

**Hollywood Marketing during a Global Pandemic:
How Music Is Used in the Trailers for *Dune* (2021)**

Master Thesis – Applied Musicology

Student: Steven Verrips

Student number: 7266138

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Emile Wennekes

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Abstract. This paper examines the three trailers for *Dune* (2021, Villeneuve), each of which uses music differently. In the first part of this paper, the most relevant literature surrounding music in film trailers is discussed. Topics like how music in film trailers generally works and how it is created or selected by trailer-makers are discussed, as well as the most relevant current themes and terminology within the field. In the second part, two notable trailer campaigns for science fiction franchise films of the past decade are examined in order to provide more context for the final analysis that constructs the largest part of this thesis. In the third and final part, the three trailers for *Dune* are closely examined, with a particular focus on their music component.

By analyzing the audiovisual content of the trailers for *Dune*, how they relate to each other, and the unique circumstances of the campaign due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, conclusions are drawn about the processes and functions of music and sound in trailers for contemporary action sci-fi films.

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Introduction

In the past decade, trailers for Hollywood motion pictures have reached new heights when it comes to audience anticipation and press coverage. Trailers used to serve the purpose of priming the audience and generating their excitement for an upcoming film. That is still their purpose, but for many Hollywood film productions, anticipation for the release of a film's trailer can at times seem just as palpable as the anticipation for the film's release itself.

Musicologists have been interested in how music works when combined with the moving image for a long time. A large portion of their research effort has been put into the relationship between music and picture in feature films. However, research into the role of music in promotional trailers has been far less prominent, at least until the past decade. Since the 2010's, interest in this field of scholarship has increased significantly, with publications from James Deaville, Lisa Kernan, Carmen Maier, and Tim Summers addressing this special type of 'music video'. Many of the topics they focus on address the question of how music works to complete the primary task that is carried out by the trailer. They have studied, for example, the use of 'synch points', high levels of volume in trailers, the perception of trailers by their audience, and the use of popular music in trailers. Even more recently, scholars have focused on sets of trailers as case studies in a more holistic approach, rather than examining individual productions. In doing this, scholars like Frank Lehman and Tim Summers aim to provide insight into the relation between trailers within a single campaign and their similarities and differences. It will be that line of research that will be the starting point for this paper.

In 2021, Denis Villeneuve directed and co-wrote a cinematic adaptation of the science fiction novel *Dune* (Frank Herbert, 1964). The marketing campaign for the film was hindered by delays, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the three trailers that were released for the film, music appears to have been used in both typical- and atypical ways, which is why I have chosen this particular campaign as a case study for this paper. I will be attempting to answer the question of how music is used in the three individual trailers, how they relate to each other, and whether this is to be considered typical for their genre and the special circumstances in which they were released.

To answer these questions, I will examine the current state of the scientific literature surrounding music in film trailers. For additional context, I will study some contextual literature about film trailers in the sci-fi action genre, in the form of two relevant case studies from the 2010's. And finally, the latter half of this thesis will be a thorough analysis of the trailer marketing of *Dune* (2021), with regard for both its musical aspects as well as their place within the bigger marketing frame.

Part 1: Theoretical Framework

To study trailers and the function of music in trailers, it is necessary to disclose how the term 'trailer' will be used in this paper. I will mostly work with a definition provided by Deaville and Malkinson in a 2014 article: "Trailers are short cinematic texts that are studio-crafted, promotional, narrative, and complete in themselves. They serve to promote the upcoming release of a new film or video game through a variety of audiovisual advertising techniques that strategically appeal to audiences by exploiting such elements as celebrity, genre, narrative content, cross-promotion, visual special effects, and soundtrack. (Deaville and Malkinson 2014: 121-122)

On the importance of music in trailers, a study by Johnston and Vollans (2016) suggests that music is foundational to the trailer narrative. In their survey, it becomes clear that music is often regarded as being vital to the impression made by the trailer, particularly when a popular song or a recognizable piece of music from a different film or trailer was involved. Johnston and Vollans note that often, memory and listening pleasure overlap, suggesting that viewers enjoy spotting familiarities. (Johnston and Vollans 2016: 71) In all examples of the survey, music helped with the recall and retention of specific trailer elements. The findings by Johnston and Vollans are echoed in the experiences by Hollywood trailer editors Mike Flanagan and Mark Woollen, quoted in the 2014 article by Deaville and Malkinson. With Woollen saying "trailers are all about rhythm, pacing and feeling. Sometimes 70, 80 percent of the job can be trying to find that perfect piece." (Kehe & Palmer 2013) And Flanagan saying that music is essential for setting 'the tone of a trailer', which is why he often begins work by finding 'a piece of music that fits the story'. (Flanagan 2012)

Current State of Scholarly Research

The scholarly focus on full-length feature films has limited the attention paid to other significant short-form cinematic texts. Throughout cinematic history the movie trailer has played a vital role in attracting audiences, using not only visual excerpts but also attempting to encapsulate the sonic landscapes of the respective feature films they promote. Similarly, the imprint of much of film sound's evolution can be identified through the text of trailer sound and the aesthetic and ideological statements it makes. The trailer is essentially a compressed version of the movie - but crucially with a superimposed narrative beyond the aural text of the actual film. This usually goes together with the highly manipulative use of music to establish emotional cues meant to guide the audience back to the theater to satisfy the need that the trailer has created. (Mike Alleyne 2009: 38) In effect, the trailer compresses (and perhaps

essentializes) the audiovisual aesthetics of cinema, relying heavily on the presence of sound and sound design to achieve impact. (Tim Summers 2016: 40)

How Does Music in a Trailer Work?

Trailers serve a purpose that is easily put into words because ultimately, the reason why trailers are made and shown is to persuade the trailer audience to buy a ticket to the film that is promoted. To accomplish this, trailer makers have a number of different tools at their disposal. In 2001, Vinzenz Hediger described the primary function of a trailer as to awaken desire, because they “simulate the entertainment value of the film and allow us to experience an emotional scene that is completed on the affective level. However, on the cognitive plane they are left unresolved, to the extent that they conjure up memories of prior cinema visits, simulate those of the coming film, and support themselves through the complex appeal of models of pleasure.” (Hediger 2001: 265–266)

Makers of cinematic trailers always aim to impact theatrical audiences in emotionally memorable ways. One of the most common and direct ways they have accomplished this is the high-level of volume that is often heard in trailers. But there is more to it than loudness. The way that the sonic realm is exploited in this context is best described by Deaville and his concept of the ‘**trailer ear.**’ To target the trailer ear, there are five components that trailer makers generally use to use audio the most effectively in the short playtime of a trailer.

The trailer ear (1) normalizes heightened audio practices of saturation, density and volume (sonic over-determination as a style feature); (2) compresses and minimizes traditional the-matic/structural devices like leitmotif and rounded musical forms; (3) elevates sound to the level of formal element; (4) relies upon aural montage as a constitutive feature of trailer narrative; and (5) intensifies the experience of temporalization through synchresis between sound and image. (Deaville and Malkinson 2014: 124)

It is fair to say that the majority of contemporary theatrical trailers adhere to these five distinct features. However, this is not to say that there is no room for variety within this set of sonic markers. In fact, there is a surprising amount of different uses of thematic music material, which remains one of the most important layers. Trailer makers depend on musical themes to generate a certain recognition within the audience; whether it’s a recognizable popular song that particularly fits (or doesn’t fit) the trailer’s narrative, or a theme that they recognize from other films or trailers, or a melodic element that falls within a certain sonic genre that is associated with the trailer that is presented.

Synch Points

All these tools and methods can help to induce recognition and anticipation in an audience within a very short timeframe. Another technique comes in the form of Michel Chion's concept of synchresis. This concept describes a specific way in which image and visual can collide, which Chion describes as "a spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time." (Chion 1994: 63)

An example of synchresis that is often seen in trailers is the 'synch point', a particular form of synchronization where sound and image collide, described by Chion as "a salient moment of an audiovisual sequence during which a sound event and a visual event meet in synchrony" and that which "give[s] the audiovisual flow its phrasing" (Chion 1994: 68, 59). These synch points are highly usable for capturing an audience's attention, which is why they are employed much more (relatively) frequently in trailers than full length films.

Examples of synch points include percussion hits to emphasize impact, like when a car crashes into a wall or a punch is landed in a fistfight. Often, near the climax of the trailer, percussive hits are also used as synch points for title or text cards with information about the narrative of the trailer or the film itself. Another example is the use of silence, or a negative (*false*) synch point. Often used simultaneously or right after the punchline of a joke. (Deaville and Malkinson 2014: 127)

How Is Music Selected?

The music supervisor or trailer editor can select tracks for a trailer from at least six sources, with wide-ranging implications for cost, use within the trailer, and audience appeal: (1) a commission by for a composer, (2) music from the film with which the trailer is associated, (3) music from a production music library, (4) pre-composed music from other trailers and films, (5) a current popular song (or cover version of that song), or (6) classical, and popular music of the past. (Deaville 2017: 245-246)

Many different non-music factors like budget and schedule are taken into consideration when selecting music for a trailer, but the goal is always the same; a persuasive attempt to nudge the trailer-viewer into buying a ticket for the product that is advertised.

Since the 1990s, more and more music production companies have been focusing exclusively on producing music for trailers. Primarily due to scheduling necessity; marketing via trailer releases needs to begin somewhere between one or two years before a film's release. It is unlikely that any part of the film's score will be available for use at this point. Music tracks from these companies are often produced

to tick all the boxes in the category of ‘trailer music’ in terms of length, dynamics, thematic material per genre, and synch points. (Deaville 2017: 246)

Use of Popular Music

One of the most widely used mechanisms of triggering appeal and recognition is the use of a popular song. The use of popular music in trailers dates back to the 1950s and has become more prominent in recent years. In 2010, ‘Creep’ by Radiohead was used in the trailer for [The Social Network](#) (David Fincher, 2010) in a reworking by the Belgian girls’ choir Scala and Kolacny Brothers. Since then, many trailer houses have adapted this technique. Notable examples are Cat Stevens’ ‘Wild World’ for [Mad Max: Fury Road](#) and Lorde’s reworking of ‘Everybody Wants to Rule the World’ in the trailer for [Dracula](#) (Gary Shore, 2015). In the year 2021 there have been versions of (for example) ‘Heart of Glass’ ([House of Gucci](#), Ridley Scott, 2021), ‘Starman’ ([Lightyear](#), Angus MacLane, 2022), ‘God Only Knows’ ([Lamb](#), Valdimar Jóhannsson, 2021) and ‘Perfect Day’ ([Spencer](#), Pablo Larraín, 2021).

Part 2: Contemporary Sci-Fi Trailers: *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*

In a 2016 article, Tim Summers, when describing the current state of musicological literature on the topic of trailer music, notes that for his research he aims to contribute to the discussion about music in film trailers in a holistic way. Hereby taking example in Frank Lehman’s musical analysis of trailers for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, their musical properties and coherence as a set. Like Lehman, Summers takes one film as a case study and studies the marketing of this particular film through its three main trailers, thus exploring the promotional strategy of the film, along with its reception, providing an insight into some of the complex dynamics at play in Hollywood action-trailer music and film marketing.

With this research, I aim to contribute to this discussion in a similar manner. The main focus of this paper is to observe the trailer campaign of *Dune* (Villeneuve, 2021) and inspect the musical elements of the campaign in order to answer the following questions:

- 1) How is music used in the trailer campaign to accomplish the desired effect of generating interest (selling tickets) by triggering memory and anticipation?
- 2) How does the music in the three different trailers relate to each other? Is there continuity or change? What could be the cause of this?
- 3) Could the use of music in the campaign be considered typical for modern sci-fi blockbuster marketing?

4) If the music is used atypically, what is the cause of this? Could the deviation be due to Covid-19 related complications in marketing strategy and timing?

For the sake of providing context surrounding the customs of sci-fi blockbuster marketing, I want to take a brief but close look at the findings of Lehman and Summers, to see if there are lessons to be learnt about the effectiveness of different strategies when it comes to promoting a new entry in an established science fiction franchise. The campaigns for *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* are different in nature, and so is the campaign for *Dune*. But some aspects of all three campaigns are useful for comparison.

Notable similarities between the three films in general are: all three were promoted by trailer campaigns in sets of three (teaser trailer, main trailer and final trailer). All three films have been released within the past ten years and are either sequels, continuations, or reboots of science-fiction franchises with devoted fan bases that have seen first installments in the 1970s. However, there are plenty of differences to note as well. The *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Dune* cinematic universes are quite different in number of installments, time gaps between installments, target audiences (arguably), and musical background. For example, it was likely that *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* would be compared (musically) and upheld to the standard of their most recent outings in cinema, which have all taken place in the decade before the newest releases. The last and only other time *Dune* was displayed on the big screen was nearly forty years ago in 1984, in an adaptation by director David Lynch. So, in terms of music, there was not as much audiovisual history that the trailer makers for *Dune* have had to adhere to when it comes to the marketing.

Star Trek

The trailer campaign for *Star Trek: Beyond* has been thoroughly analyzed recently by Tim Summer. In his article, Summers analyzes the role of music in three different trailers for the film, by dissecting each one and commenting on the source of the music, the role of the music, and the reception of the trailer. Summers notes that the three trailers are structured differently, and consequently use music differently. Stating that the trailers follow the process typical of major Hollywood films, the first serves as a ‘teaser’ trailer with an attention-grabbing audiovisual aesthetic, and the second and third lean more toward narrative concerns. (Summers 2016: 41).

The first trailer for *Star Trek: Beyond* uses a pre-existing popular song; ‘Sabotage’ by the Beastie Boys. As seen in the previous chapter, this is quite a common technique. However, in this case it was met with mixed reactions. There was criticism from various sources; YouTube comments, critics and (former) cast members all expressed their concern that the trailer did not match their expectations

surrounding the aesthetic of the Star Trek property. They worried that the core values would be undermined. Summers notes that a rap rock song is an odd choice for the genre parameters for a futuristic space opera Star Trek film. (Summers 2016: 43-44)

A different route was chosen for the second trailer. With a greater focus on narrative, the second trailer uses a pre-existing track called 'Star Fusion,' by Really Slow Motion, a major music production company that often delivers music for Hollywood sci-fi action films. Consequently, 'Star Fusion' fits into a musical style that is characterized using traditional orchestral instrumentation, augmented by additional synthesized effects. A style that is best represented by Hans Zimmer and his Remote Control Productions studio. The track received significantly more positive reception than that of the previous trailer, primarily due to its similarity to previous Star Trek scores. It was assumed that the production team took the criticism of the first trailer to heart, with the audience largely expressing their relief of the absence of 'Sabotage.' (Summers 2016: 51) The third trailer featured 'Sledgehammer' by Rihanna, a song that was specifically created for the trailer. In contrast to 'Sabotage,' the music of 'Sledgehammer' was less criticized. Summers notes that the third trailer reveals music as a force of synergistic marketing and cross-promotion, as it brought the commercial considerations front and center. (Summers 2016: 57) Taken as a whole, the set of trailers show the significant and diverse roles of music in trailers, as well as the priorities of the more critical public and fan cultures.

Star Wars

The three trailers for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) were much closer related to each other musically, in terms of style, genre, and source. Frank Lehman notes that the trailers all use themes from the grand lexicon of *Star Wars* leitmotifs (as composed by John Williams) to invoke nostalgia. The musical structure from all three trailers are basically as follows: The beginning is filled with ambiguous thematic material, with jagged, abstract, tension-filled melodies building up to a moment of silence as 'calm before the storm'. The storm in this sense being the nostalgic payoff of one of Williams's iconic motifs from the original trilogy, such as the 'Main Theme', the 'Force Theme', 'Princess Leia's Theme' or the 'Imperial March'. The tactic of deliberate withholding of nostalgia until the end of the trailer is most apparent in trailer three; for the first minute-and-a-half, an evocative, austere chord progression is heard, without a clear melody, constantly building in tension until eventually blasting the 'Love Theme' (or Princess Leia's Theme) and a reharmonized version of the 'Force Theme' to finish. The set of trailers as a whole capitalizes on the nostalgic value of Williams' themes from the original trilogy to tap into the fondness of the audience for those episodes. (Lehman 2015)

From these two trailer campaigns, the conclusion can be drawn that there are significant

differences in choice of music. Both in individual productions, as in the sets of trailers when regarded as a whole. The *Star Trek* campaign relied on different sources and types of music for every individual trailer; a popular song, library music, and an originally written track. This could have been due to a course correction after the mixed response of the first trailer, which was deemed as incongruent with the *Star Trek* cinematic tradition. The *Star Wars* trailers are much more similar to each other in structure and material. In all three productions they relied heavily on John Williams's themes for the original trilogy for the reasons of evoking nostalgia.

In the next part of this research, I want to examine the trailer marketing of *Dune* (Villeneuve, 2021), a recent major Hollywood science fiction action film. The trailer campaign for *Dune* was similar to *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* in structure (three trailers; one attention grabbing teaser and two main trailers with more focus on narrative elements), but quite different in terms of musical material. One external factor that plays a part in the marketing for *Dune* was the Covid-19 pandemic, which delayed the film three times. This had a noticeable effect on the timing of the trailers and, imaginably, their music as well.

Part 3: *Dune* (2021) Trailer Campaign

Circumstances and Context

This project, along with the announcement of Villeneuve as director, was revealed in 2017, but marketing didn't ramp up until the end of 2019, aside from some formal updates on casting and production. *Dune* was originally scheduled for release on November 20, 2020 but was pushed back to December 18, 2020. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the film was delayed again by almost a full year to October 1, 2021. In June 2021, the film's release date was delayed a final time to October 22, 2021.

In early 2021, it was made known that the entirety of Warner Bros' theatrical releases of the year would be 'hybrid', meaning that theatrical releases and streaming (HBO Max) availability would be simultaneous. (Warner Media Press Release 2021) This decision was made by Warner Bros out of necessity because of pandemic-related uncertainties. Many filmmakers, including Denis Villeneuve, were very critical of this decision, stating that it favors cash-revenue over artistic vision. (Villeneuve 2020)

In later interviews, the cast and director frequently called upon (potential) viewers to go see the movie in theaters, instead of streaming from home. To contextualize this request, Villeneuve stated that moviegoing should be considered an 'almost religious experience', best expressed communally and that the epic scope of the film was best enjoyed on the big (IMAX) screen. Furthermore, Villeneuve frequently stated that the production greenlight for a sequel would be dependent on the box-office performance of the first film. (Farley and Shepherd 2021) A strong argument, given that the film is open-

ended and Villeneuve's intention from the start was to work the story of the first *Dune*-novel in two films, splitting the story in half.

The first trailer for the film was shown in theaters in late August of 2020, two weeks before it was released online. Shortly after the first trailer came out, composer Hans Zimmer was interviewed about the process of creating the music for the first trailer; he commented on working with a full choir on a 'trailerized' version of Pink Floyd's 'Eclipse' that accompanies the spot. (Burlingame 2020) After the release of the first trailer, it was announced that the film's release would be delayed to October 2021, effectively halting the marketing. After several months of uncertainty on whether the film would be released on schedule, the marketing resumed in July of 2021 with a second trailer, focusing more on the lore of the fictional worlds, and the impressive scope and scale of the film as the ultimate 'big-screen' experience.

A final trailer was released in the first week of October of 2021, with fewer new elements and more repetition of what was already shown in the previous trailers. It also included some quotes/positive reviews by entertainment platforms like Collider, stating for example that 'The next *Lord Of The Rings*, *Star Wars* is here'.

[Trailer 1 - 'Eclipse'](#)

The first trailer for *Dune* was released online on September 9th, 2020, three months before the initial release date of the film, but more than one year before the theatrical release of the film. The trailer focuses mainly on introducing the protagonist, Paul Atreides, his home-planet Arrakis, his mission in the story and significant glimpses at almost all other major characters. For a first trailer it is quite lengthy, clocking in at three minutes and four seconds.

The trailer opens with the title cards of production companies Warner Brothers and Legendary Pictures. The first music cue is started; high pitched notes with no discernible rhythm or melody, like a distorted violin or the sound of wine glasses when used as a musical instrument (glass harp). The trailer opens to a close-up of the face of Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet) and his narration: "There's something happening to me. Something awakening in my mind that I can't control." We see a dream sequence, characterized by a yellow color palette, showing Paul and Chani (Zendaya) on the desert planet Arrakis. The music accompanying the sequence is airy, breathy synth notes overlapping and intertwining, along with the sound effect of sand being blown by the wind.

A percussive synch point occurs just after protagonist Paul narrates 'There's a crusade coming' at 0:21. A loud drum hit is played simultaneously with a war-shout in male voices, when the picture cuts to Paul and Chani looking out over a post-battle landscape, with burning pits and smoke piles rising. The

picture cuts to Paul standing in a round, stone, empty room with a pillar in the middle with a box on it. It cuts to a title card announcing the director (Denis Villeneuve). The music is still rhythmically ambiguous, with seemingly random percussion rolls and shaky cello notes. A woman, Gaius Helen Mohiam, tells Paul to put his hand in the box and that he will die if he removes his hand. A more intense, 'horror'-type synch point occurs when we promptly cut to a short frame of Paul screaming with his hand in the box at 0:44. The music then intensifies when we see a short montage of Paul engaging in combat (sword) training with Gurney Halleck (Josh Brolin). Strong percussion hits are synched to the clashing of swords at 0:53.

After this sequence, Hans Zimmers' version of 'Eclipse' by Pink Floyd begins at 01:13 with the lyrics: "All that you touch, all that you see". At this point, it's merely vocals with minimal accompaniment in synth and strings. The cuts start occurring more frequently at this point as we see multiple characters (protagonists and antagonists), armies and locations as we are shown preparations for what looks like a battle. The percussion intensifies as the lyrics of 'Eclipse' continue with "All that you did". It becomes more rhythmic, and faster as we approach a climax, along with swelling synth chords. But instead of a climax, the music falls quiet at 01:38, as the image returns to the scene of Paul and Gaius Helen Mohiam standing in the empty room and she asks him: "An animal caught in a trap will gnaw off its own leg in order to escape. What will you do?"

At 01:45, we return to a short frame of Paul standing in the yellow dream sequence, as a D-major chord is played in piano and strings, with synthesizer notes gliding up slowly, building tension.

At this point, at the 01:50 mark, there is a definite turn in the trailer, as the 'payoff' section begins. We finally hear the full, trailerized, orchestral version of Pink Floyd's 'Eclipse' that is teased for almost a minute, with added choir, percussion, 6/8 drumming and the vocal ad libs that are instantly recognizable from the original version of 'Eclipse'. The trailer turns into a more action-packed montage of sequences, cut to the beat of the 6/8 drums of the song. We see battle scenes, explosions, a sci-fi helicopter flying, close ups of main characters in battle scenes, alternated with black cards with the words 'beyond fear', 'destiny awaits' as the song nears its end. The final lyrics of 'Eclipse' 'but the sun is eclipsed by the moon' are heard as Paul says 'I must not fear, fear is the mind killer' and it looks like the trailer ends in a 'fade out' at 02:24.

However, it is a false ending, the picture cuts to a final scene in the desert where Paul and Chani are chased by the giant sand worm from the novel (which is a big reveal that fans of the novel would have been hoping to see in the trailer) as the sound becomes very loud and intense, with percussion and percussive synth swelling up. The music falls silent as the worm towers threateningly far above Paul and Chani in the final frame.

With a final heavy, percussive synch point at 2:53, we turn to the title card reading 'Dune' as the Pink

Floyd lyrics return to their start with ‘all that you touch, all that you see’, as a large, major chord swells up in strings, synth and brass.

Discussion

Wild Card Creative Group, the trailer company responsible for the first and second trailer commented on their thinking behind the two pieces. Chief creative officer Nick Temple writes in a [blog post](#) that work on the first trailer for *Dune* actually started in 2019, anticipating a 2020 release. But because the launch was delayed due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, they were able to “take a step back and really think through the mythology of the story”. (Temple 2021) They worked with an internal ‘insight’ team to gain a greater perspective on the specifics of the *Dune* mythology, in order to speak to a more mainstream audience while still exciting the passionate core fans. He explains that their main objective was to anchor the campaign in emotion and storytelling and not just showcase the visual effects with little context. With only limited footage to work with for the teaser (a common challenge in the industry of trailer making), they chose to focus on a sequence of Paul Atreidis and his ultimate test of endurance, *relying heavily on impactful cuts and audio*. (Temple 2021)

In a Variety-article that was published the week after the trailer was released, journalist Jon Burlingame researched the process of how the Pink Floyd cover was created with Lehmann Boddicker, who oversaw the choral recording of the project, as well as Allegra Willis Knerr of BMG music, who oversaw licensing the song for the project. The author notes that the version of ‘Eclipse’ is unusual, considering “most trailers are not scored by the film’s actual composer, much less a specially tailored cover of a classic rock song.” (Burlingame 2020)

Boddicker explains that she directed eight sessions of voice recording with a 32-piece choir in Zimmer’s studio in Santa Monica. These sessions were heavily influenced by Covid-19 measures; Zimmer attended and supervised the sessions via FaceTime from his home studio and the musicians all recorded vocals in separate cubicles, divided by glass, with individual mics and everything was wiped down between sessions. Zimmer wanted to “pay homage to the original, very back-phrased sound, a little spaced-out, so the vocals would not sound urgent. There’s a kind of joy happening in the track, a lot of hopefulness. It’s not despondent, just very peaceful and sounding not of this planet”, Boddicker elaborates.

Multiple entertainment news websites reported that the use of ‘Eclipse’ represents a kind of ‘full circle’ moment between adaptations of the Frank Herbert novel and Pink Floyd-music. Back in the mid 1970s, director Alejandro Jodorowsky was planning to adapt the novel into a film. While those plans were never realized, the director was in talks with Pink Floyd to score the film. The choice of ‘Eclipse’

for the teaser trailer was speculated to be a nod to the checkered history of previous (attempted) movie adaptations. However, this was never confirmed by Villeneuve or Zimmer.

When we look closer at how exactly the trailer employs music to accomplish its tasks, there are a number of common and unusual techniques that deserve highlighting. First of all, there is the significance of 'Eclipse', to which the whole soundtrack of the trailer builds toward. As mentioned before, the use of a (cover version of a) popular song is very common in contemporary blockbuster marketing. However, positive reception is not guaranteed; we saw this in the case of *Star Trek - 'Sabotage'*, as discussed by Tim Summers. On the negative reception of that trailer and its choice of track, Summers notes that "music is an important part of how film genre parameters are implied, and audience expectations created, ahead of a film's release. (Summers 2016: 45) In the case of this trailer, those inferences were misaligned with the franchise's established identity, resulting in a mixed to negative reception." In the case of 'Eclipse', there are several aspects of the original Pink Floyd song and how it relates to *Dune* that make it a better fit, explaining a more positive reception. It appears that the Pink Floyd song is better aligned with the genre parameters of the fictional world of *Dune*. Both in thematic material; outer space, futuristic, science fiction, psychedelics, and scale; *Dune* is an 'epic' sci-fi space opera, and Zimmer's version of 'Eclipse' has been made 'epic' with added vocals, instrumentation, heightened intensity of percussive elements and overall increased volume.

As mentioned before, triggering memory is one of the most effective ways to employ music in a trailer, according to Hediger. We saw an example of that in the trailer campaign for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), as analyzed by Frank Lehman. In those trailers, famous themes and motifs from the *Star Wars* saga were used to trigger the audience's collective memory and evoke feelings of nostalgia. (Lehman 2015) A similar effect is called upon in this first trailer for *Dune* and the use of 'Eclipse'. The music of Pink Floyd is explicitly linked to the *Dune*-novels because of an earlier (never realized) adaptation of the book. But the choice for a Pink Floyd song from 1973 is fitting, as the first three *Dune*-novels were released between 1965 and 1976, heavily overlapping with what is considered the prime creative period of Pink Floyd. Considering that there is likely a shared audience between the British rock band and the sci-fi novels, it's a good guess that the song will evoke pleasant memories and recognition with the audiences familiar with the franchise and music. And with *Dark Side of the Moon* being one of the highest selling albums of the 20th century, new fans are likely to recognize the song as well.

Like the trailers for *The Force Awakens*, audiences aren't immediately presented with the full, epic version of the music. It rather serves as a 'payoff', after a minute and a half of melodically and rhythmically ambiguous material. Zimmer builds suspense in the first half of the trailer by using dissonant melodies that don't resolve, 'exotic'-sounding voices and synch points. After almost two

minutes, audiences are rewarded with consonant, recognizable music in a major key in a climactic, action-packed finale.

Trailer 2 - 'Vicarious', 'House Atreides', 'Paul's Dream'

The second and main trailer for *Dune* was released on July 22nd, 2021, three months before release and almost a full year after the first trailer. It has a runtime of 3 minutes and 27 seconds, even longer than its predecessor, which was already lengthy for a teaser piece. It takes time to explore more of the narrative elements of the story, with longer scenes between cuts and more complete passages of narration and dialogue.

The trailer opens with the track 'House Atreides' from the soundtrack album *The Dune Sketchbook* (Hans Zimmer, released on September 3, 2021). The track accompanies a dream sequence of protagonist Paul Atreides where we see Chani describing her home planet Arrakis and the Spice that is mined there, while we see images of the desert-planet. The tone shifts to more typical sci-fi-thriller action sounds as she describes how invaders 'ravage our lands before our eyes'. Music is closely synchronized with action scenes of bombs dropping, explosions and fire.

A second cue from *The Dune Sketchbook* enters; 'Paul's Dream' is the track where most of the rest of the trailer's music originates from. Entering at 0:34 with an exotic sounding 3-note, rising pattern, sung by a powerful female voice. The pattern is repeated once more, completing what could be seen as a 6-note theme, or even leitmotif. The theme can be heard on the foreground multiple times throughout the rest of the trailer.

At this point, the music falls silent as Paul wakes up with a gasp, which initiates the second phase of the trailer. Black cards with the logos of Warner Bros and Legendary are shown at 0:42, while a more typical fast-paced action-thriller-style string ostinato is started. We see Paul talk about his dream to Duncan Idaho (Jason Momoa), leading into a typical comedy-trailer synch point where the music stops to give room for a comedic punchline: 'Look at you, put on some muscle?', 'I did?', 'No.'

After this, the action track continues in more intense form with added choir vocals and harder percussive hits at 1:06 while we see various scenes elaborating about the battles that Paul will face with enemy house Harkonnen, being a member and the heir of the House Atreides. Present during the track is a distorted synth tone sliding in and out of key, which creates a sense of unbalance and suspense. The music is shortly interrupted for a line of dialogue 'come with me' spoken to Paul by a mysterious figure at 01:38, after which there is more dialogue spoken by opposing houses, explaining their claim on Arrakis and why the opposing house is in the wrong and should be destroyed.

The final third of the trailer starts at 2:05 with the further eruption of multiple battles, with hand-to-

hand combat, large explosions, aerial fighting, and surroundings burning, with Duncan Idaho exclaiming ‘Let’s fight like demons’. The music is the same intense rhythmic percussion as before, but accompanied by ‘epic’, more uplifting brass and strings, instead of distorted synths this time around.

The music stops at 02:26 to show Paul facing off against the giant Sand Worm, alternated with images of him questioning his own worthiness and heritage to his father. At 2:46, The scene quickly turns back to battle sequences with the action-track with the string ostinato, while we hear faintly in the background the vocal motif from the beginning of the trailer. The music falls silent one final time at 03:13 to make room for a line of dialogue ‘it’s time’ by Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson) while we see a final close up of main characters Paul and Chani. The screen cuts to black at 03:16, the ‘Dune’ title logo is shown, accompanied by a full-volume version of the vocal motif, with an extended final note that lasts for a number of seconds, echoing through the credits.

Discussion

The second and main trailer for *Dune* was released on July 22nd, 2021, three months before release and eleven months after the release of the first trailer. This is an unusually long time between trailers, and it had everything to do with delays caused by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In October of 2020, it was announced that the theatrical release for *Dune* would be delayed by almost a full year, from December of 2020 to October of 2021. In December of 2020, HBO [announced](#) that all of their releases slated for 2021 would be ‘hybrid’ releases, meaning they would release simultaneously in theaters and their streaming service HBO Max. This decision was controversial, especially among filmmakers. In a response article published in *Variety* a week later, Denis Villeneuve heavily criticized the move by HBO, noting that this decision shows “absolutely no love for cinema, nor for the audiences here. Villeneuve stresses that streaming can produce great content, but that it is no place for content with the scope and scale of *Dune*. He notes that “Warner Bros.’ decision means *Dune* won’t have the chance to perform financially in order to be viable and piracy will ultimately triumph. Warner Bros. might just have killed the *Dune* franchise.” Villeneuve concludes that moviegoing is (or should be) a collective experience.

When the second trailer was eventually released after a long period of little to no marketing, it became apparent that the direction, tone, and content of the piece were notably different than the first trailer. Since the first trailer had already done the job of getting people interested, partly through the use of ‘Eclipse’, the second trailer focuses mainly on the grand scope and visual spectacle of locations and sequence. It also takes time to address an audience that is already familiar with the *Dune*-franchise and its

lore and legacy. For example, Chani mentions that “rolling over the sands, you can see *spice* in the air.” Spice being the fictional drug that heightens awareness and turns the users’ eyes blue. Which will not have made a lot of sense to audiences unfamiliar with the franchise. In an article published in *Wired* just after the trailer was released, journalist Angela Watercutter rhetorically asks her readers: “did *anything* that happens in this trailer make a lick of sense to people who haven’t read the book? It looks gorgeous, but, my God, it’s gotta be an uphill battle for those with no clue what ‘spice’ is.” (Angela Watercutter 2021)

Music is used extensively to establish a deeper connection to the fictional world. This trailer’s music is characterized by the use of original cues stemming from Hans Zimmer’s soundtrack, combined with a pre-existing library track. The two elements were blended together and produced custom to fit the picture by composer Mark Petrie from production music company Audiomachine. In a post on social media, Petrie notes that his job entailed working to picture, modifying one of his tracks, *Vicarious*, and merging that track with the themes and sonic material from Hans Zimmer’s *Dune* score. Zimmer’s themes are most notable in the beginning and ending of the trailer. The first seconds of the song ‘House Atreides’ are heard at the very beginning of the piece, accompanying Paul’s vision about Chani in the desert. The 6-note ‘Middle-Eastern’ sounding vocal motif is heard at the 0:34, 02:46, 02:55 and 03:16 mark, carrying much of the task of connecting the audience to the fictional world.

Apart from establishing this connection, the trailer serves another main purpose; to convince the audience that this is a film that ‘must be seen’ on the big screen. From 0:41 onwards, the trailer is a constant sequence of action-packed shots that are visually impressive, from the delegations from both Houses meeting at 1:09, to the Harkonnen army at 1:49, the rising of Baron Harkonnen at 1:53, a helicopter flying away from a giant explosion at 2:02, to the sandworm towering above Paul and Chani at 2:41. All of these shots are “practically begging you to see the film in a cinema”, according to Watercutter in the aforementioned *Wired* article.

The music helps to emphasize the epic larger-than-life scale of the project by more or less typical action-thriller musical tropes. Like high-paced rhythms, a repeating, fast string-ostinato, heavy brass, the constant adding of layers and textures, the gradual build up to a climactic point, and the mixture of orchestral instrumentation and sound design. Interesting to see is how elements from the pre-existing track by Mark Petrie are blended with original material from Zimmer’s score, like the added vocals towards the end and the constant presence of the primal, vocal motif.

However, even though the trailer mainly focuses on these two elements (accomplishing lore and showcasing visual scale) there is room for levity that wasn’t present in the first trailer; two comedic punchlines are landed in the film, one at 01:04 that makes use of silence in the established, comedy trailer-way, and one at 01:16 where music is played throughout the punchline “I am smiling”, making it a

bit more subtle as to not disturb the pacing of the trailer.

Concluding, the trailer does well in completing its two main tasks; assuring the fans of the franchise that the film is carefully crafted, with great attention to the lore of Herbert's fictional world, while also highlighting the enormous scope and visual prowess of the picture as the ultimate cinema-experience. It is noteworthy that original music from the score is used in this second trailer, this is usually not the case, since a score is rarely completed this far in advance before the release of the film. However, Covid-related delays may have created the circumstance of a completed score to be used in marketing, which is what has likely happened here.

In the third and final trailer, released almost 10 months after this first one, even more use is made of high-paced action sequences, which has a notable impact on the use of music.

Trailer 3 "Open Eyes"

One final trailer was published before the United States release of the film. On October 7th, 2021, two weeks before the film was released simultaneously in theaters and on streaming service HBO Max in the USA, the third trailer was released online. When the final trailer was released, the movie had already had a theatrical release in Europe on September 15th, mostly in countries where HBO Max wasn't yet available. The trailer is considerably shorter than its predecessors with a playtime of 2 minutes and 28 seconds.

The piece once again starts out with the familiar dream sequence in which Chani tells Paul that her people are under attack, while we see images of her people and home burning. We see Paul telling Duncan Idaho about the visions he keeps seeing of her, and him assuring him that "everything important happens to us when we're awake". After which we see Paul being told by his father Duke Leto Atreides (Oscar Isaac) that he is the future of house Atreides and he has to fulfill his destiny as such. There is a mood shift when we get a look at the villains of the story. We see scenes of Baron Harkonnen rising from a bath of dark liquid and him telling Beast Rabban Harkonnen (Dave Bautista) to "kill them all", referring to the Atreides family. The final 30 seconds of the trailer consist of a montage of action-sequences; giant explosions, helicopters flying, armies on battlefields preparing for combat, hand-to-hand fights between characters. Most, if not all of these sequences we've seen before in previous trailers.

Interestingly, hardly any new footage is shown in this trailer. Every line of dialogue has been heard in previous trailers, as well as much of the scenes, almost in identical shots, just in a different order. Many lines and even the structure of the trailer are similar to the second trailer, and to some degree even the first. For example, all three trailers start out with the dream sequence, and subsequently Paul discussing his dreams or visions with Jason Momoa. This final trailer however, is the only one that doesn't include a

scene with Paul's ultimate test of endurance/trial of pain, the Gom Jabbar.

This all ties in with the final trailer focusing much more on the action sequences, and to sum up the most important parts of the overall narrative (Paul's heritage, the battle between houses Atreides and Harkonnen, and the dynamic between Paul and Chani).

Discussion

The music in the final trailer is a more traditional and straightforward piece of trailer music than the tracks from the first two trailers. The track that was used is called Open Eyes, a song created by composer Eric Tannery for music production and publishing company Ninja Tracks. Much like the well-received second trailer for Star Trek Beyond as mentioned in this paper before, the track fits into a musical style that has become associated with modern Hollywood science fiction films. In this style, composers typically use traditional orchestral instrumentation (analog or simulated) augmented by additional synthesized effects. These pieces rely heavily on ostinati that are layered in turn, and subtly altered, to create musical climaxes through a cumulative form. In this style, the percussion often gets heavier and more intense as the track progresses. There are usually moments right after a climax left silent to leave room for highlighted pieces of dialogue, after which the music continues to build up to a new climax. "Open Eyes" is centered around the movement between two chords. The piece starts out with a B \flat major chord played on a piano and strings, lasting for two bars of 4/4 of 120 beats per minute. After which it shifts to a D minor chord. The movement between these two chords lasts for the whole piece. A piano melody is walking up with the transition from the B \flat major to the D minor chord. There are variations of this melody, but it starts out with D-E-F-A. When the melody hits the E-note, it is the #4 of the B \flat major chord, making the chord Lydian, creating a feeling of suspension and what is often described as an ethereal, otherworldly sound. At the 0:24 mark of the trailer, an A note is heard playing by a string instrument in triplets, fading out fast, creating a sort of stuttering effect. At 0:39, we hear that this effect was setting up a string ostinato that follows the chord changes. At 01:11, the music falls silent to the image of Paul meeting Chani, the girl he has been seeing in his visions, highlighting Paul saying: "I know you." The music remains silent while we see the villains of the story, anticipating a return to the intense version. After we see Duncan say "Let's fight like demons", we return to the full, intense version of the piece, with ostinato, heavy percussion and brass for the final 30 seconds of the trailer. At the very end of the trailer, during the showing of the title card, we hear Zimmer's (now recognizable) vocal motif, the only time in the trailer source music from the film is heard.

The third trailer serves a different goal than the first two. Since this trailer was released very close to

release, and in some regions even after the release of the film, it seems to focus less on bringing new material or character and dialogue exploration to the attention. Instead, it highlights a very compressed version of the overall plot of the film and is somewhat of a recap of the more action-filled sequences of the previous two pieces. This could be due to the extended marketing campaign with significant pauses in between trailers. Perhaps it was felt that the audience would need some reminding in order to be persuaded to buy a ticket for the cinema in this last-minute trailer.

Conclusion

There are many similarities between the three trailers in this campaign for *Dune* and other three-part trailer campaigns for major Hollywood science fiction films of the past decade, notably those for *Star Trek: Beyond* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. The most notable comparisons occur in the structures of the overall campaigns. First off, all three campaigns make use of music in ways that are commonly associated with the tropes of trailer music; they exploit the ‘trailer ear’, they aim to trigger memory and nostalgia in some form and rely heavily on synch points (both for action and comedy purposes). In all three campaigns, the first trailer makes use of some form of very recognizable music to grab audiences’ attention and trigger a feeling of nostalgia. *The Force Awakens* accomplishes this through the thematic material of John Williams, and *Star Trek: Beyond* attempts to accomplish this with “Sabotage”. In *Dune*, Hans Zimmer’s version of ‘Eclipse’ by Pink Floyd is employed to trigger that audience recognition. Furthermore, ‘Eclipse’ is used in a way that is similar to the trailer for *The Force Awakens*, by being teased for over 90 seconds before serving as a payoff, or reward for the audience. Not all of these methods are identical, but they are comparable in the respective settings of their franchise histories. All three campaigns make room in the second and third trailer, but especially the second, to explore narrative elements in more detail, as well as most major characters. Furthermore, in the sophomore trailers of these campaigns, there is more use of traditional trailer music with string ostinatos and heavy percussion. This type of music adheres more to the boundaries of music that is set within their filmic genres.

The campaign for *Dune* does deviate from the other two contemporary sci-fi campaigns in some ways, primarily due to the specific circumstances and timing of the overall marketing strategy. The main difference is the involvement of the composer of the film’s actual score. In *Dune*’s first and second trailer, Hans Zimmer had a major influence on the creative direction and execution of the soundtrack. This is unusual, but explainable under these circumstances. Usually, marketing for a film through trailers starts way before a film’s soundtrack or filming is even remotely completed, which is why they rely on precomposed ‘trailer music’. In the case of *Dune*, there were many delays in the film’s release slate, which meant that the soundtrack was largely completed before the first trailer was

published, giving Zimmer time and opportunity to work on their music. In the first trailer, this was notable in Zimmer's custom version of 'Eclipse', in the second trailer, this was most notable in the use of actual pieces of the soundtrack from the final film.

Dune's second and third trailer both made use of precomposed 'library' trailer music, in a combination with original music from Zimmer's score, most notably the 6 note vocal motif. There is definitely continuity in the musical material used for the second and third trailer, both pulling material from very similar sources. Furthermore, it is likely that especially the second trailer has been made to put more focus on the 'grand scope' of the film, and to display the visual effects and action sequences. All this was in order to persuade audiences to buy theater tickets for the film, rather than streaming from home, because this was said (by Denis Villeneuve) to be the way to ensure that he would be able to make the sequel. Music was instrumental in its role to amplify this message. The structure of the two latter trailers was most likely heavily influenced by the extended period of time between them and the release of the first trailer and other external factors. With the Covid-19 pandemic being the biggest reason for multiple delays and the film seeing a 'hybrid release', there was a lot of pressure on the second trailer to be especially persuasive. Interestingly, the second trailer is the only trailer that has instances of comedic synch points. They could have been included to appeal to a wider audience than the already established fanbase of the novels or sci-fi in general. Finally, the first two trailers are quite unique in the fact they are both over three minutes in length. This is most likely due to the amount of footage that was already available because of all the delays. The consequence is that these trailers consist of multiple 'acts', divided by moments of silence in the musical material.

Whether the music used in the set of trailers for *Dune* is to be considered typical is a bit more difficult to say. If the schedule of the campaign would not have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is reasonable to assume that the marketing team would not have been able to have Hans Zimmer provide so much source music from the film, but that is speculative. Overall, Zimmer's involvement in the music of the first and second (and to a lesser extent, third) trailers makes for an atypical use of music in a Hollywood film trailer campaign. His re-recording of 'Eclipse' and use of source music from the film is unusual and extends beyond the use of thematic material to invoke nostalgia (as was the case in the trailer campaign for *Star Wars: the Force Awakens*.)

To conclude, the campaign for *Dune* and its soundtrack has similarities with contemporary sci-fi trailer campaigns but is notably different due to the circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the argument can be made that all contemporary trailer campaigns are affected by their own circumstances, as delays in release schedules are relatively common in modern Hollywood, and the reception of previous trailers will in many cases be likely to play a role in the creative direction of later trailers.

There is still a lot of research left to be done in the field of music in film trailers, especially because it is a use of music in media that is always evolving to keep up with progressions in marketing strategies. A development that has been a minor part of this paper but deserves to be examined much more thoroughly is the abundance of (covered) popular music in film trailers. Are they solely used for nostalgic effect or is there a deeper mechanism at work? And is it always (measurably) effective or can it misfire and have a negative effect on ticket sales? It would be interesting to see more research on sets of trailer campaigns, rather than individual pieces. Does music play a significant role in ‘tying together’ multiple trailers over a release span of several months or even years? And with Hans Zimmers’ involvement in the trailer music for *Dune* in mind, will it be more common in the future for a film’s composer to craft the music in trailer pieces, or will it still be mostly up to external production teams?

This paper aims to have captured a unique moment in cinema marketing during an ongoing global pandemic where people were mostly discouraged from banding together in large numbers (like when going to the movies) and the friction that existed between that message and the film’s creator stressing that this film is one that simply *must* be seen on the big screen. Much like other trailer campaigns in this specific genre of film, the campaign for *Dune* had to accomplish certain tasks; it had to appeal to an established audience of the *Dune* franchise, as well as to a broader audience that might not be familiar with the novels by Frank Herbert or the David Lynch-adaptation. The main difference lies in the latter trailers where the extra task was added of persuading the audience to see the film in the cinema instead of streaming from home. As demonstrated, music was a crucial tool in completing these tasks.

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