

# ***TEN LITTLE TITLE TUNES***

**Towards a musicology of the mass media**

by

**Philip Tagg**

and

**Bob Clarida**

**New York & Montreal, 2003**

**The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press**



Tagg, Philip and Clarida, Bob: *Ten Little Title Tunes*  
(1st edition)  
The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, Inc.,  
New York and Montreal, 2003.  
xvi + 898 pages. ISBN 0-9701684-2-X.

*Keywords:* music, popular music, musicology, television, film music, title themes, signature tunes, musemes, music analysis, semiotics, ideology, gesturality, affect, emotion, taxonomy, reception tests, responses, connotations, verbal-visual association, romantic, Western, pathos, heroism, military, circus, humour, sadness, loneliness, sports, news, rural vs. urban, detectives, crime, fashion, orchestration, instruments, timbre, form, melody, harmony, chords, classical music, pop, rock, brass band.

Over 500 music examples (notation); illustrated

Text, ©Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 2003;  
delivered in PDF format for printing in November 2003.

Philip Tagg is Professor of Musicology at the Faculté de musique, Université de Montréal. He teaches popular music history, theory and analysis, as well as music and the moving image. | <http://tagg.org> |.

Bob Clarida is a partner of Cowan, Liebowitz and Latman in New York. He specialises in matters of copyright, trademark and rights of publicity. | [www.cll.com](http://www.cll.com) |

This book was produced using the following software:

*Desktop:* Adobe FrameMaker v.5.5.0  
*Notation:* Music Printer Plus v.3.3 and Finale v2002.r1  
*Image editing:* Adobe Photoshop v.6.0  
*Main font:* Century Schoolbook

- Cover design: Karen Collins and Philip Tagg
- Typing and page layout: Philip Tagg.
- Printing and binding: Books on Demand, Lima, Ohio ([www.bodbooks.com](http://www.bodbooks.com)).

Published by  
The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, Inc.  
401 West End Avenue #3B  
New York, NY 10024  
USA  
[www.mediamusicstudies.net/mmsp](http://www.mediamusicstudies.net/mmsp)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Preliminaries vii

Preface

Typography and formatting xi

- Capitals xi •Chord and note names xii •Octave designation xiii
- Date abbreviations xiii •Footnote postponement xiii
- Italics xiv •Reception test responses xiv •Examples xv

References xv

- Bibliographical references xv •Glossary references xv •Internet references xv

## PART 1: BACKGROUND, THEORY AND METHOD 1

### Chapter 1: The rise of musical absolutism 3

Music, 'music' and democracy 4

Classical, class and the Great Epistemological Divide 9

- Knowledge in and about music 9 •Why 'absolute'? 11

'Absolute music' 12

- Absolute aberration? 12 •The rise of 'absolute music' 15 •'Absolute' subjectivity 24
- The Great Epistemological Divide 27 •'Absolute' obstacles: a summary 28
- Film music: the final 'absolute' anomaly 29

### Chapter 2: The decline of musical absolutism? 33

The first three phases 34

Phase 1 – Ethno 36

Phase 2 – Socio 39

Phase 3 – Semio 47

Phase 4 – Popular music studies 57

Background and definitions 57

Rockology and the Great Divide 59

- The institutionalisation of rock 59
- Pomo-rockology, consumerism and the 'liberation of the id' 66

Music: a troublesome appendage to cultural studies 78

Conclusion and bridge 89

### Chapter 3: Method and procedure 93

Method 94

Musematic analysis 94

- Musical structures: what are they? 94 •Interobjective comparison 96
- Commutation (hypothetical substitution) 98

A simple sign typology 99

- Anaphones 99 •Episodic markers 101 •Style indicator 102 •General caveat 102

Response to earlier work 103

- Non-musos and musical categories 103

The reception test 107

Choice of test pieces, source details and selection criteria 107

- Euro-North-American mainstream 108 •Methodological expedience of film music 109
- Why title themes? 110 •Why those ten tunes in that order? 111 •Pre-test hypotheses 111
- Non-recognition criterion 112 •Playlist rotation criteria 113 •More musematic hunches 114

Respondents and test sessions 115

Test procedure 117

- Information to respondents 117 •No time to think 118 •Free induction, popular synaesthesia 119
- Free induction v. multiple choice 119 •Words ≠ pictures ≠ music ≠ words 120

Interpreting test results 121 [VVA=Verbal-Visual Association]

Discretising VVAs 122

- VVA classification 123 •Film music's functions 124 •Library music classifications 125
- Musical common sense 130

- VVA taxonomy 131 [VVA = Verbal-Visual Association]
  - General anomalies 134 •‘Weird words’ 134 •Polysemic VVAs 135 •Distanced VVAs 137
  - Contextual VVAs 137
- Limitations and functions of VVA taxonomy 140
  - General 140 •Crosschecking 141 •Functions of the taxonomy 142
- Statistics 143
  - People or responses? 143 •Proportional scaling 144 •Clustering 147 •Mean difference 150
  - Variation coefficients, Specific profiles, and Zero responses 151 •Response appendices 152
- Mode of presentation 152
  - Transcription 152
  - Order and type of discussion 153

## PART 2: THE TUNES

### **Tune 1. *The Dream of Olwen* – Classical romance and Mother Nature 155**

- Transcription 156 •Responses 18 •Special Profile Statistics 163
- Musical description and hermeneutic hunches 167
  - Musical constants 168
    - Tempo 168 •Phrasing 168 •Instrumentation 169 •Dynamics 169 •Recording 169
    - Initial hunches 170 •String padding 170 •Romantic piano arpeggios 171
  - Harmonic language 172
    - Consonant dissonances? 172 •Ave Maria chords 173
  - Half-diminished pathos 180
    - Defining the chords 180 •Tears, woe and anguish 181 •Pivotal pathos 187
    - Half-diminished crisis chords 191 •‘Autonomous’ half-diminished woe 192
    - A half-diminished typology 193 •Half-diminished in *Olwen* 194
    - Big Concerto Movie Themes 198 •Half-diminished chords: a summary 203
  - Ninths and minichromatics 204
    - Ninths 204 •Minichromatics 209 •Adeline slides 210 •Minor amen and crisis chords 211
    - Harmonic waves 214 •Harmonic summary 215
  - Melody 217
    - Swoons and sighs 217
      - Sighing sixths and sevenths 217 •Stiff-upper-lip sighs 221
    - Grace notes and disjunctive flooding 225
      - Vertical effects of the skip to degree six 226 •Horizontal effects of the skip to degree six 227
  - Waves and romance 231
    - Romantic piano arpeggios (again) 231
      - Are pianos romantic? 232 •Piano arpeggios and water 233 •Becks 233 •Rivers 236
      - Lakes 238 •Sea 239 •Piano arpeggios, plant life and Madigan meadows 241
      - Piano sextuplets: shimmer and tingle 246 •Sextuplet summary 249
  - Gestural common denominators 249
    - Lullabies, children and love 249 •Waves subjective and objective 252
    - Gestural interconversion 253
  - Conclusions 268
    - Not just ‘wavy’ 268
    - Matters arising: Gestural interconversion and ‘primary’ signification 270

### **Tune 2. *The Virginian* – Life, liberty and the US pursuit of happiness 277**

- Transcription 278 •Table of Musemes 280 •Responses 281 •Special Profile Statistics 287
- Introduction 290
  - Horse music and the lore of the West 291
    - Equine anaphones — musical horse sense 292 •Riding where? 297
    - Horses = Western? 303
  - Minor-mode moods 307
    - Soldier, sailor, cowpoke 307 •Minor-mode excursion 1 – Sadness? 310
    - Minor-mode excursion 2 – Ethnicity and archaism 317
    - British minor modes 322 •The Virginian’s British minor-mode connection 324
    - Theres and thens 327
  - Where is The Virginian’s West? 330
    - Italy, Spain and Mexico 330 •Latin American minor modes 332 •Motorised fandangos 336
    - Country & Latin clip-clop 342 •Relative major sandwiches 343 •Cowboys or vaqueros? 347

- Big-country modalisms and high-plains harmonies 357
- Mexico, Hollywood and Spaghetti 362
  - Mexico: no cows? 362 •Hollywood or Cinecittà? 364
- Why are cowboys electric? 366
  - Cowboys and spies 366 •Historical excursion 1: Berry, Shadows, Morricone 368
  - Historical excursion 2: electric Country and Western 373 •The electric Virginian 375
- Melody and a sense of direction 379
  - Undulating oboe pastorality 379 •Nature travelogue or Western action? 382
  - Harp sweep titillation 386
- B Section: Pursuit or achievement of happiness? 387
  - Semio-musical scene switching 387 •Arrival or achievement? 389
  - Dancing, women and society or the lonesome trail? 391
- Addenda 395
  - Addendum 1: Cowboy/thriller/Latin crossovers 395
  - Addendum 2: Commutation of national music identity 396
- Tune 3. *Monty Python's Flying Circus* ('Liberty Bell') 397**
  - Transcription 398 •Responses •Special Profile Statistics 405
- Parade, parody and the past 409
- Addenda 427
  - Circus 427 •Uncommented exclusives 428 •Named VVAs 428
  - Zero and very low-score responses 430
- Tune 4. *Romeo & Juliet* – Love, longing and loneliness 431**
  - Transcription 432 •Responses 444 •Special Profile Statistics 439
- Melody 442
  - Death 442 •Darkness 443 •Longing 444 •The importance of X and Z 450
  - The anguish ambitus 452
- Minor add 9: melody and harmony 453
  - Anguish — again 453 •Bitter love and crime 458
- Different 'strokes' for different folks 466
  - 'Ethnic' folk lutes, Russia and Greece
- Tune 5. *Sportsnight* – Speed, normality and television 475**
  - Transcription 476 •Responses 477 •Special Profile Statistics 480
- Speed, normality and television 483
  - Tempo and surface rate 483 •Speed, power and aggression 484 •Anaphonic telegraphy 487
  - Busy xylophones and comic bustle 494 •Loveless dancing 498
- Tune 6. *Emmerdale Farm* – Pastoralty 'as it always has been' 503**
  - Transcription 504 •Responses 506 •Special Profile Statistics 509
- Pastoralty 'as it always has been' 513
  - Recognition 513 •General response pattern 514 •Pastorality forever 517
- Tune 7. *Sayonara* – Pentatonicism and pastures 521**
  - Transcription 522 •Responses 523 •Special Profile Statistics 527
- Pentatonicism and pastures 530
- Tune 8. *A Streetcar named Desire* – Minor key jazz and all that crime 539**
  - Transcription 540 •Table of Musemes 542 •Responses 543 •Special Profile Statistics 547
- Episodic and synoptic 551
  - An efficient vehicle 551 •Episodic time: a formal digression 555
- The first sound 563
  - The march of death? 563 •Minor-key jazz and all that crime 566 •'Groanin' Low' 573
  - Lonely ninths 577 •The story so far 579
- The Church of the Flatted Fifth and P.I. Cool: Urban anxiety 579
  - Jazz underscores 579 •Dated depression? 583
- More mystery and thrills 588
  - High and low 588 •Eerie ice or fearful fog? 588 •Heavy anacrusis 590

Dejection or dames? 595

- Down in the blues 595 •Sadie ‘Trumpet’ Thompson 596
- Stripping into some looser spending 597 •Accelerando urgency and spies 598
- Chase and fight music 599

Conclusion 601

- Summary 601 •Pastiche to prove the rule 602

Addendum 604

- Undiscussed VVAs 604 •Unexplained VVAs 604 •Problematic or unexplainable VVAs 605
- Music for fashion, news and sports broadcasts 605

### **Tune 9. Deep Purple: *Owed to ‘g’ – Drugs ‘n’ crime ‘n’ rock ‘n’ roll* 607**

- Transcription 608 •Responses 610 •Special Profile Statistics 614

Detectives and delinquency 617

- Purple and Vice 617 •Youth culture vs. youth target 618
- Scenarios, attributes and characters 621 •Even spies get the blues 624
- Rock as absolute music? 631

### **Tune 10. *Miami Vice – Synthesised fashion for the eighties* 633**

- Transcription 634 •Responses 637 •Special Profile Statistics 641

Intro: phatic modernity? 644

Latin percussion and eye shadow 645

- VVAs of specific musical genre 645 •Fashion and notions of beauty 647

Latin percussion and menace 650

- Negative drum scenario 650

Guitars: menace and metamorphosis 652

- Power chord threat 652 •From wah and twang to clean and neutral 653

The synthesiser: a many-splendoured thing 654

- Semiquaver subdivisions 654 •Synthesiser semiquaver reiteration 655

Horizontal change 657

- The tune: is anybody there? 657 •Timbre and texture 659 •Harmony and form 661

## **PART 3. SO WHAT? TITLE TUNE GENDER AND IDEOLOGY 665**

Conclusions? 666

Gender in the ten tunes 667

- Statistics for male and female person VVAs 667
- ‘Male’ and ‘female’ music 669 •‘Male’ and ‘female’ VVAs 670

Indeed, so what? 677

## **APPENDICES 681**

Explanations 681

Appendix 1: Original responses in original language 683

Appendix 2: Responses translated and discretised 702

Appendix 3: Verbal-Visual Associations (VVAs) listed alphabetically with cross-reference to category number, test tune and respondent numbers 723

Appendix 4: VVA Taxonomy 745

Appendix 5: VVA scores 769

- 1-digit scores 770 •2-digit scores 771 •3-digit scores 772 •4-digit scores 777

Appendix 6: Miscellaneous test data 795

- List of test pieces •Test session data •Return rate and per-mille scoring
- 4-digit category usage •Degree of response difference between tunes
- Repeated VVAs 4-digit double VVAs •Unused VVA categories

Appendix 7: Glossary of abbreviations, foreign words, neologisms, special terms, etc. 805

Bibliography 811

List of musical and audiovisual references 826

Index 856