representation. This had been evident in an earlier ‘musical moment’, where Tank Girl and Jet Girl (Naomi Watts) initiate a Busby Berkeleysque musical number as part of their rescue of a young girl who has been forced to work in a sex club. In typical Berkeley style, the performance eschews any ties to diegetic verisimilitude and provides a moment of visual excess directed at the cinematic viewer. The performers for this number are made up of workers in, as well as patrons of, the sex club. By placing both as objects of cinematic spectacle, the film is able to alter the normative power structures of the classical gaze. Tank Girl is seen to be controlling this representation. She cannot be contained by the text, just as she cannot be contained by Water and Power. In the ‘classical’ structural context of the musical, where men are positioned as voyeurs, and women are the objects of their looks, Tank Girl works to undermine the process. Her own representation becomes aligned with sub-cultural

Figure 12 In *Tank Girl* a Busby Berkeleysque musical number presents the female performer as an object of cinematic spectacle.

music and style. Rebecca is also represented through an 'MTV aesthetic', especially in relation to her own actions and behaviour. Not fully contained by the diegesis or the gaze, *Tank Girl* remains narratively and structurally 'excessive'.

The prominent use of excessive elements is clearly purposeful. As unity in form implies an adherence to the structural norms of cinema, and to its classical conventions, to draw attention to the possibilities of excess, so *Tank Girl* in its overt reference to the Busby Berkeley number, permits a challenge to the standard modes of representation. This is also what makes *10 Things I Hate About You* such an interesting film. For while it has the appearance of a standard teen film in its high-school setting, contemporary soundtrack and vibrant young stars, its excess remains evident. The film uses the structures of music and musical performance to ensure that its main characters do not fully conform to the dominant representations of gender. The final rooftop performance of 'I Want You to Want Me' is, therefore, emblematic of this tendency. The use of a female singer to perform a masculine rock song repositions subjectivity. In 1976 Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie claimed that 'music is a means of sexual expression and as such is important as a mode of sexual control', an argument about rock music that is strikingly similar to those about the classical musical.²⁶ In countering these models *10 Things I Hate About You* shows that, as much as Kat has been pursued as a result of Cameron's initial manipulations, the formation of herself and Patrick as a couple is the result of mutual desire, an echo of the changed subjectivity found in the musical performance. As noted earlier, the gift of the guitar, and Kat's musical aspirations, place this resolution on her terms.

Further to this, the final musical performance cannot be logically contained or explained by the film's narrative. The appearance of the band on the school roof is unexplained, despite being located within the diegetic space of the film. The awareness that *10 Things I Hate About You* shows of its theatrical origins as a Shakespeare play becomes part of this construction. During the film's final credit sequence a number of out-takes from the production are shown. This offers a reminder that the film itself has been a construction, much as the band's location on the roof reminds us that the setting of the school has been an element of the film that does not need to be wholly contained by the conventional expectations. The system for taming the 'shrew' has broken down in the face of Kat's resistance, a resistance centred around music and the musical moment.

NOTE

1. Nicholas Jennings, 'Ladies on top', *MacLeans* 113: 39 (25 September 2000): 66–70.
2. Barry K. Grant, 'The classic Hollywood musical and the problem of rock 'n' roll', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 13: 4 (Winter 1986): 196.
3. *Ibid.*: 197–8.
4. *Ibid.*: 201.
5. *Ibid.*: 196.

6. Jane Feuer, 'The self-reflexive musical and the myth of entertainment', in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *Film Genre Reader* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986): 335.
7. For a discussion of the teen high-school film see Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002): 26–79. For a discussion of the teen film see also Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilisation of American Movies in the 1950s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).
8. Ian Conrich, 'Merry melodies: The Marx Brothers' musical moments', in Bill Marshall and Robyn Stilwell (eds), *Musicals – Hollywood and Beyond* (Exeter: Intellect, 2000): 47.
9. *Ibid.*: 48.
10. *Ibid.*
11. For a discussion of the folk musical see Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (London: British Film Institute, 1987): 272–327.
12. Grant: 197.
13. *Ibid.*: 196.
14. Conrich: 48.
15. Richard Maltby and Ian Craven, *Hollywood Cinema* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995): 8.
16. Kristin Thompson, 'The concept of cinematic excess', in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* 5th edn (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 488.
17. Thompson: 491.
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19. John Hill, 'Ideology, economy and the British cinema', in Robert Stam and Toby Miller (eds), *Film and Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000): 573.
20. Kay Dickinson, 'Pop, speed and the "MTV aesthetic" in recent teen films', *Scope: An On-Line Journal of Film Studies*. Posted June 1, 2001. <www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/articles/pop-speed-and-mtv.htm>.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995): 33.
23. *Ibid.*: 29.
24. Imelda Whelehan and Esther Sonnet, 'Regendered reading: *Tank Girl* and post-modernist intertextuality', in Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, Heidi Kaye and Imelda Whelehan (eds), *Trash Aesthetics: Popular Culture and Its Audience* (London: Pluto Press, 1997): 36.
25. *Ibid.*: 37.
26. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, 'Rock and sexuality', in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990): 374.

12 MUSIC, FILM AND POST-STONEWALL GAY IDENTITY

Gregory Woods and Tim Franks

In the days when ‘musical’ was a code word for male homosexuality – ‘Is he musical?’, ‘Mmm, *very*!’ – a man’s relationship with music could be as revealing and compromising as the biomechanics of his sexual acts. Not only to have certain tastes, but to have ‘taste’ at all, could be construed as a suspiciously unmanly condition. Moreover, almost from the moment when the post-Stonewall gay identity was invented in the late 1960s it has been partially defined – even if ironically – in terms of a relationship with musical cinema. The drag queens, hustlers and other gay riff-raff who rioted outside the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street, New York, on successive nights in June 1969, thereby giving spectacular birth to the gay liberation era, were not merely protesting against the routine brutality and corruption of both the police and a Mafia-controlled ghetto of gay bars; they were also, if only symbolically, mourning Judy Garland, who had been buried on the morning before the first riot. The pivotal moment in recent gay political history fortuitously coincided with the demise of one of the subculture’s favourite musical divas.¹

Since the late nineteenth century, homosexual men have been stereotyped as aesthetes and sissies whose appreciation for the arts usurps that of women and diverts them from a proper engagement with the manliness of real life. This excessive allegiance to the arts is regarded as unnatural and effeminate: Oscar Wilde is the key case in point. In cinema history, the representation of such unmanly men has concentrated, first, on physicality – aspects of bodily demeanour and dress sense – and, second, on manner of speech. But there is a further association with one division of the arts in particular: music.

Especially in its sentimental modes, classical music has been used as a sign of the knowing emotionalism of a man who has such a problematic relationship with the quotidian that he seems both superior to the domesticated mundanity of matrimony and insufficiently physical for the energetic rituals of homosocial bonding. Generally, cinema associates classical music with the figure of the cultured older homosexual man. *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* (1971) presents us with a key example of this type in the doctor (Peter Finch) who repeatedly plays the aria 'Soave sia il vento', from Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, on his gramophone while looking out through his French windows at a sculpture created by his bisexual boyfriend. But it is in another film from 1971, *Death in Venice*, that classical music and the man-boy model of Socratic, homoerotic desire are most insistently associated – the more so, since the director Luchino Visconti refigures Thomas Mann's protagonist as a composer rather than a writer.²

The role of the (artistic) homosexual man as a cultural and emotional educator of (philistine) heterosexual men is often enhanced by reference to the former's taste for the sheer unmanliness of classical music, especially opera, and especially opera as sung by the great divas. There is a good example of this process in Tomás Guitiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío's *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1993). On the occasion of (heterosexual) David's first visit to (homosexual) Diego's apartment, Diego says 'I'll put on some music so the neighbours can't hear us . . . What do you prefer? Maria Callas? Teresa Stratas? Renata Tebaldi?'. Without waiting for a response from David, who appears never to have heard of the divas named, Diego puts on Callas. Later, after a row between the two men, David goes back to his hostel and retunes his transistor radio to a station playing an operatic aria. His first lesson in emotional openness seems to have taken place.

In a similar, though more extended, scene in *Philadelphia* (1993), gay Andy Beckett (Tom Hanks) plays opera for the edification of his straight attorney Joe Miller (Denzel Washington). They are supposed to be rehearsing for Andy's appearance in the witness box the next morning, but Andy is distracted – all the more so when his apartment is filled with the music he puts on: Maria Callas singing 'La mamma morta' from Umberto Giordano's opera, *Andrea Chenier*. (This is about as far as one can get from the blue-collar straightness of Bruce Springsteen, who sings 'Streets of Philadelphia' over the opening credits.) Rather than respond to a point that Joe makes, Andy asks: 'Do you mind this music? Do you like opera?' Ignoring Joe's evident irritation, Andy says, 'This is my favourite aria' and goes on to explicate it as it runs its course. He translates some lines, paraphrases others and interjects his own comments. Meanwhile, he wanders round the room with his eyes closed, towing with him the scaffold on which his intravenous drip is suspended. Filmed from above through reddening light, he looks both ill and increasingly strange. Throughout Andy's commentary on the aria, Joe stares at him uncomprehendingly; the moment the

music stops he hurriedly gathers his things together, saying 'Jeez, I'd better get out of here' – as if Andy had been coming on to him. He flees to his own home to kiss his sleeping daughter and to lie next to his wife on their marital bed. Over this sequence the Callas aria is repeated in part, thereby transferring the intensity of Andy Beckett's queer emotionalism to the safer arena of the nuclear family's home. Now, at last, the film's intended mass audience can participate in an unthreatening appreciation of the music.

Whether Andy had been coming out or coming on to Joe would be immaterial, for the effect on Joe is much the same. The fact is that this scene is as close as *Philadelphia* dares come to the differentiating queerness of the queer. In contrast to the meticulous detail with which it attempts to simulate the bodily effects of AIDS on Tom Hanks – weight loss, hair loss, visible lesions – the film has to pantomime homosexuality by any means other than a male-male kiss (let alone a sex scene).³ Opera seems to have been chosen as a way of conveying the sheer otherness of strange tastes. To the presumed audience of 'middle America' it must seem reassuringly foreign.

Classical music will efficiently convey an impression of intellect and – not always compatibly – emotional sensitivity in any character who is shown to appreciate it. From past use, it seems less suited to the dynamics of post-liberationist pursuit-of-happiness representations of gay men than to sentimental or tragic scenarios. Whereas up until the mid-twentieth century homosexual men were often represented as figures in a tragedy, in the 1970s and 1980s discursive models changed. Suddenly, the homosexual lifestyle was more likely to be associated with musical comedy. At the point where 'gay in the old-fashioned sense' and 'gay in the new sense' coincide, the liberation of gay experience demands musical styles more accessible and upbeat than classical music is generally believed to offer. It also demands music that is youthful and sexy.

Although Judy Garland is mythically associated with the birth of gay liberation, the true siren song style of the gaylib era was disco. Except when drag queens were performing, the real gay clubs were discotheques. Subsequently, mainstream filmmakers have taken it for granted that, where required, a disco soundtrack will automatically evoke gay associations.⁴ The anglophone remake of the *La Cage aux folles* films (1978–86), *The Birdcage* (1996), is framed within two soundtrack performances of 'We Are Family', the first over the credits and opening scene, the second at the end of the narrative while the conservative senator is being smuggled out of the gay club disguised as a woman. In the first instance, the track is heard, as it were, straight; by the end, however, it is rubbing in the senator's humiliation by underlining his association with a homosexual family – and doing so in the gay musical language of disco.

Disco has been anachronistically refigured, in one way or another, in a number of films, to underline the gayness of a given sequence, and perhaps to re-establish a connection with the crucial gay liberation period. Isaac Julien's

homage to the gay African-American poet Langston Hughes, *Looking for Langston* (1989), gives the interwar Harlem Renaissance the look of a 1980s advertising campaign and explicitly comes up to date in its closing scene as thugs invade a gay-friendly dance club and the jazz soundtrack is usurped by the 1980s disco number 'Can You Feel It?' In the closing minutes of Norman René's *Longtime Companion* (1990) disco is revisited again, this time in an ironically 'classical' rendition of the Village People's 'YMCA' at an AIDS benefit. And the hero(in)es of *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) take off on their garish liberation of the outback with the Village People's 'Go West' blaring from the sound system on their bus.

However, notwithstanding disco's crucial influence on the styles of gay liberation, it is the Broadway/Hollywood musical that has prevailed as the gayest of the musical indicators of gayness. Indeed, in *Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss* (1998), the gay protagonist Billy goes so far as to speak of a 'show-tunes gene' that makes men gay.⁵ There is a comfortable logic to the humour of the transformation scenes in *Mrs Doubtfire* (1993), when the heterosexual man (Robin Williams) has to consult a homosexual man (Harvey Fierstein) on how to 'become' a woman, or at least how to perform the role. It comes as no surprise that cross-dressing soon leads to the singing of show tunes: in drag as Barbra Streisand, Williams sings 'Don't Rain on My Parade' from *Funny Girl* (1968). Once masculinity is compromised, by women's clothing if not by homosexuality itself, the tongue and throat will adapt to perverse practices: the singing of show tunes.

Jeffrey (1995) operates according to the same not entirely unserious hypothesis. One of the central characters, Darius, is a dancer in a Broadway production of *Cats*. As often as not, he is seen in his feline costume; indeed, even after his AIDS-related death he rematerialises in a pristine, white version of his *Cats*-suit. Before this, when discussing the kind of memorial ritual he envisages for himself, he says (with an appropriate flourish): 'At my memorial I want *Liza!*' (meaning Minnelli, of course). He adds: 'I want the Winter Garden. I do. I want all the other *Cats* to come out and to sing "Darius" to the tune of "Memory": "Darius, we all thought you were fabulous!"' When Jeffrey objects to this frivolity (as he sees it), Darius responds with a quiet reproach: 'Well, I like it. I mean, cute guys and Liza and dish. It's not a cure for AIDS, Jeffrey, but it's the opposite of AIDS.'

Later, the troubled Jeffrey – who has foresworn sexual involvement because of the prospect of contracting AIDS, only to fall in love with an HIV-positive man – goes to consult a priest, who himself turns out to be a gay stereotype with an addiction to musicals. This distinctly irreverend Father attempts to seduce Jeffrey. In the ensuing argument, Jeffrey angrily asks why God imposed the AIDS epidemic on humanity. The priest responds by showing him the sleeve of the LP of *My Fair Lady*, on which George Bernard Shaw is caricatured as

a puppeteer. He explains 'You got your idea of God where most gay kids get it: *My Fair Lady*, original cast! See? George Bernard Shaw, up in the clouds, manipulating Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews on strings. It was your parents' album, you were little, you thought it was a picture of God.' Jeffrey does not demur; indeed, he tentatively seems to agree ('Yeah?') or to defer to the priest's better knowledge. The priest continues: 'Well, you're almost there, because God is on this record! Lerner and Loewe! . . . I'm telling you – the only times I really feel the presence of God are when I'm having sex and during a great Broadway musical.' He then leads Jeffrey to the confessional box, which is lined with the posters for Broadway shows.

Cinema refers to itself – and to film musicals in particular – to establish gay character. The ambiguous or undefined male is pinned down to a particular identity by observation of his tastes in cinema and music; and, of all possible preferences, a liking for the musical is the most compromisingly queer. This process is clearly exemplified in the British film *Beautiful Thing* (1995), in which Jamie, a sixteen-year-old on a London housing estate, is hoping to make love with the boy next door, Ste, also sixteen. This desire is framed by references to *The Sound of Music* (1965).⁶ Initially the boys, who are lounging together on Jamie's bed, are invited by Jamie's mother to join her and her boyfriend; they are watching the musical in an adjacent room. However, Jamie, who is fast approaching the fateful moment when his homosexuality will no longer be limited to watching his mother's favourite movies but will become actively physical, turns her down. For all that he is familiar and comfortable with a certain level of camp, at the moment he is more interested in the unequivocal virility of his soccer-playing neighbour.

Jamie's taste in films is no less definitive of his sexual identity than are the sexual events whereby he loses his virginity. Not the least of his oddities is that he seems to have nothing to learn. Negotiating his way through his first seduction, he already possesses the sensibilities of a middle-aged queen. Indeed, he is the essentialist gay man, already more or less fully formed. Without ever having to learn from some gay cliché how to be a gay cliché himself, he performs the role admirably before he has ever touched any penis other than his own. As if young gay men appeared as fully-formed queens in some process of culturally viviparous materialisation, Jamie is, from the start, everything he will ever become.

The nub of this process of identification is inappropriate consumption. Like the body itself when it becomes the object of homosexual desire, the consumed product has somehow achieved an appeal beyond its intended audience.⁷ It is not merely that Jamie is inappropriately more interested in camp cultural texts than in football and girls, but that incongruity is a key structural component of camp itself. As Esther Newton wrote in a 1972 essay: 'Camp usually depends on the perception or creation of *incongruous juxtapositions*. Either way, the homosexual "creates" the camp, by pointing out the incongruity or by devising it.'⁸ In

Beautiful Thing the juxtaposition is between the text and its consumer (school-boy and *The Sound of Music*) but only until homosexuality enters the equation (*gay schoolboy* and *The Sound of Music*) whereupon the juxtaposition ceases to be incongruous. In other words, what might be inappropriate for a straight boy turns out to be entirely natural for a gay boy. When Jamie and Ste make love for the first time, the soundtrack wells up, not unpredictably, with 'Sixteen, Going on Seventeen'. *Beautiful Thing* ends with Jamie and Ste slow-dancing in public to the Mamas and Papas, defying the predominantly anti-gay community around them with as close a demonstration of togetherness as propriety allows, yet with sufficient sentiment to satisfy the demands of a pro-gay cinema audience for a happy ending. By contrast with the frenetic athleticism of the dancing in club/disco scenes – which often stands in for the unfilmable sex that, implicitly, follows on from it – slow dancing signifies the emotional physicality of not mere sex but love-making.⁹

The joke that functions as the driving premise of *In and Out* (1997) is that, come what may, (the essence of) gayness will out. It may not do so in literal terms, with homosexual intercourse, but all manner of lesser signals will give the secret homo away, even if he remain chaste. These signals may be physical – such as the tilt of a wrist or the lilt of a mincing gait – or they may reside in aspects of the personality: in passivity (say) or sensitivity, or in matters of aesthetic taste. Paradoxically, the show tunes gene is repeatedly represented as the defining taste of the essentialised gay man – gay men like musicals *inherently*. They are *born* to dance – and yet the individual character is inherently performative: performance is character, and nowhere is this more true than in the musical. What it boils down to, in this film, is that even the most comfortably closeted man who does not even, himself, know he is gay will have dedicated his inner life to Barbra Streisand.

Howard Brackett (Kevin Kline) sends out signals from the very start of the narrative, not only in his fastidious dress sense and demonstrative gestures, but also – very sketchily presented, at first – in his apparent musical tastes. In the first scene after the opening credits, Ethel Merman's version of 'Everything's Coming Up Roses' (from the Broadway musical *Gypsy*) is playing in the background as Howard and his fiancée Emily (Joan Cusack) are preparing to watch the Oscars ceremony on television. When his bedside radio alarm goes off the next morning, it plays the Village People's 'Macho Man'. A show tune – some might say *the* show tune – and a standard of post-Stonewall gay disco; no music could make a less ambiguous statement about ambiguous sexuality.

Clearly in a state of doubt about himself, and anxious to dispel those doubts before his imminent wedding, Howard listens to his self-help audiotope *Be A Man: Exploring Your Masculinity*. After a few preliminary rules on how to behave like a man, the tape comes to the point: 'We come to the most critical area of masculine behaviour: dancing.' Diana Ross begins to sing her version

of 'I Will Survive' as the voice continues: "Yes. Truly manly men do not dance . . . under any circumstances. This will be your ultimate test. At all costs avoid rhythm, grace and pleasure. Whatever you do, do not dance.' The joke is that, throughout this speech, the music is gathering pace and volume and Howard's body is involuntarily beginning to move to the imperative of the disco beat. No matter how intensely his conscious mind attends to the spoken message, it cannot overrule his body's commitment to the pleasures of dance. The voice reaches its admonitory climax – 'Feel the fever of the disco beat! . . . Whatever you do, do not dance!' – just as the music gets into its thundering stride, whereupon the body of the gay man overrides all self-restraint and hurls itself into the frenzy of the dance. To compound the joke, although Howard has dressed 'like a real man' for his lesson, his jeans, T-shirt and plaid shirt are identical to the predominant gay 'clone' look of the 1970s (all he lacks is the moustache) – and, indeed, his dancing is itself very seventies. Why, he even does 'the bump' against a wall.

But it is Howard's deeply ingrained Barbraphilia that betrays his true essence.¹⁰ At his bachelor party his straight male friends give him a copy of *Funny Girl*, reminding him that last year he made them watch all of Streisand's movies. When one of them criticises *Yentl* (1983), Howard attacks him physically. Later, when Howard protests to a gay television reporter (Tom Selleck) that he is not gay, the latter quickly asks him 'what was Streisand's eighth album?' Howard's response is so immediate as to seem instinctive or inborn: 'Color Me Barbra . . . Everyone knows that!' The evidence is definitive.

Howard finally comes out at the most inconvenient yet the most urgent moment: during his own wedding. When the distraught Emily flees from the body of the church into a private room, Howard follows her. Among the recriminations that ensue, Emily comes to the point: 'I loved you and believed you and pretended not to notice the Streisand thing!' Bursting back into the church, she shouts to the congregation: 'Does anybody here know how many times I've had to watch *Funny Lady*?' Thinking she is criticising that particular film rather than his obsessive interest in Streisand in general, Howard automatically interjects an irrelevant defence of Streisand's sequel to the more successful *Funny Girl*: 'It was a sequel. She was under contract.' For Emily this is the last straw. She yells the unutterable – 'Fuck Barbra Streisand! And you!' – and then applies a thoroughly manly fist to Howard's less than sturdy jaw. It is in the name of Streisand that the gay man's prospects as a husband are consigned to oblivion.

This convention of identifying gay men by reference to their love of musicals is parodied in the show-stopping number 'I Am Super', towards the end of *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* (1999), performed by the middle-aged queen, Big Gay Al. Surrounded by all the panoply of high musical (fountains, fireworks and so forth), Al's costume keeps spontaneously changing; at each change he wears less, until at the end of the song he is naked. His nakedness

coincides with his finishing the sentence that has hung incomplete throughout the number. The lyrics keep narrowly avoiding the word 'gay'. Its refrain is repeatedly deflected from this key word ('Everything is super when you're – /Don't you think I look nice in this hat?') until the last line, 'Everything is super when you're – gay', at which point Al is revealed. The irony is, of course, that he was never concealed in the first place. It is inconceivable that he could hide his gayness. What is being addressed in such instances is the failure of the closet. We are invited to laugh at the inability of characters like Al and Howard Brackett to maintain invisibility. For them, the closet is unsustainable. Such men come 'out' only because they cannot stay 'in'. This inability to repress their essential selves is presented as a flaw. Coming out is demoted from a positive act of self-identification, empowering to the individual and challenging to society, to an admission of the already obvious. If the queen cannot be silenced, the non-gay audience can at least have the satisfaction of claiming that they knew about him already.

Since the 1990s, gay subcultures have produced numerous examples of camp in the face of adversity. When Jeffrey (in *Jeffrey*) is confronted by three armed homophobes and they ask him what weapons he has, he replies: 'Irony. Adjectives. Eyebrows' before getting beaten up. Lying on the sidewalk, he sings the refrain of George and Ira Gershwin's 'Nice Work', accompanied by a woman who is leaning out of a nearby window. A stock character of AIDS movies is the dying queen who manages to maintain her regal campness even when most ravaged. The characters in conventional musical comedy overcome obstacles to fulfillment, performatively, by bursting into song. Similarly, a gay man's best response to homophobic attack or to AIDS may be an unexpectedly jarring performance.

The useful absurdity of the musical is exploited to such ends in *Zero Patience* (1993), to challenge predominant views about AIDS.¹¹ The principle of making a musical about the epidemic is more or less summarised by Darius's remark, quoted earlier, in *Jeffrey*: 'Cute guys and Liza and dish. It's not a cure for AIDS, Jeffrey, but it's the opposite of AIDS.' It clearly makes sense to invoke the concept of camp when describing the defensive use of 'inappropriate' humour in the face of tragedy. Camp humour was one of gay people's principal defences against institutional homophobia throughout the twentieth century (and is often compared with Jewish humour in this respect). From the earliest days of the epidemic, the funerals of out gay men who had died as a consequence of having AIDS were often staged as mini festivals of camp celebration, filling the dullest churches and crematoria, not only with disco discs and show tunes, but also with mourners dressed accordingly. Darius's hope for a flamboyantly glamorous funeral is part of a general subcultural tendency.¹²

Since *Zero Patience* is a musical about viral transmission by anal intercourse, the film's two most memorable images, for all that they are paradoxical, are

entirely in keeping with this central theme: the singing anuses in 'The Butthole Duet' and the singing virus in 'HIV's Scheherazade'. The former, a duet about anal sex, is 'sung' by the respective anuses of Sir Richard Burton, the nineteenth-century explorer and sexologist, and Gaetan Dugas, the 'Patient Zero' alluded to in the musical's title, a man burdened by some commentators with the blame for the catastrophic early 'spread' of AIDS among gay men in the West.¹³ This duet between Burton's fear and Zero's desire, by making the gay anus a singing mouth, takes the association between gayness and performative self-expression to an extreme. By locating the gay voice in the rectum, *Zero Patience* affirms a sexualised aesthetic to which other films of the 1990s have only felt able to allude.¹⁴

In the later song, HIV is played by the actor/musician/activist Michael Callen, himself HIV-positive at the time of filming. It was he who, with Richard Berkowitz, wrote the booklet *How to Have Sex in an Epidemic* (1983), generally credited as the source of the concept of safer sex. Performing this number in aquatic drag, Callen represents a bodying-forth of the idea of a specifically gay plague. HIV, the reason for the development of safer sex, is embodied by the originator of safer sex, Callen, in a low-budget parody of the irrational glamour of Esther Williams. So the virus looks like a gay man in declining health, cross-dressing as a camp icon from Hollywood musicals. Following all the cinematic principles we have been outlining in this essay, this is how you can tell a gay plague from a straight one.

NOTES

1. This is not the place – there is not the space – to enumerate all the references to Judy Garland and/or *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) in contemporary gay films. We do notice, however, that one of the sets of 'Word Magnets for Gays' produced by the *Fridge Fun!* company of Guerneville, California, includes – as well as essentials like 'leather', 'lust' and '69' – the endlessly permutable 'Dorothy', 'Toto', 'Wizard' and 'Oz'.
2. By contrast, a far more radical deployment of romantic classical music's potential for emotional emphasis and camp embellishment is demonstrated in *Desperate Remedies* (1993), in which repeated use of Giuseppe Verdi's overture to *La forza del destino* achieves a precise 'match' with the film's extravagant sets and costumes and its histrionic acting styles. The music is as beautiful and flamboyant as the frocks – yet also as impractical as they are as inappropriate to the muddy reality of life in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Classical music is used to quieter, though not dissimilar, effect in the legendary erotic film *Pink Narcissus* (1971), the stylistic influence of which piece affects every aspect of *Desperate Remedies*.
3. *Philadelphia* was by no means the first or worst offender in this respect. Even in those film musicals of the 1970s in which sexuality is represented as being so 'divinely' decadent – in tentative, if misguided, acknowledgement of the liberatory, but anti-decadent, principles of gay liberation – sex itself cannot be presented in any but the coyest manner: slow dancing (*Cabaret*, 1972), or stylised (and comical) love-making by figures in silhouette, or swimming (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, 1975). Indeed, these two supposedly liberated and liberating films cannot

muster a single male-male kiss between them. Neither Milos Forman's *Hair* (1979) nor Blake Edwards' *Victor/Victoria* (1982) adds so much as a peck on the cheek to the reckoning.

4. For a discussion of disco and gay male culture see Richard Dyer, 'In defence of disco', in Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992): 149–58; and Richard Dyer, 'Getting over the rainbow: identity and pleasure in gay cultural politics', in Dyer, *Only Entertainment*: 159–72.
5. Correspondingly, it might be argued that there must be a 'gay gene' that makes gay/bisexual men write show tunes. Think of Leonard Bernstein, Noël Coward, Lorenz Hart, Ivor Novello, Cole Porter, Stephen Sondheim.
6. In a 1976 reading, Richard Dyer speaks of *The Sound of Music* as going 'directly into a world where women are caught between asserted individuality and strong pressures on role conformity, where much pleasure must be invested in trivial items, and where the horizons are such as let only endurance, the ability to go on, make immediate sense as a life-project. The question is whether it simply celebrates these attitudes . . . or else also locks its female audience more inexorably into trivia and endurance.' Dyer, *Only Entertainment*: 59. The same attractions and the same dilemma are likely to dictate, in part, the film's reception by gay audiences, although the extent to which this is the case may have changed in the years since Dyer wrote this essay. One of the successes of the 1999 London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival was *Sing-a-long-a Sound of Music*, a mass karaoke screening of the movie. For further discussion see Ian Conrich's article 'Musical Performance and the Cult Film Experience' in this collection.
7. One of the things that makes musicals so easy to parody is that they are full of inappropriate responses. Many parodies play on the inappropriate nature of musical drama to topics which are so serious that they seem to demand high tragedy, or objective documentary at least. We are thinking of 'Springtime for Hitler' in Mel Brooks's *The Producers* (1968), 'Every Sperm is Sacred' in *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (1983), the elephant-man musical in *The Tall Guy* (1989) and virtually the entirety of *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* (1999). It is hard to see how the parodies are any less appropriate to their chosen topics than many 'straight' musical numbers. After all, 'Food, Glorious Food', in *Oliver!*, is a chirpy, up-beat number belted out by starving Victorian orphans; *Zero Patience* is a musical comedy about AIDS and so on. This is not to say, of course, that the musical cannot handle anything other than romantic comedy – *Evita*, *Miss Saigon* and *Les Miserables* demonstrate the capacity of the genre to function beyond the rather fluffy limits to which it is sometimes assumed to be confined – but, rather, that the questionably appropriate response of some musicals is a feature of the genre.
8. Esther Newton, 'Role models', in Fabio Cleto (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject, A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999): 103.
9. Traditional ballroom dancing carries an especially refreshing, romantic charge when two men 'incongruously' partner each other – as Valentino (Rudolf Nureyev) and Nijinsky (Anthony Dowell) do, tangoing together with such panache in Ken Russell's *Valentino* (1977); or as Tom Hanks and Antonio Banderas do, in full dress naval uniform, as pristine as the film's performative chastity, in *Philadelphia*; or as the two lovers eventually do, winsomely tuxedoed, in *Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss* (1998).
10. Streisand began her career in the Lion's Head and Bon Soir, gay clubs in Greenwich Village. Bette Midler went one better by beginning her career in New York's notorious Continental Baths, along with her accompanist Barry Manilow.
11. It is difficult to imagine a successful musical comedy about cancer with singing tumours. Yet the stage show *AIDS! The Musical!* (1991) included dancers in the

- roles of the opportunistic infections Karposis Sarcoma (*sic*) and Retinitis. For another example of the AIDS-musical genre, see Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau's film *Jeanne et le garçon formidable* (1997).
12. The planning of the music for an AIDS memorial service is a common scene in gay fiction/film. The choice is almost invariably between disco, show tunes and opera. These are the *Closing Numbers* in the title of Stephen Walker's 1993 film about AIDS.
 13. See Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People and the AIDS Epidemic* (New York; London: Penguin, 1988).
 14. The song counters anti-sexual discourses with its own explicit references to Leo Bersani's classic essay 'Is the rectum a grave?', in Douglas Crimp (ed.), *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988): 197–222.

PART FOUR:
BEYOND HOLLYWOOD

13 EARLY DANISH MUSICAL COMEDIES, 1931–9

Niels Hartvigson

Seventy-seven Danish sound films were produced between 1931 and 1939 and of these over fifty were musical comedies deploying a content that is both romantic and populist. This chapter focuses on how the relationship between musical numbers, story-lines and themes created three specific sub-genres that dealt differently with the ideals of romantic love and political populism: ‘collective musical comedies’, ‘character musical comedies’ and ‘romantic musical comedies’. Before turning to the films, an understanding of their political and social context is therefore necessary.

DANMARK FOR FOLKET

The depression affected Denmark badly, with 1933 being the worst year. Yet, this was a time of political stability and a widespread popular belief in parliamentarianism, which had established itself successfully during the 1920s.¹ The political solution to the *Påskekrise*, the Easter Crisis of 1920, had been a government coalition between Venstre, a right-wing farmer’s party, and the smaller Radikale Venstre, a socially conscious, intellectual and anti-militarist party. The coalition model became widely regarded as the touchstone of Danish parliamentarianism and, in 1929, Radikale Venstre and the much larger Socialdemokratiet (the Social Democrats), formed an alliance that lasted throughout the 1930s. The political platform that materialised emphasised the relationship between state power and the interests and rights of the individual, evidenced in new penal and social reforms. During this period Socialdemokratiet, which until then had largely

addressed working-class voters, redefined and widened their political identity under the populist slogan 'Danmark for Folket' (Denmark for the People). This change was further reflected in the broader parliamentary politics of the 1930s, which saw several important social reforms carried through with the support of traditionally right-wing parties.²

POPULIST VISIONS

Critics have made much of the 1930s Danish musical comedies' supposed disinclination to deal explicitly with politics, the depression and social issues,³ concluding that their relationship to the 'real world' was escapist.⁴ Contrary to this view it will be argued in this article that these films do reflect a social and political reality, but also that they must be viewed as texts that are bound by an internal logic and generic conventions.

The populism of the Danish musicals of the period can be described as a general levelling moral outlook that stresses community rather than a political doctrine.⁵ This is achieved with the aid of one or more of the working-class characters within a film. These characters are mainly defined by their individuality rather than by their class origins, which gives the transgression of social and cultural norms, integral to the distinct populism of these musical comedies, a softer edge. The films base their outlook on the premise that through the virtues and morals of the socially marginalised characters there is the possibility to transform establishment figures positively so that lawyers, earls, department store directors, professors and millionaires are won over. Rather than being exponents of a ruling class, these establishment characters are depicted in terms of their human qualities, as parents, sons, daughters, lovers and friends. The opposition between classes, then, is primarily portrayed as a human conflict, which foreshadows the final reconciliation between characters. By focusing on the reunion of people from different classes the films may seem to be escapist; however, their emphasis on community, individual opportunity and problem solving may be said to reflect not only a contemporary popular and political belief in the power of co-operation but also the relative success of Danish parliamentarianism in the decade of the depression.⁶

NON-DIEGETIC MUSIC

These films' soft-edged populism is developed through the combination of comedy and music. Although non-diegetic music is not usually included in the discussion of musicals it is necessary to acknowledge its role in order to appreciate the full musical potential of these specific films.⁷ Popular orchestral jazz and swing music constituted an important core of the non-diegetic music in 1930s Danish musicals making it audibly noticeable.⁸ To a great extent, the Danish films of the 1930s emphasise the role of non-diegetic music in a way

that often subordinates the visual elements. This non-diegetic music infuses large parts of the films, creating fictional universes with a distinct musical sensibility by producing ‘rhythmical’ landscapes, lyrical edits and distinctive camera movements, often resulting in a blurring of the borderline between spatially, temporally and narratively well-defined segments. Subsequently, many of these films have a montage-like quality. A clear example of this is *Sol over Danmark* (*Sun Over Denmark*, 1936), a holiday love story about two boys and two girls who make separate journeys through Denmark and constantly meet up in a variety of places. A musical theme played in swing time accompanies the passing landscapes as well as the action dominated scenes and is mixed with diegetic sound to such an extent that it is often difficult to distinguish between the two. Depending on the themes, characters, or milieu, this swing-style non-diegetic music is used alternately with other musical styles, such as sea shanties in *Flådens blå matroser* (*Sea-blue Sailors*, 1937) or folk tunes in *Sol over Danmark*. Only the period comedies such as *Livet på Hegnsgaard* (*Life On Fence Farm*, 1938) and *Champagnegaloppen* (*The Champagne Gallopade*, 1938) do not employ this swing-style non-diegetic score. The important role of non-diegetic music is even demonstrated by the foregrounding of the musical ensemble in the opening credits in many of the films, including *Sol over Danmark*, where an extra-diegetic scene features a band in performance.

COLLECTIVE MUSICAL COMEDIES

In collective musical comedies the entire fictional universe is potentially musical. Music may express a host of different meanings – togetherness, work, play, love, eating, being a child and being old. While romantic love is an important theme in the collective musical comedies, with the mandatory union of young and beautiful lovers at the end, it is society rather than coupledom that is emphasised in terms of musical performance.

Kidnapped (1935), for instance, connects music with physically and socially marginalised characters as a distinct strategy. In the film, a nanny to a millionaire’s daughter flees with the child – played by Little Connie, a popular child star of the 1930s – to Denmark to escape a kidnap plot by American gangsters. Once there, the nanny places the child into the care of her brother, the rotund Basse (Ib Schønberg), and his wimpish friend, Lasse (Arthur Jensen). Thinking the girl has been kidnapped, both the police and the gangsters pursue Lasse and Basse, while Little Connie’s widowed millionaire father and a girl who works in the local ice-cream parlour provide the romantic storyline.

The musicality of the lovers, who are mainly defined by their beauty, is limited whereas Lasse, Basse, the nanny and the little girl are all musically adept. The nanny, played by the popular entertainer Olga Svendsen, sings ‘Æh, bæh, buh, det er sjovt at være lille’ (My oh my, it’s fun to be little) to Little

Connie – a playful, if rather absurd performance due to Svendsen's girth and deep voice. Later, Little Connie prompts a performance of the song by a series of children who are shown in montage. This is typical of the montage numbers found in the many collective musical comedies, during which, for a short period, the film shifts focus from the main characters to anonymous performers in a way that signals that musicality is omnipresent while also displaying a self-conscious narrative and stylistic strategy. In another musical moment, Basse, inspired by his own rival love for the ice-cream girl, performs 'Jeg elsker en pige' (I love a girl) to Lasse because he is too shy to sing it to the intended; a performance which is rendered comical by a reluctant Lasse who, despite resenting being serenaded, playfully yields. Although this song is inspired by romantic love, the playfulness and imaginative performance of Lasse and Basse displace Basse's infatuation with the ice-cream girl.

Throughout the film, Basse's role as a would-be lover is made comical by his obvious physical draw-backs, but at the same time his feelings are portrayed with a good deal of sincerity by the actor, Schönberg, who gives the character a melancholic streak. However, the film primarily stresses Basse's inventiveness and the solidarity of friendship, most obviously at the end of the film. Here, as the heartbroken Basse sees the 'love of his life' sail away with the handsome millionaire, he is forced to react quickly as a real kidnapper threatens Lasse. Hooking the villain onto a crane and throwing him into the harbour basin, Basse proclaims 'Hvis ikke jeg sku' ku', hvem sku' så ku' ku' (If I shouldn't-shouldn't, then who should-should), quoting a song about helping out that he and Lasse had performed earlier.⁹ The film's musical focus is on the unconventional characters, emphasising the artistry and friendship of Lasse and Basse, the joy and innocence of the children and the maternal self-irony of the nanny. The love story element is not musical and the union of the lovers serves little more than to close the narrative.

In contrast, in *Nyhavn 17* (17, *Harbour Canal*, 1933) the young lovers are defined musically. The film is set in a wealthy suburb of Copenhagen, around the inner city and the Harbour Canal, a picturesque maritime quarter. The narrative is set in motion by the chance encounter of the two young lovers, Primula (Karina Bell), who works as a salesgirl in a department store, and Rolf (Sigfred Johansen). He is engaged to be married to the snobbish daughter of the department store managing director, played by Frederik Jensen, who is revealed later to be the father of Primula. Her mother, the long lost love of the director, owns the inn at 17, Harbour Canal. The love plot is thus interwoven with a story about family relations that focuses on the father of the two girls divided between two families.

The lovers' courtship is expressed musically in approximately the first half of the film, when, for example, Primula sings 'Vente, ikke andet, bare vente' (Waiting, nothing else, just waiting) while modelling the wedding gown of her

rival, the managing director's other daughter. Upon meeting for the first time in the furniture department of the store Primula and Rolf perform 'Hele verden sidder to og to i reden' (Love nest) a number about make-believe marriage. The lyrics of this song present a very domesticated view of love with a refrain that describes how everybody wants to pair up and build a love nest. These lyrics are underlined by the comical cut-aways during the number that feature performances of the song by pairs of employees and customers in different scenarios. Although Primula and Rolf dominate the number, it is established that their feelings are not exclusive. Another strategy is used with the song 'Godmorgen' (Good morning) for which performers are spatially separated. This song is begun by Rolf and his friends on his stag night, but is taken up and continued by anonymous members of the public, moving it out from a single group to a celebration within the wider Copenhagen community.

In the second half of the film, the musical focus moves away from the lovers to the managing director's emotional dilemma. Visiting the inn at 17, Harbour Canal, he indulges his taste for simple pleasures, as he reminisces in the song 'Ungdomsminder' (Memories of youth). Later, he and a drunken waiter play billiards and reprise 'Hele verden sidder to og to i reden', offering a different interpretation of the song's lyrics than had been suggested in the lovers' rendition, this time emphasising male comradeship, convivial surroundings and alcohol. It is the director who finally brings about the union of Primula and Rolf. Rolf, rescued from his impending marriage to the managing director's other daughter and followed by the wedding party, is brought to 17, Harbour Canal where he is reunited with Primula. Everyone is rejoicing in their union when a group of working-class children interrupt the celebration and begin the film's third rendition of 'Hele verden sidder to og to i reden', which now functions as a celebration of romantic love, together with community and class conciliation.

On each of the three occasions that 'Hele verden sidder to og to i reden' is sung it is by different people and displays different, if compatible, themes. First, the young lovers perform it as a love song; next, two older men from different class backgrounds perform it as a drinking song about male comradeship; finally, the number is performed using the original lyrics by working-class children amidst the wedding party, patrons and customers of the inn. During this final scene Primula and Rolf do not sing but are still clearly content. The reunited lovers have become well-developed characters through their performances early in the film, but at the end their own non-musical union functions as a symbol of the union of social classes. This change of musical focus from the lovers to the managing director, the working-class children and the patrons of the inn implies a move from individual union to community togetherness.

In the collective comedies the musical focus is, then, oriented towards the 'offbeat' characters: the bachelors, the old maids, the bohemians and the children. The songs feature the singers' zest for life, their inventiveness, community

feeling and good humour. In contrast, the musical focus on lovers is often stereotypical and one-dimensional. The union of lovers from different walks of life plays an important symbolic role in this levelling strategy, but it is significant that it is primarily the unconventional and non-romantic characters who make the union possible.

CHARACTER MUSICAL COMEDIES

The character musical comedies are mainly star vehicles that chart a central protagonist's self-realisation in terms of social standing and love while featuring musical numbers almost exclusively performed by that star. These performers were all well-established entertainers from revue, which had continued to be popular in Denmark until the 1930s.¹⁰ The appeal of revue began to falter with the depression and a gradual change in audience taste and consumer habits. Seasonal shows with topical sketches and musical numbers were often satirical of government and social change, although this did not reflect any coherent ideology. Rather, the shows reflected the political diversity of 1930s Denmark and offered a humorous perspective through which it could be viewed. This kind of critique called for performers who were wholly different from mainstream stars: the celebrated performers of revue were often aging, physically unconventional and from socially marginalised groups. More importantly, all such stars were musically expressive. Although these entertainers were only featured in sketches and short numbers in revue, they developed distinct star personae. Those who managed a successful crossover into films included Marguerite Viby, Osvald Helmuth, Liva Weel and the above mentioned Frederik Jensen and Olga Svendsen, all of whom brought with them characterisations with a distinct lower-class attitude and unconventionality in terms of behaviour.

Marguerite Viby (born 1909) was the youngest of the crossover artists to appear in films. Although she was conventionally beautiful her exuberance, energy and tomboy persona struck a blow against gender norms as she regularly indulged in 'unfeminine' behaviour. Moreover, with her talent for scat singing and tap-dancing her characters had a distinct flavour of the US. The Marguerite Viby film *Mille, Marie og mig* (*Mille, Marie and Me*, 1937) tells the story of Ellen Klausen, a young medical student, who explores different sides of her personality in order to pursue her studies and romantic aspirations. She appears as Klaus, a medical student, Mille, a classy nightclub singer and Marie, a provincial maid; in character as each of these she runs into her professor, who is intrigued by the physical resemblance between three seemingly different people.

'Hot, hot' (*Hot, hot*) quite deliberately employs the editing device of the wipe across nine separate instances to evoke Ellen's hard work as a housemaid while she also prepares for her anatomy exam. The number features Ellen in her three

Figure 13 Marguerite Viby exhibits her acrobatic skills in the musical number ‘Hot, hot’ from the film *Mille, Marie og mig*.

characters as maid, medical student and performer, Marie, Klaus and Mille, displaying a cocktail of working-class, middle-class, and bohemian values. Moreover, the number emphasises Viby’s status as a star performer exhibiting her acrobatic skills and singing talent as she tongue-twists her way through the lyrics while repeatedly acknowledging the camera.¹¹ As Mille, the nightclub singer, she performs ‘Jeg har elsket dig, så længe jeg kan mindes’ (I’ve loved you as long as I can remember) in satin top-hat and tails. As Marie she later performs the same song in an up-beat manner, which highlights her playfulness, and finally, as Ellen, she performs the number with her friends and beloved Professor at her side, signalling that she has resolved her different personalities to form the ‘me’ of the title.

A multifaceted character is also central to the Osvald Helmuth vehicle, *Den mandlige husassistent* (*The Male Housekeeper*, 1938). Helmuth (born 1894) excelled at portraying the common man and was noted for his unsophisticated working-class persona projected by a meaty, if charming, face. In *Den mandlige husassistent*, he plays a hardworking waiter who, after having used his life savings to buy land for a seaside hotel, is cheated by a unprincipled lawyer, loses his money and ends up as a street musician. Through the intervention of both the lawyer’s daughter, with whom Helmuth falls in love, and his dim-witted wife, who is tired of girls quitting her employment, Helmuth is employed as the

lawyer's male housekeeper. By the climax of the film his democratic politics and commonsensical humour have forced a change in the lawyer. Helmuth's character challenges social and gender norms as he jumps from being a waiter to proprietor to a street singer, and as he turns housekeeper, showing a domestic side.

The three songs featured in this film are characteristically sung-spoken by Osvald Helmuth. 'En sang for dig' (A song for you), which he performs as a street musician, is at this point only loosely connected to Helmuth's romance; however, the direct romantic effect of the song upon casual listeners within the diegesis is clearly illustrated by a couple in a nearby window caressing each other. The first song, 'Klem så på, hæng så I' (Come on, get a move on), is performed for workmen building the seaside hotel; the last, 'Kys mig godnat' (Kiss me goodnight), is a lullaby sung to the lawyer's grandchild, who is played by Little Connie. Throughout the film, Helmuth's ability to inspire is stressed by the musical numbers. Moreover, these numbers allow Helmuth to display very different aspects of his persona. At one end of the range is the work song in which Helmuth the employer demands activity from his builders. At the other is the lullaby that he sings to Little Connie, which shows his caring nature.

Another popular performer, Liva Weel (born 1897), usually played hard-working women who manage to transform the snobbish milieu they encountered. An unconventional star, she appeared in films while in her late thirties and early forties and often played characters older than her age. She is most associated with physical comedy, which flaunted her chubbiness, in films such as *De blå drenge* (*The Blue Boys*, 1933), in which she plays a physical education teacher or *Frk. Møllers Jubilæum* (*The Jubilee Of Miss Møller*, 1937), in which she skis and skates.

In *Odds 777* (*Odds 777*, 1932) Liva Weel plays a middle-aged cook, who becomes a cabaret singer. Her spiritual youth is stressed in her relationship with the film's young lovers, whose union she secures, but also in her ability to save her lover from ruin by riding his horse to victory at a derby. The character's breadth is emphasised through the variety of her musical numbers, from love ballads – in which she laments her lack of sex appeal, melancholic mood and the impossibility of a romance above her station – to the black humour number, 'Drømmer man om den' (If you dream of that, you'll ne'er wake up again), in which she mocks the bourgeoisie. This last number is out of character and unrelated to the narrative, but it is an opportunity to display a satirical dimension to her star image.

Apart from dealing implicitly or explicitly with the coming together of classes and lifestyles, the character musical comedies develop a distinctive populism through placing emphasis on a single performer who spans class, gender and age norms while also allowing the star to demonstrate the different dimensions of his or her persona.

Figure 14 Riding to Victory: Liva Weel saves her lover from financial ruin in *Odds 777*.

ROMANTIC MUSICAL COMEDIES

According to Rick Altman, the celebration of courtship is integral to US popular culture and is the determining factor in many film musicals' subordination of other storylines to a love plot.¹² He argues that the plot structure of the Hollywood musical is based on a central male/female dichotomy, which establishes a parallel principle whereby the musicality of one lover is mirrored by the musicality of the other. The structure subsequently cues the viewer to focus on the suitability of the lovers for each other and anticipates their romantic union. Danish romantic musical comedies, however, place less emphasis on heterosexual coupledness.

For example, the film *7-9-13 (Knock on Wood, 1934)*, is about Peter, a failed composer, played by Eyvind Johan-Svendsen, who takes out a suicide contract with two insurance swindlers. Having agreed to kill himself within the year, he then changes his mind when he falls in love with Molly (Solvejg Oderwald-Lander), a girl performing in his ailing show. Their love is demonstrated musically in two songs in which their individual musical expression is harmonised. In the first, while playing his compositions in a bar, Peter is asked by Molly to play something lighter. He does, she hums along, and he is inspired to write lyrics. In the second instance, during a private moment, they sing that song 'Det er dig'

(It is you) together. Later, Peter plays and Molly sings 'Kys mig, når du vil' (Kiss me when you want to), which has a lightness signalled by the title but is here performed by Molly with an almost desperate vitality, connecting it to the unpredictability of the suicide plot.

The composer's efforts to stop the fatal contract cover the last quarter of the film in which there are no musical performances. Seen in the context of the other Danish musicals of the period, *7-9-13* seems almost bleak. The insurance plot remains unaffected by the musicality of the lovers, the composer's salvation is achieved through various entirely non-musical coincidences and, moreover, the musical show plot is left undeveloped after it has been established as the determining factor in Peter's desire to kill himself. Finally, and most interestingly, the musicality of the love plot never re-enters the film after 'Kys mig, når du vil', although, unusually, the happy ending at a hot dog stand does contain a musical performance.

Another romantic musical, *Fem raske piger* (*Five Peppy Girls*, 1933), is the story of five American performing sisters, who journey to Denmark to find their uncle, an elderly earl played by Frederik Jensen. Although initially suspicious of their motives, he soon surrenders to the good-natured girls. However, a villainous butler, in collaboration with the earl's sister, does everything in his power to sour the relations between them and the earl. The story of the girls' fight to be accepted is intertwined with a love story in which the eldest sister, Annie (Karina Bell), falls for the earl's nephew and the others for four of his friends. False accusations made by the butler make the girls give up their romantic aspirations to pursue their careers. After a successful performance they receive an offer to go on tour to the US, but the tour is eventually abandoned for love and the film ends with a multiple wedding.

In this film, the family plot, show plot and love plot are neatly interwoven, while the music is primarily reserved for the storylines concerning love. The songs and singing styles are divided according to a clear dichotomy between male/female, Denmark/the US and tradition/modernity so that the boys sing folk songs and the girls perform jazzy tunes that celebrate rhythm. During a dinner party the sisters challenge the national and folksy mood of the boys' singing by performing a jazz number while tap-dancing on tables. The explicitly romantic song – 'Kom, alene vil vi gå' (We'll walk alone) – is performed after the dinner party by the two eldest girls and their respective beaux on parallel midnight strolls. The number cuts back and forth between two spatially separate and stylistically different renditions of the same song. Annie and her beau, Jørgen, sing a tango version slowly and romantically whereas Karin (Marguerite Viby) and Sigurd on their romantic promenade jazz the tune up. Prior to this in the film, music had been used to demarcate sexual difference but this number functions to reconcile the two different styles of music, folk and jazz, and at the same shows the difference of temperament between the placid Annie and the tomboy Karin.

Figure 15 In a 'Sunshine mood' the five sisters go for a choreographed bicycle jaunt in *Fem raske piger*.

Since the girls decide to give up their careers in order to marry, it would seem that the values that prevail are connected to the boys and their songs. However, throughout the film it is the girls' musicality that is featured more often and more originally in the musical numbers, such as in the twice repeated 'Solskinshumør' (Sunshine mood), which is performed during a hayride and during a choreographed bicycle jaunt.

These films are primarily concerned with the theme of love, which dominates the musical content, though it is interesting to note the relative independence of love from other themes. In *7-9-13* the show plot is left undeveloped, and in *Fem raske piger* it is isolated from the love plot, in both cases forfeiting a love inspired show or a show inspired love. Compared to their US cousins the Danish romantic comedies display a smaller degree of musical integration between related storylines.

CONCLUSION

Courtship plays an important part in the Danish musical comedies, but it is significant that romantic union is envisioned as a product of society, whereas in the Hollywood musical society is seen as a product of courtship. So this specifically Danish populism, which is developed differently according to the three subgenres explored above, is central to understanding the Danish musicals of

the 1930s. It demonstrates that such films are not only interesting as exponents of a distinct national cinema but also as a generic alternative to the dominant Hollywood model.

NOTES

1. Olaf Olsen and Tage Kaarsted argue that the popular belief in parliamentarianism is reflected in the limited popularity of extremist political groupings with non-democratic tendencies. Olaf Olsen, Tage Kaarsted, *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie Bind 13: Krise og Krig* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1991): 122.
2. See Olsen and Kaarsted: 79–85.
3. This makes the Danish musical comedies distinctly different from the populist US comedies of the 1930s, such as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), which deal with politics and the democratic process.
4. See Niels Jørgen Dinnesen and Edin Kau, *Filmen i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1983): 102–8; and Ebbe Neergaard, *Historien om Dansk Film* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1960): 98–103.
5. For more on this discussion of populism, see Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981): 290.
6. See Olsen and Kaarsted: 101–3.
7. By this I mean non-diegetic music proper, and not the supra-diegetic music that surfaces to accompany diegetic singing and dancing. See Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987): 66–7.
8. See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987): 73. In discussing the use of non-diegetic music according to classical Hollywood practice in non-musicals, Gorbman stresses *in-audibility* as the norm. In contrast, the audibility of the music in these films is due to volume as well as the rhythmic quality of the music. Because of this I have chosen to refrain from using the term ‘background music’.
9. As with many of the Ib Schønberg’s lines, this became a popular catch phrase.
10. See Emill Marott, *Dansk Revy*, vols 1 and 2 (Gylding: Narayana Press, 1991): 22–3. In the early 1800s traits of popular revue could be found in the French-inspired Copenhagen vaudevilles. In the last half of that century, popular revue began to acquire its distinct form, as a succession of topical musical and non-musical numbers with little or no narrative or thematic coherency.
11. This stylistic self-consciousness has an affinity with popular revue. One possibility is that the aesthetics of the film medium in this cultural and historic context borrowed from popular revue central elements such as the direct address.
12. Altman: 50–1. According to Altman, this strategy is culturally determined by a specific fascination in the US with the processes of courtship and with courtship as a cultural problem-solving device.

14 FILM MUSICALS IN THE GDR

Andrea Rinke

This chapter will focus on two musicals directed by two East German filmmakers who specialised in entertainment films – Gottfried Kolditz's *Revue um Mitternacht* (*Midnight Revue*, 1962) and Joachim Hasler's *Heißer Sommer* (*Hot Summer*, 1968) – both of which were domestic box office hits.¹ Situating my examples in the historical and generic context of East German cinema, I will investigate the reasons for the scarcity of musicals in GDR film production and explore the explanations for their 'acceptability' to the film authorities and their popularity with contemporary audiences.

The nationalised DEFA (Deutsche Filmaktiengesellschaft) was East Germany's only film company. As in other areas of industrial production in the GDR, the annual output of films was planned many years in advance by the DEFA management, the aim being to produce a balanced package covering a variety of genres including musicals and comedies. Nevertheless, the proportion of entertainment films within the DEFA portfolio was markedly low, and of the more than 800 films released in the forty-six years of its existence (1946–92) only a handful were 'homegrown' musicals. However, as the popularity of those examples that *did* reach the public clearly shows, the East Germans welcomed light-hearted entertainment just as enthusiastically as world audiences. Why then did the DEFA management not meet the demand for more musical films?

One of the answers lies in the fact that there were no directors with expertise in musical films, no guidelines for the making of musicals and no classes taught at the GDR's (only) film academy. Having taken over the Ufa studios in Babelsberg, the GDR regime was anxious to make a clean break with Ufa's

tradition of glamorous spectacle and escapist entertainment films, as these were associated with the Third Reich. Similarly, GDR filmmakers could not look to the rich musical tradition of the Soviet cinema for inspiration either as, after Stalin's death, anything to do with the Stalinist era had become untouchable. It was also deemed entirely unacceptable for East German cinema to emulate Hollywood musicals, for these were regarded as bourgeois and irreconcilable with the aims of socialist films, as well as being financially beyond the means of DEFA. As GDR film critic Dr Walther Kronenthal pointed out:

Our country does not have at its disposal a huge show-business industry with vast financial and personnel resources. To strive for such a thing would mislead and would only do us harm artistically and economically . . . For at the centre of our efforts should be our socialist world, our way of living.²

Another reason for the scarcity of musicals in the GDR was the constant rivalry with West Germany. The authorities who granted state approval to film projects perceived cinema as a key player in the GDR's cultural self-definition, especially since the country was, for the first two decades of its existence, fighting for its political recognition as an independent state, with its own identity and socialist way of life.³ The ideological function of cinema (singled out in the GDR, as in the Soviet Union, as 'of all the arts the most important') was to help create the 'new socialist human being' in a different and better Germany.⁴ This involved the development of socialist values, such as collectivity and solidarity. The doctrine of Socialist Realism, which the GDR had adopted from the Soviet Union as the guiding principle for all cultural activity, favoured an emphasis on people's daily lives over fun, glamour and spectacle in the cinema.⁵ Hence, in contrast to mainstream Western cinema, many DEFA films of the 1950s and 1960s were set in unglamorous workplaces, such as factories, chemical plants or construction sites, the 'centre-pieces of the construction of socialism' and 'battlefields of radical ideological change', as Alexander Abusch, the Deputy Minister for Culture, called them in his keynote speech at the second national film conference in 1958.⁶ Entertainment films, such as musicals, were condemned as neither serious nor meaningful enough to raise the consciousness of the working-class man or woman.

Moreover, the genre was regarded as escapist, and therefore contradictory to one of the most important aims of GDR cinema: the provision of *Lebenshilfe* (help for its viewers to cope with their daily lives by addressing problematic issues). As Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, Minister for Culture, pointed out in his keynote speech at the DEFA's thirtieth anniversary, 'the main objective of creative work at DEFA has remained unchanged since the day of its foundation: film must provide answers to the *Lebensfragen* [vital questions] of our people'.⁷

Those filmmakers who wished to try their hand at musicals were not encouraged by the DEFA studio management, anxious as it was to submit projects which would receive the seal of approval by the censors in the ministry of culture.

Considering this historical and ideological background to film production in East Germany, it seems surprising that there was (as one GDR actress put it) any 'laughter behind the Iron Curtain' at all.⁸ If the regime did not encourage the making of musical films, why then did it tolerate those few examples produced between 1958 and 1972? For the first half of the 1960s, the answer lies again in the rivalry between the two German states. The GDR film authorities realised that they had to compromise by meeting the people's desire for light-hearted entertainment if they wanted to compete with and counteract the attraction of Western cinema. Before the Berlin wall was built, East Berliners (literally) voted with their feet by crossing the border to see West German films, and after 1961 they flocked to the latest imports from the West. This situation was untenable for DEFA, not only from a financial but also from an ideological point of view, as the film imports were expensive and it was socialist, not Western art, that was supposed to be *massenwirksam* (to address millions of people). Therefore, the DEFA management advised filmmakers to create their own specific brand of entertainment that would win back audiences while still conveying socialist values.

The 'emancipation' of women through their integration into the workforce was regarded as one of the major achievements of socialism, demonstrating its moral superiority over capitalism. The financially independent woman, who fully participated in the production process as well as being mother, wife, lover, colleague and comrade, was seen to best epitomise the *Neuer Mensch* (the new human being), the all-round developed socialist personality. DEFA cinema, including musical films, therefore promoted the idea of the confident working woman through exemplary female protagonists who challenged and educated their male partners. Such men were often depicted as weak and fallible as a result of an insufficiently developed socialist consciousness and morality.

This was indeed the issue addressed in the first DEFA musical, entitled *Meine Frau macht Musik* (*My Wife Wants to Sing*), released in 1958 and directed by a West German, Hans Heinrich, a filmmaker who lived in West Berlin and worked in East Berlin. *Meine Frau macht Musik* features a mother of two small children who insists on pursuing a singing career against her husband's wishes, but finally succeeds in converting him from a traditional patriarch to an enlightened husband supporting women's right to work. Music and song thus become a metaphor for women's liberation from male oppression, conveying the message that under socialism everybody has the chance to fulfill their potential. Even an ordinary housewife and mother could become a star! The moral of the

story, that married men should accept women's legally inscribed right to go to work (which the heroine actually quotes to her husband in an argument), was in line with East German propaganda.

Nevertheless, Heinrich's film was met with disapproval on the part of the DEFA management who accused him of having miscast an icon of cinematic revolutionary heroism, Günter Simon, as a narrow-minded petit-bourgeois husband. Heinrich was further criticised for being a West German director who had not presented a truthful depiction of GDR life. The film was destined to be shelved but, because the film composer Gerd Natschinski had already made a popular soundtrack album, *Meine Frau macht Musik* was eventually rescued and released. It became such a success at the box office that Heinrich planned a sequel, entitled *Meine Frau ist berühmt* (*My Wife is a Star*), a project that was, however, rejected and he left DEFA to work in West Germany.

An attempt to create a new socialist variety of the backstage musical is Günter Reisch's *Sylvesterpunsch* (*New Year's Eve Punch*, 1960), which tells the story of two work brigades in a chemical plant who compete in the spirit of *sozialistischer Wettbewerb* (socialist competition) to put on the best show on New Year's Eve. The film was shot on site with real-life factory workers who support the lead actors' backstage song and dance numbers. The filmmakers conveyed their message that working together in a collective is fun and produces great achievements, with a light-hearted touch that may seem rather bizarre today, including, as it does, a 'Revue-on Ice' on New Year's Eve, a song about polyethylene and calcium carbide and dancing test tubes.

The heyday of DEFA musicals, if it can be called that, was during the years following the erection of the Berlin Wall and the closure of the GDR border to the West in 1961. Not only did the *antifaschistischer Schutzwall* (anti-fascist protection barrier) stop the exodus of thousands of East German citizens to the West, but it also drastically demonstrated the regime's determination to assure the GDR's permanence as a state. This resulted in a certain degree of stability within East German society and – paradoxically perhaps to Western eyes – a brief period of liberalisation in cultural policies in which light-hearted entertainment flourished.

In 1962, two hugely popular musicals were released, both of which featured Manfred Krug, the GDR audiences' all-time favourite actor, singer and jazz musician. In his first DEFA film he is the male lead in his own biopic, entitled *Auf der Sonnenseite* (*On the Sunny Side*, 1962). The film is again a backstage musical set at the workplace (a steel factory and a construction site respectively), featuring steelworker Krug as the would-be actor/musician Martin Hoff who, because of his artistic talent, is sent to drama school but loses his place due to his cocky attitude and individualist behaviour. Only through the love of a good socialist woman does he mend his ways. Krug was not handsome in the conventional sense, he nevertheless conquered the hearts of thousands of

female fans, usually playing grumpy macho working-class heroes which gave him the nick-name the 'GDR Marlon Brando'.

Only seven months after *Auf der Sonnenseite*, Manfred Krug featured in another backstage musical, *Revue um Mitternacht* (*Midnight Revue*, 1962), directed by Gottfried Kolditz, a filmmaker with a background in operetta films (*Die schöne Lurette* (*The Beautiful Lurette*, 1960)). The film is unique to DEFA production history in two respects: it is the only truly spectacular musical revue film made by the company and it is also presented in the tradition of Brechtian Epic theatre, drawing attention to its own process of production with ironic self-referentiality. *Revue um Mitternacht* ostentatiously breaks the illusion of the spectacle of film while, at the same time, offering the artificiality of the musical fantasy. The framework narrative is interpolated by sequences of a flamboyant revue show filmed in widescreen, Agfa-color and six-tone, and displaying innovative camera techniques, such as the multiple split screen. These revue sequences combine the 'respectability' of high culture with the appeal of contemporary GDR popular entertainment, through the collaboration of the ballets of the National Opera and the Friedrichstadtpalast with athletes from the Leipzig Sports Academy. The music (composed by national prize winner Gerd Natschinski) is performed by the DEFA Symphony Orchestra, the orchestra of the GDR's national record studio, AMIGA, and features the singing voices of many well-known GDR pop stars.

At first glance, the Berkleyesque choreography in *Revue um Mitternacht* is somewhat reminiscent of Ufa revues of the 1920s and 1930s, with their emphasis on synchronised female body geometrics, their dynamic regimented motion and the audacity of a spatial imagination that dissolves the stage into a world of kaleidoscopic planes and patterns. However, in *Revue um Mitternacht* the lines of female bodies tend to be coupled with male counterparts in curiously asexual, athletic ensembles. Equally, the sets and costumes are in deliberate contrast to the glitzy showiness of Western-style revues with their display of half-naked women, a style that was deemed decadent. East German musicals aimed to convey, in a rather more functional style, a sense of technological innovation and economic achievement. For instance, massed chorus boys and girls in cheerful uniformity are shown at a traffic crossing, and on red and yellow scooters at a petrol station, and couples turn around on gargantuan LPs singing 'Everything revolves around *amore*'. These locate the narrative within a pseudo-realistic, yet utopian vision of a bright and happy socialist society – a land of plenty and equality. The film's director, Kolditz explained

There has been a demand for a good revue film for a long time. What has been missing until now are new ideas moving away from the concept and the pattern of the 'old' revue, from the notion of the revue as a 'show of a thousand naked legs'. We believe we have found such an idea with our

script. For the revue scenes in our film are not imposed but rather they emerge logically from the plot.⁹

The plot of *Revue um Mitternacht* tells the story of four male DEFA employees – a script editor, a composer, an author and a set designer – who are held hostage in a villa by a female assistant producer until they make a revue film that everybody likes. In a clever, tongue-in-cheek manner it addresses the dilemma of GDR filmmakers who were urged to produce entertaining popular films, only to be criticised when they actually submitted such projects on the grounds that these were not sufficiently realistic and meaningful. The film opens with a parody of abduction plots in the style of the thriller movie, then switches into musical mode at the villa where the men are held captive. Handcuffed and sitting in a row of armchairs, their blindfolds are taken off and they are told to sign their contracts for the film revue project. Instead, they break into a comical song and dance number protesting (in an allusion to the censors) that they cannot touch musicals:

It's easier to buy a Trabant¹⁰
Than to make an entertaining revue film!

Figure 16 Planning for a show: Composer Alexander Ritter (Manfred Krug) performs an idea for his audience, which includes assistant producer Claudia Glück (Christel Bodenstein) in *Revue um Mitternacht*.

How could we and why should we?!
It's bound to go wrong . . .

Chorus: It's too hot to handle! Too hot! Too hot!

In comical anticipation of the scathing press reviews such a film would receive, they sit down in the row of armchairs, each man holding a major national newspaper or film journal in front of his face and then taking turns to peep over the top, while singing

And the press, that awful monster,
Will rip us apart and prove time and time again
That we should never have tried it
Because it simply can't be done.
At first they'll say we're almost realistic,
But by the middle that we're into the mystic,
And by the end they'll say we're formalistic.

Chorus: That's why we tell you count us out!
There frankly is no point!
Cos we all know by now:
It's too hot to handle! Too hot! Too hot!

This sequence, while reminiscent of contemporary cabaret sketches in its non-sensical rhymes and silly puns (in the original German), barely hides its critical allusions to various less appealing aspects of GDR reality such as having to wait up to seventeen years to obtain a Trabant car and the power of the press as the mouthpiece of Communist Party propaganda as well as the strait-jacket effect of Socialist Realism on the arts. While lyrics such as these could, on the surface, be read (and dismissed) as light-hearted musical irony by DEFA about itself, the viewers, who were used to subversive subtexts in East German cinema would have recognised these points of criticism, entering into a conspiratorial understanding with the filmmakers.

Much of the ensuing plot of *Revue um Mitternacht* revolves around the composer Ritter, played by Manfred Krug, escaping from the house into the parallel world of the revue film while the assistant producer, Claudia, and others keep looking for him. Notably, it is again a female protagonist who holds a position of authority, being in charge of the captive men, and who represents moral superiority over her male partner. Ritter's disappearance into the world of the revue film and Claudia's pursuit allows for dance sequences involving elements of hide-and-seek, masquerade, car chases and split screen crossed-wire telephone conversations, as well as the display of the work-in-progress on the fictional musical revue, including the set manager singing a song of complaint directly into the

camera in true Brechtian fashion. The US film scholar J. Hoberman commented in an article,

Could this unknown Brechtian extravaganza have been made to counter *Silk Stockings*? To show how utopia would be organised as well as feel? . . . this widescreen, stereophonic opus was brassy enough to rival MGM's chief vulgarian George Sidney. *Midnight Revue* is filled with shiny cars, sequinned showgirls, sets to represent the Socialist Construction with the sticky grandeur of a Barton's candy tin.¹¹

Contemporary GDR critics unanimously praised the film's technical achievements and the quality of the performances, welcoming the picture as a pioneering and truly socialist work in the genre of the revue that deviated from its Weimar and Nazi predecessors:

The stuffy bourgeois revue, represented in Germany by films with Marika Röck was not to be copied. Rather it was about applying their formal perfection, their technical refinement, their musical appeal, their flamboyant spectacle to a new subject matter, thus avoiding all Kitsch, melodrama . . . and all seductive drug-like elements of the old revue.¹²

Many of these GDR critics also deplored the absence of any catchy melodies, as well as the rather unmotivated love story at the centre of the plot. This said, *Revue um Mitternacht* was a great success with contemporary audiences and was watched by one million viewers in only two months.¹³

Kolditz's next film, *Geliebte weiße Maus* (*Loveable White Mouse*, 1964) met with equal success (despite a huge cut in budget) but was to be his last. Box office success in the GDR did not automatically result in the formula being repeated, as film production at DEFA was not governed by the principles of demand and supply, but rather by centralised planning, as noted above. The liberal political climate in which a satirical take on film production in the GDR, such as in *Revue um Mitternacht*, was allowed to pass the censors came to an abrupt end in 1965 when the 11th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) authorised the banning of almost an entire year of DEFA productions and the sacking of film management employees.¹⁴ In the years subsequent to this *autodafé*, many filmmakers either shied away or were steered away from potentially controversial contemporary topics. As a result, the late 1960s saw an increase in costume dramas and historical literary adaptations, as well as 'harmless' comedies and musicals.¹⁵

The most popular example of such non-committal apolitical entertainment was Jo Hasler's *Heißer Sommer* (*Hot Summer*, 1968), a pop musical about

youngsters spending their summer holidays at the beach. As the average age of cinema-goers in the GDR had fallen during the 1960s, Jo Hasler followed the fashion in the West of choosing well-known domestic pop singers for the leading parts (as in Cliff Richard's *Summer Holiday*, 1963). The songs were released on a soundtrack album by the national record label AMIGA, and became an instant hit.

In contrast to the backstage, workplace DEFA musicals released before *Heißer Sommer*, this film revolves around teenagers enjoying a holiday together in the manner of the West German *Schlagerfilme*. The *Schlager* is a catchy pop tune with lighthearted, sometimes cheeky lyrics, which became popular in West Germany via the radio, from the mid 1950s to the mid 1960s and which had filtered through to East German youth. In October 1965, a demonstration of 'Beat' fans took place in Leipzig, protesting against the prohibition of some fifty local pop bands, over 100 of whom were sentenced to work in a coal mine.¹⁶ The performance, import and even consumption on the radio of Western popular music was subsequently banned as counter-revolutionary, with the claim that it drove socialist youth to excesses and moral corruption. In the light of these events, the censors' permission to show a few homegrown 'Beat' rhythms and songs in *Heißer Sommer*, three years later, could be explained as an attempt to put a lid on the cauldron of youth rebellion.

Heißer Sommer opens by showing two groups of young men and women lined up opposite each other in a choreographed fight over the cars that will take them to the beach. The mood is one of carefree fun in the sun, with girls and boys playing, flirting and singing on the beach, in the fields and in the haystacks. The high-spirited girls, who are led by the tomboyish Stupsi (pop singer Chris Doerk, in her cinema debut), hold their own, and are shown as equal, if not superior, to their male counterparts. Stupsi constantly provokes the boys to prove themselves, singing for instance, 'Men who are not really men, sometimes make a lot of fuss, each one childishly thinks he is the best'. But the teasing, the rivalries and the playfully choreographed fights between the boys and the girls curiously lack erotic tension and are reminiscent of the factory musicals promoting the collective spirit of the *sozialistischer Wettbewerb*.

The naïve choreography, performed mainly by lay actors, is in stark contrast to the professionalism of the dance spectacles in *Revue um Mitternacht*, and thus adds a comical touch to *Heißer Sommer* that would have made it easy for young viewers to relate to the characters. For instance, in one scene, the girls in their bathing suits line up at the shore as if ready for a water-ballet number, only to waddle off into the sea in a synchronised penguin walk.

The film offered just enough teenage rebellion against the regimentation and predictability of everyday life in the GDR to appeal to young audiences. For instance, in one of Stupsi's songs, which became a smash hit, she expresses the

desire to step out of line: 'I want to do things, want to enjoy things that don't happen everyday; I want to go wild, just once.' However, this was to be kept within the boundaries of social acceptability. When the boys take a fishing boat for a night-time 'joyride', Stupsi protests, jumps overboard and swims home. Significantly, it is the female who acts as the guardian of socialist morals, while most of the males fall short of the ideal and need to be educated. As one of the boys points out: 'Are we merely a gang of rowdies or a collective?!' *Heißer Sommer* does not have a happy ending in the traditional sense, and no perfect union between two lovers is achieved. The quarrelling parties are, however, reconciled creating a new collective harmony in which both boys and girls are united and all individual differences settled.

The reception by contemporary GDR critics was mixed. Some welcomed the film's message that life under socialism was fun and that the collective spirit would triumph over individualism, while others expressed their disappointment over the weak plot and the trite dialogue. Director Jo Hasler replied that rather than letting the plot carry the songs, as in *Meine Frau macht Musik* and *Revue um Mitternacht*, he had deliberately made a film in which the hits carried the plot, catching the mood of contemporary young people. The film's tremendous success proved him right. Premiered during the annual summer film festival in 1968, it did exceptionally well – almost as well, indeed, as another hit musical being shown at the same time, *My Fair Lady* (1964).

Against the background of the Prague uprising, the apparently ideology-free depiction of youngsters having a good time must have come as a welcome moment of escapism to contemporary viewers. *Heißer Sommer* evoked feelings of pride in the *Heimat*, the homeland GDR, by showing the island of Rügen with its beautiful beaches and resorts, and in the achievements of the new German state by displaying the grandeur of the reconstructed buildings in the bombed cities of Leipzig and (East) Berlin as a backdrop for some of the hits, including the title song 'This is a hot summer!'. The film attracted crowds by using the most popular stars of the time, Frank Schöbel and Chris Doerk, as the lead characters, which was a novelty in DEFA musicals. Both leads represented the squeaky-clean, honest and attractive boy and girl next door, an image which would have made the moderately rebellious aspects of the film acceptable to the censors. At the same time, the film's appropriation of Western-style 'Beat' music and fashionable clothes, such as jeans and leather jackets, made them even more special in the eyes of their East German fans who flocked for autographs of their 'dream couple' whenever they appeared, and in subsequent years *Heißer Sommer* acquired the status of a cult film.¹⁷

Unfortunately, it took DEFA five years to make a sequel to *Heißer Sommer* entitled *Nicht schummeln, Liebling!* (*No Cheating, Darling!*, 1973). This was the last time the swallow of East German musicals flew before its all too brief summer came to an end. With Erich Honecker's take-over of power in 1971, a

Figure 17 *Heißer Sommer*'s appropriation of Western youth styles – as worn by Frank Schöbel (centre) and Chris Doerk (first left) in this musical number on the Baltic sea island of Rügen – was central to its popularity amongst East German audiences.

new era in DEFA cinema began with a revival of the critical *Gegenwartsfilme*, some of the most popular of which incorporated musical 'moments'.¹⁸ Interestingly, in the 1990s, a few years after the demise of the GDR, *Heißer Sommer* enjoyed a revival as part of the *Ostalgie* ('eastalgia', the nostalgia for things from the GDR, a new term coined after German unification) experienced by East Germans sharing the memories of their former homeland and its popular cultural heritage, as well as the lost utopia of a socialist community.

NOTES

1. Professor Hans Rodenberg, the head of the Department of Film in the Ministry of Culture, praised *Revue um Mitternacht* in a reader's letter to the GDR's leading film journal pointing out that the film had been successfully screened all over the country in its first week. Hans Rodenberg, 'Anderer Meinung', *Film Spiegel* 16 (1962). *Heißer Sommer* had 115,000 viewers in its first week. Constanze Pollatschek, "'Schüsse und Küsse': *Heißer Sommer*", *Wochenpost Berlin* 12 July 1968.
2. Dr Walther Kronenthal, 'Über die "heitere Note" in den Musifilmen. Die Koketterie mit dem Musical – Was tun ohne Show-Industrie?', *Der neue Weg, Halle* 23 July 1972. All translations of German quotations are my own.
3. West German cinema was producing mainly politically bland entertainment films such as comedies (*Natürlich die Autofahrer* (*Of Course, the Motorists*, 1959)) and *Schlagerfilme*, as they were called, music films with West German pop-stars such as

- Freddy Quinn (*Freddy, die Gitarre und das Meer* (*Freddy, the Guitar and the Sea*, 1959)).
4. A remark attributed to Lenin. Paul Rotha (additional section, Richard Griffith), *The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema* (London: Spring Books, 1967): 219.
 5. Therefore, film genres held in the highest esteem by the GDR authorities and film critics, as well as many DEFA filmmakers themselves, included anti-fascism films (*Lissy* 1957), historical films about the German working-class movement (*Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse* (*Leader of his Class*, 1955)) or *Gegenwartsfilme*, as they were called, films set in contemporary GDR addressing the daily concerns of ordinary people (*Beschreibung eines Sommers* (*Description of a Summer*, 1963)).
 6. Alexander Abusch, *Kulturelle Probleme des sozialistischen Humanismus. Beiträge zur deutschen Kulturpolitik 1946–67* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1967): 349.
 7. Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, '30 Jahre DEFA – Mit dem Film Antwort geben auf Lebensfragen', *DEFA blende. Organ der SED-Betriebsparteiorganisation des VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme*, Potsdam-Babelsberg, 14 May 1976.
 8. The GDR actress Karin Schröder, the female lead in the DEFA musical *Geliebte weiße Maus* (*Beloved White Mouse*, 1964) in the documentary *East Side Story*, tx BBC2, 1997.
 9. Dr Gottfried Kolditz, 'Revue Film dringend gesucht', *Filmspiegel* 4 (1962).
 10. This is the brand name of the most common car used in the GDR.
 11. J. Hoberman, 'The Communist musical', *Film Comment* 33: 4 (July–August 1997): 37.
 12. Christoph Funke, '“Verurteilung” zur Heiterkeit', *Der Morgen Berlin* 26 August 1962.
 13. Dana Ranga in her documentary *East Side Story*.
 14. For instance, films had shown young protagonists struggling against hypocrisy and conformism in education (*Karla*, 1965) and had depicted careerist opportunism in the legal system (*Das Kaninchen bin ich* (*I am the Rabbit*, 1965)). For a detailed analysis of these events, see Günter Agde (ed.), *Kahlschlag* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1991).
 15. Such as Günther Reisch's *Ein Lord am Alexanderplatz* (1967), and Ralf Kirsten's *Frau Venus und ihr Teufel* (1967). Costume dramas include Horst Seemann's *Schüsse unterm Galgen* (1968), and Werner Wallroth's *Hauptmann Florian von der Mühle* (1968) starring the popular Manfred Krug.
 16. See Dorothee Wierling, 'Der Staat, die Jugend und der Westen. Texte zu den Konflikten der 60er Jahre', in Alf Lüdtke and Peter Becker (eds), *Akten, Eingaben, Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997): 225f.
 17. East German viewers reminisced nostalgically about *Heißer Sommer* in an interview conducted in the documentary *East Side Story*.
 18. The most well-known are Heiner Carow's *The Legend of Paul and Paula* (1973) and Konrad Wolf's *Solo Sunny* (1980). Soundtracks of others have since been released by AMIGA, entitled *Die DEFA Filmbits* (Berlin, 1997).

15 MUSIC IN THE BOLLYWOOD FILM

Heather Tyrrell and Rajinder Dudrah

‘In India life begins and ends with music . . . a newborn baby is greeted into the world by songs . . . there is a song and dance when he weds and dies’.¹

Prioritised in Indian cultural life, music occupies a similarly central role in its popular cinema industry, both stylistically within film texts, and during the production process. To understand how and why music is so central to Indian film, this chapter considers its presence in ‘Bollywood’, as popular Hindi cinema is known.² The relationship between music and film will be explored through a case-study, the film *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . ! (Who am I to You . . . !*, 1994), one of the most significant blockbusters of contemporary Bollywood cinema, and a production that played a major role in opening up the international market in the 1990s. It not only broke box office records in India, but also filled cinemas in Britain and the US with South Asian audiences who, for a decade, had mainly watched Bollywood films on video. This film notably contains fourteen songs, an extravagance even by Bollywood standards, where six or seven is the norm. It thus serves as a powerful example of the foregrounding of music within Indian popular film, and illustrates the function of music in formulating a hit movie.

THE BOLLYWOOD PRODUCTION PROCESS

Song-and-dance numbers are at the heart of Bollywood films both stylistically and economically. It is believed that good songs make good movies, and the songs come first in the production process. Although the Indian film production

process has changed since Hollywood movies were allowed greater access to the Indian market in 1992 to include influences from US and European cinema what remains core to Hindi film, whether traditional or innovative, is its starting point: the music.³

With a national and diasporic audience speaking over 500 languages, Bollywood must operate as a 'universal' cultural form, and music is the primary means by which the films achieve this pan-cultural status. The drive is towards accessibility not complexity in music, with the songs needing to draw the audience into the film, because the Indian industry remains dependent on cinema admissions for its primary revenue. Annual ticket sales number 3.8 billion, a billion more than for Hollywood films, and every day ten million people go to the cinema in India, which accounts for about half the world's cinema visits.⁴ However, one crucial difference exists between Bollywood and Hollywood audience habits. Hit Bollywood films are habitually viewed repeatedly. It is common for audience members both in India and across the Indian diaspora to return once, or even several times, to see a favourite movie again.⁵ This behaviour has more in common with music appreciation (repeated listening to a favourite song or album) than it does with the cinema-going habits of other film audiences internationally. Moreover, the films themselves have historically operated as a collection of songs for an audience for whom the cinema is their main source of popular music.⁶ Good songs transform a Bollywood film into a well loved, and beautifully 'picturised', music album. The term 'song picturisation' is used uniquely within the Indian film industry and press, to describe what in Hollywood musicals are known as 'song and dance numbers'. It indicates the prioritisation of a film's music within the production process, and the conception of a film itself. The song comes first, and the pictures second.

A film's soundtrack is released up to six months before any theatrical release and thus creates the 'buzz' that can determine box office success. Music sales themselves do not fund films; piracy and illegal trading is too widespread, and beyond the profits for producers to be made in cinema admissions is the growth in video or DVD sales and rentals. However, with soundtracks constituting 55–60 per cent of India's INR1,040,000 music market, they have become a significant form of popular culture.⁷

Music directors are, therefore, central to the Bollywood production process. They come on board a project at the point when only the initial components of the film – the main stars, and a story outline – are in place.⁸ They write and record at least six songs for the movie with 'playback singers', many of whom have achieved the same celebrity status as the movie stars who act and mime to their voices. Lata Mangeshkar is one playback singer who has helped to shape the sound of Indian popular music, with half a century of recording and 25,000 songs to her credit.⁹ She and her sister Asha Bhosle are considered by many Indians to be bigger stars than some of their on-screen counterparts.

Such music directors as A.R. Rahman and the triumvirate of Shankar–Ehsaan–Loy have similarly become stars in their own right. Producers and directors cannot dictate to composers of their status; instead, the creative relationship is on an equal footing.¹⁰ A range of traditions and styles are drawn on for material, from Indian classical and folk music, to Middle Eastern music, to Western pop. The music thus acts as a bridge between tradition and modernity, so that Western and traditional instruments are combined. Indian musical director Kalyanji describes his music as a synthesis that takes inspiration from every source. He views Indian film music as a form at once sophisticated – ‘I feel that we are definitely ahead of other countries in music’ – and popular – ‘we try to write songs so simple that they can be hummed by everybody. Every song should be as simple as a nursery rhyme. This is where our art as music directors lies’.¹¹

Film music also plays with Eastern and Western hybrids, frequently transforming recognisable Western popular melodies, so that an audience may find themselves reminded of George Michael’s ‘Faith’ or Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’ in the middle of a film song. New influences from dance music and developing recording technologies have also attracted a younger diasporic audience earlier cut off from Hindi film music.¹² At its best, this hybrid yet uncomplicated musical form can bypass barriers of caste, age and region to become a hit song with broad national – and international – appeal.

The film director shoots the ‘song picturisations’ long before work begins on the rest of the film. These will often have high production values: with the stars miming and dancing to a playback recording of the songs, supported by dancers, grandiose sets and foreign locations. On some productions, finance is initially raised only to produce the song picturisations, and the rest of the film must wait for completion until more funding is in place. The completed song picturisations may even act as promotion material for the planned film. In 2002 the actress and dancer, Sophiya Haque, starred in picturisations for the film *Sandhya*, lip-synching to songs performed by the playback singer Gayathri Iyer. These were shown in India on MTV and Channel V and on digital channels internationally with one song in particular, ‘Maar Gayo’, becoming a success. However, by 2005, only the song picturisations had been shot. The film may still be completed. In several cases films have taken over seven years to finish, with the same actors walking out of the door in one scene seven years younger than they appear when they walk in the door in the next.

If the process of shooting song picturisations so far in advance of the other elements of a film seems unorthodox by Western standards, its logic is rooted in Indian traditions. In popular theatre it is only the song and dance numbers that are composed and rehearsed, with the dialogue and witty repartee improvised at the point of performance.¹³ Similarly, contemporary film scriptwriters often have little notice to prepare a scene’s dialogue for shooting. Of the several

hundred films shot in a year few will have what is known as a 'bound script': generally films are scripted roughly, with the middle and end undecided, and new lines are frequently added on the day of filming. Production on the rest of the film is sporadic, taking anything from six months to three years, as dates must be booked with the stars, who may be working on as many as twenty films at once, and regularly shooting scenes for two or three different movies on the same day.¹⁴

The style of song picturisations has been significantly influenced by the arrival of MTV in India in 1993. Songs traditionally last for seven minutes within a film, but are now being re-edited for television to three minutes. Directors from advertising and television are increasingly moving into film, and bringing with them a 'music video' sensibility, so that song sequences are increasingly shot and edited in an 'MTV' style. Song-and-dance numbers are therefore becoming more like stand-alone set-pieces within the larger scheme of the film. The choreographer Farah Khan, for example, exercises control over the costumes, the design and cinematography of the song as well as the dance steps. She has choreographed many of the biggest films of the late 1990's, including *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (*The Big-Hearted Will Win The Bride*, 1995), *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (*Something Is Happening*, 1998) and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham . . .* (*Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sorrow*, 2001), and one indicator of the importance accorded to Bollywood's song-and-dance sequences is the fact that Khan graduated in 2004 to directing, with her first film, *Main Hoon Na* (*I'm Here Now*).

A Bollywood film is now released simultaneously across all Indian 'territories' and then foreign and diasporic markets, generally including Britain, the US, and the Middle East. Until the 1990s, films were released first in Mumbai, and a film's reception in India's cultural capital remains significant in shaping its success. Only 20 per cent of films that go into production make it this far, and one in five films released are moderately successful.¹⁵ Blockbusters are few and far between. The Mumbai audiences are fickle, and flock to a film or leave the auditorium empty on a whim that no Bollywood formula seems able to predict.¹⁶ A film expected to be a sure-fire hit may 'bomb' at the box office, while what internationally may be considered an 'art movie' with limited box office appeal may become a popular hit, as was the case for *Bandit Queen* (1994).¹⁷

Notably, the Indian-made *Black* enjoyed surprising box office success in February 2005; it featured the Bollywood legend, Amitabh Bachchan, as the ageing alcoholic teacher of a blind, deaf and mute student, and, perhaps even more controversially, contained no song-and-dance sequences.¹⁸ Instead, *Black* took a significantly 'Western' approach to its music, using a soundtrack instead of songs, with musical themes to match scenes and characters. Although press articles suggested this heralded the end of the Bollywood musical tradition, the context of this 'song-free' hit is more complex. Gayathri Iyer recorded the

theme song, which, although not featured in the film itself, appears on the soundtrack album. The popularity of the soundtrack, even without traditional song picturisations to promote it, has gone hand in hand with the popularity of the film, and arguably helped to make it successful. The reception of 'song-free' films such as *Black* may not mean the end of song-and-dance numbers, but it could herald the beginning of a more diverse approach to film music in India.

BEYOND THE MUSICAL

Bollywood works by its own rules, to which the critical model of the classical Hollywood musical cannot be easily applied. Nevertheless, Jane Feuer's analysis of the film musical in *The Hollywood Musical* can be reformulated for Bollywood, just as Bollywood sometimes reformulates Hollywood film plots in its own image.¹⁹ Feuer locates the musical's utopia in an idea of community, and Hindi screenplay writer K.K. Shukla places kinship at the heart of Bollywood: 'Kinship emotion in India is very strong – so this element always works.'²⁰ The idea of community in Bollywood film also has an explicitly political root in the goal of a united India, originally promoted by Prime Minister Nehru's policies in the immediate post-Partition period of the 1950s, which advocated the use of the 'All-India' film to counteract alienation between India's middle and working classes.

Music in Bollywood cinema has an important intertextual role in relation to this ideological one. Song sequences operate beyond the level of 'show business' spectacle to form an extra-narrative function of linking a film to Indian tradition, often by quoting classical performances or depicting religious imagery. Hindi cinema is about spectacle, but also about a fantasy of India. In a conventional song sequence, for example, a film's hero and heroine may signify far more than the characters they play. They are akin to the figures of Hindu mythology who symbolise passion between men and women.²¹ Song sequences often refer directly to Ram and Sita, Shiva and Parvati, Radha and Krishna and to the Sufi and Christian traditions within South Asia, from which much Indian art developed. And in a cinema tradition that prioritises emotional engagement over 'realism' there is no need to legitimate musical performance through such elaborate devices as a show within a film, as in some Hollywood musicals. Instead, music is so tightly integrated within the flow of the film that, as director Raj Kapoor says, 'if you miss a song, you have missed an important link between one part of the narration and the next'.²²

Popular Hindi films are often referred to as 'Masala' movies, because a good movie 'blends the masalas in proper proportions', expertly mixing an ordered succession of modes from comedy, to romance to melodrama.²³ In the classic 'masala' film the male action hero battles against the excesses of modernisation as he combats Westernised, capitalist villains while choosing between two

models of femininity: the Westernised vamp and the traditional virgin in sari or shalwar kameez. However, contemporary 'masala' movies are increasingly blurring the moral line between 'virtuous Eastern' and 'wicked Western' feminine dress codes in order to appeal to diverse Indian and diasporic film audiences. Moreover, the Bollywood musical operates both at the level of narrative and of spectacle. Grand settings and glittering costumes are two of its central attractions, drawing on the aesthetic conventions of many kinds of traditional Indian cultural forms that place great importance on spectacular visual display by using elaborate masks or stylised make-up. Film enables these displays to take on more ambitious proportions. They may have little relationship to the actual plot, save through their elaborate representation of the scale of the hero and heroine's love. For example, in *Mughal-e-Azam* (*The King of Azam*, 1960), a sumptuous historical tale of a prince and a slave girl, the crucial moment of the film is a song-and-dance number performed in a specially constructed Hall of Mirrors where the dancing slave girl is reflected in every mirror in the room. This sequence was the first to be shot in colour in an Indian film, inserted into the middle of a black-and-white movie for dramatic effect. Most importantly, it was a song sequence, demonstrating both the privileged role of song and dance in the Bollywood film and also its separation, in narrative terms, from the world of the story.

While music can operate on a metaphorical level, enabling a step beyond the story, the last decade has seen a gradual shift in approach towards integrating the music within the narrative so that it complements the world of the film. Director Sanjay Leela Bhansali worked with Gujarati folk songs in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (*I've Already Given My Heart Away*, 1999) because the film was about a traditional Gujarati family. In *Devdas* (2002), a historical romance, the stress was on classical music. But even if song sequences no longer take such bold, even jarring, leaps in tone and musical style from the film's context, they continue to take such leaps in narrative terms, to bring to the fore broader mythical or ideological themes.

Main Kiladi Tu Anari (*I'm the Player, You're the Amateur*, 1994), made two years after the Indian film economy opened up to include dubbed Hollywood films, uses its song sequences to allow ideological exposition around themes of development and of tradition versus Westernisation. For example, the song 'Churake dil Mera' (Stealing my Heart) brings together the protagonists – a Mumbai policeman (Akshay Kumar) and his demure companion (Shilpa Shetty) – in a mutual declaration of love enacted entirely outside of the world of their experience. They are transported to a deserted tropical beach where the opposition between nature and civilisation is played out. The beach setting becomes more developed as the bay transforms, fills with boats and becomes a building site. The hero and heroine relocate to a luxury yacht where they perform an energetic and sexualised dance, the heroine clad in Western-style leopard-skin

leggings. The development process is then reversed, goes back to the construction site, then to a beach hut at night, through an aisle of trees, a cornfield, and, finally, a coconut grove. Sitting by a beach fire, the hero plays a violin, but then stops to grab the heroine by the hair and pull her towards him passionately. The sequence ends with an aerial shot of the woman lying alone on a vast, empty beach – she has dreamt the whole song. More than this, however, the beach utopia is itself shown to be a fantasy: the heroine had never left Mumbai. In fact, the protagonists are not even shown together; the policeman has been tricked into asking the woman to marry him over the phone. This song is the only evidence that they share a genuine mutual passion and it is therefore central to the narrative, while at the same time taking an enormous diversion from it.

The romance of the protagonists through the song-dream sequence is played out against a backdrop of an India undergoing modernisation and development, and these are key motifs through which a love story is often negotiated in contemporary Indian cinema. Not only is this a dream about being with a lover, it is also a dream about affluence and access to a middle-class Indian lifestyle for both the protagonists and the audience. Yet alongside such aspirational fantasies runs a critique of the process of modernisation. Increasing affluence and access to a ‘Westernised’ consumer culture is acceptable only with the retention of ‘traditional’ Indian culture and values. Thus, songs carry the weight of an extra-narrative debate about different versions of India, in addition to acting as narrative accelerators.

READING HUM AAPKE HAIN KOUN . . . !, ‘FOURTEEN SONGS, TWO WEDDINGS, AND A FUNERAL’

The relationship between music and narrative can be further explored through a reading of the film *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . !* (hereafter referred to as *HAK*). This is not a typical masala movie in that it contains no violence, nor does it leap from one fantasy location to another. Instead, it is a romantic melodrama that tells its story primarily within a ‘real world’ experienced by the characters. Released in Mumbai on 5 August 1994, *HAK* has been one of the most successful Indian films of all time, and box office takings in India were so high that the film was not released on video until 1998. At cinemas in Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad the film sustained a box office run in excess of 100 weeks. In Britain, *HAK* was one of the first films to herald a new wave of Bollywood cinema-going in the 1990s. At one London cinema, the Bellevue in Edgware, it achieved a 52-week run.

Factors such as its high quality of production, ‘family values’ and lack of violence were cited by numerous commentators as contributing to its success.²⁴ In fact, such was the popularity of *HAK* in Britain that it was adapted twice, once for BBC Radio Four and then later for the stage by Sudha Bhuchar and

Kristine Landon-Smith, co-founders of the Tamasha Theatre Company. The adaptation's title, 'Fourteen Songs, Two Weddings, and a Funeral', was inspired by co-director Sudha Bhuchar's remarks upon leaving the cinema after seeing *HAAK* for the first time, and enjoying 'a sweet, refreshing family film without all that dishin-dishin [fighting] . . . It was fourteen songs, two weddings and a funeral'.²⁵

HAAK can be described as a north Indian, Hindu fantasy, centred on an extended upper-middle-class family that functions perfectly as a loving community – a vision which is essentially conservative. The film's events are the traditional religious and family festivals revolving around marriage, birth and death, and the protagonists are prepared to sacrifice individual happiness for the communal good, never rebelling against their situation or finding it repressive. In this way, the film can be read as a preferred version of Indian family life. However, this is not to suggest that audiences everywhere believe this to be a realistic portrayal of actual lived experience. Among audiences the film has been openly acknowledged as an aspirational fantasy.²⁶

HAAK's fourteen songs are significantly more than the average six or seven of a standard Bollywood production and this is related to the prioritising of the representation of particular community values. Sudha Bhuchar argues that *HAAK*'s songs are not only memorable melodically but also reflect classic family relationships, such as the brother-in-law/sister-in-law relationship, and family rites of passage, such as the daughter leaving home. The film's plot is simple. It depicts the developing love of the two central characters, Prem (Salman Khan) and Nisha (Madhuri Dixit), through a catalogue of family festivities and trials. Unlike other Bollywood formula storylines (rich boy meets poor girl, or vice versa), in *HAAK* the protagonists are of similarly affluent origins, so that their social position is never challenged, reducing the potentially transgressive nature of their romance. Furthermore, the background presence of modern consumer goods in the *mise-en-scène* (computers, mobile phones, video recorders) is used to suggest that while the characters are literate in modern technology they still adhere to a 'traditional' Indian extended family lifestyle, so that joining in communal singing, dancing, sitting, eating and praying is given priority. In this way, the moral universe is emphasised over the consumer universe. Characters are deliberately set up to conform to or pose a threat to the moral order, so that one of the women competing for Prem's affections is depicted as 'too Westernised' in dress and behaviour, while Nisha, in contrast, lives comfortably in both modern urban India and the 'traditional' Indian home.

The importance of music and songs in the film can be gauged by the fact that its music director (Raam Laxman) is given equal billing alongside the producers and directors on areas of the film's publicity and that Lata Mangeshkar and S.P. Balasubramanyam, two of India's most renowned singers, perform the title song.²⁷ *HAAK* opens with this number 'sung' on-screen by Prem and Nisha, as

Figure 18 Prem (left, Salman Khan) and Nisha (Madhuri Dixit), the resistant lovers, in *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . !*

the film's credits roll. The song, which shares the title of the film, sets into motion the dilemma of the love story ('Who Am I to You?') which is answered at the end of the film by the two characters replying 'Hum Aapke Hain' (I Am Yours).

The second song of the film, 'Wah Wah Ram Ji' (Ode to Lord Ram), is sung at a pilgrimage site where the two families meet to arrange the marriage of

Prem's older brother Rajesh (Mohnish Bahl) to Nisha's elder sister Pooja (Renuka Shahane). The song simultaneously stages three rituals: the first is one of pilgrimage through prayer and devotion to the idols of Ram, Sita and Laxman from the *Ramayana*; the second is the performance of the engagement ceremony of Rajesh and Pooja; and the third is the ritual of courtship and attraction between Prem and Nisha. The temple is transformed from a site of pilgrimage to an extension of the family home as the two households join together in celebration. The anonymous pilgrims in the background join in the singing and dancing, and thereby become extended family members. Through this invitation to participate these pilgrims can act as symbolic representatives of the audience. The music incorporates upbeat tablas and *dholak* drums, *shehnaiis* (flute pipes) and sitars that are arranged to shift between temple music and tunes familiar at an Indian marriage. Here, the music also acts as a narrative bridge between the religious and secular worlds. Prem and Nisha sing the verses that introduce their various siblings, while through the dances (choreographed by Jay Borade) they also play with and tease one another with facial and bodily gestures loosely taken from the *mudras* (Hindu religious dancing). This is reminiscent of stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* wherein the playfulness of Ram and Sita is considered as an exposition of their divine love for each other.

As with other songs in *HAAK*, the fourth song in the film develops the love story of Prem and Nisha while simultaneously acting out the rituals of an Indian wedding. 'Jooto Dedo, Paise Lelo' (Give the Shoes, Take the Money) vocalises the stand-off between the bride's sisters and the bridegroom's brothers. The bride's cohorts have, according to custom, stolen the bridegroom's shoes and will bargain for the highest monetary price from his family for their return. It is the job of the groom's brothers to attempt to get them back. Prem and Nisha, with their group of followers, are once again seen to tease and play with each other while acting and dancing out this popular custom. Although all present at the wedding are visually signalled as individuals through their different dress codes and costume colours, it is clear what matters more is their coming together as a social unit at the wedding through its varied modes of celebration. The song transforms Nisha's parents' house into a dancehall in which numerous moving bodies, colours and dresses mingle together as a visual spectacle. Boys and girls dance together and challenge each other as bickering couples, one asking for the shoes, the other for the money – 'jooto dedo, paise lelo'.

As the song reaches its climax, Nisha is in possession of the shoes and is chased by Prem in a final attempt to get them back. They run upstairs and enter a bedroom out of sight of all the family members, falling on top of each other onto a bed. The song and music pauses momentarily. As they help each other up, Prem holds Nisha's arm and twists it towards him, signalling a romantic and sexual acceptance between the two. The music of the song begins again,

Figure 19 A moment of dance spectacle as the family house is transformed for a wedding in *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . !*

capturing the importance and intimacy of this moment. Prem allows Nisha to run back to the families with the shoes. The girls sing and dance, announcing to all that they are the winners. Prem stands on the balcony accepting defeat in the shoe game but triumphantly looking towards Nisha, knowing that he has won her love.

Despite this scene's roots in traditional popular custom there remains within it a tension between tradition and modernity. Couched within the instantly recognised traditional ritual is a transgressive moment when the hero and heroine cross customary boundaries to make intimate physical contact. This moment embodies a tension at the heart of the film: the story celebrates tradition, yet for the protagonists' love to begin, rules must be broken. From then on, while Prem and Nisha never overtly challenge the conservative status quo, the couple use traditional public rituals to mask and to facilitate their private courtship, so that the shared middle-class culture remains the dominant paradigm but is problematised as the protagonists have to manoeuvre within it to develop their love relationship. These moments of increasing intimacy between hero and heroine are depicted primarily during the film's song sequences, which throughout *HAAK* are responsible for moving the narrative forward.

MUSIC IN BOLLYWOOD, MUSIC IN INDIA

The most startling and immediate difference between Bollywood film and Western film is its use of song and dance. While the musical exists as a genre of Western film, in India the musical surpasses any genre categorisation and is considered a universal model of popular movie production.²⁸ At the same time, the film song has become a significant aspect of Indian and diasporic South Asian life. Hindi film songs have replaced the ragas of Ravi Shankar as the sound of Indian music abroad.²⁹ Across India, street performers sing film hits on the streets and trains and film songs play over loudspeakers to mark national holidays and religious festivals. At Indian wedding parties children imitate the dance steps of the stars as a band plays cover versions of film hits.³⁰ In Britain, on Birmingham's Soho Road and in West London's Southall Broadway, Bollywood songs play while British Asians shop and eat, and on British Asian radio stations film music plays continuously. The dominance of music in Indian everyday cultural life has ensured its dominance in Indian cinema, from its inception to its diverse present-day incarnations. And conversely, film music provides the songs that form the soundtrack to Indian cultural life, in a self-perpetuating cycle that is rooted in Indian history and tradition.

Bollywood's origins may be culturally specific, deeply embedded as they are in India's music-led popular tradition, but the films nevertheless retain the potential to communicate to audiences beyond the Indian cultural diaspora, as Sudha Bhuchar discovered when she turned HAHK into a hit British stage musical. 'Fourteen Songs' was a tribute not a parody and honoured the emotion of the original film in a celebration of the Bollywood tradition while at the same time adhering to a recognisable musical theatre structure that worked for the British audience.

Despite Bollywood's culturally specific origins, the features that enable it to be both a pan-Indian and diasporic phenomenon may extend its reach to new audiences, albeit in disguise. Baz Luhrmann has acknowledged Bollywood as a significant influence on his film *Moulin Rouge* (2001), and one of the film's major numbers, 'Hindi Sad Diamonds', is based on an Indian film hit, 'Chamma Chamma'.³¹ Nevertheless, while international influences are changing the face of Bollywood, transforming traditional song-and-dance numbers into MTV-friendly music videos, the deep-rooted traditions of community and kinship remain as important to the genre as ever.

NOTES

Part of the material from this chapter has been revised and extended in Rajinder Dudrah's forthcoming book *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies* (London and New Delhi: Sage).

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1. Kalyanji, music director, quoted in Jeremy Marre and Hannah Charlton, *Beats of the Heart: Popular Music of the World* (London: Pluto Press, 1985): 138.
2. 'Just as Hollywood describes both the film industry and the city in which it first thrived, "Bollywood",' too, is named after a city. Journalists unofficially invented the term in the 1970s in connection with the city where the majority of the production happens: Bombay, India. (Since then, the city has officially been renamed Mumbai, although the term "Mullywood" has not caught on.) Bollywood, however, does not represent India's entire cinema output. Bollywood produces primarily northern Indian films, mostly in Hindi. In the southern parts of India, mainly Tamil Nadu, distinct film industries churn out films in languages such as Tamil, Bengali, Gujarati, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Marathi.' Phurba Gyalzen, 'Bollywood', <<http://www.greencine.com/static/primers/bollywood.jsp>>.
3. See Heather Tyrrell (1999), 'Bollywood versus Hollywood: battle of the dream factories', in Tracey Skelton and Tim Allen (eds), *Culture and Global Change* (London: Routledge, 1999): 263.
4. Steve Bird, 'Why passage to Bollywood may mean a turn on the casting couch', *The Times* 9 April 2005: 42.
5. This observation is based on findings from qualitative audience research conducted by Heather Tyrrell at the Broadway Media Centre, Nottingham, UK, at screenings of Bollywood films over three years from 1995 to 1998, as part of doctoral research at Nottingham Trent University.
6. This was even more so in the days before audio cassettes, when record players and vinyl were beyond financial reach for the majority of Indians. See Peter Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993): 60.
7. Suveen Sinha, 'The new tunes: baton passing', *Outlook India* 7 June 2004.
8. See Marre and Charlton: 142.
9. Asha Kasbekar, 'An introduction to Indian cinema', in Jill Nelmes (ed.), *An Introduction to Film Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996): 370.
10. As observed by Namrata Joshi, film critic, *Outlook India*, in an email to Heather Tyrrell, 16 May 2005.
11. Marre and Charlton: 141–2.
12. Sinha, *Outlook India*.
13. See Kasbekar: 369.
14. See K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, *Indian Popular Cinema: A Narrative of Cultural Change* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham, 1998): 102.
15. Marre and Charlton: 143.
16. See Subhash K. Jha, 'Flop show', *g* (July 1995): 27.
17. The film was extremely popular in India, especially among low-caste audiences. See BBC News 'The on-screen bandit queen', 25 July 2001, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/film/1457064.stm>>.
18. See Amrit Dhillon, 'Bollywood's stunner: the tune-free film', *The Times* 10 April 2005.
19. Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1993).
20. Quoted in Rosie Thomas, 'Indian cinema: pleasures and popularity', *Screen* 26: 3–4 (May–August): 41.
21. Although this is a heterosexual paradigm, there is a tradition of alternatives to the heterosexual norm deeply rooted within Indian culture, such as the Hijra way of life, transvesticism and homosexuality. 'Camp' audiences may read Bollywood in ways that can subvert its ostensible heteronormative sexuality.
22. Quoted in Thomas: 42.
23. Thomas: 39.

24. See, for instance, Nikhat Kazmi, *The Dream Merchants of Bollywood* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers 1998): 186–92.
25. The term ‘dishin-dishin’ is the colloquial name for the fight sequences traditional to Bollywood, and derives from the fight noises dubbed onto the film soundtrack. Explanation given by Sudha Bhuchar in an interview with Heather Tyrrell, 8 May 2005.
26. See Heather Tyrrell, ‘Bollywood Utopias’, unpublished M. Litt dissertation, The John Logie Baird Centre, The University of Strathclyde (1995). The following are responses about *HAAK* from ethnographic work: ‘It is sheer fantasy. I think films should be more real. Things should be more concrete. People should learn to face reality and film is a good medium to teach them’ (21-year-old male Indian international student studying in Glasgow). ‘Because it is a fantasy, everything goes right in it. It’s what I wish my life was like’ (17-year-old second generation British-Asian female high-school student from Glasgow). See also Vamsee K. Juluri, ‘Global weds local: the reception of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . !*’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2: 2 (1999): 231–48.
27. Lata Mangeshkar, S. P. Balasubramanyam, and lyricist Dev Kohli, together with the stars of the film (Salman Khan and Madhuri Dixit), also helped produce the film’s most popular song, *Didi Tera Devar Deewaana* (Sister Your Brother-in-Law is Mad). This song became a national sensation and even to this day is quoted in contemporary Bollywood movies.
28. It is interesting to note that sometimes when British television broadcasts Bollywood movies they cut the songs to ‘save time’, and therefore fundamentally miss the point. For example the BBC2 screening of *Chachi 420* (1998), tx 22 January 2000, deleted every song from the film.
29. Sinha, *Outlook India*.
30. Kasbekar: 370.
31. The original version of the song ‘Chamma Chamma’, composed by Anu Malik, is featured in the film *China Gate* (1998).

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