The World is Full of Noise:
Music Supervision and the Construction of Meaning

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ABSTRACT

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Colin Arason

The licensed music that can frequently be heard accompanying motion pictures carries with it a wealth of information in the form of contextual baggage. This study actively works to unpack this baggage and detail the ways that filmmakers may harness the power of this contextual content through allusion and explicit reference. Select examples from three feature films by Gregg Araki are used to show how this process is affected by a variety of budgets and to illustrate how music supervision can act as a tool that aids in fostering connections with social subcultures, complements activist themes, and creates additional meaning . . .

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Table of Contents:

Introduction

The Opening Chords 1

Chapter One

Now Is The Time – Ripping The System with *The Living End* 7

Chapter Two

The Cresting Wave of Counterculture in *The Doom Generation* 25

Chapter Three

Learning to Adapt 42

Conclusion

Everything in Context, and the Context in Everything 59

Bibliography 64

Filmography 68

Introduction:
The Opening Chords.

Music has been a dance partner for the moving image since well before sound could be attached to film strips. Cecilia Hall, UCLA sound design professor and an Academy Award winning sound editor, has been quoted as saying that "[m]usic can extend the emotional and psychological range of characters and envelop and involve audiences in ways nothing else in movies can."[1] Music has the capacity to establish moods or indicate the period in which a narrative takes place. It can engage audiences or create a degree of distance, but compilation scores that make use of pre-existing music also bring a network of prior associations and meanings that can contribute greatly to what is being communicated on the screen.

According to Martin Scorsese "Stanley Kubrick said once that it is the combination of images and music that is of the greatest importance to the cinema, and one is convinced of the accuracy of this observation when one watches his films."[2] Kubrick's oeuvre includes films that merge traditional scoring techniques with the use of pre-existing music. Consider the indelible images of space craft traveling through the solar system in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), the way that the discordant sounds of compositions by Krzysztof Penderecki and György Ligeti create an ominous mood in *The Shining* (1980), or even the use of '60s pop songs to accompany the events chronicled in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). The material selected becomes one with the image, and we may even hear strains of it surging through our subconscious when viewing stills from these films. It is clear that the music an audience hears can resonate within the viewer and profoundly shape the way that they interpret the images that they see. Describing what the pre-existing musical selections contribute to *2001: A Space Odyssey,* Christine Lee Gengaro insists that even when music is "not strictly part of the narrative, it is still an important part of the storytelling, and a significant part of the film-going experience."[3] Observing an effect, however, is much different than documenting and understanding how it works.

Of course, a case study of licensed music can't possibly cover the entire history of the practice so, for the purposes of this thesis, I have elected to examine the music supervision

throughout the films of Gregg Araki. This is for practical reasons. Limiting the scope of inquiry to this particular body of work affords the opportunity to look closely at how connections can be established with a variety of marginalized and subcultural communities. These films also provide ways to highlight how meaning creation through the use of licensed music is not just about fleshing out the storyline. It will be seen that music supervision is a tool that can play an important role in the communication of social and political messages. Additionally, the independent nature of these projects attests to how this can be accomplished on a range of budgets.

Another reason for settling on this independent filmmaker is that Araki has been greatly influenced by a background in both music and film history, which provides rich material for a case study on how these elements fuse together. The impact of his involvement within the Los Angeles punk scene has been readily acknowledged. Matthew Hays notes that Araki's "characters and plot lines, often soaked in cynicism and despair, reflect his background in music."[4] At the same time, his education in film history sees Kylo-Patrick R. Hart assert that "Araki, as a self-described 'film school brat,' is proud of his extensive knowledge of cinematic (sub)genres and auteurs."[5] Within the corpus being examined, it can be seen that these twin inspirations don't simply exist autonomous of one another; they come together to form a cohesive whole.

The way that Araki, and other independent filmmakers in the early 1990s, displayed their knowledge of film history and cultural references through works that were frequently violent led Amy Taubin to include his name amongst a list of directors that she dubbed "the sons of Scorsese."[6] This comparison with that New Hollywood iconoclast is not entirely surprising when one considers that Scorsese has been quoted as saying that "I know that without music, I would be lost."[7] Looking at works by both directors there appears to be a similar predilection for the manner in which music has been incorporated into their filmmaking in a very organic fashion.

What sets Araki's works apart from others on Taubin's list (which also includes Tom Kalin, Nick Gomez and Quentin Tarantino) is the way that music echoes through virtually every aspect of the finished product. It is obviously a component of the sound design, but it often feels as if the selected songs were essential to the development of each film at its creative inception. In

fact, the director describes his creative process by saying that; "I get a movie complete with scenes/images/sound/music/etc., growing tumorlike in my head, then spend the next several years inexorably killing myself translating it to celluloid."[8] References to song lyrics, recording artists and even scenes featuring characters shopping for music frequently seep into both the narrative and the mise-en-scène of these films. In many ways, the works being studied inundate the viewer with a surge of subcultural cues. These films employ a series of references to specific underground scenes in order to speak directly to the audience that his films court. My focus is on how the nearly omnipresent music functions and intersects with the works in question. This may seem like an argument for the presence of a controlling musical aesthetic, but the primary interest is to explore what this musical aesthetic contributes, who it targets, and how it works.

The importance of analyzing the use and representation of music within these films is as an investigation into the additional meaning that can be gained through the use of compiled soundtracks. This involves examining the textual, contextual and intertextual meanings that thoughtful music supervision contributes to the films it accompanies. It is hoped that unpacking the relevant components will contribute to a better understanding of the ways that the selection of pre-existing music can reinforce a film's themes and invest them with added meaning. This analysis is especially useful when studying films dealing with marginalized or at risk youth and underground subjects as the cues require some degree of specialized knowledge to interpret. Representations of these sorts of cultures are fraught with hazards and depicting them in ways that subculturally aware audiences may decipher and recognize as authentic can be a complicated business. In turn, a detailed breakdown of the process may also point toward additional methods of creating meaning. The examples are employed to illustrate the manner in which these intersections occur. They may be culled from the films of one particular director, but the process of looking at the existing contextual significance of artists and songs is an exercise that can be done with virtually any film that employs a compiled soundtrack.

Araki's work is particularly suitable for this purpose for a number of reasons. First and foremost among them is the sheer presence of music. The corpus being examined is infused with it. The songs that form the soundtracks are just the beginning. These films employ a wide variety of techniques to bring intertextual information into play through the process of music selection.

In addition, they showcase how this can be done effectively despite the budgetary limitations of being independent films, as well as the way that increases in budget allow for greater access to music, but may also lead to restrictions on creative freedom.

Finally, this is an aspect that has not been explored in depth with regards to this director's work. Amanda Howell devotes a chapter of *Popular Film Music and Masculinity in Action: A Different Tune* to an analysis of the ways that *The Living End* (1992) represents a queering of the road movie soundtrack,[9] but much of the writing on Araki relates to representations of youth culture, the place of the films within the “Homo Pomo” wave, or the queer politics that are expressed. My discussion of the specific qualities that music selection adds to these works does not contradict any of these approaches. The music certainly does reflect the rebellious content of the narratives, while reinforcing much of the more political and activist nature of the works in question by fleshing out further ways in which this information is communicated.

Jeff Smith, in *The Sounds of Commerce,* engages in a similar analysis of the way that music is employed by George Lucas in *American Graffiti* (1973),[10] and there is a growing body of work that looks at the way that compiled soundtracks function in films by a diverse array of directors.[11] Within this strain of academic writing there is a tendency to examine music "as a key thematic element and a marker of authorial style."[12] This study will focus specifically on what music scholarship and awareness bring to the works in question, and does not seek to use the body of films as a means of pushing an argument regarding authorial control of the soundstage on the part of the director. Smith’s discussion of the music programming strategies in *American Graffiti* offers up an example of writing that seeks to engage primarily with these aspects, and is of particular interest due to the way that he invokes and adapts Noël Carroll’s essay “The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond).” Smith takes Carroll’s arguments about the willful appropriation of situations and imagery and applies them to the field of music. In particular, he underlines the way that the use of popular music from the 1950s brought a nostalgic tone to the film, while playing with cultural elements with which large segments of the population would have been familiar. He explores the careful way that musical styles are connected to character, and how the song selection can be seen to comment on the onscreen action.

One key aspect that creates a distinction between this thesis and many of these other investigations is that the bulk of their discussions involve popular music and the ways that compiled soundtracks draw upon common cultural awareness to appeal to a broad spectrum of viewers by way of nostalgia and familiarity. *Popular Music and the New Auteur*, for instance, seeks to "theorize individual film stylists' uses of preexisting popular music, focusing primarily on the textual aspects of the film in question."[13] Araki's works, and the way that they make use of the contextual aspects of comparatively unpopular music, differ in this regard. This makes them quite useful for engaging in a discussion of how these same strategies of recognition can be used to appeal to marginalized audiences that are wary of commercial interests seeking to co-opt their subcultural community.

Additionally, the films being studied also lend themselves to an analysis of music programming as it is affected by a variety of budgets and other factors. The first chapter looks at *The Living End,* which provides a textbook example of a shoestring budget. The film was initially conceived with a budget of $5000 and was only shot in color due to loaned equipment and donated film stock.[14] The second takes on *The Doom Generation* (1995) and examines what changes come about when a project receives support from a major music label. The third chapter will engage with an analysis of *Mysterious Skin* (2004). This affords the opportunity to expand upon the ways to connect with at risk youth, and to examine the role that music can play in the process of adapting a novel for the screen. These are all avenues that have not been adequately explored in film scholarship at large, and certainly not in regards to the corpus being studied here.

The intersection between film and music is being written about, but often in a quite different way. For example, much of *Popular Music and the New Auteur,* which has similar concerns, engages with the study of how music video aesthetics have had a noticeable effect on the look and style of feature filmmaking, but my interest lies less in how music videos have influenced those qualities. Instead, there is a desire to navigate and explore the ways that the programmed music itself becomes a key component in the apparatus of storytelling. This can sometimes be as simple as noting how songs are used expressively to represent characters' states of mind, but may also involve examining how the intertextual associations are used as

communicative tools. In fact, due to the pre-existing nature of licensed music, it can even include the ways in which musical selections may inspire narratives and reconfigure their trajectories.

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[1] Phillips, William H. *Film: An Introduction.* 2nd Ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002. 152.
[2] Hubbert, Julie. ""Without Music, I Would Be Lost": Scorsese, *Goodfellas,* and a New Soundtrack Practice." *Popular Music and the New Auteur.* Ed. Arved Ashby. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 32.
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[4] Hays, Matthew. *The View From Here.* Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007. 35.
[5] Hart, Kylo-Patrick R. *Images for a Generation Doomed.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010. 29.
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[7] Hubbert 32.
[8] Araki. "The (Sorry) State of (Independent) Things." *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts*. Ed. Russell Leong. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Visual Communications, Southern California Asian American Studies Central, 1991. 68.
[9] Howell, Amanda. *Popular Film Music and Masculinity in Action: A Different Tune.* New York: Routledge, 2015.
[10] Smith, Jeff. *Sounds of Commerce.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. 172-185.
[11] Examples of this can be found in recent collections like *Popular Music and the New Auteur* (Arved Ashby, ed) and *Music, Sound and Filmmakers: Sonic Style in Cinema* (James Wierzbicki, ed).
[12] Gorbman, Claudia. "Auteur Music." *Beyond the Soundtrack.* Goldmark, Kramer, and Lepperts, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. 149.
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Chapter One:
Now Is The Time – Ripping the System with *The Living End.*

An example of the complex relationship that can be created between soundtrack and image can be seen in the opening moments of the early feature *The Living End*. The selection of songs featured in this film provides a rich example of how creativity and an awareness of intertextual potential can overcome budgetary obstacles. *The Living End,* despite being made for the modest sum of $20,000,[1] essentially begins with sound and music. Before this self-described "irresponsible movie"[2] even gets underway we hear the rattling sound of a spray paint can while the industrial anthem "Godlike", by the German group KMFDM, plays in the background.[3] The dissolution of the title cards coincides with the music jumping in volume as the lyrics to the song begin, although vocal samples (from an earlier KMFDM track entitled "Rip The System"[4]) can be heard while the opening credits are still being displayed. After the title cards disappear, the first image we see is the nihilist message of "fuck the world" spray painted in a vibrant red on a graffiti covered wall, before giving way to a close-up of a smoking and drinking young man, Luke – holding a spray paint can and admiring his work.

Thorough analysis will show that, from the outset, the audio track is commenting on the film's visual component via the selection methods involved in the music supervision process. This might seem to be a rather straightforward process, but it can be something of a challenge to avoid conflicts between the information that the song carries and the message that the film is trying to communicate. As Jeff Smith observes: "Well-known music of any kind was thought to carry associational baggage for the spectator, and not only was this potentially distracting but these associations might also clash with those established by the narrative."[5] A score composed of original music sidesteps this issue by virtue of not having any explicit prior context for the viewing audience. This music may register in terms of style or genre, but the music will not be imbued with the same contextual meaning as songs that have been selected for a soundtrack. Thus it becomes clear that there is a necessary and essential distinction to be made here in regards to the way that music culled from the realms of existing culture registers in a manner

substantially different than that of a composed score. Michel Chion, in *Audiovision*, makes a clear statement about the inherent difference between two primary types of music that may be used to complement the action of a film:

> I have given the name *pit music* to music that accompanies the image from a nondiegetic position, outside the space and time of the action. The term refers to the classical opera's orchestra pit. I shall refer as *screen music*, on the other hand, to music arising from a source located directly or indirectly in the space and time of the action, even if this source is a radio or an offscreen musician.[6]

Chion's categorical division is a useful one, but I propose another axis which divides music into categories of *composed score* and *selected soundtrack*. This distinction relates to the origin of the music with regard to the film's production, rather than the source of the music in terms of the onscreen image. Composers, whether their work is used as pit music or screen music, strive to create something that is unique to the world of that particular film. A selected soundtrack is assembled in a somewhat different manner. Smith writes that when dealing solely with pre-existing music "the whole scoring process became simply a matter of spotting and song selection."[7] This reduces music supervision down to its essentials, but the actual practice involves weighing the merits of a number of variables. A compiled score may run the risk of having its message tainted by the associational baggage of the viewing audience, but the reward is that creative music supervision has the potential to strengthen that message by tapping into an existing network of connections. The associational baggage can be employed as a tool which can serve to link the film's world with an environment that audiences may already know. In Smith's words "filmmakers could overcome these limitations by using the associational aspects of pop music to cue settings, character traits, and dynamic situations."[8]

The selection process that goes into curating the soundtrack for a film can be viewed as a form of appropriation. Looking at it in this regard, one can see how the music supervision fits into the aesthetic qualities of the 'Homo-Pomo,' an element that B. Ruby Rich observed within the wave of New Queer Cinema that was cresting at the time that *The Living End* was released. Writing about this crop of films that emerged in the early 90s Rich notes that "there are traces in all of them of appropriation and pastiche, irony, as well as a reworking of history with social

constructionism very much in mind."[9] As Linda Hutcheon notes, the trend of appropriation and parody in postmodernism "is not nostalgic; it is always critical. It is also not ahistorical or de-historicizing; it does not wrest past art from its original historical context"[10] This echoes Richard Dyer's assertion that the pastiche practices found in postmodernism "may also in the process constitute a cultural resistance to, even a subversion of, the homogenising thrust of dominant white cultures, locally and globally."[11]

How does the 'Homo-Pomo' approach to soundtrack selection seen in Araki's work differ from what was going on in more mainstream film? How does the programming of music contribute to the 'cultural resistance' that Dyer refers to? Let's consider some of the work that set precedents for this sort of use of licensed music. Julie Hubbert writes about the cinema vérité-inspired way that the compiled soundtracks of Martin Scorsese's early films "articulated the foundation of his musical aesthetic by reprioritizing music as a narrative element and making it authentic, literally locating it in the film as a fundamental part of its imagery."[12] She recognizes the importance of having the music flow from an onscreen source, and identifies this practice of using popular music as a sort of anthropology.

The soundtracks of Araki's films share some of these same properties. There is a similar tendency for the music to be explicitly identified as screen music, but the music that appears throughout Araki's oeuvre shies away from the familiar tunes employed by Scorsese. *The Living End*, and Araki's other films, engage with more unpopular music. Phelim O'Neill observes that "Araki doesn't just use existing songs as shorthand for time and place; the music is often too obscure to be easily recognised by anyone other than devotees."[13] This somewhat arcane quality allows for the works to communicate their authenticity and place themselves inside the communities represented within the film. Those that do recognise the music may feel a certain kinship with the onscreen characters at the same time as an exotic (and possibly alienating) sensation is being delivered to wider audiences.

The post-punk music favored in Araki's films deals with subversive themes and, in songs like "Godlike", calls for individual empowerment. These are the sorts of messages that viewers of the film might be expected to understand, especially when one considers Roy Grundmann's observation that "ninety-percent of the audience consists of the jaded, but not easily fooled MTV

generation."[14] These are spectators immersed in counter-culture and weaned on *120 Minutes*.[15] They march to a rhythm substantially different from that of the dominant culture, which they may view as having been sanitized and scrubbed clean of any subversive content. Jacques Attali bluntly states that "[t]o judge by its themes, neither musically nor semantically does pop music announce a world of change. On the contrary, nothing happens in it anymore, and for twenty years it has seen only very marginal, or even cyclic, movement."[16] Embracing underground music sidesteps the potential pitfalls created by having a soundtrack composed of the sort of stagnant pop music that is in the crosshairs of Attali's caustic criticism. The music programmed throughout the film instead embraces a completely different sort of sonic environment. The use of the material drawn from the subculture of the industrial genre will have different effects depending on individual viewer experience. It may pique the attention of those familiar with the music and its contexts, whereas audience members not predisposed to this sort of sonic palette may find the selections to be simultaneously shocking and alarming.

The intimidating and imposing aspects of the music can be observed in the aggressive sound of the music in the opening sequence of *The Living End* that has already been described. The heavy metal-influenced industrial dance music lends a militant tone to the film's content, while the rhythmic pulse of the drum machine simultaneously provides both a sense of momentum, and of tension, due to its mechanical precision.[17] The snarling guitar riff, which has been appropriated from "Angel of Death" by Slayer, provides a stuttered counterpoint to the percussive elements and serves to disrupt any sense that the programmed drums are plodding along.[18] This sampled element also serves to foreshadow Luke's role in the film. It is significant to note that it is only this particular version of "Godlike", which was circulated as a single, that contains this sample. This is the version that would have been heard in underground dance clubs, but varies considerably from the Chicago Trax mix that was featured on the CD issue of KMFDM's *Naive* album. The version featured on the full-length album, which received much wider distribution, employed studio musicians to play this guitar passage, rather than making use of the Slayer loop.[19]

Making these kinds of distinctions regarding the specific mix of a particular song might seem to be splitting hairs, but it is salient to note that discrepancies between different mixes

result in significant changes to the contextual make-up. Thoroughly unpacking the diverse array of elements contained within "Godlike" and examining how they link up with character and narrative aspects of *The Living End* demonstrates how essential the components of this particular version of this song are to its precise contextual relationship with the film's contents. Simply changing the version of the song corrodes a substantial and vital point of contact between the music and the image. Let's take a closer look at how a tangible connection is made between the song and Luke, the individual that is introduced during the sequence that it accompanies.

When the subject of these opening moments is first seen in a long shot, he is shown wearing headphones and dizzily dancing to the music. It is immediately apparent that the selection is playing on his Walkman. This helps to establish what we are hearing as firmly belonging to the category of screen music, while also associating this song and all of its contexts with this particular character. This is not pit music, nor is the song blaring from a loudspeaker; this is a personal soundtrack to a public moment. Luke may be shown in a wide open space, but the headphone cord creates a visibly physical connection between the character and the musical content. This leads the viewer to identify these sounds with this specific individual.

The Walkman also carries with it a certain amount of symbolic value. We've already established how Julie Hubbert indicates the significance of prioritizing the playback device by including it within the frame to more directly link the character with the soundtrack, but the nature of a personal audio system makes an even more compelling link. Sarah Thornton, in her examination of *Club Cultures*, highlights the importance of this sort of device. She fixes upon the Walkman's value in terms of allowing the individual to create something of a sonic haven for themselves by asserting control over their audio environment:

> One of the main ways in which youth carve out virtual, and claim actual, space is by *filling* it with *their* music. Walls of sound are used to block out the clatter of family and flatmates, to seclude the private space of the bedroom with records and radio and ever to isolate 'head space' with personal stereos like the Walkman. The Walkman often affords a feeling of autonomy and empowerment by cutting the wearers off from unwanted communication and distancing them from their surroundings.[20]

Thus the Walkman, like the can of spray paint which is also wielded by Luke, is a way of marking or claiming territory. Rather than simply being a device for delivering sound, the Walkman becomes a bold means of signalling individuality and creating a sonic environment that is not synchronous with the world outside the headphones. Katie Mills, in her analysis of the film through the lens of a reinvention of the road movie, extends this idea of Luke's empowerment and argues that the character be seen in a mythical light. Examining the final minutes of the film she concludes that "Luke's body – with its health, vitality, and sexuality - seems so at odds with his diagnosis that he cannot reconcile the two images even by cutting open his wrists to ponder his virus-carrying blood. As the destructive and irresponsible member of the duo, Luke embodies *thanatos*."[21] The connection between Luke and death becomes increasingly obvious as the film progresses, but it is abundantly clear to see that the savvy use of screen music has been used to symbolically mark him as being the "Angel of Death" since the very first moments of the film.

It should also be pointed out that this screen music, because it does not simply emanate from a random onscreen source, imparts a sense of authenticity on the content. The appearance and actions of the character receive additional support in the form of a style of music that is both representative of, and familiar to, a blossoming underground community. The impact that these subcultural elements have on the tone and general attitude of the film may resonate with some viewers, but they register quite differently with individuals outside of those cultures. Araki singles out his engagement with the perspectives espoused by this fashion and lifestyle as being the contentious element that divided audiences: "Being heavily influenced by punk and post-punk music, I was comfortable living in this margin. And it was this 'punk' aspect of *The Living End* that made the film so upsetting and so threatening in the more mainstream vanilla gay culture."[22] For those outside of the 'more mainstream vanilla' demographic, and in particular for audience members immersed in the same subcultures that the onscreen characters represent, the sincere use of this aesthetic lends additional credibility to the images. It does not seem borrowed or co-opted. The awareness and incorporation of contextual meanings conveys the expressive message that this is the work of people invested in this community, rather than something created

by those who are seeking nothing more than simple shock value and a means to indicate a degree of rebelliousness.

Attali notes the way that individuals within youth cultures identify with each other through shared tastes. Mutual interest in musical acts that are on the fringes enables marginalised youth to bond with one another because "music is experienced as relation, not as spectacle; as a factor of unanimity and exclusion in relation to the world of adults, not as individual differentiation."[23] Attali is talking about how pop music becomes a banner under which youth congregate, but one can see how his analysis can also be applied to subcultural scenes. What is important when producing product that is geared toward this sort of audience is that it not ring false. There are myriad examples of films that attempted to cash in on youth movements and were rejected due to how far off the mark they were.[24] This can be due to an ignorance of the associational baggage on the part of the team making the film, or a collective dismissal by the audience of the superficial use of elements appropriated from their culture. In either case this results in works that are blatantly inauthentic.

These ways in which additional meaning is constructed by the subcultural appropriations contained in these 'Homo-Pomo' features are not simply a series of coincidences. Like the allusions that Noël Carroll examines, this work has been done by filmmakers who have "predictably attempted to incorporate the budding film-historical sensibility – the central intellectual event of their youthful apprenticeships – into their works."[25] They are the mark of both a recognition and appreciation of the value the appropriated material holds for spectators that are dedicated to these communities. Many of these films are highly personal, even biographical, projects made by independent film-makers that are heavily invested in their product. They are quite deliberate. Tim Anderson points out that "the skilled and creative work of the music supervisor understands the connotative, reader-dependent powers that popular music records often contain."[26] *The Living End* soon makes this point as well. Shortly after the introduction of Jon, the introspective and music obsessed film reviewer who will form the other half of a screen couple with Luke, there is a playful close-up that prominently displays the 'CHOOSE DEATH' sticker on the rear bumper of his car. Again, this message connects directly with the "Angel of Death" sample that features in "Godlike." This intersection between music

and mise-en-scène effectively foretells the relationship that will form between Luke (Death) and Jon (who is identified as being predestined to 'choose death').

This sort of interplay between music, script and mise-en-scène is not unique to the corpus being examined here. This form of pastiche and appropriation has been observed in other filmmakers that were identified with the 'Homo-Pomo'. These include Araki's New Queer Cinema contemporary Gus Van Sant, whose work is referenced in *The Living End.*[27] Writing on the music that appears in Van Sant's movies, Danijela Kulezic-Wilson remarks that "it is not that surprising that none of these films features originally composed music; it seems obvious that in most cases the presence of music was 'premeditated' and thus indispensable in the processes of pre-production and production."[28] One of the things that Kulezic-Wilson is underlining here is that screen music can sometimes be part of the genesis of a project, which recalls Araki's own statements about how all the elements of a movie form inside his head.[29] This differs greatly from pit music created for a feature. As Aaron Copland explains: "Almost all musical scores are composed *after* the film itself is completed."[30] The pre-existence of the screen music allows for it to be present as a film is being conceived and assembled.

This presence also means that the music selection process has the potential to be much more integrated, even integral, to the development of a film. Kylo-Patrick R. Hart has been something of a champion of Araki's filmmaking. In "Auteur / Bricoleur / Provocateur: Gregg Araki and Postpunk Style in *The Doom Generation*" Hart details Gregg Araki's cinematic style and identifies aspects that connect his work to the three categories he names in the title. The second descriptor is of particular interest and seems most connected to the sense of pastiche and homage that permeates the New Queer Cinema. Hart's argument that Araki be seen as a 'bricoleur' effectively associates him with a style of filmmaking that incessantly appropriates genres, techniques and tropes from the history of film. He provides a general definition of this practice when he states that "[a]t its most basic, bricolage involves playing with cultural elements in order to bend their established meanings to serve new (and frequently oppositional) purposes."[31] Throughout his analysis Hart details the way that Araki can be seen to employ a cinematic language that liberally borrows from across the spectrum of film history, but the author does not engage with the ways that this practice of bricolage can also be heard in the

constructed soundtracks of Araki's work.

In some ways, this process seems closer to the fan music videos described by Henry Jenkins,[32] than it does to the traditional process of scoring for film laid out by Copland.[33] In the videos that Jenkins examines, the focus is on the way that new meaning is created through a juxtaposition of popular music with a montage of familiar images and scenes appropriated from the realms of fandom. Jenkins identifies the difficulty of catching every single reference being made when he states that "[a]ny individual fan probably will not recognize all of the images (except in the most general terms) and will not have time to trace through all of the associations these images evoke."[34] The same can be said of the way that the appropriated music of compilation soundtracks bombards the audience with additional information. In both cases, audience members that do observe some of these references may have the desire to go back and revisit the material in order to actively look for further intertextual connections that they might have missed. Jenkins posits that the "fan spectator is drawn to images already saturated with meaning."[35] It seems reasonable to extend the allure he observes in those meaning saturated fan videos to feature length works that have a different sort of subcultural appeal. The key difference is that meaning creation through this type of juxtaposition is the primary focus of these videos. In narrative film this process may also occur, but it is a secondary one that operates in a supporting role.

One distinct similarity to the painstakingly assembled fan videos that Jenkins examines is that there is a surprising level of personal investment in the music that appears within the corpus being examined. In the commentary track on the DVD for *The Living End* Araki candidly points out that many of the t-shirts bearing band names and logos were articles from his own wardrobe that he provided to the performers. This shows evidence of an individual imprint on the sonic construction of the film, which is notable because, as James Wierzbicki asserts; "relatively few films demonstrate, through music or anything else, their makers' sonic style. This is because very few filmmakers, past or present, *have* a sonic style."[36] Araki's personal investment in the way that music is present, and presented, within his work helps to create a somewhat cohesive sonic palette that spreads across his oeuvre. In early films like *The Living End*, despite the limited means available to independent filmmakers, we can observe some of the traits that

continue to foreground the importance his work accords to film music to this day.

He is not entirely alone in this. The era of the music video resulted in a number of directors moving back and forth between film and promotional clips for the music industry. K.J. Donnelly notes that this list includes name directors like David Fincher, Martin Scorsese, Spike Jonze, John Landis and Derek Jarman.[37] The presence of pop music in film is less a symbol of auteurism, than a testament to the growing influence of synergy between the film and music industries. Jeff Smith asserts "[b]y the early 1980s, *synergy* had become the industry's buzzword to describe the phenomenon of successful film and music cross-promotion."[38] One of the things that is particularly striking about the use of music in *The Living End* is the sheer amount of content sourced from the Chicago-based industrial music label Wax Trax!. Dealing with one specific label certainly does seem like a rather resourceful way of streamlining the process of gaining clearance for the songs appearing in the film, but is there something else at work here?

Wax Trax! was a recognizable institution in the North American underground music scene. The label had enjoyed moderate success during the early part of the 1980s, and its profile had been raised considerably when their Chicago storefront served as the inspiration for the record shop in *Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deutch, 1986). The group running Wax Trax! worked hard to establish their brand, following a 'do-it-yourself' ethos similar to that espoused by independent American punk labels in the early 80s. Despite their place in the counterculture spotlight, it might have come as a surprise to some aficionados that Jim Nash and Dannie Flesher, the founders and owners of Wax Trax!, were gay men.[39] This was not a closely guarded secret, but neither was it something that could be readily discerned by looking at a roster that included acts with names that ranged from the mildly offensive Revolting Cocks to the somewhat questionable 1000 Homo DJs. Wax Trax! had established itself as a label that frequently pushed beyond the boundaries of acceptability. Electing to license the majority of the screen music used in *The Living End* from this single source may have the served practical purpose of streamlining the licensing process, but the queer ownership of Wax Trax! invites questions about whether or not this was also a political decision. This is especially true if one considers that Jim Nash receives a personal thank you in the film's closing credits as a "benevolent music god".

The sexual politics of the artists involved was substantially less ambiguous, though, and this is one area where context works in collusion with the narrative. Three of the acts featured on the soundtrack to *The Living End* include former members of Throbbing Gristle, the pioneering UK act that gave the industrial musical genre its name,[40] and all of them had worked with Derek Jarman on a number of occasions.[41] Throbbing Gristle disbanded in the early 80s but Coil, Peter Christopherson's post-TG partnership with John Balance, continued to work with Jarman. They notably provided the soundtrack to *The Angelic Conversation* (1987), and would later contribute to *Blue* (1993).[42] They were quite public about their sexuality and openly supported organizations sympathetic to causes they believed in. Their work was used to score *The Gay Men's Guide to Safer Sex* (David Lewis, 1992) and they had pledged all profits from sales of the single featuring their cover of the Northern Soul classic "Tainted Love" to the Terence Higgins Trust, an agency that provided "advice and counselling service on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome."[43] The association with this activist history serves to buttress the film's own observations about how people living with AIDS have been abandoned by government agencies and left to fend for themselves.[44] In addition, the members of Coil also had connections to queer author and director Clive Barker. Barker has indicated that piercing and fetish magazines that he borrowed from Balance and Christopherson inspired the look of the cenobites in his film *Hellraiser* (1987), and the pair had composed some music for the score to that film before being replaced by something more orchestral and conventional.[45]

Hart's description of Araki as a cinematic bricoleur is useful here as it attests to the director's awareness of film history and the sincere intentions behind the references that are constantly being cited. It seems highly unlikely that the director would have been ignorant of Coil's lengthy association with queer icons like Jarman and Barker at the time the decision was made to include some of their music in *The Living End.* The connection to Jarman, in particular, is one that even figures prominently within the mise-en-scène. At one point a white paper bearing only Derek Jarman's name in black text is clearly shown in Luke's hands as he shuffles through magazines that he picks up shortly after arriving at Jon's apartment for the first time. This connection is reinforced the next morning when a conspicuously placed poster for The Smiths, another group with connections to Derek Jarman[46], hangs above the breakfast table

where Jon and Luke discuss the implications of their HIV-positive status.

These visual pointers contained within the frame play out in much the same way as the overt nods to Jean-Luc Godard, which range from posters for *Made in U.S.A.* (1966) and *Nouvelle vague* (1990) appearing on the walls of Jon's apartment to the fact that fusing the names of the protagonists together forms an anglicized version of Godard's first name. As Katie Mills states "Araki insistently alludes to the work of his mentor, Jean-Luc Godard (namesake to *The Living End*'s Jon and Luke), whose car crash road film *Weekend* (1967) fretted about the "End of Cinema"."[47] All of this serves to support the idea that these connections, rather than being a complex series of coincidences, are conscious and deliberate acts. Although others writing on the film haven't picked up on it, it would seem that, given the penchant for homage built into the 'Homo-Pomo' aesthetic, it is somewhat implausible that these musical associations with Jarman's work were not something that was also being actively cultivated.

The frequent allusions to Jarman's work, both direct and indirect, pay tribute to one of the established and respected directors who was included in the cresting wave of 'Homo-Pomo.' More than that, however, they serve to acknowledge queer film history and hint at where this 'irresponsible movie' fits into that lineage. Furthermore, the inclusion of Coil on the soundtrack alludes not just to their association with Jarman, but also to the musical group's political activism and candor about their own sexuality. The 'irresponsible movie' claim made by *The Living End* indicates a desire to self-identify. This subtitle seeks to dictate, from the earliest moments, the manner in which it should be viewed. It also signals the way that the work intends to distance itself from the sentimental positive image portrayals seen in the 1980s. The contextual history of the music selected for the film consistently reinforces this message through the use of artists that are implicated or sensitive to the issues being confronted.

Chris & Cosey and Psychic TV, two of the other acts with music featured in *The Living End*, are also post-Throbbing Gristle projects. The duo of Chris Carter and Cosey Fanni Tutti had shifted away from the harsher aspects of Throbbing Gristle's 'industrial' sound. Both of the Chris & Cosey songs used in the film are sourced from the *Pagan Tango* album released in the first quarter of 1991, and like much of the duo's work they revolve around erotic themes that could be considered transgressive in some circles.[48] One of the selections, "Cords of Love",

deals with both emotional and physical bondage within sexual relationships. The contributions that Chris & Cosey's make to *The Living End* soundtrack are used to accompany night-time sequences where Jon and Luke are driving through dimly lit tunnels. These occur during the first fleeting moments of their relationship. The music enhances the highly charged eroticism of their encounter, while simultaneously fleshing out the inner turmoil that Jon feels as his intense feelings for the mysterious and somewhat psychotic Luke shift between insatiable desire and panicked terror. The surprises that the dark, handsome stranger regularly reveals are frequently more than the much more introspective Jon is prepared to deal with.

The inclusion of Psychic TV taps into an entirely different and somewhat unique set of sensibilities. The musical output of the group had a recognizable style, but the overall aesthetic of Psychic TV almost perfectly embody the element of "exploration of sexualities amid a cultural backdrop of sex, drugs, and (post-punk/industrial) rock 'n' roll"[49] that Hart considers to be a recurring theme throughout Araki's oeuvre. The ritual, cultural, and sexual aspects of Psychic TV and their quasi-religious organization Thee Temple of Psychic Youth had been documented and quite graphically presented in *Modern Primitives*, the twelfth installment in a catalog of cultural re-mapping works published by San Francisco's RE/Search Publications.[50] That tome, calling itself 'an investigation of contemporary adornment & ritual', was first published in 1989 and served as something of a crystallizing agent for a growing number of individuals interested in violating social conventions and seeking liberated models to serve as examples of unfettered individual expression. Amidst salacious images were interviews that discussed what it meant to be different. In one of these interviews Psychic TV founder Genesis P-Orridge picks up on the pratfalls of engaging with a subculture without an awareness of what you are trying to express when he opines that "to set out to *just* be different for its own sake is to actually surrender to the easiest path of all, which is to be superficial."[51]

It is quite evident that the mere presence of Psychic TV brings a diverse slate of counter-cultural elements to the forefront, but the specific selection of songs used in the *The Living End* is also quite relevant. One of the tracks, "I.C. Water", was written as a tribute to Joy Division singer Ian Curtis who killed himself in May of 1980.[52] Throughout *The Living End* there are references to Joy Division and Ian Curtis. The inclusion of "I.C. Water" pulls the film's musical

component into a discussion with the dialog and weaves the soundtrack into the script's frequent discourse around suicide, which repeatedly invokes the iconic frontman and the morbidly romantic myths surrounding his untimely end. The most obvious example of this is when Jon recounts an urban legend that tells of Ian Curtis having stood on a block of ice with a noose around his neck, hanging himself in slow motion as the object below him gradually melted. Another instance is when Jon makes a joking remark about having to "lay off the Joy Division records for a while" when his friend Darcy expresses concerns about his mental well-being in the wake of being diagnosed as HIV positive.

This comment regarding keeping a safe distance from his Joy Division recordings also highlights the way that music is one of the few things in Jon's life over which he has some degree of control. Through music he is able to create an audio environment that is less threatening than a hostile world that sees him through a lens clouded by homophobia and the stigma of disease. He is horrified at the prospect that Luke might abscond with treasures from his music shelf, and he can be seen scrambling to hide his precious CD collection the first time that this mysterious and handsome stranger comes to his apartment. Music affords him the ability to create a sort of safe zone where the influence of the outside world is less pronounced. It is in this space that he is able to work on his article about the 'death of cinema' while listening to "Rosebud"[53] by Fred Giannelli, a song composed by a former member of Psychic TV that takes its title from a *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) vocal sample. Musically, the track straddles the lines between the acid house movement and the nascent rave scene. On a soundtrack loaded with songs rooted in established styles "Rosebud", with its piano melody and synth stabs, marks the transition that was underway in the underground.

The selection of "Rosebud" in particular points out how *The Living End* connects with music that, beyond just being representative of trends in the underground, was at the cutting edge at the time of the film's release. The act of programming recent material by the selected artists into the film taps into the sounds that were at the forefront of a burgeoning underground movement, while simultaneously allowing for the film to connect directly with the rich histories of the performers. Chion writes that when we hear "a piece of music we identify the melodies, themes, and units of rhythmic patterns, to the extent that our musical training permits."[54] I would

contend that with pre-existing music our individual perception will also identify elements including (but not limited to) genre, performer, and where we might have heard the selection before. As with Chion's observation all these perceptions would, of course, all be to the extent that our cultural training permits. Those immersed in the alternative subcultures that are represented within the film's diegesis may not have picked up on all of these references, but the organic way that music is included in the film – and the strength of the selection process – combine to impart an increased realism to the characters. This results in an end product that, despite depictions of hyperbolic situations, comes across as genuine and authentic, rather than as an attempt to co-opt an emerging youth culture.

Much of this is due to Araki's own immersion in this culture. Araki freely makes reference to his own days working as a music critic for the *LA Weekly*, and admits the degree to which music influenced the genesis of this particular project. He readily acknowledges that the film takes its title from the second song on The Jesus and Mary Chain's debut album *Psychocandy.*[55] In fact, Luke's words as he watches blood flow from a self-inflicted wound to his wrist are lifted from the track "Inside Me" which appears on the second side of that album.[56] Araki is not secretive about the influence of music, and is also quick to point out that The Jesus and Mary Chain shirt worn by Luke during the opening moments of film is an item of clothing that he himself had loaned to Mike Dytri for this sequence in order to pay tribute to them as a source of inspiration.[57]

This is all part of a cohesive and pervasive approach to communicating additional meaning to viewers. Katie Mills has stated that "[t]he once-masculinist road story of the lone anarchist on the run is reborn when the genre becomes a vehicle for the representation of 'otherness' along the lines of marginalized class, race, sexuality, or gender."[58] Alternative music produced by and closely connected to 'othered' subcultures makes an immediate impression on the audience. For those unfamiliar with the music, it functions as a means of casting a different atmosphere across a landscape they've seen before, while simultaneously allowing for nuance and meaning to be conveyed to those aware of the implied messages inherent in the music programming.

Music played a role in the pre-production in many other ways. Audio commentary by Araki on the DVD reveals that the director had even gone to the lengths of providing mixed cassettes, complete with detailed track-listings and lyric sheets, to some cast members in order to provide them with a window into the interests of their respective characters, and to help them more fully prepare for the roles. In other words, the importance of the soundtrack to this project simply cannot be overstated, despite the fact that it has been all but ignored in discussions of *The Living End.* There is a reciprocity here that should not be overlooked. Chion states that "[t]ransformed by the images it influences, sound ultimately reprojects onto the image the product of their mutual influences."[59] In other words, our visual and aural experiences of the film collaborate, rather than compete with one another.

As stated in the introduction, music can be used to establish the temporal location of the story and set the overall tone for a scene, but those abilities represent only some of the potential contained within careful management of a film's music. *The Living End* exhibits a number of other ways that the intersection between sound and image can be directed in order to generate additional meaning. It has been used to foreshadow character development and comment on thematic elements within the narrative, but it has also been employed in a political way. The roster of artists sourced from a queer-run independent music label connects with youth culture and queer activism in a number of very direct and tangible ways. Jane Giles points out that "[t]he underground demands a specialized knowledge and shared appreciation of its various sources, which can combine like the eclectic jumble of a teenager's bedroom in a frenzy of cult references."[60] One of the triumphs here is that the music supervision has effectively managed to navigate that messy bedroom and embrace the associational baggage of the selected material so that those elements can be incorporated into the narrative. This has all combined to produce a compilation soundtrack that thoughtfully corroborates, and expands upon, both the ideas and the politics that are present within the frame.

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[1] Araki, Gregg. "Spring 2008." *The Living End: An Irresponsible Movie by Gregg Araki DVD Insert.* New York: Strand Releasing, 2008. 2.

[2] This term was used in marketing materials for the feature, and is included as a subtitle for the film in the opening credits.

[3] KMFDM. "Godlike". *Godlike.* Wax Trax! 9132, 1990. 12"/CDS.

[4] KMFDM, "Rip The System". *More & Faster*. Wax Trax! 9077, 1989. 12"

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[5] Smith 164.
[6] Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 80.
[7] Smith 163.
[8] Smith 171.
[9] Rich, B. Ruby. "New Queer Cinema." *Sight & Sound.* Sept 01 1992. 32.
[10] Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism.* New York: Routledge, 1989. 93.
[11] Dyer, Richard. *Pastiche.* London: Routledge, 2007. 21.
[12] Hubbert 34.
[13] O'Neill, Phelim. "Gregg Araki's Films Are Giving the US a Crash Course in Shoegazing." *The Guardian.* 6 Aug 2011.
[14] Grundmann, Ray. "The Fantasies We Live By: Bad Boys in *Swoon* & *The Living End.*" *Cinéaste*, Vol. 19. No.4 (1993). 26.
[15] *120 Minutes* was an alternative-minded music video broadcast that began airing on MTV in the mid-80s.
[16] Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music.* Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 109.
[17] Chion 14-15.
[18] Slayer. "Angel of Death". *Reign in Blood.* Geffen 24131, 1986. LP / CD.
[19] KMFDM, "Godlike (Chicago Trax mix)". *Naïve.* Wax Trax! 7148, 1990. CD.
[20] Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital.* Hanover: University of New England, 1996. 19.
[21] Mills, Katie. "Revitalizing the Road Genre: *The Living End* as an AIDS Road Film." *The Road Movie Book.* Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, eds. New York: Routledge, 1997. 316-317.
[22] Hays 38.
[23] Attali 110.
[24] *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo* (Sam Firstenberg, 1984) and *Vibrations* (Michael Paseornek, 1996) being notable failures in this regard.
[25] Carroll, Noël. "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)." *October*, Vol. 20 (Spring, 1982). The MIT Press. 54.
[26] Anderson, Tim J. "As If History Was Merely a Record: The Pathology of Nostalgia and the Figure of the Recording in Contemporary Popular Cinema." *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, Spring 2008. Liverpool University Press. 59.
[27] *Drugstore Cowboy* (Gus Van Sant, 1989) is ironically featured on a t-shirt worn by one of the gay bashers that confronts Luke early in the film.
[28] Kulezic-Wilson, Danijela. "Gus Van Sant's Soundwalks and Audio-Visual *Musique Concrete." Music, Sound and Filmmakers.* Ed. James Wierzbicki. New York: Routledge, 2012. 83.
[29] Araki. . "The (Sorry) State of (Independent) Things." 68.
[30] Copland, Aaron. "Tip to Moviegoers: Take Off Those Ear-Muffs." *New York Times*, Nov 6 1949. SM28.
[31] Hart "Auteur / Bricoleur / Provocateur: Gregg Araki and Postpunk Style in *The Doom Generation." Journal of Film and Video,* Vol. 55, No. 1 (Spring 2003). 31.
[32] Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture.* New York: Routledge, 1992. 223-249.
[33] Copland SM28.
[34] Jenkins 234.
[35] Jenkins 238.
[36] Wierzbicki, James. "Sonic Style in Cinema." *Music, Sound and Filmmakers.* New York: Routledge, 2012. 5.
[37] Donnelly, K.J. "Constructing the Future through Music of the Past: The Software in *Hardware.*" *Popular Music and Film.* Ed. Ian Inglis. London; New York: Wallfower, 2003. 136.
[38] Smith 186.
[39] Landau, Steve. "Jim Nash and Dannie Flesher: Wax Trax! Records' Gay Founders Thrive Outside Music's Mainstream." *The Advocate,* 2 May 1995. 56.
[40] The musical style takes its name from Industrial Records, the label that the members of Throbbing Gristle had founded for the purposes of releasing their own material.

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[41] *In The Shadow of the Sun* (Derek Jarman, 1984), *TG: Psychic Rally in Heaven* (Derek Jarman, 1981).
[42] Coil. "Disco Hospital". *Blue.* Mute / Nonesuch 79337, 1993. CD.
[43] Coil. "Tainted Love". *Panic / Tainted Love.* Wax 013, 1985. 12"
[44] The end credits for *The Living End* contain the following message: "Dedicated to Craig Lee (1954-1991) and the hundreds of thousands who've died and the hundreds of thousands more who will die because of a big, white house full of Republican fuckheads."
[45] Dickie, Tony. "Compulsion, No. 1, Winter 1992." *Brainwashed.*
[46] Derek Jarman had directed a trio of music videos for The Smiths that formed the short experimental film *The Queen is Dead* (1986).
[47] Mills 308.
[48] Chris & Cosey. *Pagan Tango.* Wax Trax! 7150, 1991. LP / CD.
[49] Hart (2010) 31-32.
[50] Vale, Vivian and Andrea Juno. *Modern Primitives.* San Francisco: Re/Search, 1991. 164-181.
[51] Vale and Juno 180.
[52] Psychic TV. "I.C.Water". *Towards Thee Infinite Beat.* WaxTrax 7129, 1990. LP / CD.
[53] Fred. "Rosebud". *Fred.* WaxTrax 9185, 1991. 12" / CDS.
[54] Chion 45.
[55] The Jesus and Mary Chain. *Psychocandy.* Blanco Y Negro / Reprise 925383, 1985. LP / CD.
[56] The Jesus and Mary Chain. "Inside Me". *Psychocandy.* Blanco Y Negro / Reprise 925383, 1985. LP / CD.
[57] It is interesting to note that the Barbed Wire Kisses queer filmmaking panel hosted by B. Ruby Rich at the 1992 edition of the Sundance Festival shares its name with the title of a 1988 collection of The Jesus and Mary Chain B-sides and rarities.
[58] Mills 323.
[59] Chion 22.
[60] Giles, Jane. "As Above, So Below: 30 Years of Underground Cinema and Pop Music." *Celluloid Jukebox.* London: British Film Institute, 1995. 45.

Chapter Two:
The Cresting Wave of Counterculture in *The Doom Generation.*

Coming on the heels of *Totally F***ked Up* (1993), *The Doom Generation* forms the second part of a cycle of films that is sometimes referred to as the 'teen-apocalypse trilogy'. The film, Araki's self-proclaimed 'heterosexual movie'[1], returns to the somewhat familiar landscape of the road, but there are substantial differences between this work and *The Living End.* This is most evident in the way that, rather than being an unhinged and unpredictable romance between two men who feel that they have nothing to lose, *The Doom Generation* features a sort of omnidirectional love triangle that involves two young men who develop a mutual attraction as they vie for the affection of a femme fatale.

Despite its proclamation of the contrary, the film is as removed from traditional notions of romantic heteronormative coupling as it is from typical couple on the run capers. As Kylo-Patrick R. Hart puts it, Araki's films "regularly subvert genre conventions and expectations in order to subvert their established meanings and significance, and they do so in order to create groundbreaking representations of non-heterosexual individuals and subcultures."[2] The film may self-identify as having a heterosexual orientation, but "Araki himself has called *The Doom Generation* the "gayest 'heterosexual movie' ever made.""[3]

The gender breakdown of the traveling companions is a considerable change, but perhaps the most consequential shift comes in the form of a drastically different set of financial conditions for the production. *The Doom Generation* was produced by an assortment of independents that included Araki's own Desperate Pictures, but also featured international investment from Why Not Productions (France) and Union Générale Cinématographique (UGC). North American distribution for the film was handled by the independent Trimark Pictures, a company with more history in the home video market than theatrical distribution, and one without a direct affiliation to any of the major Hollywood movie studios.

These investors provided the project much greater access to funds. According to James Moran *The Doom Generation* was "produced on a million-dollar budget with a crew and location

permits."[4] This is a far cry from the reported $20,000 allotted for the production of *The Living End*. *The Doom Generation* also received additional promotional support in the form of a soundtrack released through an established record label (American Recordings/Warner Bros). [5] These factors combine to enable the procurement of a much more diverse slate of music. It is interesting to note that Rick Rubin, the creative head and driving force behind American Recordings, had been the producer for the Slayer album *Reign in Blood.* This is the record that contained the track "Angel of Death" which is the source of the guitar riff sampled by KMFDM for "Godlike". At the time that this soundtrack was released both the manufacturing and distribution for American Recordings were being handled by Warner Bros Music. Warner represented one of the major labels in music production, but was also a component in the vertically integrated structure of Warner Brothers. The music division, as well as the film and television branches, were all recognized as being "global leaders in their respective industry sectors."[6]

Having access to the resources provided by major label distribution of the soundtrack highlights both the importance of music to a film, as well as that film's perceived ability to sell music. This is symptomatic of the manner in which soundtracks were being used as a marketing and publicity tool for films, and vice versa. Hubbert quotes Scorsese as saying that "in America today you have to, if at all possible, make a tie-in album,"[7] while Ronald V. Bettig and Jeanne Lynn Hall note that "movie sound tracks have become vehicles for a company's other interests."[8] It is true that *The Doom Generation* was not produced by a major studio, but it is worth noting that the film's release falls within the indie boom that Hollywood was experiencing in the mid-90s. This was a period in which there was increased attention paid to independent fare, as well as being a time when soundtrack sales for independent films and edgier content had demonstrated their potential to be quite lucrative.

This point becomes obvious if we look at selected titles that were released the year prior to *The Doom Generation*. *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) presents an ideal case for the potential profitability of a successful soundtrack for an independent film, as well as an illustration of the horizontal integration that was going on in Hollywood. In contrast to the vertical integration that sees different divisions of the same parent company working together,

horizontal integration is a practice which "involves buying out competing firms in the same line of business."[9] Miramax, which handled the theatrical release of *Pulp Fiction*, had been acquired by Disney the previous year in a purchase that falls into this category.[10] Disney's procuring of this independent studio was viewed by the industry as being part of "the latest swell of a sea change in Hollywood, as studios and independents increasingly align to battle booming marketing and production costs, capture fragmented audiences and scramble for bigger market shares."[11] Like *The Doom Generation, Pulp Fiction*'s soundtrack was released by a record label without affiliation to the studio that produced the property.[12] Rather than being handled by one of Disney's own properties, the soundtrack was released by MCA in September of 1994. It proved to be a very profitable title and attained Platinum sales of more than one million units before the end of that calendar year.[13]

The somewhat astonishing success of *Pulp Fiction* places it as something of an outlier, but another example is provided by the Trent Reznor assembled soundtrack for *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994).[14] This comparison is perhaps more appropriate for reasons related both to the companies involved and to genre similarities. For starters, both films include material featuring the distinctive voice of Perry Farrell.[15] As well, the opening moments of *The Doom Generation* are accompanied by "Heresy", a song by soundtrack compiler Reznor's Nine Inch Nails project.[16] On the industry side of things *The Doom Generation*'s theatrical distributor Trimark Pictures would oversee the home video release of a director's cut of *Natural Born Killers*, while the soundtrack itself was handled by Atlantic Records, a company that (like American Recordings) was part of Warner Bros Music. Sales figures were somewhat more modest for this title, but the *Natural Born Killers* soundtrack still managed to achieve Gold status (500,000 units sold) within a few months of its release in the summer of 1994.[17]

The benefits of a successful soundtrack go beyond the industry accolades and financial rewards associated with sales figures. Simply put, the release of a soundtrack, in addition to being a commodity itself, is evidently a means of advertising for the film. In the age of multiplex theatres located within shopping malls this proved to be a very effective tool. Jeff Smith calls specific attention to the mutual benefits of this proximity when he states that "[t]he spatial contiguity of theaters and record stores suggests the extent to which such reciprocal

arrangements between corporate interests have institutionalized what was once an expensive and time-consuming aspect of film marketing."[18] Backing from a major label allows for the sort of market penetration that gets product into music stores and affords films the valuable opportunity to have increased visibility in a retail environment during the period leading up to release. In this way it becomes clear how music supervision can be viewed as an important part of the promotional strategies used to both create anticipation for, and sustain interest in, the theatrical exhibition of a film.

The relationship between a film and its soundtrack is also something of a symbiotic one. Within the industry it came to be referred to as a strategy of *synergy*. This concept "held that the common cross-promotion of films and records could benefit both interests in almost equal measure."[19] Indeed, Romney and Wootton pointed out that by the mid-90s it had become "increasingly hard, faced with a film and its soundtrack CD, to tell which product is really supporting which."[20] Timothy Shary observes that given "the relocation of most movie theatres into or near shopping malls in the 1980s, the need to cater to the young audiences who frequented those malls became apparent to Hollywood."[21] His position is that the shift from stand-alone theatres to multiplexes resulted in a spike in the production of films geared toward the demographic of youthful consumers that already saw the shopping centre as a destination. *The Doom Generation* and *Totally F***ed Up* are both films that he includes in his analysis of the image of youth in contemporary American cinema.[22]

The benefits of the multiplex being located within these malls are quite obvious. With regards to what this means for the way that music and film intersect is that any audience member who hears music that pricks up their ears within a given film might be drawn to purchase it. They may find themselves watching the credits to get more information about the songs and artists featured, and the transaction is facilitated due to this increased tendency for theatres to be located in shopping centres, as opposed to being stand-alone enterprises. As Smith notes "modern film patrons, upon leaving the mall multiplex, can simply go to the mall record store and, more than likely, purchase the soundtrack for the film they have just seen."[23] To this end, the existence of a physical release of the *The Doom Generation*'s music received a somewhat bold endorsement in

the closing credits of the film with the quaint phrase: "Go out and buy the fucking soundtrack album, available on CD and cassette on American Recordings."

Unlike earlier films, where the music supervision appears to have been managed by Araki himself, *The Doom Generation* credits Peter Coquillard for this role. This helps to explain the wider range of talent presented throughout the film. As Smith indicates, without "the support system of studio supervisors, independents often rely on their network of industry contacts or their previous track record."[24] The addition of a dedicated music supervisor to the crew allows for an expansion beyond securing music from personal contacts and obliging independent labels. As well, there is shift in the way that music is used within the film. The tendency in *The Living End* and *Totally F***ked Up* had been to let songs play for extended periods, allowing them to be easily recognizable. In both of these films the music, although part of the diegesis, is foregrounded in the mix. *The Doom Generation* presents the songs it employs in a radically different manner. The overall sonic texture of the film is more dynamic. The larger budget allows for a greater diversity in terms of the musical palette that has been assembled, but there is also more attention paid to where this material fits into the general audio environment.

As indicated earlier, *The Doom Generation,* like *The Living End,* is a road movie. The music that the audience hears primarily comes from playback devices that are part of the mise-en-scène. This means that it still mostly belongs to the realm of screen music that Chion describes, but there have been substantial changes in the way it is activated within the film. While the industrial songs in *The Living End* can be seen to connect directly with characters and themes present in the narrative, the music in *The Doom Generation* has a somewhat different role to play. The selections often function as punchlines to jokes set-up within the visual realm. This playful aspect of the music supervision is evident right from the start of the film. Much like the use of KMFDM's "Godlike" indicated the role that music would play in authenticating and reinforcing the subcultural aspects present in *The Living End*, the music in *The Doom Generation* immediately asserts itself as a humorous counterpoint.

"Heresy" by Nine Inch Nails is the first song heard in the film. Its rhythmic pulse accompanies the opening credit sequence and the track is soon revealed to be screen music blasting over the sound system of an industrial dance club and inspiring the frantic moshing of

the patrons. The song's chorus of "God is dead and no one cares / If there is a Hell / I'll see you there" is followed by a brief piece of music by Babyland.[25] The last selection to appear during this sequence is a remix of "Religion" by the Belgian group Front 242.[26] The joke here is that "Welcome to Hell" is written clearly on the wall in flaming letters, which scroll across the screen during the chorus of "Heresy". Additionally, the "Burn you down" refrain of "Religion" is echoed in the Hellish décor of the club, as well as in Amy Blue's comment that "this place is so fucking boring. I wish that someone would burn it to the ground."

To a large extent the connection between the music and the mise-en-scène is much more obvious than in *The Living End.* In instances like this one deciphering the messages written into the music of *The Doom Generation* requires less specialized knowledge than some of the more targeted meanings of the earlier film. The examples above display how the lyrical content of the songs engages with the environment that the characters find themselves in within the film. It may be less obscure than some of the more elaborate scenarios found in *The Living End*, but this should not be interpreted as a less sophisticated use of music. There is an interest in providing content that is more accessible, and it should be noted that this "heterosexual movie" is attempting to shirk aside the labels that placed limits on the viewership of earlier works in order to court a substantially larger audience.

Hart stresses the importance of the decision to market *The Doom Generation* based on the impression that it intends to deliver a more traditional romantic arc. He explains that the film is a "complex work exploring bisexuality and bisexual desires that was intentionally promoted (as well as identified during the work's opening title sequence) as a 'heterosexual movie by Gregg Araki' in order to appeal to a wider range of audience members than the director's earlier New Queer Cinema offerings."[27] The box office aspirations of the project are evident in the more widespread appeal held by a number of the musical selections, but there is still a tendency toward using material that has underground significance. This is something that can be observed even in the opening moments.

Nine Inch Nails and Front 242 were both artists who had broken out of the subculture and attracted the attention of major labels in North America.[28] "Religion" had been remixed by a variety of artists and released as a readily available single, while "Heresy" is a recognizable cut

from *The Downward Spiral*, which had achieved Double Platinum sales (two million units) at the time of *The Doom Generation*'s release.[29] This is material that, on the basis of industry sales figures alone, would resonate with a much larger spectrum of viewers than the songs featured in earlier Araki films. The rather direct and heavy-handed manner in which the soundtrack relates to the content of the film could be seen as superficial, but so could many other aspects of the work. Hart states that he has "continually maintained that this film contains substantial cultural value, even though it may not seem to on its surface."[30] The music programming frequently does call attention to the obvious, but this is precisely what allows for it to offer more than just a mere accompaniment for a wider range of spectators drawn in by the film's promotional push. Aside from simply setting the mood of scenes, the music also provides a glimpse of the sort of dark humor that permeates the other filmic elements which range from props like skull shaped lighters and death cigarettes, to overly dramatic dialog and a mise-en-scène populated with oppressive messages.

Hart calls attention to these seemingly cosmetic aspects of the film's aesthetic and points out the critical backlash that resulted:

> The clear majority of reviews and analyses of this film that I have read to date, however, condemn this cinematic offering as pointless rubbish. In part, this may be because Araki – such as by giving his characters in this work the last names of Red, White, and Blue, something noted by several critics but never adequately elaborated upon thereafter – appears to be dealing with his subject matter in over-the-top and superficial ways (whether or not this is actually the case), in a manner that is immediately off-putting to the majority of popular critics.[31]

This perceived superficiality does serve a purpose, though. The songs employed in *The Doom Generation* often do the sort of work that we expect of film music, but these examples point out that the compiled soundtrack is often commenting on the events that are unfolding onscreen. In this regard, we can see that the music is also taking on an additional role, and that it functions in much the same manner as the chorus does in a play. The selection and programming of music throughout the film exhibits many of these traits, and it is clear that they manifest in a way that is often somewhat more obvious than the process seen in *The Living End.* This transparency appears to be related to the conscious effort to court a larger audience. There is less subcultural

knowledge and investment needed to decode how the music relates to the narrative, and this allows for a broader range of people to be in on these jokes. These efforts are reflected in the way that the film's advertising proclaimed its heterosexuality and, rather than being promoted to audiences interested in queer cinema, *The Doom Generation* was pitched toward the more financially rewarding youth demographic.

Further evidence of a desire to attract youth interest is provided by the tagline "teen is a four letter word," which appears on the cover artwork for the film's soundtrack. This effort to appeal to a more diverse audience is much like the assurances in the promotional campaign and opening credits that the film is a 'heterosexual movie.' James Moran views this insistence upon heterosexuality as somewhat subversive. He opines that *The Doom Generation* is "fierce in its implicit attack upon a conservative American society condoning only heterosexuality at the violent expense of all other unconventional unions (thus explaining the irreverent irony *Doom*'s subtitle)"[32], but an interview with Matthew Hays indicates that some of the motivation for this claim comes from a desire to avoid the confines of being identified strictly as a gay film-maker:

> I hate labels as much as anyone. Does anybody really like to be called "African American" or "Jewish" or "WASP" or "differently-abled" or any other stereotyping descriptor? In my view labels are meant to categorize and separate everybody and everything into convenient little pigeonholes.[33]

Araki's personal frustration at being typecast is evident here, but so is the desire to communicate with a larger public. To this end, it can be observed that the array of music present within *The Doom Generation* reaches out to a larger youth community, not just through song selection, but through cameo appearances that bring a different sort of intertextuality to the film. Increased resources allow for several cultural icons and notable musical influences to have a visual presence within the frame. The gang of thugs who appear during a key sequence near the beginning of the film is composed of the members of industrial band Skinny Puppy. These pioneering Canadian electronic musicians had relocated to Los Angeles and were working on their album *The Process* for American Recordings at the time.[34] Later in the film, a more prominent cameo is made by former Jane's Addiction frontman Perry Farrell, who appears on *The Doom Generation*'s soundtrack as part of the Warner Bros group Porno For Pyros.[35] It's a

brief sequence, but he is quite easily identified in his role as the clerk of a Stop 'n' Go convenience store. It seems salient to point out that both of these acts are associated with the companies handling the release and distribution of the soundtrack.

Farrell's appearance is of particular interest, not just because of his musical accomplishments, but due to his stature as a founder of Lollapalooza.[36] His work building up that traveling festival, which had proven to be enormously successful by this point in the 90s, had made him something of an unlikely figurehead for the growing popularity of alternative rock music. His appearance in the film provides evidence of a desire to connect with an audience shaped by a Lollapalooza influenced interest in alternative music and culture.

The Lollapalooza festival was viewed as an important ingredient in the way that alternative culture came of age in the 1990s.[37] This period witnessed a shift away from the regional scenes supported by college radio and small-run fanzines that had worked independently of the major labels. The traveling festival, which had its first incarnation during the summer of 1991, played a role in helping to create a diverse, but discernible, subcultural identity that expanded beyond the confines of isolated scenes.

In addition to the inclusion of Perry Farrell, several of the artists that contribute music to *The Doom Generation*'s soundtrack also have ties to the festival. Nine Inch Nails (1991), The Jesus and Mary Chain (1992) and Front 242 (1993) had all been featured as main stage performers in the early years of Lollapalooza. Secondary stage performers appearing on the soundtrack include God Lives Underwater (1994) and Porno For Pyros (1992).

Lollapalooza, however, was interested in far more than just touring a slate of artists across the country. The festival was also dedicated to nurturing the growth of subculture. As Simon Reynolds noted, in his review of the 1991 event: "From the start, Mr Farrell wanted Lollapalooza to be not just a musical event but a cultural smorgasbord, with a diverse array of tents, booths and displays exploring a number of political, environmental, human rights and cultural issues."[38] Included among this selection of non-musical attractions were exhibitions of body modification, which may have influenced the artistic decision to have tattoos and piercings adorn the characters that populate *The Doom Generation*. It should be noted that, in particular,

Xavier Red's prominent chest tattoo was a make-up application used to give Johnathon Schaech an appropriately edgy look for the role, and is absent in the shirtless image that is featured on the cover of *The Doom Generation*'s soundtrack release.[39]

This evident construction of a subcultural image for the characters allows us to see that the film is expanding upon the post-punk aesthetic. Although still quite candid in its depiction of sexuality, *The Doom Generation* drifts away from the explicitly sexual politics seen in *The Living End.* This embrace of counterculture suggests that the use of music and cameos isn't so much associated with the "Homo Pomo" as it is with the traditions of cult films. An example, which is also infused with a similar attention to subculture, is *Hardware* (1990). Richard Stanley, the film's director, had a history in making music videos prior to moving into feature film making. Drawing on his contacts within the music business he was able to load the film with a number of appearances by faces and voices more known for their music careers. These range from obscure acts (such as Carl McCoy of the gothrock group Fields of the Nephilim) to the more conspicuous talents of Iggy Pop and Motörhead's Lemmy Kilmister. K.J. Donnelly remarks that "the pop/rock music featured is marginal to the field as a whole and its function is to forge intertextual references to that marginal *milieu*, that which self-consciously is beyond the mainstream."[40] This effectively supports the way that the use of existing music fosters additional meaning via the cultural context that it brings to the picture, but Donnelly also suggests that "[c]ameos, like the songs in the film, provide crucial cultural co-ordinate points."[41]

Another sort of cultural co-ordinate point, and one that clearly indicates the playful intertextuality at work in *The Doom Generation* is the recurring line of dialog, with some variation, "First I'm going to find her, then I'm going to kill her." This is actually the recreation of a sample that appears in the closing moments of My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult's song "A Daisy Chain 4 Satan (Acid and Flowers mix)."[42] The original source for the sample is a 1972 episode of a television series called *The Sixth Sense*, which featured the last screen appearance of the iconic Joan Crawford.

Like the way that the Slayer sample used in "Godlike" becomes an appropriated element that effectively foreshadows character development in *The Living End*, this knowing use of a line that would be familiar to many audience members who had prior exposure to that particular My

Life With The Thrill Kill Kult song, serves a function. In this instance it becomes a running gag, but one that provides a gateway to introduce a discussion of the ways that fan communities were actively involved in cataloging precisely this sort of intertextual relationship between music and film.

Through mailing lists, and newsgroups like rec.music.industrial, fans of marginalized music began finding ways to convene with one another through online forums. One group project that emerged was dedicated to building up a comprehensive database of film and television shows that had been sampled by artists within the industrial genre. Consulting an archived version of this list provided the information regarding the source of the sample used by My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult.[43]

These allusions to music by My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult also recall their on-stage appearance performing "After The Flesh" in *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994). It is worth pointing out that the music selection for that film held a similar appeal for the alternative minded youth demographic, and includes songs by a number of artists whose work is featured in *The Doom Generation.* The group Medicine also appear as performers during a club scene in the film, and *The Crow*'s multi-Platinum selling soundtrack includes the contributions of these acts alongside selections by Nine Inch Nails and The Jesus and Mary Chain. [44],[45]

This overlap in terms of the musical acts featured on the soundtracks, alongside the commonalities shared with *Natural Born Killers* and *Hardware*, is illustrative of the way that *The Doom Generation*, while distancing itself somewhat from the 'Homo-Pomo' movement, still fits into a wave of films attempting to engage with counterculture through the appropriation of musical and aesthetic elements. What sets this film aside is the continued tendency to anchor the musical selections in the category of screen music, rather than pit music. The songs featured in *The Doom Generation* are there because the characters actively bring them into the diegesis. This is a decidedly different approach than the chaotic discontinuity seen in *Natural Born Killers*, or the more passive actions in *Hardware* where the soundtrack frequently emanates from television or radio broadcasts.

This is not to say that *The Doom Generation* is without moments where the music breaks away from its on-screen source and drifts into the domain of pit music. One major difference between *The Living End* and *The Doom Generation* is that in this road movie there are moments when the compilation soundtrack to the film assumes the role occupied by a traditional score. This can be observed in the way that abrupt shifts in both the volume and tone of the music frequently coincide with key actions in the onscreen space.

An example of this is the way that the pounding industrial music heard in Club Hell suddenly gives way to the barely audible sounds of the Slowdive track "Alison"[46] when the setting shifts to Heaven, the drive-in movie theatre that Amy Blue and Jordan White have sought out for a private moment. This romantic encounter is rudely interrupted when Xavier Red, who will become the third part of the love triangle that snares the film's three protagonists, is violently thrown across the hood of their car. This event is communicated via a combination of edits that disrupt the continuity of the audio track and blur the distinction between pit music and screen music.

The sequence begins with Amy and Jordan sitting in their car, leaning toward one another and engaging in a kiss. Sudden motion in the background and the noise of Xavier hitting the hood of the car signals an abrupt shift in the scene's tone. The couple withdraw from one another in reaction to this interruption and, by means of a jump cut, the camera leaps forward into the space that has emerged between the two lovers. This provides us with a close-up of Xavier's face and hands pressed uncomfortably against the windshield. At the precise moment that the jump cut occurs, the quiet strains of "Alison" are displaced by the loud and aggressive "Drag Me Down" by God Lives Underwater.[47]

The music up until this point in the film has had some semblance of emanating from an onscreen source. The low volume level of the Slowdive song, which functions as background music for the juvenile romantic discussion that Amy and Jordan are engaged in, leads the viewer to believe that the track is playing on the tape deck in the car. The jarringly obvious change in tone and volume disrupts this moment and violently replaces the screen music with pit music. The effect of this transition is that it removes the element that grounds the music in reality. This marks something of a departure from how music typically occurs within Araki's films. Much

like the Scorsese films examined by Julie Hubbert, Araki's films display a tendency to use "music to suggest time and place, intentionally locating the source of the music visually on-screen in order to authenticate its performance."[48] Occasionally veering away from this tendency toward the music being securely anchored to the diegesis augments the sense of chaos conveyed on the screen. In addition, the simultaneous edits that occur on both the video and audio components of the film represent a more confident and technically proficient combination than what was heard in *The Living End.*

While this example points out the way that the music is being used in a way that more closely resembles the cues of a traditional score, there are still a number of ways that, as in *The Living End*, the song selections both comment directly on the narrative and remain an organic part of the onscreen environment. We've seen some evidence of this in the way that "Religion" and "Heresy" were programmed into the scene that took place in Club Hell. These songs authenticate the environment, but can also establish the black humour that permeates the music programming throughout the entire film, which is rife with further examples. Consider the choice of "Slut" by Medicine[49], which plays during the scene where Jordan returns to the hotel room to find Amy and Xavier engaged in coitus, or "This Heaven" by Love and Rockets[50] being heard while the trio make their escape from the violence that erupts at the Heaven drive-in theatre. There is also the use of material by Coil: their track "First Dark Ride" pops up in a sequence that finds Jordan lamenting the fact that Amy has abandoned Xavier at the side of the road.[51] Coil's status as queer statesmen in the industrial movement helps this particular selection subtly underline the palpable sexual tension that develops between the bisexual Xavier and the bi-curious Jordan as they navigate the storyline of this 'heterosexual movie.'

In all of these particular situations, as in Scorsese's work, the source of the music is still a part of the mise-en-scène. A playback device of some sort is constantly shown or implied. It may be the PA system in a club or store, or a device employed by the protagonists (be it the Walkman that Jordan listens to or the tape deck in the car that is continuously in use). However, it can be seen that it is not simply limited to suggesting time and place. Beyond the intertextual elements that the music supervision provides, the soundtrack's status as screen music is essential to the narrative arc. The playback of music of their choosing allows the protagonists of *The Doom*

Generation the ability to exercise some form of control over their environment. They are unable to have much say over the inhospitable and oppressive world they inhabit, but like Jon and Luke in *The Living End*, they do have the ability to create pockets of space where their own manipulation of the soundscape allows them some degree of satisfaction.

One of the primary concerns of the music selection found in *The Doom Generation* is to establish the cohesive and immersive audio environment that the characters establish as a sort of sonic shield around themselves. The sounds they select are as expressive as the clothes they wear and this importance is foregrounded during a trip to a music store which sees Amy pining away for the record collection that she left behind when the trio of outlaws hit the road. This moment, like the presence of the Walkman or the diegetic use of the car stereo, draws our attention to the fact that the collection of music that she has amassed is not a disposable commodity, but something that she treasures and deeply identifies with. Amy speaks about missing her record collection as if it is a cherished pet, or some sort of living creature that she has been forced to abandon. There is a distinct sense of longing in her tone as she studies a copy of a record that Jordan tells her that she already owns. Ultimately the group's visit to the haven of the record store is disturbed by the group of skinheads that provide the film's final confrontation.

This bring us to conflict, a theme that reappears through *The Doom Generation.* The characters frequently find themselves in hostile situations whenever the music of the outside world creeps in. We see this early in the film when the God Lives Underwater selection creates a vulgar intrusion into Jordan and Amy's intimate moment. Another obvious example is when the brightly lit interior of a convenience store explodes into violence alongside the saccharine tones of muzak. It is even present in the opening sequence when Amy expresses her disdain for the music playing in Club Hell. The most telling example, however, is the final catastrophic episode when a gang of neo-Nazi thugs wrests control of the trio's music. The attackers replace the soundtrack the protagonists have chosen and viciously assault Amy, Jordan and Xavier while infecting their personal space with the nationalist strains of "The Star-Spangled Banner".

Hart and others have commented on the ways that characters in these films are out of control, but the use of the American national anthem during such a traumatic sequence in the film suggests that it is more a depiction of individuals struggling against the current in a society

where they really have no voice. Their pleas and plights fall upon deaf ears and their own music, that they choose, is the only voice that really speaks to them. It is a voice that they have the power to change. They can turn it off to get some silence or they may alter it to suit a situation or improve a mood.

The discussion of *The Living End* pointed out the subcultural value that Sarah Thornton observes with regards to the Walkman. This personal audio environment is equally present in *The Doom Generation*, but it is worth noting that it is not the only playback device that plays a role in the film's narrative. In fact, it is quite secondary to the shared listening space enabled by the car stereo. Thornton's writing also calls attention to the significance of the automobile for American youth. "In so-called 'Middle America' (i.e. straight, white suburbia), acquiring a driver's license and access to a car offer the sense of freedom, mobility and independence that British youth find at clubs and raves."[52] In terms of the arguments that she is building, Thornton is effectively identifying one of the ways in which the culture of clubgoing has a different sort of importance in the UK than it does in North America. Extrapolating upon her point about the liberating qualities afforded by the automobile we can also see that the car stereo allows for the ability of the occupants to listen to the music of their choosing. Being behind the wheel of a vehicle allows the individual to roll up the windows and shut out the rest of the world, or simply drive away from a toxic environment.

The Doom Generation provides examples of a number of different ways that music supervision can help target a specific viewership. The film may not have been propelled to the same heights as the most profitable independent releases of the period, but it showcases several methods that can be used to attract the attention of a subcultural audience. The discussion of *The Living End* showed that an understanding of the associational baggage connected with the music allows for the management of the interplay between song and film. *The Doom Generation* extends beyond that point. Incorporating cameos and continuing to make overt allusions to music throughout the film bolsters its authenticity, while granting the ability to explore how the physical release of a soundtrack can form an integral role in the marketing strategies used to establish a film's presence in theatres. Synergy between different sectors of the entertainment business, via horizontal or vertical integration, allows for this to be beneficial to all parties

involved. A moderately successful soundtrack, due to its status as a commodity, can be a powerful and cost effective tool that helps to sustain interest in a film, while a wildly successful release can pay enormous dividends. All of these elements contribute to the potential for a film to draw the attention of a vocal fanbase that is actively seeking to make connections between different disciplines of the arts.

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[1] This is a descriptive term which appears in promotional materials for *The Doom Generation*, as well as being featured in the opening credits for the film.
[2] Hart (2010) 50.
[3] Hart (2010) 103.
[4] Moran, James. "Gregg Araki: Guerrilla Film-maker for a Queer Generation." *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Autumn, 1996). 18.
[5] Various. *Music From the Motion Picture: The Doom Generation.* American Recordings 943063-2, 1995. CD.
[6] Bettig Ronald V. and Jeanne Lynn Hall. *Big Media, Big Money: Cultural Texts and Political Economics.* Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. 31.
[7] Hubbert 35.
[8] Bettig and Hall 116.
[9] Bettig and Hall 62
[10] Eller Claudia and John Evan Frook. "Mickey Munches on Miramax." *Variety,* May 03 1993: 1.
[11] Eller and Frook 1.
[12] Various. *Music from the Motion Picture Pulp Fiction.*MCA Records MCAD-11103, 1994. CD.
[13] RIAA.com, released September 27th, 1994. Certified Platinum Dec. 29th, 1994.
[14] Various. *Natural Born Killers (A Soundtrack for an Oliver Stone Film)*.Nothing / Atlantic 92460-2, 1994. CD.
[15] *Natural Born Killers* makes use of "Ted, Just Admit It" by Jane's Addiction.
[16] Nine Inch Nails. "Heresy". *The Downward Spiral.* Nothing / Interscope 92346, 1994. LP / CD.
[17] RIAA.com, released August 1st, 1994. Certified Gold Nov. 4th, 1994.
[18] Smith 1-2.
[19] Smith 27.
[20] Romney, Jonathan and Adrian Wootton. *Celluloid Jukebox*. London: British Film Institute, 1995. 4.
[21] Shary, Timothy. *Generation Multiplex.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. 6.
[22] *The Doom Generation* is cited in a section dealing with "Delinquent Youth" (85) of *Generation Multiplex*, while *Totally F***ed Up* is examined in some depth in a later chapter called "Youth in Love and Having Sex" (241-243).
[23] Smith 1.
[24] Smith 212.
[25] Babyland. "Double Coupon". *Music From the Motion Picture: The Doom Generation.* American Recordings 943063-2, 1995. CD.
[26] Front 242. "Religion (Pussywhipped Mix)". *Religion.* Epic 49K 74928, 1993. CDS.
[27] Hart (2010) 97.
[28] Front 242, formerly signed to Wax Trax!, were under contract to Sony's Epic imprint, and Nine Inch Nails' Nothing being distributed by Universal via Interscope.
[29] RIAA.com, released March 4th, 1994. Certified Double Platinum July 13th, 1995.
[30] Hart (2010) 93.
[31] Hart (2010) 93.
[32] Moran 23.
[33] Hays 40.
[34] Skinny Puppy. *The Process*. American Recordings 943057-2, 1995. CD.
[35] Porno for Pyros. "Dogs Rule the Night". *Good God's Urge.* Warner Bros 946126-2, 1996. CD.

[36] Sanjek, Russell and David Sanjek. *Pennies from Heaven.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1996. 678.
[37] Sanjek 678.
[38] Reynolds, Simon. "Lollapalooza: A Woodstock for the Lost Generation." *The Guardian,* 30 July 2014.
[39] While there is the temptation to make a case that the edgy look of characters from the film might have been toned down for marketing purposes, it seems more plausible that the publicity shots for the CD cover were taken after the production had wrapped.
[40] Donnelly 137.
[41] Donnelly 139.
[42] My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult. "A Daisy Chain 4 Satan (Acid and Flowers mix)". *Confessions of a Knife.* Wax 7089, 1990. LP / CD.
[43] Cigehn, Peter. "The Top 1319 Sample Sources." *Semimajor.* 1 Sept 2004.
[44] RIAA.com, released March 14th, 1994. Certified Double Platinum April 19th, 1995.
[45] Various. *The Crow (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Atlantic 82519-2, 1994. CD.
[46] Slowdive. "Alison". *Souvlaki.* Creation / SBK Records 88263, 1993. CD.
[47] God Lives Underwater. "Drag Me Down". *God Lives Underwater*. American Recordings 943022-2, 1995. CD EP.
[48] Hubbert 39-40.
[49] Medicine. "Slut". *The Buried Life.* American Recordings 945433-2, 1993. CD.
[50] Love and Rockets. "This Heaven". *Hot Trip to Heaven.* Beggars Banquet BBQ 145, 1994. CD.
[51] Coil vs. The Eskaton. "First Dark Ride". *Nasa-Arab.* Eskaton 001, 1994. 12".
[52] Thornton 16.

Chapter Three:
Learning to Adapt.

The other films being examined, indeed all of Araki's features up until this point, were stories that the filmmaker had conceived on his own. *Mysterious Skin* marks the first time that Araki adapted a film from a pre-existing work. It also differs greatly from the other films examined thus far as it employs music to establish the narrative's place at a number of distinct points in the past, rather than fixing it to the present. Aside from the additional duty of functioning as historical signpost, this application of music is not entirely dissimilar to what occurs in the other films. Its use as a subcultural marker is still a primary focus, but there are substantial changes in the way that music intersects with the images and narrative, both in terms of function and tone.

The source material for *Mysterious Skin* is Scott Heim's 1995 novel of the same title. The book's narrative relates the story of two adolescent young men marked by sexual abuse that occurred during their childhood. Music is a frequent touchpoint in the novel, but it serves a much different purpose than it does in the filmed adaptation. It seems relevant to give a cursory rundown of its function in the novel so as to provide a more complete image of how the musical references, as well as their purpose, have been transformed by the process of adaptation.

Throughout the book, the author uses music as a convenient means to flesh out the similarities between characters and the ways that they exist outside the established norms of mainstream society in the microcosm of small town Kansas. Brian Lackey's obsession with UFOs is complemented by his penchant for listening to the space-age sounds of Kraftwerk, while Neil McCormick bonds with Wendy Peterson and Eric Preston via a shared interest in more alternative fare. As Eric states in the novel, prior to arriving in Kansas "I'd had a scattering of friends who shared the same interests in music and were queer like me. Here, I only had Neil."[1] The book is filled with descriptions of a hostile world where the popular music enjoyed by the heterosexual masses is classic rock and heavy metal. To make things worse for the protagonists, any sort of counterculture in their Midwest hometown is perceived to be hopelessly out of touch with the pulse of the current underground. As Neil relates, "Rudy's, the only queer bar in Hutchinson, always seemed caught in an extremely twisted time warp."[2]

The film adaptation also uses music in a strategic way that is similar to what occurs in the book but, given the history of industrial and post-punk being a component of the soundtracks for Araki's work, there is a somewhat surprising shift in tone away from the artists referenced by Heim. The novel sees Wendy looking for records by The Dead Boys, Suicide, and Throbbing Gristle,[3] but these specific artists are completely absent from the translation to the screen. There is, however, a conscious display of merchandise related to a range of more recognizable punk and industrial artists in the mise-en-scene throughout the film. We frequently see stickers, posters and patches for bands like Suicidal Tendencies, The Misfits, Sham 69, and Nitzer Ebb. All of these artists have a visual presence. They decorate Eric's car, clothes, and bedroom. This, however, is music that is seen but not heard.

In *Unheard Melodies* Claudia Gorbman argues that "[m]usic in film is electronically regulated, and generally rendered subservient to the denotively signifying elements of narrative discourse. Its effectiveness depends on it not being listened to."[4] In this instance it is not even played. We see only the visual trappings of this music, and these are used as a means to suggest the barely contained anger and frustration felt by the characters. The aggression of these bands is absent from the soundtrack. Their diatribes are muted and, like the inner turmoil of the protagonists, appear on screen as a sort of silent cry. Instead of distorted guitars, maniacal rhythms and processed vocals, the sonic palette that underpins the dramatic action of the film has a decidedly gentler and more soothing tone. The visual element of *Mysterious Skin* pulls no punches with its frank depiction of sexual abuse and its long term consequences. The soundtrack, rather than working in concert with the images to add extra force to their impact, treats its subject matter with delicacy and actively works to cushion the blows.

Howard Paar, music supervisor for *Mysterious Skin,* employs music that is contemplative and comforting, avoiding the use of material that would add an angrier or more aggressive tone to the story. This has the effect of reducing the visceral nature of these scenes and acts as the soothing voice of reassurance that enables the viewer to keep watching. This a much different approach than that used by Peter Coqillard for *The Doom Generation*, where there was a desire for the music to operate as a sort of amplifier that ramped up the chaos during intense sequences, or augmented the calm during lulls in the action. It also differs greatly from *The Living End*,

which used its soundtrack to provide an adrenalin boost that underscored the exasperation, malaise, and dissatisfaction felt by Jon and Luke, while simultaneously highlighting the psycho-sexual dynamic of their relationship. Those earlier films had the tone of unmuted diatribes, while the music in *Mysterious Skin* replaces these defiant shouts with the plaintive quality of a desperate plea.

In order to accomplish this, the film makes use of a compilation soundtrack that, once again, draws from the underground. Unlike the aggressive eroticism of *The Living End*, or the commercial thrust which was evident with *The Doom Generation*, *Mysterious Skin* works on a much different register. Those earlier films used their soundtracks, at least in part, to articulate the rage felt by their protagonists, but *Mysterious Skin* seeks to accomplish something else entirely. In the process of adapting the book there were fundamental changes made to the musical reference points. The more imposing musical elements were shifted into the visual background. This effectively retains the presence of the shadow cast by the shared childhood trauma of the protagonists, but the songs employed within the film have a tendency to implore us to listen to the characters, rather than the lyrics of the songs. The use, in particular, of the Cocteau Twins track "Crushed", which is anchored by Elizabeth Fraser's non-linguistic vocalese, helps supports this argument in the way that it simultaneously represents a desire to be heard, as well as the struggle to find any words at all.[5]

In terms of language, Fraser's phonetic exclamations take us into somewhat alien territory. Hers is a sort of musical impressionism of peculiar phrases and enunciations that strips away the precision of linguistic communication and simply relays a feeling without representing any distinct experience. It emotes in an intuitive way that is disconnected from the descriptive nature of conventional lyrics and effectively harnesses the power of the human voice unbound from the fetish value of language itself.

Theodor W. Adorno wrote at length about the "fetish-character in music."[6] He was chiefly addressing the notion that, as music became commodified, the listener became a consumer. Much of his essay on the topic laments the fact that as music became ubiquitous it was transformed. Music shifted from being an ephemeral thing to be enjoyed as it was happening, into something that is entirely devalued by virtue of its constant presence. He states

that "[t]he more inexorably the principle of exchange-value destroys use-values for human beings, the more deeply does exchange-value disguise itself as the object of enjoyment."[7] In other words, we transition from an appreciation of music's affective qualities to an obsession with the return that its worth as a commodity may eventually bring.

Adorno may be specifically addressing the fetish value of the material good, but let us consider the fetish value of words. One of Adorno's concerns is that the ubiquity of music "seems to complement the reduction of people to silence, the dying out of speech as expression, the inability to communicate at all. It inhabits the pockets of silence that develop between people molded by anxiety, work and undemanding docility."[8] This line of thought is echoed in Baudrillard's concept of the media silencing the masses through the fabrication of non-communication. He writes that "the consumption of products and messages is the abstract social relation that they establish, the ban raised against all forms of response and reciprocity."[9] Here, and throughout the films being examined, we have works that are designed to provoke a response from their audience. *Mysterious Skin* is a film that concerns itself with the sexual abuse of minors, a subject that much of polite society finds abominable but would prefer to avoid discussing, and while the film invites reaction it also illustrates that a response is not always instantaneous or verbal. The ability to occasionally do away with words and emote in an unfettered way is incredibly important.

Of course there is still the presence of music in *Mysterious Skin*, but it is frequently an ambient music that does not make the same demands on the listener. In fact, there is an argument to be made that this music represents, at its core, an attempt to reduce the banal ubiquity of immediately recognizable songs and redistribute the ability to respond. Jacques Attali notes that one function of the conceptual work of John Cage, a precursor and influence on modern ambient music, is that it gives "back the right to speak to people who do no [sic] want to have it."[10] The subdued nature of the music being employed simultaneously highlights the struggle of the characters to understand their own experiences, while also providing the necessary outlet for the expression of their crushing anguish.

It is salient to point out here that, in addition to the compilation soundtrack to *Mysterious Skin,* there is also a composed score of ambient music that was prepared by former Cocteau

Twins member Robin Guthrie and the pianist Harold Budd, who had recorded an album with the members of that group in the mid-80s.[11] This composed score is quite ethereal in nature, and the involvement of Guthrie's recognizable guitar sound allows for it to blend in with the compiled soundtrack, which includes his own work. The work of Guthrie and Budd forms an ambient bed of sound that provides the same sort of gentle support as the compiled selections. This fits with the stated purpose that ambient music has always had.

Brian Eno, who has collaborated with Harold Budd on a number of occasions and is widely acknowledged as having coined the term 'ambient music,' initiated his forays into the style after a hospital stay where he was unable to control the volume on a turntable. Hearing a record at a barely audible volume allowed him to stumble across "a new way of hearing music—as part of the ambience of the environment just as the color of the light and the sound of the rain were parts of that ambience."[12] From its inception this was music that was meant to play a restricted role in the overall soundscape, rather than be a dominant force.

The therapeutic origins and designs of this music are worth considering. *Mysterious Skin* depicts the struggle faced by the victims of an abuse that society would much rather ignore. There is a consensus that the sexual abuse of minors is a reprehensible act, but it is an uncomfortable subject for most and it would seem that few are willing to openly discuss the effects it can have upon growth of affected individuals. Early on in his career Araki related that "[t]here is a genuine need for the under- and mis-represented to identify themselves via the cinema machine."[13] The music in his earlier works may have been shouting alongside the raised voices of the protagonists, but in *Mysterious Skin* the songs often slip into the background. In this sense, the music can certainly be seen to inhabit the pockets of silence that Adorno talks about, but they are doing so by providing a lining for those pockets instead of attempting to fill them. As Attali observes of Cage's music, this soft touch welcomes, rather than competes with, human voices.

This is of utmost importance because, with Adorno's observations in mind, we can now look back at the use of more commercially viable music in *The Doom Generation* and see the difference in how the compiled score is prepared and deployed. One could consider that the music featured in *The Doom Generation* is just an example of crass commercialism that is

attempting to speak to a wider demographic, and this certainly meshes with Adorno and Eisler's thoughts on motion pictures. They write that:

> The motion pictures are made to measure for their customers, planned according to real or supposed needs, and reproduce these needs. But at the same time the products that are most widespread, and therefore closest to the public, are objectively most remote from the public as regards the methods by which they are produced and the interests they represent.[14]

However, if Araki's statements are taken at face value then a more interesting concept may be to consider that music was being used as a means of reaching a wider selection of the 'under- and mis-represented' individuals. This would indicate that the focus on the youth market wouldn't be so much a question of crass commercialism, but a matter of helping the message be heard by those who need to know that they are not alone. The music may still have a market function, but it serves an important social role as well. In the case of *The Doom Generation,* the tactic of employing the finely honed marketing techniques of the Hollywood machine helped the feature reach the suburban malcontents that were the subject of the film. *Mysterious Skin* shifts away from this sort of commercial overture to young consumers. The soundtrack doesn't serve to bring people to the theatre, but to help defuse the triggers inherent in depicting such intense personal experience.

Like *The Living End*, *Mysterious Skin* employs more obscure material. The key difference being that in *The Living End* there was an effort to communicate with an emerging subculture, whereas the use of underground music to soundtrack *Mysterious Skin*, a film set in a specific era of the past, achieves different goals. By evoking the alien, the music aids the narrative in sensitively providing a space for those silent survivors of sexual abuse, while patiently listening for words from those who are working to find them. In this instance the soundtrack is not tied to a developing scene, but one that has had the time needed to establish a degree of outsider status. *Mysterious Skin*'s diversity of voices, from Brian's internal struggle to unravel a mystery to Neil's difficulty in recognizing himself as a victim, represent different experiences. They show the role that perspective plays in our individual reactions to such situations.

In some respects this strategy allows the film to capture an essential element of the source novel. The story in Heim's book is told via a series of first-person accounts coming from the perspectives of the core characters. These frequently contain passages that indicate distinctions between these core characters and the mass culture that surrounds them. The other occupants of Hutchinson appear periodically throughout the narrative, often in ways that illustrate the disconnect between the individual telling their tale and those they encounter. Neil desperately wants to create distance with the youth of Hutchinson and "their drugged faces, their short-on-top/long-in-back haircuts, their clothes advertising heavy metal bands."[15] Eric sees the residents sitting "on car hoods, their radios blaring heavy metal,"[16] or driving through the streets with their car stereos "wailing a song from before I was born."[17] All of this serves to illustrate the detachment that these individuals feel from their rural Midwest environment. A world with a booming voice that threatens to drown out their pleas.

The film dispenses with these devices designed to establish the protagonists as culturally removed from the inhabitants of their communities. This diminishes the roaring din of the outside world, and in doing so, it gives additional agency to the subjects of the narrative. The last chapter dealt with how the characters in *The Doom Generation* are constantly engaging in a battle to have their voices heard. Amy, Jordan, and Xavier's journey is a struggle to express themselves to an inhospitable world that refuses to listen. It is an external struggle where they are forced to contend with hostile elements in order to create the space in which to speak. Brian and Neil are given ample space in which to tell their tale, but their task is an internal one. They must grapple with the spectre of their shared past and come to a fuller awareness of what transpired, and how it has shaped their lives.

Interestingly, in order to accomplish this purpose, there is a return to the shoegazing work of some artists that have been called upon to underscore some of the calmer moments on the soundtracks to Araki's more frantic earlier work. Ride had previous contributed material that was used on the soundtracks to *Totally F***ed Up*, *The Doom Generation* and *Splendor* (1999).[18] Phelim O'Neill also asserts that the Araki feature *Nowhere* (1997) was named after the group's debut album.[19, 20] Songs by Slowdive had been featured in *The Doom Generation*, *Nowhere*, and *Splendor*.[21] Additionally, a number of these acts show the influence of the Cocteau Twins (who

appear on the soundtracks to several earlier films, too).[22] The stylistic resemblances shared by the roster of artists allows for the compiled soundtrack and the Budd and Guthrie score to flow together in a very organic manner.

The other films that have been examined in this thesis depict situations where individuals are traveling together and, because there is a tendency for all of the main characters to occupy the same vehicle, their soundtrack is something that is constantly shared. Discussion of both *The Living End* and *The Doom Generation* highlighted moments when a Walkman was used to isolate one character from the pack, but *Mysterious Skin* makes use of this same playback device in a much different way; one that cuts across the distances that separate the protagonists and highlights the transfer of music between friends.

Michael L. Jones writes that the Walkman "further reinforced and extended the pleasures of cassette copying by adding portability and immersion in a mobile, personal soundtrack to sequencing playlists and sharing them with friends."[23] We've already noted the ability for individuals to use a wall of sound in order to cut themselves off from the outside world, but Jones brings to the fore the fact that the cassette tape also enables people to record, copy, and customise. These qualities allow for the easy exchange of sounds between friends and likeminded individuals.

This aspect of cassette culture is demonstrated during a sequence when Brian is shown celebrating his birthday in Eric's bedroom. The two of them are drinking and exchanging gifts and the music playing is the song "Drive Blind", the B-side to an early EP by Ride.[24] The scene winds down as the pair discuss one of Brian's drawings which features an alien wearing tennis shoes. This is followed by a dissolve to an image of Neil, who is across the country in New York, reclining on a couch with headphones on. The music carries over and links the two locations. It is only when Wendy arrives and rouses Neil from his nap that he removes the headphones and the volume drops accordingly. This suggests that the music is diegetic in both places. The structure of the scene implies that Neil, who is seen reading a postcard from Eric earlier in the film, may be listening to a cassette that he had been given. The synchronicity of their listening indicates the strong bonds that exist between the characters, despite the distance between them.

As Chion observes "music enjoys the status of being a little freer of barriers of time and space than the other sound and visual elements. The latter are obliged to remain clearly defined in their relation to the diegetic space."[25] It may not be entirely plausible that the same song is playing diegetically in both Kansas and New York, but using music in this way doesn't violate the audiovisual contract and break the viewer's faith in what they are experiencing. In fact, the careful structure of the scene identifies the alternative tastes shared by the group of friends and reinforces our sense of the connective tissue that binds them together. This theme continues, and throughout the film there are further suggestions of the manner in which the characters influence one another.

One way that this manifests is through the way that music related ephemera is employed within the mise-en-scene. Observe the way that Brian's bedroom is filled with imagery related to science fiction films and space exploration for most of *Mysterious Skin*, but a sequence that occurs immediately before he goes to meet with Neil at the end of the film shows him in the process of taking down the solar system mobile that had been suspended from the ceiling. Behind him we can see a redecorated room that now features posters for This Mortal Coil, Suicidal Tendencies, Virgin Prunes, and an image of Robert Smith and Siouxsie Sioux posing together. Brian has been transformed from somebody who was seeking a signal from the stars into someone who has been accepted into a community that is willing to listen to what he has to say. When Eric looks at the alien drawing and points out the tennis shoes it makes it clear that the answers that Brian seeks will not come from the skies. They will come from those that he has grown to trust. He is no longer alone in the universe and desperately waiting for contact. Contact has now been made and the lines of communication are finally open.

There are many threads that hold the characters together and, through the exchange of the cassettes and the visual evidence of the influence provided by an accepting community of peers, we see these threads become bonds. These elements also help to identify music as being an essential part of the connective tissue that draws these social misfits together. It is also important to remember the role that music plays in the creative process for Araki. He states that, "I write with music playing all the time, it's integral to the atmosphere and spirit of my movies. Often I'll put the track in the script so it's there all the way through the process. Music can cut through a

lot. If you're on the same page as someone with certain bands then you'll probably have plenty else you can relate to."[26] This quote simultaneously identifies the way that music is a key ingredient in his writing process, but also speaks of how it aids in creating bonds between the people that populate his stories.

Using a song as a means to imply the connection between characters bears a similarity to the way that music has been used throughout Araki's oeuvre as a way to foster connections with subcultural audiences. Phelim O'Neill suggests that over time the process of compiling the music for these films has evolved into something more personal. "With *Totally F***ed Up,* what seemed like a cost-effective way to get a movie soundtrack together (Ride, Pale Saints, His Name Is Alive, This Mortal Coil) became something more time consuming, more an actual labour of love."[27] This certainly provides the impression that there is an investment by the director himself in terms of the material that is being used, but the shifts in the manner in which music is used in each film point toward input from other sources with regards to how the selected songs are employed.

The practice of employing 'temp tracks' during the process of assembling a film is certainly not a new practice, but having those temp tracks carry over into the finished work isn't without its problems. Looking back to the period when Kubrick compiled the soundtrack to *2001: A Space Odyssey* it becomes clear that there was a significant degree of resistance to the notion of scoring films using existing compositions. There was an expectation for movies to conform to the established tradition of having music specifically composed to suit each project. At one point Alex North, who had previously worked with Kubrick on *Spartacus* (1960), was commissioned to compose a score, which ultimately went unused.[28] There was also pressure from publicists regarding the benefits of including a marketable 'hit song' on the soundtrack.[29]

Christine Lee Gengaro makes the observation that, as successful as the melding of image and music is within *2001: A Space Odyssey*, that existing context was not something that was necessarily taken into consideration during the selection process:

> The choices of pre-existent music in film, whether handpicked by a director or in a pinch by a silent film pianist, bring additional meaning into the film experience. A director might draw upon these meanings in a narrative or referential function to enhance the

> experience of his or her film. Kubrick was far more interested in the sounds of works and how they matched with his visual images rather than what they "meant."[30]

While, due to the stature of both the director and the work itself, *2001: A Space Odyssey* may be a watershed moment for the use of pre-existing music in film, this quotation makes a very important point. As significant as it may have been in terms of making compilation scores acceptable, and as indelible as the associations Kubrick created between sound and image may be, Gengaro's analysis reveals that the musical selection process didn't aspire to make use of the rich contextual meanings that the songs actually contain.

It was established in the first chapter that prior use or 'associational baggage' is something with which filmmakers must contend, and the origins for this thesis came from a fascination with what happens when the contextual history of music is incorporated into film-making in an organic way that takes full advantage of what the songs mean. As Kate McQuiston puts it, "[e]xisting music demands a multivalent approach: the music and image must be taken together, and previous associations, whether historical and original or more recently formulated, necessarily become a part of meaning."[31] One of the ways of restricting the scope of previous associations, and streamlining the process of managing the allusions provided by licensed music, is by making use of more obscure tracks by the selected artists – rather than opting for their more known material. In the case of *Mysterious Skin,* several of the songs used in the film have been sourced from import singles or, as is the case with "Crushed" by the Cocteau Twins, are tracks exclusive to compilations.[32]

David Byrne, a musician and songwriter who has some degree of experience composing and licensing music for use in motion pictures, writes that, "films will often license a song from a record or band that isn't that well known. I suspect that there's a cool-factor at work – many film directors are covert music geeks."[33] Byrne's observation indicates that these choices are the result of trying to impress an audience through the use of lesser known material, and that may very well be the case, but this strategy certainly has the added benefit of making use of songs that have been less widely heard. This places some constraints on the associational baggage that

can build up due to prior exposure, while still providing a spark of recognition to those who recognize the performer.

None of this is meant to suggest that placing such limiters on the allusive nature of the musical selections means that rich additional meanings are somehow eliminated. The case of Slowdive's cover of the Syd Barrett composition "Golden Hair" provides a vivid illustration of the complex network of allusions that may still result.[34] The song is a somewhat obscure non-album B-side, and like Araki's treatment of *Mysterious Skin,* it is an adaptation of another artist's work. In fact, so is the original version by Barrett, as the source for the lyrics is a James Joyce poem.

"Golden Hair" plays over the opening credits for the film, and like the songs that occupy the opening moments of *The Living End* and *The Doom Generation* it does quite a bit to set the tone for *Mysterious Skin*. The washed out guitars establish the sensitive touch that the film takes with its difficult subject matter of juveniles coping with the long term effects of falling victim to a sexual predator at a young age. The song accompanies the image of a young Neil McCormick cherubically smiling as a dreamlike shower of Froot Loops cereal rains down upon his head, and the music imparts an idyllic quality on what we see projected on the screen. Indeed, this sequence echoes Chion's assertion that "it is always the image, the gathering place and magnet from auditory impressions, that sound decorates with its unbridled splendor."[35] As the narrative progresses, this image recurs and comes to represent a moment of enormous consequence for Neil. Over the course of the film Neil's ecstatic face under a shower of Froot Loops takes on a more sinister quality for the audience as it recalls the first moments of his sexual awakening at the hands of a gentle, but predatory, authority figure.

In terms of what "Golden Hair" brings to the narrative of *Mysterious Skin*, the title of the song can be seen to foreshadow the significance of the blond and moustachioed baseball coach who casts such a long shadow over the lives of the two protagonists, Brian Lackey and Neil McCormick. As stated earlier, the song is only really identifiable to those audience members who are already familiar with the piece. The process of identification is complicated due to the fact that the segment used to accompany this opening sequence is an instrumental portion of the song. It contains none of the lyrical content that might prompt viewers unfamiliar with Slowdive

to easily identify the song. This can also be seen as another instance of the soundtrack silencing its own voice in order to allow those within the film ample room to speak for themselves.

The network of contextual markers contained in this selection is a rather involving array of clues that highlight a number of themes relevant to the film. These would include allusions to the public struggles that Syd Barrett, the former Pink Floyd member, experienced with drug use and personal demons. The adaptation of his composition allows for the musician's biographical history to raise the spectre of damaged individuals and issues of mental health. It is also worth considering that the song's multiple levels of adaptation, it is a cover version of a poem by James Joyce that has been set to music by Barrett, can be seen to present a knowing wink to the audience. Reminding savvy viewers that *Mysterious Skin* marks the first time that Araki has adapted someone else's story to create a screenplay for one of his films.

The allusions presented by this musical selection are nuanced and multilayered. They effectively make use of a number of disparate elements that can be seen to connect with the concerns of the film in rather direct ways, and efficiently communicate a great deal of additional information. Like the musical selections that open both *The Living End* and *The Doom Generation,* "Golden Hair" foreshadows significant aspects of the narrative. This less aggressive opening number, however, also helps to establish the very different role that music plays. The other films hit the ground running with pulsing industrial beats and a palpable sense of violence waiting to happen. The compiled music builds upon the frustration and anger of the characters, and moves with it. The songs selected for *Mysterious Skin* operate at a different level entirely. They remove the blinders of rage and have a transformative effect on the tone of the narrative, which results in a work that is more concerned with healing than with lashing out in revenge.

At various points during this thesis Stanley Kubrick and Martin Scorsese have been the touchstones for the use of music in cinema, but the transformative work being done by the songs in *Mysterious Skin* points toward the influence of Kenneth Anger. His short film *Scorpio Rising* (1964), is of particular interest in this regard. The film is an acknowledged influence on the music-centric works of Scorsese, who writes that, "this was the movie that gave birth to this way of working with images and music."[36] *Scorpio Rising* presents the fetishized images of bikers

captured by Anger's lens, which are homo-eroticized and subverted through the use of the series of pop songs that makes up the film's soundtrack.

Anger's use of music takes possession of the images and transforms them. What might have been a document chronicling the lifestyle of the members of a motorcycle club, who party hard and take obsessive care of their bikes, becomes something entirely different. Scorsese's quote speaks volumes about the film's influence, but while it may have created ripples in Hollywood, *Scorpio Rising* had a much more pronounced effect on independent film-making. According to Jane Giles, "rather than being absorbed by the mainstream, the movie fed back into the underground, where it set a precedent for the use of pop music in experimental film-making."[37]

There are significant differences between the use of music in experimental film and the use of music in narrative features. It is clear that the way that songs are employed in *Mysterious Skin* certainly doesn't have precisely the same transformative effect on the images as the juxtapositions found in *Scorpio Rising*, but the predominantly gentle shoegazing sounds do work to temper the tone of the action. Aaron Copland relates "how serviceable music can be in tieing [sic] together a visual medium which is, by its very nature, continually in danger of falling apart."[38] In other words, one of the desired effects of a traditional score is for the soundtrack to paper over the cracks, smoothing out the rough edges and helping to maintain a sense of continuity. The function of music in this instance is different. The purpose of the selected songs is not to casually distract the viewer from the narrative sutures, but to cushion the impact of the weighty themes.

There are certainly sequences in *Mysterious Skin* where songs are used in a way that provides continuity, but in many cases they are put to the task of making thematic elements more digestible, rather than covering up errors. Copland asserts that "the composer is not a magician; he can't hardly be expected to do more than to make potent through music the film's dramatic and emotional values."[39] In this case, however, the power of music is harnessed to reduce the immediate potency of the content. The selected songs do the work of a sort of spoonful of sugar that helps the film's unpalatable subject matter go down easier. This is not some sort of sonic sleight of hand that seeks to distract the viewer. This is a sort of transformative alchemy. Rather

than being a trigger, the film seeks to defuse. This is akin to the way a vaccine brings an inert virus into the body, allowing it to develop natural defenses against the threat. The calming effect of the ambient sounds enable the film to present its visual content with veracity without being a completely overwhelming experience for the audience. It may seem a stretch to draw the comparison between the use of music in Anger's work and the manner in which it has been incorporated into films directed by Gregg Araki, but there is a precedent for introducing him into this discussion.

James Moran points out that the enduring influence of Anger manifests itself in a number of ways throughout Araki's early films. He calls specific attention to the beefcake persona of Luke in *The Living End,* which he explicitly links with *Scorpio Rising,* seeing in both films the "surrender to an attractive rebel whose homoeroticism is linked to the death drive."[40] Above all Moran notes that the director's output consistently shows traces of being a part of a continuity that includes Anger, as well as Gregory Markopoulos and Curtis Harrington, and suggests that "[t]heir concerns with personal identity, self-disclosure, and subversiveness continue to resonate with urgency in Araki's work."[41]

Moran's article, which was published in 1996, is obviously speaking about Araki's earlier works, and the connection that he makes with Anger's oeuvre are primarily related to visual aesthetics. However, it does help to establish Anger as an influence, as well as indicate some of the ways that this influence plays out. Moran, however, doesn't directly address the ground breaking ways in which Anger combined pop songs with the raw documentary footage that he had compiled in order to create a work that effectively had transformative effects on all of its components. In *Scorpio Rising,* the elements are brought together in ways that produce a homo-erotic whole that was not necessarily present in the individual parts.

There are also direct parallels to be drawn between this practice and the phenomenon of the meaning saturated fan music videos examined by Jenkins,[42]- but what is of primary concern is how *Mysterious Skin* makes use of similar techniques to achieve a very different result. *Scorpio Rising* employs music as part of an alchemical process that, to a certain extent, obliterates the allusion. Rather than building upon the audience's familiarity with songs, Anger

seeks to create subversively indelible connections that supersede all previous exposure and forever alter the meanings of that material for the viewer.

The chief reason that a discussion of Anger doesn't figure earlier in this thesis is that in all of these features the compiled soundtrack builds upon the extant meanings of the material it gathers together. The intertextual elements reinforce one another and work in concert to produce additional meaning. Anger's work operates on a vastly different level that is concerned with razing our existing conceptions in order to grant us new perspectives and force us to re-evaluate things that we thought we understood. None of this is meant to suggest that *Mysterious Skin* seeks to obliterate prior understanding, but is intended to point out how music supervision harnesses the transformative power that the juxtapositions of music and image can have, and uses it to cushion the blow. The tenderness of the soundtrack tempers the emotional violence of the image and affords the viewer the ability to continue watching in situations where they might otherwise avert their eyes. As Adorno states "[i]f nobody can any longer speak, then certainly nobody can any longer listen."[43] In this sense, it is the songs that afford the images the ability to speak by way of allowing audiences to continue to listen to what they see.

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[1] Heim, Scott. *Mysterious Skin.* New York: HarperCollins, 2005. 115.
[2] Heim 118.
[3] Heim 53.
[4] Gorbman, Claudia. *Unheard Melodies.* Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press, 1987. 57.
[5] Cocteau Twins. "Crushed" *Lonely Is An Eyesore.* 4AD CAD 703, 1987. LP / CD.
[6] Adorno, Theodor W. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. Eds, Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1990. 270-299.
[7] Adorno 279.
[8] Adorno 271.
[9] Baudrillard, Jean. "Requiem for the Media" *The New Media Reader* Eds. Nick Montfort and Noah Wardrip-Fruin. Cambridge: MIT, 2003. 281.
[10] Attali 136.
[11] Harold Budd, Elizabeth Fraser, Robin Guthrie, Simon Raymonde. *The Moon and the Melodies.* 4AD CAD611, 1986. LP.
[12] Eno, Brian. *Discreet Music.* Obscure / Island obscure no. 3, 1975. LP.
[13] Araki "The (Sorry) State of (Independent) Things" 69.
[14] Adorno, Theodor & Hanns Eisler. *Composing For The Films*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010.
[15] Heim 161-162.
[16] Heim 188.
[17] Heim 133.
[18] *Totally F***ed Up* includes "Vapour Trail" from Ride's debut album *Nowhere* (Creation/Sire 26462, 1990. CD). *The Doom Generation* uses "Leave Them All Behind" from their sophomore release *Going Blank Again*

(Creation / Sire 926836-2, 1992. CD), and *Splendor* features the rarity "Moonlight Medicine (Ride on the Wire Remix)", which is Portishead's reworking of the opening track from *Carnival of Light* (Sire 945610-2, 1994. CD).
[19] O'Neill.
[20] Ride. *Nowhere.* Creation / Sire 26462, 1990. CD.
[21] *The Doom Generation* soundtrack included two selections by Slowdive: "Alison" and "Blue Skied an' Clear" which are album tracks from *Souvlaki* (Creation / SBK Records 88263, 1993. CD.) and *Pygmalion* (Creation CRE168, 1995. CD). The soundtrack to *Nowhere* features "Avalyn II" from their debut EP (Creation CRE093, 1990. 12" / CD). *Splendor* features a version of "Shine (The Splendiforous Locust Mix)" that was created for the film.
[22] "Summerblink" by the Cocteau Twins, one of the B-sides to their single *Evangeline* (Fontana CTX1, 1993. 12" / CDS) features on the soundtrack to *The Doom Generation. Nowhere* includes an exclusive remix of their song "Seekers Who Are Lovers", and a live recording of "Pitch the Baby" by Cocteau Twins appears on the soundtrack to *Splendor*.
[23] Jones, Michael L. *Music Industries.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 179-180.
[24] Ride. "Drive Blind". *Ride.* Creation CRE072, 1990. 12" / CDS.
[25] Chion 81.
[26] O'Neill.
[27] O'Neill.
[28] See McQuiston 131-133, Gengaro 77-86.
[29] See McQuiston 133 for an excerpt from first unit publicist Roger Caras' letter to Kubrick in regards to this matter.
[30] Gengaro 75.
[31] McQuiston, Kate. *We'll Meet Again.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 162.
[32] "Crushed" appears only on the 4AD compilation *Lonely Is An Eyesore.* A video was made for the song, but it was never released commercially as a single and does not appear on any Cocteau Twins album.
[33] Byrne, David. *How Music Works.* San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2012. 246.
[34] Slowdive. "Golden Hair". *Catch The Breeze.* Creation CRE112T, 1991. 12" / CDS.
[35] Chion 143.
[36] Scorsese, Martin. "Introduction to Disc One." *Kenneth Anger: The Complete Magick Lantern Cycle DVD Insert.* San Francisco: Fantoma, 2010. 2.
[37] Giles 45.
[38] Copland SM28.
[39] Copland SM28.
[40] Moran 19.
[41] Moran 19.
[42] Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
[43] Adorno 271.

Conclusion:
Everything in Context, and the Context in Everything.

It should be obvious by now that the licensed music contained on a film's compiled soundtrack has a number of contextual elements that can be used to deliver meaning in significant ways. It should also be clear that effectively managing the allusive properties of the musical content can be a difficult task. Due partly to this fact, Hollywood has traditionally relied upon commissioned scores by dedicated composers or original soundtracks comprised of new recordings by popular artists. Both of these methods avoid the potential pitfalls served up by the Pandora's Box of employing pre-existing material. That said, situations do arise where compilation soundtracks present themselves as the best available option.

Period pieces are a good example of this. Era-appropriate musical selections are efficient ways of imparting an authenticity to depictions of specific points in time, but they are certainly not the only reason to use licensed music. In the case of Gregg Araki's early features, as Phelim O'Neill asserts, the use of this method of acquiring music was part of a strategy to minimize the cost of providing a soundtrack for low budget features.[1] What is demonstrated by the manner in which *The Living End*'s soundtrack complements the social concerns presented by the narrative, is that this is not a matter of budget. Even when working with the rather miniscule sum of $20,000 it is possible, through resourcefulness and creativity, to accomplish the feat of incorporating existing context into the content of the film. In some respects, in spite of the financial constraints, it can even be seen as somewhat more successful than *The Doom Generation*, which was bound by the obligation to produce a marketable soundtrack cd.

Despite the fact that this thesis focuses itself on Araki's body of work, there is nothing to suggest that his films are entirely unique in this respect. To the contrary, the features examined in this thesis should be considered to be part of a larger wave of music conscious films, and the interest is not so much in what is being done – but in the process of selection itself. Restricting the study to the work of one director, rather than being intended as some sort of auteurist statement, should be considered as a means of limiting the number of variables at play. Instead of

examining how a range of directors have used music supervision to serve the needs of their films, this approach illustrates the versatility and malleability of the process even when being used in the films of an individual filmmaker with music selected from within a limited pool of artists. The emphasis isn't intended to be placed on the director, but on the art of music selection; highlighting how it works, and the ways that it can be adapted and harnessed to suit the distinct needs of different projects. This manner of preparing a compiled soundtrack has evolved through the increased artistry and specialization in the field of music supervision. Sofia Coppola, Jim Jarmusch, Alex Cox, and others have frequently shown an ability to employ music supervisors that effectively make use of the contextual information associated with the music licensed for their films.

Marshall McLuhan, a media theorist who implored us to look beyond obvious meanings and pay close attention to the subtle effects that produce these meanings, once wrote that "[t]he artist is the man in any field, scientific or humanistic, who grasps the implications of his actions and of new knowledge in his own time. He is the man of integral awareness."[2] These words were meant to indicate the necessity for a wider understanding of all of the effects that arise through the application of new technologies, but they can serve to help frame this argument. Throughout this analysis we have seen that certain effects related to a film's musical accompaniment are readily observed, but that there are also other messages that can often be easily overlooked. As examples, the songs used in a film may help to dictate the mood or pace of sequences, they may establish the time period in which the narrative takes place, but this information is merely the surface meaning of what is being transmitted. Careful consideration of the contextual elements may reveal that more significant meanings are being communicated through the use of licensed music.

At a very basic level meaning can be related to literal connections with the lyrical content of the songs that appear on the compiled soundtrack, but this sort of linkage can frequently seem overbearing. To a degree this is the most banal and obvious way of manufacturing meaning. A more discerning approach relies upon the applied knowledge of a music supervisor to do subtle work with a sonic equivalent to the sort of visual allusions that Noël Carroll details in "The Future of Allusion."[3] In his words, allusion "is an umbrella term covering a mixed lot of

practices including quotations, the memorialization of past genres, the reworking of past genres, *homages*, and the recreations of 'classic' scenes, shots, plot motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures, and so forth from film history…"[4] Carroll's focus is on allusions to film history and his definition doesn't make any overt mention of allusion through musical selection but, as Jeff Smith argues, it does provide an entry point for the study of these sorts of relationships in an increasingly multi-media world.

The films examined in the first two chapters of this thesis, *The Living End* and *The Doom Generation,* rely primarily upon this sort of allusion with regards to their use of compilation soundtracks. *The Living End* employs a roster of artists sourced from a queer-run record label, many of whom had lengthy histories of working with queer filmmakers. These facts effectively bolster the political stance taken by the film without beating the audience over the head with its messages. Spectators with a heavy investment in the subculture depicted in the film are provided a number of points of reference that clearly indicate connections to a lineage of queer activism and artistic creation. To a large degree the soundtrack is speaking directly to the marginalized audience in a way that helps to establish the authenticity of the film and reassure that it is aligned with those that it represents.

The Doom Generation, which also rages against the establishment, expands upon this manner of allusion. It makes use of a somewhat more diverse array of techniques. These include the integration of trends found with the underground, cameos by recognizable celebrities, and the recreation of dialogue sampled by artists known to the demographic that the film targets. These elements combine in a way that fosters connections to an emerging counterculture, but the focus is less about communicating to the audience. There are instances where there are knowing winks to savvy viewers, but the music is primarily a diegetic device employed by the characters to voice their dissatisfaction with the world around them. In other words, the music plays a role in amplifying the concerns of the central figures. It speaks *for* the protagonists, rather than *to* the crowd.

The Doom Generation depicts a battle for expression through a series of situations where the playback of music is contested. The narrative arc of the film features a number of instances where the protagonists of the film enter into conflict due to circumstances where music is

imposed upon them by the outside world. In some ways this is a rather radical application of the soundtrack that highlights the significance of cultural expression for contemporary youth. Jacques Attali, writing about the ominous omnipresence of Muzak, observes that "[t]he music is not innocent. It is not just a way of drowning out the tedious noises of the workplace. It may be the herald of the general silence of men before the spectacle of commodities."[5] The oppressive aspects of the environmental music to which Xavier Red, Amy Blue, and Jordan White are regularly subjected are a constant source of conflict within the film. Retail outlets that saturate their spaces with saccharine melodies provoke a violent response from the trio of youths who refuse to acquiesce to the conditioning machines that demand they hold their tongues and behave like good consumers. The irony being that this message is bundled into a package destined for the multiplex, with a tie-in soundtrack available in music store housed inside the same shopping complex.

Mysterious Skin expands upon the idea of resistance against this general silence that Attali alludes to and, by providing ample space for the victimized protagonists of the film to express themselves, resists the environmental oppression and asserts that each individual victim be permitted to state their case. Through the use of an instrumental score commissioned for the project, excerpts from songs that omit vocals, and material that expresses emotion in nonverbal ways, the soundtrack for the film is able to provide the victims of abuse and exploitation with the room necessary for their voices to find a place of privilege. Instead of speaking *to* an audience or speaking *for* the protagonists, the music employed by the film takes on a supporting role that allows the individuals to speak for themselves.

Each of these situations deploys the compiled soundtrack in a substantially different way, and uses the sourced music to achieve a somewhat different goal. All of them, however, revolve around a conscientious, and well researched, use of music. There is an integral awareness of the implications of context. This provides the foundation for a compiled soundtrack that supports the aims of each particular film, and effectively extends the message in meaningful ways. Of course, this is all dependent on an audience that is prepared to recognize these effects. This doesn't just mean being able to decipher the messages. It means being open to fact that these meanings are even present. As Adorno asserts:

> Not only do the listening subjects lose, along with the freedom of choice and responsibility, the capacity for conscious perception of music, which was from time immemorial confined to a narrow group, but they stubbornly reject the possibility of such perception.[6]

In other words, if we are not paying attention the finer points of meaning may slip past our notice and be forever lost.

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[1] O'Neill.
[2] McLuhan, Marshall, "Understanding Media." *Art in Theory: 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood eds. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1992. p 741.
[3] Carroll, Noël. "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)." *October*, Vol. 20 (Spring, 1982). The MIT Press.
[4] Carroll, Noël 52.
[5] Attali 112.
[6] Adorno 286.

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