

Comparisons between Music for Media Composers (**for essays**):

Bernard Herrmann, Hans Zimmer, Thomas Newman

You should try to create examples for as many of these points as you can.

1. Almost all film composers portray an emotion in their music. This relates to the music of the Romantic period – except here the image is present on screen, instead of just being seen in the mind's eye.
2. Film Music generally does three things. It sets the emotion, it sets the pace, and it sometimes accompanies events (**'Mickey Mousing'**)
3. All of the featured composers approach music in this way, or obviously do the above two things: Eg:
 - Love (or Eve Kendall) theme: North by Northwest: Herrmann. This accompanies any scene with Eve in.
 - Chords for Townsend's Stabbing: North by North West: Herrmann. The chords 'Mickey Mouse' the actual stabbing.
 - Intro Music – linked to pursuit: North by North West: Herrmann. This rhythm accompanies chases (usually initiated by the villains).
 - Close to me Blues – linked to happiness or love: Taxi Driver: Herrmann
 - 5 note 'What is Going to Happen Next' Motif: Taxi Driver: Herrmann
 - Tension (Taxi Driver Prelude Music). Increasing use of **dissonance** in each statement of the music accompanies menace, danger or fear.
 - Descending Semitones suggest danger in Taxi Driver and North by Northwest.
 - Zimmer uses a driving low ostinato in 'Man of Steel' to suggest aggression. This is similar to Herrmann's 'North by Northwest'.
4. All of the featured composers do things that differ from C19th Romantic Music, or 'break the rules' of traditional harmony. Examples are:
 - Herrmann uses **Quartal** harmony based on **4ths** instead of **3rds** throughout 'North by North West'.
 - Herrmann uses **Chromatic Parallels** and **parallel Major 7ths** in 'Journey to the centre of the Earth'.
 - Herrmann uses superimposed chords or Bitonality in places.
 - Zimmer uses **Note Clusters** in Interstellar's 'Wonder' theme. He also uses the **Augmented 4th** and **Tremolo**.
 - The first note in Zimmer's Murph and Cooper is harmonise by the interval of a 7th. Suggesting 'space' this is not traditional.
 - Herrmann uses Jazz in Taxi Driver (Blue Notes, Jazz chords).

- Herrmann usually doesn't use 'Traditional' resolutions or cadences. When he does (start of Taxi Driver) it is notable.
 - Herrmann's music often just fades. In North by Northwest this is due to Diminuendo, in Taxi Driver this is sometimes due to Studio Fadeout.
 - Herrmann bases a lot of music in Taxi Driver on the Wind and Brass – while traditional classical music uses the strings a lot more.
 - Herrmann uses Vibraphones and Alto Sax in Taxi Driver.
 - Zimmer sometimes uses different rhythms for ideas, even if the pitches are similar to other ideas.
 - Zimmer uses the **Phrygian** Mode for General Zod's theme. Herrmann uses music, too, that sounds modal – often due to his altered scales.
 - Newman (like Herrmann) uses percussion (but also synths) in 'Wall-E'
 - Newman uses marimbas and **Polyrhythms** in 'American Beauty'.
 - Some of American Beauty sounds almost Minimalist due to the rhythms.
5. All of the featured composers use **Twentieth Century Tonality**. Although the music is **Diatonic** (based around Major and Minor poles), it is not restricted to the 7 notes of the scale – it can and does use all 12 pitches.
- North by Northwest: Herrmann: 'In' Bb (based on it).
 - Taxi Driver: Herrmann. Main Theme (and start) is 'In' Ab
6. Generally (but not always – see point 11) the music uses the standard 12 pitches of the Western equally tempered scale.
7. The music generally uses traditional expectations of **Major** and **Minor** harmonies to create the emotion, with **Augmented**, **Diminished**, **Chromatic** and **Atonal** additions to set the scene (as well as added note or altered chords to confuse the issue. There is some parallel with Debussy in making music by joining together different types of note groupings.
- In Zimmer's Man of Steel C Major of the heroic theme changes to C Minor, altering the sound and emotion.
 - Newman uses standard chord progressions the most (eg Skyfall).
 - Herrmann uses Chromaticism extensively in North by Northwest. Where he does use thirds, they are often move, or are against moving motifs.
 - While Herrmann's Taxi Driver is more **consonant**, there are many **Note clusters**, or added note chords.
 - Zimmer's Murph and Cooper uses Chromaticism (and descends scalicly)
 - However Zimmer's 'Suffering' in Man of Steel uses rising 6ths (unusual).
 - Newman's American Beauty uses Scalic and Traidic themes.

8. The music often uses expected pitch relationships (the importance of the **dominant**, etc) – despite using all 12 pitches within **Tonal areas** (or keys).
- Zimmer's theme for Murph and Cooper uses a **Dominant Pedal**.
 - His Murph and Cooper theme **contrasts Major** against **Minor**.
 - Zimmer uses **Major & Minor** sometimes for Good & Evil in Man of Steel.
 - Herrmann's films use **Tonic** or **Dominant** (or other) pedals regularly.
 - In Interstellar, it is suggested that pitch relationships relate to gravity, and that **pedals** suggest gravitational pull.
 - The 7th in Interstellar suggests distance or the vastness of space.
 - Many themes are scalar or triadic (Zimmer's Interstellar themes).
 - Herrmann's builds North by Northwest around semitones, 4ths and 5ths.
 - Zimmer's Man of Steel Themes also consistently use rising 4ths or 5ths (intervals associated with heroes – eg Wagner and John Williams).
 - Zimmer's 'Love and Action' Theme uses rising 5ths, 4ths, and 3rds.
 - Zimmer's 'Striving' Theme in Interstellar strives to escape the Tonic.
 - Herrmann starts Taxi Driver with a **Perfect Cadence** (with added notes).
 - The sections of Music in North by Northwest are usually orientated around the **Tonic, Dominant or Subdominant**.
 - Newman, too, uses pedals in American Beauty.
9. Combinations of **dynamics, silence, pitch** and the other elements create suspense, happiness or warmth, sadness, etc.
- **Tremolo** can suggest tension (Herrmann: Psycho) or 'Wonder' (Zimmer)
 - Herrmann often replaces **Tremolo** with Brass **Mutes, rhythms, etc.**
 - In Taxi Driver, the Crescendi and Diminuendi create tension/relaxation.
 - In Herrmann's North by Northwest, silence creates a sense of space (eg on the Prairie at the Bus stop).
 - The stabbing chords in North by Northwest are loud.
 - The music in North by Northwest when Thornhill creeps up to the house is generally quiet. It has swells at each moment of danger.
 - The quiet Tonal music in Herrmann's often conveys peace (Eve's theme or Close to be Blues), while the quiet Dissonant music suggests unrest.
10. Sometimes composers use different musical languages to set the scene.
- Newman uses hooting or whistling effects in **Wall-E**.
 - Herrmann uses Street Music: (Drums, Whistles, Singing) in Taxi Driver
 - Herrmann plays the Blues over the Record itself in Taxi Driver.
11. There is quite a lot of **Pastiche**. Pastiche is music deliberately copied or borrowed to set a mood of time or place. Examples are:

- The music in the hotel lobby in Herrmann's North by Northwest
- The train dining car (before the Love Theme) in North by Northwest
- The street music in Herrmann's Taxi Driver
- The Ad Jingle in Newman's Wall-E, and 'Hello Dolly' and more.
- But - Newman composes more of his pastiche than the others.
- Newman uses the well-known Bond ideas in Skyfall.

12. All of the composers use **Leitmotifs**. A Leitmotif is a musical theme or idea that is assigned to an object or emotion or event or person or feeling. Some sources say that Herrmann tried to avoid them, but North by Northwest has identifiable ideas associated with the Musical ideas.

Generally the composers above assign **leitmotifs** to events or emotions or situations causes rather than to people or events.

- Zimmer has themes for 'Love' or 'Wonder' or 'Heroic' for example.
- Newman uses 'event' leitmotifs in 'Wall-E' rather than people themes.
- He uses a 'Human pride in Technology' motif when machines appear.
- Herrmann's leitmotifs for North by Northwest relate to actions (like the spies' chase or Thornhill's pursuit)
- North by Northwest has a love theme (love/Eve)
- North by Northwest uses descending semitones for the spies.
- Herrmann's Taxi Driver has a 5 note 'What is going to happen' motif.
- 'Close to me Blues' in Herrmann's Taxi Driver relates to satisfaction or well-being or love – not necessarily love with one person.

13. The importance of **leitmotifs** is emphasised through **repetition** or **change**. They repeat to show involvement in a scene. They change to show how the event or emotion or person has changed or been affected. They **combine** to show how events are linked.

- Herrmann constantly changes the chase music in North by Northwest.
- Thornhill's Pursuit music changes a bit, but is only used twice.
- Eve's love music is always the same (does the relationship develop?).
- Herrmann's Prelude music constantly changes in Taxi Driver. Apart from the Blues, this is the main music – based on a two chord progression.
- The Taxi Driver Blues Music doesn't change. Happiness doesn't change.

14. The similarity of themes shows their relationship

- Zimmer's Man of Steel themes clearly show this.
- Descending Semitones in all of Herrmann's music shows danger.
- Rising leaps in Herrmann, Zimmer and Newman suggests action.

15. Orchestration of themes affects the way they are portrayed (or linked).
 - Newman is arguably the most advanced instrumentally (in Skyfall with electric guitars) – compare to point 11. He uses Appalachian Dulcimer, Marimba, Tabla, in American Beauty. He uses a range of effects and instruments (often in layers) in Wall-E. He uses Lap Steel, Synth Flute, Mandolins and Steel Pan in American Beauty.
 - Herrmann uses a standard orchestra in North by Northwest, but often uses just sections of it, and a lot of the music is on the strings.
 - In Taxi Driver, Herrmann extends the low orchestral instruments and the percussion section. He doesn't use higher strings (much).
 - In Taxi Driver a lot of sustained notes are held on the Brass or Wind.
 - Herrmann doesn't use electric (or pop) instruments.
 - Zimmer uses Pipe Organ in Interstellar. Usually it is in religious works.
 - Zimmer changes in 'Love and Action' theme in Interstellar from light to heavy orchestration. It accompanies 'bigger' events.
 - Zimmer uses synthesizers in 'Man of Steel' in the Krypton Theme.
 - Newman's 'Wall-E' has more emphasis on higher instruments (perhaps the lightness of space) than Herrmann's 'Taxi Driver'.

16. Arguably Herrmann is the most innovative composer – possibly because he did a lot of new things **first** (not because he was the only one): Examples are:
 - Use of **cell format** (from Stravinsky) eg the first motif of North by Northwest (quaver + 4 semiquavers) which is restated in 4 or 5 different versions, and against (or combined with) most other motifs or ideas
 - Ostinatos (linked to the above) – later used by Zimmer in Man of Steel.
 - Quartal Harmonies (see 5 above).
 - Twentieth Century Tonality – less Key orientated. More **dissonant**.
 - Avoidance of standard cadences.
 - Avoidance of consistent simple triads (Jazz Chords or Note Clusters).

17. Herrmann was influenced by notable Western Musicians such as Stravinsky, Debussy, and the English Nationalists. Herrmann paralleled Ives (ie: he was not influenced by him, but knew of his music).

18. Arguably (it has been suggested that) Herrmann influenced the other two composers (as he was first). At the very least, all three were aware of other composers (see the comparison between Zimmer and John Williams).

19. Newman uses music of others in Skyfall – using the James Bond theme, and the influence of Zimmer’s Dark Knight themes. Taxi Driver uses a pop tune – but this is not done by Herrmann, probably by Scorsese (the director).
20. In these works, Newman is probably the only one who uses pop music (Wall-E and Skyfall) and Music from Broadway (Wall-E). Sometimes the music makes ‘Cameo’ appearances – it is quoted to support an image, rather than a serious part of the soundtrack. He also uses some minimalism in ‘American Beauty’.

Newman worked heavily with Peter Gabriel in the composition of Wall-E. Gabriel is a well-known Progressive Rock composer and Artist.

There is, though, a piece of Pop Music in Taxi Driver, not written by Herrmann. Herrmann died so soon after completing the music that it is likely that any other music had to be composed by someone else.

21. For the actual **musical elements** (sustained notes, pedals, arpeggios, cadences, modes, scales, compositional devices, terminology etc), you must use the accompanying documents for each film or composer.

See the list of terms that each document covers, and see if you can use it to write a sentence about each word from memory (which film, how it is used, where and when – roughly)