The Socio-Cultural Contributions of American Film Music, 1954 to 1974

Spring 2008 – Mon. 3-5:50 – 2278 Public Affairs
Durrell Bowman – db@durrellbowman.com – office hours, Tues. 2-3, 2414 Schoenberg

From the mid-1950s through the early 1970s, film music strongly contributed to America’s artistic and cultural growth. This includes original music composed for suspense and horror films, historical epics and westerns, and science-fiction films. It also includes popular music, such as in several types of dramas, films of earlier musicals, and rock musicals. From the latter part of the period, it includes a highly diverse range of scores adapted from other types of existing music, as well as additional new instrumental music. The types of music for these various films include modern orchestral, neo-Romantic, electronic, Latin-American, pop, musical theatre, folk-rock, hard and psychedelic rock, R&B and soul, classical, avant-garde, folk-inspired, and jazz-related styles.

Schedule

Week 1—Suspense and Horror
• Vertigo

Week 2
• Psycho
—Epics about the Past
• Ben-Hur (in-class only)
• The Magnificent Seven

Week 3—“Alien” Landscapes
• Forbidden Planet
• Planet of the Apes

Week 4—“Us” and “Them”
• Touch of Evil
• West Side Story

Week 5—Turn On, Tune In …
• Breakfast at Tiffany’s
• Hair

Week 6—Drop Out
• Easy Rider
• Shaft

Week 7—New Takes on the “Future”
• 2001: A Space Odyssey
• A Clockwork Orange

Week 8—New Takes on the Past
• The Godfather
• American Graffiti

Week 9—Individual Presentations, 1st half
Week 10—Individual Presentations, 2nd half

Course Work
• fifteen films to view; on the course website (by April 4th) and on reserve at Powell 270
• selected readings; available as PDFs on the course website
• seven journal entries concerning specific readings and films; due online each Monday by 10 a.m. in Weeks 2-8—20% total (also factors in your in-class discussion participation)
• an in-class, 30-minute group presentation covering a specific reading about one of the featured films; takes place during one of the class meetings in Weeks 2-8—20%
• an in-class, 15-minute individual presentation on an additional film; Week 9 or 10—25%
• a 7-8 page essay based on that same additional film; due during exam week—35%
• you must also provide an outline and an annotated bibliography for your topic by Week 7
Readings

Week 1 (March 31)

Week 2 (April 7)
Hickman. Chapter 20: “Psycho” (most of the chapter)
[Not assigned – Hickman, Chapter 19: “Ben-Hur” – I will cover this film in class]

Week 3 (April 14)
[Presentation Group 1 includes discussion of the preceding item.]

Week 4 (April 21)
[Presentation Group 2 includes discussion of the preceding item.]
**Week 5** (April 28)

[Presentation Group 3 includes discussion of the preceding item.]
Hickman. “Landmarks of the New Era” (etc.). Excerpts from Chapter 22: “The Emerging New Era, 1960-1967.” [This is a short excerpt on *The Graduate*, but this film is now optional.]
Knapp. “*Hair.*” Excerpt from Chapter 6: “Counter-mythologies.”

[Presentation Group 4 includes discussion of the preceding item.]

**Week 6** (May 5)
Cowger, Kelsey. TBA. An article about the music for *Shaft*.

[Presentation Group 5 includes discussion of the preceding item.]

**Week 7** (May 12)

[Presentation Group 6 includes discussion of the preceding item.]

**Week 8** (May 19)

[Presentation Group 7 includes discussion of the preceding item.]

[Presentation Group 8 includes discussion of the preceding item.]

**Week 9** (May 26)
Memorial Day (holiday)

**Week 10** (June 2) and **Exam Week** (June 9?)

Individual presentations, first batch & second batch