

PATRICK SIMPSON
BRAZIL AND THE ART OF THE SOUNDTRACK SCRIPT

[AMBIENT CROWD NOISE]

PICTURE THIS. YOU'RE IN A MOVIE THEATER TO SEE WHATEVER NEW BLOCKBUSTER JUST CAME OUT, AND YOU ARRIVED RIGHT ON TIME, BUT YOU FORGOT THAT THERE ARE ALWAYS AT LEAST 15 MINUTES OF TRAILERS BEFORE THE MOVIE ACTUALLY STARTS.

[STAR TREK TRAILER DRAMATIC MUSIC]

SO YOU'RE SITTING PATIENTLY THROUGH ALL THE SOUND AND FURY...

[MORE DRAMATIC MUSIC]

ALL THE HUGE BUDGET SPECIAL EFFECTS AND EPIC MUSIC FLYING RIGHT OVER YOUR HEAD. IT'S BECOME SO COMMONPLACE THAT AT THIS POINT, IT'S JUST NOISE.

[EVEN MORE DRAMATIC MUSIC, "MY GOD"]

BUT THEN... YOU HEAR... *THIS*.

[THE ACCOUNTANT TRAILER, "YOUR SON IS A REMARKABLE YOUNG MAN"]

THIS IS THE TRAILER FOR THE ACCOUNTANT, THIS CRIME THRILLER THAT'S COMING OUT SOMETIME NEXT OCTOBER. WHEN I SAW THIS IN THEATERS A COUPLE MONTHS AGO, IT BLEW ME AWAY... BUT NOT BECAUSE OF THE PREMISE, OR THE ACTORS, OR ANYTHING ELSE LIKE THAT... BECAUSE OF THE MUSIC. THERE'S NO HUGE ORCHESTRA, NO OVER-DRAMATIC SOUND EFFECTS... JUST ONE CRISP KEYBOARD RIFF.

[THE ACCOUNTANT TRAILER, "DEFINE NORMAL"]

THIS IS RADIOHEAD'S EVERYTHING IN ITS RIGHT PLACE, AND RADIOHEAD ARE A BAND KNOWN FOR WEIRD, ABSTRACT MUSIC: NOT SOMETHING YOU TYPICALLY SEE IN A MAINSTREAM TRAILER, BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHY IT WORKS; IT STANDS OUT, AND YOU'LL REMEMBER IT MUCH LONGER THAN ALL THOSE GIBBERISH OVER BUDGET TRAILERS. EVEN MORE, IT HELPS CHARACTERIZE THE ACCOUNTANT FROM THE TITLE. THE PURE SINE WAVES OF THE KEYBOARD AND THE LYRICS "EVERYTHING IN ITS RIGHT PLACE" PERFECTLY MESH WITH THE VOICE-OVER DESCRIBING HIM AS THIS EXCEPTIONALLY INTELLIGENT, BUT NEUROTIC MAN.

[THE ACCOUNTANT TRAILER, "HE HAS HIGHLY ADVANCED COGNITIVE SKILLS...

THE OBSESSIVE PERSONALITY... CAN OUR SON LEAD A NORMAL LIFE?"]

MUSIC MEANS EVERYTHING IN A MOVIE, SO TODAY ON OUR PROGRAM, WE'VE GOT ONE CASE STUDY OF A SOUNDTRACK THAT DOES IT ALL, AND WE'RE GOING TO DELVE DEEP INTO WHAT MAKES IT WORK. I'M PATRICK SIMPSON, THIS IS MELOMANIA.

[IN THE OFFICE - BRAZIL]

YOU MAY RECOGNIZE PARTICULAR PIECE OF MUSIC BECAUSE IT'S A WEIRDLY POPULAR CHOICE FOR TRAILERS, BUT IT'S ORIGINALLY FROM THIS 1985 CULT SCI-FI FILM CALLED BRAZIL. IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT, IT'S ABOUT THIS DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY WHERE A LOW-LEVEL BUREAUCRAT SPENDS HIS DAYS DREAMING ABOUT ESCAPING HIS MUNDANE LIFE AND FLYING AWAY WITH THE WOMAN OF HIS DREAMS. SO, YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY A SCI-FI DYSTOPIA MOVIE IS NAMED AFTER THE SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRY

OF BRAZIL... WELL, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT AT FIRST TOO, BUT THE NAME ACTUALLY COMES FROM THE SONG THAT INSPIRED THE MOVIE, AQUARELA DO BRASIL BY ARY BARROSO, KNOWN IN ENGLISH SIMPLY AS BRAZIL. DIRECTOR TERRY GILLIAM TALKS ABOUT THE SONG IN THE COMMENTARY TRACK ON THE SOUNDTRACK.

[TERRY GILLIAM INTERVIEW: "THIS IS TERRY GILLIAM, I DIRECTED THE FILM BRAZIL. THE IDEA CAME FROM SITTING ON A BEACH IN PORT TALBOT IN WALES, WHICH WAS AN INDUSTRIAL TOWN WHERE THEY HAVE THESE GREAT CONTAINER SHIPS ARRIVE, AND THEY ALL FLOWED COAL ON THESE GREAT CONVEYOR BELTS THAT GO TOWARDS THE (I THINK) THE STEEL PLANTS, AND THE WHOLE BEACH IS COVERED WITH THIS BLACK COAL DUST, AND I WAS THERE, SITTING THERE AT SUNSET, AND IT WAS A GRAY, MISERABLE DAY; EVERYTHING WAS MONOCHROMATIC EXCEPT FOR A BIT OF GLOW IN THE SKY, AND I THOUGHT 'WOULDN'T IT BE INTERESTING TO MAKE A MOVIE ABOUT A GUY SORT OF, SITTING ON THIS BEACH, WITH A RADIO, AND HE'S FIDDLING ON THE DIAL, AND SUDDENLY HE PICKS UP THIS SONG, BRAZIL.'"]

THE SONG, AS YOU MAY HAVE GUESSED, IS EVERYWHERE IN THE SOUNDTRACK. DIRECTOR TERRY GILLIAM USES IT AS WHAT IS CALLED A LEITMOTIF, WHICH IS ANY RECURRING MUSICAL THEME THAT REPRESENTS A PERSON, PLACE, OR IDEA. SO LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HOW GILLIAM INCORPORATES THE SONG, AND WHAT IMPLICATIONS IT HAS FOR THE MEANING OF THE FILM.

[OPENING OF BRAZIL (GEOFF MULDAUR'S BRAZIL)]

THIS VERSION OF THE SONG, RECORDED BY GEOFF MULDAUR, IS THE FIRST SOUND WE HEAR IN THE FILM, BEFORE THE TITLE, AND EVEN BEFORE THE FIRST SHOT. ONCE THE VOCALS KICK IN, THE CAMERA ZOOMS THROUGH THE SKY, SOARING THROUGH CLOUDS AS GEOFF SINGS OF A FANTASY ROMANCE. FINALLY, AS THE SONG FADES OUT, THE CAMERA SETTLES ON A TV ADVERTISEMENT.

[TV AD, "HI THERE, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT DUCTS"]
BUT THEN, JUST WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT:

[TV AD, "... DESIGNER COLORS TO SUIT YOUR DEMANDING TASTE"]

[EXPLOSION]

A BOMB GOES OFF, IN WHAT WE LATER LEARN IS A TERRORIST
ATTACK...

[CONTINUING EXPLOSIONS]

... AND THE TITLE BRAZIL COMES INTO THE FRAME AS THE TRUMPETS HIT THAT HIGH NOTE. ALREADY, THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FANTASY OF BRAZIL AND THE HARSH REALITY OF THE WORLD IS LAID OUT, JUST WITHIN THE FIRST TWO MINUTES.

[TV INTERVIEW, "WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS BEHIND THIS RECENT
INCREASE IN TERRORIST BOMBINGS? BAD SPORTSMANSHIP"]

ABOUT SEVEN MINUTES IN, WE HEAR THAT FAMOUS IN THE OFFICE
THEME AS THE CAMERA TRACKS THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS.

[IN THE OFFICE]

IT'S A CHAOTIC ENVIRONMENT, WHERE EVERYONE IS MOVING AND PAPERS ARE ENDLESSLY SHUFFLED. THIS CONSTANT MOTION CREATES THE ILLUSION OF PRODUCTIVITY, BUT IN REALITY, NO ONE IS ACTUALLY DOING ANYTHING; THEY'RE JUST STAMPING AND EXCHANGING AND FILLING OUT FORMS WITH NOTHING BEING ACCOMPLISHED. NOTE HOW THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE MUSIC; THE MELODY REPEATS OVER AND OVER AGAIN AS THE INSTRUMENTATION SLOWLY EXPANDS, VOLUME INCREASING, PITCH RISING, ALL FEEDING INTO A BRILLIANT CRESCENDO THAT *FEELS* LIKE IT WENT SOMEWHERE, BUT REALLY, IT NEVER DEVELOPED PAST THAT INITIAL PATTERN.

[IN THE OFFICE]

AFTER NEARLY TEN MINUTES OF EXPOSITION, WE'RE INTRODUCED TO OUR PROTAGONIST FOR THE FIRST TIME. JUST AFTER WE SEE THE MANAGER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS CALL FOR SOMEONE NAMED SAM LOWRY...

["HAS ANY-HAS ANYBODY SEEN LOWRY? HAS ANYBODY SEEN SAM LOWRY?"]

WE CUT TO A SHOT JUST LIKE THE FIRST SHOT OF THE FILM...

[SAM'S FIRST DREAM]

THE CAMERA FLIES THROUGH THE SKY, EVENTUALLY REVEALING A MAN WITH WINGS GLIDING IN THE AIR. THIS IS LOWRY, DREAMING THAT HE'S A SUPERHUMAN WHO CAN FLY.

[SAM'S FIRST DREAM]

THE USE OF THE BRAZIL THEME IN THIS SEQUENCE FURTHER REINFORCES ITS ASSOCIATION WITH DREAMS, AS WELL AS PROVIDING US WITH OUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF SAM. BEING INTRODUCED TO A CHARACTER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE OF THEIR DREAMS SAYS A LOT ABOUT THAT CHARACTER; SAM'S PRIORITIES OBVIOUSLY DO NOT LIE IN REALITY. IN HIS DREAM, SAM FLIES TO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN CALLING FOR HIM, UNTIL HE'S ABRUPTLY AWAKEN BY A PHONE CALL FROM HIS BOSS.

[PHONE CALL, "HELLO?"]

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF SAM'S ROMANTIC ILLUSIONS. HE DREAMS ABOUT THIS WOMAN SEVERAL MORE TIMES, ALL WITH DIFFERENT VARIATIONS OF THE BRAZIL THEME PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND. ONE MOMENT THAT IS PARTICULARLY EXPLICIT IN THIS THEME OF FANTASY VERSUS REALITY IS WHEN SAM IS DRIVING THROUGH HIS MONOCHROMATIC, DYSTOPIAN CITY, ALL WHILE LISTENING TO THE IRONICALLY LIGHTEARTED BRAZIL ON THE RADIO.

[BRAZIL ON RADIO, "WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM TO BRING YOU NEWS OF A TERRORIST BOMBING AT THE BLUE LAGOON-"]

SAM'S LIFE SLOWLY SPIRALS OUT OF CONTROL, AS HE GETS MORE AND MORE CAUGHT UP IN HIS OWN IMAGINATION, EVENTUALLY RESULTING IN HIS CAPTURE AND ARREST BY THE GOVERNMENT. BUT JUST WHEN IT SEEMS TO BE THE END FOR SAM, HE'S SAVED BY A SURPRISE TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE FACILITY, AND HE EVENTUALLY FINDS HIMSELF IN HIS DREAM GIRL'S TRUCK, OF ALL THINGS. THEY DRIVE AWAY TOGETHER TO THE COUNTRYSIDE,

ALL AS ONE FINAL REPRISE OF BRAZIL IS PLAYING TRIUMPHANTLY. ALL IS
LOOKING WELL FOR SAM...

[FINAL REPRISE OF BRAZIL]

[SCARY VIOLIN]

BUT OF COURSE, IT'S ALL REVEALED THAT THIS SUSPICIOUSLY HAPPY
ENDING WAS JUST ANOTHER ONE SAM'S DREAMS.

["HE'S GOT AWAY FROM US, JACK. I'M AFRAID YOU'RE RIGHT, MR. HELPMANN.
HE'S GONE."]

THE FILM ENDS ON SAM, NOW CLEARLY INSANE, SINGING BRAZIL TO
HIMSELF AS HE'S LEFT ALONE IN HIS PRISON.

[SAM HUMMING BRAZIL]

SO TERRY GILLIAM FIT ALL OF THAT INTO ONE SONG. TELL ME AGAIN
WHY SOUNDTRACKS DON'T MATTER.

[AQUARELA DO BRASIL - FRANCISCO ALVES]

MELOMANIA IS WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY ME, PATRICK SIMPSON. ALL
SOUND IS EITHER FROM THE SOUNDTRACK BY MICHAEL KAMEN OR THE FILM
ITSELF. THE OVER-DRAMATIC TRAILER AT THE BEGINNING WAS THE TRAILER
FOR STAR TREK: BEYOND, AND WHAT YOU'RE HEARING RIGHT NOW IS ONE
OF THE FIRST EVER RECORDINGS OF BRAZIL, PERFORMED BY FRANCISCO
ALVES IN 1939. MELOMANIA IS A PRODUCTION OF 91.3 WHJE, BROADCASTING
FROM BEAUTIFUL, DOWNTOWN, CARMEL INDIANA. THANKS FOR LISTENING.