

Do Film Producers affect the viewers' emotions by their choice of music?

PSP 501 Media Presence & Project Planning

Electronic Music Production BA (Hons)

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ABSTRACT

Juslin and Västfjäll (2008) Argues that happiness and sadness might be the most effortlessly communicated emotions as far as musical structure. They also argued that music inspires an extensive variety of essential and complex emotions. These can run from excitement and loveliness by means of discrete feelings to more unpredictable feelings such as sentimentally, resulting in chills. This does not infer, however, that a piece of music, which communicates a specific feeling will fundamentally instigate a similar emotion in an audience.

This thesis examines if film producers can affect the viewers emotions by their choice of music and it also investigates if Juslin and Västfjäll's (2008) statements are valid for small scale research in 2016. The study presents further understanding of which feelings that surface in the wake of watching five different 40-70 seconds film excerpts with music, that potentially should stimulate the five different basic emotions (happy, sad, neutral, angry, tense) by the viewer. The study gives an answer to whether or not individuals with an interest in film are experiencing the same emotions after watching the selected excerpts.

It also reports results of the survey held with 21 randomly selected individuals. The respondents were asked to complete an online questionnaire alongside with watching five specifically selected film excerpts, to see if the music would have an affect on their emotions. Results show that the music in film is definitely having an affect on the viewers' feelings towards what they see and hear.

The study concludes that music can induce certain sentiments depending on how different individuals perceive it. Research has also proven that past events in a persons' life can have a major impact on how the individual actually experience emotions when exposed to music with visuals.

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Declaration of Originality

I, Frida Feline Nilsen, declare that this work submitted is my own, and expressed in my own words. Information derived the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text of the thesis at the point of their use. A full rundown of references utilised has been incorporated using the Harvard referencing system

Signature...Frida Feline Nilsen.....

Date...05.12.2016.....

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Abbreviation and Glossary

- *ACM* - Academy of Contemporary Music
- *YouTube* - The world's most popular video sharing website
- *iMovie* - iMovie lets the user organise clips, and turn them into films
- *MP4* - MPEG-4 is a digital multimedia container format most commonly used to store video and audio
- *Vimeo* - Vimeo is a video sharing website

INTRODUCTION

This research project aims to find out if the film producers affect the viewers feelings by their choice of music. To get a complete picture of a film's overall effect on the viewer, it is essential that the role of music must be clarified. According to Lindvig (2003) film has a unique ability to appeal to both the intellectual and the emotional feeling. In short, he argues that music in film primarily works emotionally.

To find out if this is true, research was undertaken by choosing five different clips from feature films (40-70 seconds each), that potentially should stimulate the five different basic emotions (happy, sad, neutral, angry, tense) by the viewer. Excerpts were selected that very likely would give a clear response either happy (positive), neutral or sad (tragic). 1 clip were selected from the movie *Amélie*, 1 from *Gravity*, 1 from *Signs*, 1 from *Gladiator* and one from *The girl with the dragon tattoo*. These film excerpts were specifically selected because they potentially would allow the music to have an emotional impact on the viewer. The clips were converted from YouTube to MP4 files and put together as one file in iMovie. Then, an online survey was set up with five different emotion categories for each excerpt. The respondents completed one step of the survey after each scene. A total number of 21 individuals with an interest in film acted as respondents. There were 9 females and 12 males. 62% of the respondents were below 25 years old and 14% between 25-50. The films from which excerpts were taken are listed in Appendix A.

Literature Review

Film Producers' and videographers' main goal is to pass on a particular emotion to the viewer (Kalinak, 2010). Filmmakers have to take important decisions such as correct lighting, locations and choosing actors who can deliver the intended energy on a set. Of all the most important decisions a filmmaker must take into account, Porter (2015) argues that music is among the most vital and certainly one of the most powerful. Recent studies outlined by Nugent, J (2015) suggests that different film scores can completely change the outcome of a scene. He further argues that filmmakers carefully pick their soundtracks or sound scores to convey certain emotions or ideas.

Nugent, J (2015) contends that chase scenes tend to have music with fast tempo and sad scenes are often slow and somber. He further states that these early musical psychological techniques set the standard for film scores in modern cinema. The shower scene in the psychological horror thriller *Psycho* is a perfect example of the psychology of music in film, where Maryann Crane got stabbed to death in the shower. The scene features one of the most effective film scores in history ("Psycho," n.d.). The high-pitched violin sound, mimic sounds we biologically associate with stress and danger (Kelleghan, F. 1996). A study by the university of California in 2010 found that non linear alarm sounds give us an emotional response that instinctively unsettle us psychologically. Bernard Herrmann purposely constructed the film score of *Psycho* to mimic these unsettling noises and the effect makes the scene significantly scarier and more unsettling (Stewart, H. 2013).

Nugent, J (2015) concludes that the majority of film scores intentionally stays in the background and only provides inconspicuous cues to the audience. Film score pioneer Aaron Copland (1940) gave 5 ways the score serves the screen, and most of them stay in the background. The first is to create a more convincing atmosphere of time and place; this one is pretty self-explanatory. Many genres and settings have their own style of music to go with it. The style of the film score puts the audience in a particular setting or mood (Copland, 1940). A classic example would be the wild western, which utilises instrumentation that has a very distinct sound, like the harmonica, Mandolin and the Banjo ("Instruments in Country Music," n.d.).

Copland (1940) also stated that music can underline psychological refinements, unspoken thoughts and that unseen dangers gets shown or reinforced through the music. The viewers may not see the danger but the music reminds them its there. The *Brazilian Birthday Party* scene in the science fiction thriller *Signs* is a perfect example of how the music manipulates the viewers to sense that

some sort of danger is approaching. Copland's (1940) third outline is to build a sense of continuity. If the music between shots or scenes is the same, then the viewer will relate those scenes to each other. This includes montages or flashbacks. The American mystery drama film *Citizen Kane* uses musical cues as an indicator of a flashback (Robinson, 2014).

Copland's (1940) fourth outline is to give a sense of finality. Copland (1940) notes that this takes place usually at the end of a film or after some major triumph. The triumph and sound of the music psychologically links us to the triumph on screen. And finally Copland (1940) says sometimes music is just there to fill the silence. Interestingly he states that this is the hardest film score to do because the audience shouldn't notice it. Hoffmann (2015) argues that film scores enhance the emotion of a scene but sometimes directors choose to not use any music and this can work just as well.

Boggs & Petrie (2008) state that music is utilised in film to evoke strong emotions in the viewer and to convey meaning, frequently adding to the visual storyline by giving more inconspicuous subtle nuances to the plot. Boggs & Petrie (2008) also argue that to interpret music for film as background music is to misconstrue the contribution music has to the general impact of a film. A film score is a fundamental and complimentary part of the visual-scape. There are two types of musical scores: The Generalised score and The Mickey Mousing score (Boggs & Petrie, 2008). The Generalised score does not aim to coordinate the activity of the film with the music. The emphasis of this type of score lies in making an emotional atmosphere and furthermore, passing on an emotion that parallels the activity of the scene (Boggs & Petrie, 2008).

Recent studies outlined by Cohen (2011) suggest that music is in charge of bringing the imaginary world of the film (diegesis) and the present reality of the viewers (non-diegesis) together. Music rises above the diegetic and non-diegetic universe in that it gives enthusiastic substance to the viewer without the viewers being aware of the presence of the music. Kalinak (1992) asserts that music is a complex tool for correspondence between the brain of the film-director and the psyche of the viewers.

("Using Music to Heighten Emotion," 2014), conveys that a talented composer will utilise music more subtly to escalate the viewers' emotions of every scene as well as increasing tension and conflict. ("Using Music to Heighten Emotion," 2014) Also argues that the human body is modified

to react in certain ways to various sounds. Music can influence verging on each part of the body including breath, heart rate, muscle tension and even the immune system. "Music can enhance our ability to focus, increase productivity, heighten feelings of romance and sexuality and create feelings of safety or unease" ("Using Music to Heighten Emotion," 2014).

Investigation has proven that it is not the melodies of a piece of music that influence spectators emotions the most, but rather the tempo of the score. Various exploratory studies have demonstrated that the heart rate and likewise emotions of concern rise and fall modified by the velocity of the music ("Using Music to Heighten Emotion," 2014). Composers aware of this information will make surprisingly variations in tempo to start dread and fear among the viewers. Abating the rate of the music will obviously have the opposite effect and can be utilised to soothe the viewers into a feeling that it is safe and secure ("Using Music to Heighten Emotion," 2014). Utilising a movement of harmonies that does not resolve, or sound completed, is another method for keeping the audience tense. Thus unsettling high and low pitches are additionally regularly used to control the viewers' feelings ("Using Music to Heighten Emotion," 2014).

Research done by Konecni demonstrates clear emotional impacts of music. Konecni pointed out: "Loud and complex melodies arouse non-aroused and aroused people to anger and soft and simple melodies soothe aroused people" (Konecni, 1982). However, Musicologist, Claudia Gorbman stated that:

The bath of affect in which music immerses the spectator is like easy-listening, or the hypnotist's voice, in that it rounds off the sharp edges, masks contradictions, and lessens spatial and temporal discontinuities with its own melodic and harmonic continuity (Gorbman, 1987: 6).

Gorbman (1987) called attention to an essential point that it is the music syntactic structure, i.e., intra musical instruments such as melody, harmony and rhythm, leading to affect effect in the spectator.

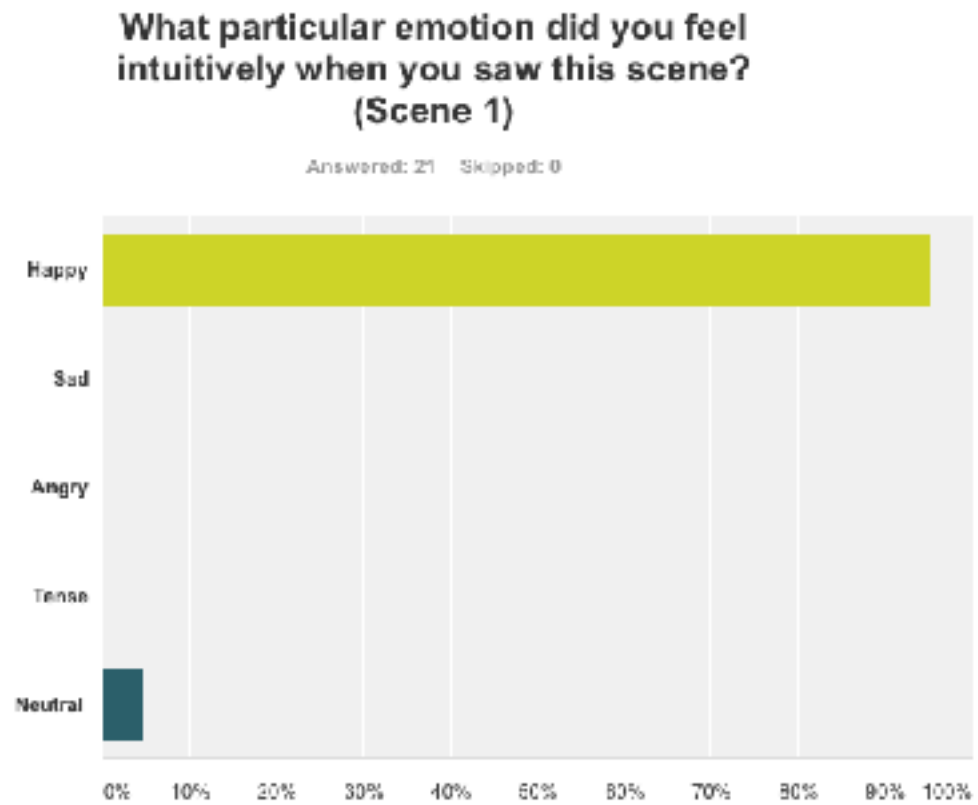
Methodology

The methods utilised as a part of this study were chosen to further investigate the main points in the literature review, to prove or disprove their validity in the current market. Parts of the literature written on the topic can be decades old so these methods will make sure the data is still up to date. Rooyen (2011) states that film and music is all about subjective feelings, and thus it will be uncertain whether respondents actually feel and think the same. In this study, it has been aimed at selecting excerpts with accompanying music, that potentially would give a relatively uniform response.

Quantitative methods were utilised to collect data and findings for this research. As stated by Wyse (2011) "Quantitative Research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics". To carry out statistical analysis of the opinions of a group of people about a particular issue or element of their lives, one can ask them to express their relative agreement with statements and answer on a five-or seven-point scale, where 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is neutral, 4 is agree and 5 is strongly agree (the seven-point scale also has slightly agree/disagree). In this case the "agree" points are substituted with different emotions. Such scales are called Likert scales, and enable statements of opinion to be directly translated into numerical data. A Likert Scale is utilised as a part of surveys to quantify variables of a research study. It uses interval variables by arranging them into a logical order with equivalent separations between the levels. The American Social psychologist Rensis Likert developed the Likert Scale which he pointed out was, "A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes," (Archives of Psychology, 1932, Vol. 140, No. 55).

RESULTS

The following chapter presents the Quantitative data collected from a questionnaire and its findings.

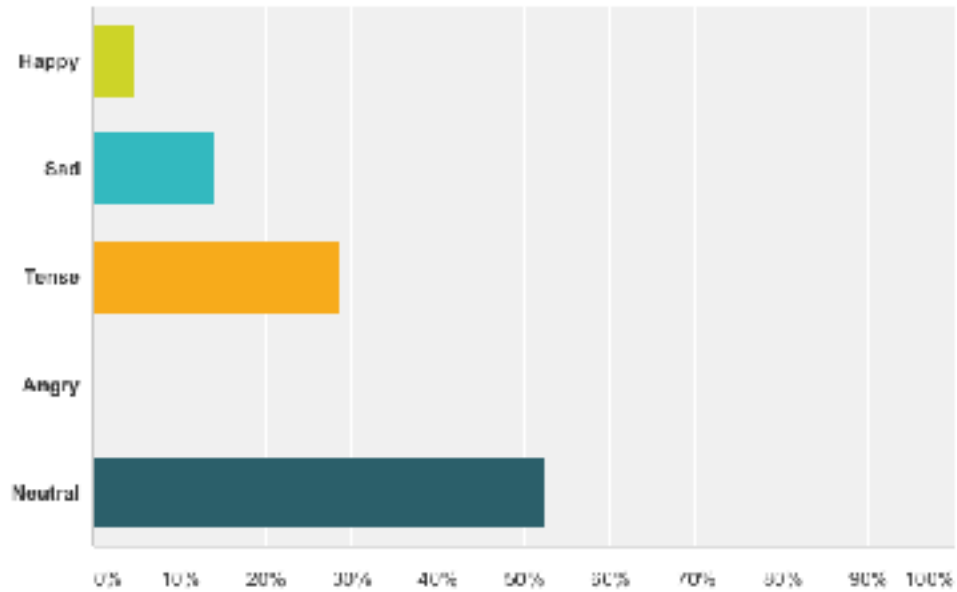


Answer Choice	Responses
Happy	95.24% 20
Sad	0.00% 0
Angry	0.00% 0
Tense	0.00% 0
Neutral	4.76% 1
Total	21

Figure 1. (Data from the *Amélie* excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively when you saw this scene? (Scene 2)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

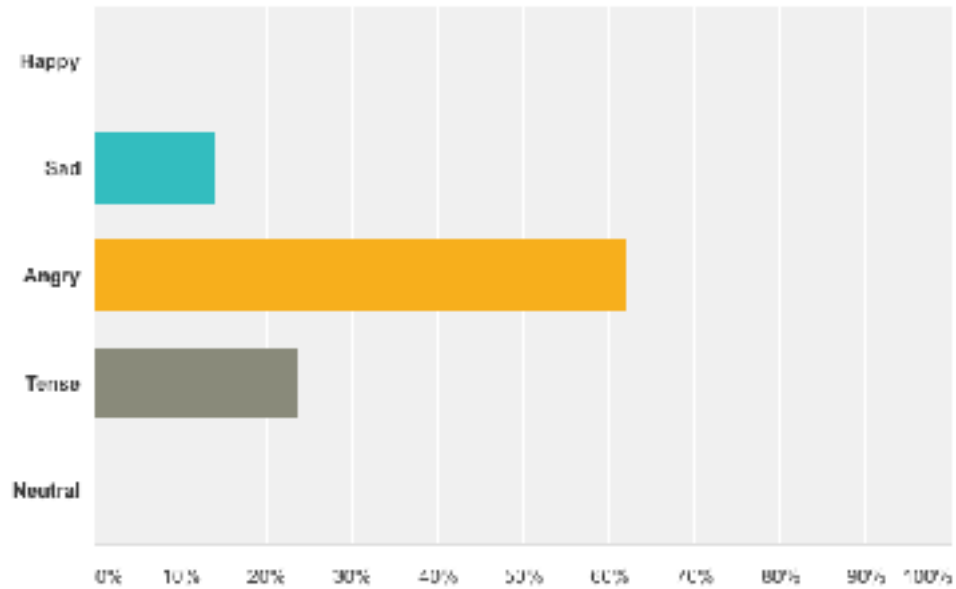


Answer Choices	Responses
Happy	4.76% 1
Sad	14.29% 3
Tense	28.57% 6
Angry	0.00% 0
Neutral	52.38% 11
Total	21

Figure 2. (Data from the *Gravity* excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively when you saw this scene? (Scene 3)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

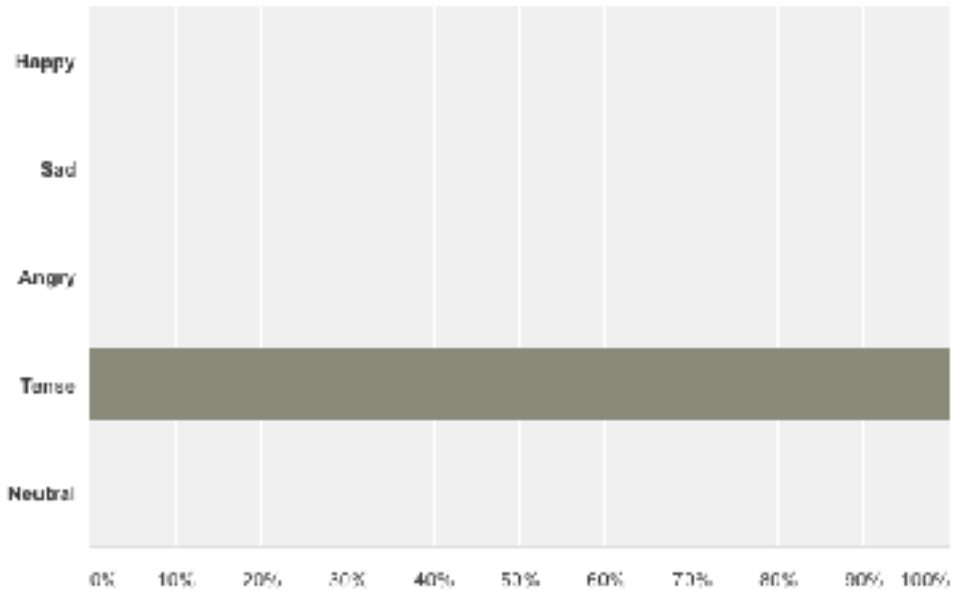


Answer Choices	Responses	
Happy	0.00%	0
Sad	14.29%	3
Angry	61.90%	13
Tense	23.81%	5
Neutral	0.00%	0
Total		21

Figure 3. (Data from *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively at the end of this scene? (Scene 4)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

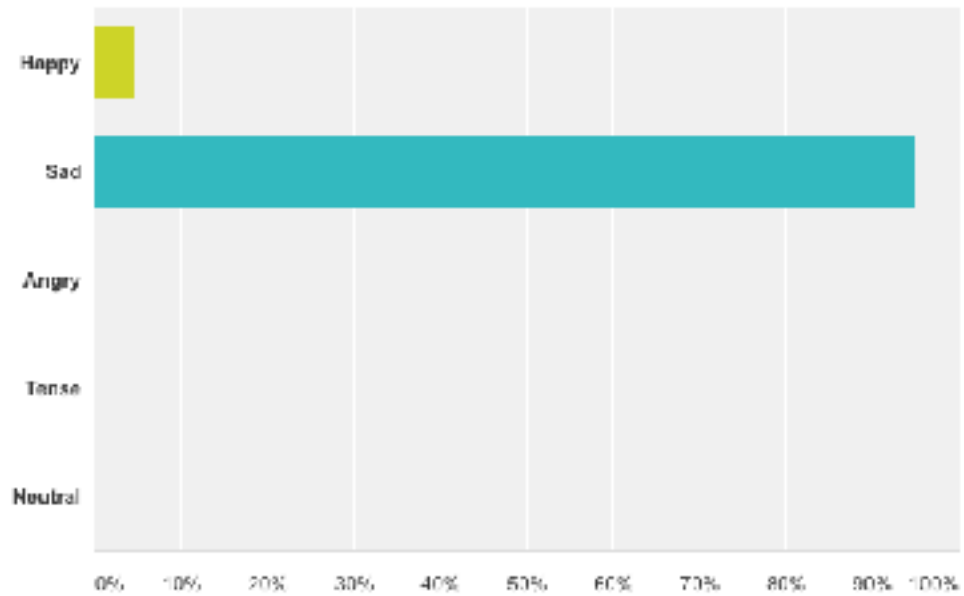


Answer Choices	Responses
Happy	0.00% 0
Sad	0.00% 0
Angry	0.00% 0
Tense	100.00% 21
Neutral	0.00% 0
Total	21

Figure 4. (Data from the *Signs* excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively when you saw this scene? (Scene 5)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



Answer Choice	Responses
Happy	4.76% 1
Sad	95.24% 20
Angry	0.00% 0
Tense	0.00% 0
Neutral	0.00% 0
Total	21

Figure 5. (Data from the *Gladiator* excerpt)

DISCUSSION

The results gathered from the survey confirms the hypothesis that music in film is affecting the emotions of spectators. However, this study also shows that some participants experienced emotions individually from one another.

Figure 3 shows that 95% of the participants experienced the music in scene one from the movie *Amelie* as happy. According to Rogers, N. (2010), this is the view of the film reviewers also.

However, one of the onlookers chose neutral as perceived emotion. One can only draw a conclusion to why that one person felt neutral to a scene so clearly staged. Perhaps the spectator miss someone he or she loves, and instead of feeling happy this person get drawn into a pattern where he / she does not know quite what to think and therefore chose neutral as perceived emotion. Yann Tiersen's use of accordions and harpsichord in the selected excerpt expresses happiness and romanticism (Roger, 2011). It is difficult to understand how Tiersen's music combined with the scene where an in love couple driving scooter in the streets of Paris, smiling to each other can be interpreted as neutral. One theory could be that this person focused more on the actual scene instead of the music.

It ought to be noticed that participants appeared to have difficulty in understanding the concept of Tense as emotion. Conceivable disarray or misunderstanding of the emotion may be responsible for the varied results in *Figure 2*. Steven Price's score "Aningaaq" for the second excerpt in the movie *Gravity*, sounds like waking from a dream (Southall, J. 2013). The score utilises light F-major repeating pad chords with many subtleties implementing the outcome of the sound. The pad chords later followed by strings expresses a balance between despair and hope. This emotional contrast may be one hypothesis why the participants have chosen such different responses to this question.

Figure 3 also shows participants experiencing various reactions after seeing excerpt three. Reznor and Ross's use of unusual percussion combined with low pitched synth sounds and weird noises underline the emotional content of the utilised scene from the movie *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Ryan, 2012). Studies have demonstrated that particular human facial expression and body language can also induce strong emotional reactions in viewers (Cohen, 2011). One can conclude that the drastic facial expressions and body language of the victim is the reason why 62% of the participants interpreted excerpt three as angry. However, Tan (1998) proposed that sympathy is viewed as the essential empathic emotion allowing an audience to draw in with the characters on

screen. This proposal led to another theory why 15% of the participants chose sad as perceived emotion after watching the same excerpt.

As previously mentioned, *Figure 2* shows that it appears to be troublesome for some viewers to understand the feeling tense in excerpt two. However, the results in *Figure 4* shows that 100% of the participators understood the meaning of tense as an emotion in the chosen excerpt from the movie *Signs*. Howard's score for the Brazilian video scene is separated into two parts, before and after the Alien has appeared in the video (Heine, 2016). The first cue is a blend of low strings with a melodic clarinet and a Viola line. The horns and the upper strings in cue two add dissonance to the sound and this can be seen at what makes fear in the spectator. Another part that is proposed to create tension and fear in the spectator is the dynamically increasing volume towards the end of the scene, when the Alien shows up on the screen. Unseen perils get reinforced through the score for excerpt four. The viewers' can't see any danger, but the music reminds the spectators that it's there.

Imagine if the original score for excerpt four was replaced by Vangelis's romantic jazz song "One More Kiss, Dear" from the movie *Blade Runner*. This would have totally changed the emotional tone of the scene, and it is believed that the response from the spectators would be peaceful rather than scared and tense. If the film producer chose the mentioned romantic song for the selected scene instead of the original score composed by Howard, it is most likely to think that the viewers' would have thought it to be a normal birthday party. The use of Vangelis's score instead of Howard's, would most likely have led the onlookers to think that the children hurried to the window to get a glance at the cake, one would not have expected to see an alien in the garden. Having said this, Howard's score seems to induce a condition of suspense or even fear. It is believed that the film would have lost its ability to pass on dread and terror, without the music.

Figure 5 shows that 95% of the participants felt sad as perceived emotion after watching excerpt five. According to Ainsworth (2015) she emphasised that the music that underscores Maximus' death deliberately makes the viewers' feel emotionally sad. Hans Zimmer's heroic soundtrack "Honor Him" is set to a slow tempo and is low in pitch, and this together with soft legato strings is believed to be one reason why so many felt tenderness and sadness. The main theme is introduced after Maximus's death along with the enchanting voice of Lisa Gerrard. The chords together with slow tempo soft strings, signifies his heroic sacrifice. According to Ainsworth (2015) she also believes that this piece of music is what makes the spectators feel emotional.

When Maximus's corps is conveyed a huge brass section is introduced to the dynamically increasing string section and this give a feeling of a greater texture. However, *Figure 5 also* shows that one person out of twenty-one felt happy as perceived emotion after watching excerpt five. Ainsworth (2015) proposes that the soundtrack in Maximus' death scene have affect on the overall emotion of the scene. The music makes the viewers' feel sad, but also emotionally satisfying, considering that Maximus got to be with his family again. This can be one philosophy why this one person felt happy as perceived emotion.

CONCLUSION

By investigating the issue through literature review and a small scale quantitative analysis, it is clear that film producers' choice of music affect the viewers' emotions. In exploring this, the thesis has also discovered that people do perceive emotions differently in terms of music combined with visuals. Quay (2007) argues that the emotions that an individual encounters are specifically identified with the way that that specific individual perceives the music. Further research shows that various composition techniques such as pitch, velocity, tempo, tonality and dynamics seems to play a huge role in how people actually perceive emotions in music. These variables can increase the feeling of calmness or tension. Facial expressions and body language in film also seems to have an important impact on viewers' emotions.

Further investigation has shown that music itself has the power to evoke different emotions in spectators such as sadness, joy, tension, fear, anger, neutralism, romanticism and more. However, people do not necessarily experience the same emotions. One can conclude that music can be seen to create certain emotions depending on how people hear it. If a person relate a specific piece of music to an occurrence or a tragedy experienced in life, then every time the person hear that specific song it will revive the same feeling of melancholy.

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Appendix A

Stated below is a list of the film music excerpts utilised in this research project and the proposed emotional characterisation of every excerpts.

Emotion	Name of Film
Happy	Amélie
Sad	Gladiator
Angry	The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo
Tense	Signs
Neutral	Gravity

Film	Descriptoin
Amélie	A couple driving on a motorcycle
Gravity	A woman undressing her astronaut suit in a space shuttle in Space
Signs	Man watching a disturbing footage on the news in terms of Aliens
The Girl With The Dragon Tattoc	Man rapes a woman wie her hands and legs are tied with ropes to the bed
Gladiator	A heroic man dies in the Colosseum

Appendix B

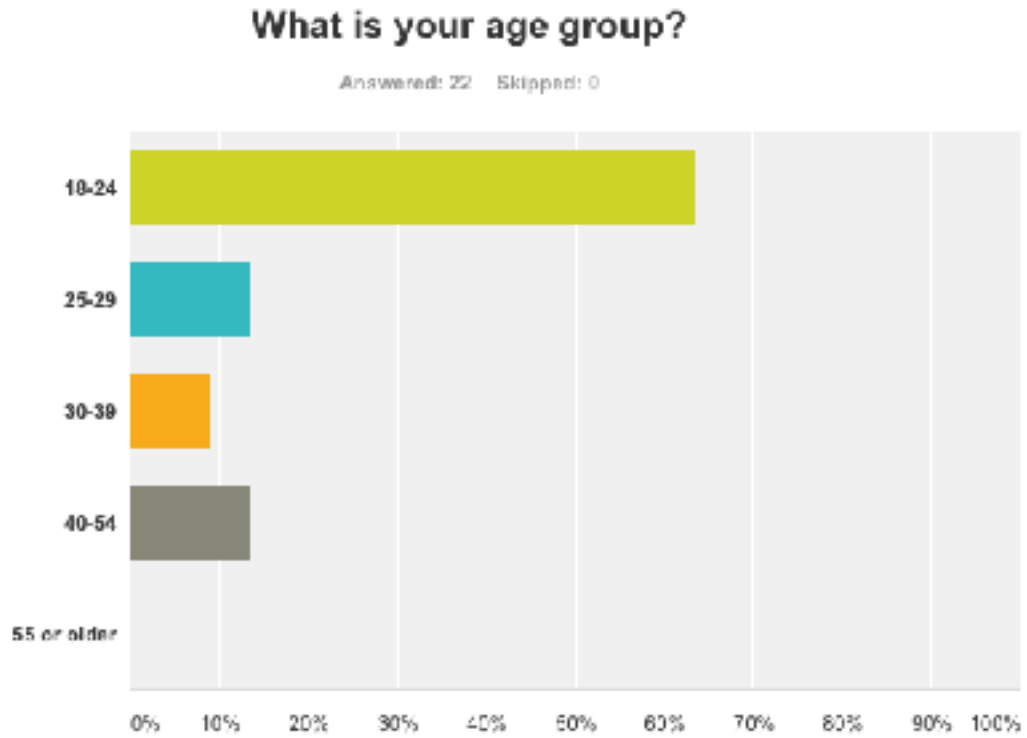
Link to survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5CL92SH>

Link to the 5 film excerpts (Vimeo): <https://vimeo.com/183327109>

Appendix C

Below is an inclusion of the Raw Data collected from the online Survey.

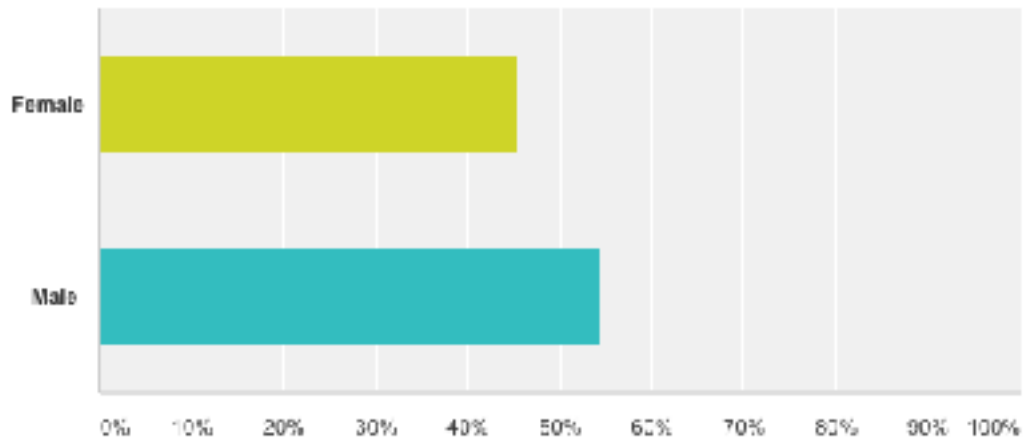
It appears that one unknown participant decided to take the survey just days before due date. This person has chosen neutral on each excerpt and therefore chooses the author not to take this participant seriously or include him/her in the results section.



Answer Choices	Responses
18-24	63.64% 14
25-29	13.64% 3
30-39	9.09% 2
40-54	13.64% 3
55 or older	0.00% 0
Total	22

Gender

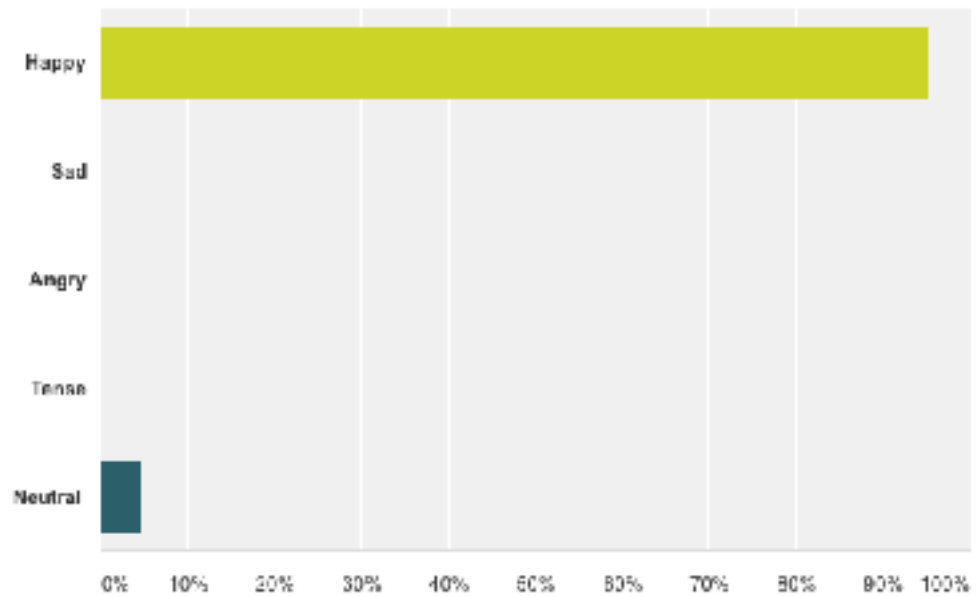
Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



Answer Options	Responses
Female	45.45% 10
Male	54.55% 12
Total	22

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively when you saw this scene? (Scene 1)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

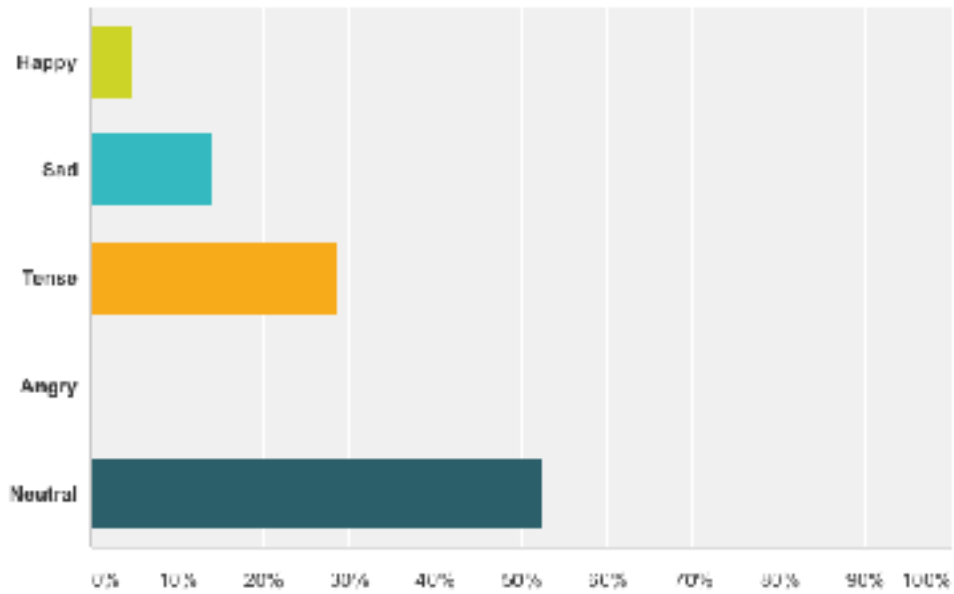


Answer Choices	Responses
Happy	95.24% 20
Sad	0.00% 0
Angry	0.00% 0
Tense	0.00% 0
Neutral	4.76% 1
Total	21

Figure 1. (Data from the *Amélie* excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively when you saw this scene? (Scene 2)

Answers: 21 Skipped: 0

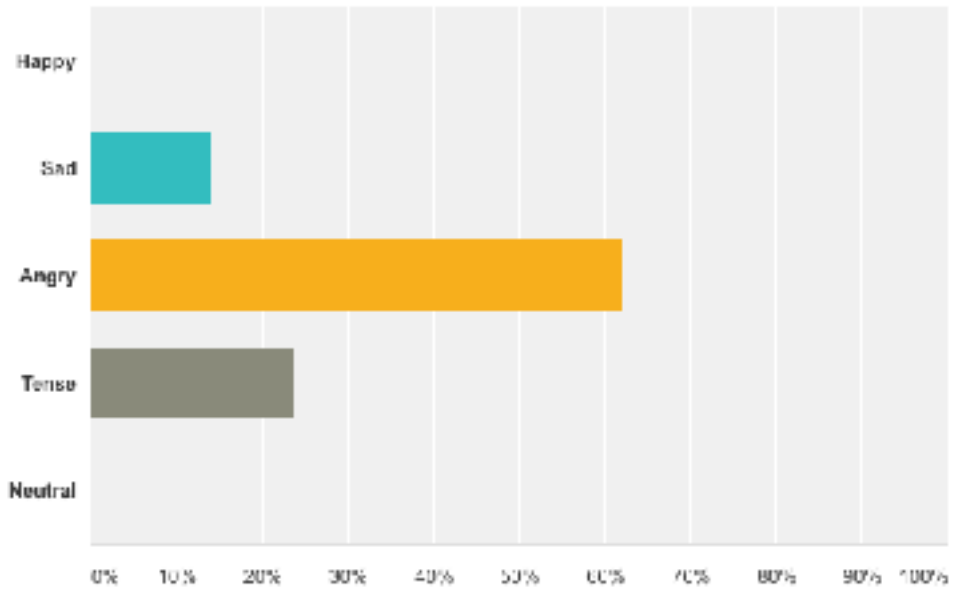


Answer Choices	Responses
Happy	4.76% 1
Sad	14.29% 3
Tense	28.57% 6
Angry	0.00% 0
Neutral	52.38% 11
Total	21

Figure 2. (Data from the Gravity excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively when you saw this scene? (Scene 3)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

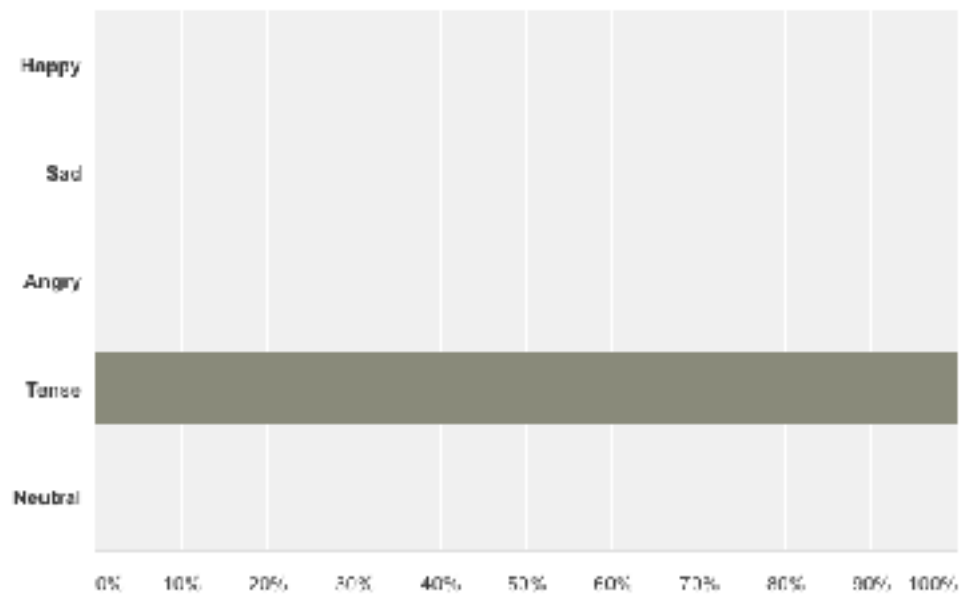


Answer Choices	Responses
Happy	0.00% 0
Sad	14.29% 3
Angry	61.90% 13
Tense	23.81% 5
Neutral	0.00% 0
Total	21

Figure 3. (Data from *The Girl with the dragon tattoo* excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively at the end of this scene? (Scene 4)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

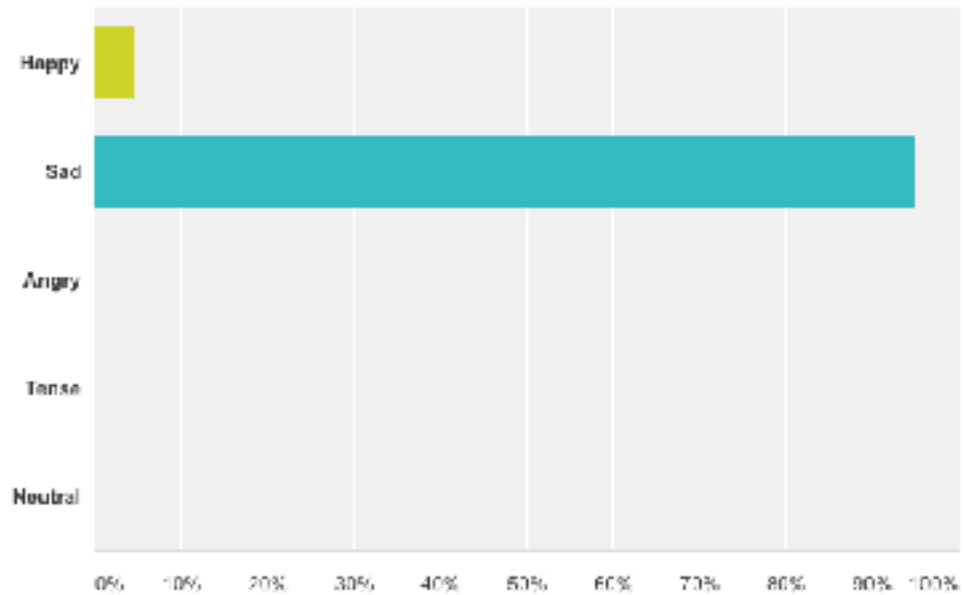


Answer Choice	Responses
Happy	0.00% 0
Sad	0.00% 0
Angry	0.00% 0
Tense	100.00% 21
Neutral	0.00% 0
Total	21

Figure 4. (Data from the *Signs* excerpt)

What particular emotion did you feel intuitively when you saw this scene? (Scene 5)

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Happy	4.76% 1
Sad	95.24% 20
Angry	0.00% 0
Tense	0.00% 0
Neutral	0.00% 0
Total	21

Figure 5. (Data from *The Gladiator* excerpt)

Appendix D

Below is a picture of three books bought on Amazon in terms of research for this study.




Appendix E

Hi everyone! I need to collect results for my dissertation survey, if you could fill it out that would really help me out thanks 😊

The task is to watch 5 different scenes I've put together from 5 different movies, combined with answering the questions at [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com)

Link to questions: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5CL92SH>

Link to film: <https://vimeo.com/183327109>

	<p>Effects of Music on Viewers Perceptions of Film Survey</p> <p>Web survey powered by SurveyMonkey.com. Create your own online survey now with SurveyMonkey's expert certified FREE templates.</p> <p>SURVEYMONKEY.CO.UK</p>
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