

Vasco Hexel

Royal College of Music, London

Harder, Better, Faster – Film music composition in the age of digital filmmaking

This paper highlights compositional techniques and musico-narrative strategies that have currency in the age of digital feature film production. With the advent of digital video editing, the process of film production and post-production was forever altered. Bordwell et al. have shown that recent mainstream Hollywood films rely on faster editing speeds and shorter average shot lengths. The rise of digital cameras has further compounded changes to the way films are shot and edited. As a result, film composers no longer work to locked picture, a crucial prerequisite for the use of traditional film scoring methods. This paper evaluates the ways in which viable compositional methods and stylistic devices, in line with prevalent production practices, can provide an effective link between music and image: Film composers rely on busy rhythmic textures, textural and loop-based composition and malleable additive layering of musical strata, enabled by the use of emerging music technology. With a focus on Harry Gregson-Williams's cue 'The Stanton Curve' from Tony Scott's *Unstoppable* (2010), this paper also illustrates aspects of sonic competition (dynamic, timbral), dramatic intent and the role of spectacle.