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Michael Brendan Baker Randolph Jordan Robynn J. Stilwell

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Table of Contents

Editor's Note	2
Contributors	3
Articles	
Notes on the Rockumentary Renaissance —Michael Brendan Baker	5
Musical Modelling: The Charismatic Teacher and Learning through Music in Television Documentary —Robynn J. Stilwell	13
Location, Location, Location: Music, Place, and Ecocriti- cism in the <i>National Parks Project</i> —Rebecca Coyle and Philip Hayward	21
The Place of Music in <i>Jazz</i> —Maurice Charland	29
"Oh What a Beautiful City": Performing Transitional Van- couver in the CBUT's <i>City Song</i> —Randolph Jordan	35

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Editor's Note

When considered as separate filmic entities and schools of thought, MUSIC and DOCUMENTARY have each attracted a wealth of research. Both categories can be easily mapped: aesthetic, theoretical, and technological foundations take root, experimentations with form may flourish from those foundations, and the evolution of a film or musical composition can be traced back chronologically. Once these topics overlap to become the less-studied Music IN Documentary, that concreteness dissipates into abstraction; evidence of generic or stylistic movements associated with documentary, musical, or musicological traditions decomposes, giving way to an anti-movement that encompasses the more fluid history of music's interaction with documentary at large.

While Music in Documentary is a narrow area of study, the technological innovations associated with both "music" and "documentary" effectively open it up. The once-crank operated 16mm camera that could capture and expose grains of truth is now a palm-sized device that can shoot, edit, and broadcast high definition music performances on the fly. We can barely remember a time before nature documentaries had lush orchestration, before the talking heads of expository documentaries became the 'bobble heads' of reality television, or before self-made music videos, mashups, and audition tapes flooded YouTube. The proliferation of these new platforms and the dawning of the do-it-yourself user have in some ways unleashed the true power and reach of "music" and "documentary" across the burgeoning global village.

In this regard, the topic we have chosen reconciles a virtually uncharted zone of film studies with the 21st century everyman's metanarrative. Evidence of mediation, which occupies such a complex position in documentary discourse because of its long-held insistence on providing audiences with objective views of their filmic subjects, becomes a compulsory facet of discussion. The self-reflexive position of the camera and sound equipment, as well as the felt presence of the director, are authenticating elements in documentary practice, rather than components that encourage a distancing effect between the filmmaker, subject, and viewer. This distinctly contemporary outlook is now being applied to films from decades past, which ignites new interpretations of the texts that comprise the vast and varied canon of documentary, from the conventional to the experimental. Thus, the various intersections of "music" and "documentary" are interdisciplinary, multimedia-oriented, and ubiquitous. With this issue of Cinephile, it is our goal to provide a sanctuary for those intersections.

Michael Brendan Baker's piece, "Notes on the Rockumentary Renaissance," surveys rockumentary's history

and picks apart its industrial trends, arguing that while rockumentary technology and distribution platforms have changed, its iconography and representational strategies have not. Robynn J. Stilwell's essay whisks readers away to the realm of the informational television documentary, introducing BBC's Scottish geologist Iain Stewart as a 'charismatic teacher' whose methods of teaching both acknowledge and build upon those of Sir David Attenborough and Carl Sagan. Stilwell uses a series of close musicological analyses to explore the ways in which Stewart's enthusiastic methods of explanation rely on music and ambient sounds to illustrate audience understanding. Philip Hayward and the late Rebecca Coyle's co-written piece on Canada's government-funded National Parks Project asks the reader (and active spectator) whether a nature documentary aesthetic combined with musical performance holds any productive cultural currency when it is situated outside of ecocinema's morally charged impetus. Maurice Charland's essay orients viewers within the world of 1930s American jazz, using Ken Burns' extensive television documentary series *Jazz* as his subject matter. By transplanting the theories of Ben Winters onto the realm of documentary film, Charland complicates the usual dichotomy of diegetic and non-diegetic music in favour of positioning the music we hear within a timeless space. Illuminating the potential for soundscape research on a local scale, Randolph Jordan uses an archival film from 1961 entitled *City Song* to resuscitate a bygone era when folk music in coffeehouses and neon signage were staple ingredients of Vancouver's topography. He argues that the soundtrack of this performative documentary not only conveys the growing pains of a city in transition, but that the city itself is a stage.

To our contributors, a variegated team with kaleidoscopic interests, we extend heartfelt thanks. We also owe gratitude to the members of our editorial board: Claire Davis, Kevin Hatch, Molly Lewis, Will Ross, Kelly St-Laurent, and Angela Walsh. We acknowledge the support of our faculty advisor Ernest Mathijs, Lisa Coulthard for inspiring this issue's topic, and the fundraising efforts of Joshua Ferguson. Profound thanks to our visual artist Nova Zheng, who expertly combines the documentary-style realism of the photographic medium with colourful embellishments to signify music. Her imaginative use of multiple exposure ensures that one can never be certain about what is seen or heard, which makes the depth of these pieces bottomless. Finally, we would like to thank Soo Min Park for her willingness to take on the full weight of the layout work for this issue of Cinephile so enthusiastically.

— Adam Bagatavicius & Paula Schneider

Contributors

Michael Brendan Baker is Professor of Film Studies in the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at Sheridan College. He holds a Ph.D. in Communication Studies from McGill University. He is author of numerous book chapters and journal articles on a range of subjects including documentary, popular music and film, and new media. Baker is co-editor, with Tom Waugh and Ezra Winton, of *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (McGill-Queen's, 2010) and sits on the editorial board of the Canadian Journal of Film Studies. He is presently completing a book manuscript, *Rockumentary: An Incomplete History of the Popular Music Documentary*.

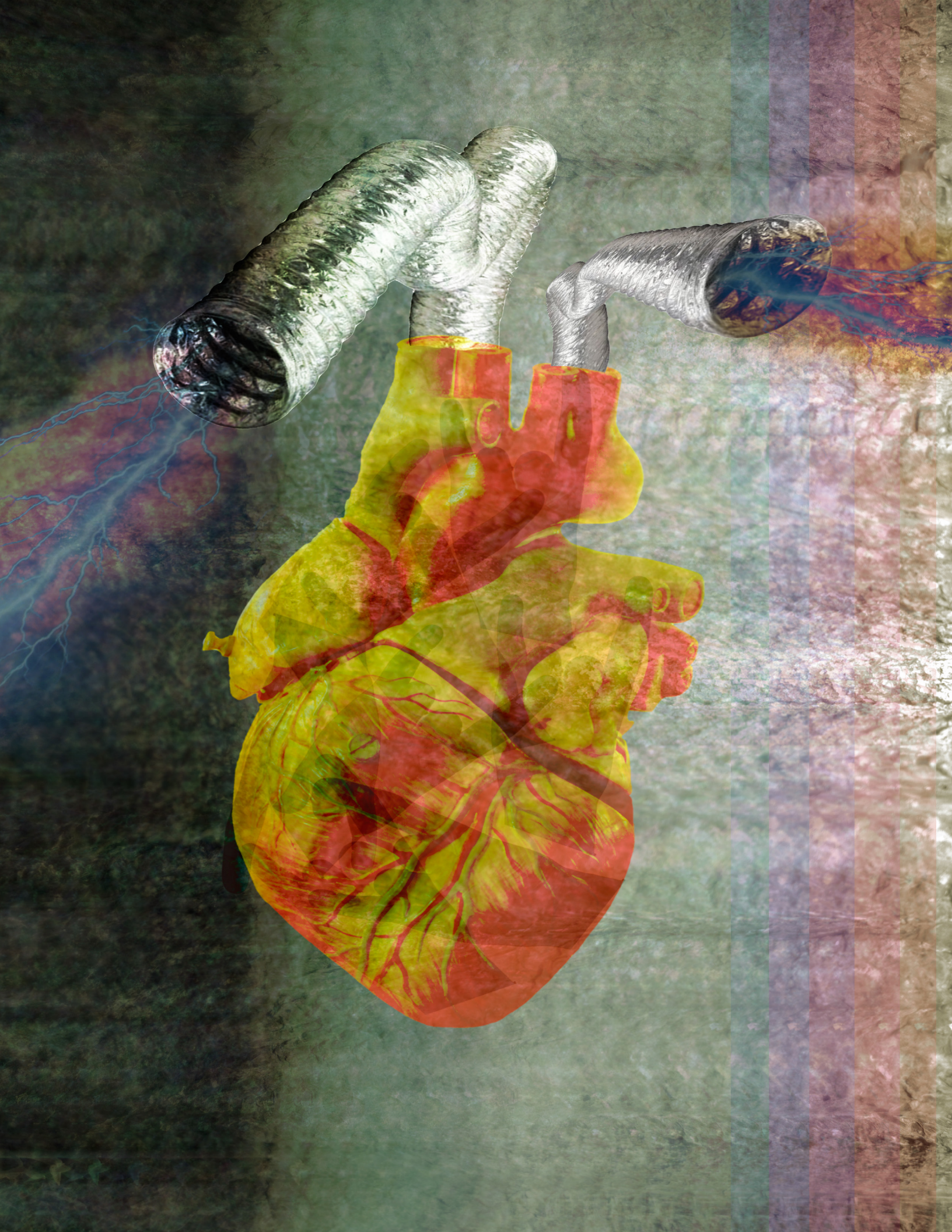
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Robynn J. Stilwell is a musicologist whose research interests centre on the meaning of music as cultural work, including the interaction of music and movement in such media as film, video, television, dance, and sport. Publications include essays on Beethoven and cinematic violence, musical form in Jane Austen, rockabilly and "white trash," figure skating, French film musicals, psychoanalytic film theory and its implications for music and for female subjects, and the boundaries between sound and music in the cinematic soundscape. She has co-edited three volumes: *The Musical: Hollywood and Beyond* (Intellect, 2000) with Bill Marshall; and *Changing Tunes: Issues in Music and Film* (Ashgate, 2006) in addition to *Composing for the Screen in the USSR and Germany* (Indiana University Press, 2007), both with Phil Powrie. Her current project is a study of audiovisual modality and genre in television, and the ways television draws from and transforms its precedents in film, theatre, radio, and concert performance, with an eye toward the aesthetic implications for technological convergence.

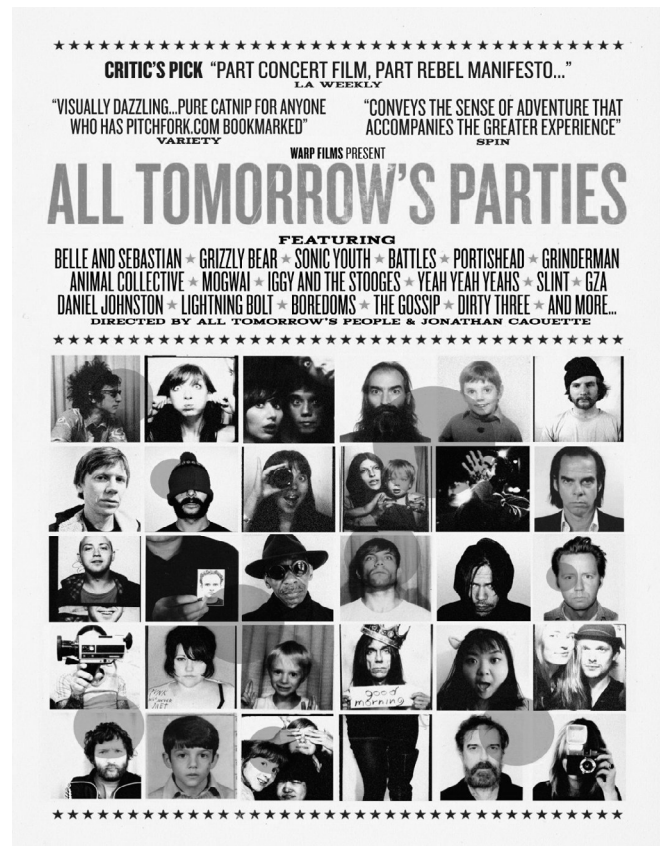


Michael Brendan Baker

Notes on the Rockumentary Renaissance

2009 saw the release of *All Tomorrow's Parties* (Jonathan Caouette), a feature-length film documenting the history of the acclaimed artist-curated annual music festival of the same name on the occasion of its tenth anniversary. The film was compiled and curated by a young filmmaker, Caouette, who burst onto the scene several years earlier with an autobiographical documentary (*Tarnation*, 2003) made with iMovie, Apple's entry-level video editing software. *All Tomorrow's Parties* is comprised of footage shot over the course of a decade on a range of media formats — including Super 8mm, 16mm, DV, and 35mm still-photography — by a mix of professional filmmakers, amateur videographers, and attendees of the yearly festival and its satellite events. Funded in part and “released” by internationally recognized music label Warp Records, the film premiered in the 24 Beats Per Second program of the annual South by Southwest music festival, secured theatrical distribution, appeared at special screening engagements featuring live musical performances from bands featured in the film, streamed online for free at a leading new music website (Pitchfork Media), and appeared on DVD and Blu-Ray home video formats at the end of 2010. Five years after its release, there is still no better example of the life-cycle and vibrancy of the contemporary rockumentary genre than *All Tomorrow's Parties* with its flow across multitudinous creative, cultural, and industrial networks emblematic of our contemporary moment of (trans)media convergence.¹ Moreover, there is no better evidence in support of a proposition I have offered elsewhere: rockumentary is an aesthetically rich and commercially viable documentary genre notable for its visual style, innovation in the area of film sound and image technology, and the ways in which it organizes a complex system of socio-cultural and industrial

1. Media convergence is described by Henry Jenkins as “[...] the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who's speaking and what they think they are talking about” (Jenkins 2).



interactions (Baker 7). The genre occupies a resonant place within larger histories of film and popular music culture and directly impacts contemporary audiovisual works organized around popular music. The ever-growing number of media objects in theatres, online, and at home invested in the documentary representation of popular music suggest we are in the midst of the genre's expansion and resurgence.

Rockumentaries are, generally speaking, documentary films about rock music and related idioms, and usually feature some combination of performance footage, interviews, and undirected material. The genre arrived when it did because of the profile of rock music within youth culture and the transformation of the music industry, and it



was delivered to the screen with tools and technology newly available to filmmakers at the time. Rockumentary emerges in the 1960s as part of a larger shift in the character and content of Western youth culture and popular music, preceded by Burt Stern's seminal work of film reportage *Jazz on A Summer's Day* (1960). The genre's swift ascent to the status of the theatrical documentary *par excellence* through the latter part of the 1960s and the 1970s occurs directly in proportion to the growth of rock music as a cultural and economic force (Baker 183). A series of high-profile films, soundtrack releases, and box-office success in the 1970s permanently establish the rockumentary as a mainstream nonfiction film genre with an identifiable stable of classics (*Dont Look Back*, 1967; *Monterey Pop*, 1968; *Gimme Shelter*, 1970; *Woodstock*, 1970; *The Concert for Bangladesh*, 1972; *The Last Waltz*, 1978) before diminishing opportunities for theatrical distribution in the era of the Hollywood blockbuster are mitigated by new exhibition outlets in the form of home video and cable television.

The genre consists of five broad currents and trends. Rockumentary biographies are an explicitly hybrid form encompassing interviews, live performance sequences, and observational footage (*Jimi Hendrix*, 1973; *Joe Strummer: The Future Is Written*, 2007; *The Punk Singer*, 2013). These films derive their allure from the featured artist's status within rock culture and popular culture at-large. Concert and other performance-based rockumentaries span the gamut from rigorously choreographed and composed audiovisual spectacles to low-budget, sparsely edited, fan-made films and videos (*Stop Making Sense*, 1984; *Sign O the Times*, 1987; *Shine A Light*, 2007). By any conservative measure, the concert rockumentary is the largest category of work within the genre. A companion to both the biography and concert currents is the 'tour film' or 'making-of' rockumentary (*Let It Be*, 1970; *Journey: Frontiers & Beyond*, 1983; *Truth or Dare*, 1991). Unlike biographies, which span an artist's entire career or the concert film that generally represents a single event, these films are focused on the events surrounding a whole tour or the act of making a single album or planning a special event. A fourth trend within the rockumentary genre is ethnographic studies of rock music, its sub-genres, and subcultures (*Decline of Western Civilization*, 1981; *Buena Vista Social Club*, 1998; *Heavy Metal in Baghdad*, 2007). While other types of rockumentary serve as documents of rock culture and its participants, the ethnographic rockumentary makes explicit claims about the value of the research object and the filmmaker's purpose for documenting the music, musicians, and audiences in



question. The last type of rockumentary, the compilation or archival project, is the most common made-for-television music documentary but it is less often produced for theatrical release (*The Kids Are Alright*, 1979; *The History of Rock'n'Roll*, 1995; *Crossfire Hurricane*, 2012). More than any other type of rockumentary, the compilation or archival project relies on the structure and expository mode of address of classical documentaries with the subordination of the images to a singular rhetorical position and a reliance on didactic commentary (Nichols 34). While a single film might adopt various approaches resulting in hybrid forms and sub-genres, rockumentaries are often best described by the approach that governs its structure and mode of address to the audience.

Notwithstanding the experimentation and innovation that naturally resides in such a large and diverse corpus of

work, rockumentary is a decidedly conservative generic form in terms of its visual style and narrative structures. The basic sonic and photographic strategies of the genre — conventionalized in the late-1960s and early-1970s — were subject to very little revision or reinvention in the decades that followed their emergence. Behind-the-scenes moments are largely observational in nature, interviews are garden-variety talking heads, and the rockumentary soundtrack honours the professional practices of the record studio in combination with live audio production, while the visual representation of musical performance within the corpus is largely limited to two basic approaches. The journalistic strategy for the visual representation of musical performance is “typified by its clear compositional qualities (i.e. stable camera position; sharp focus; balanced lighting) and commitment to a coherent representation of both the performer and performance space [...] It strives to provide an unambiguous photographic record of the performance and is amenable to conventions of analytical editing” (Baker 97). The impressionistic strategy, on the other hand, “offers a highly stylized, often abstract representation of the performance. There is less an interest in documenting the space of the performance than in communicating an emotional or psychological dimension of the music through formal techniques often evinced in experimental practice (i.e. instability of the frame; unusual compositions; unconventional focus and lighting; plastic cutting)” (116). With all of this in mind, rockumentary fails to deliver on the claims of rebellion which rock music and rock culture profess to embody and embrace (accepting, of course, the complexity and contradictory nature of these claims within the context of the global entertainment industry). Through the 2000s, however, there is mounting evidence that the widespread availability and ease-of-use of digital media technologies, combined with the exponential growth of new media platforms for the distribution and exhibition of work, is reinvigorating the rockumentary genre and reconnecting it with mainstream audiences. We might understand this moment as the rockumentary renaissance.

The first signs of this renewal are discernible at the dawn of the millennium: a resurgence in popularity enhanced, in part, by the consolidation of DVD as the premiere home video format (and the re-release of many of the aforementioned classics of the genre on this new format), as well as a degree of mainstream interest in new theatrical releases unheard of for music documentaries dating back at least to the early 1990s. The release of the Wilco making-of portrait, *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart* (Sam Jones, 2002), and the controversy surrounding the behind-the-scenes Metallica tell-all, *Some Kind of Monster* (Joe Berlinger & Bruce Sinofsky, 2003), exemplify this renewed critical interest in the genre which encouraged producers to emulate the popular and financial success of these films.² By

2. *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart* is also noteworthy for its marketing and release. The film not only appeared at film festivals,

I AM TRYING TO BREAK YOUR HEART A FILM ABOUT WILCO BY SAM JONES



the end of the decade, new approaches to form and subject matter fostered in part by digital technology (and the rapid evolution of video compression which permanently established the web as a distribution and exhibition space) had subtly re-shaped the rockumentary, transforming its conventions into a vernacular style immediately recognizable to audiences across generational boundaries. As the global audience grows larger, the ability of cultural institutions like film festivals and new media platforms like Vimeo and Pitchfork Media (specifically, the Pitchfork.tv speciality area) to reach out to niche interest groups and subcultures make the natural audience for rockumentary easier to target. The aforementioned South by Southwest music festival and the esteemed Sundance Film Festival have grown to become destination events and critical marketplaces for fans and distributors of music documentaries in North America and the United Kingdom. Film festivals with programming dedicated entirely to music documentaries, and rockumentary in particular, are popping up with increasing frequency

art cinemas, and in a multi-disc DVD package courtesy of the boutique imprint, Plexifilm, but also leveraged (and fed) the publicity surrounding the unique circumstances of the newly released *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* (Nonesuch, 2002) album to execute the sort of multi-format media event usually reserved for big budget Hollywood spectacles.



— noteworthy examples include *Sound Unseen* (Minneapolis), *Don't Knock the Rock* (Los Angeles), and *Film Pop* (Montreal) — and websites like Pitchfork and Vice now effectively serve as de facto producers of music documentaries on both mainstream and niche artists and subject matter. Most tellingly, corporate interests now commit millions of dollars to the production of live-streaming concert events (American Express's "Unstaged" series) and music videos because of the value of online venues as advertising space; Sony Music Entertainment and Universal Music Group's Vevo-branded music videos grossed more than \$200 million in advertising in 2012 (Karp) and receives additional revenue depending on the ownership of the recording and its performance.

The audiovisual aesthetic of these non-narrative works is often described as "post-classical" in terms of their relationship to traditional conceptions of cinema (Bordwell; Manovich) while acknowledging its undeniable bond to music video-style as it developed in earlier decades (Goodwin; Vernallis). Most recently, Carol Vernallis has expanded upon Bordwell's conception of "intensified continuity" — an evolution of classical Hollywood style which includes, among other things, a sizeable decrease in the average shot length in narrative films and a willingness on the part of filmmakers to complicate narrative space through the disavowal of several conventions of continuity editing including eyeline matches, cutting-on-action, and camera placement (Bordwell) — to describe "intensified audiovisual aesthetics" (Vernallis 278) across digital media platforms, focusing specifically on YouTube, music videos, and 'post-classical digital cinema'. These intensified audiovisual aesthetics move beyond Bordwell's conceptualization of post-classical narrative through a "heightened" use of traditional and still-emerging sound and image techniques that "create rifts in form that permeate all the way to deep structure" (38). Vernallis celebrates the music video as "a viable site to develop style and technique, and to discover means for communicating musical experience" (26). I would submit that the booming production of online, nonfictional musical shorts typified by the in-house productions of Pitchfork Media

and independent creators is a critical link in this chain of invention and influence connecting post-classical cinema, music videos, and the rockumentary genre.

The preponderance of nonfiction musical shorts and features now produced and distributed primarily with digital and networked technologies demonstrate two especially curious results of the ubiquity of visual representations of popular music performance as it relates to rockumentary aesthetics. The first is an emptying-out of conventional formal stylistics that results in material fitting neither the *journalistic* nor the *impressionistic* strategies for the visual representation of musical performance outlined earlier. A new generation of trained cinematographers and videographers such as France's Mathieu Saura (aka Vincent Moon) are foregrounding the presence of their increasingly mobile cameras within the space of the performance in ways that were truly unattainable (if not completely unimaginable) to previous generations of rockumentarians, effectively collapsing the observational style of classic rockumentaries with varying degrees of interactivity that calls attention to itself. These new works re-imagine the *liveness*³ of popular music performance by situating the artist in commonplace environments (i.e. private homes, elevators, cafes, public transit, tourist attractions) and capturing the performance in a single continuous take — it is not the illusion of co-presence between the performer and home audience, but rather the co-presence of the performer and the filmmaker-as-creative-force who serves as a surrogate for the viewer as she carves out the performance from quotidian spaces. In online series such as *The Take Away Show* and *Southern Souls*, on-location performances appear to occur spontaneously: there is no clear introduction of the per-

3. Originally defined by Philip Auslander (1999) in the context of mediated spaces or audiovisual events in which the performers and audience are both physically and temporally co-present to one another — a distinction that became necessary with the advent of recorded sound — the concept of *liveness* is adaptable to the digital age with reference to "an interaction produced through our engagement with [an] object and our willingness to accept its claim [that it is, in fact, 'live']" (Auslander 9).

formers apart from on-screen text and no establishing of the technical means by which the performance will be executed (i.e. sound recording devices, additional cameras), just blind faith (or an existing investment in the brand or filmmaker) that sound and image will be effectively captured and communicated in a way that preserves the emotion or energy of the performance. The second consequence of this profusion of rockumentary production is a disavowal of the notion (which gradually emerges within music videos and overtakes the long-form music video format) that the musical performance need not be represented at all. The highly stylized, fictional scenarios featuring popular music soundtracks that defined music videos through the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. *Thriller* 1982 and *Vogue* 1990, respectively) are giving way to a re-investment in nonfictional representations of musical performance and rockumentary's roots in the observational and interactive modes of representation that defined the visual style of the genre in the late-1960s and 1970s.

Perhaps the most curious contemporary example of rockumentary's reach and clear confirmation of its broader cultural impact appears in the form of an interactive digital media project that leverages the history of visual representations of popular music canonized within the genre and the iconic images of specific films for the express purposes of intelligibility and immersion. *The Beatles: Rock Band* (Harmonix, 2009), an example of the rhythm video game genre which focuses on the physical demands of keeping pace with complicated rhythmic cues (both sonic and visual), emphasizes its fidelity to the historical record and its accurate (though not photorealistic) re-creation of various performances and physical environments from the canon of The Beatles on the basis of audio-visual documentary sources — including two rockumentaries: *The Beatles Live at Shea Stadium* (ABC-TV, 1965) and the iconic rooftop concert sequence from *Let It Be* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1970). The faithful reproduction of various mediated audiovisual environments serves both the established narrative of The Beatles' career that structures the gameplay and their cultural mythology. The emphasis on visual evidence by way of the game's evocation of basic conventions of rockumentary's visual stylistics (and the remediation of individual rockumentary images) moves this and other rhythm games into a specific cultural sphere of recognition (one closely associated with the genre's target demography: family and mature player) based in part on the vernacular nature of the rockumentary genre. In these ways, *The Beatles: Rock Band* is distinct from other rhythm games wherein the visual element, while never inconsequential and often indebted to both rockumentary and music video audiovisual aesthetics, is never explicitly historical or nonfictional in its relationship to the musical performance. As a result, *The Beatles: Rock Band* functions as a something like a documentary resource, trading on the evidentiary status of (remediated) documentary images and recordings to enrich the user experience and, ultimately, prompting questions

The Beatles: Rock Band is an overt illustration of the remediation of visual representations of popular music codified within the rockumentary genre...



about the influence of film style upon interactive texts and stoking debates about what a “documentary video game” might be. The design strategy adopted by the creators at Harmonix depends upon routines and practices deeply rooted in ‘older’ forms of audiovisual representation. Thus, *The Beatles: Rock Band* is an overt illustration of the remediation⁴ of visual representations of popular music codified within the rockumentary genre for the purpose of investing a narrow thematic conceit with a rich sense of history and cultural cachet, and it exemplifies Rodowick's theory concerning the *persistence* of the cinematic in this age of the digital and new media with the prominence of cinema's representational strategies in our contemporary audiovisual culture.

Rockumentary films—individually and as a group—make significant contributions to our historical understanding of post-war documentary's development. For this reason alone there is value in turning our critical attention to this corpus. The basic vocabulary for the visual representation of rock music (and popular music in general) in the contemporary moving image has its foundations in the strategies and conventions of a genre that is now fifty

4. With their theory of remediation, Bolter & Grusin argue “what is in fact new [about new media] is the particular way in which each innovation rearranges and reconstitutes the meaning of earlier elements” (Bolter & Grusin 270). Moreover, it is the remediation of a medium (and within a medium) that offers insight to the representational practices of earlier media (Ibid. 49); the act or process of remediation reveals the influence of the earlier media—its technology, techniques and practices—upon new media.

years old. An understanding of the genre, its development, and trajectories, offers deeper insight to the visual style and soundtracks of contemporary audiovisual works invested in popular music, including those within the paradigm of *intensified audiovisual aesthetics*. There is a persistence to the rockumentary, its codes and conventions, that is in no way diminished by its migration across media formats, platforms, and distribution networks (both concrete and virtual). These spaces are especially vital to the development of works which examine heretofore ignored or marginalized subjects in many mainstream, theatrically-released music documentaries like non-Western, non-white identities (*Taqwacore*, 2011), gender identity within popular music (*Who Took the Bomp?*, 2010), and motherhood and the working musician (*Come Worry With Us!*, 2014). The rockumentary renaissance detailed above is doubly confirmed and its consequences expanded as we enlarge our definition of the category to include interactive digital media and other emergent forms of nonfiction storytelling; i.e. video games, database documentaries, and the multimedia journalism often identified as ‘snowfalling’.⁵ It is fair to suggest that we are living in a media moment defined by bounty and the way in which these works flow and converge — rockumentary, its influence, and its progeny are found everywhere.

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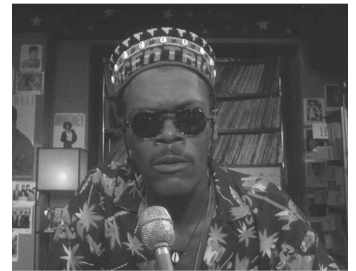
5. “Snowfalling” takes its name from the Peabody Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times multimedia story by John Branch which combined traditional journalistic investigation and reportage with extensive audiovisual supplements (including photographs, maps, 3D modelled animations, video interviews, primary documentary material like 911 emergency recordings) to tell the story of a deadly 2012 avalanche in Washington State, all delivered within a fluid web space executed by a team of designers and programmers who sought to fully integrate the audiovisual elements within the story. Similar multimedia features are now common across the web and a large number of the higher profile examples focus on musical subjects; Pitchfork often packages its feature interviews as ‘snowfalls’ and John Jeremiah Sullivan’s recent “The Ballad of Geeshie and Elvie” for the New York Times brilliantly incorporates audiovisual elements in its recuperation of two essentially ‘lost’ (and seemingly misunderstood) figures from the American vernacular blues tradition, Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas.

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VOL. 53, NO. 4 CONTENTS:

Sony and Local-Language Productions: Conglomerate Hollywood's
Strategy of Flexible Localization for the Global Film Market

Courtney Brannon Donoghue

A Cinema of Revolt: Black Wave Revolution and
Dušan Makavejev's Politics of Disgust

Sarah Hamblin

Life, Love, and Programming: The Culture and
Politics of *WALL-E* and Pixar Computer-Animation

Eric Herhuth

In the Realm of the Senses:
Sensory Realism, Speed, and Hong Kong Martial Arts Cinema

Mary Beltrán

Unpacking a Punch: Transduction and the Sound of Combat Foley in *Fight Club*

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Musical Modelling: The Charismatic Teacher and Learning through Music in Television Documentary

Geologist Iain Stewart is the most recent inheritor of a television tradition of the charismatic teacher who takes viewers on a “personal journey” through a documentary series. Taking the talking head out of the studio and into the museum (*Civilisation: A Personal View* by Kenneth Clark, 1969), historical sites (*The Ascent of Man*, 1973, with Jacob Bronowski), and even a virtual Library of Alexandria (*Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, 1980, with Carl Sagan) gives a television program movement and energy. However, the persistence of direct address maintains a classroom dynamic. These series all, directly or indirectly, stem from the tenure of David Attenborough as controller of BBC2. Attenborough is best known as the nature documentarian whose hushed, urgent cadences give a “you are there” perspective, as if he were whispering information into the viewer’s ear. Both of these models transmit authority, but differ in the relationship between the audience (students), teacher, the subject at hand, and any analytical object that the teacher may use to enter that field. Attenborough’s narrating convention suggests distance between the audience/teacher in the “duck blind” and the subject/object in the field; the personal journey model places the distance between the audience and the teacher/subject/object — the teacher is a performer on a stage, drawing in the audience in a manner that replicates the distance as configured in a typical classroom, with the added cinematic advantages of editing, graphics, and especially music.

One of Attenborough’s strengths as a programmer is formal flexibility. While his own series were marked by his naturalist’s eye, effacing his own presence onscreen (though arguably intensifying his vocal signature), the series that he developed established the “personal journey.” The format centres on a figure we might term the “charismatic teacher” — someone who not only imparts information from a position of authority, but does so in an opinionated and idiosyncratic manner. The extensive use of music in all these series is part of the luxurious presentation that signal them as prestigious productions; it can become part of the on-screen persona of the charismatic teacher, an extension of personal voice. The extent to which music interacts with presentation varies as much as individual styles do, whether

(mostly) historically accurate in *Civilisation* or in the eclectic, polysemic scores of *The Ascent of Man* and *Cosmos*.¹ The music in Attenborough’s documentaries, by contrast, tends toward two extremes: the anthropomorphism of the charismatic fauna in front of the lens, and the spectacularization of landscape, especially in such recent, high-definition explorations as *Planet Earth* (2006) and *Life* (2009).

Stewart seems poised to succeed Attenborough as the BBC’s premier documentarian. He has fronted eleven documentary series since 2004, plus several editions of the BBC’s *Horizon* science series, and, as a former child actor, has a particular ease relating to the camera.² Although the series vary in stylistic approach, each focuses on Stewart’s enthusiasm and energy. He is an unusually kinetic figure: hiking, snorkelling, tree and rock climbing, travelling in small exploratory helicopters or submarines, and occasionally performing truly idiotic — I mean, dangerous — stunts, like descending into a glacial crevasse or setting methane pools alight in the defrosting Siberian tundra.

Stewart’s active, engaging persona, prone to excited utterances in an animated Glaswegian accent, tends to close the gaps in the address, particularly in moments that focus on the emotive aspects of learning: awe, discovery, and understanding. Music is a strong factor in bonding the audience/host/subject/object in those moments. The music models a response from the audience more overtly than in previous documentaries of this stripe, moving beyond mere illustrative function in ways that should aid comprehension

1. I will be discussing these documentaries in more detail in a forthcoming study of genre and modes of representation in television, provisionally entitled *A Window on Convergence*.

2. Stewart’s contemporary, the astronomer Brian Cox, is not quite as prolific and has a different mien. Cox’s documentaries are similarly constructed, but Cox is a more diffident, airy presence and the music is canted much more toward explanation and awe and less toward problem-solving — he’s a “tell” teacher, whereas Stewart is a “show” teacher. Their disciplines have an unavoidable influence; for instance, Cox is often at remote locations to look at the sky, whereas Stewart is there to interact with the location itself. When Cox is in the desert, it is to use the sand as a demonstration of entropy; when Stewart is, it is for the chemical composition of the sand.

and learning. In some instances, music actively manipulates the audience by eschewing historical accuracy to make points immediately legible to an audience through its ability to evoke affect (power, reverence, hedonism). In other cases, Stewart's moments of doubt or fear are underscored in ways that may undercut his authority with the audience but increase their empathy and therefore their receptiveness. In the most recent series, a dynamic melding of manipulated image, graphics, and music mimics the exciting rush of information assimilation, ordering, and comprehension that comes with understanding. This encourages not just learning in the immediate moment, but fosters continued desire for learning by shaping the experience as enjoyable, even exhilarating.

Legibility

Stewart's documentaries, to varying degrees, still use music in familiar ways — theme/logo music, various kinds of illustrative and connotative music (such as pounding surf-punk for a sequence about air surfing to demonstrate the atmosphere's fluid properties), and certainly music for spectacle. While other presenters may evoke awe by implicitly saying "Look at that!", Stewart implies, "Look at this!", such as when he walks, turning and gazing, into the Wave, a location in the Arizona desert where the sandstone has been worn into the shapes of flowing water by the wind. Although his responses appear genuine, he is also modeling desired responses in the audience, and music based on the referential language developed in theatre and film often literally underscores those moments — both highlighting and lying beneath, apparently redundant but also guiding the perception of emotive content.³

Sometimes that response is better elicited by music that foregoes historical and/or cultural accuracy for a more transparent and easily grasped meaning for the, mostly British, audience. A relatively simple example comes in episode four of *Hot Rocks* ("Belief") when Stewart, at the Vatican, describes the religious context of late pagan Rome and the largely secret operation of Christianity. The historical disjunction between the location and the subject is obvious; however, the use of Handel's English coronation anthem "Zadok the Priest" is not. The anthem — even its homophonic, dactylic march rhythms read as Protestant — clashes with both the Catholic Vatican and the late-ancient marginalization of Christianity. On the other hand, the strong opening rhythm evokes imperial authority, matched to looming images of papal statuary and the colonnade that may read as more "Roman" than "Christian" in such short

Music can become part of the on-screen persona of the charismatic teacher, an extension of personal voice.

shots. In this instance, being historically accurate would not so clearly shape the point of institutional power overwhelming the Christian minority.

Similar crosscurrents are attenuated in the next example because of the presumed unfamiliarity of the primary audience with the religion being discussed. In "Indonesia" from *Journeys into the Ring of Fire*, Stewart explains the relationship between ancient animism, Balinese Hinduism, volcanoes, and tourism. The preparations for a significant ritual are accompanied by music that has the restrained, deliberate traits of an Anglican anthem. Even as we move to a procession of Balinese dancers, the editing fits their movements to the hymnic music. This can foster a kind of seamless meaning for those who know nothing about Balinese music and tradition, investing the ritual with the appropriate solemnity from a more familiar source; however, for the probably quite small fraction of the audience familiar with the tradition, the effect is jarring. Both readings are disrupted by a cut-in of Stewart and a Hindu priest speaking at the ritual: the sound was obviously captured at the event, and for a moment, we hear a burst of the loud, fast gamelan music of the ritual, over which they have to shout to be heard.

In an arguably more successful example, also from the "Belief" episode, Stewart takes us to the Milvian Bridge and the story of Constantine's conversion to Christianity. Quick editing intercuts shadows of spear-armed men on horseback cast onto stone-bricked road with Stewart walking and talking in a circle around the camera on the bridge. The sound of clashing swords, horses, armor and shouting together with pounding drums create the impression of battle without straining the budget.

Then we meet Stewart again in the Italian countryside near the Sirente crater lake, in idyllic musical silence as he explains the theory that Constantine's vision of the cross in the sky was the mushroom cloud from a meteorite impact. A local legend describes such an impact during a harvest festival dedicated to the goddess Cybele, amid wine and lascivious dancing. Rather than re-enact this, a sequence of fast editing intercuts vertiginous camera swoops and moving shots of Grecian urns to the driving rhythms of electronic dance music: wildly inaccurate historically, but an effective allusion more kinetic than cultural, as the painted nymphs and satyrs, echoing Stewart's narration, appear to gyrate to the music.

3. Sound theorist Michel Chion calls this effect "added value," where audiences perceive music as merely replicating information that seems self-evident on screen, but in fact the information is either partly or entirely transmitted through the music (5).

Anxiety and Awe

Earth: Power of the Planet (2007) has a noticeable increase in budget from the earlier series and displays the same high definition technology and advanced computer graphics as *Planet Earth*.⁴ This also means travel and adventure for the host, ranging well beyond the Mediterranean scope of *Journeys from the Centre of the Earth* or the focused locations of *Journeys into the Ring of Fire*. Stewart's willingness to do dangerous feats in order to experience geology first-hand is part of his authority. Of course, climbing the face of a frozen waterfall or abseiling into the crater of an active volcano makes for great television (arguably edging the genre toward reality television or extreme sports coverage). It also brings the audience to the coalface of geology, as it were; Stewart can show the transformation of snowpack and ice into a glacier, or use a roiling lava lake to explain the principles of plate tectonics as local convection causes rifting and subduction in miniature. It is research-led teaching in action, demonstrating both what happens and how scientists observe and understand.⁵ Conversely, his moments of doubt and anxiety, while possibly undermining this authority, can heighten the empathetic response — most audience members would understand these moments of hesitation and find them reassuringly human.⁶ Often these moments are themselves musically silent, but framed/primed by anxious music beforehand and awestruck music as Stewart reaches his goal.

One of the richest, and most representative, of these sequences occurs in "Rare Earth," entailing the exploration of a cenote in the Yucatan. These flooded sinkholes are a result of deformation of the limestone by the Chicxulub meteor strike that may have caused the extinction of the dinosaurs. A flyover of the jungle is accompanied by the low, surging strings often associated in the series (and, indeed, many cinematic representations as well as other BBC prestige documentaries) with the deep ocean.⁷ A higher drone

adds a note of tension as we drop down to the team hacking through the underbrush with machetes, accompanied by insets of a crocodile, a jaguar, and a very large spider to amplify the sense of danger amidst the exoticism provided by monkeys and small rodents.

Sitting on the rim of a cenote, Stewart explains the geological feature, then peers over the edge, commenting as with a combination of awe, humour, and apprehension, "It's quite deep, isn't it?". The cave-diving team leader, Bernadette Carrion van Rijn, replies calmly, "It's actually *very* deep," and the music re-enters with a nervous rhythmic pulse as the team rigs up for the descent.

In the first shot from inside the cenote, a narrow shaft of sunlight follows van Rijn down a simple ladder into a rocky void. The frame cuts off both the top and bottom of the ladder, and most of the frame is dark around the climber, fostering a sense of expansive space and human isolation, despite the obvious fact that there's a camera team down there. A solo female vocalise⁸ accompanies van Rijn. The melodic profile features leaps upward of a fourth or more that fall to comforting modal resting places; this surging, rising line and archaic melodic structure evoke a quasi-liturgical awe.^{9, 10}



As she reaches the foot of the ladder and calls up, "Okay, I'm down," light floods the cathedral-like space and the vocalise is joined by the orchestra in a sanctifying plagal ("Amen") cadence. This is almost immediately recontextualized, however, as a half-cadence in another key, opening

4. In his first series, Stewart used groups of schoolchildren in a Roman plaza to demonstrate the movement of magma in the earth's mantle, or water polo players with beach balls to act out the erosion of salt into the sea. These "audience participation" techniques are much cheaper than state-of-the-art graphics, and may be just as effective at engaging learning, whether directly or vicariously through the television; however, they are not as "spectacular".

5. Stewart occasionally mentions his wife's admonitions not to "geologize" on family excursions, briefly piercing the veils between "research" and "personal life" on the one hand and "teacher" and "person" on the other. The osmosis between these conceptually distinct arenas is familiar to anyone who studies something that surrounds us on a daily basis, whether geology or media.

6. Many of these hesitations are cut out of the American versions. While this might simply be for time (such as the time-travelling animations that were cut from *Hot Rocks*), the consistency with which his expressions of nervousness are cut is suggestive of a discomfort with potential degradation of authority.

7. This musical trope dates back at least to Mendelssohn's "Fingal's Cave Overture".

8. A vocalise (pronounced vocal-ese) is a piece of music sung wordlessly.

9. The melody is roughly in E minor with a raised 4th scale degree, which features a stereotypically "exotic" augmented second.

10. Beauty shots of the seething lava lake at Erte Alé ("Volcano") are also accompanied by a different female vocalise, one with Orientalist microtonal ornamentation and pulsating compression vibrato. That vocalise, however, is mixed down almost to the point of inaudibility. The near-subliminal exoticist touch is multivalent: for location (Ethiopia is a long-standing site of the undifferentiated "other"), for danger/fear, but also for seductive allure.

the musical cue up for a vast extension, much like the space the light reveals.¹¹

Stewart climbs down into the beautifully lit cavern and pauses on the ladder to look around and gasp, “Wow!”



The vocalise leaps up to a high dominant, the melodic peak, and falls back on a half-cadence through a descending minor tetrachord, bringing both equilibrium and potential energy.¹²



The music fades as Stewart and van Rijn discuss the cenote water system, and the nervously rhythmic music returns as they bring all their gear down and Stewart imparts geological information and outlines the dangers of cave-diving. Then the music stops again. Suited up for diving in the pool at the base of the cenote, Stewart looks visibly shaken and admits, “I’m not sure if I’m ready for this.” He laughs nervously, “I’ve got all the equipment. But — ah — there’s something about going down into the water when you’re not quite sure where your exit is...” His tempo and volume trail off as he looks back into the distance. Then he says assertively (as if to reassure the audience and perhaps himself), “But I trust Bernadette completely here. She knows

what she’s doing.” Another nervous laugh. “So I’m as ready as I’ll ever be.”

They descend into the clear pool with a delicate lace of medium-to-high pitched drones entering and fading in the musical texture. They sound almost like bells, or a musical approximation of water droplets. Blending the typical illustrative function of documentary music with a tentative texture, this is not the lush, awe-invoking surge of orchestra one might expect right away. Instead, the music mimics an attraction to the beauty and a hesitance about what lies beneath.

The Rush of Understanding

Stewart’s most recent series *Rise of the Continents* (2013) contains sequences that blend legibility and empathy to reflect/mimic the rush of information, insight, and excitement that comes from gathering, processing, and understanding. Quick edits and time-phased images are illustrated with graphic “chalkboard” imagery of chemical equations, diagrams, and charts. Similarly, fragments of Stewart’s narration, reflecting forward and backward in the episode, are impressionistically edited to whooshing sounds and minimalist music.

This complex of representation — complex is both a descriptor and a noun here — is a development of the affective informational bursts in Stewart’s *Earth: The Climate Wars* (2008).¹³ In that series, the information is not always directly relevant or even legible, but adds context and even emotive punch: print from a report flashes by too quickly for comprehension, but the volume of information is conveyed; test footage of a Nike Zeus missile is not directly relevant to a discussion of a climate report, but underlines the researchers’ ties to the US government and the defence industry.¹⁴

11. Cadences are like punctuation; a full cadence is closed like a full stop/period, a half-cadence is open like a comma or semi-colon. A closed, plagal cadence on one tonic (final or “home” pitch) can re-read as an open, authentic half-cadence on another tonic, depending upon the syntax around those particular melodic formulations and chordal structures. The modulation (a shift made by such a syntactical recontextualization) to a third-related key also has a long history of association with both magic and transcendence.

12. A descending minor tetrachord has been characteristic of a lament since at least the 18th century; it outlines a half-cadence, but is typically repeated to form a closed loop.

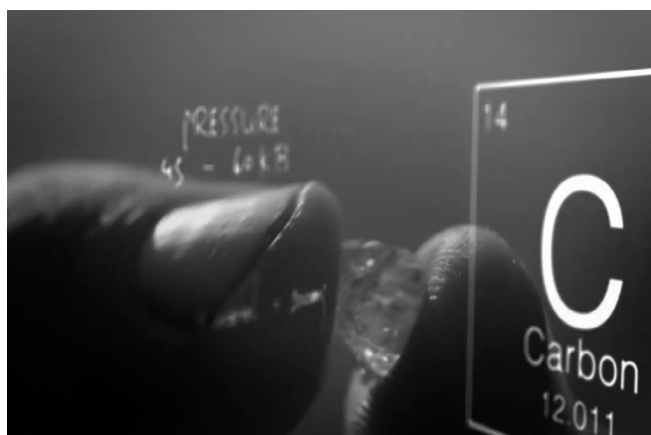
13. For extended discussion, see Stilwell (2013).

14. Another precursor, if not direct influence, comes from the television series *Numb3rs* (2005–10). This procedural centred on a mathematical genius, Charlie, who assisted his FBI-agent brother in cases with his ability to detect patterns. Two different types of special sequences feature in the series: “CharlieVision,” in which Charlie processes information and forms models; and “AudienceVision,” in which Charlie explains his insight to both the diegetic and non-diegetic audiences, usually using an extended metaphor, such as comparing a forgery to the way one runner trying to follow in another runner’s footsteps on a beach will necessarily blur the original footsteps as the second step degrades the footprint in the sand. Both types of sequences use fast editing, altered playback

The “understanding” sequences in *Rise of the Continents* start with a burst of information, as if laying out the tools the audience will need and supplying them with a burst of the excitement a good teacher demonstrates for students. What had been projected only by Stewart’s energetic presence in earlier documentaries has now become an externalized model of the teaching/learning process.

In “Africa,” a trip to a diamond mine in Sierra Leone illustrates the distinctive qualities of the five ancient cratons that underlie the continent and generate diamonds. Standing on the edge of the mine pit, Stewart holds a tiny rough diamond to the light between his thumb and forefinger. An inserted wide shot of the mine is covered with hexagonal light flare, as if we are looking through the diamond.

The image is superimposed over itself in jumpy phases as we hear similar superimposition of fragments of Stewart’s future narration; certain words (“carbon”, “pressure”) stand out in relief as the carbon unit from the periodic table, chemical symbols, and a floating molecular model of a diamond turning before Stewart’s eye fades in and out.

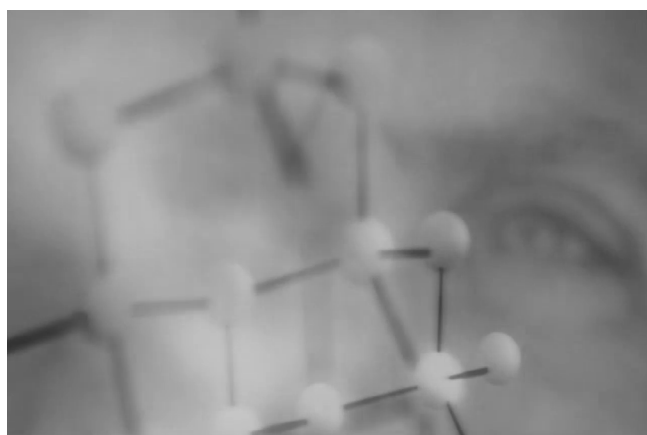


We fall into a 3D image of a craton and a whooshing sound zooms us out to a model of the moving continents of the ancient Earth before we re-emerge to Stewart for an extended explanation. In this “lesson,” we engage in longer interactions with the models and diagrams, and the narration includes the full context of the fragments from that initial burst of affective information. The initial, overlapping, quick-cut sequence is scored with a repeated, rising consecutive four-note sequence that has long been associated with counting and time passing, and as we merge back into “real time,” the score shifts into a slowly rising sequence, giving the impression of slowing down into “real

speeds and coloration, and the drawing of information onto the screen as if onto a virtual chalkboard; they are accompanied by minimalist, techno-style music and swooshes and booms that make the onscreen graphic manipulations seem as if they are taking place in real space, with weight and atmospheric resistance and surface contact.

time” as well as playing on associations of grandeur and awe that run throughout BBC documentary musical styles.

The modern documentary — particularly the prestige television documentary exemplified by Attenborough’s BBC tradition — operates in a space not between entertaining and informing, but in one that overlaps both. Historically, spectacle, especially the pushing of the technological envelope, has been a key element in engaging the audience: *Civilisation* was occasioned by the increased resolution in colour broadcasting which could be showcased by the artwork; *Cosmos* exploited embryonic computer graphics and then-new concepts of virtual reality; *Planet Earth* took advantage of new high definition broadcast standards, and Attenborough’s recent series, such as *The Kingdom of Plants*, *MicroMonsters*, and *Galapagos*, are designed for 3D. In each case, music helps give rhythm and life to static artwork, artificial imagery, and even vast expanses of savannah inhabited by herds of wildebeest. In doing so, documentary music draws on a long history of musical representation in other media, from theatrical traditions to the last century’s



development of narrative cinema.¹⁵ Similarly, music can be used to anthropomorphize animals and give emotive qualities even to seemingly impassive processes like chemical reactions and the attraction of particles through magnetism or gravity.¹⁶ Music has a connotative power far outstripping

15. Although it is worth noting that now-classic representations of the American landscape were first fused in the scores of Virgil Thomson and Aaron Copland for sometimes explicitly didactic documentaries in the 1930s — a sound routed through the cinematic genre of the Western and recapitulated in the Grand Canyon sequence of *Rise of the Continents*, where the soil erosion explained in *The Plow That Broke the Plains* in order to foster better farming techniques is the microcosm of the formation of not just the canyon but also the sedimentary rock though which it cuts.

16. An extended sequence in the 2014 revision of *Cosmos: A Space-Time Odyssey* about galaxy/star/planet formation and the seeding of life is set to Ravel’s “Bolero,” a piece of music originally written for a dance (its name is literally generic, a form of flamenco dance based on a particular rhythm). The repetitive, slowly crescendoing music

The musical saturation of the BBC documentary format is part of its “prestige,” but also guides reception in a way that is both persuasive and that doesn’t “leave fingerprints” in the form of explicit statement or image.

any meagre denotation, and its associations have been developed across centuries and across a broad range of media. Documentary is not so much a structural or formal genre as a conceptual one, and may likewise draw on a number of modes of representation to present its information, and those modes almost always come with music. The musical saturation of the BBC documentary format is part of its “prestige,” but also guides reception in a way that is both persuasive and that doesn’t “leave fingerprints” in the form of explicit statement or image.

Teaching is similarly a blend of entertainment and information; some might even uncharitably call it a bait-and-switch, but in truth, it is about engagement. In an era of media saturation and information at our fingertips, the strategy of the teacher is often to find that “wow!” moment that can engage and draw the student/audience in for the explanation, and to impart the explanation so the revelation builds rather than diffuses that engagement. It is akin to reverse-engineering, taking an object or event and gradually disassembling it, but creating a careful diagram of relationships as well as positions. Music can bind objects and subjects together, but it can also be used to “explode the diagram” and to highlight and explore relationships.

Iain Stewart himself once explained his decision to give up acting and become a geologist as coming to the realization that teaching was “just performing but with a steady income” (“Meet Iain Stewart”). His performance of the excitement of learning is something that many of us who teach will recognize, and is a primary aspect of the “personal view” documentary style led by a charismatic teacher. In the series Stewart has presented, the most basic aspects of learning (gathering and assembling information, finding connections, and finally understanding) have been increasingly externalized through a combination of graph-

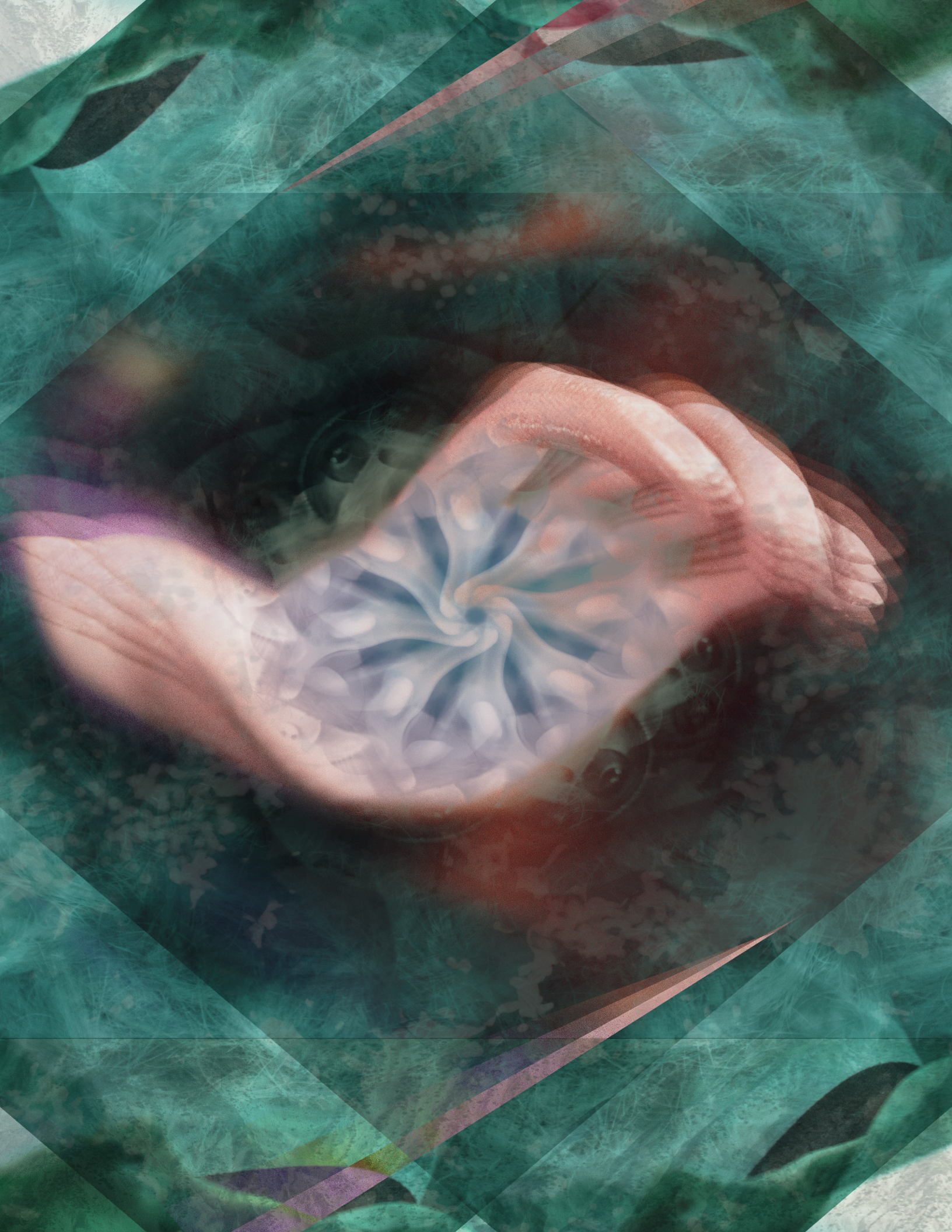
became a metaphor for sexual intercourse (i.e., reproduction, or the seeding of life) long before it was parodically memorialized in the movie *10*. But at an even finer level, the music bears a striking kinetic similarity to orbital motion (circling and bound by attraction) in the obsessive circularity of the “hypnotic” melodies and triplet-based triple-meter rhythms, driving through the measure to the downbeat but also floating at a higher metric level.

ics, editing, and camera technique, given shape and direction by analogous use of sound and music.

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Location, Location, Location: Music, Place, and Ecocriticism in the *National Parks Project*

In 1911 the Canadian Government proposed an organization to oversee the protection of valued areas of natural beauty in the face of increasing human expansion into wilderness areas. The National Parks Act was passed in 1930 to enable the designation, protection, and maintenance of national parks. There are currently forty four national park sites across all provinces and territories (Parks Canada). As part of the celebration of the organization's centenary, Parks Canada commissioned *The National Parks Project*, comprising thirteen short audio-visual pieces that were broadcast on television, compiled on DVD, and posted individually online.¹ The genesis of the project was an initial pilot production on Newfoundland's Gros Morne National Park made by a group of young Canadian media activists, who initially aggregated in 2004 to produce the online journal FilmCAN and who later diversified into distribution and production. FilmCAN have summarized the project in the following terms:

In the tradition of the Group of Seven, Margaret Atwood's *Survival* and other cultural touchstones, the *National Parks Project* aims to explore the ways in which the wilderness shapes our cultural imagination, and to contextualize it for our modern, technology-driven society.

The references are illuminating: the Group of Seven were Canadian artists, initially based around Toronto, who advanced Canadian landscape painting during the 1920s and early 1930s, venturing widely across Canada and painting in remote locations. By contrast, Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, published in 1972, was a pioneering survey of Canadian literature which argued that the notion of survival was a key motif in Canadian culture and literature. The linkage between the two in FilmCAN's characterization centres on the notion of the wilderness and of human survival in and comprehension of the wilderness. More particularly, it points to the manner in which those factors have produced senses of belonging and imaginative investment in place. While they do not speci-

fy it, the considerable tradition of Canadian documentary filmmaking, which includes a substantial body addressed to landscape issues, provides another significant context (Leach and Sloniowski).



The most significant aspect of FilmCAN's characterization of the project is its reference to "the ways in which the wilderness shapes our cultural imagination." This characterization suggests that however primarily metropolitan contemporary Canadian society may appear, its interface with the (un-developed) natural world remains a key cultural reference point. The films commissioned for the project are 'documentary' in that they visually document places, particular human presences, and performances in those places, but are also reflections on the cultural imagination of and engagement with place that the collaborative teams of documentary makers and musicians enact through their audio-visual interaction. Individual films also document site-specific music performance practices, some enacted in real-time and others created through textual editing of disparate elements. The project resulted in the production of a distinct and disparate body of films, each addressed to iconic national parks' locations, which are summarized in the following table.

Seven of the films visually represent musicians who contribute to the soundtrack, shot on location in the parks.

1. The musical material was also released on CD and vinyl (through Last Gang Records).

Table 1 – Locations and production personnel for individual films in the *National Parks Project* (2011)

Park (and location)	Film Director	Musical Performers
1) Bruce Peninsula and Fathom Five Marine Park (Ontario)	Daniel Cockburn	Christine Fellows, Sandro Perri, and John Samson
2) Cape Breton Highlands (Nova Scotia)	Keith Behrman	Tony Dekker, Daniela Gesundheit, and Old Man Luedecke
3) Gros Morne (Newfoundland)	Sturla Gunnarsson	Melissa Auf der Maur, Jamie Fleming, and Sam Shalabi
4) Gwaii Haanas (British Columbia)	Scott Smith	Jim Guthrie, Sarah Harmer, and Bry Webb
5) Kluane (Yukon)	Louise Archambault	Ian D'Sa, Mishka Stein, and Graham Van Pelt
6) Kouchibouguac (New Brunswick)	Jamie Travis	Don Kerr, Casey Mecija, and Ohad Benchetrit
7) Mingan Archipelago (Quebec)	Catherine Martin	Jennifer Castle, Sebastien Grainger, and Dan Werb
8) Nahanni (Northwest Territories)	Kevin McMahon	Olga Goreas, Jace Lasek, and Shad
9) Prince Albert (Saskatchewan)	Stephane Lafleur	Mathieu Charbonneau, Andre Ethier, and Rebecca Foon
10) Prince Edward Island	John Walker	Dale Morningstar, Chad Ross, and Sophie Trudeau
11) Sirmilik (Nunavut)	Zacharias Kunuk	Dean Stone, Tanya Tagaq, and Andrew Whiteman
12) Waterton Lakes (Alberta)	Peter Lynch	Laura Barrett, Mark Hamilton, and Cadence Weapon
13) Wapusk (Manitoba)	Hubert Davis	Kathleen Edwards, Matt Mays, and Sam Roberts

The Gros Morne and *Nahanni* films make this aspect a central focus. *The Gros Morne* film primarily comprises shots of the park, of the band getting to the dramatic shoreline where they perform, and footage of the three musicians performing. The *Nahanni* film is similar but also includes a final sequence of the musicians riding dinghies on a fast moving river. The *Similuk* film includes a brief sequence of its trio performing in the snow and the *Waterton Lakes* film includes footage of a local Blackfoot drumming and chanting ensemble. Two films include their musicians in dramatic scenarios. *The Prince Edward Island* film includes its trio, and violinist Sophie Trudeau, in particular, in a languorous vignette of travellers visiting the locale, while the *Kouchibouguac* film loosely takes the form of an extended music video, centred on the song's singer Casey Mecija. The final film of this type is a notable deviation from what might be described as the core representational formula of the National Park films (i.e. montages of spectacular macro- and micro-landscape footage accompanied by original score and/or ambient sounds). By contrast, the *Wapusk* film largely eschews a sustained representation of the park's landscape attractions and, instead, foregrounds a discussion of songwriting and musical creativity on its soundtrack. These musical elements include recorded statements by its three musicians, and are accompanied by a guitar-based instrumental (implicitly produced by the trio) while the screen shows subtle landscape images, textures, and occasional shots of the performers. One of the key aspects of this discussion involves consideration of place as inspirational on creativity. Notably *not* referring to the Wapusk National Park in particular, songwriter Matt Mays states in the film:

Being at home sometimes in the places where ideas will flow freely because it's so familiar... and then you hit a point where you've almost run out of breathing room in a sense on a creative level and that's when you need to move, which seems to free up ideas. Not necessarily in a coherent way but it shakes you out of your static mode that you find yourself in when you have been in one place for too long. And that shaking up now has a chance to re-form itself, to reconnect to a full thought.

The visits to the various parks documented in each film take the performers out of their (implicitly urban/suburban) professional locales and comfort zones and require them to engage with both the natural wilderness – and, pointedly, with the experience of being in that wilderness – as part of the process of producing music *in situ* that represents their engagement with their respective locales on a variety of levels. Unsurprisingly, for a film series celebrating Canada's national parks, all of the films show the musicians' interactions as musically productive. Any issues concerning weather, terrain, lack of power, different experiences of the wilderness, and its creative enablement (or otherwise) of individuals and ensembles are elided within the meta-production's affirmatory project. The only markers of different experiences and creative outcomes within the films are the

The overall project can thereby be regarded as nostalgic in reaffirming the wilderness myth and the tiny and almost irrelevant place and role of humans within it. [...] this places the films outside of one of the most prominent new directions in documentary cinema and cinema criticism of the last decade: that of eco-cinema.

music tracks themselves. Some are instrumental/textural 'jams,' either recorded live on location and played in extract(s) in part(s) of the film's soundtracks (or subsequently edited and post-produced), while others are more fully composed songs or combinations of song and instrumental pieces. The musical styles of the various pieces reflect the established genre orientations of the performers concerned: folk/bluegrass in the case of Tony Dekker, Daniela Gesundheit, and Old Man Luedecke's music for the *Cape Breton Highlands* film; and experimental progressive rock in the case of Melissa Auf der Maur, Jamie Fleming, and Sam Shalabi's performance in the *Gros Morne* film etc. In this regard, the musicians' contacts with and experiences within the wilderness are expressed through their established musical genres and oeuvres, rather than striving to transform wilderness through their interactions.

With the possible exception of the *Bruce Peninsula* and *Wapusk* films, which effectively use their specific locations as pretexts for more general/abstract discussions, all thirteen films include audio/musical tracks that attempt to complement (established perceptions) of the grandeur and majesty of their respective wildernesses. The films' performances of these representations is ritualistic, celebrating a Canadian tradition and ethos of wilderness as ground (and grounding) of a Canadian identity conceived outside of the metropolitan context that the majority of the nation's inhabitants operate within. In this regard, the films adhere to and re-inscribe the traditional set of values that were celebrated in Parks Canada's centenary and in the commemorative films. The overall project can thereby be regarded as nostalgic in re-affirming the wilderness myth and the tiny, almost irrelevant place and role of humans within it. Indeed, the combination of wide landscape images, and stirring instrumental passages and textures (and occasional songs) in the films directly propagates such aspects. Almost without exception, this places the films outside of one of the most prominent new directions in documentary cine-

ma and cinema criticism of the last decade: that of eco-cinema. Eco-cinema is, in essence, an interactive critical and production approach that seeks to represent ecological issues on-screen, to produce films in an ecologically responsible and sustainable manner, and to promote an active eco-consciousness amongst film viewers more generally (for more detailed expositions see Cubbitt; Rust, Salma, and Cubbitt). For eco-cinema, it is not enough to simply represent those few areas of the planet that remain relatively untouched by human presence. Instead, eco-cinema attempts to stimulate social awareness of the urgency of intervention into interconnected aspects of global population growth, environmental pollution, and carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. For eco-cinema, the changes wrought on the global environment during the Holocene epoch² are key.

Eco-cinema does not make celebratory representations of wildernesses redundant, nor necessarily conceive of these as ideologically problematic in themselves. From an ecocritical viewpoint, highlighting the essential values and virtues of wildernesses is increasingly important when so few humans have experiences or comprehensions of such locales. Ecocriticism does, however, strongly focus on ecological issues that directly intersect with representations of wildernesses. In the Canadian case, for example, ecocriticism would regard various impacts of global climate change, and of global warming in particular, as *the* key aspects of any contemporary consideration of wilderness in a national context. Despite this, representations of Holocene era impact are only present to any significant extent in two of the National Parks films. One of these – *Sirmilik* – is produced by an indigenous film maker, and the second, Lynch's *Waterton Lakes*, profiles indigenous cultural areas and heritage issues.

1) *Sirmilik*³ (Zacharias Kunuk)

Inuk film producer Zacharias Kunuk's film represents an Inuit community, and the film's trio of musicians, amidst a large, dramatic landscape. The monumentality of the landscape is emphasized in aerial shots of glaciers and rocky outcrops, and repeated long-shots of ice and rocks. The musicians score these sequences with classic ambient music devices such as sustained, soft-edged tones, and slow melodic variations (some involving heavily processed wordless vocal lines). These elements suggest the slowness of glacial movement, while more percussive tones at the rear of the mix evoke the cracking and groaning of ice sheets. The sole spoken voice on the soundtrack is that of an adult, speaking in Inuktitut language, relating how he learned tra-

ditional hunting and weather prediction skills from his father. While this narration is primarily placed over images of icy landscapes it is subsequently complemented by images of an ice hole cut for hunting, and of an individual skinning a large mammal. These elements provide a sense of cultural continuity that are not obviously in any tension with more modern images, such as a snowmobile moving across the ice. Similarly, a sequence showing Inuit throat-singer Tanya Tagaq, percussionist Dean Stone, and guitarist Andrew Whiteman playing live outside represents the musicians as at ease in their snowy surroundings. This musical sequence has a relatively unprocessed live sound, with Tagaq's rhythmic throat singing accompanied by simple percussion and unobtrusive guitar lines.



Tagaq's presence in the film and performance of a modernized form of traditional *katajjaq* singing is far from incidental. The guttural form of singing, which utilizes rhythmic breathing patterns and deep, throaty timbres, is a traditional, unaccompanied Inuit singing style, mainly practiced by women, and is used for various purposes: softly, to soothe babies; and, more dramatically, in duet/'duel' interchanges between two (or more) performers. While the form declined in prominence in the 20th Century, performers such as Tagaq, who largely performs as a solo vocalist with musical accompanists, have repopularized the style within Inuit communities and achieved a substantial profile in the 'world music' scene. Tagaq's presence in the film thereby embodies the dynamic potential of modernized versions of Inuit tradition and serves to emphasize Inuit capacity to productively embrace change. The film cleverly emphasizes this, cutting away from the ensemble's performance on the ice (complete with amplifiers) to a whale surfacing, its blowing sound briefly substituting Tagaq's singing in the mix before her vocal line returns.

While the film's sparse narration does not hint at any pressing environmental issues, at least until the final sequence, the visual images suggest a particular story. *Sirmilik* is located on the eastern side of Baffin Bay, 73 degrees north, opposite northern Greenland. While the region experiences a brief summer when night-time temperatures can stay

2. The era since the last Ice Age during which human impacts have had a major impact on the planet and its climate.

3. An Inuit term meaning "the place of glaciers."



just above freezing point, the film's scenes of a settlement with an ice-free sports area where young people play basketball and hockey, and shots of bare rocky scarps in bright sunlight and ice-free waters suggest something other than traditional Inuit life-styles. This aspect is made plain in the film's final sequence. Accompanying the image of an Inuit hunter sitting on the ice, cradling a gun, the translation caption for a final section of the hunter's Inuktitut narration simply states: "These days the weather seems to have changed. I seem to make mistakes when I try to predict the weather."

These simple, understated words identify the main threat to Inuit lifestyle and livelihood, and end the film on a note that is anything but celebratory.⁴ This delivers on FilmCAN's initial vision for their multi-part film project, to "contextualize" wilderness "for our modern, technology-driven society" from an Inuit viewpoint, making poetic use of sound and image to capture a national park region on the cusp of significant change due to the impact of global warming.

4. In this manner, the film provides a more subtle complement to Kunuk's earlier collaboration with Ian Mauro on the 2010 documentary *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*.

II) *Waterton Lakes* (Peter Lynch)

Lynch's film takes the history of the First Nations people of the region as a key focus through which to construct a representation of Holocene impact. As Lynch has identified, pre-production work included recording interviews with members of the local Blackfoot community about their perspectives on landscape, environmental history, and cultural survival that were used to give direction to the project (De Vries). The film takes its key orientation from the cataclysmic decline in buffalo numbers in the mid-19th Century. This was one crucial factor, along with the impact of European diseases and alcohol, in radically reducing both the number of the local Blackfoot community and their social viability and vitality in the mid-late 1800s. Understood in this context, the expanses of water and surrounding landscape represented in the film show an absence of human habitation that suggests a recent emptying, rather than the preservation of essential natural wilderness. This aspect is further emphasized in the film by the device of having local community members hold animal skulls and bones (taken from the local natural history museum) to symbolize what has been lost.



To create further impact and contemporary identification, Lynch juxtaposes these images with footage of the death throes of a small mammal, found by the crew whilst filming.

As Lynch emphasizes, his film was an attempt to expand and extend traditional European and Euro-American traditions of representing landscape to give them a greater sense of addressing the impacts of the Holocene era. The film attempted to provide:

a complex radical portrait of a national park that teases and engages with the boundaries of art and cinema. It subverts the conventional idea of the national park and its position in our national consciousness. It revolves around the most significant new world tragedy the massacre of the buffalo and decimation of our first nations culture. It draws this through the frame of geological time, the Blackfoot

culture the history of photography of national parks and landscape painting. (De Vries)

Music had a particular significance for the director, given his perception that: “Music can be abstract and poetic and I wanted the music to form part of the portrait as well as power up the narrative” (De Vries). The layered uses of music in the film are particularly striking. Rather than opting for a score that produces an affective and thematic colourization of the film’s narrative, narration, and/or visual themes, various aspects operate cumulatively, which adds elements and skeins to the overall impressions that the audio-visual text produces.



In addition to the contributions of the three participating musicians Laura Barrett, Mark Hamilton, and Rollie Pemberton (aka ‘Cadence Weapon’), the film also features footage of a traditional Blackfoot performance involving a group of male participants striking a single, large, horizontally-positioned drum whilst chanting. Without explanation as to the nature and purpose of the chant, the sequence serves to provide a sonic signature and pulse for the representations of contemporary Blackfoot culture that contrast to sequences of landscape accompanied by ambient sound alone. Various aspects of the music’s production and its subsequent style were actively determined by engagement with location and by responses to particular circumstances and incidents. Lynch has related that many of these were directed by him: “I had the musicians listen to Narcisse Blood, a Blackfoot elder, about the creation myth, which then informed them in their songwriting process” (De Vries). The processes of musical engagement with and interpretation of both Blackfoot culture and the creation myth varies between musicians. One outcome of this encounter featured in the film takes the form of Pemberton’s sampling of traditional drum sounds into one of his contributions to the film’s score. Complementing this, Hamilton contributes a song alluding to the creation myth. More subtly, the score also features elements such as Bennett producing musical sequences from striking bones found during the production (effectively playing the materiality of the park itself) and her rendition of a song composed during the shoot,

entitled “Humble Fawn,” which describes a young deer’s visit to the musicians’ camp site during production.

The most significant aspect of the score’s elements is the manner in which they work cumulatively. Pemberton’s sequence, featuring sampled traditional drums, has the arresting refrain “I don’t wanna play the new songs,” which can simultaneously be taken to signal Blackfoot dedication to preserving traditional cultural practices, while also providing an ironic comment on his own musical and songwriting activity in seeking to represent those practices. Linking to 20th Century popular music traditions, Lynch also asked the musicians to provide a new take on the 1930s’ song “Don’t Fence Me In” (Cole Porter/Robert Fletcher, 1934). In the gentle, low-dynamic version provided by Barrett and Hamilton, the song both provides a nostalgic link to earlier representations of prairie life and offers its opening lines as an implicit statement of Blackfoot historical aspirations to resist confinement into reserves:

Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above
Don’t fence me in
Let me ride through the wide open country that I love
Don’t fence me in

This song was also covered in a different form as part of the state of Nevada’s 2013 tourism campaign, publicized with the slogan “A World Within: A State Apart.” A key element in the launch was a riff-heavy, power-pop cover of Porter’s song by US band The Killers, which also served as the soundtrack to the campaign’s TV ad (Travel Nevada). While the Nevada TV ad relegated the state’s Indigenous people to colourful choreographic flourishes at the margins of marketable Nevada, Lynch’s film situates Blackfoot culture, sonically and visually, within a deeper temporal context that attempts to represent Holocene impact in a complex and respectful manner.

Conclusion

In their discussion of three Australian eco-media initiatives, Ward and Coyle emphasize representations of place in eco-media as significant by dint of their “normative function in reinforcing ethical values and environmental action” (203). Place is obviously crucial to the thirteen Parks Canada films as their *raison d’être*, but while they may all reflect ethical values concerning the importance of wilderness preservation, environmental action is only foregrounded in the two examples discussed in the latter part of this paper. Sound and music are crucial to all the films, and the soundtracks are, by and large, inventive and aesthetically effective, but the possibilities for utilizing sound to create more complex reflections on place and to involve it in eco-cinematic critique and creative expression are less well developed and principally articulated in Kunuk’s and Lynch’s productions. In this regard, the thirteen films – en masse – may well serve to commemorate the past of Parks

Canada but a far smaller selection point to the importance of engaging with a rapidly changing global environment that is impervious to park boundaries and regulated preservation.

Acknowledgement

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The Place of Music in *Jazz*

Song is the wind-chime of memory, and these were our songs.
– James Maher (“Swing: Pure Pleasure” 8:45)

Documentary realism is predicated upon a radical distinction between the saying and the said, or more broadly the *representing* and the *represented*, which can also be understood as between the filmic and the real. While the real world does not have a musical score, this does not deny music a place in documentary, but instead locates it either materially in the depicted scene or fully outside the scene as part of the filmic world. Ben Winters’ characterization of diegetic and non-diegetic sound in fiction film will serve as a starting point to consider the complex use of music in Ken Burns’ *Jazz* (2001), a ten-part nineteen-hour expository documentary produced for PBS.

Jazz is an ideal text through which to examine the place of music and the real in documentary film for three reasons. First, and most obviously, music is at its centre, as music is its subject matter. It features musical performances, and musical underscoring is pervasive throughout the series. Second, *Jazz* is not an experimental or avant-garde work. Its manner of address is typical of the expository mode: commentary is addressed to the viewer with images as counter-point, editing establishes rhetorical rather than spatial and temporal continuity, complementary first-person testimonies are counterpoised to create the impression of objectivity, and anecdotal history results in a stockpiling of knowledge (Nichols 34-5). In other words, *Jazz* is conventional and signifies in an easily understood manner. Thus, despite jazz journalist Francis Davis’ reservations regarding Burns’ version of jazz history, which “shows tendencies toward cockeyed legend, cut-rate sociology and amateur psychoanalysis,” she describes the series as “enjoyable television” that is “good for jazz” with “perceptive commentary” and a “wealth of great music” (Davis 78). In a similar vein, Vivien Ellen Rose and Julie Corley observe that Burns relies upon “formulaic cinematography and musical treatments” that are “artistic” while also noting that these same elements “detract from the historical endeavour by confusing past and present” (56). Third, as these com-

ments indicate, *Jazz* is rhetorical – it is an elaborate epideictic, a speech of praise to a genre of music and to America.

In his discussion of diegetic space, Winters claims that underscored music is not necessarily external to the diegetic world and consequently does not only function connotatively. Rather, he argues that even if unavailable to the characters within a diegetic space, music may function denotatively, belonging to or standing as an element within the depicted world. As Winters puts it: “It is not whether or not the characters can ‘hear’ music that dictates whether the music is part of the fictional world (though that distinction is not without interest), but whether the music appears to exist in the time and narrative space of the diegesis; or whether it appears to ‘narrate’ at a temporal distance from that space” (236-7). Consequently, Winters argues in favour of a more nuanced set of categories. He takes inspiration from Gérard Genette’s discussion of narrative levels in literature, and argues that the non-diegetic should be considered in terms of the extra-diegetic and the intra-diegetic. In this schema, extra-diegetic music would reside exclusively on the plane of narration, as is the case during the credit roll. Diegetic music would physically manifest in the diegetic world and would be heard by characters, and intra-diegetic music would belong to the diegetic space even though characters could not hear it (57-8).

Winters does not extend his analysis to documentary. Nevertheless, the concept of the intra-diegetic enhances our insight as to the function of music in documentaries, and will be particularly useful for explaining how films of the expository mode employ what Carl Plantinga refers to as the formal voice. By voice, Plantinga is referring to a filmmaker’s narrational and epistemic authority, and their attempt to make claims about the actual world come across as truthful (106-7). Bill Nichols considers rhetorical argument a better term than diegesis to describe what such films document, because they do not construct a spatially and temporally continuous narrative world, but rather represent aspects of the world in order to deliver a rhetorical argument (121-41). Nevertheless, while documentaries such as *Jazz* do offer arguments, they also offer a world, even if that world is not continuous. The stories told by *Jazz* can be

translated into a series of propositions, but *Jazz* also encourages viewers to experience moments, episodes, and scenes in recent American musical and cultural history.

In *Jazz*, music is rarely diegetic. There are few on-camera live performances or scenes in which music appears to emanate from a radio or phonograph. Furthermore, instances where we see a “live” performance are marked as archival and robbed of depth and presence: they are usually in black and white, grainy, or of poor definition, are interspersed with still images, and subject to voice-over commentary. Consistent with Nichols’ distinction between diegesis and argument, there is hardly a strictly diegetic world in *Jazz* at all, because it does not posit a continuous time and space in which a narrative unfolds. The series consists of heavily edited sequences of photographs and stock film clips interspersed with in-studio, on-camera oral histories and commentaries that are stitched together by an underscore of classic jazz recordings and voice-overs. The “voice-of-God” narrator and the in-studio commentators addressing the camera both recount jazz history and explain its meaning and significance. These interpretations are augmented by the musical underscoring which accompanies photographs and silent film clips, described by Plantinga as elements capable of “providing an experiential, emotional character to the spectator’s experience” (166). This helps to create what Plantinga terms an “experiential envelope’ consist[ing] in part of created moods” that frame the film’s reception (166). In addition, montage is given importance in *Jazz*, with its rhythmic succession of archival photographs, music, and images working together, consonantly or contrapuntally, to create an aesthetic whole that supports the film’s account of the jazz age. This is particularly so because of Burns’ signal technique of ‘animating’ archival photographs by slowly panning and zooming in on them, which not only offers focus and emphasis, but also a sense of movement and presence. Thus the music in *Jazz* does not remain part of the narration, but rather leaks into the depicted world; it sneaks from the pit onto the stage.

Jazz is a historical documentary, but it is also about music that, despite being rooted in a place and time, stands as an aesthetic object in the listener/viewer’s phenomenal present. More precisely, in this series, the musical genre of jazz appears in four ways. First, Burns’ series presents the music to viewers who have the opportunity to witness contemporaneous audiences enjoy it as it happened in that initial moment of reception. Second, jazz music is presented as an object of knowledge. The series offers the viewer musical analyses through interviews and voice-over narrations that express and explain its compelling character. Third, the series offers an historical account, based largely in anecdotal biography, of the emergence of jazz as an art form and historical phenomenon. The account is principally one of struggling artists using their genius and craft to express musically what is ‘real’ or ‘true.’ Finally, and again in the guise of history, this series elicits an affective experience of the

historically situated culture and lifeworld from which jazz springs, responds to, and insinuates itself.

Each of these four methods locates jazz at a different point along a continuum, which Winters describes as ranging from the extra-diegetic to the diegetic (237). Furthermore, musical excerpts (as opposed to underscoring or live performance footage) can operate at a number of places along this continuum simultaneously. Consider the following 80-second segment from the fourth episode: A title that reads “Mr. Armstrong” on a black background appears as the sound of cars fades in softly. As the title fades out, Louis Armstrong emphatically says, “Let’s go,” and his ensemble



begins to play the fast and syncopated “Chinatown, My Chinatown.” Archival footage of cars (themselves deprived of sound) race along New York streets, replacing the title as musician Matt Glaser’s voice over describes the music: “So they’re playing fast, it sounds like they’re nervous.” Onscreen, pedestrians walk (too) briskly, as in sped up old footage. The counterpoint of voice, image, and music continues: “It sounds like they’re having trouble coping with this fast tempo”; onscreen, a commuter train passes; “...the hectic nature of the modern world”; a subway driver’s view of entering a tunnel (and to black). Glaser, now in close-up, looking off-centre to our right, continues to speak: “It’s change, and,” he pauses to hear Armstrong interject: “Look at me cats, I’m gettin’ away, looks like they are after me.” Glaser smiles, looks at the camera and says, “They’re after him...the temporal nature of the modern world, but...” Armstrong says “But I’m ready...” Glaser echoes this: “He’s ready...and now there’s going to be no time when he comes in...suddenly just one note.” Glaser parts his hands, turning palms upward, following Armstrong’s single long held note, then sweeps his arms open in time with Armstrong’s elegant and relaxed solo.



He looks entranced:

Free, completely relaxed, floating above this [hums along]. Sounds like an aria. So, this is a new way to experience the modern world in all of its hectic movement. It’s like the Platonic world has entered for a moment into the modern world. Just relaxation and freedom, and jazz has been dealing with this concept since Louis made this record. I mean, it’s still to this day. Now drummers and bass players and everyone can get into this groove.

We see the traffic again as he concludes: “In those days, he was the only guy to have this idea” (“The True Welcome” 13:12-14:30).

In this segment, Armstrong’s performance paradoxically inhabits 1930s New York even as it comes to presence in our ear and time: the music resonates with, but is not emanating from, the streets that we see. Rather, the music

There is hardly a strictly diegetic world in Jazz at all, because it does not posit a continuous time and space in which a narrative unfolds.

stands between then and now; it is outside of the depicted scene as part of the film’s narration, particularly since Armstrong’s name and voice precede the street footage and the music lacks the hisses and pops of a 78 rpm record. The montage does not create a temporally or geographically continuous space wherein the music can be performed and heard. Similarly, nothing indicates that the music emanates from Glaser’s space, although he hears it as we do. It is as if he were within our space. The moment is intimate. Captivated, he glances at the camera, sharing his enjoyment as he explains the significance of Armstrong’s aesthetic genius. Glaser’s explanation motivates a cut to the busy New York streets upon which Armstrong’s music is a meditation. Like Armstrong’s single note, they too are rendered timeless; free from their place in time, space, and history. The music is immediate to us and the music is back there, although those hurried pedestrians cannot hear it. Armstrong’s note is part of their aesthetic landscape and musical experience, even as it mediates and transforms their lifeworld.

Ambiguity with regard to the status and location of musical tracks is pervasive in *Jazz*. It is also central to the functioning of what has been termed the “Burns effect,” that is, the manner in which Burns makes use of archival photographs. As John C. Tibbetts observes, Burns offers sequences of “motionless pictures” which “satisfy our thirst for the *actual* at the same time that they arouse our wonder in the *potential*” (130). Burns not only crops images, but moves over them, shows them in rapid succession, and offers aural cues to give the impression of narrative movement. Thus, at the beginning of “Pure Pleasure,” *Jazz*’s fifth episode, we hear the opening strains of Duke Ellington’s “Stepping into Swing Society” as the camera slowly tilts upward and out from a still of a male dancer’s feet barely touching the floor. Albert Murray speaks over Ellington’s easy swing: “I think it terribly important that jazz is primarily dance music.” Through the montage, the viewer can sense that he and his partner are dancing, although they do not move: the film cuts to a medium close-up of his face, pans along his left arm to hers and then to her face. Murray continues: “And so you move when you hear it. And it always moves in a direction of elegance, which is the most civilized thing that a human being can do.” Cut to another well-dressed couple, frozen in a dramatic dance pose, he holding her leaning back, her head an inch from the floor. Murray adds: “The ultimate extension, elaboration, and refinement of effort is



elegance where just doing it gives pleasure of itself.” Cut to a still of another young couple dancing side-by-side; then to a hugging couple – not as elegantly attired, but smiling as well. “That’s about as far as we can get with life,” Murray, now in close-up, continues: “that’s equivalent to what Ernest Hemingway called the sweat on a wine bottle. If you don’t enjoy how those beads of sweat look, you know, when you pour the white wine out and you taste it, and how your partner looks, and how the sunlight comes through, you missed it” (“Swing: Pure Pleasure” 0:01-1:12).

Like Barthes’s Algerian soldier saluting the French Empire in *Mythologies*, the dancers have been robbed of

The music in Jazz does not remain part of the narration, but rather leaks into the depicted world; it sneaks from the pit onto the stage.

their uniqueness (115). They have become the myth of pure pleasure in jazz dance. The film and music unfolds in time, but they are suspended in motion. Frozen, and so outside of time, they cannot hear. Murray, when commenting on swing dance, generally does not seem to hear either. Nevertheless, the music that we hear invests the dancers with potential energy. The music is ours to move to, but possesses the dancers as well. They are its expression. Dancers and Ellington are united in spirit, sensibility, and possibility, both onscreen and in our imagination. Thus, the music in *Jazz* is what would usually be called non-diegetic: A form of underscoring that functions exterior to the world that the film’s subjects inhabit and lends the film an atmosphere of authenticity. Yet here, not only does music contribute to the pace, mood, and tone of the depicted scene, but is also a necessary component of how these scenes are mythologized and rendered timeless. The aforementioned couple is stepping into swing society when they dance, and the music that we hear would be theirs as well.

Winters justifies the category of intra-diegetic for fiction film by opposing Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno’s generally accepted assertion that “film ‘seeks to depict reality’” (228). Winters argues that upon careful examination, both film theory and practice acknowledge at least implicitly that fiction film does not offer an impression of reality but produces narrative worlds in a filmic universe. This echoes Nichols’ observation that the resemblance between a fiction film’s world and our own world is “fundamentally metaphorical” (109). A similar argument may be made for documentary, but the matter is more complex, since documentaries claim to represent our world even while they remain constructed texts. In expository documentaries, the real cannot be fully captured by either the senses or the camera. This mode acknowledges the existence of a quotidian material real, but it is of secondary interest. The real of documentary appears within the spectator’s imagination in an encounter with the filmic text. Underscoring does not violate the premises of this form of exposition. At the very least, it can function within the filmic narration extra-diegetically, directing the viewer’s attention and providing dramatic emphasis. More importantly however, the rhetorical character of interpretive knowledge renders difficult any categorical distinction between the real that is being presented, its exposition, and its cinematic figuration. The real that such documentaries project resides, as with fiction film, in the mind.

Anecdotal moments and music in *Jazz* come together to form a cultural history residing in popular memory. Even as Burns' *Jazz* claims to represent a real, it constitutes it in the imagination. The real of *Jazz* is jazz itself, as a body of works, a genre, an age, and a mood that is both rooted historically and rendered timeless. In this film and in the viewer's imagination, the real has a soundtrack. Music resides within it. Such is the function of *Jazz*, to construct an understanding of the world of jazz within memory, with music as reality's bedrock.

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“Oh What a Beautiful City”: Performing Transitional Vancouver in the CBUT’s *City Song*

The wind, the wind, the wind blows high. Rain comes dashing from the sky. For her lover she must die, for the want of the Golden City. – “Wind the Wind”



City Song, directed by Jim Carney for CBC Vancouver’s CBUT film unit in 1961,¹ opens on a leisurely traveling shot through the old-growth forest of Stanley Park. The camera is tilted up towards the canopy as it pushes gently forward, carefully concealing the road that makes such a view possible. An ethereal voice sings of the wind and rain, but only the sun is visible peeking through the stands of evergreen, a promenade of natural monuments in this variation on the City Beautiful. Eventually a young girl (Kirstine Murdoch) of 6 or 7 years is revealed sitting in a pool of sunlight amidst the trees. A more contrived situation is scarcely imaginable. Without pretense towards objectivity, the film positions her as guide through the transition to Vancouver’s urbanity as she walks through a well-tended West End park, along the seawall of English Bay and onto the streets of downtown. Here her association with the innocence of nature will die as it is contrasted with the grit, ills, and disillusionment produced by this city on the edge of the wilderness.

1. Film elements and video copies of *City Song* are held in the CBC Vancouver Media Archives (Film Can #CBUT9165).

The opening credits promise narration spoken by Art Hives and Wally Marsh, songs performed by Kell Winzey and Joanne Thomas, and sound recorded by Bill Terry in The Inquisition Coffee House. As the film progresses, it becomes clear that these voices, recorded in this single location, will provide the vast majority of the film’s soundtrack as its wandering camera moves through a variety of different visual settings that reveal the diversity and tensions of early 1960s Vancouver. These settings are inflected not only by John Seale’s exploratory cinematography and the deft cutting of Arla Saare, but also by Barry Hale’s prose along with a variety of traditional folk lyrics emanating from The Inquisition, then at 126 Seymour St., just off of Granville Street’s theatre row, heart of the city’s entertainment district. The Inquisition was a critical node in the network of countercultural spaces that were rethinking Vancouver at the dawn of the massive shifts in urban planning that would, a decade later, begin to shape the city according to the principles of “Vancouverism” that eventually brought the city to the world stage. As such, the coffee house provides a potent sound environment that the film extends out onto the streets of downtown and the wilderness setting that lies beyond.

In this essay I argue that *City Song* enacts a performance of Vancouver that reveals as much about a city in the process of conscious redefinition as it does about the politics of representation in documentary film soundtracks, exposing key ideological overlaps between the making of cities and their cinematic representations. The film stages the city through a set of eight sequences, each roughly delimited by the performance of a particular song, and each offering its own distinct vantage point on the city with attendant shifts in rhetorical tone and aesthetic treatment. The songs cover a range of styles common within the folk repertoire of the day, and beat-style narration offers points of transition between locations. The Inquisition Coffee House is the hub of the film wherein several songs presented in synchronized performance reveal the source of the music we hear throughout the rest of the scenes. The issues facing the city are thus articulated and interrogated by way of musical performance, making *City Song* a striking (and

strikingly early) exploration of what Stella Bruzzi refers to as the “performative” mode in documentary filmmaking (186). As I will demonstrate, *City Song*’s “performativity” is both troubled and enhanced by the way it intersects with issues specific to the music documentary (of which it is also a relatively early example). I argue that this intersection is best understood as a process of the city’s self-representation that I will refer to as “staging” following recent work by Karin Bijsterveld (2013). This staging is only accessible by way of attention to the soundtrack, both in terms of the obvious thematic content of the lyrics and the loaded location in which they are sung and from which they carry over the rest of the film. Ultimately, the overt staging in *City Song* explores the potential for a film to engage actively in the re-imagining of a city, making it a model case study for how works of art can be used for serious soundscape research into urban actualities of the past.

Performing Music as Documentary Practice

City Song makes self-conscious use of musical performance to shape impressions, and expose the tensions, of early 1960s Vancouver. This performance of the city sits at the intersection of two recently theorized documentary forms, the “performative” mode and the “music documentary” genre, an intersection that necessitates addressing issues of performance by way of attention to sonic representation. Stella Bruzzi defines the “performative” documentary as any non-fiction film that uses performance, “whether built around the intrusive presence of the filmmaker or self-conscious performances by its subjects,” to enact “the notion that a documentary only comes into being as it is performed” (186). Bruzzi’s formulation considers how “real” people perform their lives when in front of the camera, and addresses the ways in which filmmakers bring the worlds they document into existence through the act of making their films. Yet this way of recognizing the performative quality of documentary filmmaking is troubled by the tradition – as old as the cinema itself – of filming subjects like theatre actors or musicians who engage in acts conventionally understood as performance but without a reflexive bent.

Michael Chanan frames the issue like this: when filmed musicians are already performing for an audience, “the camera can adopt the same role as any other listener” (341). Performance in a case like this is less likely to serve as the distancing device that premises Bruzzi’s formulation of the “performative” mode. Michael Brendan Baker raises a similar issue when theorizing the role of documentary film music more generally. Defusing the staple critique of music in documentary as marker of biased editorial comment, Baker points out that if the subject of the documentary is musical performance, then “the soundtrack is internally motivated and thus preemptively rationalized for the view-

er” (234). So a film about performing musicians is prone to deflect attention away from the act of “performing” the film itself, while also reducing the music’s potential to be heard as performative editorial commentary.

Yet, as Baker rightly notes, “to have people perform for machines fundamentally changes the process of representation and the event’s subsequent reproduction” (246), necessarily binding filmmaker and subject together in the performative act of filmmaking. This harkens back to Jonathan Sterne’s essential argument about sound reproduction in general: that sonic events are always transformed during the act of recording, not only by the recording itself but also in its staging for the recording process (290). Here there is no room for an a priori performance act to be documented without affecting the act itself, a discursive position increasingly popular with documentary filmmakers and theorists alike.

Documentaries live at the intersection of faith in the ability of recording technologies to provide a window onto the world as it exists outside of networks of representation, and knowledge that the filmmaking process always intervenes in the events being documented. As I will demonstrate, *City Song* gears its approach to musical performance to expose this intersection as a site of production, and the site being produced is the city itself. The film’s musical el-

Ultimately, the overt staging in City Song explores the potential for a film to engage actively in the re-imagining of a city, making it a model case study for how works of art can be used for serious soundscape research into urban actualities of the past.

ements – in terms of both the formal treatment of performance and the lyrical content of the songs – are born from the city while also commenting upon it. The film’s journey through the varied spaces of Vancouver is cleverly deployed along a formal arc that gradually shifts its mode of performativity from “documentary with music” to “music documentary” before ultimately conflating the two so that it can move beyond both. As such the music of *City Song* calls attention to the ways in which the city itself is performed for its citizens by way of media technologies, and invites us to consider how it might be performed differently in the future.



Structuring Vancouver through Song

The city's urban spaces are first introduced through the well-known spiritual "Oh What a Beautiful City". From there Thomas and Winzey take up "All My Trials" to sing about the perils of growing old in the city as the camera follows the young girl downtown to contrast her youth with shots of the elderly and homeless, ignored by the bustle of busy downtown shoppers. From here the film slips into a vibrant traveling montage that splits trips across the Burrard and Granville bridges into a fractured and disorienting space as narration steps in to muse about the uncertainties of urban existence: "Just a step and you pass from sure things over to only maybe." Then, with the onset of dusk comes a thrust into the neon jungle of Granville Street in the heyday of the city's famous lighted signage as a rousing rendition of the classic "Sinnerman" carries over the transition to the downtown streets at night. Here the film settles into a roving camera sequence in line with the burgeoning tradition of direct cinema, capturing a variety of street scenes through hand-held shots taken from the window of a passing car, without the overtly stylized framing and editing that has characterized the film up to this point.

Until now, the music and prose have provided poetic commentary on the images of the city while keeping their source under wraps. This situation changes dramatically as the film moves into *The Inquisition* to meet the musicians we have been hearing, and "Oh What a Beautiful City" returns as our narrator makes a request: "So sing me a city song. Sing about me and the place with its mess of illusions." And with this reflexive attention to the role of song in shaping the city, the mode suddenly shifts into a veritable music video as Winzey, now visible with his band, soars into lyrics about the ills of the income gap that cities exacerbate.

The audiovisual synchronization is tight as the musicians become the camera's subject, but the images are clearly captured separately from the sound: no audio equipment is visible, and the camera returns to a heavily stylized approach, shooting from oblique angles in various degrees of close-up that would obfuscate views from a live audi-



ence and would require multiple takes for each song. Yet the post-synchronization is effective enough to establish the mood of this sequence as a live performance, grounding the source of the film's music within a specific location positioned as the heart of the city.

After a foray out onto the rain-soaked streets of late night Gastown the film catches up with the little girl waking to a sunlit morning in her comfortable bedroom. Offscreen music returns with strains of "Tell Old Bill" as the girl heads out onto the peaceful and deserted beach of Spanish Banks where she discovers an apparently lifeless old man draped in newspapers, and the lyrics of the music confirm his fate: "Old Sal was baking bread when she found out her Bill was dead." The presentation of the music has returned to the mode of the film's first half. Yet the self-conscious performativity of the coffee house sequences, along with their grounding in a specific location, now carries forward into the world outside to charge the space with the tensions of the film's shifting subject positioning. Here the film takes another dramatic turn as the girl puts on the man's glasses prompting a sudden shift into a proto-psychedelic montage of views onto the ocean, mountains and seagulls superimposed with a series of urban images that revisit the rest of the film's locations now compressed into a few seconds. A micro-narrative emerges, positioning the dead man as a by-product of the urban blight that sits next to this stunning wilderness, set to the sounds of screeching gulls and rushing water, the only soundtrack material presented from a source other than *The Inquisition*.

Finally, the film returns to *The Inquisition* for one last performance: Winzey laments the "900 Miles" that separate him from his home, followed by the narrator musing about getting out of town once and for all - halted only as he realizes how embedded he has become across the city's diverse spaces: "So then I just sit and think about all those parts of me hummin' away in all those places all over town," putting off his exodus for yet another day. And "Oh What a Beautiful City" is reprised once again as the final montage of downtown's waterfront industrial area reveals the city's urbanity in the fresh light of morning's contemplation.

Vancouver in Transition

The Inquisition Coffee House is a significant location from which to present most of the film's soundtrack, representative of the kinds of alternative spaces that would challenge the status quo (see Davis 311) and play a role in shaping the physical and social environments just outside their doors. With its strategy of shifting modes of musical treatment through the space of the coffee house, *City Song* uses film form to engage with the multiple overlapping spaces, both geographical and ideological, that characterize key urban issues of the day. These issues coalesce within the paradox of the city's attempts at urbanity in such a wild setting. As Lance Berelowitz puts it, "the city's growth is founded on the [...] destruction of the very things that attract people in the first place" (25), an "apparently happy coexistence with its natural environment [that] is far more ambiguous than it would have the world (or itself) believe..." (37). *City Song* is eager to lay this contradiction bare in an era that finds Vancouver actively and publicly questioning its brand both at home and abroad.



The issue of municipal rebranding crystallized within the case of Vancouver's famous neon signage, well on display in *City Song*'s "Sinnerman" sequence and squarely brought into confrontation with the city's natural setting in the beach sequence later on. By the 1950s, Vancouver boasted an unparalleled density of neon that served as "the source of the city's urban identity" and "helped demarcate the boundary between the constructed city and the wilderness beyond" (Noble and Fujita 6). But a new consciousness was developing that would eventually engender the tagline "Spectacular by Nature," and neon came to be seen as "obfuscating the backdrop of nature that was now considered to be an important aspect of the city's urban identity" (6). Dealing with such "blight" would drive urban renewal projects like the 1974 bylaw that curtailed the use of neon, an early volley in a major quarter-century plan to reshape the city in ways that continue to influence new local initiatives while being studied and emulated the world over (see Punter 15-111).

Importantly, the transitional years leading up to major urban reforms found the CBC setting up its first Vancouver affiliate station, CBUT, with the express mandate of speaking in a regional dialect to its local audience. Their films would pose questions about what concept of the city its citizens should have, while challenging the dominant images and sounds purveyed through government sponsored tourist propaganda, generally the only window onto the west coast that many in the rest of Canada had at the time. And Canadians to the east would take notice, as films like *City Song* earned these Vancouver filmmakers a reputation as forging a distinct "West Coast School" (see Newman 2013). It is no surprise that a defining theme occupying this regionally inflected filmmaking would be the relationship between urbanism and the wilderness. In *City Song*, this theme is deliberately staged as a performance of the city through the countercultural music of the day, calling attention to both the performance itself and the act of performing as a way of inviting its television audience to engage actively in shaping their city.

The City Staged

The film's most brilliant move is to use The Inquisition as both studio and location simultaneously. As a makeshift studio the coffee house allows the highly constructed reflexivity of the centrepiece musical sequences that frame the city as a performance. This performative quality is ramped up when considered through The Inquisition's status as an ideologically loaded venue and tied to issues of location sound recording as marker of authentic engagement with place – a situation not usually associated with a closed set. One of the defining conundrums of the documentary genre resides in the issue of capturing direct sound to match location shooting, a key point in debates about how documentary should distinguish itself sonically from its fiction film counterparts (Ruoff 27-9). In the early 1960s it would still be a few years before synchronizing sound to the camera on location became standard practice, particularly in the technologically impoverished circumstances of the CBUT film unit (Browne 106). Thus the separate recording of sound and image in *City Song* was, by one measure, a necessity rather than an aesthetic choice. Yet the simultaneity of location-based authenticity and studio fabrication is an essential component governing the way that *City Song* performs its subject matter, offering a compelling example of how today's audience can access rich details of a time long past by navigating the film's staging of the Vancouver soundscape.

As Karin Bijsterveld argues, any appeal to sound recordings as documents of geographical specificity must account for how these soundscapes are "staged," regardless of where they sit on the spectrum between documentary and fiction (14-8). This approach considers the cultural and historical contexts of production, along with the technical and

City Song uses film form to engage with the multiple overlapping spaces, both geographical and ideological, that characterize key urban issues of the day.

conventional norms that govern particular forms of media, in order to assess why any given location is represented the way it is in a particular media item. *City Song* does not offer the same kind of documentary evidence of Vancouver's soundscape associated with field recordings such as those made by the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University (see World Soundscape Project 1973). Yet Bijsterveld's approach troubles the notion that location sound or field recording necessarily provides stronger connections to place than something contrived off site, stressing the need to recognize that all sound recordings are staged for specific reasons and in particular contexts – factors that are, by their own right, highly informative about the specific locales being represented.

City Song wants to have it both ways, emphasizing the authenticity associated with location recordings while using those recordings to reframe a variety of other locales presented on screen. The key to understanding how *City Song* stages the Vancouver soundscape lies in how the film reveals the source of its music as a function of strategies for audiovisual synchronization. *City Song* makes productive use of its necessity for asynchronous recording by structuring the music that dominates the film to drift in and out of synchronization along with the image track's movements in and out of *The Inquisition*. The asynchronous voices are eventually synchronized as they are located within the city's geography, so their commentary upon the image is made to emanate from within and spread outwards – a strategy that extends the soundscape of *The Inquisition* to mark the territory of Vancouver as its ideological jurisdiction just as church bells long served to define the boundaries of a parish. This is an embellishment of the role that “spatial signature” (Altman 24) plays in defining the sonic characteristics of a given location, creating an “acoustic profile” (Truax 67) for *The Inquisition* that has the power to bring the ideological weight of the venue's social position out into a broad area surrounding this space.

Ultimately, *City Song*'s most effective performance comes when the dominance of *The Inquisition* as the film's engine of performativity is thrown into question during the only moment to break free of the venue's acoustic space: the beach sequence in which the young girl finds the body of the old man whose plight is paired with the sounds of waves and seagulls. The sequence is framed around unsettling juxtaposition. As the girl dons the old man's glasses she



takes on his jaded experience of the city's contradictions. The sounds of the city's natural surroundings stand in stark contrast to the music presented as the pulse of the city's urban centre, and this clash – highly contrived – is mirrored on the image track as these differing spaces are forced into the same frame for a series of fleeting moments. Here a crisis of synchronization emerges: the environmental sounds impose upon the varied spaces of the city seen on screen to challenge *The Inquisition* as the location from which the film speaks, just as the girl's innocence is challenged in the face of urban realities. The question to the audience seems clear: from what position might we best interpret the wild

setting of our city and the effects of our urbanization upon it? In the end, the film leaves the question hanging, content to revel in the inevitability that each Vancouverite occupies multiple positions within the city simultaneously, and it is in this simultaneity that we are best positioned to perform the city's future.

Conclusion

City Song's use of musical performance to shape interpretations of Vancouver makes it unusually ripe for consideration as a valuable document for research into the city's past soundscapes while also guiding theoretical inquiry into key problems of addressing recorded sound as documentation. The value of *City Song* as document of Vancouver depends on our understanding of how the sound design has been staged by way of its performative strategies. What this approach reveals is a film that gears its performativity towards demonstrating how the city itself is performed both in the film and in the social consciousness of its audience. Cities and the cinema have a storied affinity, and *City Song* works to expose filmmaking and urban planning as part and parcel of the same processes of ideologically constructing the urban spaces in which we live. In so doing, the film is an invitation to question the shape of one particular city at a highly charged moment in its development, while also issuing a more general call to understand how the arts are deeply embedded within the social constructs of urban spaces. Finally, *City Song* is a shining reminder that, at least for a few years, the CBUT was able to speak creatively to the people of Vancouver from deep within the city's heart. And the city listened.

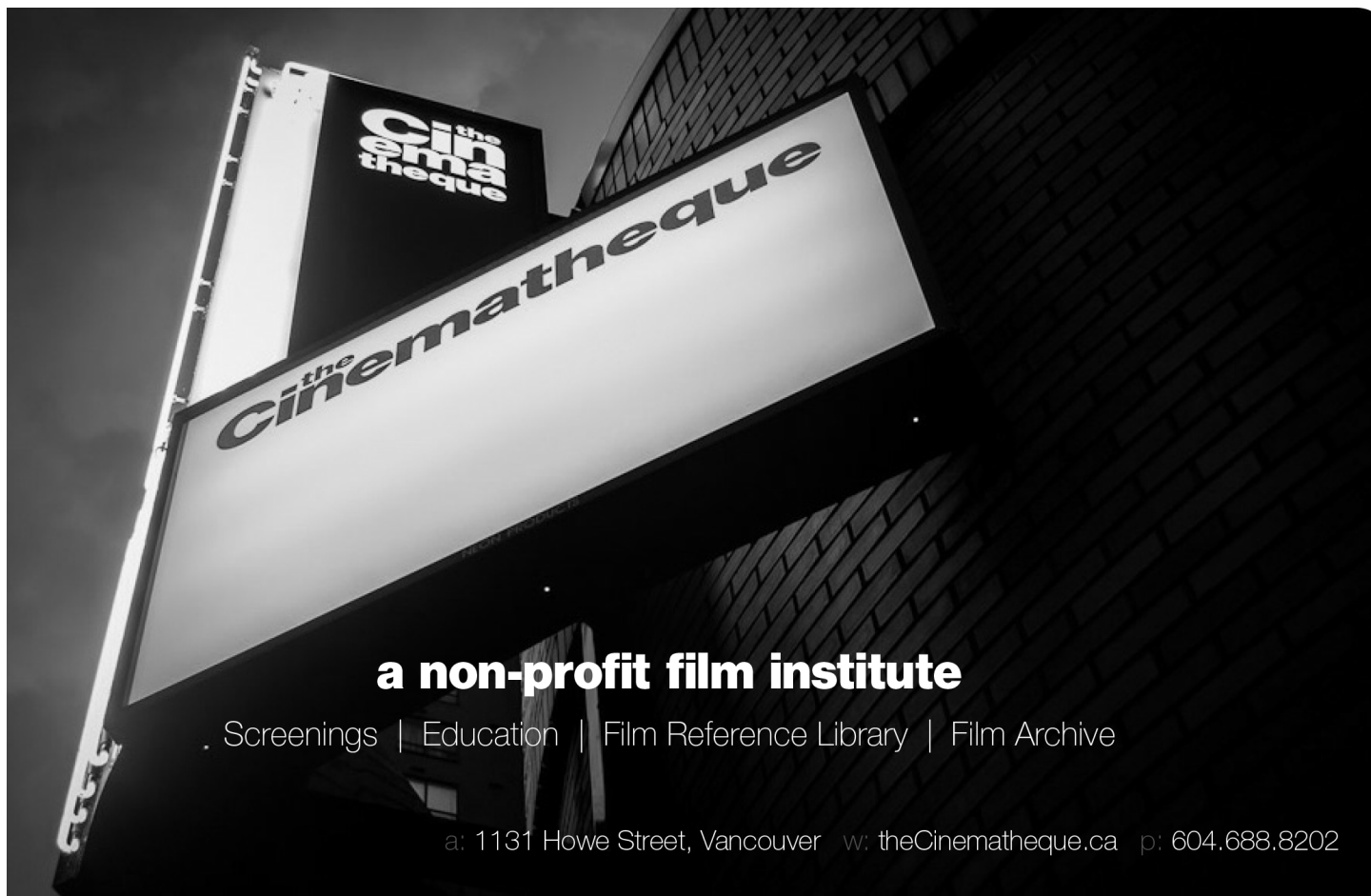
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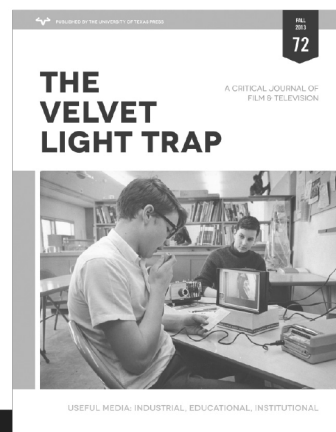
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