Jazz Goes to the Movies: Contemporary Jazz Musicians' Work at the Intersections of the Jazz and Film Art Worlds

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ABSTRACT

Jazz music has a long history in cinema soundtracks. Its on-screen representations have been widely discussed by jazz scholars and critics alike. But what happens behind-the-scenes in jazz soundtrack production? Why are certain filmmakers interested in engaging jazz artists to create soundtracks for their films? How do jazz artists then negotiate the clash of their own creativity and practices with the reality of film industry conventions and hierarchies?

This dissertation investigates contemporary jazz musicians' work within the film industry from a sociological and ethnographic perspective. I examine the relationships and tensions between jazz artists' creative autonomy and their "work-for-hire" statuses within film industry hierarchies, read alongside critical examinations of their relationships with particular directors, the directors' goals and interests, filmmaking risk ideologies, and the artists' own musical productions. I theorize this work as operating at the intersections of the jazz and film "art worlds." Drawing on Howard Becker's conceptualization of the term, I understand each art world as an art-work-producing cooperative network structured around shared conventions. In my analyses of specific jazz soundtrack productions, I critically examine how each art world's conventions, practices, ideologies, and expectations complexly intersect, and affect the members of each art world in turn.

I address these broader themes through specific case studies. Each of these studies examines the film work of what I recognize as "inner circle" jazz artists within the last several decades – artists who hold jazz performance careers, but have also worked recurrently on film projects through their ongoing collaborations with specific filmmakers. A chapter on Vince Giordano and Dick Hyman investigates the work and experiences of jazz artists producing historicist soundtracks for period films, positioning their work in dialogue with certain

filmmakers' conceptions of "authenticity" in period productions. In a chapter focusing on the film work of Antonio Sanchez and Mark Isham, I examine the production of improvised jazz soundtracks, particularly their uniqueness in relation to film industry conceptions of risk. My primary argument is that these scores – facilitated by risk-taking, "maverick" filmmakers – challenge conventional methods of film score production and offer unique opportunities for jazz artists' creative agency within film industry labor structures. The final chapter examines Terence Blanchard's score work for Spike Lee's films through the lens of political, racial, and personal ideology. I situate Blanchard's and Lee's extensive collaborative relationship at the intersections of shared political ideology and commitment to jazz as representative of black experience and creativity.

Ultimately, this study integrates diverse, interdisciplinary analyses of contemporary jazz artists' behind-the-scenes work in film. It moves beyond representational readings of these jazz-film intersections, and engages with the complex circumstances informing the production of the soundtracks themselves. It recognizes jazz production outside the boundaries of the music industry, examining how jazz artists' work in film uniquely facilitates opportunities for expanded creative production and conventional transformation in both the jazz and film art worlds. Finally - beyond its pertinence to jazz studies and film studies – this study contributes to understanding the tensions and complexities between creative agency and labor in cultural industry (or art world) work.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"It's amazing how far you can go, just because someone believed in you." I recently saw this quotation scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed, and thought, how true. So many wonderful and inspirational people have believed in and supported me as I have pursued my dreams of studying music, and as I have worked on this project. I am truly grateful to each and every one of you.

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The shrill ring of the telephone cuts through Attorney Paul Biegler's office. "Hello?" The operator puts him through. Before we hear a human voice on the other end, a brazen, bluesy brass smear blasts through the telephone receiver, followed by raunchy jazz riffs in full swing. Soon, the invisible caller appears onscreen. The seductive and mysterious Laura Manion appears to be at a club, bedecked in a tight-fitting trench coat, glittering earrings, dark lipstick, and black sunglasses completely obscuring her eyes. She asks Biegler to meet with her husband, who is in need of an attorney, as he has been arrested for murder. Laura's voice is simultaneously desperate and commanding, tinged with a flirtatious coyness when she asks, "Would you want me there too, Mr. Biegler?" Throughout the conversation, the sinuous, bluesy musical soundtrack accompanies Laura's presence, complete with a sultry saxophone solo sonically signifying her "femme fatale" nature.

This film is Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959). The musical accompaniment – a tune called "Flirtibird" – was composed by Duke Ellington, and performed by his orchestra for the soundtrack (with Johnny Hodges performing the saxophone solo). The music's representations in the film are ripe for critical consideration, and one could easily write an extensive tome on the soundtrack's cultural, racial, gendered, and ideological semiotic meanings.[1] But what is going on behind the scenes? What were the circumstances informing Ellington's involvement in the film? What experiences and interactions influenced this soundtrack's production? How did Ellington compose this score, and how much creative agency

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[1] In fact, at least two scholarly works have extensively examined Ellington's score through a representational lens: Mervyn Cooke's "Anatomy of a Movie: Duke Ellington and 1950s Film Scoring, in Graham Lock and David Murray, ed., *Thriving on a Riff: Jazz and Blues Influence in African American Literature and Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), and Krin Gabbard's *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

did he retain in the process? I am greatly interested in such queries, and what similar examples

can tell us about how jazz musicians negotiate their careers and experiences as jazz artists

composing and/or performing for film.

1959 is past, and Ellington is no longer with us. We cannot ask him about his experiences

composing for the film, or investigate the circumstances of production without navigating

through a significant amount of historical weeds. We are also decades-removed from jazz artists'

peak involvement in the film industry. The "golden era" of jazz soundtracks during the 1950s-

1960s – which featured a proliferation of jazz-oriented scores from artists such as Quincy Jones,

Benny Carter, John Lewis, and Miles Davis – seems an idyllic ghost relegated to the annals of

history. Contemporary film scores are significantly dominated by conventional, neo-Romantic

film scoring practices exhibited by such renowned composers as John Williams, Danny Elfman,

Hans Zimmer, and Howard Shore. Compilation soundtracks are also becoming increasingly

prominent.[2] Amidst these trends, jazz's presence in film music production has been relatively

limited within the last fifty years.

That said, jazz has not disappeared from contemporary cinema. While infrequent, its

presence manifests in a variety of film productions, including "period" movies, jazz biopics,

romances, dramas, and the oeuvres of auteur directors such as Woody Allen, Spike Lee, and

Clint Eastwood. Just the last few years boast a sporadic proliferation of fictional and non-

fictional jazz biopics (*Bessie*, *Whiplash*, and the forthcoming *Miles Ahead* and *Born to Be Blue*),

period programs with jazz-heavy soundtracks (e.g., *Boardwalk Empire*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Mob*

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[2] The compilation score maintains a stronghold in the industry, replacing commissioned compositions with licensed commercial recordings of popular music. Such "pop scoring" has become economically valuable in the Hollywood industry in multiple ways – including its commercial accessibility for paying audiences, its functions as a source of extra-diegetic allusion/association that supports the movie's dramatic narrative, and its potential for synergistic cross-promotion with record companies and the film industry alike. For more information on this topic, see Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

City) and unique independent films with innovative jazz scores (e.g., *Birdman*). These examples illustrate that jazz scores are not phenomena of the past, but are of value to filmmakers in the present.

In this study, I investigate contemporary jazz musicians' work within the film industry from a sociological and ethnographic perspective. I am particularly interested in how these artists negotiate their own creativity and self-identification as jazz musicians while working "for-hire" within film production hierarchies. These are career jazz artists who – in special circumstances – compose and/or perform jazz pieces to be utilized as film soundtracks. Accordingly, they must adapt their conventional practices and ideologies to work within the expectations of film score production. What is especially interesting about this work is jazz artists' identification with a culture that lauds individual, creative autonomy and experimentation (as evidenced in the jazz world's self-identification around the art of improvisation). When working in film, these artists' must address these internal ideologies alongside the expectations placed upon them by filmmakers and film industry executives. These examples highlight the intricate tensions of power, collaboration, and agency in cultural production. In some cases – as I will examine throughout this dissertation – jazz musicians' creative agency in film scoring even challenges film production conventions that position music as subordinate to the visual film.

Therefore, jazz musicians' work in contemporary cinema is ripe for the exploration of aesthetic, ideological, and economic exchange at the interface of two highly-distinct cultural mediums. The jazz and film production industries – what I identify as "art worlds"– operate in very different economic and aesthetic spheres. The film world is characterized by a powerful global system of executives, producers, and laborers cooperatively invested in the creation and mass distribution of movies. The jazz world exists as an eclectic, but small subset of the broader

global music industry, invested in performing music identified by its practitioners, critics, and audiences as "jazz."[3] The film and jazz art worlds vary greatly in terms of medium (i.e., visual vs. audial), personnel, resources, production methods, and distribution networks. When the two art worlds come together, the intersections demand negotiation of their disparate conventions, practices, and ideologies in ways that allow them to productively collaborate.

When jazz artists are hired to work in film, they must acknowledge the fundamental commercial imperatives of the projects – imperatives that ultimately determine that jazz is only utilized if it is believed to fulfill very specific, commercially-profitable (or personally-rewarding) functions for the filmmakers. Since jazz is not a common film-scoring idiom, jazz musicians do not typically hold positions of significance in film industry networks. By "significance," I mean career credit among filmmakers that results in frequent, recurrent film scoring opportunities. Sociologist Robert Faulkner identifies those artists with specialized recognition in the film art world as part of an "inner fraternity"[4] – a central social circle distinguished by strong networks of ties throughout the industry that result in frequent credentialing. This "inner circle," as I call it, is the coveted layer of the broader matrix of the film industry at large – comprised of center-periphery layers of network transactions in which those in the center receive the bulk of the work, praise, opportunity, and economic resources. Those in the periphery are the majority of film art world contributors – workers who struggle to distinguish themselves within the networks, but largely participate in only a few select projects. It is in the periphery that a majority of jazz artists have contributed to the film industry.

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[3] Paul Lopes is the first to refer specifically to the term "jazz art world" as an existing phenomenon – although he is certainly not the first to examine the *concept* of a jazz art world (Becker, among others, had done so previously). In his work *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Lopes theorizes the jazz art world's rise and development as a cultural movement against the backdrop of American cultural, racial, and social politics. His text draws significantly on Becker's art world conceptualization as its theoretical framework.
[4] Robert Faulkner, *Music on Demand: Composers and Careers in the Hollywood Film Industry* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983): 66.

Yet there are a few select jazz artists who have achieved and maintained an "inner circle" status within recent decades – either working recurrently with a particular filmmaker or in certain sectors within the film industry at large. These artists are unique, bridging the gaps between work and reputation in the disparate jazz and film art worlds simultaneously. Their statuses within the film industry problematize conventional treatments of jazz in film, and raise questions about the ways jazz musicians' and filmmakers' productive interests can intersect. While power relations, complexities, and tensions permeate these interactions, each example grants further insight into certain filmmakers' interests in jazz music, as well as jazz musicians' interests and experiences working in film. Furthermore, these circumstances provide opportunities for jazz artists' work in film to incite new directions for film production, as well as jazz creation – as I shall illustrate in the following chapters.

This sociological and ethnographic examination of jazz musicians' labor and experiences in film soundtrack production provides us with valuable behind-the-scenes insights into the ways the jazz and film art worlds can intersect and influence one another. It allows us to examine the circumstances of these intersections, reinforcing our understanding of jazz's perceived meanings to both individual filmmakers, the filmmaking industry at large, and the jazz musicians themselves. It offers us a critical understanding of conventional hierarchies of production in filmmaking, yet also provides us with examples of challenges to such conventions. It grants lenses into jazz musicians' individual experiences working on film projects, as well as their negotiations of their own careers, aesthetic ideologies, and creativity in such "for-hire" work. In addition, it recognizes jazz production outside the music industry, examining how jazz artists' work in film facilitates opportunities for expanded creative production in both the jazz and film art worlds.

The Present Study

This dissertation examines the relationships and tensions between jazz artists' creative autonomy and their "work-for-hire" statuses within film industry hierarchies. I read these tensions alongside critical examinations of the following phenomena: (1) the artists' relationships with particular directors; (2) the director's goals and interests; (3) risk ideologies within the film industry; and (4) the jazz artists' own creative practices. I challenge my readers to think about the ways that film score production forces engagements between the music and film art worlds, and demands a nuanced, critical consideration of how each art world's conventions, practices, ideologies, and expectations complexly intersect, and affect the members of each art world in turn. These specific examinations of jazz in film contribute to the extant discourse addressing the tensions and complexities between creative agency and labor in cultural industry (or art world) work.

In examining these case studies, I engage with the intersections of jazz and film more at the level of sociological *production* than representation, analyzing how the core production elements and aesthetic preferences of each art world interact. To date, critical and scholarly engagements with jazz soundtracks have focused on what is represented onscreen. The majority of published literature on jazz and film [Gabbard (1996, 2004), Townsend (2000), Butler (2002), and Stanfield (2005)] looks at the music's significations in film, theorizing how jazz has been represented within the context of cinematic narratives, and the ways in which the music's associative subtexts (e.g., sleaziness, moral deviancy, sophistication, intellectualism, etc.) reflect cultural attitudes about race, sexuality, class, and cultural aesthetics. This literature is valuable, as it grants insights into jazz's usual significations in film, and how musicians may either reinforce or challenge such associations. In this study, I intend to further investigate jazz

musicians' direct involvement in the productions, using resources and methodologies from the diverse fields of sociology, (ethno) musicology, film studies, and business studies/economics to analyze how their labor intersects with time-honored conventions of the film industry.

Each of the artists whose work I examine are jazz musicians who have been recurrently involved in scoring or recording soundtracks for recent film projects (i.e., within the last twenty years). Indeed, my list includes the major jazz figures working in film today: bandleader Vince Giordano, pianist Dick Hyman, percussionist Antonio Sanchez, trumpeter Mark Isham, and trumpeter Terence Blanchard.[5] Two of these musicians – Blanchard and Isham – are well-established film composers with multiple film credits to their names (i.e., Blanchard over forty, Isham over one hundred). The others –Giordano, Hyman, and Sanchez – have performed several soundtracks throughout their careers, often working recurrently in collaboration with particular directors. All of these artists maintain jazz performance careers.[6]

I employed a multi-methodological approach in investigating these artists' experiences working in film soundtrack production, drawing strongly on ethnographic methodologies. I accomplished a significant portion of this research through long-form personal interviews with the musicians themselves, as well as other film production personnel that worked with them (e.g., recording engineers, editors, musicians, assistants). In addition, I conducted participant observation by sitting in on particular film-scoring and recording sessions. I also employed archival work, researching numerous other interviews and articles that pertained to these jazz musicians' involvement in film projects. I chose to integrate ethnographic methodologies into

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[5] One obvious absence is Herbie Hancock. In an expanded version of this study, I would like to examine his career as well.

[6] Mark Isham is the only one of these artists who is not still involved in a full-time jazz performance career (i.e., playing regular gigs, recording albums, etc.). While he still practices regularly and plays gigs on occasion, he dedicates the majority of his time to film composition.

my research approach so that I could engage with the humans behind the work, so to speak. These musicians are complex, savvy, strategic artists, who understand the balance of personal ideology/creativity and the structures of reality that they must negotiate when working in film (or any industry, for that matter). Through my observations and interviews, I was able to see a fuller picture of how real-life artists operate and work in these circumstances. In addition to this ethnographic research, I conducted film scene and musical analysis as well, integrating these multiple methodologies to examine these jazz artists' creative productions in dialogue with their film industry labor.

I focus on these particular individuals because their recurrent film work speaks to a level of status and recognition that few jazz artists receive within film industry networks. By critically examining the details and experiences behind their inner-circle statuses, I hope to understand why their music has piqued the interest of commercial filmmakers, who in turn have provided these artists the opportunities to actively create outside their own art world.

I am also interested in the variety of these artists' interactions with the film art world. Giordano – a renowned performer of 1920s-1940s jazz styles – is largely involved in soundtracks meant to support "period" films. Dick Hyman's jazz film compositions, which have primarily been featured in the films of Woody Allen, eclectically draw on a wide range of historic jazz idioms. Antonio Sanchez, who only recently became involved in film, has contributed improvised percussion scores to the films of director Alejandro González Iñárritu. Mark Isham, who held an original career in the 1970s and 80s as a jazz trumpeter and electronic artist, is now an established Hollywood film composer with well over one hundred credits to his name that draw on a diverse wellspring of jazz, electronic, classical, and other musical styles. Finally, Terence Blanchard – an award-winning jazz performer and composer – got his start in film

collaborating with director Spike Lee in the early '90s, and has since scored the majority of Lee's feature films. By examining each of these artists' unique experiences in turn, I seek to highlight the range of jazz's potential involvement in the film industry, as well as the diverse possibilities for jazz artists to establish networks in this art world.

In concentrating on these major performers, I have deliberately chosen not to engage with the multitude of non-recurrent, freelance jazz artists who have contributed sporadically to film or television recording sessions. This is not intended to undermine or erase these artists' experiences. In this project, I look at how jazz artists directly engage with the filmmaking process and negotiate their own work and creativity within those social structures. The aforementioned "peripheral" artists rarely interact directly with the filmmakers, and are not involved in any filmmaking decisions. Rather, they are contracted by music supervisors or contract companies to record the music, and that is generally the extent of their involvement.

My case study analyses allowed me to ask the following questions. Why are these jazz artists engaged in the first place (i.e., why are filmmakers interested in them)? How do these artists negotiate the shifting internal labor markets, business transactions, and power hierarchies that structure projects within the film industry? How do they balance the film industry's conventions with their own artistic expertise and creative desires? What is unique about these jazz-film interactions that sets them apart from conventional film-scoring practices, and what conclusions can we draw from these cases? These circumstances – which include discussions from artist rights to editing processes – are examined throughout the chapters.

Overall, this dissertation's intervention into jazz scholarship is twofold. First, it introduces scholars to jazz's presence in film from a sociological perspective – an approach that is uncommon in jazz studies, and virtually absent in analyses of jazz in film. I provide detailed

case studies of jazz musicians' behind-the-scenes labor and production within the film art world, utilizing these examples to illuminate the wide-ranging relationships between jazz and film. In bringing jazz studies into dialogue with film production, I treat jazz not merely as sonic style, but as the product of a dynamic jazz art world whose conventions influence its intersections with other disciplinary networks.

Second, I examine how jazz-film intersections provide opportunities for jazz musicians' creativity in a radically different medium. Jazz critics offer ignore this issue, preferring to view the music as an idealized, "autonomous art" existing only within its own world. This view is historically-rooted. Scholars such as DeVeaux (1997), Gabbard (1996), Lopes (2002), and Gridley (2003), have shown how the rise of bebop in the 1940s corresponded to a movement in jazz cultural politics advocating for the music's new status as an art form, removed from its commercial associations with swing and mass entertainment. As Lopes argues, "[Jazz] enthusiasts . . . were looking to elevate this music as an art form deserving of 'serious' appreciation."[7] The jazz art world's upholding of such "autonomous," "creative" recordings and compositions as the paragon of jazz production still proliferates in jazz scholarship and criticism today – as evidenced in its canonization of jazz "greats" and cultural support of perceived musical "masters"/innovators.

Because film music is created "for hire" – constrained by the film's narrative and the filmmakers' tastes – few jazz scholars have taken it seriously.[8] This is an attitude that is reinforced by some film composers' statements as well.[9] I am not interested in such dismissals.

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[7] Lopes, *Jazz Art World*, 173.
[8] See K.J. Donnelley, *Film Music: Critical Approaches* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), for a discussion of this phenomenon. As Donnelley contends, "Music scholarship has persisted in the prejudice that film music is somehow below the standard of absolute [or autonomous] music." (1).
[9] For examples, see the composers cited in Faulkner, *Music on Demand,* 89-100. One composer articulated the effect of institutional pressures on his own creative production, stating, "Television [or film] is just not the place to stage a musical revolution." (89).

Instead, I concentrate on interpreting the production of particular jazz scores, preferring to bypass the "commercial/not commercial" dichotomy by considering how jazz artists draw upon their own aesthetic ideologies and musical experiences when working in the film medium. It is possible to follow industry conventions *and* create within one's own artistic expertise.

This dissertation also contributes to contemporary film scholarship. It critically examines how a few central filmmakers work with jazz musicians in often unconventional and innovative ways. It considers how key features of jazz production – including stylistic technique, improvisation, and concerns about performance "authenticity,"– interact with filmmaking expectations, and can result in unique contributions to both jazz and film production.

More broadly, this project also engages with studies of creativity, labor, and agency in cultural industry production. How can musicians be "creative" when they are producing art works "to order"? Does working within the film industry impede innovation, or does it in fact create new possibilities? How does collaboration affect creative production? These questions are relevant to any discussion of artistic labor within the mass market economy – whether it be focused on pop stars' work in the recording industry [Stahl, 2012], or composers' compositions for motion pictures.

In what follows, I introduce the primary topical threads that inform this study as whole, establishing a useful starting point for understanding the sociological and musical analyses that emerge throughout the case studies.

Art Worlds

Art works are not created in a vacuum, but within broad sociological contexts. In the title of his seminal text, *Art Worlds*, sociologist Howard Becker effectively coined a term to explain how art

is created collaboratively. An "art world" is "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for."[10] Drawing on numerous artistic media, Becker shows how many different people – guided by shared conventions, ideologies, and different points of access to networks and resources – work together to create art. Reading artistic production through such a sociological perspective helps to dismantle mythologizing narratives that interpret art as the creations of inspired artistic geniuses. Individual artistry is certainly important, but it must be understood within the collaborative activities that inform its production, distribution, and reception.

Becker's art world theory has influenced a significant amount of scholarship pertaining to musical production.[11] It is especially useful in examining film production. As Becker himself once said: "The great case for me is in film, because nobody ever figured out who the real artist is: the screenwriter, or the director, or who? Or, rather, *everybody* figured it out, but never figured out the same thing."[12] The film art world is comprised of a bewildering variety of artists – from directors and screenwriters to costume designers and makeup artists, cinematographers and composers. Each of these creative workers contributes to the finalized film project.

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[10] Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982; 2008): xxiv.

[11] One of the first authors to apply Becker's ideas in studying musical culture was Ruth Finnegan (1989), who drew on his theories of joint action in structured cultural production in her examination of music-making in Milton Keyes, UK. Richard Peterson (1997) understands the fabrication of country music's (and culture's) perceived "authenticity" as the result of production-of-culture and institutionalization via a country cultural network (i.e., art world). Peter Martin (2006) examined jazz improvisation production through the lens of art world social organization. More recently, Becker's theories influenced many of the works in Margaret S. Barrett's recent edited volume, *Collaborative Creative Thought and Practice in Music* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014). Paul Lopes (2002) was the first to directly integrate the concept of the art world into an extensive analysis of the production of jazz and jazz culture throughout the twentieth century. These are but a few of the scholarly examples that utilize Becker's art world theory in their examination of musical production.

[12] Quoted in Adam Gopnik, "The Outside Game: How the Sociologist Howard Becker Studies the Conventions of the Unconventional," *The New Yorker* (online version), 12 January 2015, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/01/12/outside-game.

These same theories can be applied more specifically to film soundtrack production. Robert Faulkner's (1971, 1983) fascinating sociological work on film industry composers and studio musicians speaks to this applicability, thoroughly examining these musicians' work in relation to the broader networks and expectations of the film industry. While Faulkner's research predates *Art Worlds*, he draws substantially on Becker's earlier sociological work on the concept,[13] which he acknowledges in the following:

> My indebtedness to Becker's work on art worlds should be evident throughout. His writings suggest that freelance social organization ought to be viewed as a network of cooperative activity, an insight that transformed my conception of the nature of data collection and the analysis of how pictures are made.[14]

In film score production, a plethora of film executives, editors, and musicians contribute to the finalized product. In addition, producers, distributers, critics, and audiences play roles in shaping how the score is ultimately created and received. Accordingly, any analysis of the production of music in film must engage with the cooperative relationships and social systems that structure its development.

By drawing on Becker's and Faulkner's theories of collaborative art work, I hope to show the complex negotiations among various aesthetic practices, conventions, and ideologies – the pushing and pulling within the hierarchies of power that ultimately coincide in some form of consensus. Since musicians are typically weak players in these negotiations – lacking the financial resources of directors or producers – it is nevertheless surprising how on occasion jazz can disrupt the conventions and expectations of the film world. Its very existence as a separate art form grants its creators interesting ways to affect the creative process. One of the most striking examples of this is in jazz musicians' creation of improvised jazz scores, which

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[13] Howard S. Becker, "Art as Collective Action," *American Sociological Review* 39 (December 1974): 767-76.
[14] Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 16.

dramatically reduce the director's control, while offering creative opportunities for the musicians themselves. I will examine this topic further later on in this project. Such creations can transform both the film world *and* the jazz world.

When Miles Davis composed and performed the now-historic soundtrack for Louis Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'echafaud* (*Elevator to the Gallows*), he was simultaneously revolutionizing "film music" while pursuing his own stylistic development. The music is now recognized as a major step toward the modal jazz performance of his seminal album *Kind of Blue*.[15] Similarly, the scores of jazz artists such as Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, and the host of performers examined throughout this dissertation are simultaneously recognized as contributions to jazz's repertory.[16] As such, these scores hold the potential to contribute to the expansion of the jazz art world's definitions of art and practice. As Becker maintains, "Each work in itself, by virtue of its differences . . . from all other works, thus teaches its audiences something new; a new symbol, a new form, a new mode of presentation."[17] Therefore, investigating contemporary jazz artists' work in the film industry can grant us insight into new areas of jazz performance and creative practice.

Examining the creation of jazz film scores from the perspective of an art-worlds intersection analysis allows to think of jazz as intersecting with film, an immense network of contributing personnel. Film production is necessarily collective action, and the musicians who succeed in this world find different and surprising roles to play. Rather than considering

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[15] For jazz scholar Gary Giddins' analysis of the significance of Davis' score work in the jazz canon, see the featurette interview on *Elevator to the Gallows* (1957), The Criterion Collection, DVD (2006).
[16] Several texts have been written about these artists' film works as unique contributions to jazz's repertoire. A few include Cooke, "Anatomy of a Movie," 240-259; Ross Lipman, "Mingus, Cassavetes, and the Birth of a Jazz Cinema," *Journal of Film Music* 2/2-4 (2009); and Ken Micallef, "Antonio Sanchez: Flying High" *Downbeat* (July 2015), which stated "[Antonio Sanchez'] *Birdman* score has been praised around the world, and it inspired two new [jazz] albums that have elevated him as a composer and bandleader." (26).
[17] Becker, *Art Worlds*, 66.

musicians' work as separate from the film – as jazz recordings on a movie soundtrack – this dissertation dives below the surface, allowing us to see what really takes place when jazz meets film.

"Jazz" in Film

An implication of my "jazz-in-film" study is that I have identified scores/soundtrack recordings that should be recognized for some type of inherent "jazz" quality. But how does one define "jazz" in film – or distinguish it from film music that is not jazz?

Jazz music has a long history of usage in film soundtracks. Dixieland, modal jazz, bop, "cool jazz," free jazz, fusion, swing – all have been present in film soundtracks at one time or another, in various manifestations. A brief skim through David Meeker's *Jazz in the Movies* highlights the wide range of jazz musicians who have performed in film soundtracks – from Louis Armstrong to Stan Getz.[18] This plethora of jazz artists and styles that have been represented in film (and their varied cinematic and cultural associations) exist simultaneously in cinema's extensive catalogue, complicating any singular readings of what "jazz in film" means.

The tenuousness of the phrase "jazz in film" becomes increasingly apparent when we consider how jazz film scores/soundtracks can often be stylistically quite different from recognizable jazz styles. Many jazz-film works are not created in traditional jazz-performance methods, and instead represent unique musical products that blend jazz and film music traditions. Often, such productions result in a fusion of jazz elements with more traditional film-scoring elements. Examples include jazz-style improvisations integrated with lush, orchestral scoring (e.g., Ornette Coleman's score for *The Naked Lunch* (1991)), tunes with jazz-style "feels" (e.g.,

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[18] David Meeker, *Jazz in the Movies: A Guide to Jazz Musicians 1917-1977* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1977).

swing, bebop, etc.) that feature prominent, leitmotivic character themes (e.g., Terence

Blanchard's jazz versions of "Malcolm's Theme" in *Malcolm X* (1992)), and soundtracks that

draw on jazz practices (e.g., improvisation), but don't necessarily sound "jazzy" (e.g., Antonio

Sanchez' improvised score for *Birdman* (2014)). These complications are further compounded

by scores that feature jazz elements (e.g., instrumentation, swinging rhythms, bluesy inflections)

but would not be typically-associated with a particular jazz style (e.g., Alex North's score for *A*

Streetcar Named Desire (1951)). How do we contextualize such products? How indeed do we

introduce into this argument a discussion of the meaning of "jazz" in cultural discourse?

What Constitutes "Jazz" (in Film)?

Within the jazz art world, the term "jazz" has often been one of contention. Ake, et. al, stated,

"The lines people draw between 'jazz' and 'not jazz' can at once be both fiercely guarded and

very difficult to discern."[19] The recent titles of critical texts such as *Jazz/Not Jazz*, *Jazz in Search*

of Itself, and *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* speak to a near century-long proliferation of

debates about the definitions of jazz and its cultural meanings.[20] Must "jazz" include

improvisation? Does jazz music have to "swing"? Is jazz a black music, an American music, or

an international music? Do various forms of "fusion" of jazz with popular music count as jazz?

Since the early 1990s, scholars affiliated with "new jazz studies" have offered new

insights into jazz historiography, critiquing the established narratives and introducing new ways

of thinking about the definition of jazz.[21] Scott DeVeaux – whose seminal work "Constructing

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[19] David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark, ed. *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012): 1.
[20] Ake, et al. *Jazz/Not Jazz* (2012); Larry Kart, *Jazz in Search of Itself* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 2004); and Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African-American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).
[21] For key works that formatively influenced the emergence of new jazz studies criticism, see Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25.3 (1991): 65-78; Krin

the Jazz Tradition" (1991) greatly influenced new jazz studies criticism – later argued that jazz

scholars should be willing to examine works that exist on the boundaries between jazz and other

art forms. Prior to the emergence of new jazz studies, jazz scholarship had typically focused on

jazz's "core" (i.e., the great musicians and their music). DeVeaux contended that in focusing on

the "boundaries," definitions and understandings of jazz are negotiated across these boundaries,

and give us the opportunity to think about how these musical works contribute to jazz

scholarship.[22]

My readings of contemporary "jazz in film" align with this new approach. My work lies

on the boundaries of jazz, considering the way jazz works *as* film music. I therefore focus less on

musical style *per se,* than on the sociological self-identification of musicians as "jazz musicians."

Each of the examples considered in the following chapters examines the film soundtrack work of

composers/musicians who have also held (or are holding) a career as a jazz musician, performing

music that is socially connected to a network of jazz practitioners, institutions, and audiences.

Yet the music should not be considered within the "core" of jazz, but on the intersection of the

jazz and film art worlds.

In this project, I situate jazz within new contexts, particularly in how it is understood and

engaged by filmmakers. "Jazz" has a number of conventional and personal meanings that

structure its implementation in film – and differ from filmmaker to filmmaker. For some

filmmakers, jazz can be experimental and innovative, to be created in the moment through

improvised score production (e.g., Antonio Sanchez's score for Iñárritu's *Birdman*). Others see it

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Gabbard, "Introduction: The Canon and Its Consequences," in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995). Also see more recent texts Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin, ed., *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); and Sherrie Tucker, "Deconstructing the Jazz Tradition: The 'Subjectless Subject' of New Jazz Studies," in Ake, et al., *Jazz/Not Jazz* (2012).

[22] Scott DeVeaux, "Core and Boundaries," *Jazz Research Journal* 2.1 (2005): 15-30.

as a marker of history, to be played 'correctly' in period style (e.g., Vince Giordano's work for Scorsese's *The Aviator* or *Boardwalk Empire*). Still others use jazz to represent black creativity and cultural expression (e.g. Terence Blanchard's work for Spike Lee's films). These differing perceptions play a significant role in how the coordination of jazz musicians with film occurs.

Directorial Investment: Auteur Theory, Maverick Filmmaking, Jazz Love

The role of directorial investment in facilitating opportunities for jazz artists to create film scores cannot be understated. Despite the collaborative nature of film production, directors have the most power in making production decisions. The director is the artistic boss, responsible for integrating all of the creative aspects of film production into a comprehensive motion picture. While in some cases, executive producers, studios, and financiers may reserve "final cut" of the film – the director is the person most significantly involved in putting all of the pieces together. He[23] oversees the determinations about which actors to cast, where/how the scenes should be filmed, what the costuming should look like – and, for our purposes – what music should be used for the soundtrack. Therefore, it is the interests of a few powerful directors that facilitates jazz-film interactions.

Certain accomplished film directors have been recognized as the artistic authors of their films, emphasized in what film studies scholars identify as "auteur theory." This theory

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[23] I use the pronoun "he" here, drawing attention to the history of gender discrepancy among film industry directors (and executives in general). Gendered discourse permeates theories of auteurism, directorial power, and creativity – contributing to film directing being a highly male-dominated field. My own case studies represent this phenomenon – in which all of the pertinent directors discussed are men. For two texts that address how specific female filmmakers negotiate their own careers and identities within the gendered structures of filmmaking and the patriarchal model of auteurism, see Julia Dobson, *Negotiating the Auteur: Dominique Cabrera, Noémie Lvovksy, Laetitia Masson and Marion Vernoux* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). For a broader look at gendered discourses of creativity and "genius," see Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Toward a Feminist Aesthetics* (London: Women's Press, 1989).

maintains that a given film reflects the director's personal creative vision, lauding distinctiveness, originality, and the perceived presence of an authorial signature. As a method of film analysis, auteur theory developed out of the critical writings of contributors to the French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, greatly influenced by director/critic Francois Truffaut's article "Une certaine tendance du cinema francais" (1954), in which he coined the phrase "la politique des Auteurs" (auteur theory). Auteur theory was primarily employed in the discourse surrounding the 1960s French New Wave cinematic movement, and later became influential in United States' film criticism through the writings of Andrew Sarris.[24] This critical theory remains present in film scholarship today – even as its history and acceptance among film critics has been one riddled with controversy and polemical debate.

A sociological perspective, of course, gives a broader picture. Filmmaking is inherently a collaborative effort, and the director cannot (or should not) receive full credit as the author of the film. A range of criticisms of auteur theory have challenged the privileging of the director over other cinematic producers, including screenwriters, cinematographers, and studio executives and producers at large – as well as the inherent fallacies of developing cults of personalities that risk marginalizing a number of potentially-valuable filmic works.[25] The sociological study of film production as the cooperative action of a diverse network of organized laborers [Rosten (1941), Powdermaker (1950), Caldwell (2008), Mayer, et. al (2009), and Szczepanik and Vonderau (2013), among others] further supports these criticisms.

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[24] See Andrew Sarris, "Notes on Auteur Theory in 1962" in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings,* ed. Leo Braudy, Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); also Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929-1968* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).

[25] Examples of literature that feature these criticisms include Pauline Kael, "Raising Kane – Parts I and II," *The New Yorker* (February, 1971); Aljean Harmetz, *Round Up the Usual Suspects: The Making of Casablanca: Bogart, Bergman, and World War II* (New York: Hyperion, 1992); and David Kipen, *The Schreiber Theory: A Radical Rewrite of American Film History* (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House, 2006) – among others.

However, what auteur theory usefully highlights is the hierarchies of power within film industry production that make such directorial control possible. If not the author, the director can be the authorial editor, whose decisions and preferences ultimately shape the final outcome of the film project, even though the project is ultimately dependent on the collaborative contributions of a plethora of other personnel (e.g., screenwriters, cinematographers, actors, etc.). This is especially true of the particular directors examined in this dissertation, who retain a disproportionate amount of control over their own films, as compared to the control exhibited by typical film studio directors. As such, it is often these powerful directors' names that brand their films (e.g., "a Martin Scorsese movie," "a Spike Lee joint," etc.). Therefore, auteur theory – while inherently problematic – engages with the hierarchical structures that are already in place in film production, placing the responsibility (and credit) for artistic decisions on top-tier agents.

Becker identifies such hierarchical social distinction in his theorization of art world community and production. He contends that within a given art world, there is an accepted distinction between those personnel who are recognized as "artists," and those who are recognized as lower-rung craft workers. Becker positions the "artists" as the most-respected authors of art works in the cultural social system, regardless of the works' collaborative production.[26] The Academy Awards designations offer insight into these arrangements of distinction and privilege within the film art world. Only those personnel considered to be "artistic" are given award categories (e.g., cinematographer, composer, costume designer), even as the more prominent awards get the most distinguished recognition (emphasized in their placement at the end of the ceremony). The award for Best Director is one of these most prominent awards.

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[26] Becker, *Art Worlds*, 16.

Accordingly, such cultural veneration for artistry is strongly reflected in the film art world's respect for the identified auteur – the determiner of cultural capital, and (often) the leader of the vanguard in establishing new, "artistic" directions for the field. These filmmakers are often recognized as "mavericks" – art world actors who push against the established conventions of the production field in new, experimental ways, thus paving the path for future art world development. In many cases these maverick auteurs are not integrated studio professionals. Rather, they are often independent filmmakers who retain artistic control of their projects through self-production and independent financing.[27] Yet because of their ideological recognition as the "innovators" of the field, they also can become profitable entities who benefit from additional financing and distribution from the major studios. These positions thus allow them to retain both cultural *and* economic capital within the film art world.

All of the directors examined in this dissertation qualify for this independent, "maverick" status in relation to the film art world's conventional field of production. I have found that among directors, it is those in this auteur/maverick category that are most likely to be interested in utilizing jazz soundtracks. These include Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Alan Rudolph, and Spike Lee. Due to their recurrent film successes, these directors have established auteur statuses within the film industry at large, resulting in the field's encouragement of their unconventional film practices and experimental approaches. Accordingly, these directors have the best of both worlds – largely uninhibited creative control, with the financial, promotional, and distributional resources typically unavailable to filmmakers working outside the studio system. Through such resources and accreditation, these filmmakers

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[27] For an interesting ethnographic study of contemporary American independent film production, see Sherry B. Ortner, *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2013).

essentially have the "green light" to do whatever they see fit with their films – including hiring jazz musicians to create their soundtracks.

Every single one of the directors discussed in the forthcoming chapters has professed a love for/personal investment in jazz music.[28] Scorsese has demonstrated a zealous interest in featuring historically-"authentic" jazz in his period programs set in the 1920s-1940s. Allen (an amateur jazz clarinetist himself) has voiced nostalgia for early jazz styles such as Dixieland and swing, and features such styles regularly in both his period-based and contemporary-based films. Both Iñárritu and Rudolph enjoyed the performances of specific jazz musicians – Antonio Sanchez and Mark Isham, respectively – and established collaborative relationships with them in order to feature their music in their films. And Lee – the son of renowned jazz bassist Bill Lee – grew up with jazz as a significant part of his life, and utilizes it in his films as the sonic representation of black creativity and culture.

Given their prestige within the film art world – and access to significant financial resources – these directors have the capabilities to bring these jazz interests to life onscreen. This is especially significant because of the unconventionality of jazz scores in contemporary cinema, which I will consider in more detail momentarily. Without these maverick directors' personal investments in the music, jazz artists' opportunities to work on film soundtracks would be significantly reduced. It is on the economic and ideological circumstances informing jazz's marginalization in film score production that I will now focus.

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[28] For the sake of comprehensiveness, there are two other contemporary auteur-status filmmakers who have professed (and demonstrated) interest in jazz who are not featured in the present study: Clint Eastwood and Robert Altman (although Altman served as producer for the film *Afterglow* (1997), directed by Alan Rudolph, which is examined in Chapter 3). An extended study might consider these filmmakers' relationships to jazz in their film projects at detailed length. See Gayle Sherwood Magee, *Robert Altman's Soundtracks: Film, Music, and Sound from M*A*S*H to A Prairie Home Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), for her discussion of Altman's treatment of music in his films.

Risk

Any study of culture industry production demands an engagement with the fields of business and economics. The film industry exists within a capitalist economy, and therefore all of its production decisions are tied to the industry's commercial imperatives. While filmmaking is an artistic endeavor, innovation can also be risky. Risk is an aesthetic construction, rooted in culturally-constituted beliefs about what "works" or "doesn't work" in film. At any given time, the accepted conventions and attitudes of the film art world determine the dominant risk discourse, which in turn shapes further practice.[29] I contend that the film industry's general risk-averseness greatly informs its production decisions, and affects the ways jazz has been (or has not been) utilized in film soundtracks.

I have benefited greatly from the limited amount of scholarship that addresses the economic and business aspects of film production. These texts include film scholar Mette Hjort's collected volume entitled *Film and Risk* (2012), economists John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny's edited collection *An Economic History of Film* (2005), and film scholar Jeff Smith's *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (1998). Each of these resources considers – through a variety of approaches – how economic considerations influence the decision-making processes of the film industry.

Within this context, jazz is especially risky. First, jazz has a long history of associational codifications in film, dating back to the 1950s. Whether functioning as a musical synecdoche for crime/urban decay, sexuality, blackness, or white urban sophistication, jazz styles hold specific

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[29] Recommended literature on this topic includes: John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Media* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John Caldwell, ed., *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and Petr Szczerpanik and Patrick Vonderau, ed., *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

(if specious or outdated) meanings for filmmakers and industry executives. Often, these meanings position jazz as a sonic "other" within the narrative – exoticized, sexualized, racialized, and used to draw overt attention to itself and the associations it is meant to exploit.[30] Jazz's sonic signifiers in film have become integrated into the industry's catalogue of conventional formulas, much as other musical genres exemplify other ethno-stereotyping (e.g., bagpipes for Scots, drums for Native Americans, mariachi brass for Mexicans). Simon Frith describes such generic conventions as "musical shorthand" – cultural codes that inform the semiotic dimensions of the film score.[31]

The semiotic significance of such "shorthand" has thus been limiting for jazz in film. Filmmakers and audiences associate the music with such connotations – thus any unconventional usage of jazz scores is risky, as it works against these semiotic conventions. In many cases, it is also the seeming-out-datedness of these connotations that leads to jazz's unattractiveness among filmmakers. Accordingly, I posit that studios and filmmaking executives who believe in jazz's pre-established cinematic codes are often reluctant to utilize jazz-influenced scores or soundtracks in non-stereotypical or unconventional ways – or at all. Composer/saxophonist Bill Kirchner shares these views:

> "I think directors are squeamish [about using jazz in their films]. . . . unless you have a
> director who's a big jazz fan. When you get something like that, someone [who] is

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[30] Much scholarship on jazz and film has addressed these associations. For a few key examples, see Krin Gabbard's *Representing Jazz* (1995) and *Jammin' at the Margins* (1996); Andrew Clark, ed. *Riffs and Choruses: A New Jazz Anthology* (2001); David Butler's *Jazz Noir* (2002); and Peter Stanfield's *Body and Soul* (2005). Katharine Kalinak also addresses jazz's associations with transgressive "other-ness" – particularly in reference to gender and race – in *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Press, 1992). Race is critical to these discussions, as jazz's recognitions as a historically-black music have greatly shaped its reception and representations in American culture.

[31] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996): 120. Another useful scholarly work on the semiotic dimensions of conventional (or 'classical') Hollywood film scores is Anahid Kassabian's *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

willing to take risks. . . . But you've got to have filmmakers who are willing to do that. It takes an exceptional director to want to take that kind of risk."[32]

The biggest threat to film is improvisation – perhaps jazz's defining feature. Improvised scores are the rarest form of jazz scores in cinematic history, and I contend that this relates to the filmmakers' perceived lack of control over the score's production. Conventionally, film composers write out music to fit short segments of film, and "demo" the score for the filmmakers in advance. Such pre-approval is not possible for improvised scores. Improvisation is spontaneous. It is not written-out and rehearsed ahead of time. It relies on an aggregate of "in-the-moment" influences that make it difficult to interpret the outcome. If "messed up," it costs time and money to be redone. All of these elements of uncertainty can be unsettling for filmmakers, whose investment in the success of the film often leads them to want to maintain as much awareness of the production features of their films as possible. Those examples in which improvised jazz scores are utilized in movies are perhaps the most fascinating case studies of jazz artists' work in film, as they inject the film art world with a production method that is entirely unconventional – and for many, very risky.

At one time – namely "the golden era" of the 1950s-1960s – jazz scores were very popular as film soundtracks. The proliferation of jazz scores in a number of French New Wave films soon extended to the U.S., manifesting in a plethora of film noir productions throughout the 1950s, and significantly informing the "crime jazz" soundtracks that dominated 1960s productions such as *The Pink Panther*, the James Bond franchise, and television series such as *Peter Gunn* and *Mission: Impossible*. This is not the case anymore. Jazz does not hold the same moorings in popular culture that it did fifty years ago, and so many filmmakers believe that jazz-influenced scores are aesthetically-risky to the value of contemporary cinema. This is inherently

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[32] Bill Kirchner, interview with the author, October 29, 2015.

tied to fear of economic risk as well, for if a film's techniques are not believed to be

ideologically successful, the implication is that the film overall will not be commercially

successful – hurting the industry on both aesthetic and financial levels.

It is in this proliferation of risk discourse in the film art world that the significance of the

aforementioned "maverick" filmmakers becomes apparent. Working outside the typical

conventions and expectations of the industry, these filmmakers are inherently much greater risk-

takers than the majority of integrated industry professionals. Their statuses as experimental

innovators who break out of the mold provide them the opportunity to challenge ideological and

aesthetic conventions – including utilizing jazz soundtracks. Overall, these filmmakers'

successes hold the possibility for facilitating new creative engagements between jazz and film.

"Creative Labor"

For many jazz critics, artists' authorial control may seem to be significantly diminished in film

score work. When composers are hired to compose a film score, they are hired with the

understanding that their work must serve the film narrative, and must ultimately correspond to

what the director wants musically. These constraints are inevitably limiting – subordinating the

artists' own authorial intentions and creative ideas. Such circumstances potentially facilitate

artist's creative separation from their own work – a phenomenon that Marx theorizes as

"alienation" in modern industrial production.[33] Robert Blauner contends that "alienation exists

when workers are unable to control their immediate work processes . . . and when they fail to

become involved in the activity of work as a mode of personal expression."[34] Yet in many cases

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[33] Marx delineates his theories of worker alienation in detail in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, 1964).

[34] Robert Blauner, *Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

– particularly in cultural industry production – artistic workers' labor is not nearly as industry-controlled as some critics might have you believe. In fact, individual creativity plays a significant role in collaborative art world production.

Creative agency is a necessary component of effective film scoring. Indeed, it is often for their creativity that culture industry personnel like film scorers are hired. Film scoring takes place within an industry; but as scholars such as Hesmondhalgh (2007; 2011), Ryan (1992), Faulkner (1971; 1975; 1983), and Sullivan (2009) have contended, workers in the culture industry experience greater autonomy over their work than industry laborers, given the importance of original and creative products in market success. Film composers necessarily work within industry expectations, but their work is nevertheless creative, and creativity is rewarded. As Robert Faulkner claims, "Hollywood demands both working according to conventions and working according to one's top expertise."[35] Although jazz artists scoring/performing for film create music in a programmatic way (to support the themes and emotions being presented on-screen), they still create the music based on their own musical knowledge, experiences, and creative insight.

There are even some circumstances in which jazz film composers enjoy a degree of freedom far above the industry average. Filmmakers' interests in and respect for jazz can result in heightened creative liberties for the composers/musicians. Improvised scores are the most obvious example. While the hierarchical power structures that characterize the filmmaking process remain in place, score production can be much more collaborative between the filmmaker and the composer, often including composer involvement at the development – rather than the post-production – stages of filmmaking. As I will examine in more detail later on, these

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[35] Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 97.

circumstances can lead to such unique production processes as scripts being written to fit the improvised soundtrack, or film scenes being edited to fit the pacing and emotion of the music (rather than the other way around)!

I therefore characterize these jazz musicians' work in film as "creative labor"[36] – work that is contained by structural and executive expectations, but also allows for experimentation and personal musical development. This is a view that places artistic labor within a sociological framework. My treatment of the term "creative," or "creativity," refers to an individual's self-directed transformation of available ideas and materials into a unique artistic product. Jason Toynbee's (2000) theorization of musical creativity among popular musicians parallels my conceptualization.[37] Toynbee reads creativity through the lens of Bourdieuian concepts of habitus, field, and positionality – arguing that musicians make creative decisions based on a number of structured "possibles." Their own authorial voices shape musical products within the structures of the social field at large – a formula he identifies as "social authorship." Toynbee states, "The social author stands at the center of a radius of creativity, but the range and scale of voices available to him/her/them will always be strongly determined by the compass and position of the radius on the musical field."[38] Thus he avers that popular musicians retain "institutional autonomy" – the space for creative production within institutional structures.

The term "creative labor" itself theorizes the balance of creative agency and subservient labor inherent in all culture industry work, informed by the tense balance of art and commerce that characterizes the industries themselves. I found Matt Stahl's *Unfree Masters: Recording*

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[36] I borrow this term from David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, as used in their work *Creative Labor: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[37] Jason Toynbee, *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity, and Institutions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[38] Ibid., 46.

Artists and the Politics of Work to be a particularly useful framework for thinking about this balance. Stahl himself utilizes the term "creative worker" to conceptualize the positions of recording artists in our present-day working, neoliberal society, examining the tensions between their relative autonomy as artists and subordination as the objects of industry control.[39] In my own readings of jazz-film intersections, I acknowledge the inherent tensions and contradictions that characterize this balance, while recognizing the musicians' own artistic agency and musical (or ideological) development in the process.

I investigate this "creative labor" by engaging directly with the musicians themselves, examining the dynamics informing the development of their jazz soundtracks through the lenses of both film industry expectation (including directorial control), and the jazz artists' own artistic and aesthetic preferences and decisions. In so doing, I analyze their performed and/or composed works while engaging with the connections of the scores to the on-screen narrative, the music's own unique artistic merits separate from the films, and the broader recognition of these specific products of creative labor in the jazz art world.

The Chapters

Each chapter examines the intersections of the jazz and film art worlds by offering detailed readings of unique examples in which jazz artists create jazz scores for film. The artists considered in this project are among the few jazz musicians who have maintained regular careers as film composers or recording artists within the last few decades. While the case studies do demonstrate some experiential similarities, each of the following jazz artists' careers in film has been unique. As a network, they collectively illustrate the wide range of possibilities for jazz's

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[39] Matt Stahl, *Unfree Masters: Recording Artists and the Politics of Work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

interaction with and representation in film—from evoking historical periods through the performance of early jazz styles, to bringing jazz improvisation into film scoring, to highlighting African-American experience and addressing social and political ideologies through soundtrack composition.

These cases are not intended to suggest that these are the only circumstances in which jazz musicians (or jazz music) are engaged in film soundtrack production; rather, they highlight the most recurrent jazz-film intersections within the last several decades, offering insight into the primary ways contemporary jazz musicians participate in the film art world. These engagements grant further insight into how artists who actively participate in both jazz and film art worlds negotiate the (at times) disparate conventions of each art world at their intersections. Each of these chapters considers jazz in film as the product of multiple actors' collaboration at the intersections of creativity and labor, and opens up new avenues for our exploration of the jazz and film art worlds at large.

Given the diversity of the case studies examined in this project, I utilize a variety of interdisciplinary methods throughout the chapters. All of my primary topics are sociological in nature, examining the process and production of particular jazz-film scores in relation to the economics, structure, and expectations (both practical and aesthetic) that shape these intersections. In several case studies I utilize musicological methods of transcription and sonic description and analysis to illustrate and describe the kind of musical work these jazz artists are doing for specific films. The chapters are also permeated with direct correspondence and interaction[40] with the artists whose work I am examining – featuring my critical analyses of this

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[40] I conducted at least one in-person interview with Vince Giordano, Mark Isham, Dick Hyman, and Terence Blanchard, supported by follow-up emails and phone conversations. I also conducted interviews with other personnel involved in these film soundtrack productions, including musicians involved in the recording process

interactions – drawing on the disciplinary methods of ethnomusicology (as well as sociological research). By employing these cross-disciplinary approaches, I methodologically reflect the complex web of political, economic, and aesthetic phenomena that characterize art worlds – particularly art worlds' intersections across disciplines.

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Chapter One sets the stage for the case studies by familiarizing the reader with the primary frameworks that inform the project at large. It begins with a brief analysis of the principal components of the jazz and film art worlds as disparate entities, then considers the complex negotiations that must take place when these two art worlds intersect – particularly in terms of economic and aesthetic risk. I follow this discussion with a delineation of the hierarchies and structures that determine music production for films, providing a reference model for understanding how jazz composers and musicians conventionally might fit into these power structures when hired to create film soundtracks. The final portion of this chapter examines the relationships between art and labor in jazz-film intersections on a general level, theorizing the balance of creativity and industry subordination that characterizes this particular type of cultural work. In discussing art as labor, I theorize jazz film composers' work in relation to the commercial imperatives of the film industry – an industry whose decisions are constantly tied up in considerations of economic profit and bottom-line success. In discussing labor as art, I consider the ways jazz musicians are afforded creative liberties in soundtrack production that are not typically acceded to the majority of film composers. I refer to these cases as examples of the aforementioned "creative labor" – in which artists negotiate their own creative agency within the power structures and expectations of the film industry, at times challenging those very structures.

(Mark Lopeman, Adrian Cunningham, among others), a recording engineer (Stewart Lerman), and a composer's assistant (Allison Geatches). I also observed scoring sessions and recording sessions.

Chapter Two investigates the work and experiences of jazz artists producing historicist soundtracks for period films. I focus primarily on two artists who have been recurrently involved in such projects – bandleader Vince Giordano (with his group the Nighthawks), and pianist Dick Hyman. I begin the chapter by arguing that period filmmakers' interest in utilizing early-jazz performers for their soundtracks is a result of their desire for the perceived "authenticity" of the film. I deconstruct the term authenticity, ultimately contending that all dimensions of the term fall within two overarching spheres – nominal/factual authenticity (with fidelity to original facts, events, styles, etc.) and expressive/experiential authenticity (i.e., an abstract, accessible "genuineness" of the product). I contend that both the period filmmakers and period jazz performers that I examine strive to achieve this dual authenticity in their art works in some combinatorial manner. It is this alignment of interest in the negotiations of dual authenticity that accounts for their collaborative interactions. Throughout these intersections, varying ideologies, prioritization of commercial appeal, and aesthetic choices converge and diverge in complicated ways. Within each case study – which include Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator* and Scorsese's and Terence Winter's hit HBO show *Boardwalk Empire* – I highlight these complex interactions through an examination of both the filmmakers' and the jazz artists' perspectives and decisions.

Another focus of this chapter is to position the practices of early-jazz performance in dialogue with the tenets and debates of traditional historically-informed performance (HIP). I delineate what I characterize as the primary points of characterization and contention in what I call *jazz-HIP* – including instrumentation, style performance (e.g., rhythm, articulation, vibrato), and improvisation. Throughout, I compare these analyses with traditional-HIP discourse, noting their alignments and differences. This examination of jazz-HIP is useful in elucidating artists' (such as Giordano's and Hyman's) perceptions of what constitutes "authentic performance," thus

influencing their relationships to filmmakers that are similarly invested in such authenticity for their film soundtracks.

In Chapter Three, I address one of the rarest manifestations of jazz performance in film – improvised jazz scores. I examine the infrequency of these scores through the lens of the risk-averseness of the commercial film industry. Improvised scores' risk is several-fold. In terms of production methods, the improvised nature of the performance offers the potential for an increased chance of "mistakes" during recording – and the necessity of increased recordings, which can lead to economic strain. Additionally, improvised scores are not composed according to strict timing parameters – as fully-written scores are – and thus might not directly align with particular scene changes, dialogue entries, etc. – again potentially necessitating re-recordings. A final significant risk element is the potential "aesthetic risk" factor of improvised jazz soundtracks. Their sonic unconventionality among film scoring traditions makes them more unpredictable in terms of fostering commercial success. For filmmaking executives who are expecting large economic returns on film projects, the unpredictability and diminished executive control over these soundtracks makes them too risky for many filmmakers' (and financiers') likings.

That said, my case studies in this chapter examine challenges to this risk-aversive conservatism. In recent cinematic history, a few filmmakers have hired jazz musicians to improvise scores for their films. In particular – I focus on Antonio Sanchez' improvised drum score for Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Birdman* (2014) and Mark Isham's improvised score for Alan Rudolph's *Afterglow* (1997). I argue that it is these filmmakers' "maverick" statuses within the film art world – operating outside film industry conventions in service of their own innovative aesthetic interests – that results in their collaborations with these improvisational jazz

performers. Additionally, the filmmakers themselves identify as fans of these jazz artists' music, conceptualizing their performances as fundamental components of the films they want to make. Accordingly, I argue that such soundtracks challenge film conventions beyond traditional acceptable levels of risk, including offering creative liberties to the jazz performers that extend beyond those typically afforded to the majority of film scorers. One particularly illustrative example of this is the musicians' involvement in the film project during the development and pre-production stages. At times, the film is created and edited to fit the music – illustrating a clear subversion of traditional film-music production hierarchies. This opens up critical dialogue regarding the circumstances of innovative musical freedom within labor expectation in cultural industry work.

The final chapter (Chapter Four) addresses the jazz-film score in relation to political, racial, and personal ideology as examined through the lens of trumpeter Terence Blanchard's score work for director Spike Lee's films. I situate Blanchard's and Lee's extensive collaborative relationship at the intersections of shared political ideology and commitment to jazz as representative of black experience and creativity. The first portion of the chapter examines Lee's political motivations as a filmmaker – particularly his professed investments in black entrepreneurship, black creativity, providing opportunities for black creative agents in film production through his hiring practices, and desire to bring nuanced narratives of diverse black experience and richness to the movie screen. I integrate Lee's own personal relationships to jazz music into these analyses, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding his affiliations with Blanchard. In this examination, I place particular emphasis on their first extensive collaboration – the 1990 film *Mo' Better Blues*.

The remainder of this chapter addresses Blanchard's own political and artistic viewpoints, engaging these ideologies in an examination of how Blanchard negotiates his score work for Lee's films within the complex territory of hierarchical relations and art-world intersections. I illustrate how Blanchard utilizes his score work as an opportunity for his own extended creative development and political activism – as evidenced through case studies of two of his extended concept albums: *The Malcolm X Jazz Suite* (based on musical material from his score for Lee's *Malcolm X* (1992)), and *A Tale of God's Will: A Requiem for Katrina* (based on his score for Lee's documentary *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (2006)). I use these analyses to challenge the rigidity of art/commerce binaries that permeate criticism of film scores' artistic (and ideological) merits, exemplifying how Blanchard's work in film actually facilitated opportunities for musical experimentation, as well as political assertion. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of Blanchard's simultaneous navigation of both the jazz and film art worlds, examining how his extensive dual career has influenced his recognition and reception within both worlds, and what his reception (both positive and negative) reveals about jazz's and film's intersections of ideology and practice. Ultimately, this final section addresses the central theme of *Jazz Goes to the Movies* – bringing into focus (on a microcosmic level) the complex tensions and negotiations that undergird jazz artists' creative work within the film industry, and those intersections' potential influences on the jazz and film art worlds at large.

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Overall, this study offers diverse, interdisciplinary analyses of a variety of contemporary jazz artists' behind-the-scenes work in film. It focuses on the complex circumstances informing soundtrack production, examining how these artists negotiate the tensions between their own creativity and practices as jazz musicians within the reality of film industry conventions and

hierarchies. I critically consider how these unique jazz-film intersections illuminate a diversity of alignments and divergences of the jazz and film art worlds' conventions – as well as how these collaborations facilitate opportunities for new methods of production in both worlds (i.e., new styles, techniques, etc.). My goal is that my readers will leave this text with a fuller understanding of each of these jazz artists' unique experiences working in film – and will use these case studies to further understand the tensions and complexities between creative agency and labor in cultural industry (or art world) work.

Chapter One
Jazz and Film Art Worlds' Intersections

In general, the jazz and film art worlds operate in very different economic and artistic spheres. The film art world is characterized by a system of executives, producers, and laborers cooperatively invested in the creation and mass distribution of movies. It is a multi-billion dollar worldwide industry with immense financial resources, comprised of major and independent studios, as well as multinational umbrella corporations and production companies. The industry employs a combination of an "inner circle" of renowned filmmakers, peripheral independent filmmakers, and a plethora of freelance support personnel that range from directors to copyists, and from actors to recording musicians.

All production within the film art world is in service of developing commercially-viable motion pictures. Due to the visual nature of the medium, filmmakers assert a hierarchy of the optical; much attention is paid to how production features such as camera angles, lighting, and set design – along with visually-convincing acting, costuming, etc. – enhances the overall narrative. Non-visual, post-production features such as music and sound effects are considered decidedly ancillary (although helpful) to the work as a whole. Ultimately, the film art world constitutes one of the most lucrative and internationally-successful culture industries in the world, and many filmmakers' economic and artistic decisions are informed by a desire to maintain this status.

The operations and production of the jazz art world are rather distinct from those of the film art world. Comprised of a host of musicians, record producers, concert producers, critics, scholars, and fans, the jazz art world exists as an eclectic, but small subset of the broader global music industry. According to Nielsen's 2014 U.S. Music Report, jazz only accounts for 2% of

total U.S. music albums sold.[41] It does not have the same financial resources that the film industry benefits from, and includes a limited number of jazz-only production companies (e.g., labels). As a genre-based art world, the jazz art world is arguably more comparable to a specific genre within the broader film world (e.g., horror films, documentaries); however, to separate an analysis of those genres from the film art world at large would be untenable, as they operate squarely within it. Jazz – while operating within the music industry at large – exists as its own sphere of artistic and economic negotiation; the boundaries of style, what constitutes jazz/not jazz, and what counts as innovative art are constantly in critical flux. To be fair, similar aesthetic and ideological debates occur within the film industry, but the immense commercial capital of the industry often leads to heightened assessments of economic risk, and an often reduced flexibility (at least within mainstream studios) for stylistic experimentation.

The most significant contrast in production between the two art worlds – aside from the obvious difference in medium (optical vs. audial) – is jazz's propensity and identification around the art of improvisation. The risk-aversive conservatism of the film industry results in high regulation of the majority of production aspects, including the musical score, which is predominantly written-out and sent regularly to production executives for approval before being inserted in the finalized film. In jazz performance, however, spontaneous, individualized creativity within the production setting is encouraged, and is generally considered to be a central feature of jazz itself. Given the fundamental ideological disjuncture between the jazz and film art worlds – experimental improvisation vs. risk-aversive regulation – it is not surprising that jazz has infrequently been utilized in film soundtracks throughout cinematic history. The paucity of this interaction is compounded by the incongruence of the two worlds' production and

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[41] 2014 Nielsen Music U.S. Report. http://s0.thejazzline.com/tjl/uploads/2015/03/nielsen-2014-year-end-music-report-us.pdf.

distribution networks; because the personnel in these networks rarely (if ever) overlap, film industry producers and executives often overlook jazz musicians in favor of composers and musicians within their established systems. Where these intersections do occur is generally in spite of the film industry's conventions.

It is in these intersections within the last few decades that I am interested. Their rarity suggests unique circumstances in which jazz aligns with the interests of the filmmakers. As will be considered in detail in the chapter case studies, these possibilities are threefold. One, the director wants a jazz score that fits the period or associational elements of the film narrative (i.e. set in a 1920s or 30s period, neo-noir thriller, etc.). Two, the director is a fan of jazz music, and wants to employ jazz composers/musicians to create his soundtrack. Three, certain jazz musicians have become part of a network of "inner circle" film industry players separate from their jazz careers, and have since been afforded the opportunity to create jazz scores. Through combinations of these circumstances, directors such as Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Alan Rudolph, Spike Lee, and Clint Eastwood collaborate with such jazz artists as Vince Giordano, Dick Hyman, Antonio Sanchez, Mark Isham, and Terence Blanchard in unique and unconventional ways. In recognizing these scenarios, I shed light on not only the film world's rare interests in jazz, but also the ways in which jazz artists negotiate their creativity and practices within the structures of film production.

In order to successfully analyze jazz's presence in film production, one must acknowledge the established hierarchical power of the filmmakers over the jazz musicians. The two worlds' intersections do not result in an equivalent balance of authority and influence; if the project is a film, the filmmakers are in control. When jazz and film art worlds intersect, the result is multiple artists cooperating in the production of several art works that eventually culminate in

an overall film project. Directors, composers, arrangers, musicians, recording engineers, and editors (among others) all contribute to the finalized art work. But the more complicated understanding of who makes the final artistic calls relies on accepted hierarchies of talent and expertise in the production of the given work. As will be delineated in the forthcoming section, there is a structured order of artistic weight granted to particular members of the film world. The directors and producers are at the top of this structure; they make the final decisions.

However, I also acknowledge that filmmakers generally rely heavily on the artistic expertise of those they commission to produce their musical soundtracks, just as they do for other supporting production roles (e.g., writing, acting, set designing, etc.). The Academy Awards (and other film award) category designations illustrate the recognition of the artistic contributions of these film network members beyond the director – including best Costume Design, Cinematography, Film Editing, Music – among numerous others. Many directors (and the film industry as a whole) realize that relative artistic freedom among their independent contractors can greatly influence the overall success of the film. As David Hesmondhalgh claims, "creative autonomy" is essential to cultural industry work because "autonomy itself is bound up with the interests of culture-industry businesses."[42] The industry believes that such freedom is what allows creative workers to develop valuable cultural products, and fears that restriction of these freedoms could impede such productivity.

As such, film-industry contractors such as composers and musicians occupy a paradoxical position in which they are simultaneously support laborers and independent artists. Their relationships to the industry "employers" (e.g., directors, producers, music supervisors) are not equal, and their production is both overseen and owned by the filmmaking executives. Not

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[42] David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2007): 199.

unlike recording artists,[43] (jazz) film artists must balance creative autonomy with industry expectations as delineated in their contracts. However, they may also be given significant liberties in the production process, involved in what I characterize as the "creative labor" of film music production. I contend that the jazz artists discussed in this dissertation are especially granted extensive creative liberties, for reasons I will examine in the following chapters. Within the film-jazz art world, jazz musicians negotiate these intersections between labor and art in their work experiences.

Hierarchical Structure of Film-Jazz Production

Before delving into a more thorough analysis of the intersections of art and labor in jazz artists' film careers, I want to first delineate the structure of personnel involved in the film-jazz art world. It is important to identify the network of actors that comprises this cooperative body, and outline their relationships to one another. This network is largely reflective of the hierarchical breakdown that characterizes the majority of filmmaking music departments; the distinction resides in the fact that the composers/musicians involved are self-identified jazz artists in addition to film scorers or soundtrack recording artists. I elucidate this structural network to illustrate how the intersections of art and labor in these artists' film work operate within a complex milieu of interpersonal and business transactions and relationships.

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[43] For a thorough investigation of the balance of autonomy and alienated labor in pop recording artists' careers, see Stahl, *Unfree Masters* (2013).
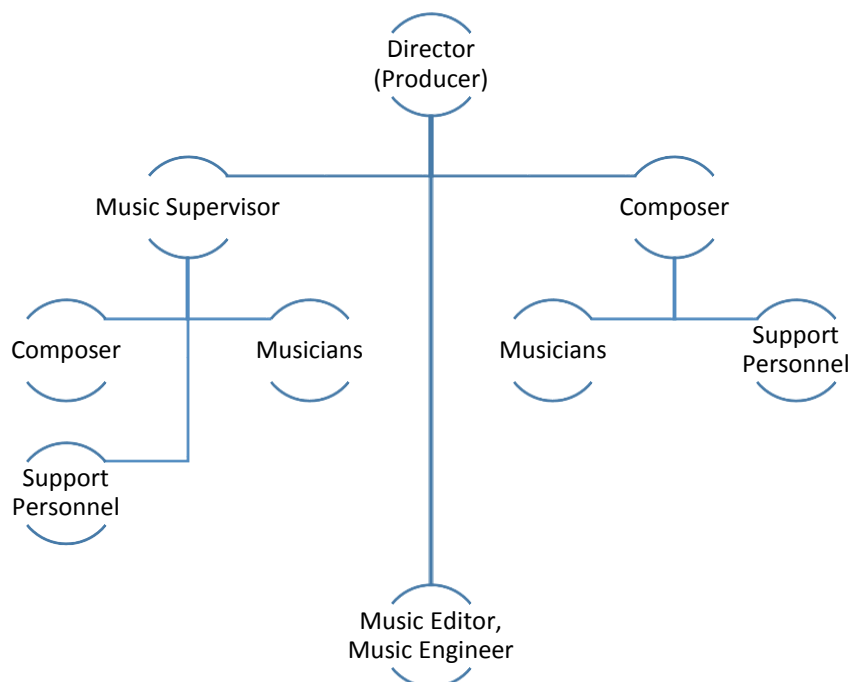
Figure 1.1 *Hierarchical Model of Conventional Network Relationships in Film Music Production*

Director/Producer

At the hierarchical zenith of the jazz-film network is the producer and/or the director. (These positions are not mutually exclusive; there are several examples in which a single person has been both producer and director for a film project.) A film producer is responsible for planning and coordinating various aspects of a film's production – from the early development stage through post-production and marketing. Tasks may include selecting a screenplay writer and director, securing rights and financing, planning schedules and budget, and consulting with directors, other creative personnel, and editors. Some films and television programs have multiple producers. In such cases, the producers' roles vary in relation to their expertise.

For the purposes of a single film, producers are the industry executives; they are representative of the industry at large (although they also work within it). While the producers

can be highly involved in the creative aspects of the film, in many cases they finance and oversee production, while creative control is the domain of the director. However, I include the discussion of the producer's role in my analysis because the majority of the cases examined in this dissertation feature directors who produce their own films as well. In such cases, production decisions are economically and ideologically tied to directorial decisions.

The director governs the making of the film, exerting control over a plethora of creative and dramatic aspects in order to produce a completed narrative. Directors are responsible for organizing the cast and crew, and overseeing all the elements of production – including acting, costuming, music, editing, etc. According to the Director's Guild of America (DGA), a director "contributes to all creative elements relating to the making of a motion picture and participates in molding and integrating them into one dramatic and aesthetic whole."[44] Ultimately, the director is artistically responsible for the final outcome of the film; he/she is the industry executive most directly involved with the day-to-day production aspects of the work. In film music production, either the director or the producer may choose to directly consult with the composer and/or the musicians to discuss his vision for the soundtrack. In some cases, the director/producer may contract a music supervisor to serve as a liaison for these negotiations.

Music Supervisors

In film music production, music supervisors are the next step below directors and producers. They are either chosen directly by the film's director, or their production company is hired, and they take on the supervision role. The music supervisor is essentially the overseer of the music production, and the liaison between the director, the composers/musicians, and the music

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[44] Directors Guild of America. http://www.dga.org/Contracts/Creative-Rights/Summary.aspx.

engineers and editors. According to Fred Karlin and Ray Wright, "Generally speaking, the music executive [supervisor] is responsible for anything and everything having to do with music."[45] These duties might include creating budgets for projects and sessions, conducting preliminary discussions with filmmakers regarding what the music should entail, choosing music, seeking out and negotiating contracts with artists and contractors, attending screenings and spotting sessions, and fundamentally functioning as a liaison between the composer/musicians and the director. As film recording artist Vince Giordano claimed, "[The supervisor] kind of has his tentacles out there all around, just to try to put it all together."[46] Recording engineer Stewart Lerman stated, "A lot of [a music supervisor's responsibility] involves licensing, and figuring out the copyrights and the publishing, as well as the creative side of it, which is picking the material."[47] Saxophonist Mark Lopeman stated that "[The music supervisors are] doing what the director wants them to do. The director is hiring them to essentially procure music for the film. And they can procure it various ways, and one of those ways is to get a soundtrack recording from us—and in another instance, one of those ways is for us to be on camera and play."[48]

Many established music supervisors have a network of "go-to" people for specific tasks (e.g., composers, musicians, recording engineers, music editors, etc.)—people they are familiar with and can rely on in order to accomplish their projects efficiently. For example, Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks have become the "go-to" ensemble for supervisors such as Randall Poster and Stewart Lerman, whenever they are seeking music from the 1920s-1940s time periods. Dick Hyman – who has simultaneously worked as both music supervisor and

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[45] Fred Karlin and Rayburn Wright, *On the Track: A Guide to Contemporary Film Scoring* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 12.
[46] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.
[47] Stewart Lerman, interview with the author, November 21, 2014.
[48] Mark Lopeman, interview with the author, October 11, 2014.

composer on a number of Woody Allen's films – had a select group of musicians that he

contracted for many of his film soundtracks. As Robert Faulkner avers, "The music contractor

must be familiar with the talent available, know the individual skills of the musicians, understand

the needs and desires of the composer and conductor, and, on the basis of his experience and

bargaining power, hire the best musicians he can."[49] Certain projects might call for certain styles

or types of artists more than others, so music supervisors are often in touch with an expansive

network of artists to suit different filmmakers' soundtrack needs – as well as budget limitations.

Composers and Musicians

Composers and musicians are the specialists within this network, and contribute the most

substantially to the creation of the film music itself. If a composer is hired, he is often brought on

during the postproduction stage of the filmmaking process – the scenes have been shot, the

dialogue has been recorded, and the film is being put together for the final cut. The composer can

either be directly hired by the producer or director (as is the case in all of the following case

studies in this dissertation), or hired by the production company/music supervisor. Contract

decisions are informed by the employer's decision to pursue an original score, a compilation

score (of previously-made recordings), an adaptation score, or some combination. This decision

determines whether or not a composer is needed, whether musicians are just needed to re-record

adaptations of songs, or whether the entire soundtrack can be licensed for rights of previous

recordings without requiring composers or musicians.

If a composer is hired, he is responsible for writing music that fits particular pre-

determined scenes. Often, the composer sits with the director and/or the music supervisor in what

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[49] Robert Faulkner, *Hollywood Studio Musicians: Their Work and Careers in the Recording Industry* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971): 44.

is referred to as a "spotting session," watching rough cuts of the film to discuss where music should be placed, and what it should sound like. In some scenarios the composers are given musical frameworks on which to base their compositions—such as "we want this to sound like Wagner," or "this should sound like your previous work on [insert title]." Other times, composers are granted more compositional freedom, and base their work off of emotions, themes, or characters depicted in the films themselves.

Once demos have been approved, the composer is then directly involved in the recording process for the score. In some cases, the music supervisor will select the ensemble/musicians to record the score (as mentioned above). However, there are also many cases in which the composer will choose his own musicians or ensembles – having written scores or cues with specific individual musicians in mind. All of the jazz artists discussed in the following chapters have been in positions where they have selected their own musicians for their soundtrack recordings. Composer Mark Isham – who has worked on such jazz-based scores as *Romeo is Bleeding*, *Afterglow*, and *The Black Dahlia* – stated, "The key to [score writing is that] you try to write for the musicians that you have. You kind of know what you want to achieve, and you cast it. I cast my scores."[50] Naturally the only way to successfully "cast" a score is to have a strong familiarity with the musicians' playing styles and capabilities. As such, these composers rely heavily on artists whom they have worked with before, or whose music they have listened to extensively. The composers develop their own "go-to" networks – just as the music supervisors do.

As mentioned previously, some soundtracks do not call for a composer. In such cases where musicians are hired without the need of a composer, the contracting process still remains

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[50] Mark Isham, interview with the author, December 15, 2014.

relatively similar. Either the producer/director will have direct input on which musicians he/she

want to contract, or the music supervisor/production company will consult with the film

executives and make recommendations. For example, the HBO series *Boardwalk Empire* –

which I will consider more thoroughly in Chapter 2 – is comprised completely of licensed

original recordings and an adapted score consisting of re-recordings of 1920s and '30s tunes. The

show's production company, Search Party, sought a group of musicians who could record this

music. Given music supervisor Randall Poster's familiarity with Vince Giordano's successful

work performing such period-specific tunes, Giordano and the Nighthawks were hired.

Music Engineer and Music Editor

Two other key players in the film music production network are the music engineer and the

music editor. The engineer is responsible for working with and manipulating the technical

aspects of sound during the recording, mixing, and reproduction processes. The position is both

creative and highly technical – encompassing such activities as balancing volume, adjusting

sound fidelity, etc. Producer, engineer, and mixer Phil Ek has described it as the "technical

aspect of recording—the placing of microphones, the turning of pre-amp knobs, the setting of

levels. The physical recording of any project is done by an engineer ... the nuts and bolts."[51]

Engineering mixers may do a number of different things depending on the director's vision for

the soundtrack – including overlay various tracks on top of one another, "loop" tracks, and apply

distortion (among many other) techniques. As will be considered in Chapter 2 – in which I

discuss historicism in jazz soundtracks – engineers may also use their technological expertise to

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[51] Bob Noble, "Interview with Phil Ek," *Hit Quarters*, 25 May 2009,
http://www.hitquarters.com/index.php3?page=intrview/opar/intrview_Phil_Ek_Interview.html.

"distress" recording fidelity, making the music sound older and more period-appropriate. These are but a few examples of the possibilities in soundtrack engineering.

The music editor is responsible for compiling, editing, and syncing the music, as well as any other jobs that directly tie to the process of preparing the music to be laid into the film. The editor is in constant dialogue with the composer and music supervisor – as well as the director and the producer in some cases. He attends all spotting sessions, and keeps detailed notes of all music entrances and exits, what the music should sound like (according to the filmmakers), etc. He is highly involved with the creation of the temp track,[52] and then with dubbing after the music has been recorded. As Karlin and Wright delineate:

> The job of the music editor is to provide spotting and timing notes for each cue when/as requested by the composer; prepare the videotape or digital video with visual aids such as punches, streamers, and any special click layouts that may be required to assist the conductor at the recording sessions; monitor the recording sessions; provide clicks and other conducting aids as necessary to ensure correct timings; prepare the music for dubbing; attend the final audio mix on the dubbing stage; assist in any adjustments or changes that may be requested at any stage; and keep detailed notes on the whole process."[53]

For film composers, the music editor is one of the most invaluable allies. It is his notes and communication that allows the composer to write and record the "right" music for the "right" scenes. Without the editor's assistance, the composer could be lost in the dark. The composer is also reliant on the editor for making his music fit into the scenes (after dubbing). Editors favored by composers will try to fit/cut the music in aesthetically appropriate ways. However, unexpected issues can arise which the editor must try to handle. Film editors may cut a film scene three bars short, and the music editor may need to find a way to manipulate the music

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[52] The "temp track" – short for temporary track – is existing music that is temporarily utilized in film production during the editing phase. It functions as a sonic "place holder" that approximates the mood that the director wants for a given scene. Temp tracks are often later replaced with an original score prior to the film's release.
[53] Karlin and Wright, *On the Track*, 10-11.

tracks to make them fit appropriately with the new scene length. A loud percussion hit or trumpet

blast may overshadow dialogue, and again the music would need to be edited to accommodate

the film. Some music editors make these adjustments more successfully than others in terms of

musical cohesiveness. Composer Terence Blanchard offers high praise for music editor Marvin

Morris – with whom he has worked on numerous Spike Lee film scores, referring to him as "the

gatekeeper" who makes concerted efforts to keep Blanchard's music as intact as possible.[54]

Other editors are less attuned to the musicians' desires. When I asked Vince Giordano about

whether or not he had experienced this, he informed me that I had hit a very "sore point," and

expressed the following:

> I'm very disappointed with some of the editing jobs that I have had to endure in my
> lifetime—because they're real butcher jobs. They don't make any sense. . . . It reminds
> me . . . when I was a young kid, they were having these horrific scientific experiments in
> Russia. They were transplanting dogs' heads. They were taking a German Shepherd and
> putting it on a Collie, and the Collie on the German Shepherd. And these dogs lived! But
> what the hell are you doing? What kind of animal is this, and how barbaric! Well, I feel
> the same way about the music editors. They just take out sections, and I'm like, my god!
> Yeah, the timing is right, but there's a better way to edit this! There's a better way to
> make a nice, clean feeling for the scene, versus chopping stuff like that. And I have no
> control over that, so I just have to say it's not my job, and I'm totally out of control.[55]

I will consider the editing process and its inherent tensions with creativity in my discussion of

art and labor later in this chapter.

Support Positions and Technology

A number of support positions also comprise this broader network. One is the orchestrator

position. This position is not always utilized; some composers do all their own orchestrating. Yet

often those composers who are especially busy with multiple projects will lay out basic concepts

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[54] Terence Blanchard, interview with the author, August 25, 2015.
[55] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.

for their scores, and send them to an orchestrator along with mockup audio cues of what the orchestration should sound like. For example, composer Mark Isham works frequently with orchestrator Brad Dechter – who has worked with him on such projects as *The Black Dahlia*, *The Mechanic*, *Warrior*, *The Conspirator*, *Mob City*, and *American Crime*. Isham sends Dechter an outline of his musical ideas (e.g., form, style, chords) in a Finale sketch, and Dechter fills in the score. Anything Dechter adds, however, he makes easy to take out in the Finale program, in case Isham wants to make changes.

Administrative support positions include secretaries, production assistants, copyists, financial managers, and systems operators for recording/timing programs (e.g., Auricle), among others. All contribute to the ultimate finished product of the film soundtrack. These lower-level support positions – while generally assumed to be more technical and interchangeable than the "artistic" positions of composer, music, engineer, etc. – are still integral to the completion of the finalized work. Allison Geatches – Mark Isham's assistant – is responsible for a plethora of necessary duties that help keep Isham's manifold film projects afloat, including (but not limited to): translating notes from music editors into overview documents that indicate all entrances and music lengths for a given project; handling email correspondence with contract agencies and other film personnel; sketching Finale files based on Isham's score ideas for distribution to orchestrators/arrangers; organizing and scheduling recording and editing sessions; and even writing occasional cues. Without the presence of thousands of support personnel like Allison, the music film industry would cease to exist.

Technology also plays a significant role in the film music support system. At times, it has even supplanted traditional support roles. Developments in score-notation systems such as Finale and Sibelius have reduced the need for copyists, as the music can just be printed directly from

the notation program for each part. In addition, having scores saved on computers eliminates the need for complete reproductions of updated scores when changes must be made spur-of-the-moment during the film-editing process. Sequencing and timing programs such as The Auricle: The Film Composers' Time Processor function as conducting aids by utilizing clicks and/or visual punches and streamers superimposed on video in order to help the composer synchronize the music with the film.[56] Such aids reduce the amount of time spent in the recording studio, by ideally reducing the need for multiple 'takes' or re-recordings. The Auricle also fulfills several other functions, allowing tempi and meter manipulation in order for composers to quickly find the preferred options for hitting cues. Such technology – along with similar programs such as The Streamline Music Scoring System and other sequencing programs – allows for quicker, more efficient score experimentation and correction.

Synthesizers reduce the need for musicians for recorded demos; in some cases synthesizers replaces orchestras/musicians entirely. These technological replacements cut down majorly on logistics, expense of hiring musicians, renting space and recording equipment, etc.

All of the aforementioned personnel (and technology) participate in the art work production accomplished by the film music art world.[57] As delineated, their relational structure is certainly hierarchical, yet it is also linearly collaborative. While those who occupy the higher hierarchical rungs often give direction and reserve the right to approve and/or demand changes in production, they also can grant an extensive amount of autonomy and creative freedom to the contractors they have hired – relying on the contractors' own expertise to make creative decisions. The level of autonomy granted is greatly dependent on the contractor's reputation,

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[56] For more information, see Karlin and Wright, *On the Track*, 124-125 or The Auricle's website, http://www.auricle.com/.

[57] While distributers and patrons play a role in the art world as well, I am solely considering those involved in the production process.

combined with his/her relationships to the filmmaking executives. Both reputation and relationships are enhanced through network development – a key element in any film musician's career.

The "Inner Circle" and Networking

The value of networking within the film industry art world cannot be understated. As Robert Faulkner highlights, the majority of film-scoring opportunities are issued to a small coterie of renowned personnel who receive recurrent film-scoring gigs, surrounded by a semi-periphery of moderately-active freelance composers, further surrounded by a plethora of freelancers who have only received one or two (or no) scoring opportunities.[58] The film industry is comprised of an "inner fraternity"[59] that is built through reputation and industry connections – in which one hand feeds the other. Reputations can be built slowly through accumulations of credits, or can be instantaneous – the product of a fortuitous moment of being in the right place at the right time. A composers' agent stated, "Sometimes ability is not enough. It's fate, luck, or personality. There are a million factors that go into who gets trapped and who breaks out."[60]

For Mark Isham, his break-out moment occurred when director Caroll Ballard – while visiting a friend of Isham's – overheard a recording Isham had recently made and immediately was interested in a similar style of music for his upcoming film *Never Cry Wolf*. Isham auditioned for the score commission, and got the contract. Terence Blanchard's film scoring break occurred on the set of Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*, for which he was already recording trumpet parts. During a break, he sat down at the piano and played a composition he had been

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[58] Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 31.
[59] Ibid., 66.
[60] Ibid., 115.

working on – called "Sing Soweto." Lee liked the sound of the composition, and asked him to

score his next film. Since then, Blanchard has scored dozens of Lee's films, and has been

commissioned by other filmmakers as well.

For most full-time freelance composers, "breaking out" into the inner circle of the film

industry networks is the primary career goal. Faulkner states, "The real targets of a career line

are networks of work relationships: the 'social circles' of ties among employers that result in

snowball effects or a credentialing again and again as a sought-after composer. It is the changing

of those alignments among producers that is sought."[61] In his text *Hollywood Studio Musicians*,

he states: "Breaking into the informal web of relations in the studios requires a combination of

entrepreneurial zeal, aggressive self-advertisement, ability to handle interpersonal competition

with grace and coolness, and performing talent."[62]

Unfortunately, many are not able to break into the inner circle. Networks – while

valuable for some – can be very exclusionary for others. For instance, such exclusivity is evident

in the racial dynamics of the film industry. The film art world and its networks are largely

organized around the predominant statuses of whiteness. Studio systems are overwhelmingly

headed by white (male) executives, reflected in the racial makeup of the vast majority of

producers and directors. This is further reflected among other art world collaborators, including

cinematographers, composers, and production supervisors. Networks build up around personnel

of common backgrounds and interests, resulting in the continued marginalization of workers

from minority races, ethnicities, genders, or cultural backgrounds.

It is generally only when a person of minority status attains executive power within the

film industry that new networks of minority personnel begin to emerge. As I will examine

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[61] Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 117.
[62] Faulkner, *Hollywood Studio Musicians*, 97.

throughout this dissertation, Spike Lee's status as a powerful, independent director has facilitated the opportunity for a number of African-American artists to become involved in film industry production. As another example, Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu has built up a go-to network of production collaborators who also share his Mexican ethnicity. Yet to date, the "inner circles" of the film industry are still largely comprised of white males, who are continually exerting their power and influence on the production decisions and labor allocations of the film industry at large.

The exclusivity and "insider-ness" of the film industry is reinforced in the racial dynamics of the jazz artists I examine in the following chapters. Three of them – Vince Giordano, Dick Hyman, and Mark Isham – are of Caucasian descent, and actively work in networks generally headed by white directors (e.g., Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen, Alan Rudolph, Brian de Palma, etc.). The two remaining jazz artists – Antonio Sanchez and Terence Blanchard – both actively work with directors who share their ethnic or racial backgrounds (Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu and Spike Lee, respectively). One might note that the collaborative relationship between Dick Hyman and Woody Allen is also based on an ethnic dimension, specifically their shared Jewish background. While these artists have branched out to work with film industry personnel of other racial or ethnic backgrounds, they have established their strongest network connections with those who share these affiliations.

Yet racial or cultural affiliation is only one factor in film industry network determinations, and it is certainly not the only one. Many of the director-jazz artist collaborations that I examine have also been regionally-based (e.g., Allen and Hyman were part of the same New York scene, Sanchez and Iñárritu were from the same hometown, etc.). Many of these networks were also established through the artists' reputations. For example, I argue that the

primary reason Vince Giordano was hired to perform music for Martin Scorsese's period productions was because he was identified as one of the most successful contemporary bandleaders performing period jazz, not because of his racial background. (It is also worth noting that the vast majority of professional early-jazz performers to date are white.) It is essential to realize that each of the present artists' introduction into film networks came as the direct result of the filmmakers' interest in jazz music broadly, and these artists' approaches to jazz more specifically.

In summary, the film art world is constructed in a way that particular "inner circle" personnel have access to networks, job opportunities, and resources in ways that many "peripheral" workers do not have access to. These networks are established at the intersection of a host of factors – reputation, race, connections, and sometimes simply being in the right place at the right time. Throughout this dissertation, I will examine how particular jazz artists attain these "inner circle" statuses within the film art world, further theorizing the uniqueness of their experiences in relation to the vast number of jazz musicians who are not involved in film soundtrack production.

Art and Labor

The intersections of art and labor comprise a preponderance of the present study. Film music production is commercial work that is simultaneously determined by industry expectations and desires, and composers' and musicians' artistic craft and innovation. Analyzing film music production through an "either-or" approach (i.e., either it is non-innovative, over-determined work or innovative, individualized "art") is unproductive. The art work develops at the nexus of the industry's conventional demands *and* artistic creation – with results varying from project to

project. These forces are concurrently in tension and cooperative; without both, the film project

could not exist. Highlighting the necessity of both forces, Faulkner posits the following

rhetorical questions:

> Hired hands—or artists? Are film composers subservient technicians skilled in working against time pressures and within worn commercial grooves, or independent creators able to balance the demands of commerce and creativity? Are they simple pawns in the television producer's master plan, or dedicated professionals who demonstrate their extraordinary range, stay away from 'bad' work, and get the job done?—The commercial composer is all of these things.[63]

It is the cooperation of these intersections – art as labor and labor as art – that characterize a film

musician's career experiences. In this section, I examine how both structured labor and creativity

interact in film music production, highlighting the necessities of and tensions between

employment subordination and expressive freedom. Yet, I also argue that the "inner circle" of

jazz artists involved in film score production are creative workers whose level of autonomy and

independence often exceeds the liberties granted in typical employer-employee relationships. I

contend that these artists' "creative labor" can complicate assumed culture-industry hierarchies,

granting them democratic participation in the art work production that is informed by a

combination of the director/producer's investment in jazz music, the artists' musical expertise,

and the music's pertinence to the film narrative.

Art as Labor

Ultimately, filmmakers are in business to make money. They contribute to a large film-making

enterprise that Paul Hirsch characterizes as a culture industry – a "profit-seeking firm producing

cultural products for national [and international] distribution . . . comprised of all organizations

engaged in the process of filtering new products and ideas as they flow from 'creative' personnel

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[63] Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 89.

in the technical subsystem to the managerial, institutional and societal levels of organization."[64]

Standardization is common among culture industry distribution systems, born from a combination of convenience and audience expectations. All of the work that goes into the development of a culture industry art work – for our purposes a completed film – operates in service of commercial profit.

It is this bottom-line end-goal – this art-as-business approach – that has often led to contentious stigmatization of film music within music criticism. This aligns with condemnations of "selling-out" that – according to Faulkner – emphasize the notion "of sacrificing one's integrity for the pursuit of higher and quicker economic net returns."[65] Film work often pays well – in many cases higher than orchestral or band side work, or freelance gigging and studio recording (with the exception of "star" performers). Per this topic, Mark Isham – who primarily established himself as a jazz trumpet player before becoming a film composer – confessed, "Obviously, in film composing I could do very, very well [financially]—I don't know of any jazz musician who could quite do this well, just in general."[66] It is not a mystery why composers and musicians are interested in taking opportunity of these gigs in terms of economic reward.

But the crux of the "sell-out" criticism attacks artists' creative dignity. As Herbert Gans contends:

> The criticism of the process of popular-culture creation breaks down into three charges: that mass culture is an industry organized for profit; that in order for this industry to be profitable, it must create a homogenous and standardized product that appeals to a mass audience; and that this requires a process in which the industry transforms the creator into a worker on a mass production assembly line, where he gives up the individual expression of his own skills and values.[67]

[64] Paul Hirsch, "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization-Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems," *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1972): 642.
[65] Faulkner, *Hollywood Studio Musicians*, 88.
[66] Mark Isham, interview with the author, December 15, 2014
[67] Herbert Gans, "Popular Culture in America: Social Problems in a Mass Society or Social Asset in Pluralistic Society?" in *Social Problems: A Modern Approach, ed. Howard Becker* (New York: Wiley, 1966).

The assumption that film artists "give up [their] individual expression" derives from the subservience of their artistic product to the filmmakers' desires. Composer John Corigliano avers, "[Many critics'] image of the film composer is that of (a) a sellout to his art, because he's composing for money in a sense and to someone else's order."[68] Such criticism may be especially prominent among jazz critics, who are inclined to laud jazz for its innovation, avant-garde qualities, and relative freedom from expectation or industry control.

These concerns are not unsupported. Film composers are first-and-foremost hired as part of a labor organization whose primary function is to contribute to the production of the finalized film according to executives' expectations. They are certainly creating "to someone else's order." While the film musician contributes greatly to the finalized product, he himself is rarely indispensable. As Faulkner described, "The tensions of dealing with business and art simultaneously are particularly severe. . . . Any attempt to fight the contradictions of commercial work—part commerce and part art and craft—results in another colleague getting the assignment, credit 'point,' and work connection."[69] Film historian Gergely Hubai's *Torn Music: Rejected Film Scores, A Selected History* offers a fascinating study of the variety of tensions that have led to film scores being disregarded, and the scorers being replaced – including miscommunication, art/commerce clashes, and aesthetic conflict.[70] Accordingly, composers must carefully balance their aesthetic desires against the demands of the industry. Once hired, the film composer is hardly given "free rein," so to speak. Working in cooperation with directors, music supervisors, and editors – he must negotiate his own creativity with a number of business

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[68] Quoted in David Morgan, *Knowing the Score: Film Composers Talk About The Art, Craft, Blood, Sweat, and Tears of Writing Music for Cinema* (New York, Harper Entertainment, 2000): 140.
[69] Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 37-38.
[70] Gergely Hubai, *Torn Music: Rejected Film Scores, A Selected History* (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2012).

decisions and expectations, including budget, timeline, and editing (both expected and unexpected).

Budgeting

Before any soundtrack production can happen, the music budget for a film must be discussed and delineated. In general, the total music budget will be worked out by the music supervisor, once he has looked at the scripts and been in touch with the filmmaking executives (e.g., producer and/or director). In many cases, the budget decision is made well in advance of any decisions about composers, musicians, etc. – because the budget will determine who can be brought on. The factors to consider in determining budget are typically: size and makeup of orchestra, amount (in minutes) of music, amount of extra studio time for prerecording, song recording, and post-mixing, difficulty of music (time to record), and instrumentation. In terms of personnel, the supervisor must consider expenses for which composers and musicians they are getting; obviously, more in-demand artists will generally have higher fees. Composers who utilize orchestrators will cost more overall, as fees will need to be paid to multiple people. Utilizing union or non-union musicians must be taken into account. Union musicians – while generally more reliable in terms of professionalism and efficiency – also require specific union pay scales, regulated break times, and benefits (pension, health and welfare, etc.). [71] For soundtracks that require licensing of original tunes, that process can take on considerable expense.[72] Support personnel – like those mentioned in the previous section – must also be paid: copyists, assistants, people carting/transporting instruments, etc. All of these possible expenses must be taken into

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[71] See Karlin and Wright, *On the Track*, 51-52.

[72] For details, see Chapter 24, "Licensing Recordings for Motion Pictures," in M. William Krasilovksy and Sidney Shemel, *This Business of Music: The Definitive Guide to the Music Industry*, 10th ed. (New York: Billboard Books, 2007): 269-273.

account by the music supervisor when he/she is determining how to allot funds and which

composers/musicians to approach for the gig. As composer Dick Hyman maintains, "All [these

factors] directly affect the kind of music, and the specific music you would use."[73]

Once the budget has been determined, all of the personnel hired, licensing arranged, and

the production underway, steps are still constantly taken to mitigate extra expenditure of funds.

Recording musicians are expected to be able to essentially perfectly sight-read their parts in a

recording session; extra rehearsal or re-recording means more time in the recording studio, which

means more cost to the music department. Instrumentalists are also hired only when they are

needed. If the strings and the brass are to be recorded separately, they will likely be recorded on

separate days, so there is not any "down time" in which instrumentalists are not playing, but are

being paid.

Schedule/Timeline

Time constraints are one of the biggest burdens for film soundtrack musicians. As the score is

one of the last phases of the project, filmmakers are notorious for bringing the composers and

musicians on board at the "last minute." As Karlin and Wright describe, "Because music is the

last element in the production chain, the composer's time gets cut short: he is often not given the

final cut when promised, while the delivery date remains unchanged or in some cases may be

moved forward."[74] They further state, "Everyone agrees that to be a film composer you must be

a fast writer and have the physical stamina to work under extreme pressure and still continue to

write music for many days with inadequate sleep."[75] Musical artists are usually given anywhere

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[73] Dick Hyman, interview with the author, March 10, 2015.
[74] Karlin and Wright, *On the Track*, 59.
[75] Ibid.

between a mere week to a couple of months to spot the film, come up with concepts, write the

music, and record it. One of the shortest time frames for a major motion picture was Graeme

Revell's score for *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001), which was completed in six days.[76] For

many artists, such time constraints might impede creativity, as the artists aren't afforded much

time to brainstorm, experiment, edit, etc. Vince Giordano expressed his frustrations in the

following comments:

> I think there's a very unrealistic idea in the film industry about how long it takes to do something. To them, it's like making toast—you just put the bread in there and in two minutes, it's done! Or like choosing different tracks on a CD player—I want track 13, I want track 16. And to be very exacting—it takes time! It's like preparing a meal. And to use another food [analogy]—you take a bowl of lettuce, and it's very edible, but there's nothing very special about it. And I try to tell these folks that you can give me three hours or four hours to just come up with music, but I'm just going to show up with a bowl of lettuce. It's edible, but it's not going to be great. If you gave me more time, I'd be able to cut some tomatoes, and put some olive oil, and some little things in it, and present you with this beautiful salad that's very substantial, and a lot more fun than the bowl of lettuce. [The filmmakers say:] "Well, we're going to pay you!" No, that's not the issue—the money is not the issue—it's what I'm trying to do for you, and [I] need time. You need time to do this.[77]

There is no doubt that allowing more time for creating, experimenting, and editing would likely

enhance the overall product. Yet it is also an expected part of the business, and in some cases can

influence creativity in unexpected ways. Terence Blanchard acknowledges that such a limited

time frame has repercussions for his creative process – both negatively and positively. He

contended, "It influences me greatly because I don't have time to sit down and ponder . . . the

decision. You've got to make a choice and stick with it. So I think in a weird way it makes you

concentrate a little more. It makes me at least make sure that I've dotted every i and crossed

every t. . . . It's taxing, but it makes me more conscientious – more aware of where I'm going,

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[76] Karlin and Wright, *On the Track*, 60.
[77] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29. 2014.

because I don't have time to make any mistakes and go back and correct any mistakes."[78] These

constraints are not unlike songwriting and album deadlines (for recording artists) or publication

deadlines (for writers) – they are ostensibly very limiting, but there is also an expectation that the

artist can work creatively within these constraints. Whether or not they do so – or whether or not

they might have been more successful with more time – is debatable on a case-by-case basis.

I must also draw attention to the fact that these short timelines are not universal. While in

general, many directors wait until they have a final cut of the film to start reaching out to the

music supervisor about soundtrack details, there are always exceptions. Several of the case

studies I examine in this dissertation highlight scenarios in which the filmmakers are actively

involved with the composers during (or even before!) the shooting process. Terence Blanchard

avers that Spike Lee – with whom he has collaborated on numerous films – is very involved in

discussing musical concepts with Terence throughout filming. He stated, "In my work with

Spike – Spike is a dude that is really involved in [the music] process while he's shooting."[79]

Composer/pianist Dick Hyman shared a similar level of collaboration with director Woody

Allen, who conceptualized the music for his films from the early developmental and pre-

production stages. For Antonio Sanchez' work on the *Birdman* (2014) soundtrack – which I will

look at more closely in Chapter 3 – he collaborated with director Alejandro González Iñárritu

during the pre-production stages, recording the majority of the film's soundtrack prior to filming.

In this unique case, the film itself was cut to the fit the pre-recorded music. In each of these

examples, the filmmakers have demonstrated a strong investment in the music, and are cognizant

of how they want it to fit into the film. As such, the contracted composers/musicians are brought

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[78] Terence Blanchard, interview with the author, August 25, 2015.
[79] Ibid.

in more as artistic collaborators early on in the process, rather than as last-minute post-production creative personnel.

Editing

The editorial process in film soundtrack production is both highly necessary and potentially highly contentious. The composer/musician does not have final say in how his music is utilized in the final cut of the film. Karlin and Wright state, "It should be stressed here that no composer, no matter how prestigious or how great his track record, is ever contractually granted the right of final decision as to whether his music is used in a film, or in what manner."[80] Composer John Corigliano stated, "They can take your music out, they can put it in other places, they can cut it up, [and] they can add sounds to it."[81] Henry Mancini once decried, "Many a composer's heart is broken in the dubbing room. Sometimes music is severely subdued, or cut out entirely. Sometimes it is used under scenes it was not intended for. Cries of 'How can they do this to my music?' have been heard. 'They' [the filmmakers] can, and 'they' do."[82]

Once the music has been recorded, it is spliced/cut/manipulated to fit within the soundtrack, integrated with (and often subservient to) dialogue and additional sound effects. The editing stage is completed by the music editor, though his decisions are primarily influenced by the preferences of the music supervisor, who is in conversation with the director and/or producer. Ideally, the music editor will have been in close communication with these filmmaking executives from early on in the filming process, and will have good ideas of timing lengths and music expectations for particular scenes, so that excess music is not recorded or so that the music

[80] Karlin and Wright, *On the Track*, 359.
[81] Quoted in Morgan, *Knowing the Score*, 50.
[82] Henry Mancini, "Did They Mention the Music? (1989)" in Mervyn Cooke, ed., *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 207.

does not require a lot of manipulation in order to make it fit. Composers are being paid to write for the film – it is in the filmmakers' best interest to give them the information they need to make that happen with as little waste of resources as possible. However, changes to the film are constantly being made, and this can often result in scene changes that require unexpected editing of the soundtrack recording. In some cases, the resultant editing is less than musically desirable, being cut or spliced in the middle of phrases or even measures. Mark Lopeman revealed that some editing jobs result in "cutting things so that bars are spliced together and not complete, or that the harmony doesn't work out or make any sense anymore."[83]

With artists like Lopeman – who are recording song adaptations that are also released separately on compiled soundtracks – editing is absolutely necessary. Rarely are the entire songs played in the films/television programs they support, but whole tunes are often recorded so there is a version to release on soundtrack. As such, the recordings are chopped/edited to fit into given scenes of varying length. Again – this is not always the case for composers, who generally write to fit given time specifications. Yet as indicated above, these specifications are rarely set in stone. Composers are faced with having moments removed that helped fulfill a musical statement, with whole or partial phrases and sections being eliminated. I do not intend to suggest that all music editing jobs are insensitive to the musical work; many editors take great care in making sure the results are musically-appropriate. Instead, I address these complications in order to highlight the conventionally-subservient role of music in film production, and the challenges that many soundtrack musicians face.

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[83] Mark Lopeman, interview with the author, October 11, 2014.

Music Rights

As in any artistic domain, the artists' rights to their music is an important factor—one which varies from project to project. All film music products fit into the 1976 Copyright Act definition of work-for-hire, in which intellectual property of a direct employee or specially-commissioned independent contractor is owned by the employer/producer.[84] As Matt Stahl articulates, "Work for hire splits author from creator: if an employee creates a work, then in the absence of a contract to the contrary, work for hire alienates the work from the employee-creator. The employee is the employer's instrument or medium of creation, the work is the employer's: the employer is the author and owner."[85]

The intellectual property rights owned by the producer include all rights of recording, performance, and music publishing. Vince Giordano confirmed his work-for-hire status in his contract with *Boardwalk Empire*, informing me that he has no rights to the music that he and the Nighthawks record for the soundtrack. He stated, "With HBO it's all buy-out. They own everything, and they can do anything they want with it."[86] As an illustration of the producer's all-encompassing rights, Giordano revealed that he has not been able to produce albums that include any of the tracks from the *Boardwalk* recording sessions.[87] Evidently there are many recordings from these sessions that were not released in the three soundtrack volumes that were issued. That music is now stored somewhere in HBO executives' files, and only they can determine what happens to it. Giordano is interested in the music, but he legally has to rights to it.

Composers/musicians for film soundtracks may receive royalties – which fall under a number of categories. These include printed editions, piano copies, foreign printed editions,

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[84] For more detailed information on work-for-hire, see Krasilovsky and Shemel, *This Business of Music*, 260.
[85] Stahl, *Unfree Masters*, 21.
[86] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.
[87] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, March 26, 2016.

mechanical license receipts of the original publisher, and – when negotiated – recording artist royalties on sales of soundtrack recordings.[88] In some cases royalties can be very small (Vince Giordano informed me that he received a royalty check for thirty-two cents); other times they can be more substantial, depending on the success of the sales and the royalty negotiations in place.

Labor as Art

To dismiss film music-making as an artistic endeavor solely because of its subordinate role in film is as naïve and uncritical as disregarding books that must meet publishers' expectations, or albums that must meet record companies' expectations. Film music artists always have choices. It is for their ability to make these artistic choices and decisions that they have been hired. Certainly, these artistic choices operate within the hierarchies and conventions of the established art world; whether they are conventional, risky, innovative, and successful or unsuccessful depends on unique case-by-case scenarios in which all of these art world factors are at play.

Assessing such risks and values continually informs composers' decisions on a daily basis, and may vary greatly from experience to experience. Ultimately a composer's decision must result in compromise. While "compromise" is generally pejoratively-construed, I argue that it can also be a positively-valenced term. Faulkner positively re-frames compromise's significance in film industry work: "It is all too easy to see such compromise as a lowering of the standards and values the composer begins with, but such a view is usually an inaccurate cliché. The compromise a film composer must achieve is not the result of a process of weakening but of

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[88] For more details, see Krasilovsky and Shemel, *This Business of Music*, 264-5.

strengthening his own craft—his talent and his ability to function in the Hollywood scene—to balance conflicting demands."[89]

I would like to take Faulkner's comment a step further and suggest that such compromise may also result in the strengthening of a composers' own compositional creativity. Even within conventional limitations—or even because of conventional limitations—composers can be challenged to develop musically-interesting ways of influencing audience emotion. In my numerous interviews with film composers, they have stressed that the primary goal of film composition is to capture the audiences' emotions and imaginations in service of the narrative. While Hollywood conventions have established certain sonic significations for particular emotional meanings (e.g., lush, melodic strings for romance, etc.), such conventions do not necessarily preclude other musical approaches. There may be several possible methods for scoring romance, or fear, or anger, or nostalgia. For example, both John Williams' repetitive half-step motif for *Jaws* (1975) and Stephen Price's intensely layered electronic score for *Gravity* (2014) sonically evoke suspense in uniquely different and effective ways. Therefore, the compromises that result in the process of commercial film scoring are not all relinquishments of artistic agency (although this can happen at times), but rather complex negotiations of interests and talents in service of the work. This provides a challenge to mass-culture criticism that views culture industry work as solely alienated labor, instead providing an alternative understanding of labor that is simultaneously regulated and individually-creative.

In the following chapters, I highlight how particular jazz artists' involvement in soundtracks demonstrates this phenomenon of "creative labor" within the film industry, and further contributes to our expanded understanding of ideology, creation, and production within

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[89] Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 96.

the broader jazz art world. By examining these artists' works at the nexus of creative autonomy

and industry regulation, I draw an image of film-jazz production that is simultaneously

hierarchical and collaborative. It is to the case studies that I now turn.

Chapter Two
Jazz-HIP Meets Film: Historicism and the Quest for
"Dual Authenticity" in Period Jazz Soundtracks

In the first episode of *Boardwalk Empire*, gangster Nucky Thompson hosts a party at Babette's, a speakeasy located in Atlantic City, New Jersey. At the beginning of the party, an onstage band-leader sarcastically yells "Prohibition!," while champagne corks pop, glamorously-dressed partiers revel on the dance floor, and the band breaks into a Dixieland-style jazz tune. While "Mr. Prohibition" only appears for a brief moment—and only utters one word—he is actually significantly responsible for much of the "authenticity" of atmosphere that permeates this HBO series. He is an actual jazz bandleader named Vince Giordano, and he—along with his group the Nighthawks—recorded all of the 1920s-30s "period" tracks for all five seasons of the show.

Within the last several decades, jazz musicians such as Giordano – who are known for performing historic jazz styles – have been attractive to filmmakers making period-based films or television projects. In the majority of cases, these examples include films set in the early twentieth-century, for which jazz was a characteristic musical idiom of the times. Filmmakers' reliance on present-day recording artists – rather than period recordings themselves – is largely a result of the inferior recording quality of early twentieth-century records. Accordingly, jazz artists familiar with these early jazz styles are hired to recreate the music with as much deference to the originals as possible. I argue that filmmakers' interest in these period-jazz performers is rooted in their desire to inject their film projects with a perceived aura of "authenticity." The filmmaker's goal is that this period-appropriate music – combined with other period elements such as setting, costuming, etc. – will elevate the perceived authenticity of their movies among consuming audiences.

But what is meant by the term "authenticity"? J.L. Austin recognizes it as a "dimension word," or – as Denis Dutton defines it – "a term whose meaning remains uncertain until we know what dimension of its reference it being talked about."[90] The potential dimensional meanings are manifold. I find philosopher Philip Kivy's breakdown of authenticity's five primary definitions to be particular illustrative of these possible dimensions. In his work *Authenticities*, Kivy utilizes the Old English Dictionary to identify these definitions as follows:[91]

1. Of authority, authoritative. (Possessing original or inherent authority).
2. Original, firsthand, prototypical. (Opposed to copied.)
3. Really proceeding from its reputed source or author: of undisputed origin, genuine. (Opposed to counterfeit, forged).
4. Belonging to himself, own, proper.
5. Acting of itself, self-originated, automatic.

These diverse definitions reinforce the complexity and polysemy of the term – which varies greatly based on the context in which it is used.

"Authenticity" is a term that arises frequently in both film and jazz discourse. I will delineate these discursive meanings in more detail throughout this chapter, but first I want to more broadly frame the notions of authenticity in period films in dialogue with those of authenticity in historically-informed jazz performance. The film industry is first and foremost a commercial industry. Its claims to "authenticity" are marketing devices, utilized to capture audiences' interests. Films are inherently an illusory medium; they are contrived representations of reality. Period films are even more obviously contrived, as they are representations of phenomena that have purportedly happened in the past. Therefore, historical authenticity in period film is the perceived believability or accuracy of the representations depicted – not of

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[90] Denis Dutton, "Authenticity in Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 258.

[91] Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995): 3.

genuine "reality." Filmmakers attempt to achieve perceived authenticity by utilizing historically- or situationally-appropriate settings, props, music, etc. However, they are also willing to compromise such accuracy in order to make their films more commercially-accessible or appealing.

Period jazz performers also strive for perceived historical authenticity in their musical representations. However, jazz performance is also entangled with the jazz art world's ideological recognitions of "authenticity" as individual, self-directed (or "autonomous") creative expression – as evidenced in the art world's self-identification around the art of improvisation. As such, period jazz performers must navigate the tensions between historical fidelity and personal creativity. These tensions become even more complicated when these artists are performing for commercial purposes – either for paying audiences, or in period film productions. In such circumstances, they must also negotiate their performance decisions with reference to audiences' or filmmakers' ostensible desires.

Therefore, "authenticity" as a concept in either period film or period jazz production is not a singular phenomenon – but a complex construction that is continually reconstituted through the tensions and negotiations of both art and commerce. Filmmakers and period jazz performers alike must grapple with these tensions during all of their production decisions. Sometimes, they may prioritize historical "accuracy," other times originality, all the while attending to the notion of the work's commercial appeal. A useful analogy is that of a chef making a dish, with multiple ingredients on the counter to choose from. The ingredients that the chef chooses – and the ratios (prioritization) of those ingredients – will ultimately effect the final outcome on the plate. While the chef may seek to incorporate both eggs and vegetables into the dish, she will have to determine how much of each ingredient to use, and the particular preparation style for each

ingredient, in order to make what she believes will be a satisfying meal for her customers. Similarly, period filmmakers and jazz performers must also negotiate their own ideologies and practices regarding "authentic" production, while also considering the commercial potential of their work.

In this chapter, I contend that certain individuals in both jazz and film are invested in trying to achieve an effective balance between elements of "factual authenticity" (i.e., historical accuracy) and "expressive authenticity" (i.e., creativity, originality, and "real" experiences for audiences) in their period works. I describe these efforts as quests for "*dual authenticity.*" This duality encompasses the employment of production techniques/practices that evoke historical fidelity (e.g., performing period-appropriate music in historically-informed styles, utilizing historically-informed staging, costuming, etc.) *and* a vital, individualized expressivity that appeals to modern-day audiences. While idealistic and likely unattainable, these quests for authenticity illuminate how commercial artists negotiate the pushes and pulls of creativity, ideology, and commercialism in historically-based productions. I argue that shared ideological quests for dual authenticity between particular filmmakers (e.g., Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen) and period jazz performers (e.g., Vince Giordano, Dick Hyman) have resulted in the latter's regular involvement in period film soundtrack production. In examining these case studies, I analyze how these jazz musicians address their own ideologies about period practice at the intersections of perceptions of "authenticity," art, and commerce within film industry work.

In the following sections, I examine discourses of authenticity in both period jazz performance and in film production, theorizing the notion of "dual authenticity" aspirations within these discursive frameworks. I will then address how historically-informed jazz

performance (jazz HIP, as I will call it) functions in support of period filmmakers' efforts to inject ostensible "dual authenticity" into their films.

Jazz HIP

A study of jazz musicians' work as historical performers for film soundtracks first necessitates an understanding of historically-informed performance (HIP) in jazz as a theoretical, aesthetic, and ideological artistic phenomenon. Here, I explore what I call jazz-HIP, positioning historically-informed performance practice in jazz in dialogue with the broader trends and debates that characterize the traditional-HIP movements that emerged in the mid-to-late twentieth century. While the principles and efforts between the two do not exactly correspond, their practices and ideologies overlap and intersect in many ways.

Historicism and revivalism have maintained a strong presence in jazz's relatively brief history, manifesting in such movements as the traditional-jazz revival of the late 1930s-1940s, the jazz-repertory movement in the mid-1970s, The Neoclassicist movement of the 1980s, and swing revival in the 1990s. These movements have been rooted in a variety of historicist perspectives, including respect for tradition, reactionism against avant-garde developments, desires to establish and define a "history of jazz," and for some – nostalgia. The revivalist sub-genres that most directly align with the manifold goals and approaches of early music HIP are those of early-jazz performance, which particularly focus on repertories and styles performed from the 1910s (the music of Scott Joplin, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, etc.) through the 1940s (e.g., big band "ghost bands" such as the Glenn Miller Orchestra, the Count Basie Orchestra, etc.). Historically-informed early jazz performances are often performed in contextual milieus that highlight the historical value of the idiom – at early jazz festivals (e.g., Bix

Beiderbecke Festival, Ragtime and Early Jazz Festival, Django Reinhardt Jazz Festival), at

heritage sites (e.g., The Preservation Hall Jazz Band performances), and in academic settings

such as universities and conservatories (e.g., student or faculty early-jazz repertory ensembles).

A few select groups perform this music in society/club gigs, including the Beau Hunks

Orchestra, Woody Allen and His New Orleans Jazz Band, and Vince Giordano and the

Nighthawks – though still marketing the music's connection to past jazz history.[92]

Historically-informed performance practice is born out of musicians' and scholars' desire

to reconnect with the music of the past. The height of criticism and scholarship in the traditional-

HIP performance practice movement in the 1960s-1990s reflected a growing investment in

identifying and establishing conventions for appropriately performing early Western art music –

from Medieval chant through the early twentieth-century pieces of such composers as Stravinsky

and Elgar.[93] Jazz historicists throughout jazz history have similarly placed a large investment in

achieving period-appropriate performance styles, inflections, and perceptibly "authentic" fidelity

to the original pieces or idioms in question. These performers' contentions and decisions about

what constitutes authentic performance can be varied, and questions arise concerning what and

how performance techniques should be employed.[94] Yet the big questions all focus on one large

overarching query – how much fidelity to the original works is expected, and what does that

fidelity constitute?

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[92] For an interesting (though now dated) volume highlighting the careers of active early-jazz performers, see Chip Deffaa, *Traditionalists and Revivalists in Jazz* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1993).

[93] Thomas Forrest Kelly, *Early Music: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Also see John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), for a comprehensive introduction to historically-informed performance in music criticism.

[94] Again, see Deffaa, *Traditionalists and Revivalists* (1993), for an overview of the diverse practices and attitudes about "authenticity" espoused by a variety of jazz traditionalists and revivalists.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation is one point of contention.[95] Should jazz-HIP performers utilize instruments anachronistically in order to achieve a preferred sound or performance aesthetic? For example, should they use more recently-manufactured instruments, or ones that date to the period in question? Should they use an electronically amplified string bass (which was uncommon throughout the early 1920s), or the more typical tuba or bass sax? Should they use updated amplification technology in performance at all?

These questions resonate with parallel debates in traditional-HIP. The early-music revival in the latter half of the twentieth century was greatly spurred by performers' interests in antique instruments (e.g., clavichord, harpsichord, lute, etc.), leading to historically-informed performance in an effort to understand their functions and capabilities. Accordingly, many traditional-HIP performers were greatly invested in utilizing the appropriate period instruments for the given music they were performing. Yet other practitioners and musicologists began to debate this fidelity to historic instrumentation to the extent that it ostensibly impeded musical style and expressivity. Some believed the instruments made the performance too mechanized – too lifeless – causing a rift among those who were committed to using the antiques, and those who were willing to use more modern technology in order to achieve supposedly more accessible, period-inspired sounds. For example, musicologist Richard Taruskin – one of traditional HIP's greatest critics – espouses that "instruments do not play music, people do."[96] Similarly, oboist/recordist Bruce Haynes contends that "What we [HIP performers] have discovered is that authenticity is not a product of the instrument being played, but of the

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[95] Bruce Haynes discusses the debates surrounding instrumentation in HIP discourse at length in his tome *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Kelly (2011), also discusses these contentions.

[96] Haynes, *The End of Early Music,* 153.

musician's sense of style. Style originates, of course, in the player's head (and/or heart). This is where musical 'restoration' takes place."[97]

Jazz-HIP performers consider these same questions. It is the case that many "vintage" instruments from early jazz performance still exist today, and are therefore not as foreign as early-music instruments such as a harpsichord and viol. However, several have been retired from general use – banjos, tubas, bass saxophones, and washboards have been largely replaced by guitars, string basses, and drum sets, respectively. Does using these instruments make the music more "authentic"? If the instruments aren't used, does the music become less authentic? Does playing unfamiliar vintage instruments result in uncomfortable novelty performance, rather than expressive, period-appropriate style? These are all queries that inform jazz-HIP artists' considerations (and debates) concerning the utilization of period instrumentation.

Performance Style/Inflections

Another point of inquiry is the usage of performance inflections in jazz-HIP, which can include nuances of vibrato, the degree of "swing" in rhythmic propulsion, articulations (e.g., staccato, legato, etc.), and even individual timbres. For early jazz idioms, vibrato is decidedly fuller and more prominent than later jazz styles. New Orleans-style rhythms are typically jauntily-syncopated, featuring a march-like quality, with an ebullient, bouncy energy. These rhythms (and the corresponding level of "swing") sharply contrast with the swing idioms that characterized the music of the later Swing Era, or many later jazz styles. Vocal timbres and projection styles contrasted with the later "crooning" styles of the 1930s-1950s, as they were pre-microphone

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[97] Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, 153.

performance styles. All of these technical features can be considered (and arguably should be –

even if disregarded) by any prospective early jazz HIP performer.

Regarding traditional-HIP, Bruce Haynes characterizes the usage of such period-

influenced performance techniques as "style copying" (which he distinguishes from singular

"work-copying") – replication based on the performer's knowledge of a body of works, that he

then applies to a new performance.[98] Haynes views style-copying through a linguistic lens,

arguing that successful period performers require the musical equivalent of "linguistic

competence" – "the ability to extrapolate new but correct expressions in a foreign language and

to reject unacceptable ones."[99] To effectively style-copy in a historically-informed manner, one

must thoroughly research and understand the practices common during the period of the works in

question. In addition, however, performers should also be able to perform these period

techniques with a musical command.

It is this latter contention that has surfaced in skepticism and criticism of style-copying

within traditional-HIP discourse. Many practitioners believe that style imitation is ineffective if

the performers are not able to convincingly bring antiquated performance techniques into

contemporary performance. Returning to Haynes' linguistic comparison, imitating language or

accent does not make one sound like a native speaker until they have a command of the idiom.

As Jose A. Bowen stated, "You can learn to pronounce the words, but your performance will be

wooden if you do not learn what they mean and also how they mean it. . . . A good accent is not

sufficient. Even imitating all the nuances of a previous great performance is not enough. A direct

imitation of the external sound is hollow, and misses the point."[100] This is certainly a challenge

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[98] Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, 142.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Jose A. Bowen, "Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 443.

for many traditional-HIP performers, particularly since no original recordings of the period music exist that can definitively point performers in the right direction. They must instead rely on a combination of scores, historical treatises, and period commentary to inform their stylistic decision-making, and must internalize these stylistic elements in order to effectively perform them.

Jazz-HIP performers have the advantage of having access to original period recordings, providing them the sonic resources for learning and imitating early-jazz techniques and articulations. Furthermore, they are not as far-removed (as traditional-HIP performers) from the period practices of the styles they are emulating, thus making period performance techniques arguably less foreign to them. One could argue, therefore, that jazz-HIP artists are able to more accurately style-copy than traditional-HIP artists, as they have actual sonic evidence to base their performances on. That said, having access to this evidence does not necessarily mean that jazz-HIP practitioners will automatically be more successful at historic performance style, or that they will always value all of the period techniques. For jazz-HIP performers today that are interested in playing music from the 1920s, there are about ninety intervening years of style and taste development that sub-consciously inform these artists' understanding of an approach to music. They think differently about vibrato, solo style, and a number of other performance factors. As such, they must make decisions about what is important to them in historically-informed performance, and determine what techniques/performance elements they will employ accordingly.

Improvisation (vs. Werktreue ideal)

Improvisation is considered to be a fundamental characteristic of jazz performance. While not all jazz-identified pieces contain it, this practice is nonetheless a distinguishing aesthetic in the majority of products of the jazz art world. Improvisation itself implies spontaneous creativity – a musical approach that is not highly regulated by score, notation, or performance rules. Several early music repertories also contained elements of improvisation or extempore ornamentation (e.g., Baroque basso continuo, operatic vocal cadenzas, etc.), giving responsibility to the performers in the absence of fully-notated scores. In what Bruce Haynes characterizes as "implicit notation,"[101] Baroque performers were provided with ambiguous instruction for performance, leaving them a considerable amount of freedom for individual interpretation and expression. As Thomas Forrest Kelly argues, "In earlier ways of writing music, the score was perhaps a set of suggestions for what might happen, a sort of fake book."[102] Barthold Kuijken further maintains, "We should bear in mind that in actual [early-music] performance musicians were often required to add their own unique layer of interpretation, which could or even should be different each time the work was played."[103] Therefore, both traditional-HIP and jazz-HIP practitioners must be cognizant of the opportunity and presence of improvisation in their period works.

Yet the phenomenon of improvisation throws a wrench in the ostensible straightforwardness of work replication in historically-informed performance. Among traditional-HIP performances, one of the most significant pieces of historical evidence about how the music was performed is the score itself. The score is understood as a tangible token of the art

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[101] Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, 108.

[102] Kelly, *Early Music,* 80.

[103] Barthold Kuijken, *The Notation Is Not the Music: Reflections on Early Music Practice and Performance* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013): 2.

work, ideally representative of the composer's intentions. As such, many HIP performers look to the score as the Urtext, and base their performance decisions on a desire to achieve fidelity to it. These motivations align with a pervasive *Werktreue* ideal in modern Western society that locates authenticity and meaning in individual musical works. Lydia Goehr argues that this Romantic ideal has resulted in a "conceptual imperialism" that positions the "true meaning" of musical works as the product of composer intent.[104] Accordingly, the score – as a written illustration of the composer's intent – becomes the subject of authenticity itself. Since improvisation is by nature not notated, HIP performers who have adopted this Werktreue ideal must negotiate how to perform musical moments that are meant to be personally-interpreted. They must rely on their knowledge of improvised styles within the context of the given work, and make their performance decisions accordingly.

This phenomenon of dealing with improvisation becomes increasingly complicated in the case of jazz HIP. In the relative absence of fully-notated scores, the "intents" of the composers/performers are most fully-articulated in recordings. The primary difference between these texts and traditional-HIP scores in terms of improvisation is that the *improvisations are also documented*. Accordingly, jazz-HIP practitioners must decide whether or not to transcribe and copy the original solos (as though they were a score), or to improvise the solos as originally-intended. Here, controversy stirs concerning whether the performer is more invested in a historical approach that practices textual fidelity or fidelity to the original performance approach. For example, ideological purists who believe that improvisation fundamentally should be performed in-the-moment are likely to reject transcription, arguing that it diminishes creative expression. In contrast, artists performing a tribute to the works of a particular musician (e.g.,

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[104] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay In the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 250.

Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet) may copy a particular solo note-for-note, demonstrating reverence for the improvised "compositions" of that musician. In this case, however, selecting the appropriate "original" text to emulate can become another difficult decision; a single tune could have been recorded by a given period artist on multiple occasions, featuring different improvised solos each time. How does one choose what counts as the original, and/or which solo should be recreated? There is no singular answer, and will depend greatly on the performer's own intentions.

Intent is further problematized by historical knowledge. If a modern-day jazz performer is interested in improvising over the solo sections of a tune in a historically-informed performance, he must also consider what improvising during that time period was like musically. In order to remain historically-appropriate, one must disregard the musical developments that have occurred since the period in question, otherwise risk being anachronistic. For some, such modernist anachronism might be intentional, bringing the period music into dialogue with contemporary interpretation. However, others may become frustrated when musicians introduce harmonic substitutions or Charlie Parker licks into a solo chorus from the 1920s. Such artists are much more likely to advocate transcription-based approaches to period improvisation, in which the performer re-creates an original solo note-for-note. While availability of original recordings of early-jazz performances assists in identification of stylistic appropriateness (a luxury not afforded to traditional-HIP practitioners), limited recording technology and the absence of "live performance" leaves gaps for interpretation, and thus for potential anachronistic error. Again, the performer's decisions about what constitutes "fidelity" to the original work is case-dependent, and remains a field for debate within jazz-HIP discourse.

Authenticity as a Product of Perception

One can see in this proliferation of questions and debates that there is no singular interpretation of what constitutes "authentic" early jazz historicized performance – nor will there ever be. Authenticity is an ideological construct – in essence, a phenomenological object of perception whose identity is dependent on socially-determined expectations. The biggest source of conflict in defining authenticity is the fact that it cannot be singularly defined. Different people perceive authenticity in different ways, and even a single person can hold multiple interpretations of the term. We already see this confusion played out in the host of traditional-HIP debates and scholarship. Treatises proliferate addressing a wide variety of early music performers' and musicologists' beliefs in what constitutes appropriate HIP practice – from fidelity to the work and/or composer, to appropriate instrumentation, to how to approach improvised passages, to how much personal expressivity is appropriate.[105]

The multitude of scholars and musicians who have participated in the education and performance of early music styles tend to fall within a spectrum that on one end represents absolute fidelity to the original performance of the piece (an "absoluteness" we can never truly know), and on the other end represents a complete disregard of the original work in favor of a postmodern expressive freedom. Bernard Sherman identifies three broad typologies of early music performers: (1) the central early music tradition, who "adhere firmly to the ideal of trying

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[105] Listing the pertinent literature in its entirety would be too extensive for this footnote. However, key texts include John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Laurence Dreyfus, "Early Music Defended Against Its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century," *The Musical Quarterly* 69 (1983): 297-322; Haynes, *The End of Early Music* (2007); Nicholas Kenyon, ed., *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Bernard Sherman, *Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Musical Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

to play music as it was played in its own time;" (2) those who reject (at least partially) the core ideal of historical authenticity, believing themselves constrained by historical positivism; and (3) those who shares Type 1's dedication to history, but use history radically to undermine the Romantic *Werktreue* concept (fidelity to the work).[106] Any single performer could fall within any three of these typologies at any given time – highlighting the complexity (and ostensible futility) of the early movement "authenticity wars."[107] As Sherman maintains, "It may boil down to case-by-case decisions by the performer about whether each performance instruction is essential, beneficial, insignificant, or inferior to some other alternative. Which category each intention ends up in will, again, depend on the artist's (and the era's) priorities."[108]

In jazz-HIP, case-by-case deliberations along the authenticity spectrum are just as prevalent as in traditional HIP – despite the seemingly-authoritative presence of original recordings. Decisions about authenticity are the product of choice and prioritization – not the true existence of a singular authenticity. I reassert that authenticity is the product of perception, not of reality. I believe it is this element of perception that is key to all analyses of authenticity in HIP. I also believe that for historicist musicians – early music, jazz, folk, and pop alike[109] -

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[106] Sherman, *Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (1997): 391ff.

[107] I borrow this description from Bernard Sherman, *Inside Early Music* (1997).

[108] Ibid., 14.

[109] HIP discourse – though primarily generated among the scholars and practitioners of early Western art music – should not be limited to discussions of their repertoire. Descriptively, historic performance practice means performance practice that is historically-influenced – striving to be historically appropriate in one manner or another. Such practices exist within a plethora of other musical idioms – including folk musics (e.g., English and American folk revivals), popular musics (e.g., *a capella* Barbershop quartet singing revivals) traditional non-Western repertoires (e.g., Japanese *gagaku*, Chinese historically-informed *qin* performance), and – as I am examining in this chapter – jazz. For additional resources on how HIP ideology has been applied to various non-art musics, see Elizabeth Upton, "Concepts of Authenticity in Early Music and Popular Music Communities," *Ethnomusicology Review* 17 (2012), http://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/; Frederick Dohl, "Creating Popular Music History: The Barbershop Harmony Revival in the United States around 1940," in *Popular History: Now and Then*, Barbara Korte and Sylvia Paletschek, ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012); and John Thompson, "Some Issues in Historically-Informed Qin Performance," http://www.silkqin.com/08anal/hip.htm.

there are two primary spheres of perceived authentic performance that influence performance decisions. It is to a more in-depth discussion of these dual spheres that I now turn.

Dual Authenticity in HIP

There are two primary elements of musical performance – the "facts" of the performance (e.g., the notes, instruments, dynamics, etc.), and the "experience" of the performance (by performers and audience members alike). The first focuses on appropriately replicating the "facts" of history – written scores, instrumentation, and commonly-accepted performance practice as evidenced through contemporary theoretical literature, criticism, and (in the case of twentieth-century works) recordings. The second seeks to replicate the more abstract and ephemeral qualities of performance – the "experience" as it was perceived by those who witnessed the performance at the time.

I argue that these two elements manifest in two overarching perceptions of performance authenticity that encompass all other dimensional definitions of the term – nominal/factual authenticity, and expressive/experiential authenticity.[110] I refer to these primary elements as the interactive components of "dual authenticity." In order to completely replicate a given performance, one would ideally need to replicate all of the elements that comprise these dual spheres. This is of course impossible, which is why no two performances – despite consistency

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[110] In distinguishing these terms, I draw on philosopher Dennis Dutton's work in his article "Authenticity in Art" (2003). Dutton also distinguishes between two different types of authenticity in art in general, which he identifies as "nominal authenticity" and "expressive authenticity." The former encompasses accurate identification of the origins or provenance of a work of art (implying that the object is not fraudulent, but "true"), or the perceivable fidelity of a performance to authorial intention or stylistic tradition. The second typology – expressive authenticity – pertains to self-expression, the notion that the work of art or performance possesses original authority through the genuineness and sincerity of its creator in performance. Nominal authenticity is empirical in nature, concerning fundamental, identifiable elements that inform claims that an object is authentic/inauthentic. Expressive authenticity, in contrast, is more abstract, and can only be accepted if the artists' work is indeed accepted by the audience as being genuine, aligning with the artist's own personal expression and values.

in personnel, scores, etc. – are ever exactly the same. This does not, however, discourage HIP

practitioners from attempting such recreation. Whether for scholarly interests, nostalgia, or

commissions that request "authentic" historically-informed performances (such as film

soundtrack projects), many artists still attempt to approximate original performances as

"accurately" as possible.
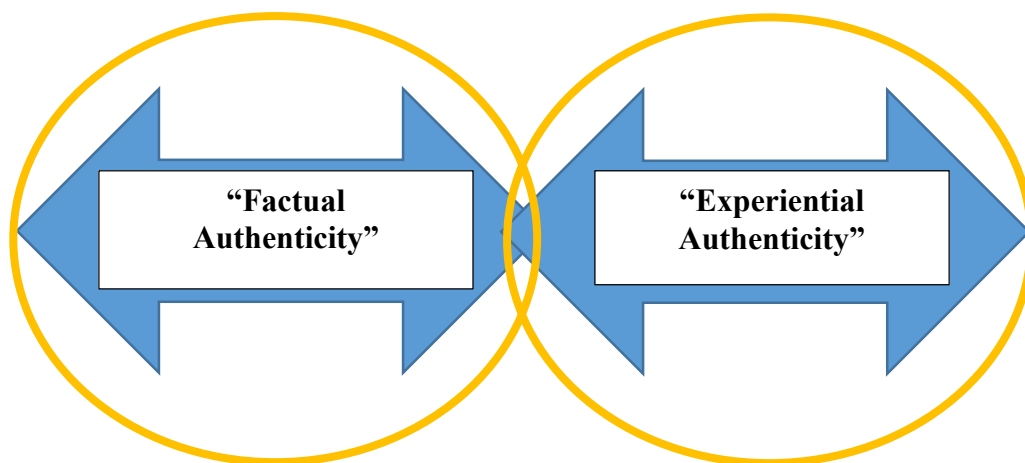
Figure 2.1 *Potential interactions of dual spheres of authenticity in historically-informed performance*

When HIP practitioners favor factual authenticity over experiential authenticity – or vice versa –

their work may be criticized by other HIP practitioners and music scholars. For example,

performers who are more interested in capturing the period-appropriate facts of the performance

have been criticized for being too mechanistic and text-oriented, and dismissive of personal

interpretation and audience accessibility. In illustration, Richard Taruskin's seminal work *Text*

and Act heaps criticism on ostensibly slavish, disinterested fidelity to a given "original" work,

instead advocating for personal expressivity and pluralist interpretation in performances of these

early-music pieces.[111] He locates authenticity in the expressive performance itself – not in its

formalist fidelity to a historic text (which he claims is impossible). On the opposite end of the

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[111] Taruskin, *Text and Act* (1995).

spectrum, those post-modern performers who forego textual fidelity in order to capture the expressiveness of the performance in a modern-day setting (like Taruskin) have been criticized for lacking stylistic or intentional period-appropriateness.

In engaging elements of both factual and experiential authenticity on some level, HIP artists come closer to approximating the experience of the performance in its original period setting. Now, I am not making a value judgement, arguing that one approach to authenticity is inherently "better" than another. Rather, I am arguing that those artists who draw on elements of perceived authenticity in both historical content and experience will come the closest to attaining a recreation of the original event. It is these artists' attempted efforts to capture historical fidelity as well as contemporary expressive authenticity that produce interesting performance results for musicians, historians, and audiences alike. Denis Dutton has expressed a similar viewpoint, arguing, "The best attitude towards authenticity in music performance is that in which careful attention is paid to the historic conventions and limitations of a composer's age, but where one also tries to determine the larger artistic potential of a musical work, including implicit meanings that go beyond the understanding that the composer's age might have derived from it."[112]

I argue that "determining the larger artistic potential" of a musical work need not only include efforts to find new ways of interpreting the work, but may also include performing the work in ways that make its contemporary musical meanings relevant for present-day audiences. This can certainly be challenging in situations where the cultural context of the original music is far removed from our present-day culture – such as Medieval or Renaissance idioms – but that does not keep artists from trying. For more recent twentieth-century musical idioms such as jazz, expressive authenticity with the intent of achieving experiential authenticity in the present day is

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[112] Dutton, "Authenticity in Art."

less complicated by far-removed cultural and epochal barriers. It is for this reason that jazz-HIP offers particularly interesting readings of dual authenticity in historically-informed performance in general.

Early jazz was an interactive music – not for quiet listening, but for dancing and audience participation. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, jazz styles such stride, New Orleans style, and the blues dominated the city streets, apartment and house parties, speakeasies/clubs, and dance halls. As an improvised and interpretive idiom, early jazz was not highly regulated by written-out scores, but instead utilized lead sheets or head arrangements as interpretive frameworks for their performances. All of these conditions contrast with earlier musical styles interpreted by traditional-HIP performers. Traditional HIP focuses primarily on Western art musics – idioms generally encountered in churches, concerts, or highly-stylized party occasions, characterized by predominantly written-out scores.

These differences contribute to my analysis of the degrees to which factual and experiential authenticity inform traditional-HIP and jazz-HIP practices. Traditional HIP, by nature of the music that it studies, can often lean heavily on the side of factual authenticity. Our present-day remoteness from the experiences of the original performances of these works further complicates the achievement of experiential authenticity by such practitioners. Jazz HIP, in contrast, is greatly informed by early jazz's ideological and aesthetic emphasis on interactive experience. The similarity of early jazz reception to today's pop music reception gives jazz-HIP artists a culturally-relevant framework for attempting to approximate experiential authenticity in their performances. The "facts" of the original performances – located in the performances themselves, which are often accessed through recordings (not generally written scores) – provide a textual reference that practitioners may choose to recreate, with varying levels of fidelity. Yet I

argue that the majority of successful jazz HIP artists utilize these textual elements in conjunction with efforts to draw modern-day audiences into the excitement and interactive experiences that characterized the original 1920s and 1930s performances. The success of these artists is in their perception and attempted recreation of the dual authenticity of historic performance. I argue that for these same reasons, successful jazz-HIP performers such as Vince Giordano and Dick Hyman have been offered opportunities to bring their performances into period-based cinema.

Dual Authenticity in Film

In period film productions, filmmakers also negotiate a dual approach to authenticity. Unlike historically-informed performances, period films aren't recreating an original performance, but are developing an art work that references the contexts, milieus, and events of a historical period. Accordingly, many period filmmakers attempt to achieve factual authenticity in their films through researching (or commissioning research of) key features of the era – events, styles of dress, settings/architecture, appropriate terminology, music, etc.

Yet filmmakers are also concerned with "experiential authenticity". As a rule, a filmmaker's primary goal is the commercial success of his film – getting audience members to be interested in (and willing to pay for) what is happening onscreen. Therefore, filmmakers often utilize a number of approaches in order to have their period-based films "make sense" and generate interest among present-day consumers. While they pay attention to empirical (factual) details such as dates, costuming, set design, etc., filmmakers also hire screenwriters and actors that adhere to modern audiences' critical sensibilities, and help them connect to the stories and characters onscreen by presenting parallels to present-day contexts and situations.

For example, think of recent period film and television programs that have met with much commercial popularity – *Downton Abbey* (set in early 20th-century England), *Game of Thrones* (set in a Medieval fantasy-world), *Turn* (set in colonial, revolutionary America), and *Boardwalk Empire* (set in 1920s America, which I will consider in more detail momentarily). Each of these programs thematically focuses on the universals of human experience that present-day audiences can identify with – human struggle, loss, violence, and love. We modern audiences get into the stories because we get into the characters and the melodramatic circumstances being played out. Actors portraying period roles should be well-studied in the stylistic mannerisms and nuances of gesture and behavior within the original cultural period (which must be considered at the intersections of the character's class, race, gender, language, and personality within a historicized context), yet they should also present their emotions and expressions in ways that modern audiences can understand. In many ways, the "factual" historical elements in place in the film's set designs, costumes, etc. may actually grant the actors more freedom in utilizing expressions that appeal to modern audiences, as the periodicity of the event is already established. In other words, the actors may not have to be as historically-accurate in how they represent themselves, since the backdrops and dressings are already contributing to the narrative's historical placement.

Therefore – with commercial success as an imperative – filmmakers strive to integrate both factual and experiential authenticity into their movies. They want the period settings to "come to life" both through factual period referents and through the accessibility of the period characters. That said, there are certainly circumstances where the two conflict with one another, and in such cases experiential authenticity takes precedence. Pertinent examples are the vast

number of modernized film renditions of classic Shakespearean plays.[113] Concerned that the antiquated situational content and language of the original plays might not adapt to the interests and competences of contemporary mass audiences, the producers and directors of these films utilize modernly-accessible settings, situations, and dialogue in order to appeal to (the wallets of) broader audiences. One often hears of Hollywood "taking liberties" with historical facts to make for better drama, or to appeal more to modern sensibilities.

A particularly intriguing musical example of this phenomenon is found in director Baz Luhrmann's recent film adaptation of the literary classic *The Great Gatsby* (2013). The soundtrack – which, like the film, was produced by hip-hop artist Jay-Z – features an eclectic mix of hip-hop, alternative rock, pop, and electronic music recordings by contemporary stars from the corresponding genres. Despite Luhrmann's commitment to visually reproducing the 1920s context of the story through costuming, backdrops, and dialogue – the corresponding music does not reference the early twentieth century in any form. For an article with *Rolling Stone*, Luhrmann explained his impetus for this decision, stating, "The question for me in approaching *Gatsby* was how to elicit from our audience the same level of excitement and pop cultural immediacy toward the world that Fitzgerald did for his audience. And in our age, the energy of jazz is caught in the energy of hip-hop."[114] Evidently he did not believe that the original jazz music of the period could stimulate the same amount of excitement among contemporary audiences as modern popular music could; therefore, he facilitated the production of an anachronistic soundtrack that – despite its lack of nominal authenticity to the original

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[113] A few recent examples of modern-day adaptations of Shakespeare include *Ten Things I Hate About You* (1999 – based on *The Taming of the Shrew*), *O* (2001 – based on *Othello*), *She's the Man* (2006 – based on *Twelfth Night*), and *Warm Bodies* (2013 – based on Romeo and Juliet, with a zombie twist).

[114] John Blistein, "Great Gastby Soundtrack Features Jay-Z, Andre 3000, Beyonce," *Rolling Stone* (online), 4 April 2013. http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/great-gatsby-soundtrack-features-jay-z-andre-3000-beyonce-lana-del-rey-20130404.

period – would draw in audiences as a result of its expressive/experiential authenticity and pop culture appeal. Whether this decision was wise or appropriate is up for debate, but for the purposes of this discussion, it provides an example of how filmmakers' negotiate varying prioritizations of the dual spheres of perceived authenticity in their period works at the intersections of their own ideologies, interests, and commercial imperatives.

Nevertheless, for many period filmmakers, perceived factual authenticity is a very important (and commercially-viable) component of their movies. Audiences view period films because they are interested in the ostensibly historic components of the story; they want to be imaginatively transported into another time – and to be able to believe what they see there. As such, several directors take great strides to integrate both nominal and experiential authenticity in their filmmaking approaches, realizing the inherent commercial value of perceived "dual authenticity" among consuming audiences.

Jazz HIP's Dual-Authentic Functions in Period Film

Music is an integral feature that filmmakers utilize in order to achieve dual authenticity in their period works. The period soundtrack's accomplishments reside in its ability to not only aurally position the audience in the time period of reference, but to also stimulate identification with the characters through an ostensibly shared listening experience. In Milos Forman's *Amadeus* (1984), Neville Marriner and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Orchestra's recordings of Mozart's works do not just remind the audience that we are in late 18th-century Vienna; they foreground Mozart's musical brilliance as experienced by his contemporary audiences, as well as dramatically underscore his own emotional experiences and internal conflicts as depicted in the film. In Greenwald's *Songcatcher*, we discover Appalachian folk music as protagonist Dr. Lily

Penleric does in her collection quest; the narrative is both framed and permeated with the music, helping audiences identify not only with Dr. Penleric's experiences, but also the culture and experiences of the diegetic performers.

So what about jazz? In recent decades, jazz artists such as Vince Giordano (with his group The Nighthawks) and Dick Hyman have become involved in the film industry by virtue of their perceived value as authentic performers of period jazz styles – particularly early jazz styles of the 1920s-1930s. I contend that their attractiveness to filmmakers goes beyond their ability to play in period styles, extending to their capacities to also engage modern-day audiences in the performances. As I will examine in the following case studies, these abilities are related to the artists' technical and improvisational efforts to capture the ebullience and in-the-moment vitality of early jazz styles. They strive to create performances that invite the attention of present-day listeners (and dancers) in a manner akin to the way the music was listened to and appreciated in the early twentieth century. Accordingly, they attempt to bring a "liveness" – either through live performance or in updated recording technology – that is often lost in the inferior recording quality of early original records.

Recording Quality: An Authenticity of "Experience"
Mechanical recording technology in the early twentieth century lacked the fidelity we are accustomed to today, often featuring uneven amplification of the instruments, limited frequency range that eliminated high treble and low bass frequencies, and surface noise that obfuscated a significant portion of the music being performed. The earliest acoustic recordings (prior to the transition to electrical recording) are particularly problematic, as they required jazz ensembles to record without drums or bass. While this is how we hear the original music of the '20s and '30s

today, this is not how the music was heard by its original audiences. How King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band or the Original Dixieland Jazz Band sounded to its contemporary audiences is narrowed and distorted through the mediation of old recordings. Therefore, the experiential authenticity of early recordings is lost through technological limitation.

I argue that this ability to re-create period jazz music in greater recording fidelity is the primary reason contemporary jazz artists are hired by period filmmakers. In some cases, original recordings are rare, no longer exist, or are of such poor quality that they cannot be effectively utilized. In other cases, licensing arrangements must be made in order to attain the rights to utilize the recording in the film. Film music supervisors must locate whoever owns the rights to the music (e.g., companies, families), and purchase the rights for usage. Sometimes, the rights might not be granted. Other times, they might be granted, but the licensing fees may be too excessive for the music department's budget. Hiring present-day musicians who are capable of performing these pieces with fidelity to the sound of the original work kills two birds with one stone – the music department then has the rights to the recording of the piece, and avoids overshooting their budget.[115]

I contend that beyond technological convenience, present-day recordings support filmmakers' efforts to capture both historical and experiential authenticity on-screen. They want to "set the scene" with period music, but they are also interested in making the music sonically

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[115] These claims are supported by information I received in interviews with both Vince Giordano (personal interview, 29 September 2014) and Stewart Lerman (personal interview, 21 November 2014) – an established New York recording engineer and music producer for many film projects, including *The Aviator* and *Boardwalk Empire*. Lerman also informed me that having modern performers create updated recordings of tunes can also be necessary for the process of manipulating audio files in the film-dubbing process. He stated that whenever the elements of a soundtrack recording need to be controlled within a scene, it is useful to re-record them onto separate tracks known as "stems." He claimed, "I'll give [the music editor] a stereo stem of the drums, stereo stem of the horns, maybe the banjo and the piano, and I'll leave the vocals separate – whatever elements are in there, I give them separate stems, so that way if all of a sudden a song is playing, and then there's dialogue, they can pull the vocal out. Or if someone's playing a trumpet melody and it's competing with something else in the movie, which I don't know [about] yet, I give them the flexibility to manipulate my tracks later on – in post-production."

and experientially accessible to modern audiences. While in some soundtrack-production instances the recordings are recorded on vintage equipment in order to approximate the period sound quality, oftentimes - particularly in diegetic scenes in which on-screen audiences are listening and dancing to the music – the recording fidelity is much greater. We hear the instruments and the full frequency ranges much as those actually listening to these bands in 1920s speakeasies and clubs would have heard them, helping us modern listeners identify even more with the period environment and – by extension – the characters and the narrative. In addition, the present-ness and high-fidelity "liveness" of the recordings makes the music sound more alive and more vital – an accessible musical experience far-removed from the crackling, old-sounding vintage recordings. Somewhat ironically, the "authenticity" of the original recordings is forgone for historical recreations that arguably more effectively approximate the experiential authenticity of the music for present-day audiences.

Period Expertise: An Authenticity of Historical Accuracy

But we must also not forget the other sphere of dual authenticity in jazz-HIP performance – specialized knowledge and performance ability of factual components of early jazz musical style. These include technical capabilities, articulation, and most significantly, intricate knowledge of the repertoire. Performers such as Vince Giordano and Dick Hyman have dedicated their careers to listening to, studying, and collecting early jazz music. This command of the idiom not only makes them ideal recordings artists for period filmmakers, but also makes them valuable resources in the music selection process. In several cases, these artists may have a much more extensive knowledge of period-appropriate tunes than the director – or even the music supervisor – possibly could. Mark Lopeman – a saxophonist in Vince Giordano's band The Nighthawks –

explained that when their band is recording for a film, the music production company will contact Giordano and say, "We need to have a recording session, and we want to record these songs," or "some songs like these." The expectation is that Giordano and his group will (1) be able to convincingly perform a period-appropriate arrangement of the original recording provided, or (2) locate and/or create an arrangement that effectively captures the appropriate style/feel of the sample. These expectations assume a vast amount of repertoire knowledge, as well as the capability to re-create the tunes/style with a successful early-jazz trained ensemble. These artists' expertise makes the soundtrack-producing process much smoother and more efficient, potentially saving time, effort, and money for the music department as a whole.

<div align="center">***</div>

Bruce Haynes compares successful period music performance to a successful historical novel, which I will in turn suggest could be equally applied to a successful historical film. He states, "Just as a novel [or film] must have a form/plot and characters, a successful concert performance of a piece of historical music must perform all the notes and make sense to a modern audience. Continuous narrative and coherence are obligatory for the historical performer."[116] Ultimately, it is for all the aforementioned reasons in this section that particular jazz-HIP artists such as Vince Giordano and Dick Hyman are attractive to period filmmakers who are also interested in injecting their films with a perceivable dual authenticity. As I will examine in the following case studies, these artists' dual-authentic approaches to performances – "performing all the notes *and making sense to a modern audience*" – have resulted in their successful collaborations with a number of filmmakers, resulting in their go-to, inner-circle statuses within particular film industry networks.

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[116] Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, 129.

Vince Giordano: "Our Touchstone to Authenticity"

Vince Giordano is a New-York based bandleader who specializes in performing vintage jazz music of the 1920s-1940s. Recently described as "Hollywood's go-to guy to authentically re-create vintage jazz music,"[117] Giordano has established a reputation both around New York City and in the film industry for reliably recording authentic-sounding 1920s-1940s jazz tunes. His first film involvement was as a sideman – as a member of Dick Hyman's film orchestra for Woody Allen's 1920s-set mockumentary, *Zelig* (1983). Following *Zelig*, Giordano recorded for a number of Woody Allen's films.[118] Giordano's band The Nighthawks also began recording for soundtracks, first appearing in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Cotton Club* (1984). Giordano revealed that soon afterward, the Nighthawks started to get more soundtrack work thanks to word-of mouth. He stated, "The word had kind of gotten out that I was this young fellow who really loved this music. It wasn't like I was doing it for a novelty. This was real devotion and I had a good reputation with all the musicians."[119]

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[117] Will Friedwald, "Vince Giordano and the Underground Nighthawk Boogie," *Wall Street Journal* (online), 15 July 2011. <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304203304576446290663135026>.

[118] These include *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) *Radio Days* (1987), *Bullets Over Broadway* (1994), *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995), *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), *Sweet and Lowdown* (1999) and *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion* (2001).

[119] David Chiu, "The Jazz Expert Behind the Boardwalk Empire Soundtrack," *Brooklyn Based*, 20 November 2013, http://brooklynbased.com/blog/2013/11/20/the-jazz-age-expert-behind-the-boardwalk-empire-soundtrack/.

Figure 2.1: *Photo of the author with Vince Giordano (holding a vintage clarinet mute), taken September 29, 2014 at the Iguana Club, New York City*

Giordano's film opportunities continued to expand following his soundtrack work for Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator* (2004), which will be considered in more detail momentarily. During this project, Giordano worked directly with music supervisor Randall Poster, who has expressed great admiration for Giordano's performance of period music. Poster claimed, "I met Vince when I was supervising *The Aviator*. And since then, whenever there is any kind of jazz or period elements, I always rely on him. He is a repository of various eras and our touchstone to authenticity."[120] This has led to further collaborative projects such as HBO's miniseries *Mildred Pierce* (2011) and television series *Boardwalk Empire* (2010-2014). Giordano has continued to do many other film recording projects, as listed in Table 2.1 below. He has also arranged scores

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[120] Will Friedwald, "Sound of an 'Empire': To Recreate '20s Music, HBO Series Went to an Authority." *Wall Street Journal,* 16 October 2010. http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704361504575552893404047312.

and provided soundtracks for several silent films, including *Sherlock Junior*, starring Buster

Keaton, and *Get Out and Get Under* and *High and Dizzy* starring Harold Lloyd.[121]

Film	Director/Producer	Year
Zelig	Woody Allen	1983
The Cotton Club	Francis Ford Coppola	1984
The Purple Rose of Cairo	Woody Allen	1985
Bix	Pupi Avati	1991
Mighty Aphrodite	Woody Allen	1995
Everyone Says I Love You	Woody Allen	1996
Sweet and Lowdown	Woody Allen	1999
Finding Forrester	Gus Van Sant	2000
The Curse of the Jade Scorpion	Woody Allen	2001
Ghost World	Terry Zwigoff	2001
The Aviator	Martin Scorsese	2004
The Good Shepherd	Robert DeNiro	2006
Revolutionary Road	Sam Mendes	2008
Grey Gardens	Michael Sucsy	2009
Public Enemies	Michael Mann	2009
Mildred Pierce	Todd Haynes	2011
Kill Your Darlings	John Krokidas	2013
Boardwalk Empire	Martin Scorsese/Terence Winter	2010-2014
Bessie	Dee Rees	2015
Carol	Todd Haynes	2015
Café Society	Woody Allen	2016

Table 2.1 *Vince Giordano's selected soundtrack filmography*

"*A repository of various eras and our touchstone to authenticity.*" To filmmakers, audiences, and

musicians alike, Giordano is perceived as a bandleader who brings authenticity to early-jazz HIP

performances. Fellow jazz performer and film composer Dick Hyman claimed, "If it's Vince

performing, it's going to be authentic.[122] While I have already deconstructed the term

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[121] In the early 2000s, Giordano was contracted by the television network AMC to record synchronized soundtracks for these films, so that AMC could air them.

[122] Dick Hyman, interview with the author, March 10, 2015.

"authenticity" in reference to period musical performance, maintaining that there is no true or singular definition of the phenomenon, its *perception* among consumers is a reality. Again, I maintain that perceptions of authenticity are informed by dual spheres of perceived historical factuality and experience. Giordano is a committed practitioner of this dual approach to authenticity and, for that reason, is recognized as a go-to artist among filmmakers who seek to benefit from his "authentic" production. By referring to Giordano as "our touchstone to authenticity," Stewart Lerman depicts him as a standard-bearer who injects perceived historical legitimacy into the film through his performances. Giordano has not received this accolade just because he plays period tunes. As I will illustrate in the following paragraphs, he is ideologically committed to the preservation and continued performance of early jazz music, both in his historically-informed approach to performance practice, as well as his self-professed goal of "getting the word out"[123] to new audiences. These dual motivations manifest in performance approaches that stress both fidelity to the original works/styles (i.e., nominal/factual authenticity) and re-creating the contemporary experience of early jazz for modern day audiences (i.e., expressive/experiential authenticity).

"Nominal Authenticity": Research, Style, and Instrumentation

Giordano's commitment to the factual/evidentiary elements of early jazz performance greatly informs the perceived nominal authenticity of his own historically-informed performances. The groundwork for this factual knowledge is Giordano's consumption and collection of an immense amount of early jazz music and recordings. Today, his collection is so extensive (approximately 60,000 scores, 34,000 pieces of sheet music), that he had to purchase the house next door to his

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[123] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.

home so that he could store them all.[124] On any given night, he brings about two- to three-thousand scores to each gig, offering constant variety and ever-changing set lists to his audiences. Beyond collecting, Giordano studies many of the scores in dialogue with continually-expanding knowledge of the music's development and reception histories. His continual engagement with this vast amount of period repertoire plays a significant role in his successful historical approach to performing the music. This practice echoes the assertions of traditional-HIP scholars/practitioners Lawson and Stowell, who claim, "In our efforts to express ourselves within a style, we must attune our imaginations as closely as possible to the taste of the period of the music. . . . Although intuition is one of a musician's most valuable attributes, it is no substitute for knowledge; and historical research has an extremely important part of play in the performance process."[125]

Giordano's ideological approach to early jazz performance reflects many of the tenets espoused in both traditional- and jazz-HIP movements. First is his commitment to re-creating the music with fidelity to both style and overall sound. Echoing Bruce Haynes' linguistic reading of "style-copying," Giordano contends, "Playing in this style of music is almost like playing a new language, and the way musicians played was definitely different from how people play today."[126] One particularly important musical component that the Nighthawks work to achieve is period-appropriate rhythmic feeling, or "swing." Giordano has revealed, "In listening to this music, one thing that impresses me so much is the metronomic abilities that these guys had. . . . The whole consciousness of keeping this music light, free and—I hate to use the word—peppy, that's the

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[124] He has built this collection over the years through several methods—including contacting families of deceased musicians, putting ads on Craiglist and in the newspapers, and contacting old movie houses and museums.

[125] Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 41.

[126] Mollie Galchus, "Boardwalk Empire Musician Giordano and Company Take up Jazz Residency at Iguana NYC, Columbia Spectator, 4 October 2013, http://columbiaspectator.com/2013/10/04/%E2%80%98boardwalk-empire-musician-giordano-and-company-take-jazz-residency-iguana-nyc.

way these guys performed this music, and that's the only way to interpret it correctly."[127] In listening to the Nighthawks' recordings, one can hear exactly what Giordano means by "metronomic ability" and "peppy." The rhythm is crisply on-beat – not behind-the-beat or laid-back. The off-beat syncopations incite a bouncy propulsive-ness that effectively makes you want to get up and dance.

Another significant musical factor that Giordano focuses on is vibrato—which was much fuller and more pronounced among earlier jazz performers than today. Giordano has stated, "Vibrato's a big problem. Musicians don't play with vibratos any more, for the most part. It's all a kind of straight, cool sound. That's okay if you're doing post-1945 music, where most players started their education and where they make money. It's not okay for this music."[128] In contrast, the Nighthawks' wind players bring a substantial, almost operatic-like vibrato to their held notes – evoking the sounds of the original music more accurately than playing with straight articulation.

Giordano has also made efforts to only hire musicians who are very familiar with this music and have an appreciation for and experience performing in an early jazz style. As he told *New York Times* journalist Corey Kilgannon, "I've gone through many, many musicians to find a group who really interprets the stuff the correct way--it's almost like trying to find someone who's speaking an obscure language."[129] Giordano hires musicians who already show promising talents as performers of the early jazz idiom. He vets performers coming out of New York's music school scenes (e.g., Manhattan School of Music, Queens College, Julliard, etc.), and identifies those who are not only skilled players, but also passionate about the music. They have

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[127] "A Visit with Vince Giordano."
[128] Ibid.
[129] Corey Kilgannon, "Bringing Big Band Jazz Back to the Theater District," *New York Times* (online), 27 November 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/28/nyregion/28metjournal.html?_r=0.

studied and are familiar with the tradition, and therefore do not need to be taught from scratch.

Regarding his chosen band members—who have included a mix of regulars and newcomers over

the decades—Giordano professed: "These guys were superb musicians who played beautifully,

could read anything, and give you the exact interpretation that you wanted. . . . They were happy

to work in my bands because we were serious about playing the vintage music in the

Nighthawks' book with integrity."[130]

When he founded the Nighthawks in the 1970s, some of the members of the band had

actually performed the repertoire in the '20s and '30s, and were thus familiar with performance

styles from those periods. As the band's makeup has changed over the years, new members have

had to learn the techniques and nuances of the music by listening to recorded samples of the

genre. When I asked Giordano if younger band members have had difficulty adopting these

particular styles, he replied, "No, because I have been drilling it in them for years and years. I've

been telling them what I want. And today it's much easier because we have easier ways of

getting the music to them with Youtube and mp3s."[131]

The value of recording availability for Giordano's musical training cannot be understated.

Whereas traditional-HIP performers attempting to recreate the performances of Bach or Mozart

must rely solely on scores, written anecdotes of what their performances sounded like, or

textbooks or theory, Giordano can actually hear versions of 1920s and '30s performances.

Admittedly, early recording fidelity buries certain elements of performance, and such mediation

can be sonically problematic for identifying what the performance sounded like in its entirety.

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[130] Michael Zirpolo, "Get Rhythm in Your Feet: A Profile of Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks, *IAJRC Journal* (June 1, 2012) 43.
[131] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.

That said, these recordings provide a much more solid framework for how things sounded than a mere written score would.

Giordano also attempts to achieve period-appropriate sounds through his instrumentation choices. Much as he collects old scores and sheet music, he is also a collector of vintage instruments. Anyone going to see his weekly gigs in New York clubs will see period microphones, a vintage painted drum set, and other unique instrumental paraphernalia such as clarinet mutes and violin amplifiers. Giordano's utilization of vintage instruments is partially the result of his own fascination with musical items from the early-jazz period. He collects these instruments, and enjoys having the opportunity to put them back into use during his performances. Yet he also strives to approximate a vintage sound, and believes that using such objects will help contribute to a more "authentic-sounding" performance. This contention aligns with those of many traditional-HIP performers who advocate for the usage of period instruments in historically-informed performance, maintaining that one of the primary ways to truly recreate the historic music is to effectively utilize the instrumental mediums through which it was performed.

Figure 2.3 *Giordano's "vintage" bandstand set-up; taken September 29, 2014 (by the author)*

Nominal Authenticity Meets Expression: The Score and Improvisation

As examined earlier in this chapter, one of the most prominent controversies in traditional-HIP

debates is the necessary level of a HIP performer's fidelity to the written score. In the case of

early jazz performance, such score-fidelity is complicated, as many tunes from the period were

orchestrated as "head arrangements,"[132] or as loose stock arrangements that were printed with the

understanding that bandleaders and arrangers would edit them for their own performances.[133]

Unlike traditional-HIP performers seeking to play the music of Bach – for whom manifold Bach

scores exist – early jazz practitioners do not have a full "score," per-se, for textual reference.

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[132] A head arrangement is typically an arrangement for a jazz ensemble that is not written down, but collectively organized by members of the band through discussion, and then recalled at the time of the performance. Such arrangements were common among early-jazz performers, as well as in riff-based tunes in the Swing Era (e.g., Count Basie's "One O'Clock Jump").

[133] For further information on jazz stock arrangements, see John L. Clark, Jr. "Archie Bleyer and the Lost Influence of Stock Arrangements in Jazz," *American Music* 27.2 (Summer 2009): 138-179.

Instead, textual fidelity is typically applied to original recordings from the period – not written scores. Giordano – who I argue has adopted a *Werktreue* ideal to the extent that he views early jazz performances as artistic musical works worthy of study and preservation - builds his own "scores" through acute listening to period recordings. He describes his process as follows:

> I'll have the recording, and I'll take my stock arrangement—if I have it of that—and enter the whole arrangement into Sibelius, and then adapt it to what I'm hearing on this recording—either by changing the key, re-rhythmatizing, or sometimes I have to start from scratch. . . . I'll sit there with a little Marantz cassette that goes half-speed. . . . And I fiddle around on the piano—hunt and peck for different harmonies and notes. Then we'll take it here to the club [the Iguana Club in NYC, where the Nighthawks have a weekly gig] and I'll play [the recording] for the guys, and they'll make little notes, and then sometimes even at the session someone will hear something [and say], "I think you [should be] playing this here." Fine! Let's try it. And then we'll make those changes. So it's a process that we go through to get it as close as possible.[134]

Yet Giordano does not always strive for exact reproductions of recordings in his performance work. In some cases, recordings for tunes are not available or are garbled; in others, he seeks to inject personal creativity into the performances. Stock arrangements from Giordano's collection function as musical shells, or frameworks on which to develop more substantive arrangements. Such developments include transposition, doubling, shifting the melodic emphasis to a different instrument, altering rhythms, or adding sixths or sevenths to the chords to make them fuller. Giordano also shared with me, "Many times—particularly like in *Boardwalk [Empire]*—we'll take stock arrangements and make them a little more interesting by adding some syncopation to them."[135]

This process reflects the historical arranging approach practiced by Swing Era bandleaders such as The Fletcher Henderson Orchestra and the California Ramblers (among others), who also used many stock arrangements as the basis of their repertoire. As Jeffrey

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[134] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.
[135] Ibid.

Magee illustrated in his insightful study of Fletcher Henderson's "Copenhagen," arrangements of the period were actually the products of collaboration – drawing on a combination of information from the original composition, the commercial stock arrangement, other contemporary performances and recordings of the tune, and finally, the contributions of the present arranger.[136] The arranger would draw on all of these resources, and make arranging decisions based on what he believed would work best for his particular band/group of musicians. These decisions could include writing unique intros and codas, altering the structure/strains, re-orchestrating instrumentation, or adding special riffs, syncopations, or choruses. Similarly, Giordano writes in introductions and special sections for the stock arrangements he pulls for the film soundtracks. The arrangement process can also be collaborative, with the musicians making suggestions for re-voicings, adjusted rhythms, and added chordal notes.[137] Therefore, while Giordano expresses fidelity to the "original" works through a meticulous arranging process that reflects the period nuances he hears in the recording and sees on the sheet music, he also understands that these original texts are frameworks, and makes personal (and collaboratively – influenced) expressive decisions based on his own knowledge of the style.

Improvisation

Giordano's approach to improvisation highlights the tensions and interactions between fidelity to the text (in this case, an original recording) and expressive authenticity. I asked him whether he required his band members to play transcriptions of the solos from original early-jazz recordings,

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[136] Jeffrey Magee, "Revisiting Fletcher Henderson's 'Copenhagen,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48.1 (Spring 1995): 42-66. For more information on Fletcher Henderson's (and Don Redman's) work with stock arrangements, also see Magee's *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[137] I received this information from personal interviews with Vince Giordano, Mark Lopeman, and Adrian Cunningham.

or if he encouraged individual improvisation over the changes. He replied that he allows both options, but primarily has his band members focus on transcribed solos. His reasoning is two-fold. One, he respects the original improvisations in a manner parallel to many traditional-HIP practitioners' respect for the scores of the Western art music "masters." Giordano stated, "To me, this is like recreating Mozart or Brahms or Beethoven—it's classic music. And these solos that were performed in those early years—in the 1920s and 30s—they were done by pioneering musicians . . . They were creating compositions; not in the formal way of taking pen and paper out and writing something down, but they were creating their own little compositions based on the chord changes and the melodic things that they did."[138] He hopes that by performing these "compositions" live and in new recorded formats, he will make them more accessible to modern-day audiences.

Second, Giordano prefers transcribed solos to improvised ones because he disapproves of past experiences in which he gave soloists opportunities to improvise, but they did not remain cognizant of solo styles appropriate to the tune's period (e.g., melodic and harmonic choices, rhythm, tempo, etc.). Due to the prominence of 1940s-50s bebop tunes and recordings in current jazz training – several younger substitute musicians have played bebop-influenced solos, inserting Charlie Parker licks, double-time tempos, and/or harmonic substitutions over the chord changes. These musical developments had not yet emerged during the 1920s-1930s, and thus are anachronistic additions to the jazz music of the time. As Dan Levinson, the band's principal clarinet soloist, pointed out: "It's very hard to play that music accurately and to disregard all of the changes in music that have taken place since it was originally performed. You really have to forget about swing and bebop and all the subsequent permutations of post-1934

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[138] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, 29 September 2014.

jazz."[139]Accordingly, Giordano leans toward having his musicians perform "accurate" solos - rather than personally expressive ones – by providing them with solo notation.

However, Mark Lopeman and Adrian Cunningham – two saxophonists in the Nighthawks – shared with me that the reality is that improvised solos may still happen anyway. The Nighthawks rarely have rehearsals, and many of the pieces performed are sight-read on the spot. Accordingly, if a soloist loses track of his place in the transcribed solo, it becomes very difficult to pick up the thread again, and improvisation becomes necessary. Lopeman claimed, "I will tell you honestly what happens more often than not is that sort of in the heat of battle you will stand up and start to play the written solo, and at some point if it gets away from me a little bit, I'll just start blowing on the changes instead, because it becomes too hard to pick up the thread of what the soloist on the record was playing."[140] Yet – due to Giordano's current musicians' training and commitment to performing within 1920s/30s idioms – they still often manage to convincingly perform in an aesthetically-appropriate style, even when losing track of the notation. As written in the program notes to a concert program featuring the Nighthawks at the Ossining Public Library, "It's a mark of the band's command of the idiom that you find it is hard to tell which solos are old and which are new."[141] Mark Lopeman says that in order to keep his improvisations within the appropriate period style, he tries to stick to elaborations on the 1, 3, and 5 of the chords, avoiding upper extensions and "out" playing. It is because of these musicians' capacities to improvise in a more-or-less early jazz mindset that Giordano will occasionally encourage improvised solos during performance. He understands that by integrating such moments of

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[139] "Great Music in a Great Place: Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks Concert Program, Presented by the Ossining Public Library."
[140] Mark Lopeman, interview with the author, October 11, 2014.
[141] "Great Music in a Great Place."

personal expressivity, the performances will more closely approximate the experience of performance of the original music.

"Expressive Authenticity": Past Music, Present-Day Experience

A final key feature of Giordano's historically-informed performance ideology is his desire to re-capture the excitement of the performance as it purportedly was experienced in its heyday. Giordano is a revivalist. This is the music that he loves; he wants to share it with people of current generations, and to contribute to its continued presence as a vital, enjoyable musical style. He fears its relegation into the annals of history, becoming a style that is only discussed in jazz history classes. In an interview with Lew Shaw, Giordano adamantly maintained, "These were the creators of jazz. Why not preserve and present their music the way we do for Bach and Beethoven? If this music is not heard and played, it will die. . . . I want to see a renaissance of this good old music, especially for kids."[142] His ideology resonates with musicologist Thomas Forrest Kelly's assertion that "The power of early music is in the commitment of those dedicated to it by a love of the repertory and by a fascination with the effort of bringing the music of the past alive for audiences of today."[143] Giordano has likened his music to a well-preserved classic car: "I'm restoring a classic, that's the way I look at it—a Rolls-Royce that's not a museum piece, but one that can go down the highway in a not-stodgy way."[144]

Giordano's assertions that his performances aren't "museum pieces" and aren't "stodgy" challenge the discourse permeating historically-informed performance debates that criticizes notational fidelity, arguing that it is attempted at the expense of the music itself. Traditional

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[142] Lew Shaw, "Carrying the Torch."
[143] Kelly, *Early Music*, 118.
[144] Darling, "Stop Time."

HIP's greatest critics contend that strict adherence to a musical text as a reified historical object actually stultifies its effectiveness as a creative work, failing in its attempt to capture the composer's intentions and reproduce the conditions under which the original performance was experienced. Richard Taruskin argues, "Indeed, to the extent that musicians sincerely believe in the lie of restoration . . . it has been a brake on authenticity."[145] He further maintains that "Ever since we have had a concept of 'classical' music we have implicitly regarded our musical institutions as museums and our performers as curators."[146] Musicologist Paul Lang's contention that "performance practice is not like taxidermy"[147] also highlights this concern. Yet several performers and musicologists – Lang included – acknowledge that early music performance practice is effective when performers utilize a *combination* of historical reproduction with an attempt to capture the original "feel" of the performance for the audience. Lang argues, "Our real aim should be to approximate the musical experience of the original listeners, and to strive for an unattainable absolute authenticity. Thorough historical studies are emphatically required, but what is also required is an acknowledgement of the validity of our own aesthetic norms and ideals of live sound."[148] I argue that Giordano espouses this ideal – determined to maintain fidelity to the performance style, while also striving to incite audience experiences of joy and excitement about the music that reflect the audiences' experiences of the time.

His performances reflect this commitment to recreating the experience of when the music was originally performed. His regular gigs are in clubs – not concert halls – approximating the early-twentieth century milieus of speakeasies, restaurant clubs, and dance halls. The Nighthawks encourage participation from the audience, including dancing and clapping.

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[145] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 9.
[146] Ibid., 149
[147] Paul Lang, *Musicology and Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997): 177.
[148] Ibid., 181.

Giordano himself rotates through the audience in-between sets, introducing himself, thanking

people for coming, and taking tune requests - which he almost invariably has the Nighthawks

play, regardless of whether or not they have recently played or rehearsed the tune.[149] There is a

jovial air of informality on the bandstand, as Giordano tells jokes between tunes and the

musicians congratulate each other on successful solos. The atmosphere is far from Christopher

Small's concert hall – "a place for hearing"[150] - and rather evinces a milieu of entertainment,

frivolity, and participation – much like the settings in which this music would have been

originally heard.

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To reiterate – I contend that it is his perceived efforts toward "dual authenticity" that

significantly account for Giordano's attractiveness within film industry networks. In terms of the

former, he is recognized as a reliable artist who can produce period-appropriate music both

professionally and successfully, making him an ideal candidate for filmmakers who want re-

recordings of early jazz music for their films. In terms of the latter, his reputation for also getting

audiences excited about the music bodes well for filmmakers, whose ultimate goal is to get

audiences to watch and appreciate their films. However, filmmakers' motivations do not always

directly align with Giordano's ideologies. While both directors' and Giordano's shared interests

in dual authenticity result in their collaborations, Giordano must also make concessions and

adapt his performance approaches to meet the desires of the filmmaking executives. For more

specific illustrations of Giordano's work in film soundtracks, I now turn to case studies of his

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[149] When I attended a Nighthawks performance at the Club Iguana in September 2014, I requested an old popular New Orleans tune, "Dr. Jazz" (written by King Oliver in 1926). Giordano replied, "Wow, we haven't played that tune in a while. How do you even know about that tune?" He proceeded to locate sheet music for his band members from his large collection, and they successfully played through the tune in the next set.

[150] Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

two most successful film-industry involvements: Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator*, and HBO's hit television series *Boardwalk Empire*.

The Aviator

Film director Martin Scorsese is a veritable expert in attending to details of perceived authenticity in his films. Having developed his emerging directorial craft during the 1960s cinematic trends of French New Wave, Italian neorealism, and cinema verité,[151] Scorsese foregrounds a documentary-style approach to the grittiness and "reality" of his characters' stories. Despite the fact that many of his films are fictional, he strives to locate his characters and narrative development within perceivably real worlds – the gang-ridden streets of Little Italy, violent urban scenarios in such films as *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*, and the frivolous decadence of crooked Wall Street brokers. Scorsese's graphically realistic approach is the result of his own experiences and research into the type of narratives he is depicting. In reference to his film *Mean Streets*, Scorsese described his directorial approach as "anthropological" or "sociological," stating, "Mean Streets was an attempt to put myself and my old friends on the screen, to show how we lived, what life was like in Little Italy."[152] In another illustration, Ben Nyce notes how Scorsese's utilization of historical and cultural research lent realism to his powerful film about the life of Italian-American boxer Jake LaMotta in his 1980 film *Raging Bull*:

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[151] French New Wave was a cinematic revolution in the late 1950s and 60s that rejected traditional, linear Hollywood film narratives, seeking to engage the viewer through innovative editing techniques (e.g., jump cuts, rapid editing) and improvised, "realistic" performance. The movement is linked to the rise of the auteur, and a creative, philosophical approach to filmmaking that contrasted with prior standardized filmmaking methods. Italian Neorealism emerged on the tail end of WWII, characterized by an approach to filmmaking that focused on the economic and moral concerns of poor and working-class Italians, often utilizing non-professional actors and featuring a documentary-style approach. Cinema verité – a French film movement of the 1960s - is an actual form of documentary filmmaking that depicts people in daily situations with unscripted action and dialogue.

[152] David Thompson and Ian Christie, ed., *Scorsese on Scorsese* (London: Faber, 2003): 48.

"Exhaustive effort was made to portray the way boxing was presented to the public in LaMotta's historical moment, as well as to portray what life was like in the subculture of boxing at that time. The careful attribution in the credits to specific fighters in specific fight sequences attests to Scorsese's efforts at authenticity. . . . [Also], the decision to shoot with black and white film stock was partially based on the way TV and newsreels, in the earliest days, presented boxing."[153]

These "efforts at authenticity" underpin filmic elements that have now come to be characterized as typical of a Scorsese film: graphic realistic violence, impassioned method acting (often by favored leads such as Robert De Niro or Leonardo DiCaprio), realistic-looking sets, and strict attention to period and/or contextual appropriateness (e.g., costuming, actor mannerisms, etc.). Now, there are certainly a number of filmmakers who – with the proper amount of financial resources – also invest in historically-accurate detail production for their historically-based movies. I am not contending that Scorsese is the *only* filmmaker who demonstrates a passion for nominal historical authenticity. Rather, I claim that his body of filmic works consistently illustrates his dedication to historical accuracy in a manner that highlights his commitment to filmic authenticity in both nominal and experiential ways.

Music is a fundamental component of Scorsese's approach to filmic authenticity. He utilizes a combination of composed scores and compilation soundtracks in a number of varying capacities – supporting character introspection, action, cultural context, and/or time period. Scorsese is highly involved in determining what music will be used in his films. As Peter Brunette said, "Scorsese has . . . been obsessed with such things as the precise nuances of the music he uses in every film."[154] His involvement ranges from directly choosing pre-recorded pieces himself, to articulating what type of style he wants and hiring music supervisors or composers/performers to find and/or create the music for him. For period films, Scorsese strives

[153] Ben Nyce, *Scorsese Up Close: A Study of the Films* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004): 73.
[154] Peter Brunette, ed., *Martin Scorsese: Interviews* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press: 1999): x.

to enrich the soundtracks with solely period-appropriate tunes, attempting to avoid anachronisms. In regards to compiling the soundtrack for *GoodFellas*, Scorsese stated: "[The] only rule was to use music which could only have been heard at that time. If a scene took place in 1973, I could use any music that was current or older. For example, I wanted to use one Rolling Stones song at the end – 'She Was Hot' – for that last day in 1979, but it came out a year later, so I had to use something else."[155] In cases where Scorsese himself is not as familiar with the period repertoire, he utilizes his production network – specifically music supervisors – to locate and/or produce the appropriate music. In the case of *The Aviator*, he relied on supervisor Randall Poster to assist in making these decisions. It is to this soundtrack that we now turn.

The Aviator – set from the mid-1920s to 1940s – depicts the life and career of the ambitious and eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes, highlighting his extravagant ambition as manifested in his film productions, aircraft development, and torrid love affairs – as well as his madness undergirded by extreme obsessive compulsive disorder. The film elaborately captures the historic milieu of the times, shifting along with the changing decades in the narrative. Scorsese's production network – his production designer, costume designer, and music supervisor, among others – researched and worked to create a period-appropriate, realistic world for Scorsese's Hughes (played by Leonardo DiCaprio). Production designer Dante Ferretti built huge sets that boasted built-from-scratch full-size recreations of period-appropriate airplanes, lavish art-deco offices, and a historically-informed recreation of Hughes' house (based on photos, descriptions, and Ferretti's own visit to the home). His set designs for the Cocoanut Grove – a historic Los Angeles nightclub housed in the Ambassador Hotel that features regularly as a hangout location for Hughes in the film – mark aesthetic changes as the narrative progresses

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[155] Thompson and Christie, *Scorsese on Scorsese*, 161.

from the 1920s – 1940s, noting changes in color schemes, decorations, and server attire. The chandeliers, silverware, linens, and a multitude of other minutiae were attended to with strict appreciation for period appropriateness.[156] Costume designer Sandy Powell adopted a similar philosophy in her design work. Prior to designing, she avidly studied photographs of Hughes and his contemporaries within each of the decades depicted in the film, basing her costume sketches off of this information, and attempting to capture transitions in clothing style that reflected temporal progression.

The soundtrack of *The Aviator* is undeniably a contextual and structural force in the film, establishing setting, as well as sonically moving the audience through the various phases of Hughes' life. While the narrative features original scoring by composer Howard Shore – which itself is worthy of study, but will not be considered for the purposes of this chapter – the soundtrack is also inundated with a plethora of period tunes, highlighting the popular music of the day. A few original recordings are featured (e.g., "Somebody Stole My Gal" performed by The Original Memphis Five, "Moonglow" performed by the Benny Goodman Orchestra"), yet a bulk of these period pieces are re-recorded, performed by Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks, along with select feature vocalists, including Rufus Wainwright and Loudon Wainwright III. Giordano and the Nighthawks' music is featured primarily diegetically in this film, appearing in party scenes at the Cocoanut Grove club and other entertainment locations, with songs including "Stairway to Paradise," "Shake That Thing," "Yellow Dog Blues," and "Stardust" – among others.

Giordano became involved in this project primarily because of his reputation as a professional performer who could play "authentic" early jazz. Scorsese contracted Randall Poster

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[156] Dante Ferretti interview, *The Aviator* DVD (2004), special features.

and recording engineer/co-producer Stewart Lerman to locate performers who could achieve this period-appropriateness for the film soundtrack. Poster and Lerman – both of whom reside in New York – were familiar with Giordano's work, and determined that he would be the best option. Lerman shared the following with me:

> I found Vince because he was playing regularly in New York. He's done this for twenty-five years where he plays a couple of nights at one club – he does a residency. And very early on [in the filmmaking process] Randy and I went down and saw him and we were like "Oh boy, this is exactly what we're looking for!" [There] really aren't a lot of people who do what he does. He is an immense resource for music that is not contemporary.[157]

This successful collaboration solidified Giordano's recognition within film networks as the "go-to-guy" for vintage soundtracks. The scarcity of performers consistently performing early jazz in the historically-informed manner that he does – combined with his extensive knowledge of the repertoire, dedication to achieving both a period-appropriate sound and a present-day vitality informed by his expressivity and passion for the music, and his access to a ready-made and "well-oiled"[158] ensemble of powerhouse period jazz players – makes him the ostensibly ideal contact for film music departments seeking musicians to record period-based jazz soundtracks. This recognition in fact led to Giordano's work on the film (television) project I will consider in the following case study – *Boardwalk Empire*.

Boardwalk Empire

Stemming from their successful collaborations on *The Aviator* – Scorsese, Poster, and Giordano and the Nighthawks reunited for the production of Terence Winter's hit HBO series *Boardwalk*

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[157] Stewart Lerman, interview with the author, November 21, 2014.
[158] In an interview with me, Stewart Lerman described how one of the valuable features of hiring Vince Giordano for film soundtrack projects is the fact that he keeps a "well-oiled" ensemble of period-style performing musicians, who are ready to play at a moment's notice. His exact quote was: "Vince is just so resourceful, and also has his working ensemble. It's not like he's just a guy who has charts and can be a bandleader – he has a working operative band that he keeps well-oiled, so that as soon as something comes up, he's not just putting musicians together." Interview with the author, November 21, 2014.

Empire, which aired its pilot episode on September 19, 2010. An instant success, the series ultimately released five seasons, culminating on October 26, 2014. The narrative foregrounds the life of Atlantic City political kingpin Enoch "Nucky" Thompson during Prohibition in the 1920s and 1930s, following a number of additional characters caught in a web of intrigue, mobsters, and intra-national political machinations. Like *The Aviator*, *Boardwalk Empire* has received numerous accolades for its "authentic" depiction of the era – replete with the inclusion of historical figures (e.g., Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, Arnold Rothstein), events (e.g., The Volstead Act, women's suffrage and the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, the Wall Street Stock Market Crash of '29), period-appropriate sets, costuming, and of course, music. Giordano revealed that Scorsese is "very keen on getting the right music from the period so that it's correct. He's also very interested in making sure that this fits the scene. He's got his hand in there. He really knows his stuff, and he's a big fan not only of classic cinema but classic recordings of times gone-by."[159]

Randall Poster and Stewart Lerman worked diligently with Giordano and other performing artists to achieve this soundtrack appropriateness. In an interview with Barbara Schultz, Lerman maintained, "When we're recording something from 1924, it has to be right for 1924, whether that's the instrumentation or the style of the song."[160] He lauded the expertise of the Nighthawks' musicians, whose knowledge of the period music in question was performed "right down to their vibrato." [161]

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[159] Rick Florino, "Vince Giordano Talks 'Boardwalk Empire Vol. 1: Music From the HBO Original Series,' Working with Martin Scorsese, and More," *Artist Direct*, 12 September 2011, http://www.artistdirect.com/entertainment-news/article/vince-giordano-talks-boardwalk-empire-volume-1-music-from-the-hbo-original-series-working-with-martin-scorsese-and-more/9205084.

[160] Barbara Schultz, "Boardwalk Empire Volume 2: Soundtrack Puts Listeners in a Musical Time Machine," *MIX* (1 October 2013), http://www.mixonline.com/news/profiles/boardwalk-empire-volume-2-soundtrack-puts-listeners-musical-time-machine/366451.

[161] Ibid.

Now, I do not intend to create the illusion that Giordano's and Scorsese's (and producer Terence Winter's) interests directly aligned. As examined previously in the chapter, filmmaker's interests and decisions are almost exclusively tied to what they anticipate their audiences will respond to. Giordano and the Nighthawks' involvement in this project is because the film executives believed his historically-appropriate music would interest viewers and help situate them in the period milieu. However, there are certainly circumstances where Giordano had to make artistic and collaborative concessions that he might otherwise not have preferred. In this case study, I will analyze both where the filmmakers' and Giordano's interests in authenticity align and where they diverge, examining the collaborations and tensions that comprise these unique intersections of the jazz and film art worlds.

For Giordano, working with a filmmaker with this level of commitment to historical accuracy was a welcome project. As illustrated above, Giordano himself is invested in making the music of the past come alive for modern-day audiences. In his weekly performances, he sets up the stage with vintage instruments and has the band dress in 1920s apparel in order to evoke a sense of stepping back in time. Since he does not own his own club, he is not able to fully transform the spaces he plays into 1920s recreations – but the desire is present. He shared with me that his ideal goal for his future career is "To have a place to call home, and set it up, and then get the word out to have people come and see us. It's a dream."[162] His work with Scorsese and Winter was therefore an opportunity to perform his music alongside full visual recreations of the early jazz era. Despite film's illusoriness, shows such as *Boardwalk Empire* bring Giordano closer to the experience of performing in the 1920s than he is often afforded.

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[162] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.

Giordano's music structures the film narrative, inviting the audience into the world of the Atlantic City politicians and gangsters.[163] Through a sonic milieu paralleling the elaborate visual 1920s political culture we are immersed in onscreen, the show achieves an "authenticity" that a non-period-appropriate soundtrack would likely thwart. A significant portion of the musical soundtrack in the show is presented on-screen. The characters are constantly frequenting nightclubs, speakeasies, brothels, or private parties featuring live music – in many cases meant to directly reference the performances of such 1920s entertainers as Eddie Cantor and Sophie Tucker.

For example, one episode features Sophie Tucker (played by Kathy Brier) at Babette's – the local Atlantic City supper club. Bedecked in glittery crimson garb and a feather headband, Tucker stands center-stage, telling raunchy jokes while the moneyed audience looks on with approval and laughter. Tucker breaks into a rendition of the tune "Some of These Days," backed by the house band positioned in a balcony above her. The camera shots make us feel like we are actually part of the audience, offering several vantage points from immediately in front of the stage (looking upward), from the side of the stage (where our main characters – Nucky, Margaret, prospective Mayor Bader, and Mrs. Bader sit), to up above the stage on the surrounding balcony (looking downward). The performance is an integral part of this scene - the main characters acknowledge it through gesture and commentary; other audience members sway,

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[163] A portion of the *Boardwalk Empire* soundtracks are comprised of licensed original recordings. These clips function as sonic background – they are identifiable as neither non-diegetic nor diegetic, but rather sound as though the characters have a gramophone playing invisibly in a nearby room. For example, in Season 1 Episode 3, Paul Whiteman's "Japanese Sandman" (1920) is heard faintly in the background while New York gangster Arnold Rothstein plays cards and wins a large amount of money on a bluff. Such background music functions to position us in the time period, granting us access to original recordings that would have been heard by these actual historical figures (or their contemporaries). These tracks are generally located behind transitional scenes (moving from one scene to another), or subtly underscoring scenes in which characters participate in daily functions (e.g., walk on the boardwalk, meet in private offices, spend time with family in their homes, etc.). In some cases, re-recorded tunes by Giordano and Nighthawks also serve this background, non-diegetic function (e.g., "Maple Leaf Rag," "Just a Little While to Stay Here," and manifold others.)

clap, and approvingly look at the stage and smile; and the music itself is largely foregrounded in the audio track, with the exception of brief moments when dialogue is happening, and it recedes into the background with reduced volume.

Figure 2.4 *Screenshot of Sophie Tucker (Kathy Brier) performing in an episode of Boardwalk Empire* (2010)

In such examples, we feel as though we are part of the 1920s audience – watching Tucker sing, gesture, and dance onstage from our seats, laughing at her raw jokes, and listening to Giordano and the Nighthawks' music in high fidelity. Here, we have an evident illustration of the music's "dual authenticity" functioning effectively in the film – bringing Giordano's and the filmmakers' interests into alignment. While stylistically appropriate to the period, it also appeals to audience experience through both an updated recording technology and a visual representation of performance that brings modern-day audiences into contact with the music (albeit mediated) in ways that approximate how it originally may have been received.

Stewart Lerman avers, "One of the things we've considered carefully about old records that we love from the '20s is that they're sonically compromised. We're not trying to actually do this the way they did, because that was not optimal; oftentimes on those recordings, you can't

hear half the instruments. Instead, we're trying to maintain the art form as close as possible but update it in some slight but special way."[164] Using updated recording technology, Lerman is able to capture the nuances of performance that often go unnoticed on early jazz recordings. Therefore, Giordano's recordings not only pay testament to the songs of the '20s and '30s, but provide the opportunity for modern-day audiences to appreciate them in accessible audio formats. The pieces may still be "old," but they do not sound outdated.[165] Through such adjustments, the soundtrack – and ideally by extension, the show – becomes more inviting to contemporary consuming audiences.

Yet it is essential to realize that – for all of their efforts at "authenticity" – the filmmakers' primary goal is to capture and maintain viewership. Accordingly, they will forego historic authenticity if it means creating the opportunity for more people to be interested in the show. An evident musical example of this may be demonstrated in *Boardwalk Empire's* opening credit theme song – psychedelic rock band Brian Jonestown Massacre's 1996 tune "Straight Up and Down." Terence Winter himself chose the tune, claiming that "he wanted [something] unexpected."[166] More than likely, he wanted something that would capture a wider viewership among modern-day audiences. The logic is sound; the period aspects of the show at large would already draw in audiences interested in its historical elements. By introducing the show with a

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[164] Schultz (2013).

[165] To be clear, the recordings are not as smooth and clean as modern-day digital records. Lerman informed me that he, Poster, and Giordano have determined that they want the music to still have a period flavor, so they often record using vintage technology, including ribbon microphones and vintage instruments. Once they have the hi-res recording, they may also "distress" it by distorting it, putting it in mono, running it through valves, or even having it re-recorded on old cylinders so it acquires a vintage patina. Yet they also have determined that much of the "old sound" of original records (e.g., missing high and low frequency ranges, excess surface noise) were not intentional artistic decisions, and they try to record with enough "modern-ness" that the originally-lost performance elements are now aurally accessible. It's a balance – sounding "old" enough to fit the narrative period, but "modern" enough to be accessible to modern ears.

[166] Shirley Halperin and Merle Gisberg, "Boardwalk Empire Theme: Series Creator Explains Decisions to Use Contemporary Music," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 25 November 2001, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/boardwalk-empire-creator-explains-decision-239981.

brief, 90-second opening that featured more contemporary music, he might be able to also draw in audiences intrigued by the juxtaposition of electric rock with a visual of Steve Buscemi dressed in 1920s garb against the backdrop of a period boardwalk. While Giordano would have advocated using music that was more period-appropriate, Winter and Scorsese chose in favor of anachronism to ideally expand commercial appeal. Given their position in the film industry hierarchy, their decision took precedence.

The film executives also made an effort to expand their commercial base by appropriating one of Giordano and the Nighthawks' recordings for a promotional CD that blended period jazz with remixes by hip-hop DJs. The promotional album was entitled *Sounds of the Onyx* – referring to the Cotton Club-esque venue joint-owned by Nucky Thompson and two African-American characters (Chalky White and Valentin Narcisse) in the show. Marketed as "Prohibition Era Jazz Remixed," the CD features six tracks; five of them are original period recordings (by such artists as Ethel Waters, Eva Taylor & Clarence Williams' Blue Five, Lloyd Scott and his Orchestra, Jim Jackson, and Charlie Johnson's Paradise Ten Orchestra) that are remixed by a variety of hip-hop DJs (e.g., Om'Mas Keith, Shafiq Husayn, DJ Jazzy Jeff, etc.). The first track on the album is Giordano and the Nighthawks' version of "Sugarfoot Stomp," remixed by Pete Rock. In it, Rock loops a groove with a few distinct elements of the original recording – including a repeated horn riff and the band chanting "Oh, play that thing!" Aside from these moments, the tune is largely unrecognizable. It lacks the structure of the tune, the blues form, the soli sections, and the prominent individual solos (trombone, clarinet, piano, trumpet, etc.).

Figure 2.5 *"Sounds of the Onyx" album cover (2013)*

Giordano was very dissatisfied with the result. He shared, "[HBO] took one of our tracks, 'The Sugarfoot Stomp' and—I didn't know they were going to do this—they gave it to a hip-hop guy—a guy named Pete Rock. And we had a punk-rock-hip-hop version of "Sugarfoot Stomp" that's out there. And in the words of Oliver Hardy, "I have nothing to say. . . . I have no control over that, so I just have to say it's not my job, and I'm totally out of control."[167]

Despite this clear violation of Giordano's HIP ideology and aesthetic preferences, HBO's usage of his music was not a violation of rights. As illustrated in Chapter 1, film music contractors are under "work-for-hire" status, and the rights to their music recorded for a film becomes the property of the studio or production company. In this circumstance, HBO

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[167] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, September 29, 2014.

executives decided that such a promotional effort might draw more contemporary audiences toward the show, thus leading them to disregard the nominal authenticity of the music (and Giordano's wishes) in favor of commercial accessibility.

Another of the filmmakers' methods for sparking modern interest was featuring well-known current vocalists from pop and indie genres in collaboration with Giordano and the Nighthawks on several of the period recordings.[168] These included Kathy Brier (as listed above), Regina Spektor, Elvis Costello, Patti Smith, and Rufus Wainwright, among others. Music supervisor Randall Poster made these decisions, at the request of Terence Winter. Each of the pop artists on these albums ostensibly had something to contribute – they were selected either for their familiarity with the repertoire, or distinct vocal attributes that the music producers believed could contribute to the idiomatic elements of the style, while still retaining their uniqueness. Poster claimed, "All the singers that we invite to work with us have a vocal distinction as well as a certain sensitivity and an insight into the repertoire – because they're tricky songs . . . especially with the arrangements. So I think that we cast the singers because they have a particular musical personality."[169] Perhaps most key, though, is the fact that many of these artists also had commercial followings that were believed to enhance the soundtracks' market appeal.[170]

The result is an interesting blend of "period" and "pop"—styles that clearly reference early jazz and popular song traditions, but still resonate with modern voices. In many cases, the

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[168] This promotional method was not unlike the James Bond films producers' formula for commissioning contemporary pop artists to perform an opening tune for each new installment of the franchise. For an interesting study of the commercial influences on Bond music production, see Chapter 5, "The Midas Touch," in Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce* (1998).

[169] Quoted in Shirley Halperin, "Boardwalk Empire Music Supervisor Randall Poster on Bringing 1920s 'Hits' Into 2013," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 8 September 2013, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/boardwalk-empire-music-supervisor-randall-624117.

[170] See Pauline Reay, *Music in Film: Soundtracks and Synergy* (New York: Wallflower, 2004) for an examination of the film industry's utilization of popular artists in film soundtracks for cross-promotional purposes.

results are successful. Heather Phares' review of the *Boardwalk Empire Volume 1* soundtrack

aptly highlights the positive aspects of this cross-generational musical compilation:

> "Too often, when a soundtrack to a period film or television show tries to introduce listeners to older and often unfamiliar songs, they're presented in a dumbed-down form that doesn't do justice to the music or capture the imagination of a new audience. Fortunately, the soundtrack to the riveting, meticulously detailed HBO series *Boardwalk Empire* defies these hefty odds, which are even steeper considering that it features contemporary pop singers trying their vocal cords on '20s classics. But instead of trying to modernize the music to fit the vocalists, singers such as Regina Spektor slip seamlessly into songs such as 'My Man' like actors given flawlessly-reproduced Roaring Twenties costumes. Part of the reason the soundtrack works so well is the involvement of Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks, who are *Boardwalk Empire's* 'house band' and have been playing vaudeville, jazz, and other styles of the era since the early '70s, and faithfully recreate the ricky-ticky rhythms and swooning brass and woodwinds of the era (they get all of the spotlight on the numerous instrumentals, including 'Livery Stable Blues' and "Darktown Strutters Ball).' . . . As with everything involved with this show, this set of songs is a great balance of creativity and attention to historical accuracy, and an equally great musical souvenir for fans."[171]

I primarily agree with Phares' recognition that a large part of the success of these collaborations

is Giordano and the Nighthawks' involvement. As has been demonstrated, these musicians are

highly-skilled practitioners of the repertoire and performance style. Without them, the "period"

elements of the soundtrack may have been significantly less recognizable, or effective.

Some of the vocal artists are more successful than others. Broadway performer Stephen

DeRosa is very impressive in his vocal performances as popular 1920s performer Eddie Cantor –

whom DeRosa also plays in the show. DeRosa uncannily captures the stylistic nuances of

Cantor's theatrical vocalizations – including vocal timbre, speak-singing delivery/projection,

vibrato, and even personalized inflections on certain words. His version of "The Dumber They

Come" is a nearly-exact rendition of Cantor's, which was originally recorded by Cantor in a

Deforest Phonofilm performance act titled *A Few Minutes with Eddie Cantor* (1923). Other

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[171] Heather Phares, "Boardwalk Empire Vol. 1," *AllMusic*, http://www.allmusic.com/album/boardwalk-empire-vol-1-mw0002191519.

songs in which DeRosa exhibits a parallel amount of stylistic fidelity include "Old King Tut,"

"The Yodeling Chinaman," "You'd Be Surprised" and "Life is a Funny Proposition After All" –

all popular vaudevillian tunes in the 1920s.

Actress Margot Bingham is also successful as blues/jazz singer Daughter Maitland – a

character developed for the show. Bingham has a brief history as a singer-songwriter, but she

was hired for the show as an actress (not a singer). Stewart Lerman informed me that the music

department was prepared to have another vocalist sing Daughter's parts (which Margot would

lip-sync) if need be, but the filmmakers and the music department alike were impressed with her

period-appropriate, yet highly expressive singing. Bingham dedicatedly studied and practiced the

period styles in preparation for her role. As she shared in an interview with *Rolling Stone*, "I just

surrounded myself with Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, and Twenties on Pandora all day long."[172]

Her feature tunes include "St. Louis Blues," "I'm A Little Blackbird," "Farewell Daddy Blues,"

and "I'm Going South,"– originally popularized by such 1920s vocalists as Bessie Smith, "Ma"

Rainey, and Eva Taylor. Her deep alto tone, slightly raspy timbre, and period-informed vibrato

and blues inflections combined with personal, emotional expressivity results in a unique blend of

her own style and the blues queens of the past. And Bingham is not the only vocalist to

effectively "sing the blues" on the *Boardwalk* soundtrack. Another successful track is Catherine

Russell's version of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" - her phrasing, full-bodied vibrato, and

plaintive bluesy cries pay clear homage to Mamie's original version. Russell's familiarity with

the blues idiom is to be expected – she is actually an accomplished blues and jazz singer herself.

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[172] Sarene Leeds, "Boardwalk Empire Actress Margot Bingham Dishes on Daughter Maitland," *Rolling Stone* (online), 15 November 2013, http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/news/boardwalk-empire-actress-margot-bingham-dishes-on-daughter-maitland-20131115.

Not every collaboration is ideal, and some jazz-HIP purists might take issue with any of the recordings that do not reflect exact notational and timbral replicas of the original recordings of the tunes. Let's take a look at an example that is a little less reverent to the period style in terms of vocal approach. David Johansen – an eclectic performer whose music career emerged in the late 1960s, and has been recognized for involvement in rock, blues, pop, and protopunk (e.g. The New York Dolls) – recorded a track for Episode 22 of *Boardwalk Empire*, which was then featured on the *Boardwalk Empire Volume 2* soundtrack. The tune – "Strut Ms. Lizzie" – was a popular ragtime song composed in 1921 by Turner Layton and lyricist Henry Creamer. One of its most popular recorded versions is Irving Mills and his Hotsy Totsy Gang's 1930 rendition, which featured Bix Beiderbecke, Benny Goodman, Joe Venuti, and Gene Krupa. Giordano obviously based his arrangement of the tune on this recording – the solos are practically note-for-note, and the variations are primarily due to the facts that (1) Giordano's version is shorter, and thus edited accordingly, and (2) the tune is arranged to be primarily a vocal feature.

It is in the vocals that this recording obviously diverges from the original. David Johansen's singing is clearly distinct from Dick Robertson's on the Mills' record, featuring a deeper and more gravelly timbre that contrasts with Robertson's more nasal, higher tone. Johansen's vocals exhibit less vibrato than Robertson's, are less mellifluous, with more abrupt staccatos, and are in general harsher and more aggressive than Robertson's. He also interpolates extemporized scat phrases throughout the tune, including a contrapuntal scat solo against the first four bars of the clarinet solo (which was re-created from Benny Goodman's original solo).

Such vocal anachronisms appear frequently throughout the three soundtrack volumes. One pertinent track is Leon Redbone's performance on "The Sheik of Araby." Redbone's unique bass-range guttural vocal timbre contrasts with the higher, smoother vocal ranges and timbres of

the majority of 1920s male vocalists. Other artists – such as Elvis Costello and Liza Minelli –

sing with expression that is more 1940s/50s in nature – emulating the more fluid phrasing and

articulation of later crooners. Their vocal interpretations are not as metronomic or jauntily

syncopated as those popularized by such 1920s vocalists as Marion Harris, Sophie Tucker, Eddie

Cantor, and Al Jolson. In addition, they lack the prominent vibrato that was featured by both

vocalists and instrumentalists at the time.

Giordano's own reactions to the soundtracks are mixed.[173] He was pleased with many of

the instrumental-only features (e.g., "Livery Stable Blues," "Darktown Strutters Ball"). He also

admired the work of many of the vocalists. He was less excited about the vocalists who exhibited

non-traditional vocal delivery styles. He shared that this was a common reaction among many

jazz "traditionalists" whom he spoke with. He stated, "People who were devotees of 78-RPM –

some of them said they wished some of the vocalists would be more period. And I said, 'Well, it

wasn't my choice'."[174] Regardless of Giordano's own personal viewpoints – all of the final

decisions were made by Poster, in dialogue with the film executives. Giordano further claimed,

"You've just got to hold your tongue, kick the garbage can, and hope it's going to come out

ok."[175]

Overall, these albums provide a useful model for how the aspects of "dual authenticity"

are negotiated in period film (and its related media) production. If Giordano had produced these

soundtracks himself, he would have featured only singers who were well-versed in singing

1920s/30s style. His album would have integrated much more "factual authenticity" (i.e., fidelity

to period style) than the actual soundtracks did. The filmmakers, however, wanted to guarantee

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[173] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, March 26, 2016.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.

that the albums were commercially successful. In order to have the soundtracks be perceptibly

"factually authentic," they had Giordano and the Nighthawks accompany all the tracks. To have

it be ostensibly "experientially authentic" – and accessible to modern audiences – they hired

vocalists with a variety of commercial followings. They wanted to have their cake, and eat it too.

And one could argue that they were successful – the first volume of the soundtrack earned the

2012 Grammy Award for Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media.[176] Overall, these

albums are fascinating products that illuminate the intersections of art and commerce in film

soundtrack production – as well as generate unique contemporary listening experiences at the

nexus of "past" and present.

<div align="center">***</div>

Through this variety of case studies pertaining to Vince Giordano's (and the Nighthawks') early

jazz performances in film soundtrack production, I hope I have illustrated the ways in which

jazz-HIP artists' commitments to the dual aspects of perceived authenticity can intersect and

interact with filmmakers' own dual authenticity – as well as commercial – interests. I focused

primarily on Giordano's work because of his established status and recognition within

Hollywood networks as the go-to guy for early-jazz HIP, aligned with his perceived ability to

help inject dual authenticity into 1920s/30s period films. At this point in time, Giordano and the

Nighthawks are the only jazz-HIP group that are regularly contacted by filmmakers and/or music

supervisors to record their soundtracks.

I now turn to briefly consider the work of another jazz-HIP artist who has worked in film

with regularity in the past – pianist Dick Hyman. Hyman has not worked on a jazz film

soundtrack in over a decade, so – given the focus of this dissertation on contemporary jazz-HIP

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[176] Kate Ward, "Grammys 2012: The Full List of Winners," *Entertainment Weekly*, 12 February 2012, http://www.ew.com/article/2012/02/12/grammys-2012-the-full-list-of-winners.

performers in film – my analysis of his involvements in film will be briefer than my case studies

of Giordano's work. That said, I believe Hyman's collaborative relationship with filmmaker

Woody Allen provides another useful illustration of the intersections of dual-authenticity

aspiration within jazz-HIP performance and filmmaking.

Dick Hyman: "A Film Director's Dream"

For close to seventy years, pianist Dick Hyman has maintained a prolific career as a performer,

recording artist, and composer. Since the 1970s, he has largely been recognized for his

performances of early jazz piano music of the 1920s and 1930s, including ragtime, stride, and

early swing piano styles of such artists as Scott Joplin, James P. Johnson, Eubie Blake, Fats

Waller, Zez Confrey, and Duke Ellington. He has also recorded tributes to the music of several

Tin Pan Alley composers, including Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and George

Gershwin. Yet Hyman's jazz performance capabilities well exceed the styles of the early

twentieth century. The most effective illustration of his command of a range of jazz styles is his

Century of Jazz Piano (released on Arbor Records in 2009) which includes over 120 solo piano

recordings highlighting Hyman's pianistic virtuosity – from ragtime to free improvisation.

Throughout his extensive career, Hyman has performed with a number of renowned jazz

artists, including Teddy Wilson (whom he took lessons from), Benny Goodman, and Charlie

Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, as well as recurrently performing and recording with contemporaries

Ruby Braff, Ken Peplowski, Milt Hinton, Randy Sandke, Bucky Pizzarelli, and Howard Alden.

Hyman has also been very involved in facilitating jazz performance through his regular

contributions to jazz festivals and concert series. In the 1970s, he acted as musical director for

George Wein's New York Jazz Repertory Company, organizing jazz concert seasons at Carnegie

Hall that featured the works of early jazz pianists. In 1984, he founded the Jazz in July concert series at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, and served as its artistic director for twenty years, until handing over the position to fellow jazz pianist Bill Charlap. This impressive resume supports his recognition as one of the most historically-knowledgeable jazz pianists of our time. His wide diversity of performances have been characterized as masterfully accurate and stylistically "authentic" on numerous occasions.

Like Vince Giordano, Hyman's musical evocation of period early-jazz styles largely accounts for his interactions with the film industry. In the mid-twentieth century, he became very active in the New York studio circuit, establishing his reputation as a performer and making connections with a surfeit of New York-based artists at the time. Hyman informed me, "I was part of a few hundred people who were making the records and playing in bands for every possible circumstance around New York at that time, and I met a lot of people, and I often met producers, and that's how I did it. I did not have an agent, I just was there."[177] During this period, he became acquainted with New York-based director Woody Allen, who was just beginning to make movies at the time. Their shared interested in early jazz music – which I will examine more thoroughly momentarily – eventually led to Allen hiring Hyman as his composer and music supervisor for his film *Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask* (1972). For the next thirty years, Hyman remained highly involved in many of Allen's soundtracks, acting as original score composer, arranger, music supervisor, performer, and even on-screen performer in a few short cameos.[178] He ultimately contributed to the soundtracks of exactly fourteen of Allen's films, spanning from 1972 to 2004 (see Table 2.2 below).

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[177] Dick Hyman, interview with the author, March 10, 2015.
[178] Hyman had brief cameos in *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984) and *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion* (2001).

Film	Year
Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask	1972
Manhattan	1979
Stardust Memories	1980
Zelig	1983
Broadway Danny Rose	1984
The Purple Rose of Cairo	1985
Hannah and Her Sisters	1986
Radio Days	1987
Bullets Over Broadway	1994
Mighty Aphrodite	1995
Everyone Says I Love You	1996
Sweet and Lowdown	1999
The Curse of the Jade Scorpion	2001
Melinda and Melinda	2004

Table 2.2 *Dick Hyman's film soundtracks for Woody Allen's films*

Woody's initial interest in Hyman's musical talents extended beyond mere interest in a competent pianist. Woody has a passion for early jazz and popular music of the 1920s and '30s. He has stated, "I started to listen to jazz in my teens . . . When I was fourteen, maybe, I heard Sidney Bechet. On record. And I was very, very taken with it. And this gradually introduced me to more jazz recordings. . . . And I got very, very interested in jazz. I loved it."[179] Hyman reflected, "I think he is nostalgic for an earlier time. I think that's the kind of music he—like I—grew up with . . . . We collected records, and we subscribed to jazz publications, and we learned those records by heart. That's basically what's over there, in all [of his films]. . . . It's just what appeals to him."[180]

Woody's interest in the music even extends to his own performance practice. An amateur early-jazz clarinetist, he has performed throughout his life with a number of groups that focus on

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[179] Stig Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen* (New York: Grove Press, 1995): 37.
[180] Dick Hyman, interview with the author, March 10, 2015.

jazz tunes featuring New Orleans/Dixieland style; presently he is performing with the Eddy

Davis Jazz Band in a residency at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City.[181] It is therefore

unsurprising that Allen and Hyman – two contemporary, active New York artists devoted to

performing 1920s and '30s jazz and popular music – established a relationship. Allen has

remarked, "[Dick Hyman] is a film director's dream. He looks at the scenes and knows what

works. He can do whatever you want. He can be Erroll Garner, or Bud Powell, or Fats Waller.

He has a mastery of the tunes of Jelly Roll Morton and Bix Beiderbecke and the New Orleans

style that I love. I'm amazed at the scenes with music he has given us."[182]

I contend that Allen – like the other directors and musicians examined in this chapter –

seeks to establish the perception of "dual authenticity" in his period works.[183] In terms of

nominal authenticity, he utilizes period-appropriate settings, costuming, and music – much as

many other period film directors do. In the cases of his "mockumentary" period films such as

Zelig and *Sweet and Lowdown*, he further tries to inject his fictional stories with a tongue-in-

cheek authenticity by having the stories told by real jazz aficionado and scholarly talking heads

(e.g., Nat Hentoff, Douglas McGrath, Susan Sontag, etc.). His approach to

expressive/experiential authenticity must be considered across his body of filmic works, putting

his period and contemporary films in dialogue with one another. Early jazz music is a

fundamental feature of Allen's soundtracks – regardless of the time period in which the film is

set. For him, the music represents emotion and inner experience, it is a key structuring element

of the development of the narrative as a whole. Each musical selection is rife with associational

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[181] For an in-depth look at Allen's tour work as a clarinetist/jazz performer with his group Woody Allen's New Orleans Jazz Band, see Barbara Kopple's documentary *Wild Man Blues* (1997).

[182] Quoted in John S. Wilson, "Allen Plans Year-Round Jazz Playing," *New York Times* (June 4, 1984), http://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/04/arts/allen-plans-year-round-jazz-playing.html?pagewanted=all.

[183] Allen's "period" works include *Zelig* (1983), *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), *Radio Days* (1987), *Shadows and Fog* (1991), *Bullets Over Broadway* (1994), *Sweet and Lowdown* (1991), and *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion* (2001).

subtexts that are meant to enhance our understanding of what is happening onscreen. Tunes such as "I Love My Baby, and My Baby Loves Me," "I'll See You in My Dreams," and "Easy to Love" accompany romantic scenes between two characters. Blues accompany characters' reflections on loss. One recent example is the closing credits sequence of *Blue Jasmine* (2013), in which the protagonist's plight—having lost everything from her husband, to her upscale lifestyle, to her job, to a place to live, to her fiancée—is underscored by blues vocalist Lizzie Miles singing "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." The expressive gravelliness of Miles' voice, coupled with the lyrics, musically evokes Jasmine's inner turmoil, "bluesiness," and downward spiral throughout the course of the film. For Allen, expressive authenticity is in how the music helps us identify with the characters through the music. The music has meaning for him, so therefore he believes it will have meaning for us.

In hiring Dick Hyman to compose, arrange, and/or supervise the film's soundtracks, Allen located an ally that shared his understanding of early jazz music in relation to human experience, and his interest in the dual authenticity of historically-informed performance. In addition to identifying and period-appropriately performing tunes that fit Allen's desires, Hyman was also able to perform them in ways that would evoke the more abstract themes Allen was hoping to project – romance, longing, mystery, etc. In an effort to bring period music alive for present-day listening audiences (and ostensibly for himself), Hyman significantly extemporized on or arranged original score frameworks, bringing in his own ideas to create more personalized, expressive works.[184] Hyman claimed in an interview for the *Wall Street Journal*, "On some [early music performances/recordings] I'm perfectly authentic; on others, more interpretive."[185]

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[184] When recording for film, he often experiments beforehand and writes down his ideas so that they can correspond with the timing necessities of the film. In live performance, he is much more likely to improvise in-the-moment.
[185] John McDonough, "The Chameleon Days of Dick Hyman," *The Wall Street Journal* (online), 30 December 2009, http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704107204574475193134391938.

That said, he takes care to improvise in historically-appropriate styles, avoiding utilizing anachronistic techniques or solo styles. A book-length (at least) study of Hyman's improvisations in comparison to original recordings would be a valuable contribution to jazz studies – but one that I am not focusing on here. Rather, I discuss Hyman's shifting approaches between textual fidelity to original period scores/recordings and personal improvisation as an illustration of the operations of "dual authenticity" in a single jazz-HIP performer's body of work.

Because of their complimentary musical interests, Allen and Hyman were able to collaborate on a shared aesthetic wavelength. Allen's trust of Hyman's early jazz and expertise – as well as his proven ability to create and perform music that fit what Allen was looking for in his soundtracks – resulted in his heavy reliance on him for over a quarter century. Allen himself stated, "[Dick] … knows all the kinds of songs that I like. When I need the kind of songs that Cole Porter would write or the kind of jazz arrangements that Paul Whiteman or Jelly Roll Morton would do, Dick Hyman knows that code."[186] While Allen was strongly involved in the music selection process – choosing many of the licensed songs himself – he left nearly all of the artistic/creative decisions to Hyman. Hyman's two primary production responsibilities were as follows: One, he would write arrangements of or (occasionally, but more rarely) improvise tunes that Allen was unable to license. Two, he would compose new, original tunes – what I refer to as HICs (historically-informed compositions) – in which he drew on his historic musical knowledge to write "new" pieces that sounded as though they were written and performed in the 1920s.[187]

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[186] Björkman, *Woody Allen on Woody Allen*, 142.

[187] I relate this phenomenon to Susan Stewart's conceptualization of "distressed genres," considering these self-referential "new old songs" at the intersections of nostalgia and appropriation of cultural value/authenticity. In 1991, Susan Stewart published her influential work, "Notes on Distressed Genres," *The Journal of American Folklore* 104.411 (Winter, 1991): 5-31, theorizing how the creation of "distressed genres" in late 17th-century literary culture attempted to imbue evolving literary forms with cultural authenticity, based on their perceived representation of earlier (i.e., oral) cultural forms. Stewart identifies distressed genres as "new antiques" – self-referential works that

Such HICs are evidenced in several of Allen's period-based films, including *Zelig* (1983) and *Sweet and Lowdown* (1999).

In alignment with the hierarchies of power that dominate the film art world, Allen did reserve final say on all of Hyman's decisions and recordings. As is prone to happen in any filmmaking project, Hyman's tracks were cut and edited, and some of his musical suggestions were likely rejected. However – in a uniquely collaborative level between director and composer – Allen granted Hyman much authority in the soundtrack production. For example, Hyman shared with me that he occasionally advised Allen that a certain song or piece of music should be used in places that Allen himself had not identified. He stated, "At times, I would submit songs to [Allen], if there was a song that needed to be composed for the occasion, or if I thought it could be used, and he hadn't so designated it. I would write the song and present it to him, and then mostly he saw the wisdom of my choice, and we put that in the film."

I maintain that this high level of collaboration and low level of conflict is a direct result of the alignment of Allen's and Hyman's investment in the attainment of perceptible dual authenticity in early jazz music. Both are respectful of the nominal stylistic elements of the music, seeking to recreate the tunes with as much fidelity to the original as possible. But both also believe it is a vital, expressive music that sonically evokes human experience. Through Hyman's vast knowledge of the early-jazz repertoire and expressive approach to period arrangement, composition, and performance, he became Allen's trusted long-time musical collaborator – and a key figure in jazz-film intersections during that time period.

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imitate older forms, contextually appropriating the past while simultaneously producing a new cultural artifact to be consumed in the present. The creation of these objects results from the interaction of multiple desires – nostalgic desire for the historical context of the referent, desire for the acquisition of authenticity and cultural value for the present artifact, and – relatedly – a desire to transcend temporality by conflating the present with the past. While my present study does not address literary cultural forms of the 17th and 18th centuries, I believe Stewart's description of distressed genres as "new antiques" referent to earlier cultural forms is appropriately applicable to Hyman's "new compositions" of old-style jazz tunes for several of Woody Allen's films.

Closing Thoughts

Aside from Vince Giordano and Dick Hyman, the majority of jazz-HIP performers who have

been contracted to record or compose for film soundtracks have had infrequent gigs. They are

often hired for singular, specific projects that call for early jazz re-recordings. These projects

generally include atypical period films for a specific director – films with soundtracks that

primarily consist of licensed recordings, but need one or two re-recordings due to licensing or

fidelity issues, or jazz-themed films that depict the "creation" of the music onscreen, and thus

demand live recordings that fit the on-screen specifications. The brief networks established

between these artists and the filmmakers are nearly always immediately dissolved once the

project is finished, due to the project's uniqueness. In the absence of established networks (such

as Giordano's and Hyman's), these artists are thrown back into periphery of the film art world,

often returning to their primary careers as jazz performers, without the expectation that they will

be hired for film projects again.

The artists whose film work is examined in this chapter are recognized because of the

frequency and uniqueness of their interactions with the film industry. Both Giordano and Hyman

have established direct connections with particular filmmakers, thus expanding their film

industry networks, and resulting in their "inner circle" or "go-to" statuses among other

filmmakers, and film music departments. As I hope to have illustrated, the initial groundwork for

these jazz-film collaborations is these artists' perceived recognition as "authentic" period jazz

performers who can bring both nominal and expressive authenticity – and accordingly, hoped-for

commercial success – to the film projects. Their reputations are based on their own successes and

endeavors in their separate jazz careers. This is not to suggest that other jazz-HIP performers

who are not involved recurrently in film projects are not successful in their own performance

careers. Rather, it further highlights the necessity of networking (in many cases initiated through being at the right place at the right time) within the film art world. Whether or not other jazz-HIP artists like Giordano and Hyman will emerge in the period-film scene is for time to tell.

As the discussions and case studies in this chapter illustrate, the intersections between the jazz and film art worlds at the nodes of historicism are not merely convenient – but represent the engagements of commercial, ideological, and artistic aspirations under a shared interest in the complex (and constructed) phenomenon of authenticity. The relationships between the jazz and film art worlds in these cases are both circular and interactive – desired "dual authenticity" (or the perception of it) among both jazz-HIP practitioners and filmmakers is what brings these two decidedly separate art worlds together.

These ostensible quests for dual authenticity are riddled with tensions and complexities. Historical "accuracy," may be disregarded in favor of greater consumer accessibility. For example, filmmakers may favor period-based music that is "modernized" in order to ostensibly make it more palatable to contemporary audiences. These variances in ideology can be problematic for the jazz-HIP performers, who have their own ideologies about period performance practice. Accordingly, these artists must negotiate their own idealized practices and creativity within the hierarchical structures of film production. Circumstances have generally worked out well for both Giordano and Hyman – largely due to directors Scorsese's and Allen's shared investment in the importance of their soundtracks' historical appropriateness. Other circumstances between other freelance jazz-HIP performers and directors may not always be as favorable for the performing artists.

In the midst of shifting convergences and divergences of ideology, aesthetic and/or economic prioritizing, hierarchical structuring of production power, and varying interpretations

of what "authenticity" is – these two art worlds intersect in interesting and productive ways. The projects examined here encourage us to critically consider how jazz-HIP musicians' performance in film soundtracks can go beyond the notes, styles, or tunes performed, and actually introduce a "liveness" or contemporary experience to the film that the artists themselves strive for in their everyday jazz performances. And just as the soundtrack work of artists like Vince Giordano helps to "inject authenticity" into such shows as *The Aviator* and *Boardwalk Empire*, it is useful to consider how the music's presence in these popular mainstream shows may also inject Giordano's (and other jazz-HIP artists') live performances with a new, modern-day renown via the silver screen.

Chapter Three
Improvised Film Scores: Risk, "Mavericks," and Creative Agency

On December 4, 1957, Miles Davis made cinema soundtrack history. At Le Poste Parisien studio in Paris - along with fellow musicians Kenny Clarke, Pierre Michelot, Rene Urtreger, and Barney Wilen - Davis created the earliest-known fully-improvised film soundtrack (for synchronized-sound film). The project was French director Louis Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'echafaud* (*Elevator to the Gallows*). On this now-historic evening, Davis and the ensemble recorded the entire soundtrack while watching rough cuts of the film onscreen. In fascinating staged footage released on the special features of the 2006 Criterion Collection DVD version of the film, we see a depiction of this soundtrack production; Davis stares intently at a large projection of actress Jeanne Moreau wandering forlornly, yet seductively through Champ-Elysees at night, searching for her lover whom she believes has abandoned her. As Davis watches, he appears to be spontaneously creating the accompaniment to Moreau's troubled and lonely wandering. His illuminated eyes shift from side-to-side, surveying the scene, as we hear him improvise in the d-minor mode. His bluesy and mournful-sounding phrases emulate Moreau's exasperated sighs and painful recognition of abandonment, yet also evince a sinuousness that heightens Moreau's on-screen seductiveness – her slight raise of her eyebrow, the fluid motion of her hips as she walks, her haunting, pain-filled eyes.

Figure 3.1 *Miles Davis improvising the soundtrack for "Elevator to the Gallows," taken from the Criterion DVD release's special features (screenshot, 1957)*

Improvised soundtracks[188] such as these are rare. They are non-traditional. They are not carefully-composed by note and rhythm, but rather conceptualized and spontaneously performed in reaction to an emotional or thematic component of the film itself. Although a staple feature of silent films, improvised soundtrack production is generally absent from synchronized-sound film productions. I argue that this rarity results from the film industry's risk averseness; economic and aesthetic concerns about various forms of production risk preclude improvised scores' utilization in many filmmaking circumstances. These perceived elements of risk – which I will delineate in more detail shortly – are heavily considered within the film industry, whose primary goal is to achieve a commercially-successful product.

Nevertheless, there are a few filmmakers who are willing to take this risk. They are almost-exclusively independent filmmakers, whose work is primarily produced outside of the

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[188] To be clear, I define improvised scores as those that are predominantly created in an improvised manner – excluding scores that include improvised passages over primarily pre-written arrangements.

major studio industry. I characterize these filmmakers as "mavericks," who – as described by

Howard Becker – propose innovations outside the limits of what the art world [i.e., film industry]

conventionally produces.[189] Through self- and/or independent production, maverick filmmakers

are capable of producing their films without the same constraints experienced by integrated film-

industry professionals. They experience more freedom and less restriction in the usage of

unconventional storylines, production techniques, and film style. In several cases, this can

include innovative methods of scoring the film – including utilizing improvised scores.

Historically, it is no complete coincidence that Malle considered the prospect of

employing an improvising jazz musician for his film – although he was at the forefront of such

collaborations. During the late 1950s-1960s, the French New Wave cinematic movement

developed as an aesthetic response to the post-war domination of the Hollywood film industry

and its redundant, commercial film conventions – as well as the classic "Tradition of Quality" in

French cinema. Along with those involved in the Italian neo-realist movement and American

independent cinema, New Wave filmmakers sought to introduce new ways of creating movies

that challenged the studio-determined, script-driven commercialism of mainstream filmmaking

trends.[190] They pursued alternatives to traditional narrative style, emphasizing fragmentation,

abstraction, and improvisation over fixed rigidity and over-determined production. Techniques

included location shooting, live ("direct sound") recording, and "plan-of-action" scripts that

allowed for chance ideas, production flexibility, and ad-libbed dialogue – breaking down

traditional dichotomies between cinematic fiction and documentary-style cinema. These

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[189] Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*, 232.
[190] For comprehensive scholarly texts addressing the French New Wave film movement, see Richard Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema,* 2nd ed. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007) and Michel Marie, *The French New Wave: An Artistic School*, trans. Richard Neupert (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003). Also see Peter Graham, ed. *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks* (New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968) for a collection of seminal film criticism texts written by prominent New Wave filmmakers such as André Bazin, François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, and Jean-Luc Godard.

production methods exhibited New Wave filmmakers' investment in questioning the nature of cinematic reality, as well as urging audiences to critically (not complacently) engage with the films they were viewing onscreen. As Sandy Flitterman-Lewis claimed, "In New Wave films, the component elements of the genre are often broken down and foregrounded so that viewers can engage in a process of critical reflection about the images that flow before them. For this reason, these films are often marked by a dialectical interaction between genre conventions and reflexive commentary, placing the viewer in a position of new awareness about the processes of cinematic meaning-production."[191]

New Wave's critical practices resonated with mid-century modernist trends in art, literature, and music – including Abstract Expressionism, Beat literature, and Bebop jazz – which emphasized personal creativity and sincerity, spontaneity (improvisation), and subjective interpretation. Accordingly, many New Wave directors (as well as independent American filmmakers) utilized jazz music for their film scores. In several cases the music was improvised; others were jazz-influenced composed scores. Examples of such film projects include Roger Vadim's *Sait on jamais?* (1957), with a score by John Lewis, Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1959), with a score by Martial Solal, and Roger Vadim's *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1960), with a score by Thelonious Monk and Art Blakey. In America, such usage of jazz soundtracks was spearheaded by Alex North's innovative jazz-influenced score for Elia Kazan's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), and manifested in such projects as Elmer Bernstein's scores for *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) and *The Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), Duke Ellington's score for Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), as well as John Cassavetes' *Shadows* (1960), with a score performed by Charles Mingus. This host of noir-style films was characterized by an

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[191] Flitterman-Lewis, "Varda in Context," 254.

emphasis on mystery, freedom, unpredictability, psychology, and emotion – all elements that were regularly associated with jazz improvisation. As Russel Lack contends, "When jazz has worked well in cinema it's because it has got as close as possible to being a correlate of personal expression. Gone was the idea of an omniscient narrative instructing us to read the film in a certain way. . . . Jazz as soundtrack came to signify personal expression – a character's secret and internal voice."[192]

Within recent decades, there have only been a few scenarios in which jazz artists have improvised jazz scores for films. New Wave filmmaking, Abstract Expressionism, beat poetry, and bebop are now all historic movements – they are no longer definitive of the modernist artistic milieu and cultural criticism in the United States and Europe as they were during the post-war era. The impetus to utilize such improvised scores now no longer aligns with the ideological and aesthetic motivations evinced by late-1950s independent filmmakers. Instead, the catalysts for these projects are uniquely-determined, dependent on the directors' personal interests in improvised jazz music for various aesthetic, emotional, stylistic, or sub-textual reasons.

Of those movies which do contain soundtracks utilizing jazz improvisation, few offer fully-improvised scores. Instead, they exhibit soundtracks which include brief moments/passages of improvisation, against the backdrop of pre-composed scores. One example is Ornette Coleman's free improvisation over Howard Shore's orchestral score in David Cronenberg's *The Naked Lunch* (1991). Here, Coleman's frenetic, squealing saxophone improvisations evoke the disorienting hallucinations of character William Lee in the eccentric and disturbing milieu of the Interzone – reinforcing cinematic associations of jazz (particularly free jazz) with anxiety,

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[192] Russel Lack, *Twenty-Four Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music* (London: Quartet Books, 1997): 201, 203.

unpredictability, and chaos. Another example is Dave Grusin's jazz-based soundtrack for *The Fabulous Baker Boys* (1989), which features quite a bit of improvisation, but within the context of previously-composed tunes and ensemble orchestrations. This film focuses on the musical and personal experiences of two brothers who are jazz pianists – particularly the more talented (and troubled) of the two, Jack (Jeff Bridges). Improvisational passages – as well as the holistic jazz-based score – reflect Jack's career as a jazz musician, as well as his own exploration of individuality and expression throughout the course of the film.[193] It is also useful to consider that a significant portion of the improvisation that happens in this soundtrack is featured diegetically. Improvisation in the soundtrack generally corresponds to moments of "visible" improvisation in the film. As such, these musical components are fulfilling specific diegetic functions that relate to the plot of the narrative.

Such circumstances – in which jazz improvisation appears on soundtracks to support diegetic moments – accounts for the vast majority of improvisation in film in recent decades. Examples include (but are not limited to) jazz-themed films such as, *Round Midnight* (1986), *Bird* (1988), *Mo' Better Blues* (1990), *Kansas City* (1996), and *Whiplash* (2014) – and several others. It is filmmakers' utilization of improvised jazz scores in *non-jazz* films that is especially uncommon – particularly when the scores are improvised in their entirety.

In this chapter, I offer case studies that analyze the development and production of these rare, fully-improvised jazz scores. The thread that connects each of these case studies is the director's "maverick" status – his innovative approach to filmmaking that exists outside of

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[193] For an insightful study on how jazz improvisation in *The Baker Boys'* film soundtrack functions in relation to Jack's character development, see Adam Biggs, "Jazz as Individual Expression: An Analysis of the Fabulous Baker Boys Soundtrack," *The Soundtrack* 6: 1 +2 (2014): 21-32. Biggs theorizes, "As well as a portrayal of sibling rivalry, the film is a study of the working jazz musicians and the suppression and expression of individual identity. . . Dave Grusin uses jazz standards and original thematic compositions that . . . provide improvisatory contexts for the main character's emerging individuality and his relationships with the other characters" (21).

traditional film industry conventions. These independent methodologies generally result in greater risk-taking throughout the filmmaking process. I contend that it is these directors' more liberal attitudes toward economic and ideological risk – coupled with their personal interests in jazz improvisation and its conceived usefulness for their narratives – that facilitates the creation of improvised jazz scores. I further examine how these scores challenge conventional methods of film score production, and offer unique opportunities for jazz artists' creative agency within film industry labor.

Risk: Theorizing Improvised Scores' Rarity in Cinema History

Before diving into our case studies, I want to first theorize the rarity of improvised scores in cinematic history in relation to the goals and conventions of the film industry as a business. I argue that this rarity results from the film industry's *risk averseness*. The film industry's primary goal is to achieve a commercially-successful product. Potential "risk" refers to any type of production uncertainty that might negatively influence the expected financial success of the film. Risk itself is not a concrete phenomenon, but an ideological narrative constructed within the film art world that discursively influences industry conventions, production processes, biases, and fears. Risk discourse primarily engages with both economic and aesthetic risk assessment - which I will examine here.

Economic/"Practical" Risk

In economic theory, the term *risk* represents a measurement of uncertainty concerning how one's decisions will negatively affect (or result in a deviation from) expected financial

gain.[194] According to NASDAQ, project financing risk is defined as "the risk that the project's output will not be salable at a price that will cover the project's operating and maintenance costs and its debt service requirements."[195] On an economic level, risk assessment operates similarly within the film industry.[196] Large corporations, investment companies, and wealthy executives financially support film projects with the intent to make a profit. Therefore, risk aversion plays a large role in the discussions prior to "green-lighting" (i.e., giving the "go ahead" to) the filmmaking process. These discussions are fundamentally concerned with economic gain, determining whether or not the proposed production elements will result in a commercially-successful product. These conversations also engage with perceived aesthetic risk, which I will consider more thoroughly momentarily.

For many filmmaking executives, improvised jazz scores are risky ventures at the level of practical production. They are highly unconventional in relation to the majority of film-scoring procedures. The most obvious unconventionality is the fact that the music itself is not pre-prepared when the artists go into the recording studio. There is no written score; there is no established text for the musicians to interpret. While the composer will often have discussed the narrative with the director and developed ideas for the music, he will generally bring no more than a chart or lead sheet to the recording session. The soundtrack recordings themselves will be spontaneous – not over-determined – and will likely vary from take to take. This process is economically risky on several levels. First, the resulting improvisations might not meet the director's expectations for what the score should sound like. In traditional film-scoring practices, the score is pre-written and often demoed for the director (either through software such as

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[194] "Risk," *Economic Times*, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/risk.
[195] "Economic Risk," http://financial-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Economic+risk.
[196] For two useful resources on risk and risk management in the film industry, see Hjort, ed. *Film and Risk* (2012) and Sedgwick and Pokorny, ed. *An Economic History of Film* (2005).

Sibelius or Finale, or by the composer himself on a keyboard or synthesizers), so that the director may approve and/or offer suggestions for edits. When the score is improvised, this type of direct pre-approval is not possible. Therefore, if the improvised recordings do not end up meeting the director's expectations, the music will either have to be re-recorded, or a new composer will need to be hired – both of which increase the level of economic risk for the project by requiring additional time and money.

A second perceived risk is the potential for the performers to make more musical "mistakes" during the recording process, since they are not performing from a written score. Although the performances are in fact structured by themes, "feels" (e.g., specific grooves and tempos), and often written-out chord changes – the lack of specification for how every element of the soundtrack should be performed introduces a potential level of risk that many filmmakers are reluctant to take on.

Another potential complication is the strict timing expectations for soundtracks, where musical cues must occur at exact specified timings that match with on-screen events. For example, a composer may be notified that a particular portion of the score – known as a "cue" – can only be thirty-seven seconds long in order to fit a visual scene. It can be difficult for improvising performers to conceptualize and play their music effectively while also being constrained by very specific (and often short) time limits. This process is much more controlled for the majority of composers, who write out their scores prior to recording them. The composers input their scores into sequencing systems that allow them to monitor the exact timings that correspond to the film, and to develop the compositions accordingly within appropriately-timed hits, builds, cadences, etc.

As jazz pianist and film composer Dick Hyman stated, "You don't improvise much in films. It has to be precisely the length to match the scene, or it has to be of such a length that it can be edited into the scene for ambience, and it has to be carefully planned. And more and more, it has to be put together in some form in advance, so that people can make judgments about whether it's suitable.[197] If the improvised portion does not match the scene appropriately in terms of length and aesthetic quality in relation to the narrative, it must then be re-recorded until it meets those expectations, or there is a risk of it manipulating the scene in ineffectual ways. Filmmakers do not want to cut further into their budgets by doing re-recordings, or take the time to meet with and ask their composers to re-conceptualize their approaches to the score. They expect the music department to work quickly and productively, and to achieve "the sound" they are looking for without much ado. As such, all of the aforementioned potential complications make filmmakers' utilization of improvised scores a risky venture – one that many are not willing to take.

Film Industry Ideological Conservatism and "Aesthetic Risk"

It is important to recognize that risk assessment in the film industry is also largely ideologically-driven. With economic profit as the end-goal, filmmaking decisions are primarily informed by conventional beliefs about what will (or will not) be successful among consuming audiences. It is these culturally-constituted theories that determine the dominant risk discourse at any given time. If a film's genre, techniques, or storyline is not believed to appeal to mass audiences, it will often be assessed as too risky to produce.

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[197] Dick Hyman, interview with the author, 10 March 2015.

Risk aversion is inherently related to convention and industry formulas that have been proven successful, and seeks to avoid the new, the unknown, and the unexplored. Verna Fields, a former film editor and production executive at MCA-Universal claimed, "Producers are investing the money, and I don't think they feel very courageous about being daring and experimental. I don't blame them. They want to be safe. They know that *Jaws* made money, so *Jaws II* is sure to make it. And if *Jaws* can do it, King Kong can do it. They want a best-seller book, something proven. I can't blame them for being nervous about trying anything new."[198] This reliance on "the proven" also accounts for the significant in-group mentality in film industry networks – the recurring hiring of an elite "inner circle" of filmmakers, actors, editors, and composers. As Robert Faulkner contends, in big-budget feature films "producers and directors are very reluctant to hand their project over to an unknown, or to somebody without a calculable track record of credits, or someone whose musical approach may be totally unexpected, unconventional, and full of risk."[199] Film executive Lucy Fisher makes a similar contention, stating, "[Directors and producers are] fearful of trying new things because the pressure is so big and people do usually prefer what they already know to what they don't know. And certainly people who are in the decision-making seats feel safer making decisions about known quantities as opposed to unknown quantities."[200]

A complicating factor in film industry assessments of risk is the industry's reliance on the creative uniqueness of its products. Unlike manufacturing companies that aim for consistency in production, creative corporations like the film industry depend on originality for audience appeal. Accordingly, film producers must negotiate the tensions between art and commerce –

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[198] Quoted in Faulkner, *Music on Demand*, 172.
[199] Ibid., 66.
[200] "The Monster That Ate Hollywood: Interview, Lucy Fisher," *PBS Frontline*, November 2001, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/hollywood/interviews/fisher.html.

producing for the mass market while avoiding routine, standardized production. As writer Leo

Rosten articulated, "Hollywood is geared to a mass market, yet it cannot employ the methods of

mass production. Each picture is a different picture and presents unique demands."[201]

Problematically, unique creative production is inherently irrational from an economic

perspective. It is "untested," its outcomes are unpredictable, and – even if successful – it cannot

(or should not) be routinized into a formulaic production process. Accordingly, risk discourse in

the film industry is continually informed by the simultaneously-complementary and

contradictory intersections of economic assessment and ideology.[202]

In navigating these art-commerce tensions, film producers employ a number of strategies

to mitigate the uncertainty (and ostensible risk-level) of creative elements' successes. While

many producers boast "gut instincts"[203] – mythological attributes that allow them to predict

whether or not a film will be commercially successful – several production studies reveal the

manifold ways in which producers attempt to understand audience tastes, and formulate theories

about what kinds of films will appeal to those given audiences.[204] Methods include concept

testing in the film's development stages, surveying potential audience members, and test-

screening rough cuts of films – among others. Scholars such as Stephen Zafirau have also argued

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[201] Leo C. Rosten, *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, the Movie Makers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941): 28.

[202] For useful texts on the development, reinforcement, and production of ideology, risk discourse, and critical practice in the film industry, see the following recommended literature: Caldwell (2008); Mayer, et al. (2009); and Szczerpanik and Vonderau (2013).

[203] Such boasted "intuition" has been a point of pride for many studio executives, although it is a mythological, self-constructed (and often erroneous) phenomenon. Hortense Powdermaker's seminal ethnography of the Hollywood industry - *Hollywood: The Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950) – takes special note of these attitudes. She claims that studio executives described themselves as "showmen gifted with special intuitive powers" (93). That said, studios' investment in audience reception research demonstrates that even these executives believe that such intuition is malleable and improvable, and that methods for grounding attitudes about audience taste are valuable.

[204] Robert Marich, *Marketing to Moviegoers: A Handbook of Strategies Used By Major Studios and Independents* (New York and London: Elsevier, 2005); Leo Handel, *Hollywood Looks at Its Audience: A Report of Film Audience Research* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1950); Susan Ohmer, *George Gallup in Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

that filmmaking executives draw on their own everyday lives and experiences in attempting to ground their understandings of audience tastes.[205] For example, they try to adopt the roles and mentalities of everyday audience members by considering their own tastes, the tastes of their children/family members/friends, and by also directly engaging with popular culture (e.g., watching movies, television, reading pop culture magazines, etc.). In doing so, they hope to mediate their own "intuitive" perceptions, helping them better gauge success and risk.

In the midst of negotiations of risk discourse, production conventions, "gut reactions," and audience reception studies, filmmakers will assess that certain creative production elements are "too risky." I contend that these elements have a high level of perceived "*aesthetic risk*." Aesthetic risk encompasses those aesthetically-innovative components of a filmic project that may potentially influence the commercial success of the film in a negative way. As Helen Grace describes, "aesthetic risk [is] a form of risk producing terror in financiers fearful of loss of (their) control – and fearful also that they will be judged uncivilized for lacking critical judgment."[206] Grace further maintains that "because of its inherent unpredictability, aesthetic risk is placed on the side of fiscal recklessness."[207] Accordingly, film industry producers and financiers attempt to limit aesthetic decisions that might potentially negatively affect the film's bottom line.

It is such risk-aversive decision-making among film industry executives that has resulted in the overwhelming conservatism of aesthetic filmmaking approaches within the Hollywood studio system – from plot lines to shooting style, from lighting to soundtrack music. As Peter Bart – who has had lengthy careers as a film executive and as editor-in-chief of *Variety* magazine

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[205] Stephen Zafirau, "Audience Knowledge and the Everyday Lives of Cultural Producers in Hollywood," in *Production Studies*, ed. Mayer et al. (2009): 190-202.

[206] Helen Grace, "Aesthetic Risk and Deficit Thinking: Some Profit and Loss Statements about Cinema and Thought," *LOLA* Issue 2 (2012), http://www.lolajournal.com/2/aesthetic_risk.html.

[207] Ibid.

– states, "What big corporations want most is risk-averse pictures."[208] In an effort to retain economic control and "safeness," these financiers rely on time-tested successful formulas and conventions, which can unfortunately also lead to constraints on creativity and an increasingly-stale standardization within cinema products. For an illustration, note the immense proliferation of franchise blockbusters coming out of Hollywood in recent years – Star Wars, Star Trek, superhero movies, James Bond films, etc. Producer Lynda Obst argues, "We've got [these] formula[s]. . . . It's not easy to make those things fresh. We're approaching a singularity."[209]

Jazz scores are affected by this aesthetic risk aversion. Jazz has often been an unconventional soundtrack genre. As many jazz and film scholars have noted – it often reinforces associations with certain historical periods and cinematic codes. It has connotations of sleaziness, of urban decay, of seduction, and other specific semiotic meanings. As a result, filmmakers are reluctant to use jazz scores unless they are trying to highlight these particular associations. They are even more reluctant to use *improvised* jazz scores – given the seeming unpredictability of such production. Today, the perceived aesthetic riskiness of jazz scores, the economic/production risks elucidated above, and the fact that few improvising jazz artists hold strong networks within the film industry largely account for the continued marginalization of improvised film scores. Those occasions where improvised scores are utilized are entirely dependent on the investment of the director/producer, who is often working independently from the corporate film industry at large.

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[208] "Monster that Ate Hollywood," Interview, Pete Bart.
[209] Phil Hoad, "Hollywood and the New Abnormal: Why the Industry is Scared of Risk," *The Guardian*, 31 October 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/oct/31/hollywood-new-abnormal-lynda-obst-scared-risk.

"Maverick" Filmmakers: Challenging Conventions and Risk Aversion

The "maverick" filmmaker is one who challenges film art world conventions. Iconoclastic, idiosyncratic, independent – these are all adjectives that have been used to describe the creative outputs of such directors. Film scholar Geoff Andrew understands the term "maverick" as describing an "attitude or achievement . . . those film-makers who, for some or all of their directing careers, have made movies which in one way or another stand outside the commercial mainstream."[210] Such directors may be financially independent from the Hollywood studio system, or they may work with the major studios for financing and distribution, while retaining their own individuality and creative control. In recent decades, those directors recognized with maverick status have included Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, Robert Altman, Woody Allen, and Spike Lee – among others. Several maverick filmmakers have exhibited interest in using jazz scores for their films – including improvised jazz scores. Following a brief description of "the maverick's" social position within the film art world, I consider how these filmmakers' positions directly affect the opportunities for improvising jazz artists to become involved in film soundtrack production.

"Maverick" Auteurs and Jazz

The maverick filmmaker is recognized as one who overtly pushes against typical cinematic conventions – ostensibly paving radically new directions for the production field as a whole. Many write their own screenplays, make their own casting decisions, get funding outside of major studies (in some cases may even self-produce), and retain final cut of their film projects. Through such independence, they are able to utilize creative freedoms that are often limited by

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[210] Geoff Andrew, *Stranger than Paradise: Maverick Film-Makers in Recent American Cinema* (New York: Limelight, 1999): 6.

studio control. Independent production reduces the level of institutional investment and expectation, thus allowing maverick filmmakers to make more internally-directed decisions.

I argue that maverick directors' freedoms from (or dismissals of) conglomerate control are reflected in their non-traditional considerations of risk. When Louis Malle filmed *Elevator to the Gallows*, he was a twenty-four-year-old director who was new on the film industry scene. While his lack of recognition was limiting in terms of production budgeting and promotional opportunities, it also had liberating effects. Malle himself contended, "Once huge sums of money are lined up for a film production, commercial constraints come into play that really paralyze you. . . . I think [we directors achieve] . . . freedom by agreeing to make films on low-budgets, which allows for more risk-taking."[211] In "breaking out of the molds" of conventional filmmaking, such independent directors choose to – and in fact may be expected to – take greater risks in their aesthetic decision-making. Accordingly, their liberal approaches to risk can be very liberating in terms of creativity and innovative experimentation, and can in turn influence their own reputations and cultural capital as innovative filmmakers.

In recent decades, two maverick filmmakers in particular have engaged risk through their utilization of improvised jazz scores for their films. As I have theorized throughout this chapter, improvised soundtracks are perceived as conventionally-risky on both economic and aesthetic levels. The first of these filmmakers is Alejandro González Iñárritu. This Mexican filmmaker has been lauded for his innovative cinematic techniques, and has recently won back-to-back Academy Awards for Best Director for his films *Birdman* (2014) and The *Revenant* (2015). It is on his film *Birdman* that I will focus, which features an improvised percussion score by jazz drummer Antonio Sanchez. The second filmmaker is Alan Rudolph – a protégé of Robert

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[211] "Interview with Louis Malle," *Elevator to the Gallows* (Special Features), DVD, The Criterion Collection (2006).

Altman's who has since developed into a highly idiosyncratic talent of his own. Rudolph has frequently professed an interest in jazz music; I will focus on trumpeter Mark Isham's improvised jazz score for one of his films in particular – *Afterglow* (1997).

In these following case studies, I examine the circumstances in which these improvised jazz scores have been developed, focusing on the directors' impetuses for utilizing them in spite of (or perhaps because of) the risk involved. I also examine the musicians' own experiences and creative agency in these productions. In doing so, I theorize how maverick directors' liberal approaches to risk can challenge film production hierarchies and conventional opportunities for film scorers' creative freedom in film production.

Alejandro González Iñárritu and Antonio Sanchez: *Birdman* (2014)

Jazz drummer Antonio Sanchez is not a conventional film scorer. Although his prolific career boasts over one hundred albums, collaborations with such artists as Pat Metheny, Chick Corea, and Michael Brecker, and an immense repertoire of jazz performance styles, film soundtrack work remained outside of his purview until recently. It was not until director Alejandro González Iñárritu contacted him to perform the original score for his 2014 film *Birdman (or The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* that Sanchez' performance experience intersected with the film industry. Iñárritu's familiarity with and admiration of Sanchez' work as a jazz percussionist was the catalyst that led to this collaboration. "I want something that's not scripted, something jazzy. You're a jazz musician. That's what I want."[212] Iñárritu conceived of Sanchez's percussion improvisations as an integral part of *Birdman's* narrative. Despite Sanchez' unfamiliarity with

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[212] Alejandro González Iñárritu, quoted in Lorraine Ali, "Antonio Sanchez' Soaring Beat Takes Flight in *Birdman*," *LA Times*, 9 December 2014, http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/la-et-mn-birdman-antonio-sanchez-20141209-story.html.

working on film scores – and his initial reluctance due to this lack of experience – he agreed. The resulting soundtrack is a fascinating demonstration of Sanchez' ability to channel his improvisational aptitude and command of his instrument's stylistic and timbral possibilities into an emotional narrative that sonically embodies the themes of *Birdman* itself.

Narrative Correspondence

The plot documents the struggles of washed-up superhero actor Riggan Thomson (played by Michael Keaton), who is trying to shed his commercial associations and establish himself as a "true" artist late in his career by producing a Broadway play. The film's central themes address Thomson's own ego, his career anxiety, and his growing insanity, as well as his complicated relationships with others – including his drug-addicted daughter, his (supposedly) pregnant girlfriend, his acting rival, and a powerful, antagonistic play reviewer. Sanchez's score sonically represents these themes. The frenzied aesthetic of his percussive grooves musically reflect Thomson's anxiety, disillusionment with his career, the chaotic status of his life, and his descent into madness. The drums simulate corporeality – heartbeats racing, neurons firing, palms sweating – as well as psychological states of mind – explicitly functioning as the musical embodiment of the characters' emotions. Iñárritu averred, "Sanchez's score . . . was absolutely key and irreplaceable. The intensity of the drum cues almost became a separate character in the film, and an indispensable part of it."[213]

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[213] Ali, "Soaring Beat," (2014).

Structure/Movement

Iñárritu's desire to utilize Sanchez's percussive improvisations corresponded to more than just the narrative themes – but to the structure of the film as well. Iñárritu employed a unique cinematic approach to this film that demanded a rethinking of traditional usage of musical score. The movie was filmed as a single continuous, uninterrupted shot, in which scenes were not cut from each other, but were connected through the movement of the characters from location to location. [214] One of the most challenging aspects of such a technique – aside from the intricate editing challenges in threading the takes together in a manner that appeared seamless and continuous – was discovering a way to aesthetically evoke the transitional nature of the movement (i.e. we were in one scene, and now we are in another scene). Accordingly, the drum score is an integral feature in the pace and tempo of the film and scenes. In the soundtrack liner notes, Iñárritu claims: "I attempted *Birdman* . . . to be experienced in one continuous and uninterrupted shot. Very much as we live our lives. But not having the possibility to fragment time and space, it is almost a contradiction to the nature of cinema itself. DRUUUMMMMMSSS! Eureka! I thought the drums would help me to find the internal rhythm of the film and the audience will flow with it."[215] Sanchez' improvisations – which were recorded in the pre-production stages of filming – provided the sonic threadwork that linked these mobile, transitional moments together.

Allow me to take a moment to describe one of these in-motion tracks – "Dirty Walk" – as it is situated within the film itself. The dressing room in the St. James Theater is dirty and dim –

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[214] I would like to recognize Emmanuel Lubezki, the award-winning cinematographer responsible for executing this innovative filming approach. He has received Academy Awards for Best Cinematography the last three years, for *Gravity* (2013), *Birdman* (2014), and *The Revenant* (2015).

[215] Alejandro González Iñárritu, liner notes to *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*, Milan M2-36689, CD, 2014.

backlit by faded afternoon sunlight creeping underneath a half-blinded window facing the New

York streets. Riggan Thomson floats in the middle of a dingy greenroom in the St. James Theater

as the voice of his superhero character, Birdman, haunts him. *How did we end up here?"*

Birdman taunts. *This place is horrible. . ."* Birdman's monologue is interrupted when Riggan's

computer rings; his daughter, Sam, angrily video calls him to find out what flowers he wants for

his dressing room. The conversation abruptly ends as Sam yells "I hate doing this job!" and

hangs up. Riggan wearily sits down and sighs. As he does so, we hear a sharp and invasive drum

hit, soon layered with a 4/4 rhythmic drum groove and triplet-heavy ride cymbal overlay. The

camera pans to a close-up of Riggan's face – exhausted, disappointed, both? – as he stares at

himself in the mirror with a poster of Birdman looking on. Sanchez's shimmering, hissing

cymbal figure symbolically reflects the psychological tremor of anxiety that permeates Riggan's

inner thoughts as he thinks about the status of his career, family, and life.

Figure 3.2 *Riggan Thompson (Michael Keaton), in "Birdman" (screenshot, 2014)*

The texture of the improvisation shifts gears from at 0:20, as we hear a voice on the loudspeaker saying "Riggan, they're ready for you [onstage]." The groove is at once propulsive, yet stationary through repetition – sounding as though it is "prepping" to go somewhere, much as car does when the engine is revved, or a record as it is caught in a repetitious skip. The groove's momentum is soon released [0:26]; after a second encouragement from the loudspeaker, Riggan visibly jolts out of his contemplative daze, rising quickly, and putting on his pants. The percussion soundtrack remains viscerally present through this entire scene – a solid 4/4 groove interpolated with syncopated, full drum set improvisations. Tight hits on the snare and bass drum pierce loudly through the scene, the high-hat clasps the off-beats, the ride cymbal shimmers in and out of the rhythm. Syncopation is rampant, rhythmic motives shift and turn inward and outward on each other, but the groove – with or without the downbeats – is always there.

Following a sharp drum hit that corresponds to Riggan opening his dressing room door, the groove shifts again when he moves out into the hallway [0:41]. The pacing is slightly quicker – more intentional – paralleling the speed with which Riggan moves throughout the theater corridors. The soundtrack is a syncopated march, reflecting Riggan's pace and movement as he progresses through the hallways toward the St. James stage, as well as the inner voices of Birdman and Sam inaudibly beating in his mind. Sanchez's change in groove not only marks the change in momentum, but sonically alerts us to the changes in scenery that are happening on-screen. Even without the visual, an astute listener can identify where these changes occur. As this example illustrates, Sanchez's improvisations assist in both narrative and structural clarity in the film, helping make Riggan's internal anxiety more sonically perceptible, while simultaneously assisting the continuity of Iñárritu's single-shot cinematic approach.
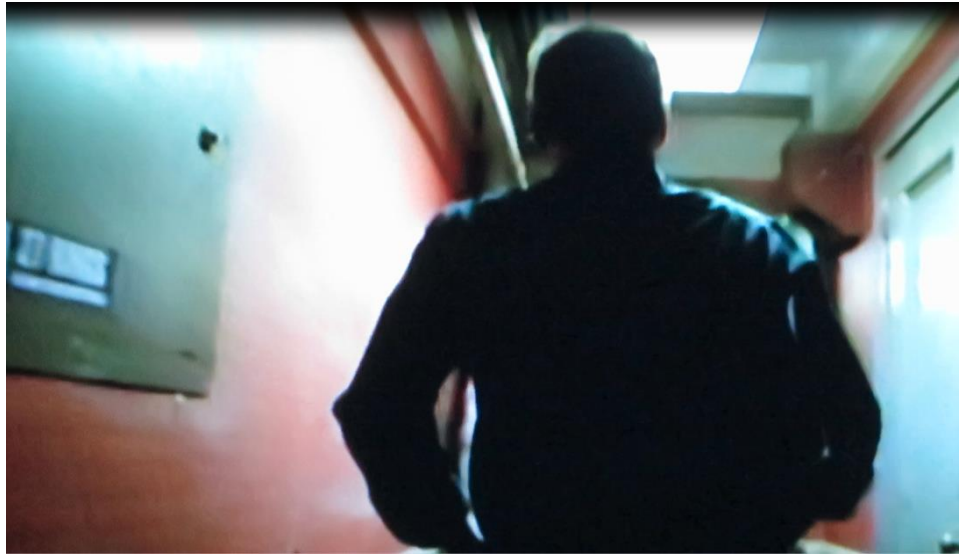
Figure 3.3 *Riggan's "Dirty Walk" (screenshot, 2014)*

"Live" Aesthetic

This soundtrack also supports Iñárritu's aesthetic desire to present the film with a perceptible

liveness and seeming authentic realness that reflects "[how] we live our lives." The act of

improvisation itself corresponds to the "the gritty, live aesthetic of the film,"[216] which is

produced in a non-glamorized, documentary style that evokes the rawness and unexpected

spontaneity of everyday life. Visually, Iñárritu captures Riggan's day-to-day experiences as he

maneuvers through the dark, dirty St. James theater, battles his own anxiety within the confines

of his dressing room, argues with a play reviewer in a dimly-lit nearby bar, walks through Times

Square, and interacts with his producer, fellow actors, and family members in the corridors and

rooms of the theater. We as audience members feel as though we are actually with him in the

rooms – living his life alongside him. Sonically, Sanchez attempted to portray to this "live

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[216] Matt Collar, "Birdman (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)," *AllMusic*, 14 October 2014,
http://www.allmusic.com/album/birdman-original-motion-picture-soundtrack-mw0002796520.

aesthetic" by adjusting his conventional percussion set-up, utilizing such techniques as putting tape on his drumheads, detuning them, and stacking his cymbals to make them sound more broken-in and well-used – ultimately giving the recordings a quality of grainy realism that contrasts with typical clean, smooth soundtrack recordings.

At two points in the film, the music itself becomes "live," shifting from non-diegetic to diegetic status – and then back again – within the confines of single tunes. These two tracks are identified as "Doors and Distance" (Track 7), and "Claustrophobia" (Track 14). In "Doors and Distance," non-diegetic score switches to live performance as Riggan and co-actor Mike Shiner walk down a street in New York, coming upon a drummer performing on a drum set on the sidewalk. The drummer's performance looks accurately synced with the percussion we are hearing.[217] The "liveness" of this performance is further attempted through the Doppler-effect of the recording production. As Riggan and Mike approach the drummer (we as viewers cannot see him yet), the recording is mixed in the right speaker [0:59], moving to middle-balance between the speakers as they pass directly in front of him [1:24], and moving away into the left speaker as they pass and move beyond him down the sidewalk [1:27].

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[217] The filmmakers wanted to actually film Sanchez re-performing (through mimicry) his own improvisations for these scenes. However – due to a conflict with Sanchez' tour schedule – they hired a contemporary of Sanchez's, Nate Smith, to mimic the recordings on-screen.

Figure 3.4 *"The drummer" (Nate Smith) in "Doors and Distance" (screenshot, 2014)*

A similar effect occurs in "Claustrophobia." As Riggan moves through the St. James corridors toward his opening night performance, he turns a corner that reveals the same drummer playing a drum set in a back room/kitchenette off the hallway – again appearing to be playing the music we have been (and are) hearing. The performance is mixed heavily in the left speaker as Riggan approaches and passes him, since he is coming to him from the right. Once Riggan moves beyond him, the recording is mixed in an equal balance between both speakers again. In both of these aforementioned cases, Sanchez's improvisations begin as sonic reflections of the internal state(s) of Riggan's mind; they are psychological underscores that simultaneously generate the pulse of Riggan's physical momentum as he moves through various milieus. Yet both tracks momentarily transform into "diegetic" performances, as Riggan passes a drummer ostensibly performing the exact music that is being heard. In these tunes, the fluidity between underscore and "live," diegetic performance parallels Riggan's own conflations of internal thought and reality throughout the film. These moments also draw attention to the score in ways that demand recognition of it as an integral part (or even character) in the story – just as the voice of Birdman

is. They become present components of the narrative, further enhancing the realism (even in psychological non-realism) that Iñárritu is trying to convey.

Pre-Production Development: Challenging Filmmaking Conventions

The uniqueness of Sanchez' score lies not only in its improvised creation, but in the music's development during the pre-production stages of film-making. As described in Chapter 1, film composers are almost exclusively hired to write and record scores in the post-production stages, after the film has been shot and is in the editing stage. Unconventionally, Iñárritu selected Sanchez to score the film *before the scenes themselves were recorded*. Prior to film production, Iñárritu and Sanchez went to a studio in New York, where Iñárritu walked through the scenes based on the scripted screenplay, describing the action and giving Sanchez verbalized cues. Sanchez told him, 'Sit in front of me, and when you feel like [the character] is opening the door, raise your hand. "When you feel that he's turning the corner of the hallway, raise it again. When he's getting to the stage door, do it again."' Each time Iñárritu raised his hand, Sanchez would alter the beat and intensity he was playing to reflect the subtext of the scene. He recorded 60 or 70 takes of those improvised segments, which Iñárritu then used for timing during production. They helped determine the pacing for the actors, even before the scenes began to be filmed. Takes were then selected and edited into the rough cut of the film as "temp tracks,"[218] which Sanchez later viewed. From there, he improvised another version of each track – this time watching the movie as he was drumming – and made the final cuts for the final release of the film.

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[218] Temp tracks are music recordings that are edited into a rough cut of a film so that the filmmakers can get an idea of music placement in relation to the timing of the edited visuals. Temp tracks may also be utilized to establish an idea for the mood or emotional feel of a given scene.

In a large way, the editing of the film itself revolved largely around Sanchez's playing. This disrupted conventional film hierarchies in which the music is edited to fit the film – not the other way around. This hierarchical fracturing was echoed in Iñárritu's and Sanchez' collaborative relationship on this project; while Iñárritu certainly gave narrative direction (and reserved the right to demand edits or re-dos from Sanchez), he granted Sanchez a significant amount of creative liberty in the score production. He asked Sanchez to create the score spontaneously based on his improvisational expertise and creative instinct. Despite the risks, he did not want him to write out music in reaction to already-filmed scenes; rather, he wanted him to help create the scenes in the pre-production stages. This is an opportunity rarely afforded film scorers – no matter how much a part of the "inner circle" of Hollywood networks they are. That said, it is also an opportunity that can only be offered by the director himself. Without Iñárritu's desire, Sanchez' improvised score would never have happened. It was Iñárritu's interest in Sanchez' improvisational percussion talents – as well as his conceptualization of those talents as fulfilling of his narrative desires – that allowed this unconventional collaboration.

Sanchez's "Creative Labor"

For Sanchez, working on this score pushed him into new creative territory, requiring him to improvise according to new narrative and visual structures, rather than just musical form and style. In an interview with Steve Pond, Sanchez stated, "It was an amazingly fun challenge. Being a jazz drummer, I am used to improvising, but I usually don't do it with imagery."[219] Throughout the soundtrack, Sanchez plays with a variety of grooves and tempos to capture the

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[219] Steve Pond, "How *Birdman* Composer Improvised the Year's Most Audacious Film Score," *The Wrap: Covering Hollywood*, 19 October, 2014. http://www.thewrap.com/how-birdman-composer-improvised-the-years-most-audacious-film-score/.

themes and emotions represented on-screen. He also experiments with his drum set's timbral and textural capabilities, utilizing a variety of mallets and sticks (including his hands), and playing in both traditional and non-traditional ways (i.e., hitting the rims, playing on the sides of the drums, etc.). The results are impressive. Even in the absence of the film itself, Sanchez's improvisations sonically reflect the themes of anxiety, internal conflict, and frustration that permeate the characters' emotional states. Let's take a look at some detailed examples of this creative work.

"Just Chatting" (Track 3) emerges in the film as Riggan walks through the theater corridors, arguing with his producer/lawyer Jake that the first preview of the play must be cancelled due to the inadequate talent of one of the lead actors, Ralph – who has also recently been injured by falling overhead equipment. Jake fights back that they would have to refund a full house, and that the to-be-dismissed actor would also have the rights to file a lawsuit. Sanchez's percussive, clipped phrases and hits in this tune effectively simulate the fast-paced, energy-laden and quarrelsome dialogue demonstrated between the two characters; the call-and-response interaction between the lower-pitched, syncopated snare and bass groove with interruptive cymbal and tambourine hits illustrates the dialogic, yet combative nature of the conversation.

The tune begins with a syncopated drum roll on brushes, capped by a high-hat hit that sets off a dialogic interchange between bass drum, snare, and cymbals. The overarching quarter-note pulse approximates 120 bpm, but a pulsing, sixteenth-note subdivision stimulates an internal, anxious propulsion – reflecting Riggan's own nervousness after "causing" Ralph's injury. His nervous energy belies his attempts to casually leave the scene. In spite of his large, rhythmic strides, everything inside him – from his brain to his heartbeat – is rushing. This anxious hurriedness is mirrored by producer Jake – who immediately thinks of the potential

lawsuit that Ralph could bring against them. Together, the paced rhythm of their intentional, long strides down the hallway and the quicker, more syncopated palpitations of their internal concerns manifest in Sanchez's multi-layered percussive dialogue.

Sanchez' improvisations sonically and structurally capture the nuances of Riggan's and Jake's argument as they hurry through the theater hallways to Riggan's dressing room. Here is a segment of the beginning of their dialogue – which corresponds to the track of music included in the released soundtrack:

Jake [*after Ralph has been hit by the falling equipment*]: That's going to a fucking lawsuit. [*To Riggan:*] Ok, where are you going? They're starting to be ready [for rehearsal] in less than five minutes.

Riggan: …We're going to have to cancel the first preview.

Jake: But it's a full house! We would have to refund the entire –

Riggan: Just do it. Just do it.

Jake: Fucking wait! [*as Riggan continues to hurry down the hallway*]

Riggan: Listen to me. It was going to be a disaster. That guy's the worst actor I've ever seen in my life. The blood coming out of his ear is the most honest thing he's done so far.

J: He's not that bad. [*Pause, Riggan turns back to look at him incredulously*]. Ok, he's fucking terrible.

Figure 3.5 *Riggan (Keaton) and Jake (Zach Galifianakis) - "Just Chatting" (screenshot, 2014)*

Despite the seeming worry on his face, Riggan's replies to Jake are direct, pragmatic, and relatively non-emotional. His voice is low and fairly monotonic; he does not employ emotion-laden pitch/range changes or inflections. Instead he keeps repeating his primary argument, albeit with different support. *We have to cancel the first preview. Just do it. It was going to be a disaster. He's the worst actor I've seen my life.* Riggan's mind is made up, and he remains consistent – both in content and expression – throughout the conversation. Jake, in contrast, is highly emotional and reactive. His voice is much higher in range, further exaggerated through the high-pitched screechiness that often accompanies emotion-laden vocal expression. His phrases are clipped and abrupt, reacting both incredulously and pleadingly against Riggan's forceful assertions that the preview be cancelled (and, later, that Ralph be replaced).

Sanchez evinces this dialogue through timbral choices as well as the cyclic, yet varied structure of his improvised performance. Riggan's low-pitched, repetitive arguments are represented by the lower-range drum set components featured in this tune – the snare and bass

drum. Jake's high-pitched, emotional pleas are evinced through the abrupt, shimmering splashes

of higher-range auxiliary percussion – various cymbals, high-hat, and tambourine. These

separate voices engage in a cyclical call-and-response with one another. Riggan's "drums" are

fundamentally repetitive within each cycle – reflecting the consistency of his responses to Jake's

cries. Yet the rhythm/syncopation within each cycle is somewhat varied, indicating Riggan's

own variations and reassertions throughout the dialogue. Jake's "cymbals" are much more

sporadic; each figure is different from the one before it, representing Jake's desperate efforts to

say anything that will make Riggan change his mind. The ineffectiveness of each plea at the end

of a cycle leads him to say something different at the end of the next one.

All the while, the groove pulsing through the improvisation aligns with the pacing of

Riggan's and Jake's movement throughout the St. James Theater corridors. The rate of exchange

in the percussive call-and-response impressively reflects the pacing of the dialogic interchange

between the two characters – at times even directly aligning with their voices in the film

soundtrack. The end of the tune [0:31] (as it is cut in the released soundtrack)[220] poignantly

corresponds to the movement of the on-screen action. Right after Riggan argues that Ralph is the

worst actor he's ever seen in his life, Jake exasperatedly argues that "He's not that bad!" Riggan

stops abruptly in his tracks – turning to stare at Jake as though he can't believe he could even say

that out loud. Sanchez – who had been solidly improvising Riggan's "drum" groove, cuts to a

short, syncopated tambourine figure, which abruptly cuts off into silence. The tambourine figure

represents Jake's pathetic attempt to argue for Ralph's talent – resulting in the cessation of not

only sound, but on-screen movement – in an awkward moment of incredulity.

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[220] In the film itself, Sanchez' improvisations actually re-commence after this "stopping point," and continue for the remainder of Riggan and Jake's interaction in this particular dramatic scene.

In the aptly-named "Schizo" (Track 10), Sanchez further demonstrates his impressive improvisational experimentation in engaging scenic structure, pacing, and thematic emotion – particularly with regards to schizophrenic experience. Schizophrenia is defined by the Mayo Clinic as "a severe brain disorder in which people interpret reality abnormally. [It] may result in some combination of hallucinations, delusions, and extremely disordered thinking and behavior. . . . [It] refers to a disruption of the usual balance of emotions and thinking."[221] Sanchez employs a variety of timbral and rhythmic approaches in this track (which I will soon examine) that utilizing his understanding of this psychological disorder in relation to Riggan's own experiences in the film.

This portion of the soundtrack emerges after Riggan reads a front-page newspaper feature of Mike – the supporting actor in his play – while coverage of Riggan's own performance is relegated to a brief blurb on page eight. Seething with anger and jealousy over this snub, he lashes out at his girlfriend, Laura, who is trying to comfort him. She leaves – hurt and angry – retorting that she is not pregnant (she previously suspected that she was), and that it is one less thing for him to worry about. After she slams the door, he raises his hands with frustration and exasperation, while the face of Birdman on a promotional poster in his room stares over his shoulder. The poster anticipates Birdman's entry into the scene through Riggan's hallucinations – but his arrival is preluded by Sanchez's gritty, fluttery-sounding snare rolls. The percussive timbre simulates a bird scurrying across the drumhead with sharp talons, clawing its way into the music that is representative of Riggan's inner thoughts. After the first roll, Birdman's harsh, deep, mysterious voice is heard:

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[221] "Schizophrenia," Mayo Clinic, http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/schizophrenia/basics/definition/con-20021077.

Forget about her. He [Mike] stole your front page. He's stealing your show. He thinks you're a joke. Now two million people agree with him. Maybe you are Riggan – maybe that's what you are – a joke.

Figure 3.6 *"Schizo" (screenshot, 2014)*

As Birdman taunts him, Riggan clenches his jaw, his face becoming noticeably angrier and more determinedly confrontational. The gritty drum rolls repeat two more times, sonically representing Birdman's continued invasion of his thoughts. The surging crescendo – decrescendo of each roll evinces the anger boiling and surging inside of him, which ultimately leads him to stand up and head to the door. A bass drum hit [0:10] marks this snap decision, and several syncopated hits afterword capture his swaggered steps as he stomps out the door into the hallway. As he angrily moves through the corridors with an intent to confront Mike, Sanchez's groove becomes more regulated [0:15], rhythmically mirroring Riggan's hurried movement. At 0:21, the pulse becomes fractured into a series of stop-time hits, interpolated with frantic sticking against the drumhead rims. This brief interlude parallels Riggan's stilted movement down the staircase, and also reflects clenched surges of pumping anger.

Two eighth-note hits re-introduce the hurried groove, which is now ablaze with many frantically-interactive percussive "voices" (e.g., snare drums rolls, bass drum hits, cymbal shimmers and crashes, and sharp rim shots) that bombard the listener in an unpredictable, high-paced onslaught [0:26]. For the next ten seconds, the wild, chaotic quality of Sanchez's improvisations evince a sonic schizophrenia that mirrors Riggan's compounding break with reality. Although his body stays in motion (just as the groove does), neurons, thoughts, blood, heartbeat, emotion, and Birdman's echoing taunts race in different directions, simulated through the manifold percussive instruments being struck at all moments. The hysterical polyphony abruptly finishes with a cymbal splash [0:36] that aligns with Riggan throwing open the door to Mike's dressing room, followed by him throwing open the lid to the tanning bed that Mike is laying in. Three successive cymbal crashes [0:41] mark Riggan's smacking of Mike with the newspaper, while Mike yells "Hey! Ow, that hurts!" At 0:43, Sanchez locks into a steady groove that continues for the remainder of the scene, underscoring Riggan's and Mike's verbal confrontation.

Following "Schizo," Sanchez performs the track "Internal War" (Track 11), in which he reflects Riggan's internal emotional conflict through the sonic metaphor of "drums of war." The piece begins with low, rumbling rolls on the floor tom, ferociously increasing in tempo and dynamics to represent an offensive internal siege, meeting the defensive line in explosive cymbal crashes. These "attacks" continue throughout the track, intertwined with an underlying, syncopated, "defensive" groove.
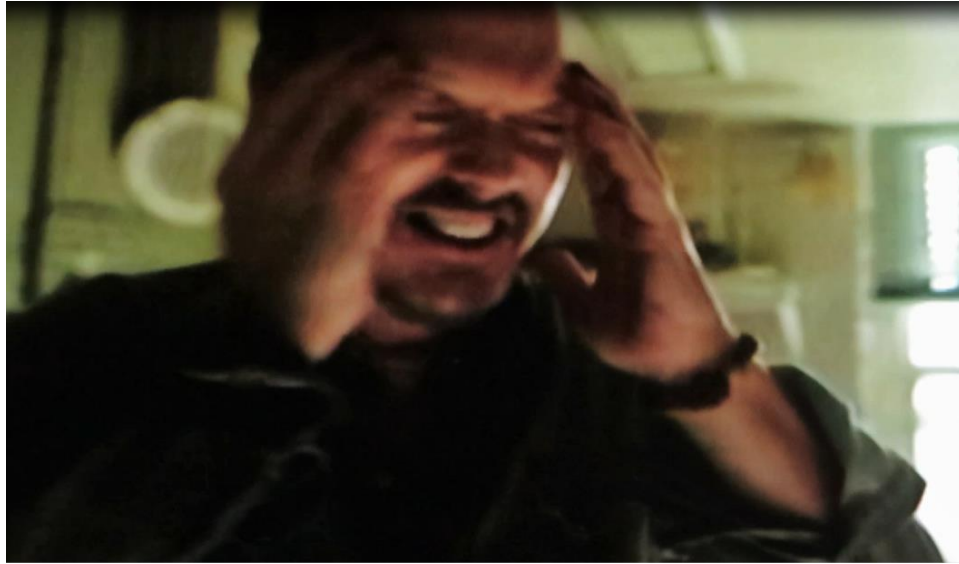
Figure 3.7 *"Internal War" (screenshot, 2014)*

The visual portion of the narrative displayed with this track occurs immediately after Riggan has

punched Mike and is storming out of Mike's dressing room. He feels hopelessly out-of-control,

fighting with his simultaneous hatred/jealousy of Mike with his knowledge that Mike can help

make his theater debut successful. He is angry, frustrated, and full of conflict – which he takes

out by banging on the walls as he returns to his own dressing room. The soundtrack begins as

Riggan commences this walk, offering eighteen seconds of an unmetered, building/crescendo-ing

bass drum roll that reflects his building disillusionment with Mike, with his play, with his career

– and with himself. This passage is not musically-structured, but determined in alignment with

the timing of Riggan's movement. The roll culminates with a cymbal crash [0:19] that directly

corresponds to Riggan's final bang on the wall before he re-enters his own dressing room. A few

more brief drum roll/cymbal crash figures mark his entry into the room, and conclude with rapid-

fire once he enters the room [0:27], standing facing the window and looking outside in

desperation.

A few seconds of silence leave space for Birdman's voice to cut through Riggan's thoughts. *You are lame, Riggan – rolling around with that poncy theater. Fuck. An 800-seat shithole like this.* Throughout, we hear two more building drumrolls and cymbal crashes – the latter corresponding to Riggan smashing a case full of makeup products across the room against the wall. Sanchez kicks into a syncopated, but steady groove at 0:46 that undergirds the internal, yet externally-articulated war between Riggan and Birdman (i.e., his other self). At first, Birdman pulls all the punches, taunting while Riggan clutches his chest and murmurs to himself in exasperation. *You really fucked up this time. You destroyed a genius book with that infantile adaptation. Now you're about to destroy what's left of your career. It's pathetic. Let's get the hell out of here while we can.* Riggan leans down against his dressing table to support himself. Eyes closed, he murmurs, *Ignore this mental formation. This is a mental formation.* At this point, a burgeoning bass drum roll simulates Riggan's self-defense, his will to fight back against Birdman's slander. It starts quietly [1:02], while he is leaning against the dresser looking pathetic and defeated, but grows in intensity and volume as he physically raises himself up, looks in the mirror, and begins to argue back. The dialogue is as follows:

Birdman: Stop that shit. I'm not a fucking formation. I'm you – asshole.

Riggan: Leave me alone [desperately].

Birdman: You're a movie star, remember? Pretentious, but happy.

Riggan: I wasn't happy.

Sanchez employs more interpolated drum hits and cymbal crashes as the debate becomes increasingly impassioned. Riggan's voice becomes louder, more vitriolic, and he utilizes his "powers" to smash lightbulbs, fling items across the room, and essentially destroy his dressing area. Percussion explosions sonically reflect this aggression. The dialogue continues as follows:

B: Ignorant, but charming. Now, you're just a tiny, bitter cock-sucker.

R: Miserable – I was fucking miserable!

B: Yeah – fake miserable. Hollywood miserable. What are you trying to prove – that you're an artist? Well, you're not!

R: Fuck you! [Continues smashing things].

B: No, fuck you, you coward! We grossed billions. What, are you ashamed of that? Billions!

R: And billions of flies eat shit every day! So what, does that make it good!? [Smash]. I don't know if you noticed, but that was 1992!

B: You could jump right back in that suit if you wanted to. We're not dead!

R: Look at me! I'm getting thick! I look like a turkey with leukemia! I'm fucking disappearing!! This is all that's left! I'm the answer to a fucking Trivial Pursuit question!!

B: You're an imposter here. Eventually they're going to figure you out.

R: …we're dead.

B: We are not dead.

R: Please, just stay dead. Stay dead [pleading].

B: We are not dead.

R: [Screams] Stop saying we!! There is no we! I'm not fucking you! I'm Riggan fucking Thompson! [Smash]

B: No. You're Birdman. Because without me, all that's left is you – a sad, selfish, mediocre actor, grasping at the last vestiges of his career. [*Riggan uses his "powers" to lift the Birdman poster and slam it against the wall*]. What the hell did you do that for? I liked that poster. It's always, "we," brother.

R: Fuck you! Shut the fuck up! Leave me alone! You're fucking – so fucking annoying! Shut up! [*Jake then enters the room, and Riggan calms down.*]

These final vitriolic exchanges of dialogue – punctuated with literal crashes of items and

equipment being flung against the room at the walls – become even more explosive, reflected in

Sanchez's relentless, explosive cymbal crashes and drum hits in the soundtrack.

In all of the aforementioned examples, Sanchez employs his own expertise as an improviser in a creative negotiation of the programmatic demands of film – structure, theme, emotion, and the director's narrative vision. In employing sonic metaphors, varying percussion pieces, timbres, and rhythms, and unique, movement- and dialogue-inspired structures and forms, Sanchez innovatively explored and pushed the boundaries of jazz improvisation (and his own creativity) at this intersection with cinematic production. In the process, he highlights the opportunity for creative labor in these jazz-film engagements, evidencing jazz improvisation as an integral component of this film's development, production, and narrative success.

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Overall, this innovative soundtrack challenges traditional film music production conventions – introducing improvisation in place of fully-notated scores, and developmental, pre-production involvement in place of post-production addition. Conventions of risk were especially disrupted by the amount of creative liberty afforded Sanchez himself. Overall, this project illustrates how Iñárritu's "maverick status" and his independent methodologies and liberal approach to risk facilitated Sanchez's improvisational opportunities (and creative agency) in a filmmaking setting.

Alan Rudolph and Mark Isham: *Afterglow* **(1997)**

Let's turn now to another case study. In 1996, film composer Mark Isham – who also established a successful career as a jazz trumpeter and cross-genre electronic and improvisational artist throughout the 1980s-1990s – recorded the score for director Alan Rudolph's emotional relationship drama *Afterglow*, which was produced by Robert Altman. Rudolph and Isham

collaborated together quite frequently prior to the release of this film, and have presently done

eight films together (see Table 3.1 below).

Film	Year
Trouble in Mind	1985
Made in Heaven	1987
The Moderns	1988
Love at Large	1990
Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle	1994
Afterglow	1997
Breakfast of Champions	1999
Trixie	2000

Table 3.1 *Mark Isham's film soundtracks for Alan Rudolph's films*

The origin of their collaboration offers fascinating insight into their unique relationship. Rudolph

is highly involved in the music selection process for his films. He has stated, ""I like to know the

music before I shoot a film, because to me the music is the most influential part of any film

except for maybe the actors."[222] In a documentary about the development of *Trouble in Mind*

(Rudolph's and Isham's first collaboration), Rudolph revealed that he went to the record store

looking for music that would fit the emotional themes of the narrative, which he himself wrote.

He located Isham's *Vapor Drawings* cassette on the Wyndham Hill label, and noticed on the

back cover that Isham recorded all of the instruments himself. Rudolph purportedly recognized

the financial value of Isham's self-sufficiency, stating, "This guy is my guy – he plays all the

instruments! We can afford him!" He therefore purchased the cassette and took it home.

Fortuitously, that same week, Isham's manager called David Blocker (the film's producer)

advocating for Isham's work on the score. Isham had expressed to his manager that he was

interested in working with Rudolph, and asked him to get in touch with the film's executives to

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[222] *Trouble in Mind* documentary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIAvWZMauHY

hopefully facilitate the opportunity. When Rudolph was notified by Blocker of the manager's

call, Rudolph took heed of the seemingly-serendipitous situation and hired Isham immediately,

without having heard any demos for the film.

The production of the film itself was largely determined by Isham's music. Similar to

Iñárritu's and Sanchez' collaboration for *Birdman*, Rudolph and Isham went into the studio

together, Rudolph described particular emotions and themes of the script (casting had not even

yet begun), and Isham performed demos on-the-spot utilizing his trumpet and his synthesizer set-

up. When Rudolph began casting, he had each actor first listen to Isham's temp cassettes, stating

"that's what the story is about." Rudolph has revealed that even after filming began, he

occasionally re-wrote the script to fit the sound of Isham's music – removing dialogue in some

cases. Perhaps needless to say, such production in service to the music is not common. Isham

has revealed that of all the films he has worked on, Rudolph's films are the only ones in which

he never views the film itself as he is creating the music. The conception is solely based off

Rudolph's description of emotion and thematic content.

It is Rudolph's directorial power – and his commitment to music as the fundamental

emotional component of the narrative itself – that facilitates this unconventional disruption of

film production hierarchies. Rudolph himself has contended that in terms of his inspiration for

filmmaking, "I'm more influenced by John Coltrane than John Ford."[223] He is fascinated by jazz

music and its fluidity and resonances with emotion. He does not want the music in his films to

sound over-orchestrated or over-determined, but to sound in-the-moment. He is interested in

tonal color, emotion, spontaneity. He stated, "There's something about jazz – you know it when

you hear it, or you feel it. . . . Those happy surprises are what you want."[224] As such, he enjoys

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[223] *Trouble in Mind* documentary.
[224] Ibid.

working with Mark Isham – whose experiences as a jazz player and electronic music composer

has informed an improvisational, emotion-driven approach to film composition. Isham stated that

these terms of "jazz" and "improvisation" frequently characterize his discussion with Rudolph

about the scores he puts together for the films, claiming that he utilizes "enough improvisation so

it's fresh, and it's new, and it's in the moment."[225]

The most fully-improvised score that Isham created for Rudolph was for the film

Afterglow. Rudolph actually claims that he wrote the script listening to Isham's solo jazz trumpet

album *Blue Sun*. Rudolph sent the script to Isham, telling him, "*Blue Sun* is the accompaniment

to this—that's [the kind of music that] I want for the score." The story follows the relationships

of two couples – an older couple name Lucky (Nick Nolte) and Phyllis (Julie Christie), and a

younger couple named Jeffrey (Jonny Lee Miller) and Marianne (Lara Flynn Boyle). Their

marriages are unhappy, characterized by betrayal, loss, emotional incompatibility, neediness,

jealousy, and callousness, leading them to seek comfort and/or satisfaction through adultery with

the spouse in the other relationship (they don't find out until later that they are all

interconnected). The narrative is rife with emotion – love, lust, distress, and hurt – which is

further enhanced by the underscoring. As in *Blue Sun*, the soundtrack features a range of jazz

styles, including slow, minor modal ballads and up-tempo, frenetic bop tunes. This diversity

corresponds to the array of emotions experienced by the four primary characters. Frantic bebop

improvisations channel Jeffery's inner rage and jealously when he discovers that his wife is

cheating on him, paralleling such tunes as "Trapeze" on the *Blue Sun* album. Manifold scenes

characterized by seductive romance and somber loss echo the highly-melodic, longing minor

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[225] *Trouble in Mind* documentary.

melodies heard on tracks such as "Lazy Afternoon" and "In More Than Love" on *Blue Sun* – evoking Isham's self-described "mournful trumpet sound."[226]

As an illustrative example, let us consider a specific scene in the film itself. In the first scene where we are introduced to Lucky's wife – Phyllis – we see them at home together at the end of the workday. Their relationship is strained, for reasons that we discover throughout the course of the film. In this particular scene, Phyllis has just received word that her co-star (she used to be a B-movie star), has just died. She is also aware that Lucky has just returned from a fix-it job that likely included more than appliance maintenance. Lucky is a philanderer, and she knows it. Lucky tries to flirt with her, but she is not fully receptive, deflecting with passive-aggressive statements such as "How was work today – unclog a few pipes?" and "My soul needs an overhaul."

The music effectively underscores and reflects the relationship happening onscreen. We first hear the music when Lucky and Phyllis come together physically – when he sits with her on the couch and begins massaging her foot. The tune establishes a ¾ waltz groove – a melancholy dance. Two solo instruments represent the two characters – muted trumpet for Lucky, and the violin for Phyllis. Characterized by languid, minor melodies, the two instruments contrapuntally interact, featured in an ebb and flow that reflects the back-and-forth of the couple's conversation. At some points the two lines come together in homophonic harmony, but consistently break apart. The solo lines evoke a sense of longing while the rhythm section continues to generate the slow waltz groove – an ever-circling, melancholy dance that sonically embodies the characters' strained relationship.

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[226] Mark Isham, interview with the author, 15 December 2014.

Mark Isham told me that "there's no way, shape, or form that [this score] isn't a jazz score by pretty much any definition." He described the score's conception as follows: "I took a look at the script and picked the five basic emotions that were hit—betrayal, distress—whatever they were—and charted a jazz lead sheet that exemplified those emotions. And then I assigned every character—because it was a small ensemble cast—an instrument. For example, we have Nick Nolte and Julie Christie and betrayal—so the violin and the [trumpet] have to play that piece for that scene. And [I] literally just made a little chart for every scene, and what the emotion was, the subject, and the characters—and lined it up." He demoed a few of the charts on piano and/or trumpet for Rudolph, to make sure the music captured the emotional aesthetic Rudolph wanted. When the demoes were approved, Isham determined which musicians he wanted for the various instrumental parts. Drawing on his jazz networks, he put together a small-group ensemble of jazz powerhouses, including Charles Lloyd on saxophone, Geri Allen on piano, Billy Higgins on drums, Gary Burton on vibes, Jeff Littleton on bass, and Sid Page on violin. In this circumstance, Isham himself became the "employer," using the music budget he has been allotted to contract the musicians he wanted. Rudolph trusted Isham to make these decisions, based on Isham's own familiarity with the type of sounds he was trying to create, and his knowledge of which jazz musicians might be able to best fulfill those roles (also taking budget and availability into consideration).

Isham was confident in the musicians' ability to successfully create the music without strict regulation of notation or timing. He stated, "I mean, you don't give *these guys* a click track. . . . And you don't give them the picture [film]. You just say, "Alright, I'm going to trust that they're going to give me great material." Isham distributed lead sheets, set the tempo for each tune through a click track that corresponded to the pacing of the film scene, and then turned off

the click track and they performed the tune. Very little notation was written out by way of arrangement, and the majority of the choruses were completely improvised. He stated, "There were a couple of them where I did some arrangements because I knew we had to build, but I really didn't limit the number of choruses that anybody would play, and I had my little hand metronome. I just went out, played the click through the microphone so everybody heard it, and I said, "Billy, count it off." I turned the metronome off. And his time was so fucking great—I mean, everything was spot on where I had figured out that it would hit."[227] The album was completed in one recording session. Isham stated, "That's a jazz score, because . . . it was done like a jazz record. And that's the only time I've ever really done that."[228]

Once the recording was completed, Isham worked directly with the music editor Steve Borne to take the recordings and edit them into a score for the final film release. "We did the [recording] session two weeks before we had to mix, so that we could cut. And it just became a big editing job. I just sat down with a music editor for two weeks, and took all the material that we created, and cut it into a score."[229] During this editing process, Isham viewed the rough cut of the now-filmed movie, and edited the soundtrack so that the music worked in terms of timing as related to scenes and transitions. This work was primarily done without directorial or producer supervision – Rudolph left these preliminary decisions to Isham – although reserved the right to approve/disapprove once Isham gave him the preliminary cut.

In a highly unconventional manner, Rudolph also allowed Isham to make suggestions about how the film itself might be edited in relation to the score. Isham recalls that at least twice during post-production, he called Rudolph and asked if the visual scenes could be edited slightly

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[227] Mark Isham, interview with the author, 17 December 2014.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.

to fit the length of a musical cue that he thought worked best. He stated, "I think twice I called up Alan and I said, "Look, I'm going to send something—can you move the picture two seconds later here?"[230] And he said, "Sure!" This level of collaboration and agreeable give-and-take is fairly rare in the majority of filmmaking projects. (Nevertheless, it is still important to recognize that Rudolph retained final say in all the decisions that were made. Though Isham's score is an integral part of *Afterglow*, it is also subservient to it, and is frequently dialed down to allow for dialogue, and edited to fit the narrative flow.)

Overall, the unique conceptualization and production of this score challenges the traditional conventions of film soundtrack development. Along with *Birdman*, this case study illustrates the necessity of a director with both economic resources and a determined interest in the specific artist's music – despite its riskiness. Rudolph didn't just want a jazz score for *Afterglow* – he wanted Mark Isham's music – specifically in a style that was similar to his album *Blue Sun*. Seemingly paradoxically, the specificity of this desire resulted in *increased* creative freedom for Isham himself in the score's creation. Due to his established artistic relationship with Rudolph – and Rudolph's strong familiarity with Isham's creative style – Rudolph trusted that Isham would create music that would work well for his narrative ideas. Because Isham had introduced improvisation in soundtracks they had done together previously, Rudolph was confident that Isham could do it successfully. The film's producer – Robert Altman – also shared Rudolph's confidence. Isham was very aware that without Rudolph and Altman's enthusiasm, the risk of the project would have been too great, and likely would not have happened. He stated, "[This project was] something I'd never done before—or may never do again—not because it wasn't successful, but just because it's risky, and not a lot of people would go for that. But

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[230] Mark Isham, interview with the author, 17 December 2014.

Robert Altman producing, Alan Rudolph—they were totally game."[231] Because of Isham's "inner circle" status among these filmmaking executives, the project was a go. It also afforded film opportunities for the other performing jazz musicians, illustrating the significance of network in-groups in facilitating the intersections of the jazz and film art worlds.

Theorizing the Case Studies: Mavericks, Risk, Creativity, and Opportunity in Improvised Film Score Production

These case studies illustrate a few of the infrequent intersections of jazz musicians with the film industry, and – even more infrequently – of jazz improvisation with film score production. The core of these intersections is the relationship between the director and the jazz artist – which is informed by a number of subcomponents that include the director's interest in jazz, and the artist's performance style, specifically. Included among these subcomponents is the director's interest in improvisation as an aesthetic and narrative device. In each of the aforementioned case studies, the directors' approaches to the films themselves seek to capture an onscreen "authenticity" (e.g., emotion, "liveness," realism) that is largely supported through the spontaneity of the improvised score. On a broader level, these directors are improvising themselves, carving out new territory through "maverick," innovative approaches to filmmaking. Louis Malle, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Alan Rudolph – all experimented with new ways of making movies; Malle was on the cusp of an independent filmmaking movement (i.e., the French New Wave), while Iñárritu and Rudolph may be paving the way for new movements in the future (e.g., continuous-shot documentary-style films, writing scripts to fit scores, etc.).

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[231] Mark Isham, interview with the author, 15 December 2014.

These directors' liberal attitudes toward risk have opened up spaces for the jazz artists to experiment more freely with their own creative production. In both of the aforementioned case studies, the level of collaboration between these directors and film composers was highly reciprocal. Scripts were re-written. Actors' movements were timed to fit the emotion and tempo of the recorded improvisations. The films themselves were edited to more appropriately feature the music. In many ways, the jazz artists momentarily (although not nominally) became the artistic directors of the film. These types of collaborations and director concessions to film musicians' performances are not happening on other film soundtracks.

In many ways, these film opportunities have resulted in these jazz artists' own creative development. First, I'd like to refer back to Miles Davis' score for *Elevator to the Gallows*. As scholars such as Gary Giddins have noted, the modal experimentations that Davis employed in this soundtrack are the first recorded examples of the type of modal improvisational style that made jazz history in his seminal album *Kind of Blue* (1959).[232] Antonio Sanchez has claimed that his work on *Birdman's* score was a significant learning experience for him – not only in terms of learning how to create music that can be integrated into a filmic medium, but also experimenting with the programmatic potential of solo percussion improvisations as part of narrative, capturing emotions, themes, and movement through the utilization of various textures, rhythms, and performances approaches. In Mark Isham's work on the *Afterglow* soundtrack, he was essentially afforded the same opportunities for creative exploration as those that occur during the development and production of a jazz record. Isham charted lead sheets based on themes that pertained to Rudolph's script, put together a powerhouse group of jazz musicians, discussed the theme/feel/timing of the charts with the musicians, got everyone together in the

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[232] Gary Giddins and Jon Faddis' Discussion of Miles Davis' Score, *Elevator to the Gallows* (Special Features), DVD, The Criterion Collection (2006).

studio, and recorded the tunes top to bottom – not limiting choruses, and allowing plenty of opportunity for individual improvisation and creative collaboration. These case studies highlight the potential for jazz artists' creative agency within film industry work.

So Why Jazz Musicians (i.e., Why Not Improvising Film Studio Performers)?

As a final point, I want to integrate this discussion of maverick directors' attitudes toward risk, extended liberties, and creative agency into a theory for why jazz musicians in particular are commissioned for improvised film soundtracks. The answer may seem obvious, but is worth considering. Having determined that they want to utilize an improvised soundtrack for their films (for various narrative/aesthetic reasons), directors have two choices – (1) hire a film composer or industry studio musicians to perform an improvised score, or (2) hire a musician who is an experienced improviser to organize and perform the score. Of those who comprise the first category, few have regular experience as improvising musicians. The few exceptions include such film composers as Mark Isham, Herbie Hancock, and Terence Blanchard – who have maintained simultaneous careers as regular film scorers and performing jazz musicians, thus accounting for their involvement in the vast majority of jazz-based film scores. In the absence of these artists' availability – or if the director is not interested in hiring these particular composers – he is likely to seek out actual performing jazz musicians.

In hiring such artists to record the score, the director is actually reducing the amount of risk inherent in the risky move of contracting an improvised film score. These artists are expert improvisers – it is part of their compositional language. Mark Isham avers: "Creating a musical idea—if you're writing, you're basically improvising. . . . [I'm] just sitting there [trying to compose a film score], painfully wondering why I'm not coming up with anything good, and

then I realize "If you were on stage right now, pal, the audience would have walked out!"[233]

Terence Blanchard similarly expressed that "All jazz musicians are composers in some ways –

not in some ways, in definite ways. In improvising, I think you're composing."[234]

To these jazz artists, improvisation and composition are not distinct methodological

approaches, but rather inherently related (note that both Isham and Blanchard made statements

that were the exact inverse of each other). Artists such as Miles Davis, Antonio Sanchez, and

Mark Isham are especially effective at producing improvised scores because their training and

continued experiences as jazz musicians has made improvisation an integral part of their creative

processes. For these artists, there is a fluid and reciprocal influence between improvisational

performance practice and film score composition. Terence Blanchard shared the following about

his recognition of this reciprocal influence:

> "When you're performing a show, you should have – at the very least – a concept for
> what that musical presentation is going to be (i.e., story). And stick to that, so you're sure
> to have a certain type of cohesion. But that doesn't mean that the music has to stay within
> the same genre – no, but just be aware of the total package, the total picture. [My jazz
> experience] has influenced film because it's allowed me a good thinker on the dime and
> think fast, just because of the mere experience of improvisation.

In this quotation Terence recognizes that his musical performances – regardless of whether or not

they are being performed for a film – are rooted in some form of cohesive element; by the same

token, he has room to be creative and improvise within that cohesive "total package" because of

his awareness of it.

The directors of these films that feature improvised scores understand that jazz

musicians' ability to improvise in this "compositional" manner is a unique creative skill that has

the potential to support their film projects. Iñárritu did not care that Sanchez had never scored a

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[233] Mark Isham, interview with the author, 15 December 2014.
[234] Terence Blanchard, interview with the author, 25 August 2015.

film before – he hired him because he could improvise, and believed he could help tell the

Birdman story with that improvisational ability. Alan Rudolph hired Mark Isham because he

wanted a similar improvisational sound to what he heard on Isham's *Blue Sun* album. Certainly

their previous collaborations came into play, through which Isham reassured Rudolph that he

could successfully produce a score – improvised or not – that would meet Rudolph's filmmaking

expectations. Yet all of these examples illustrate a significant level of trust and respect on the

part of the director toward the improvising musician. It is this trust that allows for increased

creative liberty among the performing artists.[235]

The production of improvised film scores occurs at the ideological and aesthetic

intersections of the jazz and film art worlds. Filmmakers' respect for and investment in the art of

improvised jazz music – as well as trust and respect for the individual jazz musician's

craftsmanship in improvised performance – facilitates the opportunity for these rare, but

fascinating scores to be developed. Only a handful of jazz musicians have had this opportunity

within the last few decades. Aside from the case studies considered in this chapter, the only few

examples of predominantly-improvised scores that I have located are Bill Kirchner and Marc

Copeland's improvised score for Marlyn Mason's short film *The Right Regrets* (2013), Mattias

Bärjed and Jonas Kullhammar's score for Swedish filmmakers Klas Ostergren and Mikael

Marcimain's *Gentlemen* (2014), and (arguably) Howard Shore and Ornette Coleman's score for

David Cronenberg's *The Naked Lunch* (1991). Doubtless there are many more jazz musicians

who would be capable of composing/improvising a jazz film score. Nevertheless, it is the fortune

of the rare few jazz musicians' "go-to" statuses in the minds of the few directors interested in

utilizing jazz scores that leads to these opportunities. Perhaps if more "maverick" directors and

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[235] For more information on "trust" and its relations to risk in the film industry, see Mark Banks et al., "Risk and Trust in the Cultural Industries," *Geoforum* 31 (2000).

jazz musicians network in the future, more of these intersections may occur – and generate further critical dialogue regarding innovative musical agency within labor expectation in film industry work. Given *Birdman's* Best Picture success – it may be a possibility. It is for time to tell.

Chapter Four
"A Jazz Thing:" Terence Blanchard, Spike Lee, and the Racial Politics
of Jazz Scoring

I want to be remembered for honest, true portrayals of [African Americans] and for bringing our great richness to the screen.[236]

-Spike Lee

What jazz hasn't been used for [in film scores] is exploiting all of the different colors and tones within the music which comes from a different rhythmic base – which, when combined with film, can give you something unique from what most people are accustomed to hearing. . . . Jazz can be humorous, it can be sad, it can be triumphant, it can be heroic. It's all about the composer and how he can envision the music being utilized. There are no limits.[237]

-Terence Blanchard

As examined in the previous chapter, many contemporary filmmakers are reluctant to use jazz

soundtracks. Jazz is (perceived to be) risky. It is "othered" in the film industry – racialized,

sexualized, and not often utilized without stereotypical or historicist intention. Systematically,

filmmakers often overlook jazz's inherent potential as an experimental style, capable of

transforming and engaging with the needs of a variety of musical (and non-musical) projects.

Yet there is a recent auteur who has welcomed the diversity of expressive potential

inherent in jazz performance – Spike Lee. Since he began making films in the 1980s, Lee has

utilized jazz soundtracks for nearly all of his films – first composed by his father Bill Lee, then

later jazz trumpeter Terence Blanchard. Lee's film oeuvre – rife with politics and ideology –

reflects an investment in bringing diverse stories about black experience to a wide range of film

audiences. Viewing filmmaking as a comprehensive integration of visual and audial elements of

creative production, Lee believes music plays an integral role in supporting his depictions of

black experience. In addition to permeating his soundtracks with commercial recordings of

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[236] Quoted in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Just Whose 'Malcolm' Is It, Anyway? *New York Times* (May 31, 1992): 16.
[237] Terence Blanchard, interview with the author, 25 August 2015.

African-American performers throughout history, Lee employs contemporary jazz scores to represent a range of sonic expression of diverse black culture and creativity – both past and present. His personal investment in and appreciation for jazz – combined with his desire to expose African-American audiences to what he believes is a significant feature of their cultural heritage – makes Lee one of the most prominent filmmakers to recurrently use contemporary jazz scores throughout his film oeuvre.

Terence Blanchard – who has at present composed for sixteen of Lee's films – shares this understanding of jazz as a diverse musical idiom rooted in black culture, which has immense potential to support various types of filmic narratives. In this chapter, I examine Blanchard's jazz film work, particularly in reference to his decades-long collaboration with Lee. As all of the other examples analyzed throughout this dissertation, this collaboration re-asserts the value of a "maverick" director's interests in facilitating opportunities for jazz in film, and positioning jazz artists within filmmaking networks.

I situate Blanchard's and Lee's relationship at the intersections of shared political ideology and commitment to jazz as representative of black experience and creativity. Throughout, I examine Blanchard's own political and artistic assertions, and his negotiations of his own musicality and ideologies within this hierarchical relationship. I offer close readings of his score work for two of their most powerful collaborative projects: *Malcolm X* – a biographical account of the title character – and *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, a documentary highlighting the horrors of those suffering in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Within these readings, I examine how Blanchard both works within the production expectations of Lee's directorial vision, yet also branches out beyond the films to assert his own creativity in individualized, extended recording projects – *The Malcolm X Jazz*

Suite, and *A Tale of God's Will: A Requiem for Katrina*. Through these analyses, I illustrate how film scores themselves can be transformed into artistic concept albums that function autonomously from the visual medium, facilitating new creative projects within the jazz art world. I culminate the chapter with an assessment of how Blanchard's dual career as a jazz artist and film scorer – presently the jazz artist with the most recent film score credits to his name – has influenced his own recognition and reception within both camps, and what this reception might reveal about the ideological intersections of the jazz and film art worlds.

Blanchard's Background

Terence Blanchard was born in New Orleans, Louisiana – a diverse haven of cultures, peoples, and musical expression. As a youth, he studied music alongside fellow New Orleanians Wynton and Branford Marsalis, attending such institutions as NOCCA (the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts), and studying with local musicians Roger Dickerson and Ellis Marsalis, Jr. Blanchard has sustained a prolific jazz performance career as a trumpeter since the 1980s. His early tenure included performing with Lionel Hampton, participating in (and eventually leading) Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and co-leading a quintet with saxophonist Donald Harrison. To date, he has over thirty album credits to his name, has been nominated for thirteen Grammy Awards (he has won five), has received multiple nominations for his score work,[238] and travels extensively to gig both nationally and internationally.

Blanchard's musical projects often reflect his commitments to activism and advocacy – particularly for members of the African-American community. His most recent album,

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[238] These nominations include an Emmy Award nomination for "Best Original Score for a TV Series" for mini-series *The Promised Land* (1995) Golden Globe, Sierra Award, and Central Ohio Film Critics Association (COFCA) nominations for Best Score for *The 25th Hour* (2002), and Black Reel nominations for Best Original Score for *She Hate Me* (2004) and *Inside Man* (2006).

Breathless (2015), is named in response to Eric Garners' final words ("I can't breathe") while in a chokehold by an NYPD police officer. *Champion* (2013) – the jazz opera that he recently co-produced with librettist Michael Cristofer – addresses the life and experiences of African-American boxer Emile Griffith in relation to his race and homosexuality. An outspoken advocate of civil rights, racial justice, and the recent Black Lives Matter movement, Blanchard frequently utilizes his compositions and performances as formats for facilitating engagement with these issues among his listenership. This activism has also manifested in several of his film scores (and extended concept albums based on these scores) – including *Jungle Fever*, *Malcolm X*, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem for Katrina*, *Miracle at St. Anna*, and *Red Tails* – among numerous others. I will examine Blanchard's activism through his film music projects in more detail throughout this chapter.

Blanchard first became involved in film work when he was hired as a session man for Spike Lee's *School Daze* (1988). "Spike wanted an orchestra, and his father, who's a jazz musician, hired a guy by the name of Harold Vick to do the contracting. By him being a jazz guy, he hired nothing but jazz musicians."[239] He was again hired for more session recording work on Lee's next film, *Do the Right Thing* (1989). The following project – Lee's *Mo' Better Blues* (1990) – marked a significant breakthrough for Blanchard in film work; aside from recording a large number of solo tracks for the soundtrack, he also had the opportunity to score a portion of the soundtrack. I will consider his work on this film more thoroughly momentarily. Blanchard has since worked in a continuous collaborative relationship with Lee (see Table 4.1 below). Their most recent project is *Chiraq*, which was just released in December 2015.

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[239] Michael Schelle, *The Score: Interviews with Film Composers* (Los Angeles, CA: 1999): 63.

Film	Year
Mo' Better Blues	1990
Jungle Fever	1991
Malcom X	1992
Crooklyn	1994
Clockers	1995
Get on the Bus	1996
4 Little Girls	1997
Summer of Sam	1999
Bamboozled	2000
25th Hour	2002
Jim Brown – All American	2002
She Hate Me	2004
Inside Man	2006
When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts	2006
Miracle at St. Anna's	2008
Chiraq	2015

4.1 *Terence Blanchard's film soundtracks for Spike Lee's films*

Aside from Lee's films, Blanchard has done score and recording work for a number of other films as well, including Leo Ichaso's *Sugar Hill* (1993), Mattie Rich's *The Inkwell* (1994), Kasi Lemmons's *Eve's Bayou* (1997), *The Caveman's Valentine* (2001), and *Talk to Me* (2007), Gina Prince Bythewood's *Love and Basketball* (2000), Darnell Martin's adaptation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2005), and Anthony Hemingway's *Red Tails* (2012), to name a few. Many of these filmmakers are young African-American filmmakers who have emerged on the scene since Spike gained recognition in the 1980s. Blanchard's recognition within the film industry as a film scorer and recording artist is continually expanding. These expansive opportunities are a direct result of his recognition within Hollywood (and independent filmmaking) networks, a by-product of his continued collaborations with a number of filmmakers – especially Spike Lee.

In this chapter, I choose to focus primarily on Blanchard's jazz score work for Lee's films. This is not intended to negate the work he is done elsewhere, but to instead engage with

the roots of how Blanchard got involved in film scoring in the first place, and why he continues to maintain this career alongside his full-time jazz performance career. I contend that the impetuses for this continued work are primarily threefold: one, Lee and Blanchard share an ideological commitment to bringing a diversity of black voices and experiences to the screen (which includes jazz expression); two, Blanchard views film scoring as an opportunity to expand his own creativity and musical skills within a different project medium than his typical jazz performances; and three, film work is lucrative. It is to the first of these factors – Blanchard and Lee's ideological relationship – that I now turn.

Spike Lee: Ideology and Entrepreneurship

"Capturing the Richness of African-American Culture"

Spike Lee is a uniquely independent auteur whose film career has been punctuated with much controversy. A preponderance of his work has targeted the conventions of the Hollywood industry, particularly with regards to the employment, recognition, and on-screen portrayals of African-Americans. He rails against what he perceives to be inherent systematic racism within filmmaking networks, criticizing the absence of African-Americans who can "green light" films, the lack of recognition of black actors/filmmakers/etc. at prestigious awards ceremonies such as the Academy Awards,[240] and the racist portrayals of blacks in a large amount of commercial films (which will be examined in more detail momentarily).

When Lee was growing up, African-American cinematic history reflected this paucity of black power within the Hollywood system. Although actors such as Sidney Poitier, Dorothy

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[240] This controversy is still in high-gear today. At the time of this writing, we are weeks away from the 2016 Academy Awards Ceremony, which has come under sharp criticism from a number of African-Americans in the film industry (Lee included) for its lack of recognition of black contributors – exemplified in the trending Twitter hashtag, #Oscarssowhite.

Dandridge, and Harry Belafonte emerged in on-screen recognition during the 1950s and 1960s –

with both Dandridge and Poitier attaining the first Oscars for Best Actress and Best Actor among

African-Americans – they retained little (if any) control over their representations in the films,

fulfilling the roles determined by white screenwriters, directors, and producers. Blacks – aside

from acting – were (and had been) largely absent from the production side of industry

filmmaking. The primary exception was Oscar Micheaux, who maintained a prolific career as a

filmmaker, producing and directing over thirty films spanning from 1919 – 1948. Yet Micheaux

was not directly involved in the Hollywood studio industry; he self-produced independently from

filmmaking production companies, instead organizing his own company, the Oscar Micheaux

Corporation, in order to be able to "green-light" and direct his own material.

The first African-American to direct a feature-length motion picture for a Hollywood

studio was Gordon Parks, whose racially-sensitive coming-of-age story of a young black boy,

The Learning Tree, was not produced until 1969. Even in the 1970s – when African-American

faces dominated the silver screen in the so-called Blaxploitation era – white filmmakers were at

the helm, drawing on the industry's recognition of militant black ideology as a theme attractive

to African-American consumers, just as they reinforced "Black Buck" racial stereotypes in

representing the films' antiheroes as violent, angry, sexually aggressive black men (sometimes

women), fighting against the white establishment.[241] As David Sterritt aptly contends, "Black

movies' [in the 1970s] were almost always made by white men who unambiguously aimed to

redirect African-American energies, talents, subjects, and subjectivities toward the explicitly

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[241] Key films include Melvin van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971), *Shaft* (1971), *Superfly* (1972), *Trouble Man* (1972), *Blacula* (1972), *Cleopatra Jones* (1973), and *Hell Up in Harlem* (1973), to name a few.

commercial aims of an industry almost entirely dedicated to the purpose of filling white men's

pockets with money."[242]

Even since the 1970s, the African-American-directed films that are most prominently

"green-lit" are those that the studio executives ideologically believe will appeal most directly to

black consumers (and their pocketbooks) – tragic films that address racism, drugs, economic

struggle, and social oppression (e.g., John Singleton's *Boyz in Da Hood* (1991), Lee Daniels'

Precious (2001), Steve McQueen's *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013)), or highly comedic

romances/family films (e.g., Tyler Perry's *Why Did I Get Married* and the *Madea* franchise,

etc.). Yet, these are not the only African-American stories out there – nor the only ones that

black audiences can identify with. When Spike Lee emerged on the filmmaking scene in the late

1980s, he attempted to usher in new ways of telling black stories onscreen that challenged these

representational pigeonholes.

As Thomas Edison once stated, "Whoever controls the motion picture industry controls

the most powerful medium of influence over the people."[243] Like Edison, Lee recognizes the

power of the film industry in shaping public perception. He is determined to counteract the ways

African-Americans are both being represented onscreen and participating in the industry's

decision-making processes. Believing that the majority of white filmmaking executives lack

cultural knowledge or sensitivity to African-American experience, Lee jump-started his own

independent filmmaking company – entitled 40 Acres and a Mule (in reference to the

government's broken promise to provide previously-enslaved African-Americans with their own

property following Emancipation) – with the intent of producing a diverse array of visions of

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[242] David Sterritt, *Spike Lee's America* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013): 88.
[243] Quoted in S. Torriano Berry and Venise T. Berry, *The Historical Dictionary of African American Cinema* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007): xxiv.

African-American life for audience consumption. He has stated, "I think that when I decided I wanted to be a filmmaker, I wanted to attempt to capture the richness of African American culture that I can see, just standing on the corner, or looking out my window every day, and try to get that on screen."[244] This richness includes a variety of African-American people (men, women, young, old, light-skinned, dark-skinned, mixed-race), relationships (family, friends, lovers, enemies, co-workers, etc.) and situations (careers, family life, artistic passion, inter-racial romance, jealousy, bigotry, dealing with racial and class discrimination, the law, etc.)

In representing these stories on-screen, Lee hopes to raise hard questions about racial, social, and political issues confronting contemporary Americans – particularly African-Americans – that he feels are neglected within conventional Hollywood films. Much of this marginalization is likely the result of the film industry's ideological risk-averseness, which historically has tended to favor stereotypes and narrative formulas that position African-Americans as largely one-dimensional outsiders to white narratives.[245] Counteracting these representations, Lee seeks to show black culture as *human culture* – not as a culture of "otherness." Yet in the process, he introduces contentious issues that criticize various facets and behavior within African-American culture, demanding a sociopolitical awareness informed by his own middle-class conservatism. As articulated in the closing and opening words of his films *School Daze* and *Do the Right Thing*, respectively, the proclamation "Wake Up!" aptly summarizes Lee's primary message of communication to his audiences. He is severely critical of drug culture, black-on-black violence, and what he calls out as "ignorance" about self-

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[244] Delroy Lindo, "Delroy Lindo on Spike Lee" in *Spike Lee: Interviews*, ed. Cynthia Fuchs (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2002): 165.

[245] I would argue that such one-dimensional representation of black characters is not as pronounced in contemporary films and televisions programs. There have been many mainstream motion pictures within the last twenty years that have depicted complex, relatable black characters, including *Save the Last Dance*, *Red Tails*, *Twelve Years a Slave*, *Selma*, *Concussion*, and hit television series such as *The Walking Dead*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, and *American Crime* – among others.

responsibility and building a better, stronger black culture. He strongly advocates for education and self-responsibility among members of the African-American community. Drawing on the example of his cultural role model – Malcolm X – Lee has argued:

> Malcolm said we're the only ones who are gonna do something positive about our lives, so we have to take responsibility for them. You can't blame it all on the white man – that's part of our problem too. In fact, I think education of our younger brothers and sisters is totally on us and up to us now.[246]

One of his largest criticisms concerns black complicity in perpetuating racist stereotypes in entertainment through neo-minstrel performance, which he recognizes in a number of performances from gangsta rap to the grossly-hyperbolized representations of black women in such films as *Big Momma's House*, *Norbit*, and even Lee Daniels' *Precious*. This criticism is most aptly demonstrated in Lee's controversial satirical film *Bamboozled*, in which he contentiously suggests that some African-Americans in contemporary entertainment are involved in their own cultural self-destruction through the perpetuation and revival of racist caricatures from both past and present.

Lee's work is certainly ideological in nature, and functions less as a repository of solutions than a visual representation of his own personal concerns. He addresses those issues that matter most to him, without necessarily presenting any answers to the problems. Instead, he focuses on awareness – on educating his audiences about the issues he wants them to be knowledgeable about. As Dan Flory articulated, "When Lee incites controversy, he does so because he wants people to reflect seriously and discuss the matter at hand – whether it be misunderstandings of race and xenophobia or the need to take responsibility for one's actions –

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[246] Spike Lee with Ralph Wiley, *By Any Means Necessary: The Trials and Tribulations of the Making of Malcolm X* (New York: Hyperion, 1992): 15.

and come to a better understanding than they previously have had."[247] Lee himself has contended that he holds no misconceptions that his films will eliminate racial tension or prejudice, rather claiming that "I think the best thing my films can do is provoke discussion."[248] Many of his films are open-ended, not offering conventional wrap-ups or final solutions to the conflicts represented in the narrative. Many leave audiences wondering what the outcome will be, or try to determine what Lee meant for the endings to insinuate. This trope of ambiguity, and Lee's disruption of what he identifies as "Hollywood script structure,"[249] result in unconventional narratives that challenge audiences to engage and try to understand what is happening onscreen. As Lee has reported, "More often than not, I let the audience do some work."[250]

Certainly, not all audiences agree with the issues that Lee chooses to present – or the ways he presents them. Scholars such as bell hooks, Michelle Wallace, and Wahneema Lubiano have critiqued a number of his films through allegations of misogyny, sexism, and homophobia.[251] He has recurrently been accused of being racist or prejudiced – particularly against white Americans. Barbara Grizzuti Harrison's cover story of Lee for *Esquire* in 1992 – entitled "Spike Lee Hates Your Cracker Ass" – aggressively encapsulates a perpetuated perception of Lee as an angry black man who hates whites. While this is certainly not an irrefutably accurate or nuanced engagement with Lee's ideological relationships to white people, his depictions of white characters in his films do not easily let him off the hook. For example, the

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[247] Dan Flory, "*Bamboozled*: Philosophy Through Blackface," in *The Philosophy of Spike Lee*, ed. Mark Conard (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011): 178.

[248] Janice Mosier Richolson, "He's Gotta Have It: An Interview with Spike Lee," in Fuchs, 26.

[249] Spike Lee and Kaleem Aftab, *That's My Story and I'm Sticking to It* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005): 377.

[250] Ibid.

[251] See bell hooks, "Whose Pussy Is This: A Feminist Comment;" Michele Wallace, "Spike Lee and Black Women," and Wahneema Lubiano, "But Compared to What?: Reading Realism, Representation, and Essentialism in *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing*, and the Spike Lee Discourse," – all found in Paula Massood, ed. *The Spike Lee Reader* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007).

white characters in *Malcolm X* – about which Harrison's article was written – are entirely one-dimensional, with the vast majority stereotyped as evil, selfish, and manipulative.[252] His depictions of the Jewish Flatbush brothers in *Mo' Better Blues* are even more stereotypically grotesque; the brothers are represented as sniveling, greedy, money-grubbing club owners who don't care about anyone but themselves and their pocketbooks.

Additional scholars level criticisms at Lee's self-contradictions, hypocrisy, and the ways in which he represents African-American narratives and experiences on-screen. A particularly prominent example is Amiri Baraka's "Spike Lee at the Movies," in which Baraka criticizes Lee as "the quintessential buppie, almost the spirit of the young, upwardly mobile, Black, petit bourgeois professional."[253] Through this claim, Baraka attacks Lee for his middle-class-ness, capitalist ideology, and social conservatism, arguing that this class position influences Lee's erasure of the economic and social struggles of lower-class African Americans. One can certainly counter Baraka that one's class position does not necessarily make him inattentive to the struggles of the lower classes, particularly since Baraka himself was from an (upper) middle-class background. However, Baraka is but one of many scholars and critics who have challenged Lee for his ideological conservatism and how it influences the ways he depicts black experience and culture onscreen.

Lee has dismissed many of these allegations, and acknowledged some (particularly admitting that he needs to work on his portrayals of women). But he stands firmly by his right to present his films in whatever way he sees fit. He attempts to alleviate the cultural responsibility of his film work by repeatedly averring that "I have never, ever, felt that I was a spokesperson

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[252] The few exceptions are the college girl who asks if she could help, and Muslims he is shown with in Mecca – but they are granted no agency, and are entirely superficial.

[253] Amiri Baraka, "Spike Lee at the Movies," in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993): 146.

for Afro-Americans in this country."[254] Yet, his unique position as one of the few independently-successful African-American filmmakers in cinematic historic (and certainly the first to work so overtly against the Hollywood establishment) demands his recognition of the cultural stakes of his work. He himself has repeatedly stated that he wants his work to bring crucial issues to the attention of audiences, so he understands the power that his on-screen representations potentially have. He has also claimed that "I've been blessed with the opportunity to express the views of black people who otherwise don't have access to power and the media."[255] In this statement, he is clearly accepting responsibility for telling the stories of those who are not able – a burden not to be taken lightly, or dismissed nonchalantly. Spike Lee's oeuvre must be examined critically; it is imperfect, full of contradictions, and largely biased by Lee's own personal viewpoints and attitudes. That said, his body of work must also be acknowledged and examined for the merits of his auteristic approach in bringing diverse representations of African-American culture onscreen, and inciting audiences to intellectually engage with the issues he is presenting – whether we agree with them or not.

Black Entrepreneurship in the Film Industry

Lee firmly advocates for self-achieved African-American entrepreneurship and creative control as the antidote to the film industry's structural racism. He is convinced that the only way to break through the informally-established "glass ceiling" for African-American decisive involvement is for African-Americans to get in "gatekeeping" positions of power themselves. He avers,

> The gatekeepers – these are the people that decide what goes on in television, what movies are made, what gets heard on the radio, what's getting written in the magazines – I can tell you those are all exclusively white males. These are the guys making the

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[254] Brandon Judell, "An Interview with Spike Lee, Director of *4 Little Girls*," in Fuchs, *Spike Lee: Interviews*, 140.
[255] Fuchs, viii.

choices for all of Western Civilization. . . . And we've got to get in those positions. And that's when you'll start to see some change.[256]

Change has started to emerge. Lee made the aforementioned quote in 2000; since then, a growing number of African-American studio industry executives and independent producers (with their own production companies) have emerged on the Hollywood scene – including Stephanie Allain Bray, Effie Brown, Debra Martin Brown, Tyler Perry, and Oprah Winfrey. However, African-Americans make up a very small percentage of these gatekeeping executives, which – as Lee maintains – may greatly account for the limited amount of African-American-oriented stories in commercial film production. These thematic erasures are rooted in perpetuated mythologies of aesthetic and economic risk that inform industry decision-making. As examined in the previous chapter, studio executives rely heavily on thematic formulas to anticipate project success, and are generally reluctant to deviate far from these formulas. While independent filmmakers ostensibly have more opportunity to break out of these molds, they often choose to rely on the larger studios for financing and distribution, and thus may need to still appeal to these executives. In an effort to maximize profits, Hollywood studios often dismiss unconventional, minority-based film projects that they fear will only appeal to small percentages of the purchasing population (whether or not this is actually the case). As Jason Vest correctly suggests, "Hollywood studios lavish more money on tent-pole films such as *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Man of Steel* (2013), upon which they can build franchises with wide audience appeal that earn blockbuster profits, rather than small-scale movies about minority characters. The studios . . . choose not to finance independent films . . . because, in the profit-maximizing mentality that pervades early twenty-first century Hollywood moviemaking, the margins are too low."[257]

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[256] Steve Goldstein, "By Any Means Necessary: Spike Lee on Video's Viability," in Fuchs, *Spike Lee: Interviews,* 186.

[257] Jason Vest, *Spike Lee: Finding the Story and Forcing the Issue* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014): xv.

As such, Spike Lee is convinced that the primary method for making sure that African-American stories are told the way African-Americans want them told (or at least, how *he* wants them told), is for black filmmakers to be in positions of power. He views filmmaking as both an art and business, and is not reluctant to identify himself as a capitalist who seeks both financial power and creative control, which he views as inextricably linked. In an interview with David Breskin, he revealed, "Am I a capitalist? We all are over here. And I'm just trying to get the power to do what I have to do. To get that power you have to accumulate some kind of bank. And that's what I've done. I've always tried to be in an entrepreneurial mode of thinking."[258] This "entrepreneurial mode of thinking" has manifested in a multitude of business ventures. Aside from initiating and using his own production company (rather than working as a contract director for Hollywood studios), he has also established his own recording studio (40 Acres and a Mule Musicworks), a merchandise store that sells products related to his films (Spike's Joint), and retail lines (e.g., clothing lines, Air Jordan shoe lines). In addition, he has issued multiple publications "demystifying"[259] the development of his film projects, including detailed texts examining the production of each of his first five films (e.g., *Spike Lee's Gotta Have It* [on the making of *She's Gotta Have It*], *Uplift the Race* [on the making of *School Daze*], etc.). His establishment of the moniker "A Spike Lee Joint" – which he typically uses in the opening credits of his self-produced films – pronounces his overt declaration of ownership and entrepreneurship against the conventions of the Hollywood studio system.

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[258] David Breskin, *Inner Views: Filmmakers in Conversation* (New York: Da Capo, 1997): 188.

[259] Lee has claimed that he wants to counter notions that filmmaking is a magical, unattainable field – particularly for members of the African-American community. He has stated that by "demystifying" the process – describing how one gets into film work, how films are actually made, how one can navigate and work with the industry executives, etc. – he is trying to work against these mythologies and make the notion of filmmaking more accessible to those who might be interested in pursuing a career in film.

As an independent filmmaker, Lee demands ultimate creative control on all of his film projects, maintaining rights to have the "final cut" before each film is released. With the exception of highly established, bankable auteurs in the Hollywood industry (e.g., Steven Spielberg, Peter Jackson, etc.), filmmakers are rarely afforded this final say, contractually acceding the ultimate pre-release decisions to the studios that are financing and distributing the film. Spike Lee does utilize Hollywood backers – appealing to major studios for financial and distributional support – yet he stipulates in his contracts that he has the rights to all final decisions. In several cases, he has had to seek financial and distributional support elsewhere. For his early films, he relied on the support of family (particularly his grandmother), friends, and other local investors. As he gained recognition within the African-American community, he has also received financial gifts and investments from a number of prominent/wealthy African-American figures – including Michael Jordan, Janet Jackson, Bill Cosby, and Oprah Winfrey, among others. Yet he finds it beneficial to work within the Hollywood system, as he believes they have the resources to help him distribute his films to the masses (and give him the finances to not only make higher-budget films, but to also retain a larger amount of money).

Paula Massood has referred to him as "the quintessential inside/outside man,"[260] highlighting his propensity to operate both independently from, yet in collaboration with major film industry studios. Spike has shared, "I think I have the best of both worlds because I'm an independent filmmaker with complete creative control of my films. I hire who I want. I have final cut. But at the same time, I go directly to Hollywood for financing and distribution. I find it's best for me to work within the Hollywood system. It's an individual choice, and you have to make up your mind."[261] For this reason, Lee has been criticized as inconsistent – rendered

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[260] Paula Massood, ed., *The Spike Lee Reader* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007): xxiv.
[261] Richolson, "He's Gotta Have It," in Fuchs, 33.

suspicious for his direct industry involvement. While he advocates that African-Americans should develop their own production and ownership networks separate from the Hollywood industry, he draws heavily on their resources for economic support. This insider-outsider status is complicated, and should be considered critically, rather than taken at face value. Lee certainly demonstrates business savvy, and has clearly figured out ways to play the Hollywood system that allow him to retain control over his film productions; yet one must also think critically about how his economic dependence on various industry entities can influence his filmmaking process, even though he retains final cut.

Regarding facilitating black ownership, production, and creativity in filmmaking, Lee's word and action is most prominently consistent in his personnel hiring. Many currently well-known African-American actors cut their teeth in early Spike Lee films, including Samuel L. Jackson, Larry Fishburne, Halle Berry, Wesley Snipes, Jada Pinkett Smith, and Denzel Washington. Beyond hiring black actors, he is an avid advocate for providing behind-the-scenes opportunities for African Americans as well – including cinematography, costume design, score composition, etc. His contracts demand that African-Americans be hired, and he has also worked to make sure that many of his crew members have become established in unions. Lee has claimed, "It is harder for blacks in the industry. But we have to create our own jobs and make our own films."[262] Accordingly, he since built up a consistent coterie of actors and crew whom he has worked with regularly throughout his directorial tenure. One of these crew members is composer Terence Blanchard – whom I will consider more momentarily.

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[262] Marlaine Glicksman, "Lee Way," in Fuchs, *Spike Lee: Interviews*, 9.

Black Creativity and Artistic Expression

Lee has maintained, "To me, Black people are the most creative people on this earth."[263] He

values his film projects for facilitating the opportunities to bring these creative black artists

together, weaving together stories about blackness based on their own unique experiences. While

one cannot state that these artists – actors, cinematographers, costume designers, composers – are

inherently more creative than any other filmmaking crew members because they are black (as

Lee tries to do), it can be acknowledged that the cooperation of such a number of black artists in

singular, commercial filmic projects had been virtually unprecedented prior to Spike Lee's

emergence on the mainstream stage. Ruth Carter's costume design is inspired by her knowledge

and research of African-American fashions, Ernest Dickerson's cinematography is informed by

what facets of black expression and life he wants to illuminate through his camera, and Terence

Blanchard's musical compositions directly stem from his experience and expertise performing an

idiom firmly rooted in African-American musical tradition – jazz.

Lee's films draw on these various forms of African-American cultural expression in

experimental ways. By "experimental," I utilize Mia Mask's definition, which describes

experimental filmmaking as "encompass[ing] a range of styles that are opposed to – or at least

dissimilar from – mainstream commercial feature filmmaking and even documentary

moviemaking."[264] Mask avers that the goal of such experimental filmmaking is "to place the

viewer in a more active and more thoughtful relationship to the film by provoking spectators to

question the meaning of these techniques as they relate to the subject."[265] Lee's oeuvre

demonstrates a significant amount of experimentalism – from his mixing of genres within the

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[263] Spike Lee with Lisa Jones, *Mo' Better Blues* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990): 161.
[264] Mia Mask, ed. *Contemporary Black American Cinema: Race, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 2012) 11.
[265] Ibid.

context of a single narrative, to his experimentation with various lighting, camera angles, and direct-to-camera addresses, to his "signature shot,"[266] which disturbs the "realism" of the film through a technique that depicts his characters as 'floating,' transcending the ostensible realities in which their characters are rooted.

Beyond these production techniques, Lee's prominent utilization of direct references to African-American creative heritage set his films apart from the majority of mainstream motion pictures. He liberally draws on a plethora of (African-American) cultural references – including literature (e.g., Alex Haley, Zora Neale Hurston), visual arts (African-American memorabilia), popular culture (e.g., clothing, sports teams, advertising, television, music videos), and music (featuring historic recordings and commissioned works from a vast number of African-American musical artists). Paula Massood characterizes Lee's wellspring of cultural signification as a "polyphonic system of cultural and political references."[267] The inter-texuality of his works reflects a cross-media commitment to the African-American trope of "signifyin(g),"[268] in which he plays off, expands, criticizes, and transforms various elements of African-American cultural production to inform his diverse narratives.

Beyond signifyin,' Lee also implements production techniques that draw on a characteristic component of African-American musical performance – improvisation. Lee himself has stated, "I guess [that jazz has influenced my filmmaking] in the sense that I never try to restrict myself. I just let my imagination go very free. And I like to improvise."[269] Such

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[266] This "signature shot" is a double-dolly technique that Lee has employed in several of his films, where he puts both the camera and the actor on a dolly, and has the actor pushed toward the camera, while the camera is pushed away. This creates the cinematic illusion that the character is "floating" toward the camera/viewer. For a fascinating philosophical examination of Lee's usage of this technique, see Jerold J. Abrams, "Transcendence and Sublimity in Spike Lee's Signature Shot," in Conard, *The Philosophy of Spike Lee*, 187-199.

[267] Massood, xxii.

[268] Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[269] Glicksman, "Lee Way," in Fuchs, 12.

improvisation manifests in his uninhibited approach to screenplay writing, in which he does not adhere to conventional scripting or narrative development. His scripts are bare-bones, and he instead relies heavily on the work of the actors to bring scenes and situations to life. While he does write key dialogue (and certainly maintains a directorial role in all the shooting), he also leaves opportunity for improvisation among the actors. A poignant example is what has been dubbed the 'War Council' scene in the film *Jungle Fever* (1991), in which a group of black female characters (one being the main character's recently-jilted wife) discuss their frustrations about black men and interracial fascination with white women. Lee opened this scene up to the female actors, giving them the premise of the discussion, and letting them create the rest. He stated, "It was completely improvisational. We did between twenty and twenty-five takes. I find the more you talk the more honest you get."[270] These are but a few of the ways that Lee draws on a wealth of African-American cultural practice, heritage, and experience in creating his own film projects. Now, I want to turn to examine a particularly prominent aspect of black culture in his films – and the focus of this overall dissertation – the music.

Music/Jazz

Lee's films are greatly inspired by music – particularly African-American music. He has stated that when he develops the concepts for his movies, "I start thinking about the music for my films at the same moment I'm writing the script. It's part of my creative process. I pay as much attention to the music as I do to the cinematography, casting, and production design."[271] Alex Steyermark, Spike's longtime music supervisor, has claimed that Lee is "incredibly knowledgeable about music. I think music is very important to Spike generally. . . . He devotes a

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[270] Richolson, "He's Gotta Have It," in Fuchs, 29.
[271] Ibid., 33.

lot of time to it and a lot of resources – the scores on his films are usually very well-budgeted."[272] Lee's usage of music draws heavily on a number of African-American-influenced musical genres, including blues, gospel, R&B, jazz, and hip-hop. His soundtracks are comprised of both licensed popular recordings and commissioned performances and scores – boasting contributions from artists as diverse as Ella Fitzgerald to Public Enemy, Sam Cooke to Mos Def, as well as Lee's scorers, Bill Lee and Terence Blanchard. Lee does not completely omit the music of white musicians from his soundtracks; one of the most prominent examples is his utilization of Aaron Copland's compositions in his film *He Got Game* (1998), underscoring scenes featuring African-American men playing basketball.[273] Yet his musical selections are very crucial in supporting his narratives that voice a diversity of black experience, history, and culture, promoting black artists for mass consumption as well as cultural acknowledgement. Just as Lee's films represent a differentiated panoply of African-American characters interacting together onscreen, each film is interwoven with a sonic tapestry of varied African-American musical styles – from pop, to hip-hop, to blues, to jazz-influenced underscores – interacting and alluding to the rich history of black music.

For underscore, jazz-influenced orchestrations are Lee's preferred style of musical accompaniment. As he stated after making his fourth film, *Mo' Better Blues*, "Jazz has been an integral part of all my movies."[274] The son of an established jazz bassist, Bill Lee, he grew up listening to and appreciating jazz from infancy. Bill Lee himself composed the scores for Spike's first four feature films (*She's Gotta Have It*, *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing*, and *Mo' Better*

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[272] Anthony Magro, *Contemporary Cat: Terence Blanchard with Special Guests* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002): 105.

[273] For an insightful examination of Lee's usage of Copland in this film see Krin Gabbard, "Race and Reappropriation: Spike Lee Meets Aaron Copland," *American Music* 18.4 (Winter, 2000): 370-390.

[274] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 155.

Blues), as well as several student films Spike produced during his graduate school days at NYU.

When interviewed regarding his first feature, *She's Gotta Have It*, Spike claimed, "I feel that jazz

is a higher form of music. . . . I may not always have a jazz score, but for this film I thought it

was appropriate."[275]

His assessment of jazz as a "higher form of music" reveals a complex dynamic that

simultaneously lauds black creativity over other races' creativity, yet positions the music within

a high-low artistic hierarchy characteristic of white European assessments of culture. In asserting

this hierarchical status, Lee makes proclamations to aesthetic superiority that he hopes will aid

jazz's cultural legitimacy within the white cultural establishment, while also presenting his

personal proclivity for jazz idioms. While it is unclear exactly what other forms of music Lee is

arguing jazz is higher than, I contend that by using the term, he is attempting to spatially elevate

the art form's perceived value and – by extension – the perceived value of the films the music is

accompanying. To his viewpoint, utilizing "high art" music to accompany the lives and

experiences of black characters onscreen challenges conventional representations of African-

Americans in film, and asserts that the narratives themselves represent valuable culture that

should be recognized.

The ways Lee utilizes jazz in his films disrupt conventional jazz associations in the

Hollywood industry. As examined throughout this dissertation, these associations have been

manifold – ranging from links to criminality/deviance/sexual promiscuity, to internal anxiety, to

sophistication, to functioning as a historic place marker through "period style." Jazz has been

used to underscore narratives featuring both black and white characters (and perhaps other

ethnicities as well), but its range of uses is consistently rooted in the racialized legacies of the

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[275] Spike Lee, *Spike Lee's Gotta Have It: Inside Guerrilla Filmmaking* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997): 59.

music's representational histories themselves. In the vast majority of these cases, jazz is prominently "othered" – its presence in the sonic background of the film draws attention to itself, alerting the viewer to the particular association it is trying to trigger. When we hear a bluesy saxophone solo as a female slowly walks through corridors illuminated in chiaroscuro lighting – we immediately associate her with seduction, loose morals, and deception. When we hear Vince Giordano's music in *Boardwalk Empire*, we immediately, think 'Ah yes, we are in the 1920s (or 30s, 40s).' As we listen to Antonio Sanchez's percussion improvisations in *Birdman* – innovative as they are – they draw up associations with the 'anxiety jazz' that corresponded to characters' internal struggle and anxiety in the noir films of the 1950s. Dick Hyman's performances of classic Great American Songbook standards behind elegant New York penthouse party scenes in Woody Allen's films draw on a parallel history of jazz – the elegance, glamour, and sophistication associated with the patrons of symphonic jazz and big bands during the Swing Era.

The jazz scores in Lee's films work against these conventional associations. They do not try to situationally draw attention to themselves in ways that say 'Hey! You should think about this right now!' Instead, the scores focus on enhancing the emotional content of the narrative, accompanying the primarily black characters as they navigate through everyday situations of love, quarrel, fear, frustration, contentment, etc. They do not typically employ the aforementioned sonic clichés, and instead feature jazz as a 'natural' part of the sonic backdrop – not overtly "othered" or associatively-marked as conventional Hollywood uses of jazz are. Rather, they function much more like conventional film scores, supporting the narrative and transitions in the background – simultaneously audible and inaudible, supporting the characters, but not functioning as characters themselves.

For Lee, jazz is the sonic embodiment of black musical tradition and cultural creativity – the site of black musical artists' most profound innovation and individual expressiveness. While he acknowledges the musical contributions of early rock n' roll, R&B, soul, funk, and hip-hop artists, Lee prefers jazz, arguing that it "lends a sense of tradition and timelessness" to his films.[276] This investment in jazz as tradition permeates Lee's broader filmmaking ideology that seeks to expose black (and also other) audiences to the richness of African-American culture and history. He believes jazz is an integral part of black heritage, and that modern-day black audiences should have engagements with the music – engagements that he feels are sorely lacking. Echoing several African-American jazz artists' (and critics') concerns with the small percentages of black audiences purchasing jazz and attending performances,[277] Lee claimed, "The sad thing . . . is that we have whole generations of black people who know nothing about jazz. . . . Jazz music is black music and that's what we're projecting in my film.[278]

Certainly, jazz music is not solely black music – its variegated past of development through the performances of whites, Hispanics, Africans, Asians, and many others speaks to that fact. However, jazz's rootedness in black culture and significance in African-American history cannot be denied. Its associations with creativity and freedom reflect its historical value as the voices through which an overwhelmingly marginalized African-American population could speak. Throughout jazz history, artists such as Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, and John Coltrane challenged racism and cultural oppression through activism in their music. It is through the platforms of the bandstand and the

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[276] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 155.
[277] African-American jazz artists who have expressed such concerns include Wynton Marsalis, Branford Marsalis, Nicholas Payton, Christian McBride. For a more comprehensive look at this discussion, see Magro, *Contemporary Cat*, 143-148.
[278] Lee, *She's Gotta Have It*, 21.

recording studio that these black artists made their voices heard. Accordingly, Lee weaves these jazz voices into the variegated tapestry of black experience he seeks to represent on-screen, injecting his film with direct connections to musical black heritage, as well as providing the opportunity for present-day jazz musicians to continue developing their own voices and sharing them both among and beyond African-American consuming audiences.

Over the course of his filmmaking tenure – which includes close to forty works – Lee has employed a number of performing jazz musicians to participate in the creation of his soundtracks. While Bill Lee and Terence Blanchard are the obvious examples, the soundtracks have included an array of prominent jazz artists, including the Branford Marsalis Quartet (with Kenny Kirkland, Jeff "Tain" Watts, and Robert Hurst), Kenny Baron, and many others. "Jazz" for Lee – as for many who are familiarity with its vast diversity of styles – encompasses a wide range of musical expression. His films feature the blues, bebop, swing, modal jazz, jazz-rap collaborations, hard bop, and jazz-orchestral scores. Accordingly, he employs a variety of unique jazz artists performing a diversity of jazz styles that – while obligated to the needs of the film – are also afforded opportunities to play their music, hone their own crafts, and share their performances with consuming film audiences throughout the world. Much as Lee is invested in giving work to a number of black artists both behind and in front of the camera, he is also glad to facilitate opportunities that promote black artistry beyond the film world – particularly among jazz musicians.

Mo' Better Makes It Mo' Better

"I always knew I would do a movie about the music. I'm talking about jazz, the music I grew up with. Jazz isn't the only type of music that I listen to, but it's the music I feel closest to."[279]

-Spike Lee

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[279] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 39.

A brief reading of Lee's film *Mo' Better Blues* (1990) highlights the director's relationship to jazz music, and the level of respect with which he integrated it into the film's storyline and soundtrack. This film provides an excellent case study of Lee's usage of jazz in relation to his aforementioned interests in representing jazz as black culture/creativity and as tradition/cultural heritage. In addition, it illustrates his desire to counteract traditional narratives of jazz and jazz musicians in Hollywood, and to attempt to present jazz music as a contemporary and modernly-accessible art form (particularly among black audiences). The film certainly has its problems, but it is also the only film Lee ever made about musicians, and the best representation of how his relationship to jazz music informs his filmic work. *Mo' Better* also introduces us to Terence Blanchard's first in-depth work on one of Lee's films, as well as his first film-scoring opportunity.[280]

The film's premise follows the character of Bleek Gilliam (Denzel Washington), a jazz trumpet player committed to his art who navigates his own musical commitment alongside his relationships with his father, two different women, his bandmates, and his irresponsible best friend/manager, Giant (Spike Lee). Throughout the narrative, Bleek demonstrates a passionate dedication to his performance, the development of his craft, and the integrity of his music. At points, this artistic commitment has negative consequences – leading to conflicts with his lovers, and jealousy and tension with particular band members. Towards the end of the film, when Bleek's ability to play is finally jeopardized (he gets hit in the mouth with his own trumpet as he tries to protect Giant from violent gambling debt collectors), his separation from his art clearly

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[280] A tune that Blanchard composed, entitled "Swing Soweto," was used during the scene in which Bleek is playing his trumpet solitarily on the Brooklyn Bridge. "Swing Soweto" was a piece that Blanchard had already composed in memory of the children who were killed in the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa. Blanchard played the tune on the piano one day on set, and Lee liked it and asked him if they could use it in the film. The tune also later reemerged as a primary theme in Lee's soundtrack for *Jungle Fever* (1991).

shatters him and his sanity. It takes the replacement of his love for his music with love for his family (a wife and child) to help him move beyond the devastation. The script was inspired by Lee's own observations and experiences as a witness to his father's career as a jazz musician who refused to compromise his art.[281] Spike has stated, "Everything I know about jazz, I know from my father. I saw his integrity, how he was not going to play just any kind of music, no matter how much money he could make."[282] Lee projects this integrity and musical commitment onto his depiction of Bleek's character, who navigates similar elements of artistic ideology, stylistic preference, and understanding of music as an integral component of self-identity.

The narrative itself contrasts with conventional Hollywood representations of jazz artists as drug-inflicted, disturbed, and irresponsible. Lee produced the film soon after the release of two prominent jazz films, Bernard Tavernier's '*Round Midnight* (1986) and Clint Eastwood's '*Bird* (1988), both of which darkly represent depressing illustrations of the lives of jazz musicians. These films were but the more recent manifestations of decades of dark cinematic depictions of the black (and also white) jazz artist – evidenced since the 1950s in such films as Michael Curtiz's *Young Man with a Horn* (1950), Otto Preminger's *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), Leo Penn's *A Man Called Adam* (1966), Herbert Danska's *Sweet Love, Bitter* (1967), and Sidney J. Furie's *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972).[283] Lee stated, "I did not want to make another typical story of a jazz musician who's an alcoholic or who's hooked on heroin."[284]

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[281] The elder Lee was outspoken against playing electric bass, as he preferred to always play acoustic. He would only take gigs that let him play acoustic only. This ideology was informed by his anti-electric attitudes in general – particularly given his suspicions that musical technology was replacing (and would continue to replace) performing musicians.

[282] Samuel G. Freedman, "Spike Lee and the 'Slavery' of the Blues," *New York Times* (July 29, 1990): 9.

[283] These tropes of self-destruction are also evident in a number of recent musician biopics featuring both African-American and non-African-American figures – including *Ray* (2004), *Walk the Line* (2005), *La Vie en Rose* (2007), *Bessie* (2015), and *Straight Outta Compton* (2015). I predict we will also see similarities in the forthcoming *Born to Be Blue* (Robert Budreau's biopic of Chet Baker) and *Miles Ahead* (Don't Cheadle's biopic of Miles Davis).

[284] Richolson, "He's Gotta Have It," in Fuchs, 30.

Determined to work against these stereotypes, Lee chose to illustrate Bleek's life as one characterized by both creativity and social/familial responsibility. He stated, "I wanted to show a man who could make decisions, who had a family life, who wasn't a drug addict or alcoholic."[285] Contradictorily, however, it is Bleek's jazz career and commitment to his music that renders him indecisive, immature, and selfish. It is only after he gives up performing (out of necessity due to his injury), that he is able to become a fully-responsible, mature family man. Jazz scholar Krin Gabbard similarly notes that Bleek's renunciation of jazz allows to him to reclaim his masculinity through responsible fatherhood, avoiding the destructive pitfalls (i.e., metaphorical castration) of the jazz life.[286] Through such representations, Lee reinforces Hollywood's conventional associations of jazz with decadence and irresponsibility more than he might like to admit. That said, Bleek's portrayal as a jazz artist sharply contrasts with the dark depictions of Rick Martin (in *Young Man with a Horn*), Charlie Parker (in *Bird*), and Dale Turner (in *Round Midnight*). Lee presents Bleek as someone meticulous, passionate, and fairly heroic – not a pitiful creature lost in the throes of his own drug-induced self-destruction.

At the core of Lee's unconventional approach to this film is providing audiences – particularly black audiences – with a creative African-American character who appears relatable and real. Bleek isn't perfect, but he isn't hyperbolized. He is not represented as a spectacular "other" – a genius, incomprehensible artist who lives in a cyclic pattern of excess and self-destruction. He is shown laughing while playing catch with his dad, sharing real intimate moments with his lovers, hanging out and bantering with his bandmates, and getting in arguments and experiencing conflict and frustration much as normal people do. The film

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[285] Freedman, 9.

[286] See Krin Gabbard, "Signifying the Phallus: Representations of the Jazz Trumpet," in *Jammin' at the Margins,* (1996): 138-159.

highlights black creativity, culture, camaraderie, and familial and friendly love in ways that neither '*Round Midnight* nor *Bird* demonstrate. As Lee himself contended, "Both were narrow depictions of the lives of Black musicians, as seen through the eyes of White screenwriters and White directors."[287] With the exceptions of the main character roles themselves, neither of these films engage with any other black characters on any substantial level, instead focusing on the protagonists' relationships with their white acquaintances. Lee instead sought to represent the jazz artist as a laudable figure within the African-American cultural community, one whose commitment to his craft – and his eventual commitment to his family – could be aspirational.

Again, the characters represented in *Mo' Better* are not perfect. For a good portion of the film, Bleek has the propensity to be a selfish, preoccupied jerk. He takes advantage of both of his lovers, and often seems to be quite callous in his treatment of them. The women themselves are highly stereotypical and one-dimensional. Indigo (Joie Lee) is a responsible schoolteacher, while Clarke (Cynda Williams) is a seductive, aspiring jazz singer. This love triangle reinforces conventional film stereotypes that represent black women as either Madonnas or whores – particularly in love triangle scenarios. Both women are generally pathetic characters – pleading for love and affirmation from Bleek, and (generally) going along with the fact that Bleek is seeing the other woman as long as they get him too.[288] His representations of the Jewish club owners in the film – Moe and Josh Flatbush – also leave a lot to be desired, as discussed earlier in this chapter. In one-dimensionally depicting them as greedy, selfish and manipulative tricksters who are screwing over Bleek and his ensemble in their financial contract, Lee seems to imply that all Jews (and all white people for that matter, since they are the only whites in the

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[287] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 39.

[288] For insightful critical readings of Lee's treatment of Indigo and Clarke in this film, see Vest, *Spike Lee: Finding the Story* (2014): 58-61.

film), are out to oppress and take advantage of others (especially African-Americans) for their own gains. As discussed in my assessments earlier in this chapter, Lee has often struggled with the ways he represents women and non-African-American characters, and has been criticized heavily for it. These criticisms should not be dismissed, and Lee's audiences should be careful to assess the ways Lee's depictions of certain types of characters both reinforce conventional stereotypes and may even introduce new ones. Yet – also taking the good with the bad – audiences must also acknowledge how his films potentially introduce us to a diversity of ostensibly realistic black characters whose stories are rarely shared on-screen. In the case of *Mo' Better*, that is the depiction of a black jazz musician – one who practices, challenges himself, works/hangs out with other black jazz musicians, and has made a steady, responsible career of playing music.

In his commitment to represent Bleek as a realistic black jazz musician, Lee invested a significant amount of research and production into portraying the musical elements of the narrative with as much fidelity to "real life" as possible. He drew heavily on information from his father Bill Lee, Terence Blanchard, and a number of other jazz musicians in order to develop a convincing portrayal of the musicians and their experiences on-screen. He conducted a particularly long interview with saxophonist Branford Marsalis, who performs on the soundtrack – as I will examine more thoroughly momentarily. In the production notes for the film, Lee shared his impetus for conducting this interview, "Since Branford is part of the young generation of jazz musicians that inspired the film, I thought his views on the music . . . would be helpful in bringing Bleek to life. I did a long interview with Branford between the first and second drafts of the script."[289]

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[289] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 41.

One of the strongest depictions of "real" jazz musicianship is Bleek's continual musical development through solitary practice – an element of musicianship that is so germane and vital, but is rarely (if ever) represented in films about musicians. Several scenes depict Bleek air-fingering parts, singing licks, practicing scales and technical exercises, and figuring out harmonies at the piano while muttering chord changes to himself (e.g., "A minor 7"). These depictions work against the "creative genius" or primitivist narratives that permeate conventional Hollywood depictions of black artists, in which the artists appear to be imbued with magical musical gifts that require no training or development. Bleek takes his art seriously, and he works at it. In the scene where we first meet Clarke – Bleek's second lover – he reprimands her for coming to visit him during his regularly-scheduled practice time. She retorts, "Everything with you is so damn regulated. A certain time to do this, a certain time to do that. Everything's on a schedule or timetable." While Bleek looks like a jerk in this scene, this does not inaccurately portray how some successful jazz musicians may approach their practicing – with a rigorous, consistent daily schedule.

Lee also gives ample screen time to the nuances of jazz performance. Several pieces were written for the film by Branford Marsalis and Bill Lee – including "Say Hey," "Beneath the Underdog," "Pop Top 40, "Again Never," "Knocked Out of the Box," the eponymous "Mo' Better Blues," and an updated arrangement of W.C. Handy's "Harlem Blues." In many cases, the pieces are performed in their entirety by the Bleek Gilliam Quintet onstage at their local jazz club. Cinematographer Ernest Dickerson fluidly moves us through a variety of shots during the performance. As viewers, we are offered close ups of the musicians' faces and bodies while they are performing, granted witness to the nuances of them breathing, drumming, fingering the trumpet valves or saxophone keys, and plucking the bass strings. The camera engages with the

performance from multiple angles – close ups from above, below, and peripherally, wide shots looking down from the club balcony, "over the shoulder" shots behind the band members looking down at their instruments or out into the audience, and "flying shots" closing in from wide to close up.

We are also privy to more subtle action and interaction often present in jazz performances. We see bassist Bottom Hammer (Bill Nunn) moving his lips along with bass lines he is playing, as many bassists do. The members of the ensemble each have their own unique ways of moving to and physically internalizing the music – from bobbing their heads, to tapping their toes. We see a combination of group and solo shots, sometimes focusing on the musicians while they are playing, sometimes focusing on the musicians who are not playing, and are instead moving around the stage, or listening to what the others are doing. Bandstand camaraderie is displayed through a number of ways; the ensemble members encourage each other through physical gestures (e.g., clapping on the back), visual gestures (e.g., nods, smiles, eye contact), and verbal cues (e.g., "Yeah!" [Nice playing]). These depictions give audiences a closer look at the creation of the music (informed by the scenes throughout the film that show the characters practicing, writing music, discussing how they want to play the chart, etc.), the interactions between the musicians onstage, and the aesthetics of witnessing a live jazz performance.

The realism of these moments is compounded by Terence Blanchard's involvement in the film. Lee wanted all of the music-playing scenes – of which there are many – to look as though the music was actually being played on-screen, presenting as realistic a representation of jazz performance as possible. He claimed, "I did not want jazz critics . . . nitpicking about the realism of the music scenes. I can hear them now: 'How can Spike Lee, son of a famous jazz musician,

Bill Lee, present jazz music inaccurately, especially after he criticized Clint Eastwood's film?'

Give me a break, guys!"[290] Accordingly, he contracted actual jazz musicians to not only record

the music, but then to tutor the actors in convincingly emulating the performance of the

recordings. Blanchard worked with Denzel Washington, while artists such as Branford Marsalis,

bassist Michael Fleming, saxophonist Donald Harrison, and Spike's father – Bill Lee – worked

with the other members of Bleek's Quintet, which included Shadow Henderson (Wesley Snipes),

Left Hand Lacey (Giancarlo Esposito), Bottom Hammer (Bill Nunn), and Rhythm Jones (Jeff

Watts – who performed for himself). The music coaches each employed their own unique

approaches, meeting with the actors five days a week to help them solidify their techniques. Lee

avers, "Every time we shot a musical sequence [the musicians] were there, watching their pupils

and making sure the fingering, mannerisms, and breathing were accurate, or at least

believable."[291] Blanchard collaborated extensively with Washington, working with him to

memorize the fingering, as well as to mentally 'sing' the melodies, so that his fingering aligned

with the musicality and phrasing of the music, regardless of whether or not the actual fingering

was correct. Terence shared his methods here:

> "I made a videotape of myself playing Bleek's trumpet parts,[292] and sent it to Denzel in
> California so he'd have something to work with before he came to New York to begin
> rehearsals. It would have taken too long for me to show him every note and every scale,
> so I had him memorize the fingerings to each song. . . I [later] had Denzel put the trumpet
> down, listen to the track, and learn to 'sing' his part. Once he memorized a song this way,
> it was easier for him to follow the playback track. He could press any valve on the
> trumpet, even if it wasn't the right one. And as long as he pressed with confidence, and in
> sync, while blowing into the horn, his execution was believable."[293]

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[290] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 93.
[291] Ibid.
[292] These "parts" included both the primary tunes and all of the little practice riffs and runs. Lee, *Mo' Better*, 158.
[293] Ibid., 187.

Figure 4.1 *Bleek Gilliam (Denzel Washington) performing in "Mo' Better Blues" (screenshot, 1990)*

Lee expressed his confidence in Blanchard's – and by extension, Washington's – work. He

stated, "Next to my father, Terence had the most impact on how we captured the music on

screen. And because of his involvement, I'm sure we've done it, to the best of our abilities, with

utmost integrity. Terence made it his personal crusade to see that Denzel looked real on screen –

his trumpet techniques, mannerisms, attitude. He wanted Denzel to come across nothing short of

a real-life musician."[294] I personally was impressed with the convincing manner in which Denzel

portrayed a performing jazz musician – a welcome relief from an extensive history of cinema in

which the actors don't remotely appear to be playing the music that is heard in the soundtrack

(e.g., *Bird*). Denzel's breathing is right in time with the musical phrasing, his valving is (or at

least appears to be) accurate, and the intensity of focus on his face while he plays aptly depicts a

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[294] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 158.

jazz trumpeter dedicated to his musical craft. Wesley Snipes – who plays saxophonist Shadow

Henderson – is not quite as convincing. He moves around a bit too aggressively while he solos to

encourage proper embouchure or breath support, and there are close ups during one of his solos

where he clearly should have been taking breaths but didn't. That said, Denzel's performance –

along with the performances of Bill Nunn on bass and Jeff Watts on drums (a simpler task,

considering Jeff himself is a drummer) – was quite impressive.

A key threadwork of *Mo' Better Blues* is Lee's commitment to and respect for jazz music

itself as a sonic reflection of black cultural creativity and heritage. Largely due to his exposure

through his father's career, Lee is well-versed in jazz music, its historical recordings, and its

contemporary artists. He claims that when he wrote the screenplay for *Mo' Better Blues*, he

already knew that he wanted the Branford Marsalis' Quartet[295] to record all of the feature music

– which ultimately included several original tunes written by Branford and Bill Lee.[296] Once he

determined that the primary character was a trumpet player, he chose Blanchard to perform those

parts, based on Blanchard's recognition as a prominent jazz trumpeter, as well as Lee's prior

work with Blanchard on his two previous films.

Aside from the original feature tracks, the film's soundtrack is interpolated with a number

of classic jazz tunes composed and performed by renowned African-American jazz artists,

including "All Blues" (Miles Davis), "Tunji" (John Coltrane), "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" (Joe

Zawinul), "Footprints" (Wayne Shorter), "Lonely Woman" (Ornette Coleman), and "Goodbye

Porkpie Hat" (Charles Mingus), among others. The most significant licensed recording of the

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[295] The personnel of this quartet included Bob Hirsch on bass, Jeff Watts on drums, Kenny Kirkland on piano, and Branford himself on tenor and soprano saxophone.
[296] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 156.

film is Part I of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, "Acknowledgment."[297] Lee combines this full recording with a montage revealing the "supreme love" of family, as Bleek romances Indigo, gets married, has a child, and celebrates the child growing up. This audio-visual placement evokes Coltrane's own spirituality and recognition of jazz music as a healing, universal element that also draws on its roots in black expression.

The significance of jazz as black cultural tradition is reflected in the narrative itself. The film begins with a young Bleek inside his home, practicing his trumpet while his friends beg for him to come outside and play.[298] In the final scene of the film, Bleek and Indigo react as their own son, young Miles (played by Zakee Howze, the same actor who played young Bleek), practices his own trumpet and reenacts a similar conflict with his impatient friends. Although Bleek allows Miles to go outside and play, the film still suggests that jazz music is something that this father and son share – a cultural legacy being passed down from generation to generation. Lee further avers that his decision to set the film in the present (rather than as a period film) is meant to signal that jazz performance is something that is still very much alive today – not a stylistic novelty from the past. He stated, "I wanted to show that there are young jazz musicians out there today who are carrying on a tradition."[299] This attitude informed his employment of such young, budding jazz artists as Branford Marsalis and Terence Blanchard, who at the time contributed to the "Young Lions" movement of black artists leading the jazz resurgence in the 1980s-1990s.

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[297] Initially, Lee wanted to use "A Love Supreme" as the title for the film, but – ostensibly due to the profanity exhibited in the screenplay – John's widow, Alice, would not grant him the rights to the title. She wanted the name of Coltrane's tune to stay associated with the purity and spirituality that its title was meant to evoke.

[298] A side note: Bleek's mother at the beginning of the film is played by renowned jazz artist Abbey Lincoln. Her brief cameo in this scene speaks to a jazz legacy, as well as alludes to the music as political creative expression of African-American culture (Lincoln was also a dedicated civil rights activist).

[299] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 40.

Several elements of the film reinforce Lee's desire for contemporary black audiences to engage with jazz music as part of their cultural heritage. The first is the overwhelmingly African-American demographics of the audiences that attend Bleek's Quintet's performances at the Beneath the Underdog Club.[300] Part of this decision corresponded to Lee's desire to employ black actors and crew members; another part reflected his desire for such black attendance at jazz concerts to become reality. In reference to this fact, he stated, "In many ways this film is a romantic ideal of the jazz world."[301] A key element of the script reinforces Lee's concern that in non-idealized (or non-fictionalized) scenarios, African-Americans are largely absent among jazz performance patrons. This scripted scene is delivered by Bleek, who is speaking to Shadow about these same concerns:

> Here we are. This is our music, right? Jazz is our music – black music. We will go and watch some crossover stuff that's created by other people, but we don't even come to see our own, man! You know – jazz – if we had to depend upon black people to eat, we would starve to death. . . . It incenses me that our own people don't realize our own heritage, our own culture. This is our music.

A final significant element in the film that emphasizes jazz's significance in black cultural heritage is the tune played over the closing credits – "A Jazz Thing." Performed by hip-hop duo Gang Starr, with music by Branford Marsalis, Christopher Martin, and Keith Elam, and with lyrics by Lolis Eric Elie, the tune is an intertextual ride through jazz history, positioning aesthetic and ideological links between African drumming, decades of jazz stylistic development, and contemporary jazz-hip-hop performance. In its intentional references to specific jazz artists, creative puns incorporating the names of several influential jazz standards (e.g., "Ornithology," "Afro Blue," "Oleo," etc.), and sampled clips of solos and performances

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[300] The club is named after the title of jazz bassist Charles Mingus' autobiography - *Beneath the Underdog: His World as Composed by Mingus* (1971).

[301] Lee, *Mo' Better Blues*, 99. This romanticism is also reflected in the architecture of the set itself – which appears to emulate the large jazz clubs of the 1920s/30s, rather than present-day urban jazz clubs.

from canonic jazz recordings, this track reflects Lee's desire to position jazz as a cornerstone of

African-American cultural creativity.

"A Jazz Thing" (lyrics)

"I would like to play a little tune I just composed not so long ago"
[brief swing band instrumental clip]
"Ms. Billie, Ms. Billie, Ms. Billie Holiday" [all recordings of different announcers' voices]
[more brief musical clips: swing band tune ending; drum solo;
Monk-sounding piano passage, repeat of horn ending]
"Bird..?"
[more brief jazz samples mixed together]
"The music called jazz.."
[swing band ending; followed by hip-hop groove with repeated sax lick sample]

It's roots are in the sounds of the African
or should I say the mother, bringin' us back again
From the drummin' on the Congo, we came with a strong flow
and continue to grow
Feet move, to the beat of the t'balo
Now dig the story and follow
For then it landed, on American soil
Through the sweat, the blood, and the toil
It praised the Lord, shouted on chain gangs
Pain it felt, but it helped them to maintain
Scott Joplin's rags, Bessie Smith's blues
St. Louis blues, they were all the news
Ringing smooth, in all the listeners' ears
Fulfilling the needs, and planting the seeds
of a jazz thing

King Oliver's group was a train coming through to Chicago,
bringing the New Orleans groove
And when Satchmo blew, the audience knew
Basin Street Blues was the whole house tune
it was music.. great to dance to
Great to romance to with a lot to say to you
Relaying a message, revealing the essence
of a jazz thing

[DJ Premier cuts "jazz music"]

In the 40's came be-bop, the first be-bop
The real be-bop, so let me talk about
Diz' and Bird, giving the word

Defining how a beat could be so complete
Playing with ferocity, thinking with velocity
About Ornithology, or Anthropology
and even Epistrophy, and this is real history
Thelonious Monk, a melodious thunk
No mistakes were made with the notes he played
His conception, was recondite
A star glowing bright among dim lights
The critics did cite that he sounded alright
Charlie Mingus, such nimble fingers
Droppin' the bass, all over the place
and Max Roach, cymbals socking
Bass drum talking, snare drum rocking
Restructuring.. the metaphysics
of a jazz thing

John Coltrane, a man supreme
He was the cream.. he was the wise one
The impression of Afro Blue
and of the promise, that was not kept
He was a giant step, and there was Ornette Coleman
He was another soul man
The original invisible, playing great music
I wonder why the bankers couldn't use it
Now listen see
The real mystery is how music history
created Paul Whiteman or any other white man
that pretended he originated ("uh-huh")
and contended that he innovated ("uh-huh")
a jazz thing
("Of course we know who can really blow")
Scheming on the meaning
of a jazz thing

And this music ain't dead, so don't be misled
by those who said that jazz was on its deathbed
Cause when Betty Carter sings a song
ain't nothin' goin' on, but simply good music
And you won't refuse it
She's takin her time, making the nuances rhyme
Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone
with a big old tone, reciting poems
with notes as words, and haven't you heard
(Next stop butter, right past Oleo)
Now there's young cats blowin'
and more and more people, yes they will be knowin'

Jazz ain't the past, this music's gonna last
and as the facts unfold, remember who foretold
The 90's, will be the decade of
a jazz thing ("I love jazz music") [x3]

A jazz thing...

Ultimately, *Mo' Better Blues* is Lee's love letter to jazz. It is true that Bleek's relationship with

the music is complicated, and he only achieves familial happiness through giving up performing.

However, unlike Gabbard, I do not believe this is meant to condemn jazz (or the jazz life)

holistically – as evidenced by the successful simultaneous romances and performance careers of

the other musicians in the film. Lee seeks to "realistically" depict the lives of jazz musicians. It is

not unimaginable to suggest that an artist who completely immerses himself in his art would

struggle with maintaining personal relationships outside the music world. Such relationships take

work, time, and energy – as well as an understanding from others that performing is the priority.

In addition, it is not "the jazz life" that leads to Bleek's ultimate destruction (his violent mouth

injury) – it is his relationship with (and protectiveness of) his boyhood friend, Giant. While

elements of *Mo' Better* align with cinematic codes that associate jazz with self-destructiveness,

they also work against these conventions.

Perhaps Lee's attitudes toward jazz and the jazz life are best depicted in the closing

sequences of the film. First, Coltrane's "Acknowledgement" accompanies Bleek's familial love

and growth, suggesting that his renunciation of performing (a physical necessity) is not meant to

signify the renunciation of jazz itself. Secondly, the depiction of Bleek's young son Miles

(obviously named for Miles Davis) practicing trumpet suggests that jazz will ideally continue to

be part of their family's life. The fact that Bleek allows Miles to go play with his friends seems

less a condemnation of jazz, and more a value-based concern that one should not ignore

family/friends in pursuit of any passion – lest that passion be lost due to unforeseen circumstances. Lee's own tenuous relationship with his father may have informed this viewpoint, as Bill Lee's commitment to his jazz career and his refusal to compromise his art (by playing electric bass) led to familial and economic strife during his youth. This ambivalence toward artistic commitment – not jazz – is the crux of the narrative tension. Lee himself hoped that the film might encourage more audiences (particularly African-American audiences) to listen to jazz – not push them away from it. He stated, "So much good jazz goes unheard. . . . If people are exposed to jazz through this film, that's wonderful. I hope that *A Love Supreme* sells two hundred thousand more copies because of *Mo' Better Blues*."[302] For the "music he feels closest to," *Mo' Better* is Lee's capstone homage.

Terence Blanchard: Politics and Personal Expression

I now want to turn my focus to Terence Blanchard, positioning his own ideologies and musical practices in conversation with those of Spike Lee's articulated above. In many ways, Blanchard and Lee share an ideological commitment to the artistic highlighting of black experience and creativity, working against the erasures of African-American culture within American cultural industries. While Lee's platform of expression is through filmmaking, Blanchard's is through the mediums of musical composition and performance. As described earlier in this chapter, his body of works reflects a fervent activism that manifests in his album titles, the content of his performance projects, and his own musical expression. Blanchard maintains, "I've always felt that [in] being an artist, you have to be socially conscious. . . . As artists, part of our job is to

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[302] *Lee, Mo' Better Blues*, 162.

document our environment, our community, as we're experiencing it, and hopefully shine a light

on it."[303]

Blanchard positions his own activism within a historical lineage of African-American

jazz artists who have overtly expressed their political ideologies through their musical projects.

He has stated,

> John Coltrane wrote a tune called "Alabama" for the four little girls that were killed [in 1963's 16th Street Baptist Church bombing]. I take my cues from those guys, and I stand on their shoulders. Those are the dudes who inspire me. Max Roach wrote the *Freedom Now Suite.* It's incumbent upon me -- or at least, I feel like it is -- to keep the discussion going in my realm of the world. . . If me writing a song, or writing some music to help push [agendas] forward can help, so be it.[304]

Like Lee, he believes in the effective potential of the cinematic format to bring issues to the

attention of mass audiences. He thus views his compositional work for Lee's soundtracks as an

opportunity for musical activism. He too has uttered contempt and frustration with the lack of

diverse African-American stories within the film industry, and loathes the preponderance of

stereotypes that taint black representations when they are present. He has stated, "I have strong

emotions about some of these movies being made about black life and Afro-American culture

that are very one-dimensional. I'm worried that a lot of directors aren't respecting the Afro-

American audience as they should. They think we only want to see one type of film. It's like the

1970s, the [Blaxploitation] period of *Superfly*. It's not the truth."[305] Blanchard has further

averred that he is frustrated "about African-Americans being pigeonholed into this stereotype of

what we are. I know the diversity of the culture, so my whole plan was to not give in to that easy

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[303] Jason Moore, "Melissa Harris-Perry Asks Terence Blanchard What Role Music Has in Social Activism; His Answer: Impeccable," *Atlanta Black Star*, 3 June 2015, http://atlantablackstar.com/2015/06/03/melissa-harris-perry-ask-terrence-roll-music-social-activism-answer-impeccable/.

[304] Natalie Weiner, "Terence Blanchard on Ferguson vs. Waco, Spike Lee's 'Chiraq,' and His New Album 'Breathless'," *Billboard*, 27 May 2015, http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6576084/terence-blanchard-breathless-ferguson-chiraq-new-album.

[305] Magro, *Contemporary Cat*, 114.

stereotype and, instead, to try to build up [black film] characters in other, unusual ways: To say that they're just like anybody else. They have the same issues of family, loyalty, responsibility, and all that."[306] By claiming that "they're just like anybody else," Blanchard is not intending to say that there is nothing unique about black culture, but rather that black culture – like all cultures – is nuanced and rich, not to be reduced to otherizing, one-dimensional stereotypes.

Blanchard works against such myopic representation in his jazz scores, focusing on the humanity and emotion of the on-screen characters – not on their exoticism. As examined earlier in this chapter, jazz scores have often been utilized in reinforcing associational links between sonic tropes and transgressive or "othered" character traits. In contrast, Blanchard utilizes jazz elements in ways that dispel these associational myths, drawing on the richness of jazz musical expression to tell people's stories in non-stereotypical ways. He argues that the possibilities of jazz composition and performance well exceed the musical stereotypes that we have come to recognize in conventional Hollywood films. He has claimed,

> "One of the things that I'm trying to do [in my writing] is bring the music I love to film. Duke Ellington was probably the only composer who got to score film using [jazz] with some degree of integrity. I get tired of seeing downtrodden figures, and all of a sudden you hear saxophones swinging. Jazz can be funny, can be sad, can be serious. . . You don't have to hear drums all the time or hear a bass walking all the time. There's a lot of room for this music to be used in very creative ways. It can bring something very fresh to this industry."[307]

This freshness comes in the forms of his cross-genre and cross-ensemble compositions, in which he draws on a diversity of musical elements from jazz, Romantic-style orchestral scoring, folk musics, and other popular, classical, and electronic styles. He experiments widely with utilizing a variety of orchestral and ensemble timbres, weaving contrapuntal lines of strings, horns, and woodwinds in and out of each other, and often writing pieces that employ small jazz

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[306] Schelle, *The Score*, 81.
[307] Magro, 141.

groups and large orchestras simultaneously. Blanchard himself has averred, "One of the great things about this business is it gives me a chance to write some of the craziest shit for the most outrageous orchestrations and ensembles – music I wouldn't get a chance to write just being a jazz musician."[308]

The common thread throughout his scores is his strong emphasis on clear melodies – melodic lines that are intended to support the emotions of the on-screen characters. Beyond his melodies, his scores represent a diversity of engagements with various rhythms, grooves, and syncopations – fresh, yet evident indicators of his jazz experience. He has been known to incorporate aspects of the blues, swing, funk, and Latin rhythms into his film compositions, manifesting at various times in melody, harmony, or rhythm. It is in these ways that Blanchard's scores differ significantly from either conventional romantic Hollywood scores *or* conventional jazz scores (even those considered throughout this dissertation). In integrating all of these different elements, Blanchard challenges film score categorizations, and further problematizes the term "jazz" by pushing beyond its traditional boundaries. He acknowledges a wide range of timbral, rhythmic, and tonal possibilities for jazz composition and performance – exceeding regimented expectations of style and genre.

These opportunities are largely the product of the greater economic resources of the film industry; extensive budgets allow him to work with larger ensembles and a wider range of instrumentation than he would use for his usual jazz performances. Blanchard shared with me, "Everybody has just assumed that film scores involve a certain thing, but what jazz hasn't been used for is exploiting all of the different colors and tones within the music which comes from a different rhythmic base – which, when combined with film, can give you something unique from

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[308] Schelle, 83.

what most people are accustomed to hearing."[309] Divorcing himself from stereotypical jazz tropes in film, Blanchard's scores contribute new meanings to the images and themes they are accompanying onscreen, supporting both Blanchard's and Lee's interests in providing film audiences with diverse representations of African-American experience and creativity.

Now, it is certainly important to recall that due to the hierarchical structure of film production, Blanchard's music is composed and utilized in service to the perceived needs of the films – or, more specifically, Lee's aesthetic desires. Blanchard and Lee may not always see eye-to-eye – politically or aesthetically – but Blanchard must ultimately adhere to Lee's decisions. One pertinent example of a disagreement between the two over how music should be utilized was for a scene in *Jungle Fever*, in which the Good Reverend Doctor (Ossie Davis) shoots and kills his crack-addicted son Gator (Samuel L. Jackson) in front of his wife. Blanchard maintained, "I saw that scene with no music – to draw right into the mother's pain. . . . But [Spike] wanted to a put a hymn there. It works, but it's a little distracting for me because it kind of takes you out of it."[310]

That said, Blanchard has lauded their collaborative relationship, claiming that Lee largely grants him artistic freedom, and often allows him to make the majority of musical decisions. Blanchard has claimed, "Since he trusts me so much, he likes to get [right] in the [recording] studio. . . . And then he tweaks here and there – just minor stuff, not major. He never cuts my music. Out of all the films I've done with him, I think only one scene has been cut."[311] He confesses that he has not received nearly the same level of independence from other directors he has worked with, in which his scores have been more significantly edited, chopped, moved

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[309] Terence Blanchard, interview with the author, 25 August 2015.
[310] Schelle, 70.
[311] Ibid., 72.

around, or even omitted entirely.[312] With Lee – as a result of Lee's personal confidence in Blanchard's work as an artist, their shared ideological commitments, and their extensive collaborative history – Blanchard has achieved a level of creative autonomy that exceeds typical film scoring labor, and has only rarely occurred in some of the key director/composer collaborations in cinematic history (e.g., Steven Spielberg/John Williams, Tim Burton/Danny Elfman, Sam Mendes/Thomas Newman, etc.)

Blanchard uses his work for Lee's films as a platform for his own artistic and ideological expression. Creatively, he finds working in film (and other mediums) to be a welcome challenge to his own artistic development. Blanchard has claimed, "[Working on film scores] is liberating for me because the limitations bring about a certain kind of creativity – you have to be creative because you only have a certain amount of space [and time] to work with."[313] This has provided him opportunities to channel his improvisational and compositional talents into efficiently producing scores that are not only coherent, but also support the emotions and themes of the film narratives. Blanchard shared with me, "[My experience in film] has helped [my jazz performance] because, while thinking quickly on my feet, the music stays within the context of the story – it doesn't go all over the place and meander."[314] Film scoring also allows him to experiment with new musical forms, orchestrations, and tone colors; the work often provides him with the financial and personnel resources to compose for large amounts of musicians and instruments – giving him opportunities to experiment with orchestral arrangements that are not possible when he is composing for his own small jazz group.

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[312] A particularly significant example of these extensive score manipulations occurred in Blanchard's work with director Matty Rich on *The Inkwell* (1994). Much of his score was cut and moved around to places it was not originally composed for. For a more detailed recount of this experience, see Blanchard's interview in Schelle, 75-76.
[313] Magro, 108.
[314] Terence Blanchard, interview with the author, 25 August 2015.

Ideologically, Blanchard's collaborations with Lee have also afforded him the opportunity to translate his political reactions to particular historical events, racial injustice, and African-American experiences into musical statements. He informed me that several of Lee's projects – particularly *Malcolm X* (1992), *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (2006), and *Miracle at St. Anna* (2008) – especially resonated with his own ideological responses. His work on these films was so important to him politically, that he extended his musical responses to the stories in expanded, self-led musical projects. His two extended albums to date – *The Malcolm X Jazz Suite* and *A Tale of God's Will: A Requiem for Katrina* – illustrate how Lee's films facilitated a starting point for Blanchard to musically explore his reactions to these stories through score composition (aligned with what Lee was looking for in the score), then extending his own voice into individualized, expanded explorations of ideology and musical reflection. It is to expanded examinations of these projects that I now turn.

Malcolm X

Malcom X is a controversial figure in American history. He was a man of passion, conviction, and contradiction – of revolution, evolution, and spiritual conversion. Many Americans associate him with the black militancy, supremacy, and separatism he espoused as a minister for the Nation of Islam throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, but his full history reveals a more complicated past – one permeated with multiple, shifting and transforming stages of ideology and political action.

It was nearly thirty years before a feature film was made about Malcolm's life. There had been attempts – screenplays written, producers hired – but none came to fruition. There are multiple speculations why none of these endeavors panned out, not the least of which was the

subject matter. Malcolm X has often been associated with anti-white black militancy – a topic that white filmmakers were likely not readily willing to risk producing, given its ostensibly limited commercial appeal. As Jason Vest claimed, "Fears that Malcolm's stridency would put off viewers (particularly white viewers) affected studio thinking about Malcolm X's financial viability."[315] So, despite film producer Marvin Worth's acquisition of the rights to Haley's *Autobiography* in the late 1960s – and attention paid by such screenwriters as James Baldwin, Arnold Perl, David Mamet, and Charles Fuller, and directors such as Sidney Lumet – the film did not become a reality until the 1990s.

Initially, Warner Brothers was interested in having director Norman Jewison direct the film – who had produced an Oscar-nominated documentary about Malcolm in 1971. Spike Lee was incensed by the circulating news, believing that only an African-American (specifically him) would be able to "properly" make a film about such a significant African-American figure. He vitriolically claimed, "We –I gotta make our own Goddamn films. Fuck having these white boys fuck up telling our stories. We gotta tell our own as only we can."[316] This statement reinforces Lee's condemnations of how the white-controlled film industry has appeared generally insensitive to the stories and experiences of black people onscreen, and has (in Spike's view), consistently determined how blacks are represented with sole regard to lining their own pocketbooks. He averred, "Too many times have white people controlled what should have been Black films. And there is a reason for this. They still feel – I'm talking about the major Hollywood studios – that white moviegoers here in America are not interested in films with Black subject matter. . . the studios have no respect for the buying power of the Black

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[315] Vest, 72.
[316] Lee, *Spike Lee's Gotta Have It*, 253.

market."[317] In a concerted effort to make sure that similar treatment did not happen to the story

of Malcolm X, Lee relentlessly pursued the project, eventually negotiating with both the studio

and Norman Jewison in order to get the rights to making the film.[318] Once he was commissioned

to make the film, he re-wrote the Baldwin-Perl screenplay, and also drew on Alex Haley's

Autobiography of Malcolm X[319] and interviews he himself conducted with a number of people

who knew or had interacted with Malcolm while he was living – including Betty X (Malcolm's

wife), Minister Louis Farrakhan, and members of the Nation of Islam who had worked closely

with Malcolm in his lifetime.[320]

Lee has confessed much personal investment in Malcolm's story. He claims that reading

Malcolm's autobiography as a youth was a significant moment in his own ideological

development. "I read his autobiography and – well, just put it this way. I read it and thought,

'This is a great Black man, a strong Black man, a courageous Black man who did not back down

from anybody, even toward his death. The Man. Malcolm."[321] There are clear parallels between

Lee's own challenges for African-Americans to 'wake up!' and take responsibility for working

against their own systematic and social oppression – to actively challenge racial disparity, and to

help make America a better place for African-Americans – and Malcolm's own ideological

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[317] Lee, *By Any Means Necessary*, 11.

[318] For more detail about these negotiations, see Anna Everett, "'Spike, Don't Mess Malcolm Up': Courting Controversy and Control in *Malcolm X*," in Massood, *The Spike Lee Reader*, 73.

[319] Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1965). This text was a collaboration between Malcolm himself and journalist Alex Haley, and was one of the earliest comprehensive resources illustrating Malcolm's fascinating life. It was published soon after Malcolm's assassination.

[320] The film's production was not without complication. From the initial stages, Warner Brothers did not grant Lee the amount of money that he requested for the film - $33 million, and he very quickly ran over budget. Unwilling to compromise, the studio refused to grant him the extra funds that he wanted to complete the film, so he ended up using some of his own money, as well as requesting financial gifts from wealthy members of the African-American community (e.g., Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, Janet Jackson, etc.). The film is also quite long – over three and a half hours – which caused problems with the studio, who wanted it to be closer to the traditional two-hour feature film length. Throughout production, he also received much concern from a variety of members of the African-American community, believing he should represent Malcolm in certain ways, and urging him not to "mess Malcolm up."

[321] Lee, *By Any Means Necessary*, 3.

initiatives throughout his lifetime. As Richard Blake insightfully contends, "Lee admires Malcolm Little for growing through his self-destructive behavior patterns without apology, and despite conflicts and disagreements, for learning to work with others for a common goal. That is enough to raise him to heroic stature in Lee's eyes, and that is the Malcolm X who appears on the screen."[322]

Undoubtedly, the character of Malcolm in the film is highly romanticized – attaining near angelic, incorruptible status by the movie's end. He even maintains a spiritual afterlife – depicted in scenes cutting from classrooms in Harlem to Soweto, South Africa in which young black students stand up and proudly say, "I am Malcolm X!" This final scene depicts Lee's investment in relating Malcolm's story to audiences of today – further compounded by his opening of the film with footage of the brutal police beating of Rodney King (which occurred in 1991), just months before *Malcolm X* was released. Lee hopes to present Malcolm's life as an educational resource for contemporary African-Americans, confirmed through his development of a classroom study guide to accompany the film.[323]

The Malcolm X we see on-screen is very much Lee's idealized Malcolm. He himself has confessed this point, stating, "Malcolm X is my artistic vision. The film is my interpretation of the man. It's nobody else's."[324] Yet it is not truly "nobody else's;" the contributions of many others greatly inform the final outcome of the film. Most prominent is Denzel Washington – whose commitment to researching the role, reading texts about Malcolm, listening to his speeches, watching film of him – came to very impressive fruition in his portrayals. The

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[322] Richard Blake, *Street Smart: The New York of Lumet, Allen, Scorsese and Lee* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005): 263.

[323] Gary Crowdus and Dan Georgakas, "Our Film is Only a Starting Point: An Interview with Spike Lee," in Fuchs, 68.

[324] Lee, *By Any Means Necessary*, xiv.

screenplay itself – while re-written and adapted, was substantially informed by the original

Baldwin-Perl script, with the bulk of the re-writing occurring in the third act.[325] A multitude of

exterior influences – information from interviewees, pleas/demands from both interviewees and

other members of African-American communities to represent Malcolm in a particular way, etc.

– likely influenced the final production in unquantifiable (and perhaps subconscious) ways.

Additionally – a whole host of creative production personnel (e.g., cinematographers, actors,

costumers, etc.) contributed to the film's final release. Lee is an auteur, yes – but he is not a one-

man show. While perhaps not obviously, the contributions of these artists helped shape and

inform the final product – much as is the case in the majority of film projects. One especially

influential contributor was Terence Blanchard, whose work on the *Malcolm* soundtrack I will

now turn to.

Music for Malcolm

The soundtrack for the film – as in many of Lee's movies – features a combination of licensed

commercial recordings and original score. The commercial tunes include an expansive number

of performances by popular African-American recording artists, helping situate the passage of

time over the forty-year span the film addresses. As the line producer for the film, John Kilik,

stated, "The music, the songs that are . . . on the soundtrack, not only tell the history of Malcom

X from 1925 until 1965, but much history of Black music during that forty-year period."[326]

These recordings include recognizable pieces by such artists as Lionel Hampton, Billie Holiday,

Louis Jordan, John Coltrane, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, and Sam Cooke.

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[325] Lee, *By Any Means Necessary*, xiv.
[326] Ibid., 72.

Beyond these recordings, the remainder of the musical soundtrack is comprised of Terence Blanchard's original instrumental score. One might argue that this soundtrack is a typical Hollywood film score – unlike the historically-informed recordings and improvised scores examined in the previous chapters. Blanchard's poignant compositions guide us through the various stages of the narrative, enhancing the situations onscreen through musical evocations of emotion. His approach is clearly representative of what Claudia Gorbman would identify as the "classic model" of film-scoring conventions.[327] This model is rooted in Romantic orchestral idioms, and draws heavily on conventional connotative musical elements (or *codes*) that function as signifiers of milieu and mood.

Gorbman delineates seven primary conventions in film music, "whose combination and recombination constitutes an easily recognized discursive field."[328] They are:

> (1) ***Invisibility***: The technical apparatus of non-diegetic music must not be visible
> (2) ***Inaudibility***: Music is not meant to be hard consciously. As such, it should subordinate itself to dialogue, to visuals, that is, to the primary vehicles of the narrative
> (3) ***Signifier of Emotion***: Soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasize particular emotions suggested in the narrative, but first and foremost, it is a signifier of emotion itself
> (4) ***Narrative Cueing***: (a) *referential/narrative* – Music gives referential and narrative cues, for example indicating point of view, supplying formal demarcations and establishing setting and characters; (b) *connotative* – Music 'interprets' and 'illustrates' narrative events
> (5) ***Continuity***: Music provides formal and rhythmic continuity – between shots, in transitions between scenes, by filling 'gaps'
> (6) ***Unity***: Via repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation, music aids in the construction of formal and narrative unity
> (7) A given film score may violate any of the principles above, providing the violation is at the service of the other principles (1987: 73)

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[327] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Gorbman bases her "classic model" off of film-scorer Max Steiner's compositional methods, "because of his voluminous presence and influence in the classical [film music] period." (p. 73).
[328] Ibid., 71.

Blanchard's score exhibits many of these formulas, falling within this long-standing Hollywood tradition. Structurally, it is subordinated to narrative form, marking transitions, underscoring montage scenes, and aiding the overall continuity of the film. While noticeable, it does not overpower the dialogue or the story, but rather supports it.

Emotional affect is one of the key functions of Blanchard's work. In a poignant flashback scene, a group of Ku Klux Klan members storm Malcolm's parents' home with torches. As Malcolm and his family frantically run through the house – issuing blood-chilling screams as the walls are engulfed in vibrant flames around them – Blanchard heightens the tension with explosive cymbal crashes and wrenching, dissonant string figures. In another one of the most powerful scenes of the film, Malcolm leads a massive group of African-Americans to the hospital to confirm (and demand) that a friend of theirs who had been beaten – Brother Johnson – is getting proper care. Their confrontational determination and outrage at Johnson's situation resounds in the scores' militant march-style percussion that captures the aggressiveness of their movement. These drums are featured throughout the entire scene. They first accompany a syncopated, brass-heavy reprisal of "Malcolm's Theme," ever-growing in dynamic intensity and supported by forceful string and brass figures. The drums continue (solo) as Malcolm confronts the police chief guarding the hospital; each snare roll captures the welling intensity burning beneath Malcolm's cool, but threatening demeanor. This militant march only concludes when Malcolm is finally satisfied that Johnson is being cared for, and dramatically disperses the crowd with a point of his finger. This leads to the incredulous police officer uttering, "That's too much power for one man to have." These are just a couple examples of how Blanchard's score effectively contributes to the emotional elements of the narrative. From romance to sorrow, awe

to horror – Blanchard's orchestrations draw audiences into Malcolm's story through affective emotional experience.

Another primary function of this score is its contribution to the unity and contextual coherence of the (quite lengthy) film. This is largely accomplished through Blanchard's focus on several primary melodic themes, interweaved throughout the story. Key characters are associated with their own themes – including Laura (Malcolm's girlfriend in his early years), Elijah Muhammad, Betty X, and Malcolm himself. As Gorbman maintains, "The major unifying force in Hollywood scoring is the use of musical themes. . . The thematic score provides a built-in unity of statement and variation, as well as a semiotic subsystem. The repetition, interaction, and variation of musical themes throughout a film contributes much to the clarity of its dramaturgy and to the clarity of its formal structures."[329] Think of John Williams' and Howard Shore's scores for the blockbuster franchises *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. When we hear Darth Vader's theme in *Star Wars*, we know he will soon appear on the screen (and someone will likely meet with danger via a "force choke"). When we hear Indiana Jones' triumphant "Raiders" theme, we know that he will win out against the bad guys soon. When we hear the theme of "the Ring" in *Lord of the Rings*, we understand that the Ring is exerting its powers of seduction and temptation on some unfortunate character.

The theme that is most frequently reprised in the *Malcolm X* score is aptly called "Malcolm's Theme," and appears in various stylistic manifestations over the course of the three-and-a-half hours. In its first iteration, it is heard during the opening credits, underscoring a vitriolic voiceover of Malcolm (Denzel) condemning and charging the white man for various atrocities. The scene is set against the backdrop of an American flag, and then interpolated with

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[329] Gorbman, 91.

images of African-American Rodney King being beaten by police officers. Blanchard's theme is somber and militant; a solo trumpet cries out the melody against combative, dirge-like bass drum hits and minor harmonic string accompaniment. The composition integrates a wordless choir towards the end, as the American flag burns away to leave a red, white, and blue X on the screen.

Example 4.1: *"Malcolm's Theme," opening credits from Malcolm X (1992), author transcription, 2016*

From that point onward, the theme represents Malcolm – signifying his character development throughout various periods of his life. As he navigates through diverse stages – from being a young criminal in Detroit, to a devout follower of Elijah Muhammad, to a militant Nation of Islam leader, to a loving family man – permutations of the theme reflect different moods and atmospheres that parallel the character's dynamic evolution. When Malcolm first meets Elijah Muhammad, the theme is featured as a majestic French horn solo supported by high tremolo strings that sonically capture Malcolm's simultaneous anxiety and reverence for the moment. Snippets of the theme are introduced with a Middle-Eastern flavor in the scenes where Malcolm visits Mecca and Egypt, through the utilization of oboe melody, sitar, high woodwinds,

percussion such as finger cymbals and tambourine, and the employment of traditional Middle Eastern modes and rhythms.

Audiences also hear jazz-oriented versions of the theme. In one scene, we are treated to a swinging big-band orchestration of the tune, as Malcolm escapes in a car from the formidable Harlem gangster West Indian Archie (who just tried to kill him) with his lover Sophia and his friend Shorty (Spike Lee). Beyond the Ellingtonian feel of the main theme's arrangement (particularly in the sectional interplay), we hear featured bluesy, improvised solos on both trumpet and saxophone. Later in the film, Blanchard offers another, slower big-band arrangement of the theme, underscoring Malcolm's meeting with Shorty after he (Malcolm) has become a devout follower of Islam. The two discuss their present lives, and Shorty fills Malcolm in on what has happened to everyone they used to know during their hustling days. The bluesy soundtrack theme is accompanied by a medium-slow swing shuffle groove, featuring "cool" improvised solos by Blanchard himself on trumpet. In both of these aforementioned instances, jazz accompanies Malcolm's involvement in (or reminiscences of) his decadent, impetuous former life as a misguided criminal. In overtly connecting these jazz-style permutations of the theme to Malcolm's deviant past, the score reinforces conventional cinematic codes that align jazz with criminality and corruption.

Yet, I argue that there are distinct features of the *Malcolm X* score that speak to Blanchard's jazz training which do not merely reinforce conventional codes at particular points in the narrative. First and foremost is the blues influence evident in Malcolm's theme – as well as in the other key themes that permeate the film. Malcolm's melody is a sinuous exploration of the C minor blues scale,[330] with primary emphasis on the key tones from a Cmin7 chord (with

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[330] The opening iteration of "Malcolm's Theme" is the only version that appears in C minor. All of the other versions throughout the film are performed in F minor (blues).

occasional 4ths and a particularly powerful b9 prior to the final cadence). The theme itself sounds like a version of a jazz trumpeter's lyrical solo over C minor blues, even though it is supported by orchestral strings rather than a jazz ensemble. This "jazz solo" quality is further reinforced at the end of the tune, in which Blanchard does a brief ad-lib solo over the chord tones of the final cadence – much as jazz soloists often do when culminating a tune performance.

Improvisation also plays a prominent role throughout the score. While the soundtrack itself is not fully-improvised – as those scores discussed in the previous chapter were – Blanchard opens up solo spaces in many of his compositions/arrangements to feature personalized, improvised solos from the jazz players in the recording ensemble (himself included). In addition to solos featured in the "big band" arrangements described above, there are a few other pertinent examples. Early on in the film, Malcolm has a romantic moment with his girlfriend Laura as they walk and kiss on the beach. "Melody for Laura" is highly conventional at first listen – soaring strings, and a beautiful oboe melody to capture the passion and love shared between the two characters. Yet in the second iteration of the melody – now featuring French horn – one can note the pianist improvising in the background, further introducing jazz-flavored harmonies to the tonal tapestry. Later in the movie, a jazz waltz accompanies Malcolm and Betty on their "ice cream date," underscoring their coy flirtations with improvised piano and a mellifluous soprano saxophone solo.

Therefore, while Blanchard's score for *Malcolm X* is highly conventional – more so than any of the other jazz soundtracks examined in this dissertation – there are also elements that can be directly tied to Blanchard's experiences and knowledge as a jazz musician. Not all of Blanchard's film scores have such evident ties to jazz idioms – but *Malcolm X* certainly does.[331]

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[331] Beyond Blanchard's score, jazz plays a prominent role in the overall soundtrack. As mentioned previously, recordings of black jazz artists such as Louis Jordan, John Coltrane, and Ella Fitzgerald permeate the film. Jazz is

Blues-based melodies, jazz harmonies, swing and jazz waltz styles, improvised solos – all of these elements permeate this soundtrack in ways that cause us to consider whether this "classical score" could also be called a "jazz score." Blanchard's own personal associations of Malcolm's story with jazz become increasingly evident when considering his *Malcolm X Jazz Suite*, to which I now turn.

The Malcolm X Jazz Suite

For Blanchard, composing the *Malcolm X* score was a significant undertaking. He, like Lee, had found inspiration in Malcolm's life and teachings, and he believed that it was very important that this film be made. That said, he felt the weight of effectively supporting the narrative with his music. He stated, "To me, all the time and effort that went into the making of this score will have been for naught if the viewer and listener don't come away with an emotional attachment to Malcolm X and his struggles."[332]

It is difficult to describe creative processes in ways that don't sound trite or uncritical, but I believe Blanchard's explanation of how he developed this score is worth examining. He thought about his own relationships to the characters – particularly Malcolm. He has revealed, "When it came to writing the theme for Malcolm, I went back to all the fears, frustrations, and anger that I felt as a kid and combined that with what I felt when I read the autobiography. And from that, I was able to create the musical identity for Malcolm."[333] Much of this reflection manifests in Blanchard's musical representation of Malcolm's solitude – articulated through the featuring of solitary melodic instruments such as trumpet, French horn, and oboe. Blanchard's

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also utilized diegetically in several club and party scenes. In one scene, Billie Holiday is represented performing in a local Harlem club, featuring Terence Blanchard himself in a cameo as her trumpet soloist.

[332] Magro, 168.

[333] Ibid., 167.

compositions are significantly informed by his own ideological understanding of the character of

Malcolm himself – his own, not Spike Lee's. Fortunately, Lee approved of what he was doing

musically, and the score was ultimately accepted for the final release of the film. Lee himself

said, "With [Terence's] score we hear the joy, sorrow and the celebration of the African

American experience, which is really also the story of Malcolm's life."[334]

Blanchard's work for *Malcolm X* served as a creative starting point for his continued

musical exploration of his own relationship to Malcolm's history. He has described his interest in

Malcolm's legacy at length:

> To me, Malcolm X was a person in search of something. His quest to unravel the truth
> about human injustice and to acquire human rights in the U.S. and abroad never wavered.
> Malcolm was a very sincere person who put everything out front for everybody to see,
> which leads me to believe that he had a large sense of humility. See, that's what I love
> about his story because if the humility wasn't there, then you don't leave yourself open to
> change. . . . So for me, my level of respect for Malcom at that point [admitting he was
> wrong] goes sky high. That's what life is supposed to be about. Those are the principles
> and values that we're taught as kids but forget as grownups. So it was really inspiring to
> see a person who maintained those kind of values throughout his life.[335]

Accordingly, he determined to create an extended suite paying homage to the story of Malcolm

X's life, appropriately entitled the *Malcolm X Jazz Suite*. This stand-alone concept album is an

impressive jazz rearrangement and exploration of several of the themes presented in Blanchard's

orchestral score for the film. It is performed by a small-group jazz ensemble, featuring Sam

Newsome (ts), Tarus Mateen (b), Bruce Bath (p), and Troy Davis (d).Comprehensive in form,

the suite builds a musical reflection of Malcolm's history through a succession of themes that

parallel his biographical development – from his relationship with Laura ("Melody for Laura"),

to his introduction to Elijah Mohammad's teaching ("Theme for Elijah"), to his involvement in

the Nation of Islam ("The Nation"), to his relationship with his wife Betty ("Betty's Theme"), to

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[334] Spike Lee, *Malcolm X Score*, liner notes.
[335] Magro, 157-158.

his pilgrimage to Mecca ("Malcolm Makes Hajj"), to his assassination ("Malcolm At Peace"), to

his immortality through his legacy ("Perpetuity"). These pieces are all interpolated by

reiterations of "Malcolm's Theme" in various stylistic formats.

Figure 4.2 *Album Cover, Terence Blanchard's "Malcolm X Jazz Suite" (1993)*

The album's uniqueness from the film soundtrack is immediately obvious. The first track,

entitled "The Opening," begins with an extensive one-and-a-half minute bass solo. When the

main Malcolm theme enters at 1:27 – featuring Blanchard on trumpet – the solo is much jazzier

than in its appearance at the opening of the film (and also is played in F, instead of C minor, as in

the film). Blanchard utilizes half-valve smears to elicit a vocalized bluesiness, while the solo is

accompanied by piano fills, bass, and drum extemporizations. There is no evident time signature

at this point – the ensemble members are engaged in a free improvisation, directed by

Blanchard's fluid, rubato performance of the theme. Only at two minutes and forty-two seconds

in does the bass player break into a syncopated rhythmic groove, which the remainder of the rhythm sections joins. Blanchard and Newsome harmonize the main theme, then engage in a collective improvisation over the rhythm section. While in conversation with one another, they are not in time with one another – or with the rhythm section. The entire tune sounds uninhibited – a musical platform for each member of the ensemble to express his reactions to Malcolm through his own voice, in his own time.

A number of jazz styles are featured throughout the album – each movement distinct from its precursor. "Melody for Laura" is a contemplative, bluesy jazz waltz, providing ample room for solo choruses from Newsome, Bath, and Blanchard. This transitions directly into "Theme for Elijah" – an intense bop tune flaring at Parker/Diz speeds and featuring impressive improvised solos. "Blues for Malcolm" begins with a lengthy drum solo, eventually featuring a waltz head with melodic echoes of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints." "The Nation" is a light, faced-paced bop tune, immediately followed by a samba-style variation of "Malcolm's Theme," which features quotes of "Footprints" by both Blanchard and Newsome at the end of the tune. "Betty's Theme" slows the tempo down with a somber, bluesy jazz waltz, beautifully reflecting Betty's sorrow and strength throughout her life – particularly when Malcolm was assassinated. "Malcolm Makes Hajj" returns to the frenetic, fast-paced bop style, featuring solos by Newsome, Davis, Blanchard, and Bath. "Malcolm at Peace" begins with a reflective, expressive piano solo that draws on numerous themes from the suite, including "Theme for Elijah" and "Malcolm's Theme," and continues with the introduction of a Middle-Eastern influenced rhythmic groove, emulating the theme heard in the film when Malcolm is in Mecca. This eleven-minute tune goes on to feature solos by both Blanchard and Newsome. "Perpetuity" returns to the fast-paced bop style that reemerges frequently throughout the album, while the final track – "Malcolm's Theme"

[reprise] – integrates samba grooves and medium swing beneath this final iteration of the primary melody. Blanchard and Newsome collectively improvise over the rhythms section, while the tune fades out – implying that the performance is still going (just as Spike Lee suggests that Malcolm X' legacy lives on). All of these musical movements weave together the complex, multi-layered identity of Malcolm as a result of and in relation to the various characters and experiences delineated in the tracks' titles, as well as the transformations of himself from within.

Like "Malcolm's Theme," Blanchard's renditions of the other primary themes drawn from the film's soundtrack are quite interpretive. The themes are melodically recognizable, but vary in terms of key, rhythm/syncopation, and overall stylistic feel. Take, for example, the *Jazz Suite's* variations on "Melody for Laura" and "Betty's Theme."


Example 4.2: *"Melody for Laura," from Malcolm X (1992), author transcription, 2016*

Example 4.3: *"Melody for Laura," from The Malcolm X Jazz Suite (1993), author transcription, 2016*

The film version of the theme is a lovely d-minor oboe melody enhanced through lush string orchestrations and sweeping dynamics. It is composed in 2/4, with generally square rhythms – although some syncopation is demonstrated. It features a slow tempo, allowing the melody to yearn and fulfill its conventional function of reinforcing the romantic emotions exhibited onscreen. *The Jazz Suite* version of this melody is quite transformed. "Melody for Laura" becomes a c-minor jazz waltz, opening with a contrapuntal dance between acoustic bass and Blanchard's trumpet solo. The tempo is more upbeat (medium), issuing a pulsing waltz groove that manifests throughout the melody variations and improvised solos featured in the remainder of the tune.

The transformations to "Betty's Theme" are equally noteworthy. The most powerful iteration of the theme in the movie occurs right after Malcolm's assassination at the Audubon Ballroom. Betty holds Malcolm's head on her lap. The ballroom is eerily quiet except for her painful sobs; the silence sharply contrasts with the screaming and gunfire that permeated the scene only seconds before. A haunting minor oboe melody cuts through the silence, heart-wrenchingly reflecting the aching and loss paralleled in Betty's weeping.
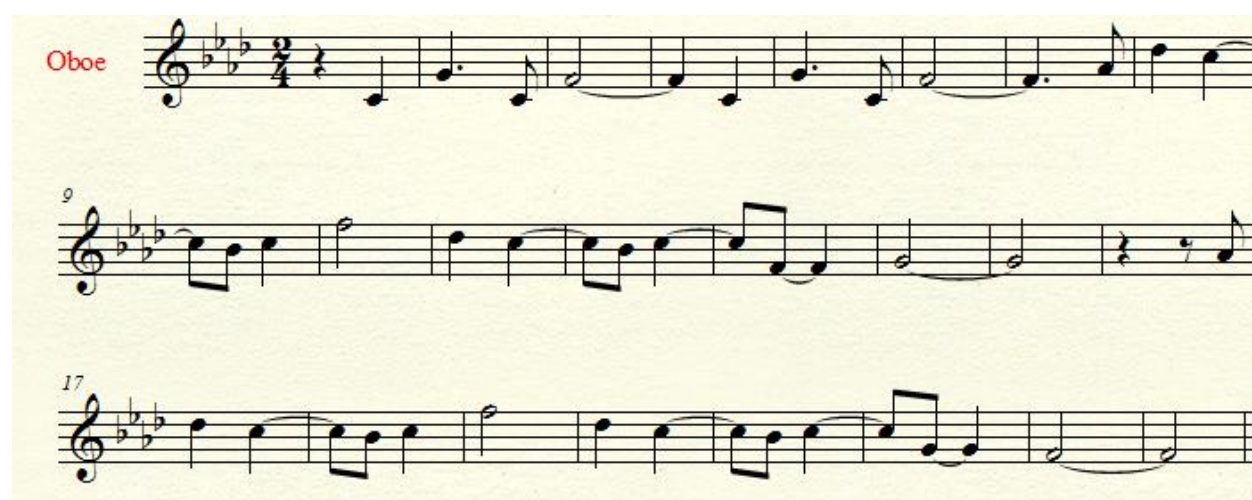
Example 4.4: *"Betty's Theme," from Malcolm X (1992), author transcription, 2016*

The *Jazz Suite* version of this tune captures Betty's pain through the utterances of the blues. Blanchard and his ensemble transform the piece into a blues-based waltz. The primary portion of the original theme that remains is the opening four notes. Saxophonist Sam Newsome then offers his interpretive melodic improvisation, utilizing certain portions of the melody from the score, while introducing his own elaborations. "Betty's Theme" then becomes an improvised solo feature. Each instrumentalist takes several choruses, drawing on blues idioms to represent Betty's pain in their own instrumental interpretations. The result is a new, stand-alone jazz tune that simultaneously boasts inspiration from the *Malcolm X* score, as well as the jazz musicians' updated, individual transformations of the material.

The *Malcolm X Jazz Suite* was highly acclaimed among critics within the jazz art world. It was released on Columbia Records in 1993, performed on tour, and has received such accolades as reaching #23 on the Top Jazz Album charts of 1993. Geoffrey Himes described the album as an "extraordinary landmark,' identifying Blanchard as "Wynton Marsalis' only real rival as a modern composer of jazz suites in the Ellington mode."[336] Scott Yanow describes it as "one of Blanchard's finest recordings."[337] The album is simultaneously a reflective engagement with the life and legacy of Malcolm X, and an impressive comprehensive performance for Blanchard and all the members of his quintet. Each member of the ensemble demonstrates a surfeit of soloist talent – from ballads, to samba, to blues, to frenetic bop. Blanchard himself demonstrates an incredible range and mastery of the trumpet – a chameleonic aptitude that allows him to transform his reprised themes both stylistically and emotionally. Between his score

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[336] Geoffrey Himes, "'Malcolm X Suite': Blanchard Landmark," *Washington Post*, 1 October 1993, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1993/10/01/malcolm-x-suite-blanchard-landmark/22a90c96-9936-46a8-ad1c-11a484e4ccfb/.

[337] Scott Yanow, "Terence Blanchard: The Malcolm X Jazz Suite," *AllMusic*, Review, http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-malcolm-x-jazz-suite-mw0000618632.

for Lee's film and his work on the *Jazz Suite*, Blanchard channeled his ideas about Malcolm, his

ideology, and his musical talents into two fascinating works of contemporary jazz that greatly

inform both his film and jazz oeuvres.

When the Levees Broke **and** *A Tale of God's Will*

In the late summer of 2005, the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina permanently silenced

nearly fifteen hundred inhabitants of New Orleans. Katrina—now charted as one of the five

deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States—inflicted extreme destruction along the

Gulf Coast, resulting in widespread devastation and loss of life. The highest death toll occurred

in New Orleans, compounded by the failure of the levee system after the hurricane itself had

passed through the city. When the levees broke, death and destruction tore through the Crescent

City, obliterating homes and neighborhoods that had just hours before thrived with the voices

and sounds of community and life. Many cries for help went unacknowledged. Delayed

governmental responses—on both the local and national level—left countless New Orleans

residents homeless, without possessions, separated from family members, and suffering in the

summer heat. Those without financial resources were particularly disadvantaged, as they had

little to no means to begin rebuilding their homes and their lives. This lack of resources greatly

affected the lower-class African-American residents of the city, many of whom had their homes

completely obliterated when the levees broke.

Attempting to bring these people's suffering into public consciousness, Spike Lee

immediately produced the HBO documentary *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four*

Acts—a poignant tapestry of images and the voices of those affected by the New Orleans Katrina

experience. He began filming in late September 2005, directly following the devastation. It aired

one year later on HBO, attaining great critical acclaim.[338] This documentary highlights the

manifold experiences and stories produced by the disaster and its aftermath, focusing primarily

on the plights of the lower-class black communities and their struggles for their cries for help to

be heard. This extensive, four-hour feature is comprised of news video footage, graphic still

photos of the death and devastation in New Orleans, and many interpolated interviews with both

residents and non-residents of the city.

The film's primary goal is to illustrate the suffering endured by many New Orleans

residents (mainly African-American) in the aftermath of the hurricane and the levees' implosion,

as well as to highlight their will to survive, overcome, and rebuild their beloved city and

communities. Spike Lee himself said of the film: "New Orleans is fighting for its life. These are

not people who will disappear quietly—they're accustomed to hardship and slights, and they'll

fight for New Orleans. This film will showcase the struggle for New Orleans by focusing on the

profound loss, as well as the indomitable spirit of New Orleaneans."[339]

The second theme of the documentary is its political critique of perceived governmental

failure (on both local and federal levels) in both preventative and responsive areas. The film

suggests that the levee breakage was preventable, and occurred as a result of faulty engineering

by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. In the aftermath of the breakage, both local and

federal relief was delayed, leading to poignant accusations of the government's indifference,

particularly on a racial level. The fact that the majority of those whose lives (and homes) were

devastated by the storm were poor African-Americans has further compounded these

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[338] The film received three Emmy Awards: Exceptional Merit in Nonfiction Filmmaking, Outstanding Directing for Nonfiction Programming, and Outstanding Picture Editing for Nonfiction Programming. It also received a 2006 Peabody Award from the University of Georgia, as well as the 2007 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Television Movie, Mini-Series, or Dramatic Special.

[339] "*When The Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts,* Synopsis," *HBO Documentaries*, website. http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/when-the-levees-broke-a-requiem-in-four-acts/synopsis.html. Accessed 5 December, 2013.

conspiratorial beliefs, echoed in such statements as Kanye West's infamous "George Bush doesn't care about black people" comment, which he presented during "A Concert for Hurricane Relief" broadcast on NBC in the immediate hurricane aftermath.[340] The documentary is largely an activist response to what Lee (and many of his interviewees) view as distinguishable racism and social oppression of New Orleans' lower-class residents. Amidst these racial, class, and political threads, Lee's intent is to engage directly with the losses and experiences of the people themselves, foregoing voice-overs to present the variety of unique voices that each tell their own story. Like New Orleans musical culture, the voices presented in this documentary constitute an explicitly constructed visual and sonic "gumbo"—a diverse variety of interviewees from different backgrounds and locations, each with their articulations of own detailed experiences.

A powerful component of the documentary is the musical soundtrack. While the voices of the interviewees dominate the sonic landscape of the film, Terence Blanchard's original score evocatively underscores and transitions between the images and personal stories through poignant, sentiment-laden melodies. Four primary melodic themes weave in and out of the four-hour montage, strongly evincing the emotions of fear, longing, sadness, and frustration that are reflected through the subjects' words and expressions. These pieces – nominally identified as "Levees," "Wading Through," "The Water," and "Funeral Dirge" – each draw on a diverse wellspring of the blues, New Orleans funeral marches, military dirges, and Romantic-style, lush string orchestrations to musically convey the aforementioned emotional themes.

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[340] A clip of this broadcast is shown in the documentary: Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts,* DVD (Forty Acres and a Mule Filmworks, 2006).

Example 4.5: *"Levees" theme (2006), author transcription, 2016*

Example 4.6: *"Wading Through" theme (2006), author transcription, 2016*

Example 4.7: *"The Water" theme (2006), author transcription, 2016*

Example 4.8: *"Funeral Dirge" theme (2006), author transcription, 2016*

These four themes manifest in varied permutations throughout the documentary. The transcriptions indicated above are only approximations – the melodies are never played exactly the same way twice. They sometimes appear holistically, and sometimes in fragments. They emerge through melodic improvisations featuring saxophone, trumpet, violin, piano, and other solo instruments. They weave in and out of audibility, underscoring an assortment of visual moments – from photo montages to news clips, from film of the destruction to conversations with politicians and residents alike. While the iterations of each theme are continually varied, they remain recognizable. As such, they help bring thematic unity to the scrapbook-style documentary – connecting the vast array of stories and footage together with recurrent, emotion-laden musical statements that sonically-support the sentiments evinced onscreen.

Blanchard had a limited amount of time to put the score together, given its unplanned inception, and Lee's determination to immediately release the documentary as a call-to-action for aid for the people of New Orleans. When the hurricane hit, Blanchard and Lee had been working on post-production for the feature film *Inside Man* (2006). Interestingly, the "Wading Through" theme used in *Levees* is actually a prominent theme that Blanchard composed for *Inside Man*. In his commentary on the Levees *DVD*, Lee recounted the circumstances; he said, "Terence, you're not going to have a lot of time. I like these themes from *Inside Man*, so let's use them [for the *Levees* film]." Blanchard did, however, compose the remainder of the themes for the documentary, and would later go on to greatly expand his musical work from the soundtrack through an extended concept album – *A Tale of God's Will: A Requiem for Katrina* – which I will discuss in more detail momentarily.

Blanchard's connections to the New Orleans disaster ran deeper than his professional relationship with Lee. A New Orleans resident himself, he was acutely affected by the tragedy,

as many of his friends and family members suffered greatly in the destruction. One of the most powerful scenes in *Levees* features Blanchard returning with his mother to her obliterated Pontchartrain Park home. Upon entering the premises and looking at the water-damaged destruction she breaks down into tears, collapsing into his chest, and sobbing: "I knew there was devastation, but I didn't know it was this bad. Lord, have mercy!" In a recorded interview on the documentary, Blanchard stated, "It's like I can't go home," as he chokes up with tears and grows silent.

The personal effects of the post-Katrina circumstances led Blanchard to expressive activism through his own voice – his music. "When I looked at all those people struggling ... it's not like I [just] felt like I needed to make a musical statement about it. I felt like I needed to be a megaphone for the voiceless. In my little corner of the world, I could bring attention to what was happening to people who didn't have resources. Of course I have to say something. Of course I have to do something."[341] Taking the themes he composed for *Levees* as a starting point, he expanded his musical ideas in a concept album inspired by his own personal responses to the events. Blanchard shared with me that he felt that he had more to say musically about the situation than he had been able to produce for the documentary. "I felt like I had done my job in terms of creating music for the score, but not creating music that was totally based on how I wanted to express myself regarding those issues. So with *When the Levees Broke*, I just felt like I wasn't finished making a statement about it – that's how *A Tale of God's Will* came about."[342]

The full album, *A Tale of God's Will: A Requiem for Katrina*, was released on Blue Note

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[341] Keith Spera, "Terence Blanchard Aimed for a Universal Feeling with 'A Tale of God's Will': Katrina and the Arts," *The Times Picayune*, 24 August 2015, http://www.nola.com/katrina/index.ssf/2015/08/terence_blanchard_katrina_a_ta.html.
[342] Terence Blanchard, interview with the author, 25 August 2015.

records in 2007, featuring Blanchard's quintet,[343] Seattle-based symphonic orchestra Northwest

Sinfonia, along with prominent solos by Blanchard himself. The album is comprised of a

combination of re-arrangements of the four primary themes from the documentary, as well as

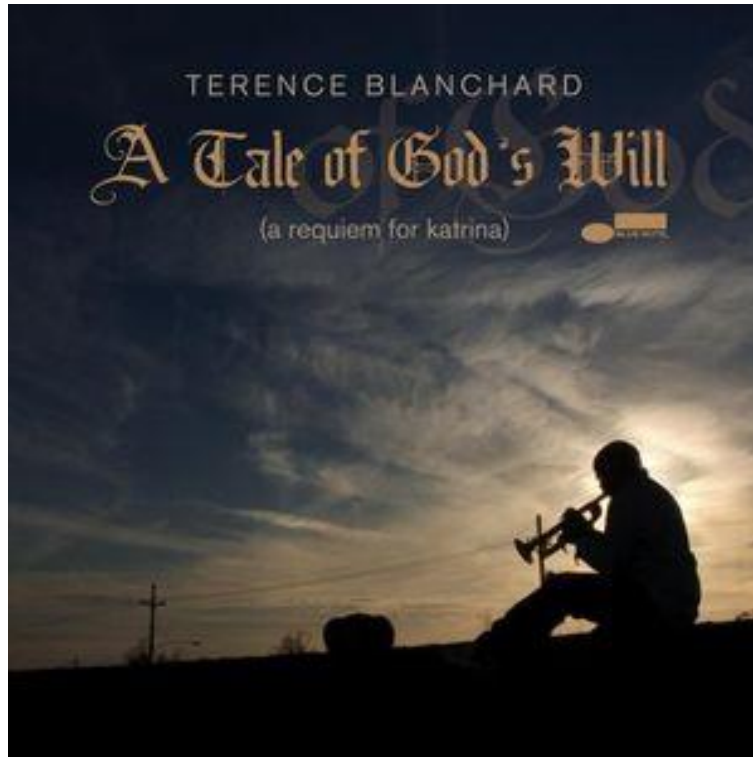number of new pieces composed by both Blanchard and the ensemble members alike.[344]

Figure 4.3 *Album Cover, Terence Blanchard's "A Tale of God's Will: A Requiem for Katrina" (2007)*

The four primary themes – "Levees," "Wading Through," "The Water," and "Funeral Dirge –

are not simply redistributed from the documentary soundtrack to this album. Instead, Blanchard,

the quintet, and the orchestra greatly expand on and embellish the themes. The brief melodies are

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[343] Derrick Hodge (b), Aaron Parks (p), Kendrick Scott (d), Brice Winston (s), with Zak Harmon contributing on (tabla).

[344] The ensemble member contributions include Kendrick Scott's "Mantra," Derrick Hodge's "Over There," Brice Winston's "In Time of Need," and Aaron Parks' "Ashé."

transformed into comprehensive five-minute-plus performances comprised of orchestral features, lengthy solo choruses, new sub-melodies, and newly-introduced rhythmic grooves. Allow me to illustrate in greater detail on one tune in particular – "Levees."

<div align="center">

"Levees"

</div>

"Before a storm hits, the weather cools. The winds are gentle. New Orleans feels big and easy. My hometown is known for food, music, and summer heat so oppressive that you almost don't feel like eating and dancing. But before a storm hits, the weather is calm and beautiful. The city seems to move at a laid-back pace like the tempo of "Levees."[345]

Following an ominous, trembling open fourth interval, the piece begins with haunting strings sequentially "rocking" between dissonant minor second intervals, evoking a sense of precarious calm, of unsettled fear, and of impending threat. It aurally represents "the calm before (and after) the storm." Moving legato contrapuntal lines beneath the high sustained notes evoke a sense of longing and anxiety, reflecting the internal emotions of those trapped and displaced after the levee breakage, further represented through the descending scalar motion of the melodies and the ebbs and swells of the strings' dynamics. The melodic and harmonic intervals of seconds and fourths are unsettling – demanding resolution that never comes. The repetitive harmonic motion, shifting back and forth between variations on A minor and G minor chords elicits a sense of stagnancy—an inability to escape from the harmonic cycle or the melodic sequencing presented in the mid-range strings.

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[345] Terence Blanchard, liner notes, *A Tale of God's Will: A Requiem for Katrina*, Sound Recording, CD (New York: Blue Note: 2007).

Example 4.9: *"Levees," from A Tale of God's Will (2007), 0:00-0:35 seconds (author transcription, 2016)*

"That calm is a warning. A cry. Listen to the trumpet. . . . These are the people the trumpet is crying for. For the 72-year-old man I met who was on his roof for three days with two 73-year-old women. What did they have? No food, but plenty of filthy, dirty water."[346]

Approximately a minute and a half into the piece [at 1:25], a plucked string bass pedal point on G emerges underneath the strings, eliciting a sense of aural build-up and tension, plodding through the contrapuntal string tapestry. A few bars in, a trumpet solo emerges, piercing through the "rocking" strings in a plaintive cry rooted in g minor blues. This solo – performed by Blanchard himself – is an iteration of one of the prominent main themes utilized throughout the documentary. As the solo progresses, the strings snake chromatically underneath – descending, ascending, and making dissonant jumps of both augmented and diminished intervals; they

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[346] Blanchard, liner notes, *A Tale of God's Will*.

maintain a constant, cycling tension beneath the bluesy cries, much as the swirling, cycling

waters of the floods provoked continued anxiety among those crying for help.

Example 4.10: *"Levees," from A Tale of God's Will (2007), 1:20-1:57 (author transcription, 2016)*

Blanchard's scoops, lip bends, and other blues inflections sonically depict the thousands of

people wailing and crying for help, for food, for water, for safety, and for acknowledgement.

These pitch-bending techniques are very characteristic of blues performances, and are recognized

for the ways in which they express the unique musicianship and "voice" of the performer. As

David Evans claims,

> "Blues players and singers tended to improvise and vary their melodic lines, instrumental parts and lyrics, and to experiment with sound quality, using growling, screaming, wailing, and falsetto singing and the muffling, snapping, sliding, and bending of notes. This spontaneous quality created the impression that the thoughts, feelings, and expressions of the moment were quite important, turning attention away from the song as product of a deliberate and often arduous process of composition, toward the performance itself and the personality and uniqueness of the performer."[347]

In *Blues People*, LeRoi Jones stated, "Blues-playing is the closest imitation of the human voice

of any music I've heard."[348] This assertion resonates with Blanchard's choice to feature a bluesy

trumpet as the "voiced" expression of human suffering. Ostensibly the melody was inspired by

the story of a seventy-two-year-old trumpeter stuck on a roof with two elderly women while their

neighborhood flooded beneath them; the blues-inflicted solo represents their unanswered cries.[349]

Through the aforementioned pitch-bending, as well as rhythmic liberties and rubato phrasing,

Blanchard successfully transformed "The Levees'" melody into an improvised, expressively-

articulated human story—not unlike the stories riddling Lee's documentary.

Following a restatement of the primary "Levees" theme, Blanchard proceeds into an

extensive blues-based improvisation [beginning at 2:35]. A bass/piano/drums vamp emerges

with an implied 6/8 groove, while the trumpet voices its cries of reflection and longing through

strained, sustained notes, conversational phrasing, and a plethora of half-valved slurs and blue

notes. As the trumpet solo ascends in pitch, the rhythm section simultaneously builds in dynamic

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[347] David Evans, "The Development of the Blues," in *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music,* ed. Allan Moore (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000): 23.
[348] Leroi Jones, *Blues People* (New York: Perennial, 2002): 28.
[349] Keith Spera, *Groove, Interrupted: Loss, Renewal, and the Music of New Orleans* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011): 116-117.

and accentual fervor. The trumpet itself cracks and squeals, metaphorically screaming at the horror that has befallen the residents of New Orleans.

As Blanchard ends his solo, it is replaced with the re-emergence of the contrapuntal string figures similar to those heard earlier in the piece; this time, however, dynamics and pitch range steadily builds, evoking a sense of progressively increasing anxiety and tension. The lead and secondary violins engage in a polyphonic dialogue, soon to be joined by the cellos; several voices and rhythms occur simultaneously, crying out to be heard.

Example 4.11: *"Levees," from A Tale of God's Will, 5:07-5:20 (author transcription, 2016)*

"The calm gives way in the final vamp. The water and the cries, the strings and the trumpet, the deep menace and the pleas for help. The pleas asking, as I did, why did this happen?"[350]

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[350] Blanchard, liner notes, *A Tale of God's Will*.

The string interlude culminates with the re-introduction of the main "Levees" theme – this time over the rhythm section's 6/8 groove [at 5:51]. In this final vamp, the main theme eventually subsides, re-introducing another improvised solo from Blanchard, which becomes increasingly frenetic in terms of syncopation, range, and inflection. The pianist pounds out chords in a relentless 3 over 2 rhythm, and the drummer's hits and cymbal crashes become more sporadic and intense. After eight minutes, the track eventually fades into silence, with the ghost of the trumpet's high squeals faintly echoing in the listener's ears, suggesting the cries of those who continued to suffer.

<div align="center">***</div>

In its entirety, *A Tale of God's Will* is a sonic space for solace, reflection, communal mourning, political critique, and ultimately optimism and healing. Newly-composed pieces on the album reflect Blanchard's personal, political, and ideological investments in the devastating experience, its aftermath, and the spiritual will to overcome the adversity. A trio of specter-named compositions – "Ghost of Congo Square," "Ghost of Betsy," and "Ghost of 1927" – recall dark moments in New Orleans history that foreshadowed the devastation of both natural disaster and racial oppression in the Katrina events, actively critiquing treatment of African-Americans in New Orleans, and challenging current administrators to work against such oppression both now and in the future. The closing tune, "Dear Mom," beautifully interweaves major and minor modalities and melodies to simultaneously morn his mother's loss of her home, but to also celebrate her fortunate survival. The lush dialogue between the strings and Blanchard's elegiac trumpet melodies both condemns the disaster but celebrates the courage to move through it – an appropriate final track for this requiem album. Much like the jazz funerals so characteristic

within New Orleans' African-American culture – the requiem laments the loss, but celebrates the life, spirit, and hope for the future.

Blanchard himself commented on the intention of this album, as well as his compositional choices to achieve a more "universal" aesthetic than his primarily jazz-oriented oeuvre. He stated, "I didn't want to write New Orleans-style music—I wanted to write music that was more universal. Because in my mind, this was a universal story of tragedy, hope, and despair. I tried to find melodic themes related directly to those emotions."[351] He integrates a number of musical styles, timbres, rhythms, and instrumental combinations in a compositional approach that both synthesizes and problematizes genre, and alludes to the wide range of people who were affected by the results of Hurricane Katrina. Meanwhile, his own voice – his solo trumpet – remains firmly tied to his African-American cultural heritage through its predominantly blues-inflected utterances. Just as in the documentary, the sonic expressions of jazz and the blues highlight the suffering of African-American people in New Orleans, yet also emphasize their resilience in challenging their predicament, maintaining their spirits, and rebuilding their lives.

Aside from Blanchard's score, the documentary is permeated with recordings and film footage of jazz musicians working against tragedy through their musical expressions of the blues, jazz requiems, brass band performances, and second-line celebrations. It seems appropriate that the final feature on the DVD release of the documentary – entitled *"Water is Rising"* – features Blanchard and his ensemble performing a second-line New Orleans-style groove on the melody from "Funeral Dirge," accompanying a gallery of photos of the people who participated in the documentary.[352] In melding this mournful, minor elegy with the robust, energized rhythms of the

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[351] Spera, *Groove, Interrupted,* 114.
[352] These photos were all taken by Lee's brother, David Lee, throughout the course of documentary production.

second line – Blanchard sonically encapsulated how the people of New Orleans worked against their losses to help rebuild their community and their spirits.

A Tale of God's Will was released by Blue Note Records on August 14, 2006. It was very well-received, garnering accolades such as Bill Milkowski's assertion that Blanchard "score[d] the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina with empathy and grace."[353] The album won Blanchard two Grammys – his firsts as a leader and for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album. In addition, it was placed No. 2 on JazzTimes' list of the best albums of 2007. Arguably one of his most powerful works to date, A Tale of God's Will began in the film recording studio, facilitated through Lee's desire to make a documentary about the Katrina aftermath, and fueled by Blanchard's own personal commitment to the project that led to its extended creation. Both this album and the Malcolm X Jazz Suite illustrate how film soundtrack composition can be a powerful springboard for jazz artists' (or any musical artists') own independent creative development, and challenge assumptions that render the jazz and film art worlds incompatible.

A Prolific Film-Scoring Jazz Musician, or a Jazz-Playing Film Scorer? Reputations, Negotiations, and Art-World Intersections

Of all of the artists examined throughout this dissertation, Terence Blanchard is incomparably the one who maintains a committed dual-career as both a full-time, touring and recording jazz artist and a film scorer for an extensive number of projects that currently includes close to fifty works. Accordingly, he has established substantial networks in both the jazz and film art worlds simultaneously. His navigation of, and reputation in these dual worlds provides a fascinating case study of the ways in which these fundamentally different art worlds can intersect. He has

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[353] Bill Milkowski: "Tragic Symphony: Terence Blanchard scores the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina with empathy and grace," Jazz Times, 37.7 (Sep.2007): 52-56, 95.

articulated to me – as well as on numerous occasions – that he is first and foremost a jazz artist.

However, he also works squarely within the film industry as a composer who brings his jazz

experiences and musical preferences into the work he is commissioned to create. As examined

throughout this chapter, Blanchard views his work in new mediums as opportunities to continue

to develop his own musical language, and to challenge himself in new forms of composition that

are subject to narrative hierarchy.

In many ways, Blanchard's successes as both a jazz artist and a film composer have been

effectively cross-promotional. As described earlier, it was his reputation as a jazz performer that

originally got him his first gig working on Spike Lee's films. Conversely, his reputation as a film

scorer has also enhanced his reputation within the jazz art world. When he was emerging on the

jazz scene in the 1980s, he constantly grappled with the struggle of setting himself apart from the

giant of Wynton Marsalis, to whom he was incessantly compared. Much of this "shadowing"

occurred as a result of both artists' contracts with Columbia Records. Marsalis had already been

recording for Columbia for four years when Blanchard (and co-collaborator Donald Harrison)

received his contract in 1986. To the uncritical eye (or ear), there were a lot of similarities

between the two: they were young African-Americans, they were from New Orleans, they were

trumpet players, and they played jazz. Blanchard, in retrospect, has considered that signing with

Columbia was a problematic career move. He stated, "Columbia had Wynton, and they didn't

really know how to market more than one jazz artist – and still don't. I mean, that's sad, and it

was a big problem for us."[354] Largely a result of poor marketing, consumer interest in Blanchard

and Harrison waned, and Blanchard disbanded the ensemble in 1989, searching for new creative

territory, as well as to work on changing his embouchure (for improved command of his

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[354] Magro, 84.

playing).[355] Fortuitously, it was around this exact same time that he was hired to work on Spike

Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*.

For some jazz artists, a performance hiatus and embouchure change may have resulted in

a permanent hiatus – or at least an unwillingness from record companies to want to promote

them. It was largely Blanchard's positive associations with *Mo' Better Blues* that helped him

work against these odds. Robin Burgess – Blanchard's manager (and wife) – stated, "Because of

the hype of *Mo' Better Blues*, that kind of dictated that Terence was now in demand, which

pushed (the music industry's) hand a bit."[356] *Mo' Better* also marked the first time Blanchard

composed a piece for one of Lee's films – a providential moment that led to decades of the two

artists' collaborations. As Blanchard's status in the film industry rose, he became increasingly

recognized within the jazz art world and among music industry executives as a unique entity –

separating him from Wynton's shadow. Troy Davis argues, "Columbia was thinking about

dropping Terence until they realized how well his film scoring career was going."[357] For the

record companies, unique recognition translates to higher demand, and thus higher sales

potential, making the artist in question increasingly more attractive to keep (or attain) on the

label. As Mulgrew Miller insightfully reflected, "If you can do something that's different from

what everybody else is doing, then the record companies will take more of an interest in you."[358]

For Blanchard, he has certainly set himself apart as an artist who is doing something different.

Not all reactions to Blanchard's film success within the jazz community have been

favorable. The jazz industry itself has begun to narrow in terms of what it promotes as jazz –

relying heavily on established names, re-issues of classic recordings, and commercially

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[355] Magro, 85, 93.
[356] Ibid., 131.
[357] Ibid., 133.
[358] Ibid., 134.

successful styles (e.g., swing, bop, jazz vocals, etc.). Blanchard's film scores – while greatly jazz-influenced – do not fit neatly within these limited visions. His usage of full orchestras, writing Romantic-style passages for strings, experimenting with electronic instruments and synthesizers, and his extensions beyond clear, idiomatic jazz styles or structural forms makes his music difficult to categorize. He forays into engagements with popular music, classical, folk, and non-Western musics, as well as conventional film score precedents. As a result, several industry members have tried to invalidate him, questioning his sincerity as a jazz artist. Blanchard revealed: "It's amazing how the whole notion of being a jazz musician is to be experimental, but in this certain climate of the business, when you do that you're viewed as being unfaithful to the music. . . . It's like they want you to stay within a certain niche because they think that's what jazz is."[359] Such criticisms have been leveled against several other jazz artists who have forayed into additional careers in popular performance mediums – including Miles Davis, Branford Marsalis, Kenny G, and Harry Connick, Jr. The underlying tone of the majority of these denunciations is an implication that these artists are abandoning their jazz craft for financial gain – the ever-popular "sell-out" criticism.

Without a doubt, scoring for major motion pictures is financially lucrative. Blanchard himself has maintained, "Scoring films is far more lucrative that fronting a jazz band. It is the sort of second career that enables a jazz bandleader to park his Porsche in neighborhoods not typically populated by musicians."[360] But financial success does not equal creative dearth. Jazz is not a narrow definition, and it arguably has a place in film scoring just as much as anywhere else. Blanchard has adamantly maintained, "I always try to bring the elements of jazz into every score

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[359] Magro, 139.
[360] Spera, 113.

I do, no matter what style it is."[361] The cross-media component of film scoring can be potentially

problematic for jazz purists – particularly the hierarchical expectations of filmmaking in which

the music is produced and edited in accordance with the director's narrative visions. They fear

that creativity is squashed, and that the composer must slavishly produce music in alignment

with film-scoring conventions, eliminating the individuality of their former jazz selves. As I

hope to have demonstrated throughout this entire dissertation, this is certainly not always the

case. Blanchard's jazz scores may not sound like a Jazz at Lincoln Center performance, or a jazz

club gig at Small's in NYC, or even his own recordings and gigs when he is touring with his

ensemble – but they are still created by Blanchard, and they are rooted in his fundamental

experience as a jazz musician. His work on the *Malcolm X Jazz Suite* and *A Tale of God's Will*

further demonstrates how working in film can spur productive creativity that manifests in

individualized jazz projects, enhancing one's own creative development.

In contrast to these aforementioned criticisms, there are also a number of people within

the jazz art world who view Blanchard's forays into the film art world as something to be

celebrated, and inherently valuable for the jazz community at large. Bassist Christian McBride

positions him in a lineage of jazz artists who wrote scores for motion pictures during the 1960s –

including Duke Ellington, Quincy Jones, and Benny Carter – arguing that Blanchard has been the

first to reignite that tradition in the modern era. Several jazz artists, including Blanchard himself,

realize that film is a powerful medium through which jazz can be heard by significantly large

amounts of the consuming public. Edward Simon claimed, "I think film is another avenue for

jazz to be heard. So I think the jazz industry should welcome and cultivate that because we need

more people to listen to jazz."[362] Similar assertions have been articulated by the jazz artists I

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[361] Magro, 139.
[362] Ibid., 140.

interviewed for this project. Vince Giordano averred, "If a movie's a real big hit, sometimes the music goes along with it. It's like when we got the Grammy for *Boardwalk*, I was happy to get it, but happier that the music really got the attention that we—that I wanted—so that more people could identify with this music and it would just be less obscure."[363] Mark Isham shared, "I think [film is] a great platform [for jazz] because we are a video age. . . . if you are watching a movie or a great television program with music featured, it's going to pull you in. You're going to want to know [more]."[364]

Through the successful manifestation of his dual career, Blanchard is demonstrating that jazz can reach beyond its labels, clubs, and select audiences, and navigate into and intersect with other cultural industries. Joe Henderson lauded, "He's showing that there are great possibilities out there for jazz musicians, particularly in film scoring. Just seeing Terence deal out those cards for people to pick up will influence the scene because it will get jazzers to think much broader in terms of their career goals. I mean, that's a pretty fair amount of power there."[365] Although breaking into the film industry is difficult, Blanchard (along with the other artists examined in this dissertation) has proven that it can be done. It will be interesting to see if their successes lead to more intersections of the jazz and film art worlds in the future.

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[363] Vince Giordano, interview with the author, 29 September 2014.
[364] Mark Isham, interview with the author, 15 December 2014.
[365] Magro, 143.

EPILOGUE

This project has been a preliminary investigation of contemporary jazz artists' behind-the-scenes work in film. As I articulated in my introduction, my primary goal is that my readers will leave this text with a more robust understanding of each of these artists' unique experiences working in film soundtrack production, and will use these case studies to further understand the tensions and complexities between creative agency and labor in cultural industry (or art world) work.

There is much that remains uncovered. These particular artists' circumstances and experiences are varied, and suggest that other jazz artists' involvements with film are also unique in definitive ways. These musicians' work in film is layered with complexity; each experience is generated at the intersections of one's own ideologies, practices, and agency within the structures and collaborations they are participating in. Only in-depth analyses can begin to shed light on what is happening in these circumstances. As layers are revealed, more layers are uncovered.

What I hope to have illustrated throughout this dissertation is that within these distinctive, case-by-case circumstances, jazz artists must constantly grapple with a number of internal and external factors that influence their choices and products. In some circumstances, these artists experience similar situations. All must ultimately create their music according to the film executives' expectations. All meet with the possibility of having their music cut, edited, or altered to fit the purported needs of the film. All work "for hire," and are alienated from their music to the extent that they do not hold the rights to it, or have any say in what happens to it. Yet within these consistent frameworks, each of these jazz musicians have encountered very unique soundtrack-production opportunities, dependent on the specifics of the particular project, and with whom they were collaborating.

Therefore, I have used a case-study approach in this dissertation in order to both elucidate the hierarchies, conventions, and discourses that structure film soundtrack work in general, as well as to investigate particular individuals' unique experiences in an in-depth manner. While each case study is isolated as a single chapter, the jazz artists' individual circumstances must be considered within the milieu of the broader film art world's structures as examined throughout the dissertation holistically.

I want to make it clear that the discourses of authenticity, risk, and politicality that I address in Chapters 2-4, respectively, are not solely applicable to the case studies with which they are grouped. My intent in delineating these discourses in separate chapters was to give each topic a specialized feature. Yet it is vital to recognized that these phenomena blend together, interacting with one another in all circumstances where jazz artists negotiate their work in the film industry.

I consider the topic of "authenticity" most heavily in Chapter 2, where I argue that shared quests for "dual authenticity" among period film directors and early jazz performers results in the latter's involvement in period film soundtrack production. As I hope to have illustrated, "authenticity" is far from a reified term, and instead contains multiple meanings and dimensions. Accordingly, the concept of "authenticity" in jazz soundtrack production is not reserved for the period-based works of Vince Giordano or Dick Hyman. It takes on significant meanings in the production of the improvised soundtracks of Antonio Sanchez or Mark Isham, in which authenticity is associated with the spontaneous "genuineness" or "liveness" of improvisational music-making, and the connections between such "authentic" expression and the on-screen emotions that the film is attempting to convey. For Spike Lee, Terence Blanchard's jazz-influenced film compositions evince a cultural and racial authenticity; they are the "authentic"

musical expressions of an African-American artist, purportedly injecting his films with genuine black creativity.

The notion of risk (which I examine most thoroughly in Chapter 3) is also not a singular, reified concept, but a constructed, multi-registered phenomenon that intersects with ideology, economics, aesthetics, and commercialism. Perceptions and brands of risk are subjective, informed by the film industry's conventions and expectations, as well as the subjective circumstances surrounding a given project. These variances affect when particular production approaches, such as utilizing jazz soundtracks, are recognized as being either "risky" or "not risky" by filmmaking executives.

For example, Martin Scorsese's utilization of Giordano and the Nighthawks' period jazz soundtracks for *Boardwalk Empire*, which was set in the period when that music would have been popular, could be interpreted as not being a very risky production choice. In fact, it was a highly conventional decision, matching the music to fit the historic setting. A purportedly riskier move was Baz Luhrmann's approach to *The Great Gatsby* soundtrack, which featured a hip-hop soundtrack (along with other modern styles), juxtaposed against a narrative visually set in the 1920s. Luhrmann's soundtrack was original, unexpected, and challenged conventional approaches to utilizing historic-based performances or recordings for period films. Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's utilization of jazz in *Birdman* – as examined in Chapter 3 –was also decidedly risky from a music-content standpoint. It featured solely percussion – virtually unheard of for a film soundtrack. The music itself was also highly obtrusive; it was not "inaudible" or inconspicuous as conventional film scores are expected to be [per Gorbman (1987)].

All of these assessments of risk refer to the perceived commercial viability of the soundtrack, evaluating its "aesthetic risk" value. Yet such "aesthetic risk" is not extractable from considerations of financial risk, production process risk (i.e., in terms of time, budget, feasibility, etc.), and personal risk (i.e., in terms of how the final outcome of the project might affect one's reputation on a creative or political level). These varying layers of risk assessment are continually in dialogue with one another, sometimes supporting each other, and at other times coming into conflict with one another. Any study of risk assessment regarding film production must take these complexities into consideration.

For example, whereas Sanchez's score for *Birdman* may have seemed risky in its unconventionality, it actually may have been perceived as risk-reducing from a budgetary standpoint. More specifically, the economic investment of hiring a single artist to record the soundtrack in one or two recording sessions (without rehearsals, since Sanchez' score was improvised), is inherently significantly cheaper than hiring a full orchestra or multiple personnel to write, rehearse, and record a film soundtrack over a longer period of time. Therefore, what may seem risky to some filmmakers under certain circumstances, may seem not risky to other filmmakers under other circumstances.

In essence, any examinations of how discourses of risk and risk aversion affect artists' work in film industry production must critically examine risk as a multi-dimensional construction that is constantly in dialogue with the film world's conventions, expectations, and ideologies. Risk takes on different meanings in different circumstances and for different people, and is negotiated at the tense intersections of art and commerce, of experimentation and commercial appeal. As illustrated throughout the previous chapters, it also engages with discourses of authenticity, political ideology, personal creativity, and collaborative production.

And while I focus most overtly on political ideology in jazz soundtrack performance when analyzing Terence Blanchard's film work, I hope it is clear that personal politics plays a significant role in all artists' negotiations of their own creativity and practices in film soundtrack production, regardless of how explicitly they are able to express those ideologies in their musical works. As I discuss in my Vince Giordano case study, his passionate ideologies about his desires and practices as an early-jazz recreationist significantly influence his attitudes about his film soundtrack work. While Mark Isham, Dick Hyman, and Antonio Sanchez have been less vocal about their political and ideological leanings, one must not assume that their own personal drives and attitudes do not influence the types of film soundtrack gigs that they take, or how they think and create in these circumstances.

Therefore – just as these topics of authenticity, risk, and politicality weave throughout each of the chapter case studies, they also weave throughout the dissertation as connecting threads in constant dialogue with one another, informing the circumstances of each case study in unique ways.

Art Worlds and Individual Creativity

This project is greatly informed by a sociological, art world perspective, which understands art work production (i.e., film production) as the collaborative result of a cooperative network of personnel operating within shared structures and conventions. This perspective challenges readings of film industry production as the result of solitary, independent artists, who are uninfluenced by institutional structures or expectations.

My emphasis on individual creativity throughout this dissertation may initially appear to work against this art world approach. Throughout the previous case studies, I highlight the

creative decisions made by particular jazz artists in their work on film soundtracks, as well as the creative choices made by the "maverick" filmmakers with whom they worked. Yet, as I seek to have demonstrated, art world production and individual creativity are not at odds with one another. Personal creativity is actually a fundamental component of culture industry production. Creativity is a category of labor within these film industry structures.

I am not intending to reify the notion of individual creativity as the singular method of artistic production, but instead to illustrate how individual laborers' creative practices cooperatively intersect in art world production. For example, the unique development of the film *Birdman* was the product of the individual creative efforts of multiple personnel: director Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's conception of the screenplay and his desire to film it with a "gritty, live" aesthetic; cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki's innovative approach to filming the narrative in a single, continuous cinematic shot; and musician Antonio Sanchez's improvisational creativity in developing the score; among others. In such circumstances, individual creativity and agency are not in conflict with collaborative art world production, but an integral component of it (albeit influenced by the structures and expectations of the art world itself).

Although my project looks specifically at how jazz composers/recording musicians contribute negotiate their own creative practices within these art world structures, these are certainly not the only applicable studies suitable for this topic. Within sociological analyses of the film art world alone, scholars could investigate how a plethora of "artistic" personnel balance their own creative agency in their film industry labor, including production designers, actors, cinematographers, and many others. By continually advancing such scholarship, we will

contribute to making our understanding of the complexities of film art world production even more robust and nuanced.

Why Jazz? : Separate Art Worlds' Intersections

You may ask, why jazz? How are the case studies examined in these chapters any different than any other circumstances where musicians or composers work on a film score? I will be honest and say that my reasoning for examining jazz artists behind-the-scenes work in film was personally-driven. I am a jazz player, and have often been interested in jazz's intersections with popular culture (film included), and what other jazz performers' lives and work experiences are like. In thinking about jazz artists' work in film, I became aware that the predominant literature examining jazz-film intersections focused on the music's on-screen representations and semiotic meanings, not the jazz artists' involvement in production. I wanted to investigate these phenomena.

There have been a few texts that examine film score production through a sociological lens [Faulkner (1971; 1983); Morgan (2000); Karlin and Wright (2004)], looking specifically at the experiences of regular film-industry composers and studio musicians. This literature provided a starting point for my own investigations. But in choosing to study the experiences of artists who both created film scores *and* maintained full-time careers as performing jazz musicians, I introduced the added layer of investigating the film soundtrack work of artists who are actively involved in a *separate* art world, with its own expectations, conventions, and practices.

The jazz art world's self-identification around the art of individual improvisation made the prospect of this study especially fascinating. Contemporary jazz culture places high value on individuality, experimentation, and anti-commercialism. Accordingly, this upholding of jazz as

an "autonomous art" generates increased tension for those providing alienated labor within the hierarchical structures of film industry production. When working in film, these artists' must address these internal ideologies alongside the expectations placed upon them by filmmakers and film industry executives. They will not necessarily have the same opportunities or flexibility for experimentation as they might on the bandstand, or even in the recording studio. They must adjust their conventional jazz art world practices to allow them to work productively and collaboratively on film projects, negotiating their own agency within these new structures of power and convention.

In addition, the relative rarity of jazz soundtracks within the last several decades makes these analyses unique. True, the last couple of years have featured a proliferation of jazz biopics and jazz-themed films, which have utilized jazz-based soundtracks. Yet beyond these very recent examples, jazz film soundtracks are largely nonexistent, with the exception of those performed by the artists in these chapters. In choosing to examine these artists' work in film, I sought to investigate the unique ways that jazz – as an unconventional soundtrack genre – could potentially disrupt the expectations of the film world, and affect the creative processes of film soundtrack production in interesting ways.

But I also want to be clear that jazz artists' work in film is not inherently "more special" or "more creative" than the works of any other musicians coming from separate art world. Pauline Reay (2004) has discussed various rock and popular music artists' involvement in writing film scores for both mainstream and independent film productions. One could also investigate the film soundtrack contributions of artists coming from musical backgrounds in folk, electronic music, world music, classical art music – the list is virtually endless. Just as the jazz artists in these pages have done, these disparate artists working in film must also negotiate the

tensions between their own creative practices and art world conventions with the expectations they encounter in their film production labor. It is my goal that the present work has encouraged my readers to think more broadly about these possibilities, and will incite further investigation of other artists' experiences in film industry production.

Future Studies: The Jazz Biopics

By way of conclusion, I want to address a topic that is sure to be on the radar of anyone examining the recent intersections between jazz and film: the re-emergence of the "jazz biopic." In essence, the jazz biopic is a narrative that is thematically constructed around a main character who is a jazz musician (or jazz musicians). I use the term "biopic" to refer to both biographical (i.e., based on the lives of real jazz figures) and fictionalized accounts. Within the last two years, four mainstream jazz biopic productions have been released: *Whiplash* (2014, a fictionalized account of an aspiring jazz drummer and his abusive jazz performance teacher), *Bessie* (2015, about legendary blues singer Bessie Smith), *Miles Ahead* (2015, about jazz trumpeter Miles Davis), and *Born to Be Blue* (2015, about jazz trumpeter and vocalist Chet Baker). This proliferation emerges out of a relative dearth of jazz-themed films since the release of *Bird*, '*Round Midnight*, *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, and *Mo' Better Blues* in the 1980s and early '90's. The motivations behind this re-emergence would themselves be a fascinating topic of study, analyzed through the lenses of risk, commercialism, and racial and cultural politics.

I did not focus on jazz musicians' work in jazz-themed films throughout my dissertation (with the exception of my analysis of *Mo' Better Blues*, which was provided to illustrate Spike Lee's attitudes toward jazz, as manifested in the production choices he made in the making of that particular film). My primary reason was simply that when I began this project, the "inner

circle" jazz artists whose work I was engaging with were not involved in producing soundtracks for these types of films. Therefore, I overlooked them in favor of examining the films that my case study interviewees were actually involved in.

That said, jazz artists' involvement in producing soundtracks for jazz-themed films is certainly an area that is worthy of study. In a future manifestation of this research, I would like to integrate case studies that also examine these circumstances, investigating how jazz artists' negotiate their own practices in these settings, and how these cases compare to the non-jazz-themed film production scenarios that I have been examining in this project. How are they similar? How are they different? Who are the artists involved in these projects, and how actively are they involved in the soundtrack production process (i.e., are they actively involved in discussions with the directors, or do they simply record the music, which is then laid into the soundtrack by a music editor)?

These particular examples generate new ways of thinking about the topics of risk, authenticity, ideology, and creative agency in relation to jazz soundtrack production. For example, the usage of jazz music in jazz-themed films is highly *conventional* – unlike in some of the case studies examined in the previous chapters. It is expected. Therefore, its production is less likely to challenge film industry structures or production conventions, and is not likely to be perceived as risky.

In terms of creative agency, the jazz artists performing for these soundtracks are often placed in positions where they are expected to create jazz music in ways that are already familiar to them – recording jazz tunes in the recording studio (which will ultimately be laid into the film). Much of the jazz music recorded for these films is featured diegetically, functioning as the soundtrack to jazz performances visually depicted onscreen. Therefore, the music often sounds

just as a tune might sound at a jazz performance (although not often featured in its entirety). Improvised solos are common, and the music is not often expected to fulfill the functions of narrative cueing, continuity, invisibility, and emotional signification that a conventional Hollywood film score might.

The discourse of "authenticity" is vital to any critical consideration of soundtrack production in jazz biopics. These circumstances are not unlike Giordano's work in producing period jazz soundtracks, in which many of the pieces performed are contemporary re-creations of jazz pieces originally-performed by the jazz artist whom the movie is about. For example, in *Born to Be Blue*, the soundtrack is comprise of a number of Chet Baker's signature tunes re-recorded by the David Braid Quartet, featuring Kevin Turcotte on trumpet and Ethan Hawke (who plays Baker in the film) on vocals.[366] The same considerations of authenticity that I examined in Chapter 2 play out in these soundtrack productions. How much fidelity to the original is expected? Is it more "authentic" to make it more accessible to modern-day audiences?

Again, these are all considerations for a future study. I am interested to see if this present interest in jazz-themed films, as well as jazz-oriented film soundtracks, continues to prevail in the coming decades.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, this dissertation serves as an interdisciplinary text that examines the on-the-ground experiences of the primary jazz artists working in film today. These specific examinations bring new perspectives to the study of jazz in film, and to the study of creativity within industry labor more broadly. I investigate real human work, specifically how real musicians negotiate their

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[366] "Born to Be Blue: Media from the Motion Picture," *Rhino Media*, http://media.rhino.com/press-release/born-be-blue-music-motion-picture.

individual creativity and agency when working within particular cultural industry structures. On a base level, this a phenomenon that many people working within a neoliberal society encounter in their own lives, negotiating their own agency and desires with the expectations of the labor structures that they work within.

My intent is that this project urges readers to think beyond what appears on-screen when "jazz goes to the movies," and to consider what happens behind-the-scenes when jazz actually "gets to the movies." The unique collaborative and creative products and experiences that come out of these circumstances are examples of the types of things we discover when we examine art world productions on its boundaries. I hope that through this project, I have laid the groundwork for further investigation of jazz artists' work in film, as well as in other cross-disciplinary mediums, and have led my readers to want to interrogate the rich experiences, negotiations, and new productions that occur at art worlds' intersections.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY AND DISCOGRAPHY

Filmography (Films Discussed and/or Analyzed)

Afterglow. DVD. Directed by Alan Rudolph. 1997.

Anatomy of a Murder. Directed by Otto Preminger. 1959.

The Aviator. Directed by Martin Scorsese. 2004.

Birdman. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. 2014.

Boardwalk Empire, Seasons 1 – 5. Produced by Martin Scorsese and Terence Winter. 2010-2014.

Elevator to the Gallows (or *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*). Directed by Louis Malle. 1958.

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