

The Filmmaker as DJ: Martin Scorsese's Compiled Score for *Casino* (1995)

TODD DECKER

"I wish I could create music, but I can't. What I can do is put images and music together."

Martin Scorsese, 2008¹

Complied film scores recycle pre-existing recorded music in service of a film narrative. Arved Ashby has described the compiled score—typically crafted by directors, editors, and music supervisors—as expressing “the musical decisions of non-musicians.”² Filmmaker Martin Scorsese is foremost among such “non-musicians” of the cinema.³ Indeed, the complex compiled score for Scorsese’s 1995 film

281

¹ Peter Travers, “Martin Scorsese ‘The Stones Freed my Mind,’” *Rolling Stone*, 17 April 2008, 47.

² Arved Ashby, ed., *Popular Music and the New Auteur: Visionary Filmmakers after MTV* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 15. Music supervisors oversee the selection and acquisition of pre-existing recorded music, serving as liaisons between the film and music industries. For a description of the music supervisor in Hollywood around the time *Casino* was made, see Robert Hershon, “They’re Playing Your Song: The Role of the Music Supervisor,” *Cineaste* 26 (2001): 24–26, 55.

³ Among American directors of his generation, Scorsese is peerless in his consistent use of compiled scores and the practice of cutting to music. He was the earliest director to pick up on Stanley Kubrick’s example of crafting scores out of pre-existing recorded tracks. Others of Scorsese’s generation who used popular music in the late 1960s, such as Mike Nichols with *The Graduate* (1967), did not make compiled scores central to their subsequent work. Perhaps only Woody Allen, Scorsese’s elder by seven years, has turned to the compiled score so consistently. Later generations of directors have followed Scorsese’s example, among them Quentin Tarantino, David Lynch, and Wes Anderson. All three

Casino includes so much music, with so much of it woven into a continuous fabric, that categorizing Scorsese as a “non-musician” proves problematic. Made squarely in the heyday of the sample-based, hip-hop DJ, *Casino*’s lengthy compiled score can be understood within the frame of turntablism, defined by hip-hop scholar Mark Katz as a musical practice built on the creative re-use of recorded music—although Scorsese does not work in a live context and his final product is a narrative feature film.⁴

While creatively reusing recorded music to fit his purposes, Scorsese routinely works in reciprocal fashion: modeling the image track and film narrative to the shape of the score, building film form on musical form. Indeed conceiving, creating, and cutting (or editing) film sequences to music serves as a default mode of filmmaking for Scorsese, as attested by multiple references to this practice by the filmmaker across many sources. Scorsese noted his debt to Kubrick’s use of compiled music on his own earliest film success: “The music was very important in *Mean Streets* [1973]. And also the cutting with music. It was all designed. This was the first time, I think, that music was used this way. I had no choice. I didn’t see it and didn’t hear it any other way. The person who gave me the validation to do it was, really, Stanley Kubrick, because of his use of music in *2001*.”⁵ Some projects led naturally in this direction. Scorsese noted of the concert film *The Last Waltz* (1978): “I wanted to get a visual counterpart to the power of the music, again by listening to the music and envisioning the camera moves.”⁶ But his conception of films and scenes ostensibly unrelated to music also draws on the act of listening, for example, Scorsese’s studio-work-for-hire Paul Newman vehicle *The Color of Money* (1986): “A lot of my ideas for the pool scenes came from listening to music late at night . . . I’d hear something on television at two in the morning and I’d write on these little Post-its you leave around the house different ideas of how to do these scenes. Over the years I’ve been very much influenced by music that way.”⁷

Scorsese’s everyday practices as a listener seem to be implicated generally in his imaginative life as a filmmaker outside any specific

have received scholarly attention; for example, see chapters on each in James Wierzbicki, ed., *Music, Sound, and Filmmakers: Sonic Style in Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁴ Mark Katz and Joseph Schloss provide historical context for this kind of DJ work. Scorsese, of course, does not incorporate the performative elements of DJing, such as scratching. Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 115–16; Mark Katz, *Groove Music: The Art and Culture of the Hip-Hop DJ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 5; and Joseph Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-hop* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

⁵ Richard Schickel, *Conversations with Scorsese* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 99.

⁶ Gavin Smith, “Martin Scorsese Interviewed [Film Comment, 1993],” in *Martin Scorsese: Interviews*, ed. Peter Brunette (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 200–19, at 212.

⁷ Ian Christie and David Thompson, eds., *Scorsese on Scorsese*, revised edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 111.

project: “It was just the same as when I was living in California and driving everywhere listening to rock’n’roll [sic] on the radio, I’d find myself fantasizing about scenes in movies, and scenes in movies I was going to make, how I would cover them with the camera.”⁸ And his personal listening history remains formative for his use of music in film, as suggested by a quote from 2011: “I find that I’m listening to music that I heard back in 1949. . . . By 1985 I stopped really listening to popular music. But the earlier songs created images in my head. Somehow some of those images and feelings—not all of them—were able to be used in certain pictures. Certain scenes suddenly reminded me of a piece of music that I thought would be perfect for a film.”⁹

On occasion, Scorsese uses musical terms when discussing his own work, such as his practice on the 1977 musical film *New York, New York* of holding shots for “24 bars” or “12 bars.”¹⁰ This approach is fundamental to Scorsese’s aesthetic, as suggested by the following exchange with critic Roger Ebert in 1997 about the formal composition of the opening moments of *Mean Streets*.

EBERT: Right there in the beginning when you have the dots going past, right at the end of the leader, it looks like it’s haphazard but yet it’s cut to the music.

SCORSESE: It’s cut to the music, exactly.

EBERT: So it really gets . . . it gets into you.

SCORSESE: Yes.¹¹

Watching with his ears, so to speak, Ebert caught the musically inspired rhythmic design of this first moment in Scorsese’s breakthrough film. In *Casino* Scorsese takes his practice of cutting to the music to a career-long extreme.

Eight of Scorsese’s twenty-three full-length features have compiled scores and no credited composer: *Who’s That Knocking at My Door* (1968), *Mean Streets*, *Raging Bull* (1980), *The King of Comedy* (1983), *GoodFellas* (1990), *Casino*, *Shutter Island* (2010), and *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013).¹² As Julie Hubbert notes, in such films “Scorsese himself has acted as composer.”¹³

⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹ Schickel, *Conversations with Scorsese*, 349.

¹⁰ Christie and Thompson, *Scorsese on Scorsese*, 69.

¹¹ Roger Ebert, *Scorsese by Ebert* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 166.

¹² Excluded from this count is the short film “Life Lessons” in the anthology film *New York Stories* (1989), which also has no credited composer.

¹³ Julie Hubbert, “‘Without Music, I Would Be Lost’: Scorsese, *Goodfellas* [sic], and a New Soundtrack Practice,” in *Popular Music and the New Auteur: Visionary Filmmakers after MTV*, ed. Arved Ashby (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 31–62, at 32–33.

This article offers a close analysis of Scorsese acting as composer—compiling *Casino*'s score in the manner of a sample-based DJ—and editing images to recorded music. Beyond inserting Scorsese “as composer” more fully into film music history and scholarship—where his body of work has yet to find a place commensurate with its importance in American, indeed world, cinema of the last half-century—this analysis of *Casino* centers on the multivalent relationship between musical form and film form.¹⁴ Formal and expressive aspects of the film, from narrative structure to characterization, are fundamentally defined by musical form as expressed in both formal structures (song forms, the blues) and the content with which formal structures are made (including beats, vocal styles, instrumental solos, arranging choices, tempo, texture). Musical form is a constituent element of the film's construction on multiple

¹⁴ Claudia Gorbman includes Scorsese among music-loving or “melomane” directors of the post-studio era in “Auteur Music,” in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 149–62. She also notes his “use of Italian opera and 1950s pop music [to] strongly establish atmosphere, character, and plot” in “Ears Wide Open: Kubrick's Music,” in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stülwell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3–18, at 18. Mike Cormack's “The Pleasures of Ambiguity: Using Classical Music in Film” in the latter collection briefly considers Scorsese's use of interpolated classical music in *Raging Bull* (19–30, at 21–23). Mervyn Cooke offers a quick overview of Scorsese's use of music beside Tarantino and Lynch in *A History of Film Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 483–85. *Casino* is very briefly described in Julie Hubbert, “The Compilation Soundtrack from the 1960s to the Present,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 291–318. Hubbert misidentifies the selection from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* used in the film—it is the final chorus; not the “opening movements” (308).

Only one article on Scorsese's use of compiled music has appeared in the major musicology and film music journals: Jordan Stokes, “Rock Composition and Recomposition in *The Departed*'s Soundscape,” *Music and the Moving Image* 6 (2013): 3–20. The following list of sources includes all the published scholarship in English on Scorsese's use of music. Jonathan Godsall focuses on Scorsese's interaction with two composers (Bernard Herrmann and Elmer Bernstein) in “*Cape Fear*: Remaking a Film Score,” *The Soundtrack* 4 (2011): 117–35; and Martha Shearer deals with industrial and genre history in “Sax and the City: *New York, New York* [Scorsese, 1977], Urban Decline and the Jazz Musical,” *The Soundtrack* 6 (2014): 53–66. Elsie Walker reads the compiled score for *Shutter Island* by way of Lacan in *Understanding Sound Tracks through Film Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015): 286–322. Amanda Howell considers popular music in Scorsese's gangster films, folding *Casino* into a larger argument drawing on *GoodFellas* in *Popular Film Music and Masculinity in Action: A Different Tune* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 64–65. In addition to her chapter, “Without Music, I Would Be Lost,” in *Popular Music and the New Auteur*, ed. Arved Ashby (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 31–62, see Julie Hubbert's “Bach and the Rolling Stones: Scorsese and the Postmodern Soundtrack in *Casino*,” in *Tonspuren: Musik im Film: Fallstudien 1994–2001*, ed. Andreas Dorschel (Vienna: Universal Editions, 2005), 43–69. Pauline Reay offers a brief analysis of *GoodFellas* in *Music in Film: Soundtracks and Synergy* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 49–55.

See also the German-language collection: Guido Heldt, Tarek Krohn, Peter Moormann, and Willem Strank, eds., *Martin Scorsese: Die Musikalität der Bilder* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2015), and the discussion of Scorsese in Jonathan Godsall, “Pre-existing Music in Fiction Sound Film” (Ph.D. diss., University of Bristol, 2013).

levels: from singular moments and extended scenes to the film whole. The thoroughly musical nature of *Casino* proves to be ironic, for the main characters are collectively deaf to its music. As Thelma Schoonmaker, Scorsese's longtime editor and creative partner, noted on the film's release, *Casino* was unlike any previous Scorsese film in both "task and size."¹⁵ Its technical challenges yielded a uniquely music-driven film.

Casino was the first film Scorsese and Schoonmaker assembled using digital editing tools.¹⁶ This more flexible and faster process may have encouraged the score's extent and complexity, as sound and image could be more intimately aligned and adjusted to fit one another earlier in the film's workflow. As described by editor Walter Murch, who transitioned to digital tools around the same time on the 1999 film *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, digital editing allows for the image and sound tracks to be simultaneously created and stored for subsequent cleaning up. Complex work done on the soundtrack during image editing does not need to be redone, putting the interaction between sound and image more concretely into the hands of the editor and director. In addition, digital sound editing programs store the complete sound files of compiled tracks, facilitating the practice of sampling and potentially increasing the number of sources—well before hip-hop DJs began using DVS or digital vinyl emulation systems to similar ends.¹⁷ An expression of then-new digital filmmaking, *Casino* captures seasoned, musically sensitive filmmakers experimenting with new tools that may have encouraged the intimate relationship between the image track and the film's especially long and varied compiled score.

Casino itself is long: 178 minutes from start to finish, including end titles. Three-quarters of *Casino*'s run time is scored—about 129 minutes of music in total. All but one of the compiled cues making up *Casino*'s score are borrowed from that capacious and varied category: popular music. Because most compiled scores use popular music, these scores have generally been discussed by film scholars specializing in popular music. Yet most of their work has operated at the level of the scene and the song rather than accounting for all the music in a given compiled

¹⁵ Nicolas Saada, "Thelma Schoonmaker Interviewed," in *Projections 7: Film-makers on Film-making in association with Cahiers du Cinéma*, ed. John Boorman and Walter Donohue (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 22–28, at 23.

¹⁶ Jami Philbrick, "IAR Exclusive Interview: Editor Thelma Schoonmaker Talks *The Wolf of Wall Street* Blu-Ray/DVD, Working with Martin Scorsese and her Legendary Career," <http://www.iamrogue.com/news/interviews/item/10928-iar-exclusive-interview-editor-thelma-schoonmaker-talks-the-wolf-of-wall-street-blu-ray/dvd-working-with-martin-scorsese-and-her-legendary-career.html>, 23 March 2014 (accessed 23 February 2016).

¹⁷ Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001), 128–29. On DVS, see Katz, *Groove Music*, 219–30.

score.¹⁸ I consider *Casino*'s score as a whole: every second of the score and film is accounted for in the appendix, where individual cues are numbered for reference in the text: e.g., "Hurt" (41). Analyzing a compiled score demands familiarity with the complete recordings from which the score was built. I have created a playlist of the original recordings heard in *Casino* in order of their appearance in the film; this playlist is available on the streaming audio service Spotify, accessible at playlist name *casinoscore*. A few tracks are not available on Spotify but in most cases can be found elsewhere on the internet.

The score for *Casino* contains eighty-three discrete musical cues, ranging in length from an entire track (all seven-plus minutes of the Rolling Stones' "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" [37]) to short excerpts from the middle of a record (Scorsese segues seamlessly between two thirty-second excerpts taken from live and studio versions, respectively, of the Stones' "Gimme Shelter" [47, 48]). Most of the pop records used in *Casino* begin somewhere within the track; the appendix indicates the point on the original record where each cue starts. In their sensitivity to determining needle drops and to how long to let a track play, Scorsese and Schoonmaker display the skill and taste of consummate DJs.

286

Casino's credits include sixty-one clearances (acknowledgements of permission to use specific songs and tracks listed by order of first use in the end titles).¹⁹ Excluding four clearances used very briefly as music heard during a television show within the film (cues 51–54) and adding a track not listed in the clearances, fifty-eight tracks are stitched together to make the score for *Casino*—an astonishingly high number.²⁰ Comparable films by Scorsese have many fewer clearances: *Mean Streets* has 23; *Raging Bull*, 34; *GoodFellas*, 41; and *The Wolf of Wall Street*, 42.²¹

Only fourteen cleared tracks in *Casino* are heard more than once. Scorsese does not build his score by repeating particular songs. Instead, successive cues offer musical novelty rather than something familiar. As Scorsese said in 2011, he wanted *Casino* to be "a three-hour epic, but very fast. Very fast, because in the world that they're in, things go faster."²² Constant music and constant musical novelty were crucial to this effect.

¹⁸ Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley, *Pop Fiction: The Song in Cinema* (Bristol: intellect, 2005).

¹⁹ There are only fifty-eight songs in the score because of the two recorded versions of "The In-Crowd" and "Gimme Shelter" and the three versions of "Stardust." The clearance for "Happy Birthday to You" has been omitted from the cue list.

²⁰ Only two versions of "Stardust" are in the clearances.

²¹ These counts include only preexisting recorded tracks licensed from record companies. Excluded are music heard in film clips, songs performed by characters in the film (i.e., a phrase of "Danny Boy" in *GoodFellas*), and cues created for the film and credited to individuals (i.e., "The Money Chant" in *The Wolf of Wall Street*).

²² Schickel, *Conversations with Scorsese*, 209.

Dual Narrative Arcs and Large-Scale Musical Form

The title card at the start of *Casino* reads “adapted from a true story.” At the center of the story are three characters based on actual individuals profiled under their real names in Nicholas Pileggi’s 1995 book *Casino: Love and Honor in Las Vegas*.²³ *Casino* centers on Sam “Ace” Rothstein (real name: Frank “Lefty” Rosenthal; played by Robert DeNiro), a Jewish bookie who is tapped by the Midwest Italian mafia to run the Tangiers, a Las Vegas casino. (I refer to this character as both Ace and Sam, following usage in the film: Ace is used in business contexts; Ginger, his wife, calls him Sam.) The Tangiers, a composite of several actual hotels, was financed by the mob-influenced Teamsters Union in the 1960s, before banks and Wall Street began investing in the gaming industry. The mob makes money on the Tangiers by skimming cash directly from the count room. Nicky Santoro (real name: Anthony “Tony the Ant” Spilotro, played by Joe Pesci) is sent to Vegas by the same bosses to protect Ace and the mob’s investment more generally. Nicky ends up being banned from all the town’s casinos, so he sets himself up as a loan shark, thief, and mob enforcer on the streets of Vegas. Ginger McKenna (real name: Geri McGee; played by Sharon Stone) is a hustler whom Sam persuades to marry him. Their marriage fails and Ginger dies of a drug overdose after having had an affair with Nicky, a gross violation of mafia rules on Nicky’s part. FBI investigations into organized crime, helped along by careless mistakes by individual gangsters, eventually bring down the system. Las Vegas is then claimed by legitimate business interests. Nicky’s former mob bosses have him and his brother killed: they are brutally beaten with baseball bats and buried alive. Ace survives by remaining profitable for his mafia sponsors: he places winning bets on sporting events.

Casino combines two stories: the film is both a crime saga detailing the economic and political structure of mob-run Vegas, and the chronicle of a failed marriage. As Schoonmaker noted, “in *Casino* Marty was trying to have the personal story and the other story—the epic about the corruption and linkage with the Mafia—running simultaneously. The real challenge was to try and make that work.”²⁴ The film’s compiled score plays an essential formal role in meeting this challenge, solving structural problems that Scorsese, going against his normal practice, had

²³ Scorsese and Pileggi spent six months writing the *Casino* screenplay, working from Pileggi’s 700-page, single-spaced chronology, which drew primarily on interviews. Research continued during work on the screenplay. Pileggi’s book *Casino* was written after the screenplay had been completed. See Tom Shone, *Martin Scorsese: A Retrospective* (New York: Abrams, 2014), 170. Scorsese and Pileggi share a screenwriting credit on *GoodFellas*, an adaptation of Pileggi’s book *Wiseguy*.

²⁴ Saada, “Thelma Schoonmaker Interviewed,” 23.

not worked out in advance in the script. The extant draft scripts for *Casino* include no more than a few musical references.²⁵ Scorsese noted that *Casino*'s internal structure changed a great deal in the eleven months it took him and Schoonmaker to edit the film, the stage when compiled music is added—although “added” implies the image track existed without the music.²⁶ Internal evidence from the film suggests it did not. Image and music editing must have occurred simultaneously for *Casino*.

Furthermore, the superabundant score supports extensive voiceovers by Ace and Nicky. This flexible, explanatory element—present in the early scripts—was recorded and refined in post-production, when the length and timing of each voiceover could be adjusted to match the music as the structure of the film was slowly arrived at in the editing suite. One reason Scorsese and Schoonmaker keep the music playing is to provide support for these voiceovers. Indeed, only a few voiceovers lack musical backing.

At the broadest level, *Casino*'s score shapes the long arc of this long film's narrative. *Casino*'s eighty-minute exposition—itsself almost the length of a feature—uses virtually continuous music: forty-four cues crossfade, segue, or follow one other after brief stretches of silence. By analogy with DJ practice, the score for the opening section of *Casino* can be understood as an extended set. During the exposition, the score falls silent for more than twenty seconds only eight times. The length of these breaks varies from twenty-five seconds to one minute, twenty seconds—though only one break exceeds one minute. When the music finally falls away for a pair of lengthy dialogue scenes—six minutes of talking, followed by four minutes with music, then a further seven minutes of dialogue alone—*Casino*'s breakneck conceit collapses. The music literally stops and the characters are left to deal with problems set up during the exposition. Scorsese has spoken of his films as having a “point where the picture proper begins” (*The Age of Innocence*, 1993) or where “the movie begins anew” (*Cape Fear*, 1991).²⁷ In *Cape Fear*, this point of articulation is marked musically by a general silencing of the score. In *The Aviator* (2004), swing jazz yields entirely to original scoring about two-thirds of the way into the film, marking a shift in narrative focus. In *Casino*, the feel of the film changes appreciably when the virtually continuous score falls

²⁵ Available draft scripts include: “Sixth draft,” 21 February 1994 (Writer's Guild Foundation Shavelson-Webb Library, Los Angeles); “Draft 12A,” 9 May 1994 (author's collection); “Shooting Script,” 2 September 1994, revised through 10 November 1994 (Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Hollywood).

²⁶ Shone, *Martin Scorsese*, 171–72.

²⁷ Christie and Thompson, *Scorsese on Scorsese*, 188, 169.

silent. And although music returns for much of *Casino*'s final hour, the musical and narrative momentum of the first eighty minutes is never regained.

No compiled score by Scorsese uses musical continuity to the extent found in *Casino*, which, upon analysis, emerges as a bold film-music experiment driven by the specifics of the film's plot, characters, and concept. Although Scorsese has a distinctive style, his varied output demonstrates an ability to put his vision in service of the particular story and characters at hand. Scorsese's work must be understood film by film and requires a deep engagement with the specific cinematic characters and worlds he creates, in large part through music. Still, given their shared Italian-American gangster milieu, analysis of *Casino* sheds comparative light on such important earlier films as *Mean Streets*, *Raging Bull*, and *GoodFellas*.

Musical Style as Musical Content

Scorsese responded to several questions about the content of *Casino*'s score in a 1996 interview in *Sight and Sound*. Several of his answers do not fit the film. When asked, "You follow the same rule as in *GoodFellas* of keeping the music strictly in period?," he responded, "Yes, as far as possible," offering as an example Fleetwood Mac's 1977 hit "Go Your Own Way" (61) used in a scene set around 1980.²⁸ Scorsese then posited a musical progression: "The sounds change from the beginning of the film from Louis Prima to Fleetwood Mac," suggesting a time span running from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. Scorsese's comments are misleading on several levels. Title cards set *Casino*'s narrative between 1973 and 1983. As Table 1 shows, only eight of the fifty-eight tracks in the score were released in the 1970s and only one (Devo's "Whip It") came out in the 1980s: 1980 to be exact. Tracks by Louis Prima, a signature Vegas performer in the late 1950s, can be heard across *Casino*'s full length (2, 5, 32, 63, 71, 78), and as early as cue 18 the score taps the mid-1970s (Roxy Music, "Love is the Drug"). *Casino*'s score is far from "strictly in period" and suggests no popular music chronology.

For the informed popular music listener watching *Casino*, most of the film's music signals the 1950s and 1960s, creating an ongoing, audible mismatch between the precisely demarcated timespan of the plot and the period suggested by the music. By contrast, Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights* (1997), set in Southern California during almost the exact same years as *Casino*, has a compiled score in which

²⁸ Ian Christie, "Martin Scorsese's Testament," *Sight and Sound* 6 (1996): 7–11, 13, at 11. Reprinted in slightly different form in the published screenplay (Nicolas Pileggi and Martin Scorsese, *Casino* [London: Faber and Faber, 1995], ix–xxiii).

TABLE 1.
Compiled tracks in *Casino* sorted by decade

Date range	Number of tracks	Notes
Pre–1950s	3	3 versions of “Stardust”
1950–1959	17	
1960–1969	28	2 versions of “The In-Crowd” and “Gimme Shelter”
1970–1979	8	
1980–	1	
Classical	1	Bach
TOTAL	58	

all but six of thirty-three cleared tracks date from the 1970s—most from the late 1970s. An audible shift in musical style marks the film’s final reels, set in the early 1980s.²⁹ In *Boogie Nights*, the music matches the costumes in a way it emphatically does not in *Casino*. Scorsese’s film presents a world trapped in a popular music time warp, much like its director, who has noted of his listening habits, “I’m still stuck in the early 60s.”³⁰ Of course, the characters and locales of *Casino* and *Boogie Nights* necessarily contrast sharply. And popular music in a period film need not act as fashionable wallpaper; it can just as easily serve as unfashionable decor indicating the generational identity of a film’s characters, as in Lawrence Kasdan’s *The Big Chill* (1983)—set in the 1980s, yet bursting with music from the 1960s. But the music in *Casino* is too varied in genre and the narrative too complex in structure to work this way.³¹ And, as detailed below, *Casino*’s characters are not musical, an aspect of their characterization that lends the music in the film a kind of distance that allows it to better articulate the form.

²⁹ Late in *Boogie Nights*, Anderson scores a montage wrapping up the fates of the film’s characters with a complete playing of the Beach Boys’ 1966 hit “God Only Knows.” Scorsese uses 1960s rock tracks in a similar way at the conclusion of *GoodFellas* and *Casino*.

³⁰ Christie and Thompson, *Scorsese on Scorsese*, 239.

³¹ Julie Hubbert reads *Casino*’s compiled score as adhering to “Scorsese’s rule of authenticity.” She borrows a “current or older” rule of thumb Scorsese articulated to defend a singular choice of music in *GoodFellas* and claims that “because the temporal scope of [*Casino*] itself is unusually large, this period policy resulted in a wide and eclectic range of musical styles. Particularly in flashback sequences and scenes that focus on the older generation of mob bosses, the soundtrack features music from the 1950s and 1960s and from a variety of jazz and pop music performers, such as Louis Prima, Tony Bennett, Brenda Lee, Dinah Washington, Otis Redding, Muddy Waters and B.B. King.” Hubbert, “Bach and the Rolling Stones,” 53, 52. None of the recording artists Hubbert lists, however, are linked in the film to the old mob bosses “back home.” Prima resounds across the film; Bennett, Lee, and Washington are associated with Sam and Ginger; Redding and Waters characterize Ace; and King scores Ginger and Nicky’s affair.

TABLE 2.
Select cues in *Casino* listed by popular music categories and sub-
categories

Category	Subcategory	Cue numbers (as listed in appendix)
Pop	Classic Pop	3, 4, 20, 24, 27, 33, 35, 41, 45, 49, 50, 59, 73, 75
	Classic Pop (Louis Prima)	2, 5, 32, 63, 72, 78
	Late 1960s Black Pop	8, 13, 23, 28, 34, 40
Rock	1950s Rock 'n' Roll	6, 15, 16, 30, 42, 43, 58, 67
	Late 1960s and 1970s Rock	18, 22, 38, 39, 44, 55, 61, 69, 77, 79, 80
	Late 1960s and 1970s Rock (The Rolling Stones)	9, 10, 17, 31, 37, 47, 48
	New Wave (Devo)	57, 70, 71, 74, 76
Jazz	1960s Soul Jazz	12, 14, 46

Far from limiting the score to music that is strictly in period, Scorsese deploys a range of musical genres in a manner that de-emphasizes historical origins or associations and instead exploits musical qualities—tempo, texture, timbre—to mutually reinforce formal and expressive ends. The score can be sorted into distinct style or genre groups drawn from the mainstream of American popular music—pop, rock, jazz—that map onto various strands of the plot and/or specific characters or relationships. In place of the kind of unity expressed in composed scores through thematic repetition, Scorsese's compiled score relies on the suggestive recurrence of readily recognizable subgenres: for example, Fifties rock 'n' roll or Sixties soul jazz.³² Table 2 sorts sixty of the film's eighty-two cues into the score's most significant popular music categories and subcategories.

Pop pervades *Casino*'s score. The smooth, string-laden, gently swinging sounds of classic pop produced by the major record labels of the 1950s and 1960s play a primary role in musicalizing Sam and Ginger's marriage. A subcategory of classic pop—six cues using tracks featuring Louis Prima—marks one of the film's few musical references to Vegas.

³² Similar large-scale, style-based strategies have been noted in the compiled scores for *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Trainspotting* (1996). See Ronald Rodman, "The Popular Song as Leitmotif in 1990s Film," in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 119–36. Walker notes Scorsese's contrasting use of modernist and late romantic compiled art music cues in *Shutter Island* in *Understanding Sound Tracks through Film Theory*, 290–91, 298.

Prima enjoyed a long-term residency at the Sahara in the late 1950s and early 1960s.³³ Teamed with singer Keely Smith, sax player Sam Butera and his rowdy band, the Witnesses, and recording for Columbia Records, Prima offered a mix of swing, Dixieland, and rhythm and blues tailored for adult listeners, anchored in Vegas but known across the nation. Rock musician Robbie Robertson—a member of The Band and a longtime creative associate of Scorsese's, credited as "music consultant" on *Casino*—suggested Prima as a way to inject some genuine Vegas music into the film; Scorsese uses Prima across the full length of the score.³⁴ Indeed, the music of the opening titles from J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* cross-fades abruptly into Prima's "Angelina / Zooma Zooma," a shift Scorsese described as "creating a strong shock effect."³⁵ A third pop sub-category centers on black pop groups from the late 1960s, some in a Motown vein, others—such as The Staple Singers with "I'll Take You There" (28)—in a more soulful style. There are no black characters in *Casino*, but viewers hear a substantial amount of black music and the voices of many black singers, often used by Scorsese to shape the character of Ace/Sam.

Casino also includes a broad spectrum of rock records. Fifties rock 'n' roll is well represented. Like Sixties black pop, it can also be heard in *Mean Streets* and *GoodFellas*. Indeed, a key scene in *Mean Streets* has one wiseguy say to another over a jukebox: "Play only oldies tonight." All three of Scorsese's gangster films are set in the 1970s and 1980s. *GoodFellas* is almost exactly contemporaneous with *Casino*. *Mean Streets* was made in the early 1970s and is purportedly set in that period—the Vietnam War is mentioned. In 1998, Scorsese admitted, "Basically, even though *Mean Streets* pretends to be the Seventies; it's really 1963, before The Beatles."³⁶ It's telling that the filmmaker marks history by way of shifts in popular music. He is always aware of a given track's position before or after The Beatles.

³³ Prima also worked in Lake Tahoe. The first Prima cue in *Casino* (2) is from an LP titled *The Wildest Show at Tahoe*.

³⁴ Scorsese has framed Robertson's role on *Casino* in casual terms, a matter of friends sharing ideas about music for a project already in process. In an interview with *Cahiers du Cinéma* on the film's French release, Scorsese credits Robertson with suggesting Georges Delerue's "Theme de Camille," after being asked to recommend something that was not classical and that would not distract from the already selected Bach chorus. Robertson is also credited as producer on the *Casino: Music from the Motion Picture* album. Thierry Jousse and Nicolas Saada, "Martin Scorsese Interviewed," in *Projections 7: Film-makers on Film-making in association with Cahiers du Cinéma*, ed. John Boorman and Walter Donohue (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 20.

³⁵ Christie, "Martin Scorsese's Testament."

³⁶ Gavin Smith, "The Art of Vision: Martin Scorsese's *Kundun* [*Film Comment*, 1998]," in *Martin Scorsese: Interviews*, ed. Peter Brunette (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 236–56, at 254.

In all three of his gangster films, the retrospective category “oldies” plays a prominent role unrelated to straightforward nostalgia—the effect of a song evoking a specific time period. Scorsese said of filmmakers who use pop music this way: “Well, I think they’re using it cheaply. I think they’re using it unimaginatively.”³⁷ The effect is similar to Woody Allen’s use of 1930s and 1940s swing in films set in Manhattan in the 1980s and 1990s.³⁸ Both filmmakers posit an axiomatic relationship—based largely on their personal tastes and record collections—between certain kinds of New Yorkers and certain eras of pop music.³⁹ These relationships are instantiated on film, and thus take on a kind of naturalness for audiences unfamiliar with such people in real life. This effect foregrounds the constructed nature of film reality and film genres and the power of musically oriented filmmakers to shape cultural perceptions of given socio-economic and ethnic groups by way of compiled scores.

Rock music from the late 1960s and 1970s is the best represented genre category in *Casino* in terms of the number of licensed tracks: thirteen clearances in all. Among these, six are by the Rolling Stones. Rock of this sort also appears in *Mean Streets* and *GoodFellas*, in both cases accompanying graphic onscreen violence.⁴⁰ For example, near the end of *Mean Streets*, the record “Steppin’ Out,” featuring Eric Clapton on guitar, plays on a car radio just before Johnny Boy is shot in the neck. This is not music the characters in the film normally listen to. In 1975, speaking of *Mean Streets*, Scorsese explained his use of rock as derived from his experience growing up in New York’s Little Italy, where “rock ’n’ roll was always the background noise to our barhops and our brawls.”⁴¹ (Of course, this would have been late 1950s rock—not the Stones.) In *Casino*, late 1960s and 1970s rock is associated with Nicky and his crew, adding mayhem to montages of robbery and mob hits. Finally, Scorsese draws very selectively on the musical 1980s, represented only by the New Wave group Devo.

Successive cues in Scorsese’s score consistently juxtapose contrasting musical styles, at times leaping wildly across popular music history—for example, cues 27 through 31. These five cues, collectively accompanying

³⁷ Anthony DeCurtis, “What the Streets Mean [*South Atlantic Quarterly*, 1992].” in *Martin Scorsese: Interviews*, ed. Peter Brunette (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 158–85, at 175.

³⁸ For example, *Stardust Melodies* (1980); *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986); *Oedipus Wrecks*, Allen’s segment in *New York Stories* (1989); *Alice* (1990); *Manhattan Murder Mystery* (1993); *Deconstructing Harry* (1997); *Celebrity* (1998); and *Anything Else* (2003).

³⁹ For Allen on his method of crafting compiled scores from his record collection, see Eric Lax, *Conversations with Woody Allen: His Films, the Movies, and Moviemaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 308–10.

⁴⁰ See Howell, *Popular Film Music and Masculinity in Action*, 65–67.

⁴¹ Michel Ciment, *Film World: Interviews with Cinema’s Leading Directors*, trans. Julie Rose (New York: Berg, 2009), 316.

about seven-and-a-half minutes of screen time, cover the early stages of Sam and Ginger's marriage and the first narrative evidence that conflict between Ace and Nicky will be a significant element of the plot. The swooping, easy listening, classic pop of "What a Diff'rence a Day Makes" (27, the track heard in its entirety) gives way to about fifty seconds of gospel-tinged black pop sampled from the outro of "I'll Take You There" (28). The sleepy mid-60s bpm (beats per minute) of the former yields to the urgent 103 bpm of the latter, which aptly accompanies Sam and Ginger erotically ramming home a safe deposit box stuffed with cash. Pure Vegas schmaltz comes swooning in on a crossfade to Vegas standby Jerry Vale's cameo singing "Love Me the Way I Love You" (29) in a lounge at the Tangiers. Judiciously sampled sweeping violins on this slower (low 70s bpm) track round out scenes of Sam and Ginger's early marriage with a genre closely connected to them. Vale's song, a rare diegetic cue, plays for about one minute and continues across several voiceover handoffs between Ace and Nicky describing business matters.

The abrupt entrance of "Let's Start All Over Again" (30), an obscure piece of unmistakable Fifties, nasal-high-vocal doo wop (heard for about fifty seconds), registers Ace's frustration with Nicky's crew working the Tangiers—two players at the same blackjack table signaling to each other. The doo wop selection matches the deliberate tempo of Vale's track but its rhythmic groove and silly vocal suggests a certain childishness on Nicky's part. This impression is emphasized directly by Nicky in voiceover as he labels Ace's concern about gaming agents observing his crew as silly. For Nicky, to *not* steal in this manner is to miss the whole point of Vegas. The doo wop record raises the tension and hints at the weaknesses of both men.

The sloppy, folk-rock-tinged, sing-a-long sound of the Rolling Stones' "Sweet Virginia" (31) abruptly elevates the score's tempo to 111 bpm. A member of Nicky's crew—a cowboy, not a wiseguy from "back home"—offends the always-perfectly-attired Ace by playing blackjack with his boots off and his feet propped up on the table. The Stones' song drops in the soundtrack on a full shot of the cowboy's white socks. The appreciably faster, acoustic groove scores Ace's confrontation with this man, which unfolds in two acts of violence—Ace has the cowboy thrown head first out of the Tangiers; and Nicky beats the cowboy over the head with a phone for his bad behavior. The Stones' track plays for just under two-and-a-half minutes, its use matching exactly the short episode with the cowboy.

In the seven-and-a-half minutes scored by cues 27 to 31, *Casino's* score bounces freely from 1959 to 1972 to 1967 to 1957 to 1972, from sophisticated to soulful black pop, to passionate, slightly ethnic saloon balladry, to juvenile street-corner music, to blues-inspired Brit rock. As

noted above, each successive cue effects subtle shifts in narrative topic and momentum. Some respond to larger strands of the score, as with the classic pop for Sam and Ginger; others work to “juice” *Casino* at various levels, as each change of tempo, texture, and timbre adjusts the film’s default state of musical engagement.

Cues 2 and 3 offer another example of Scorsese’s use of contrast. The pair also shows how he selects the part of a record that best serves his purposes, shaping the film’s form on the music’s preexisting scaffolding. Prima’s “Angelina / Zooma Zooma” (2) begins at a—for Prima—restrained, march-like 154 bpm. About three minutes into the record, Prima kicks off a much faster, breathless jump tempo—in the 240s bpm—that eventually gives way to a raucous Dixieland jam session. In *Casino*, only the faster section is used, coming in over the Bach—the “strong shock effect” mentioned above—with the sound of Prima’s scatting accompanying our first and only sight of the Vegas strip. The Dixieland portion of the record kicks in, synchronized with a sequence of titles: “The Strip,” “Las Vegas,” “Ten Years Earlier [1973].” This thoroughly anachronistic pop cue—a Fifties reinvention of Twenties collectively improvised jazz in an overheated jiving style—declares from the start that *Casino*’s score will not function as a superficially applied element of production design. Nothing about the music says 1973. The track may activate a deep memory of Vegas for some viewers, but knowledge of Prima’s career is not essential to get the message conveyed by the track’s tempo, texture, and timbre. This is noisy, busy, explosive, fun, unrestrained, crazy music by any measure. Live crowd noises on the record add to the effect. Prima’s groove lends a driving energy to the Strip and the Tangiers readily audible to any moviegoer.

The subsequent images offer a contrast to the continuing, raucous energy of Prima’s track: Ace and his staff of managers—including the comedian Don Rickles cast against type in an unsmiling role—are introduced and shown walking into the Tangiers and across the grand expanse of the casino floor. *Casino* was shot on location in a working casino. Scorsese hated it. He noted in a published diary of the making of the film, “In the casino: a hellish din and the horror of so many people, like zombies, the ugly noise from the machines, the music, the yelling. It saps all the energy that I have left.”⁴² Scorsese never simulates the casino soundscape he described here in *Casino*; instead, constant compiled music substitutes for the “hellish din” of reality.

Ace describes the scene and his place in it in a dispassionate voiceover. Unlike *GoodFellas*, which from its first cue exploits music to suggest the attractiveness of the mafia, *Casino* begins with music that communicates

⁴² Martin Scorsese, “The Filmmaker Series: Scorsese,” *Premiere* 9 (1995): 110–17, at 112.

the energy of Vegas as the scene of a scam observed with detachment by the men running the show. The film's characters are immune to the energy of the town and deaf to its music as they seek to steal as much as possible for themselves and the old men "back home." This opening move encourages a dialectical reading of the relationship between music and image in the film to follow, as suggested by Amanda Howell in her discussion of the opening moments of *Mean Streets*, a film about tough guys that begins with the girl group record "Be My Baby." Howell notes, "'Be My Baby' creates a total environment of rhythmic music and roiling emotion that draws the listener into a fantasy of idealized romance and sexual desire" just after shots of actor Harvey Keitel in a state of apparent masculine doubt.⁴³ Reading image and music together demands an interpretive distance from both, pulling both into a critical relationship. In similar fashion, at the start of *Casino* the raucous "Zooma Zooma" gives sonic dimension to the film's initial visual presentation of Las Vegas, against which images of stone-faced gangsters acting like businessmen and sober voiceovers describing how the mob stole from legalized gambling in Nevada call for an awareness on the moviegoer's part of the dark reality behind a glittering (if tacky) surface.

296

"Angelina / Zooma Zooma" keeps playing over the panorama of the casino floor to the exclusion of all diegetic sound (as noted, the track, recorded live, includes crowd noises). This facilitates a direct cut to the count room, where Prima's record comes to its conclusion with a big finish and big cheers. The next cue, "Moonglow" (3), crossfades in some eleven seconds into the track as Ace and Nicky's alternating voiceover descriptions of the skim proceed. Scorsese is setting up musical reinforcement for a key moment. Just as the mob's bag man enters the count room, the ethereal chime at 1:04 on "Moonglow" signals the viewer's entry with him into the casino "holy of holies." Scorsese exploits in full the magic moment in "Moonglow," for from this chime forward the track, heretofore featuring just a light jazz combo, acquires a wispy string *obbligato*, arching above the earth-bound rhythm section like so much musical moon glow.⁴⁴ The track's musical qualities—for instance, the smoothly swinging 105 bpm tempo—communicate how routine and sweet (for the mob bosses) the skim was when it was working. Scorsese the close listener located the "sting" in "Moonglow." Then, while editing the film, he and Schoonmaker dropped the needle, cut the montage, and timed the voiceover to catch it. Scorsese mentions looking for "stings"—Bernard Herrmann's word, he says—in the compiled art music score for

⁴³ Howell, *Popular Film Music and Masculinity in Action*, 53.

⁴⁴ Godsall considers the use of "Moonglow" in detail in "Pre-existing Music in Fiction Sound Film," 129–31.

Shutter Island and notes, “It requires hours of listening to music.”⁴⁵ DJ practice and Scorsese’s method for crafting compiled scores alike entail listening to recorded music with an ear for how sections or moments of a given track might be reused for a different creative purpose.

The significant, multivalent contrasts of tempo, texture, and timbre between these two cues (2 and 3) set up a pattern developed across the score. The driving “Angelina / Zooma Zooma” fuels the narrative with the physical assertion of a danceable groove. Several cues offer similar beats (5, 21, 34, 58, 61, 78). The relaxed “Moonglow” provides an alternative pace: low-key, relaxing qualities more suited to cultivating mood or ambience. Again, similar cues tap into this kind of motion (24, 27, 44, 46, 59, 66, 75).

Jazz, Rock, and Lyrics as Voiceover

Casino’s score borrows popular music beats to make shifts in the momentum of the narrative along a spectrum from nuanced to abrupt. Musical continuity intensifies these shifts: directly juxtaposed cues, whether transitioned by segue or crossfade, subtly or not so subtly signal shifts of emphasis in the narrative—much as DJs manage transitions of pace or mood on the dance floor, only here in service of a complex diegetic world offered for the pleasure of the viewer (who is also, of course, a listener).

Soul jazz tracks in the score locate a middle ground between groove and ambience cues; again, Scorsese’s sensitivity to tempo, texture, and timbre is evident. He juxtaposes two versions of “The In-Crowd” during an expository sequence about Ace’s dealings with state and local politicians and international high rollers. Ramsey Lewis’s hit “The In-Crowd” (12) cooks along as Ace disciplines “juiced in” “good ole boys” given jobs at the Tangiers, and caters to politicians expecting free chips, rooms, and women. Lewis’s live track comes with its own crowd noise—again there was no need for *Casino*’s effects department to add them.

At 140 bpm, Lewis’s sleek, sophisticated, active groove works equally well for the Japanese “whale” K. K. Ichikawa profiled next, a high-stakes player who takes the casino for two million dollars at baccarat. Ace responds to Ichikawa’s success by grounding his complementary private jet and ushering the gambler back to the gaming tables where he loses back a million. Ace greets Ichikawa on his return to the casino at the Tangiers’ brightly lit portal and, at that moment, Dobie Gray’s lesser known

⁴⁵ Schickel, *Conversations with Scorsese*, 349.

original version of “The In-Crowd” (13) segues seamlessly in on a sustained high note in the vocals and a blasting fill from the horns, a needle-drop coming 1:40 into the track executed with the skill of a DJ adjusting the tempo of the dance floor by moving from one version to another, one turntable to the other, by way of the crossfader. This musical flourish—the horns add a piquant new element—accompanies a low-angle, lateral tracking shot of Ace, visually celebrating his ability to manage even the toughest customers (fig. 1). Gray’s soulful pop rendition runs at 122 bpm, a bit behind Lewis. Very present in the mix—the viewer can choose to follow Gray’s vocal—the record plays over a montage of Ichikawa losing while Ace watches. In voiceover, Ace advises us that the way to deal with such players is to “keep them playing. . . . The longer they play, the more they lose. In the end, we get it all,” to which the voice of pianist and singer Les McCann offers the musical reply, “Goddamn it”—the start of the next cue, “Compared to What” (14). Here, suddenly, a singer’s voice on a compiled cue is granted the status of voiceover—a substantial move in a film as saturated with voiceover as *Casino*. Scorsese edits the film, arranges the dialogue, and adjusts the mix of the soundtrack to foreground McCann’s “Goddamn it,” which can be heard in several ways: within the plot as Ichikawa’s response to losing half of his winnings; in the film audience as a viewer’s similar reaction; or—more narrowly—as a kind of male bonding affirmation, a sung high-five from an understood male viewer, who can join McCann in praising Ace as one hell of a man. Few sections of *Casino* feel as much like a DJ set as the above sequence, which turns three similar, soulful tracks into a continuous yet shifting musical stream.

The Italian-American DeNiro’s embodiment of the Jewish Ace’s masterful manipulation of a Japanese gambler is confirmed in the score by McCann’s hip black voice. An earlier cue granting another black singer the status of voiceover sets up this use of jazz to undergird Ace’s powerful masculine presence. *Casino*’s initial twenty minutes establish Ace’s value for the mob bosses: he picks winners in sports bets and deftly manages the Tangiers. Muddy Water’s “Hoochie Coochie Man” is used twice in this sequence. On the second use (11), Scorsese folds an almost complete chorus of “Hoochie Coochie Man” into Nicky’s voiceover. The lyrics are not included in the published screenplay, but in the film the verbal content of the scene effectively reads:

NICKY: Listen, with me protecting Ace, he made a fortune for the bosses.

MUDDY WATERS: On the seventh hour.

NICKY: I mean that’s what got him to Vegas.

MUDDY WATERS: On the seventh day.

NICKY: He was a money machine.

FIGURE 1. Ace greets the “whale” Ichikawa at the Tangiers’ entrance as brass fanfares from Dobie Gray’s version of “The In-Crowd” drop into the score.



FIGURE 2. A special-effects shot of a falling die offers a visual and sonic re-set and stands in for musical closure during *Casino*'s long exposition.



Ace while singing the line, “Don’t you mess with me.”⁴⁷ Two other instances of vocals given the prominence of voiceovers draw on black pop music to inflect the other side of Ace/Sam’s character: his attraction to Ginger is made plain by way of a phrase cut from the novelty hit “Love is Strange” (16); and a low point in their marriage is commented upon bitterly by lines from the spoken section of The Velvetones’ “The Glory of Love” (67). These cues present Sam as lovesick and out of control, caught in his emotional attachment to a woman who says, to his face, “I don’t love you,” just before she agrees to marry him. Thus, black jazz and pop singers selectively comment on the two sides of the film’s main character: the strong manager; the weak lover.

Scorsese noted the complicated creation of these kinds of cues: “And you have to have the best part of the song or the best part of the vocal, [sic] between the dialogue. That caused a lot of tension for our mixer. Each choice was a major decision.”⁴⁸ Black singers’ voices, sorted by style, shape Ace/Sam’s character at key moments using a technique that demands close coordination between music, dialogue, and editing.

⁴⁷ Waters may have meant “Hoochie Coochie Man” to be a comic song, which would be at odds with Scorsese’s earnest, less nuanced use of it. Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Amistad, 2004), 177.

⁴⁸ Andy Dougan, *Martin Scorsese: Close Up: The Making of His Movies* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1998), 106.

This substitution of the sung for the spoken sets *Casino* apart from Scorsese's other crime films. Although *Mean Streets*, *GoodFellas*, and *The Wolf of Wall Street* all use music, their use of language is equally if not more memorable. DeNiro's long rap as Johnny Boy, Pesci's terrifying "You laughing at me" scene, and Leonardo DiCaprio's sales meeting monologues respectively capture the essence of these three films.⁴⁹ There is no similar use of dialogue in *Casino*: its essential nature is musical; its characters are defined more by the music playing behind them in the score—continuously for much of the film—than by the words they say.

Pushing the limits at the groove end of the spectrum, rock tracks with a violent and chaotic edge add a musical element to the characterization of Nicky and his crew, the film's "real gangsters" (according to Ace). Scorsese culls choice drum and guitar solos, which drop in abruptly and lend the film a menace that would otherwise be lacking. For example, Scorsese uses Cream's "Toad"—an instrumental that is largely a Ginger Baker drum solo—four times, taking different cuts from the record each time to varied effect. The track's signature descending guitar riff and howling, keening feedback initially underline Nicky's designation in Ace's voiceover as "the new boss of Las Vegas" (38). Baker's solo drumming is used a second time (55) to express Nicky and Ace's frustration at having to elude FBI surveillance on the phone and, in Nicky's case, by changing cars several times on his way to meet Ace in the desert. Select insertions of the descending guitar riff match Nicky's moves from car to car. Scorsese and Schoonmaker cut the images to the music, timing the sequence to the track. For the viewer, of course, the music simply matches Nicky's actions. Having arrived in the desert, Scorsese fades in Baker's solo drumming over the already playing "Theme de Camille" from Georges Delerue's score for Jean Luc Godard's *Contempt* (56) as Nicky gets out of his car; Ace fears for his life and says as much in the voiceover. In this rare instance of simultaneously played tracks, the lyrical "Theme de Camille" makes its first appearance in the score, communicating the pathos of the encounter in the desert between friends as the proto-hard rock groove of "Toad" underlines the menace attending Nicky throughout *Casino*'s latter half. The fourth cut from "Toad" (77)—a mere forty seconds of drumming, its dry sound by now familiar to the viewer's ear—accompanies Sam's expressions of his fear that Nicky might come after him at home.

Nicky's volatile, violent character carries a musical genre signature linked to late Sixties rock, a connection introduced by a single, fragmentary line from the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" as early

⁴⁹ Reay, *Music in Film*, 50: "It is notable that particularly important dialogue [in *GoodFellas*] does not have music playing."

as cue 10, where the lyrics initiate the score's larger employment of this specific sort of rock. Having just repeatedly stabbed a man in the neck with a fountain pen for having spoken rudely to Ace, Nicky's enraged face fills the screen, smoke from a cigarette rising in slow motion before him. The aftermath of this act—not the act itself, which is scored with the Stones' "Long Long While" (9)—briefly stops the musical flow of the exposition as Ace comments on Nicky in voiceover over a rising, roaring sound effect mixed well to the back. Scorsese comes out of this unscored passage with a direct cut to a long shot from the other end of the bar. Mixed with precise auditory perspective and a rare use of futzing (filtering the sound of a cue to suggest low-quality speakers in the diegetic world of the film), a fragment of the extremely well-known record, perhaps playing on an unseen jukebox, can just barely be caught by the attentive viewer: "can't get no satisfact-." Rock—often by the Rolling Stones—will shadow Nicky throughout the film, accompanying his many acts of violence. Mick Jagger's unmistakable voice delivering his most famous song title, heard in the distance just before the exposition rushes on, establishes this recurring stylistic connection between rock and violence.

Song Scenes and Sam and Ginger's Classic Pop Marriage

The complexity of *Casino's* dual narrative and the unusual decision to score so much of the film's run time perhaps necessitated the score's significant stylistic diversity and wide historical reach. And so, Nicky's acts of violence, scored with rock (a connection with precedents in Scorsese's earlier gangster pictures), register a sharp contrast with the classic pop used behind Sam and Ginger's marriage. Their plot strand comprises a series of extended-dialogue scenes that function as musical and dramatic set pieces laying out a progression from promise to failure.

The tracks heard during several of Sam and Ginger's scenes play in their entirety, granting a musical shape to the unfolding of the narrative and potentially limiting the length of time granted specific dialogue or action (although Scorsese imperceptibly recomposes compiled cues when more time is needed). Close, extended matching of scenes and tracks occurs often in *Casino*. I group such cues under the term song scenes.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ For analysis of comparative song scenes by other directors, see Todd Decker, *Hymns for the Fallen: Combat Movie Music and Sound after Vietnam* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2017), 88, 95–96, 153–55, 169; and idem, "Racing in the Beat: Music in *The Fast and the Furious* Franchise," in *Contemporary Musicals*, ed. K.J. Donnelly and Beth Carroll (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

Sam and Ginger's marriage begins with a proposal to the layered sounds of Dinah Washington's 1959 recording "Unforgettable" (24). Washington's record features a slow, swinging pace laid down by a jazz-oriented rhythm section (primarily bass and guitar) overlaid with a high unison violin *obbligato* line plus female backup vocals, also in a high range. Washington's sultry voice sits in the middle of this texture. Scorsese drops the needle 33 seconds into Washington's track, at the start of the tune when the lyrics give the listener the title. The record plays for a minute before seamlessly returning to the 47-second mark—the start of the B phrase in this ABAC tune—then playing to the end of the track, which is aligned with the end of the scene. This strategy of unnoticeably re-cutting a pop record has a precedent in *GoodFellas*, where the Shangri-La's "Leader of the Pack" is similarly lengthened. In both cases, the desire to match a given scene to a given record necessitated extending the record—as a DJ might extend a break—to allow sufficient time for dialogue or voiceover. Only intentional, analytical listening reveals the alterations made to these tracks in the films. The average viewer only registers that scene and song begin and end together, forming a narrative and aesthetic unit: a song scene.

304

Sam and Ginger have a rather honest conversation about marriage while "Unforgettable" plays. All the difficulties to come—money, love, parenting—are foregrounded. However, it is hard to hear the warning signs of impending failure while Washington sings so romantically and so prominently in the mix. Scorsese never shows the end of the discussion: the conversation and "Unforgettable" reach a cadence on Sam's question, "Want to take a chance?"—a resonant line given the Vegas *mise en scène*—and the film cuts to the couple's wedding reception. This early in the film, it is—perhaps—difficult to take the dialogue's warning signs to heart as the music plays so beautifully in the background. The scenes that follow, at their wedding reception and new home, hold out a sense of hopefulness that somehow this thread of the story will come out all right.

The reception—interrupted by Ginger's call to her former pimp Lester, the longest disruption of the exposition's musical flow—segues into a second Dinah Washington track, "What a Diff'rence a Day Makes" (27), a number eight hit also, like "Unforgettable," from 1959. The arrangement shares the tempo, texture, and timbre of "Unforgettable": a slow, swinging beat laid down by a jazz rhythm section, soaring *obbligato* unison strings, backup vocals, and Washington's distinctive delivery of a lyric promising love, popular-song style. Scorsese the DJ has extended an earlier mood by moving to a different track on what sounds like the same Washington LP. In fact, he draws from two albums, again demonstrating his wide listening knowledge. In a nod toward the visual-musical

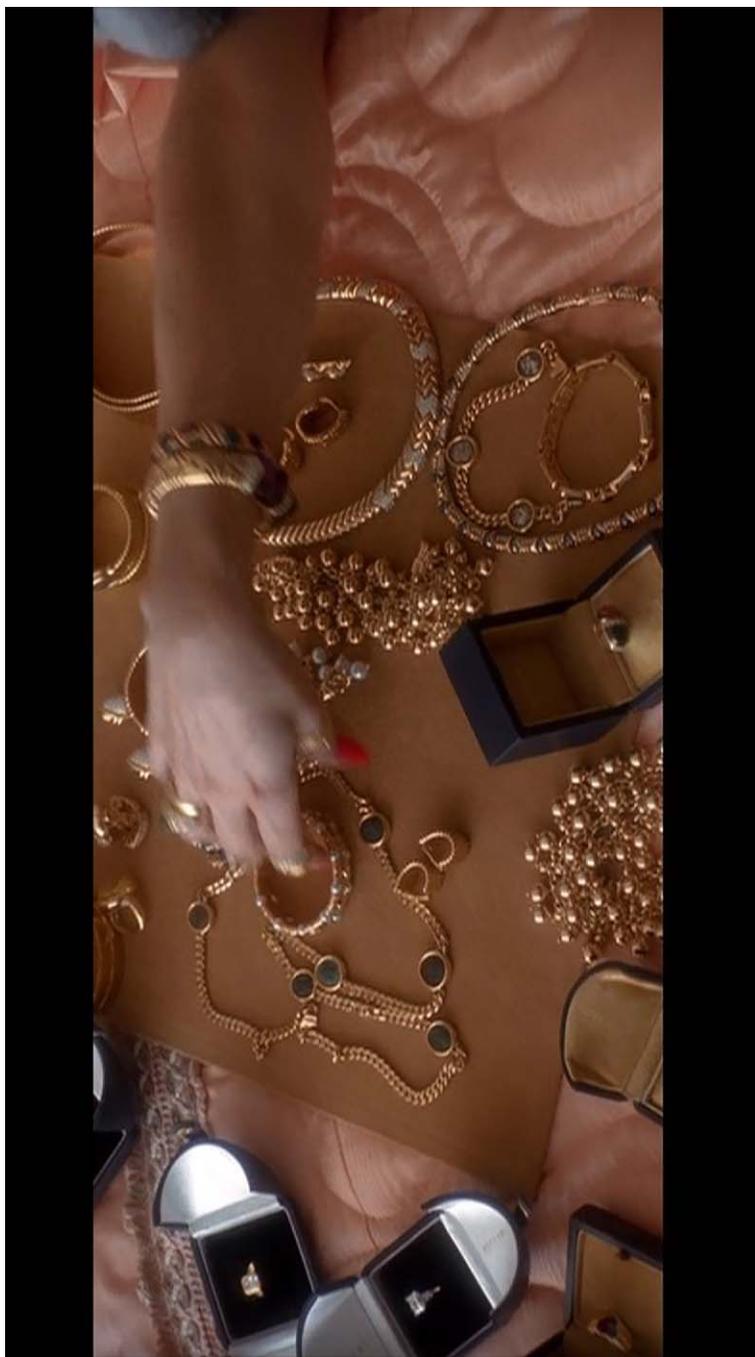
values of the so-called “women’s pictures” of the later 1950s, such as those of director Douglas Sirk, Scorsese uses the track’s instrumental introduction as scoring, fitting the descending melodic contour of the unison strings to an ascending crane shot framing Sam’s wedding gift to Ginger: a new house on the edge of a golf course. Further gifts follow: a room-sized closet filled with the couple’s equally massive wardrobes, a chinchilla coat, and a million-dollar array of Bulgari gold jewelry. The length of the scene is determined by the length of Washington’s record, and internal cadence points are roughly aligned with the revelation of specific gifts: the first shot of the living room with the start of the vocal; the box of Bulgari with the midpoint of this ABAC song (fig. 3).

Washington’s lush track—about two decades out of date, prominent in the mix, and heard in its entirety—serves again to distract from the structural faults of this marriage, which again are clearly laid out in the dialogue. Only on a second viewing, with full knowledge of the marriage’s catastrophic failure, can these ostensibly romantic, if thoroughly materialistic, scenes be confirmed as deeply troubled. Scorsese may be deploying a subtle sort of anempathic or counter-scoring in his use of the Washington tracks, which might be heard as just so much artificial sentiment poured over a tacky, mutually exploitative love story, depending on the viewer’s attitude toward classic pop. A score like *Casino*’s, juxtaposing Dinah Washington and Mick Jagger, could, in a different study, be examined as a kind of Rorschach test of listener associations with specific popular music styles.

Sam and Ginger’s marriage launches the couple into Las Vegas society, marked in the narrative by a formal party honoring Ace at a local country club. Ray Charles’ 1961 track “Stella by Starlight” (33) plays as scoring. Again, Scorsese creates a song scene cut to the pace and timing of the record. The introduction’s mannerist strings and wordless chorus add grandeur to the “flash bulb bursts”—a common Scorsese trope—heralding Ginger’s arrival as a star of “legitimate” Vegas.⁵¹ Charles’s voice seems to be describing what we see very directly: Ginger is a ravishingly beautiful woman, as a young man says forthrightly to her during the scene. But as the track plays on, Sam’s voiceover pulls the rug out from under the conceit, and the integrity of the song scene is compromised. The setting shifts to Ginger at the bank, playing with the Bulgari jewelry, liberated from its safe deposit box. Scorsese renders Ginger’s character starkly in word and image: a blurry, extreme close-up of just her eyes gazing at an equally blurry gold-and-jewels necklace receives a voiceover comment from Sam that this is “what really moved her.” Charles’s classic pop sound washes over this moment of candor, which is hard to read as

⁵¹ Draft script, “Draft 12A,” 9 May 1994 (author’s collection).

FIGURE 3. Ginger reaches toward Sam's gift of Bulgari jewelry just before Dinah Washington sings the title lyric "What a Diff'rence a Day Makes" at the midpoint of the song's ABAC chorus.



anything but ironic counter-scoring. Before Charles's track comes to its close, *Casino* cuts away to mundane matters back at the casino, scored with the strongly contrasting 1967 black pop hit "Boogaloo Down Broadway" (34). Disrupting "Stella by Starlight" in this way serves as an early hint that Sam and Ginger's decline has begun.

As the relationship fails spectacularly, Scorsese continues to call on the classic pop sound (41, 53, 62–65, 73). The couple's first in a series of arguments is a song scene set to Timi Yuro's 1961 "Hurt" (41). The ordered structure of the track works in contrast to the disorderly give and take of the scene, a battle of wills over trust and money. The musical content hints at a certain decadence: Yuro's voice is ambiguously gendered—a low, strong alto that sounds like a man to some listeners—and the violins and backup voices share the spare texture with a slackly played triplet rhythm. Prominent in the final hour is three short uses of "Theme de Camille" (62, 64, 65). In *Casino*'s compiled score, the all-strings "Theme de Camille" resonates as a deepening and darkening of musical traits heard in the tracks featuring Washington, Charles, and Yuro. The romantic lyrics, heartfelt vocals, easy rhythm grooves, and smoothly harmonizing backup singers are stripped away: all that remains is the strings, playing a wordless tune that invites humming along—a movie theme, after all—and communicates, as Scorsese noted of the track, "sadness."⁵² Sam and Ginger's final scenes together are merciless (and unscored) shouting matches.

The use of recurring musical styles to draw out select threads of a plot or aspects of characterization raises a question about the role of musical taste in the construction of film characters through compiled cues. My analysis of Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* argues that musical taste is key to both character and plot in this film, the score for which uses compiled cues representing distinct musical genres (classical and jazz).⁵³ The power of music in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, however, hinges on the characters being musicians themselves or interested listeners loyal to particular types of music. Ben Winters makes a similar argument about characters' tastes shaping compiled scores in the films of Wes Anderson.⁵⁴ Scorsese's earlier mafia films feature gangsters listening to music with deep appreciation. But in *Casino*, Sam, Nicky, and Ginger have no apparent musical tastes at all. They are supremely unmusical characters. None dance or move to music. None show any signs of hearing the music

⁵² Christie, "Martin Scorsese's Testament."

⁵³ Todd Decker, "The Musical Mr. Ripley: Closeting a Character in the 1950s and a Film in the 1990s," *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* 6 (2012): 185–207.

⁵⁴ Ben Winters, "'It's All Really Happening': Sonic Shaping in the Films of Wes Anderson," in *Music, Sound, and Filmmakers: Sonic Style in the Cinema*, ed. James Wierzbicki (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 45–60.

flooding the soundtrack for so much of the film. This lack may have contributed to the view of writer and director Paul Schrader, a frequent collaborator with Scorsese in the 1970s, who reportedly said of *Casino*, “You cannot make a three-hour picture about people with no souls.” Unwilling to concede the point, Scorsese responded, “They have souls. We watch them lose their souls, true. But they got ‘em.”⁵⁵

More specifically, Nicky and his goons might perpetrate their crimes to the sound of the Rolling Stones and Cream, but would men of their age and origins have been fans of such music in the 1970s? Can we imagine Pesci’s Nicky sitting at home listening to the Stones’ LP *Sticky Fingers*? Scorsese addressed this question about his use of Cream’s “Sunshine of Your Love” in *GoodFellas*, arguing that while gangsters might not have listened to this music intentionally, it was on Top 40 radio, “so they heard it anyway, whether they liked it or not!” At least, presumably, in film contexts where the music is unambiguously sourced.⁵⁶ But his rationale avoids the strong connection made in several of his films between rock and violence.

Later in the same interview, Scorsese admits to choosing music “for the rhythm and emotion of each scene” and also “to take advantage of the emotional impact of the music.” In another interview, Scorsese described the process of selecting *Casino*’s music based on his personal popular music archive, which tilts strongly toward the 1950s. He noted:

It took me a while to complete the music because I had to choose from 1945 right up until 1983. The music itself becomes like another character in this film. I was able to narrow it down, decade by decade, from tapes which I had made over the years and which I had taken around the world with me. These were digital tapes with 45 songs on each of them and I had 11 for the Fifties alone.⁵⁷

As shown above, the music in *Casino* functions “like another character”—indisputably the filmmaker’s voice expressed in musical terms, a composer’s voice working with preexisting music like a DJ, arranging it along formal and expressive lines to support a film narrative. This much more instrumental and expansive approach to music as a vehicle of cinematic structure and meaning supports the entire construct of *Casino*’s compiled score, which can only with difficulty be heard as connected to the characters’ outward social identities, their deeper selves, or

⁵⁵ Jousse and Saada, “Martin Scorsese Interviewed,” 12.

⁵⁶ Christie and Thompson, *Scorsese on Scorsese*, 161. Very few cues in *Casino* are given definite diegetic status by way of visual confirmation (29, 36, 50, 61).

⁵⁷ Dougan, *Martin Scorsese*, 106. Scorsese’s collection of 45s, purchased in the 1950s and lovingly indexed, remains part of his personal archive. It is pictured in Kristina Jaspers and Nils Warnecke, *Martin Scorsese* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2013), 146.

the film's period setting. Indeed, as Schrader's "no souls" comment suggests, there is some doubt as to whether Sam, Ginger, and Nicky *have* deeper selves. Instead, the musical styles associated with them in the score function for the viewer only as constituent elements of the film's form—of how it tells their story—and of Scorsese's signature style, which here and elsewhere in his output is made by and of popular music. As Tom Shone has noted, *Casino* is "an easier film to admire than to like—technically bravura but a little joyless. Sometimes it can seem as if the only person really having fun is Scorsese."⁵⁸ A substantial part of the fun consists of Scorsese the DJ spinning the film's score.

Conclusion: Obvious and Subliminal Song Scenes

In the dialogue scenes from Sam and Ginger's marriage set to tracks by Washington, Charles, and Yuro discussed above, the viewer is more or less aware that a piece of recorded popular music is shaping the unfolding of the narrative for an extended period. Such song scenes work by analogy with musical numbers in the musical film genre: a song starts, plays out its formal architecture, and comes to a noticeable close, structuring the experience of the film along the way. Song scenes without substantial dialogue can foreground this awareness, working as a kind of music video within the body of the film.

309

Casino's most self-consciously framed song scene comes late in the film. A complete playing of the Animals' "The House of the Rising Sun" (79) accompanies a montage with voiceover that ties up multiple story lines, including Ginger's death. Originally spotted for the opening titles, the track was moved to a prime spot at the end of the narrative. This choice of a British folk rock hit from 1964 to close out a story about American gangsters in Las Vegas in the early 1980s has a precedent in Scorsese's output. At an analogous place in its early 1980s narrative, *GoodFellas* pauses for a musical montage picturing multiple mob hits accompanied by the piano coda to Derek and the Domino's 1970 record "Layla." Scorsese described "Layla" this way, demonstrating again that his primary response relies on musical qualities: "And the tragedy is in the music. The music made me feel a certain way and gave a certain sadness to it, a certain sadness and a certain sympathy."⁵⁹ In *Sight and Sound*, Scorsese noted the "almost religious quality" of "House of the Rising Sun."⁶⁰ Similar in texture and tempo, "Layla" and "House of the Rising Sun" are widely familiar, classic rock tracks; both instantly

⁵⁸ Shone, *Martin Scorsese*, 172.

⁵⁹ DeCurtis, "What the Streets Mean," 175.

⁶⁰ Christie, "Martin Scorsese's Testament."

generate a relaxed sense of closure (“this film is almost over,” perhaps a relief to some). Both also cast a scaffolding of musical order over images—tableaux, really—of extreme violence. Scorsese even played “Layla” on set while filming *GoodFellas* to pace the camera movement.⁶¹

Other montage-driven song scenes in *Casino* work at a more subliminal level. They do not call attention to the musical form on which the film is hanging, but instead suggest how musical form drives Scorsese as a filmmaker who habitually cuts to music. A central example is the Rolling Stones’ “Can’t You Hear Me Knocking” (37), which Scorsese called “a key song in the film.”⁶² The track opens with a distinctive guitar lick, which drops into the soundtrack abruptly at a high volume just after Nicky says, “Fuck ’em,” twice. Having just been banned from the casinos of Vegas, he decides to make the rest of the town his domain. The full seven minutes of “Can’t You Hear Me Knocking” are given over to Nicky. The track’s instrumental introduction accompanies a lateral tracking shot revealing Nicky and his crew in a posed arrangement, looking toward the camera. It was almost certainly shot with the song in mind—likely with the song playing on set to time the camera move, as the vocal begins just as Nicky’s face appears. Shifts of topic and locale in the montage match changes in the Stones’ record. We enter Nicky’s house just when a short bongo solo thins out the musical texture.⁶³ A rising guitar solo matches Nicky’s rising anger as he yells at Al and slackens when the yelling is done.⁶⁴ “Can’t You Hear Me Knocking” does not foreground these relationships between music and narrative flow or dialogue. The connection between film and musical form is subtle—appreciably less obvious than in “What a Difference a Day Makes” or “House of the Rising Sun.”

A relatively tangential piece of exposition offers further evidence for how musical form, even when not emphasized for the listener, shapes the unfolding of *Casino*’s narrative on several levels simultaneously. This narrative vignette reveals Ace’s method for flushing out cheats at the Tangiers. With the track accompanying it, we get close to Scorsese’s process of designing scenes to music noted at the outset of this article. The sequence in question uses an almost complete playing of Jeff Beck’s “I Ain’t Superstitious” (22).⁶⁵ The musical structure of the track is as follows:

⁶¹ DeCurtis, “What the Streets Mean,” 175.

⁶² Christie, “Martin Scorsese’s Testament.”

⁶³ 2:44 in the track; 1:02:35 in the film.

⁶⁴ 5:35 in the track; 1:05:15 in the film.

⁶⁵ For a slightly different analysis of this sequence, see Jonathan Godsall, “Präexistente Musik als Autorensignatur in den Filmen Martin Scorseses,” trans. Guido Heldt, in *Martin Scorsese: Die Musikalität der Bilder*, ed. Guido Heldt, Tarek Krohn, Peter Moormann, and Willem Strank (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2015), 11–27, at 23–24.

- A 0:00–0:14 guitar introduction
- B 0:14–2:51 six blues choruses (alternating vocal and instrumental)
- C 2:51–3:55 extended guitar solo on one chord (building in its second half by way of a stepwise rising line, thickening of the texture, and an increase in volume)
- D 3:55–4:09 abrupt drop in volume (the texture clears to drums and fragmentary guitar licks)
- E 4:09–4:44 beat stops (all but drums drop out; rhythmically free drum solo begins)
- F 4:44–4:53 final chord (rings to end of track)

Scorsese drops the needle at the start of the third blues chorus (midway through B).⁶⁶ In a voiceover from blues choruses three through six, Ace explains how pairs of cheats exploit weak dealers. During Beck's extended solo on a one-chord vamp (C), Ace marshals his forces to disrupt the cheats.⁶⁷ The music—harmonically, a pedal point; rhythmically, an ostinato—effectively builds suspense as the viewer remains ignorant of Ace's battle plan. The casino's counterattack involves distracting the other gamblers' attention with a staged presentation of a birthday cake as the floor manager shocks one of the cheats with a cattle prod. Security, already in place, steps in to escort the cheat, loudly called a victim of "cardiac arrest," from the floor to a back room (where, in an unscored scene that follows, one of his hands is pounded to pulp with four rhythmic hammer blows). The floor manager moves into position behind the cheater just as an ascending stepwise line and gradual dynamic increase and textural thickening begins in the score.⁶⁸ The shock with the cattle prod—one of the few sound effects in the sequence—is administered just before the abrupt drop in volume and thinning out of the texture (the start of D). Sam's voiceover returns briefly at the moment the record's groove falls silent (the start of E), and the cue cuts off abruptly in the midst of the final drum solo (E) to the loud sound of a door opening into the backroom. More than a few doors in *Casino* open with a slamming sound, part of the way Scorsese uses sound effects to punctuate the narrative and here, to effect musical closure.⁶⁹

"I Ain't Superstitious" serves as scoring and framework for a song scene that is concealed within a crisp vignette. The music changes in response to events onscreen as if it were composed especially for this purpose. But, of course, the opposite was the case. Film form followed musical form in this song scene that comes, as it were, in disguise, since

⁶⁶ 1:10 in the track; 33:45 in the film.

⁶⁷ 35:23 in the film.

⁶⁸ 3:30 on the track.

⁶⁹ See also Sam's entrance into the Leaning Tower Restaurant at 2:28:32. Scorsese developed this technique in *Cape Fear*.

no sung lyrics articulate a clear song form. Rock as an instrumental genre of popular music is put to precise narrative use. The power of “I Ain’t Superstitious,” unfolding with the narrative and with its own musical logic, enhances the power and pleasure of the sequence, whether the viewer is aware of the relationship or not (depending, in all likelihood, on prior close familiarity with Beck’s track). And, again, rock and violence come as a package—here with Ace, rather than Nicky, supervising the blows. Paced to a rock record, the cheats sequence qualifies as an exercise in rock filmmaking, a direct expression of Scorsese’s long practice of listening to records and mapping out screen action. Filled with moments like this, *Casino* is a profoundly musical film in which tempo, texture, and timbre set the parameters for an often dizzying unfolding of a complex, shifting narrative.

Appendix

Casino compiled score listed by cue

312

Titles given as listed in end-title clearances

Musical silences of more than 20 seconds are noted

*denotes cues that use a track in its entirety

Film timecode (start of cue)	Cue #	Title (Performer)	Date / highest <i>Billboard</i> <i>Hot 100</i> chart position (as single)	Track timecode (when cue begins)
1:07	1	“Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder,” final chorus from J.S. Bach, <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> (Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti conducting)		:36
4:54	2	“Angelina / Zooma Zooma” (Louis Prima, on the LP <i>The Wildest Show at Tahoe</i>)	1957	2:58
6:07	3	“Moonglow / Love Theme from <i>Picnic</i> ”	1956 / 1	:11
8:20	4	“You’re Nobody ’Til Somebody Loves You” (Dean Martin) :45 musical silence	1965 / 25	:00
10:20	5	“Sing, Sing, Sing (With a Swing)” (Louis Prima, on the LP <i>Strictly Prima!</i>)	1959	1:32
12:16	6	“7–11 (aka Mambo #5)” (The Gone All Stars)	1958 / 30	1:30
12:43	7	“Hoochie Coochie Man” (Muddy Waters)	1954	:50
13:30	8	“Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)” (Otis Redding, on the LP <i>The Otis Redding Dictionary of Soul – Complete and Unbelievable</i>)	1966 / 29	1:30

(continued)

Appendix. (*continued*)

Film timecode (start of cue)	Cue #	Title (Performer)	Date / highest <i>Billboard</i> <i>Hot 100</i> chart position (as single)	Track timecode (when cue begins)
14:33	9	“Long Long While” (The Rolling Stones) <i>:43 musical silence</i>	1966	:32
17:05	10	“(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” (The Rolling Stones)	1965 / 1	:15
17:13	11	REPRISE: “Hoochie Coochie Man” [see cue 7]		1:50
17:52	12	“The ‘In’ Crowd” (Ramsey Lewis, on the LP <i>The In Crowd</i>)	1965 / 5	:43
19:59	13	“The ‘In’ Crowd” (Dobie Gray, on the LP <i>Dobie Gray Sings for ‘In’ Crowd</i>)	1965 / 13	1:41
20:59	14	“Compared To What” (Les McCann and Eddie Harris, on the LP <i>Swiss Movement</i>)	1969	4:03
22:39	15	“Slippin’ and Slidin’” (Little Richard, previously released single included on the LP <i>Here’s Little Richard</i> [1957])	1956 / 33	:44
23:48	16	“Love Is Strange” (Mickey & Sylvia)	1956 / 11	2:20
24:30	17	“Heart of Stone” (The Rolling Stones, previously released single included on the US LP <i>The Rolling Stones, Now!</i> [1965])	1964 / 19	:54
25:55	18	“Love Is The Drug” (Roxy Music, on the LP <i>Siren</i>)	1975 / 30	:24
27:48	19	“Nel Blu Dipinto Di Blu (Volare)” (Domenico Modugno)	1958 / 1	:24
28:56	20	“Takes Two to Tango” (Ray Charles and Betty Carter, on the LP <i>Ray Charles and Betty Carter</i>)	1961	:00
32:30	21	“How High The Moon” (Les Paul and Mary Ford)	1951	:00
33:44	22	“I Ain’t Superstitious” (Jeff Beck, vocal by Rod Stewart, on the LP <i>Truth</i>) <i>:50 musical silence</i>	1968	1:12
37:46	23	“Working in the Coal Mine” (Lee Dorsey) <i>:30 musical silence</i>	1966 / 8	:33
38:54	24*	“Unforgettable” (Dinah Washington, on the LP <i>Unforgettable</i>)	1959 / 17+	:33–1:30; then :47-end of track
41:44	25	“Stardust” (instrumental, no performer credit given) <i>1:20 musical silence</i>		
44:05	26	“Stardust” (Hoagy Carmichael)	c.1950s	1:51
45:17	27*	“What A Diff’rence A Day Makes” (Dinah Washington, on the LP <i>What a Diff’rence A Day Makes!</i>)	1959 / 8	:00
47:40	28	“I’ll Take You There” The Staple Singers	1972 / 1	2:36
48:47	29	“Love Me the Way I Love You” (Jerry Vale)	1967	1:06

(continued)

Appendix. (continued)

Film timecode (start of cue)	Cue #	Title (Performer)	Date / highest <i>Billboard</i> <i>Hot 100</i> chart position (as single)	Track timecode (when cue begins)
49:43	30	"Let's Start All Over Again" (The Paragons)	1957	:49
50:32	31	"Sweet Virginia" (The Rolling Stones, on the LP <i>Exile on Main St.</i>)	1972	2:18
52:54	32	"Basin Street Blues / When It's Sleepy Time Down South" (Louis Prima, on the LP <i>The Wildest!</i>)	1956	:23
55:07	33	"Stella By Starlight" (Ray Charles, on the LP <i>Dedicated to You</i>)	1961	:00
57:23	34	"Boogaloo Down Broadway" (The Fantastic Johnny C)	1967 / 7	1:35
58:03	35	REPRISE: "Stella By Starlight" [see cue 33]		1:12
58:23	36	"Sweet Dreams" (Emmylou Harris)	1975	:20
59:50	37*	"Can't You Hear Me Knocking" (The Rolling Stones, on the LP <i>Sticky Fingers</i>)	1971	:00
		:25 musical silence		
314 —	1:07:07	38 "Toad" (Cream, on the LP <i>Fresh Cream</i>)	1966	:00
	1:09:17	39 "Those Were The Days" (Cream, on the LP <i>Wheels of Fire</i>)	1968	1:07
	1:10:24	40 REPRISE: "Working In The Coal Mine" [see cue 23]		:11
	1:11:26	41* "Hurt" (Timi Yuro)	1961 / 4	:00
	1:13:37	42 "The Glory of Love" (The Velvetones)	1957	:00
		:40 musical silence		
	1:14:52	43 REPRISE: "The Glory of Love" [see cue 42]		:00
		:40 musical silence		
	1:17:02	44 "Nights In White Satin" (The Moody Blues) <i>END OF EXPOSITION</i>	1967 / 2	:35
		6:00 musical silence		
	1:26:24	45 REPRISE: "Moonglow / Love Theme from <i>Picnic</i> " [see cue 3]		:00
	1:27:30	46 "Walk On The Wild Side" (Jimmy Smith, on the LP <i>Bashin': The Unpredictable Jimmy Smith</i>)	1962 / 21	2:37
		7:00 musical silence		
	1:37:44	47 "Gimme Shelter" (The Rolling Stones, live version++)		
	1:38:11	48 "Gimme Shelter" (The Rolling Stones, studio version on the LP <i>Let It Bleed</i>)	1969	1:32
	1:39:12	49 "EEE-O Eleven" (Sammy Davis Jr., from the soundtrack to the film <i>Ocean's Eleven</i>)	1960	
		1:20 musical silence		
	1:41:51	50 "I'll Walk Alone" (Don Cornell)	1952 / 5	:59
		3:00 musical silence		

(continued)

Appendix. (continued)

Film timecode (start of cue)	Cue #	Title (Performer)	Date / highest <i>Billboard</i> <i>Hot 100</i> chart position (as single)	Track timecode (when cue begins)
1:47:02	51	“Sunrise (Prelude from <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>)” (Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Fritz Reiner conducting)		
1:47:17	52	“That’s the Way I Like It” (instrumental by in- film television show band, no performer credit given, song charted at #1 in 1975 for K.C. and the Sunshine Band)		
1:48:17	53	“Venus” (instrumental by in-film television show band, no performer credit given, song charted at #1 in 1959 for Frankie Avalon)		
1:48:32	54	“Flight of the Bumblebee” (Jascha Heifetz) <i>1:45 musical silence</i>		
1:50:39	55	REPRISE: “Toad” [see cue 38] <i>:30 musical silence</i>		
1:52:30	56	“Theme de Camille” (from the film <i>Contempt</i> [<i>Le Mépris</i>]); with REPRISE: “Toad” [see cue 38] <i>2:00 musical silence</i>	1963	:00
1:55:12	57	“Whip It” (Devo, on the LP <i>Freedom of Choice</i>) <i>:30 musical silence</i>	1980 / 14	:00
1:56:48	58	“Ain’t Got No Home” (Clarence “Frogman” Henry) <i>1:00 musical silence</i>	1956 / 20	:05
1:59:58	59	“I’m Sorry” (Brenda Lee) <i>:25 musical silence</i>	1960 / 1	:15
2:01:28	60	“Without You” (Harry Nilsson, on the LP <i>Nilsson Schmilsson</i>)	1971 / 1	:17
2:04:05	61	“Go Your Own Way” (Fleetwood Mac, on the LP <i>Rumours</i>) <i>1:30 musical silence</i>	1977 / 10	1:22
2:06:54	62	REPRISE: “Theme de Camille” [see cue 56]		:00
2:07:46	63	“I’m Confessin’ (That I Love You)” (Louis Prima and Keely Smith, on the LP <i>Louis and Keely!</i>)	1959	:12
2:10:05	64	REPRISE: “Theme de Camille” [see cue 56] <i>1:05 musical silence</i>		:00
2:12:04	65	REPRISE: “Theme de Camille” [see cue 56] <i>1:45 musical silence</i>		:00
2:14:06	66	“The Thrill Is Gone” (B.B. King, on the LP <i>Completely Well</i>)	1969 / 15	1:26
2:17:22	67	REPRISE: “The Glory of Love” [see cue 42] <i>3:15 musical silence</i>		1:22
2:21:24	68	REPRISE: “Stardust” [see cue 26]		2:00

(continued)

Appendix. (*continued*)

Film timecode (start of cue)	Cue #	Title (Performer)	Date / highest <i>Billboard</i> <i>Hot 100</i> chart position (as single)	Track timecode (when cue begins)
2:22:09		:25 musical silence on freeze frame		
2:22:33	68	REPRISE: "Stardust" (restarts)		
2:23:17	69	REPRISE: "Gimme Shelter" [see cue 47]		
2:24:14	70	"(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" (Devo, on the LP <i>Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!</i> [1978])	1977	1:37
		1:25 musical silence		
2:26:25	71	REPRISE: "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" [see cue 70]		:55
		:40 musical silence		
2:28:01	72	REPRISE: "I'm Confessin' (That I Love You)" [see cue 63]		1:42
2:28:27	73	"Who Can I Turn To (When Nobody Needs Me)" (Tony Bennett, on the LP <i>Who Can I Turn To</i>)	1964 / 33	1:19
316 2:30:30	74	REPRISE: "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" [see cue 70]		2:12
2:30:56	75	"Harbor Lights" (The Platters)	1960 / 8	:35
2:33:14	76	REPRISE: "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" [see cue 70]		:12
2:33:22	77	REPRISE: "Toad" [see cue 38]		1:14
		6:30 musical silence		
2:40:08	78	REPRISE: "Sing Sing Sing (with a Swing)" [see cue 5]		1:33
2:41:57	79*	"The House of the Rising Sun" (The Animals)	1964 / 1	:00
		:30 musical silence		
2:46:52	80	REPRISE: "The House of the Rising Sun" [see cue 79]		3:32
		2:35 musical silence		
2:50:12	81	REPRISE: "Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder," final chorus from J.S. Bach, <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> [see cue 1]		:36
2:51:51	82*	REPRISE: "Theme de Camille" [see cue 56]		:00
2:54:28	83*	"Stardust" (Hoagy Carmichael, spoken vocal version)+++		:00

+ Track re-released as a single and on the LP *Unforgettable* in 1961 (single charted at #10); single inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2001.

++ The exact provenance of this live recording is not given in the *Casino* clearances. Multiple live versions from the 1970s have been released since 2010 by Promotone B.V., the Rolling Stones' record label. The live version in *Casino* was licensed from Promotone B.V., so Scorsese likely had access to recordings unreleased as of 1995.

+++ This track is not listed in the clearances but is included on the film's CD.

ABSTRACT

Filmmaker Martin Scorsese's *Casino* (1995) is structured around a compiled score of almost sixty popular music recordings. Scorsese himself, working with editor Thelma Schoonmaker and using digital editing tools for the first time, assembled and arranged a diverse body of pre-existing music into a unified score that plays for more than two of the film's three hours. This article offers a close analysis of Scorsese acting as composer—crafting *Casino*'s compiled score in the manner of a DJ—and, in reciprocal fashion, editing film images and narrative to recorded music. *Casino* demonstrates highly varied, multivalent relationships between musical form and film form. Indeed, musical form proves a constituent element of *Casino*'s construction at multiple levels of magnification. The large-scale form of the score as a whole articulates the larger arc of *Casino*'s dual narrative. The strategic deployment of musical styles (from jazz to rock to pop) and the targeted use of lyrics as voiceover (often subtly deploying aspects of racial performance in popular styles) serve to differentiate narrative strands and fill out otherwise unspoken characterization. Scorsese builds several sequences in *Casino* on a direct, often audible relationship between song forms and narrative unfolding, creating song scenes in which compiled tracks heard as musical wholes grant a musical shape to discrete narrative units. *Casino*'s complex use of music does not, however, penetrate the inner lives of the film's three primary characters, who seem unaware of the musical flow Scorsese employs to set their story dancing. The analysis draws upon the filmmaker's own words about his creative process and offers select comparisons to other Scorsese films with compiled scores.

Keywords: Martin Scorsese, *Casino*, film music, compiled scores, popular music in films