Jana Radošinská is affiliated with the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. Her scientific and research specialisation is based on critical analysis of media culture. She is interested in mainstream filmmaking, the terminological axis of media and communication studies, problems of the culture and entertainment industry, as well as the perspectives of understanding media audiences and digital games.

Lenka Rusňáková works at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. She deals with new trends in multimedia production and media philosophy. Her scholarly specialisation also includes the culture of digital games, the processes of identity formation in the virtual environment and the narratological frameworks of digital media, especially film works, music videos and digital games. She is also interested in issues of feminism in the sphere of media production, but also in heroism in the context of media culture.

Martin Schwarz is a full-time PhD. student at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. He focuses on digital art and visual aspects of storytelling utilised in digital games. His academic specialisation is centred on identifying various visual connections between film, television production, digital games, comic books and art. His practical experience includes creating illustrations, classic drawing and painting, character design, digital art and animation.

Zuzana Točená is a full-time PhD. student at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. She is interested in film and episodic production in the context of so-called Internet-distributed television. In her scientific work to date, she has dealt with the original programming of the media companies Home Box Office and Netflix, focusing on the narrative, thematic and sociocultural aspects of various works produced by the named companies. She has practical experience acquired in the field of television production.

ABSTRACT:
The study focuses on Bohemian Rhapsody (2018, directed by Bryan Singer, later Dexter Fletcher), the biographical drama that reflects on the extraordinary lives and career patterns of the four members of the rock band Queen, predominantly the band’s frontman, Freddie Mercury. Given the fact that this feature film has changed the way we perceive the economic potential of biopics entirely, we offer an overview of some of the reasons why it was so successful in terms of the globalised film industry. The main objective of the study is to outline the biographical drama’s synergistic tendency in relation to the film industry and the music business. Acknowledging Bohemian Rhapsody’s unprecedented global success, we work with the assumption that certain biographical dramas can, in fact, become globally popular, partly thanks to the fact that they utilise music as a nostalgia-driven narrative tool making portrayals of musicians deeper and more complex. The assumption is addressed via a theoretical reflection on the given topic and through a qualitative content analysis of the biographical drama Bohemian Rhapsody.

KEY WORDS:
biographical drama, Bohemian Rhapsody, diegesis, film industry, film music, movie narrative, music industry, soundtrack


1 Introduction: Synergy of the Music and Film Industries

The ways the film and music industries operate in the 21st century reflect the enormous influence international media conglomerates hold over the social, political and economic organisation of the globalised world. These segments may produce different kinds of content and services, but their economic activities are significantly intertwined due to direct or indirect ownership ties. The fact that the film and music industries...
There are some of their market structures and both of them function as media oligopolies only deepens the already existing synergistic connections. Digital communication may have changed our lives, but that does not mean it has abandoned this basic economic framework, i.e., the existing distribution of power held over the global and international media markets. We may even say that media conglomerates (such as major music and movie producers, mostly those based in the United States) now operate online and offline and thus have gained even more economic power and social importance. The synergies merging the movie and music industries shape production processes related to both these business sectors, acting as a driving force of a new era of multimedia and multiplatform media entertainment.

Discussing the ways in which the movie and music industries cooperate and merge is rather problematic, as most of the processes of the media industries are becoming increasingly digitized and are changing the whole framework of media production and distribution. However, these issues reach far beyond the boundaries of economy and doing (media) business. For example, Meyer considers the fact that the American app industry may soon eclipse the American film industry more interesting for what it means culturally. After all, there is a growing sense that the products of the sector we usually call ‘tech’ are nowadays attaining cultural primacy. In production processes related to both these business sectors, acting as a driving force of a new era of multimedia tools. The oligopolistic character of Hollywood production is further underlined by the fact that it has been horizontal and vertical concentrations of ownership are still amongst the most effective risk elimination strategies (e.g., the parallel existence of costly box office flops and surprising hits with relatively limited budget schemes) (see, for example, Radošinská, J., Kytianová, Z., Věžnovský, J.: To Thrive Means to Entertain: The Nature of Today’s Media Industries. In Communication Today, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 1–8). These companies include Sony Pictures/Columbia, Universal Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, Warner Brothers, Paramount Pictures and 20th Century Studios, the latter being owned by The Walt Disney Company since 2018, which means that the expression ‘the Big Six’ is now rather questionable. Perhaps it should be replaced by ‘the Big Five’, given the outlined ownership structure.

One of the most obvious development trends the film and music industries share is their propensity for overproduction. Musical works and motion pictures are produced, distributed and promoted within oversaturated global markets which are increasingly dependent on multiplatform distribution lines and digital communication forms. There is much more music than one can possibly listen to and more films are released than anyone would be able to watch. Regarding Hollywood blockbusters, their production routines are financially demanding and time-consuming, marked by the apparent inability of movie producers to adapt to the ever-changing needs and preferences of their target audiences. As a result, we may observe the parallel existence of costly box office flops and surprising hits with relatively limited budget schemes (e.g., the biographical drama Bohemian Rhapsody released in 2018, which is discussed below).

The music and film industries extend their focus on celebrity power and talent across multiple sectors of the show business. Elberse addresses this topic in a general manner, acknowledging that neither professionally produced music nor any other media industry can exist on their own, without merging their business activities with other segments, and that all media industries are necessarily driven by star talent: ‘As it turns out, how executives can best deal with risk is cross-related around the worlds of film, television, music, book publishing, sports, and other entertainment sectors.’ In other words, the synergistic strategies applied today have blurred the remaining boundaries separating the individual media industries. This fact necessarily complicates any academic and professional debates on film, television, music and digital games production. Biographical dramas such as Bohemian Rhapsody that present life stories of still active or late musical celebrities are a logical outcome of the given communication trend. Their purpose is not only to portray celebrity musicians in an engaging way but also to popularise film music which does not have to be created specifically in relation to the film project in question. After all, as Elavsky states, after two decades of unprecedented changes followed by a problematic transition to the digital environment, music producers are forced to look for new opportunities to generate profit that would compensate for their significant economic losses. Popular music being integrated into the audio-visual media production industry can be considered as probably the most effective means of economically strengthening professional music production. The commercial potential of film music (or, musical works created specifically for the needs of the film industry) has increased enormously. Outlining Bohemian Rhapsody’s synergistic tendency in relation to the film industry and the business of music, our ambition is to discuss how the film utilises music as a nostalgia-driven narrative tool which makes its rather spectacular portrayal of Freddie Mercury deeper, emotionally engaging and more complex in terms of storytelling.

The present discourse analysis works with the assumption that Bohemian Rhapsody’s unprecedented success is, to a large extent, based on the ways the film’s creators use Queen’s most popular songs to drive forward the main storyline and provide the narrative with a deeper emotional impact. Considering the aforementioned framework of the analysis, its main objective is to identify the ways in which Bohemian Rhapsody utilises Queen’s music in order to present Freddie Mercury’s life as a story that celebrates his showmanship and unique personality. Thus, our aim is to determine the extent to which Bohemian Rhapsody uses Queen’s songs in order to drive the main storyline or deepen Freddie Mercury’s celebratory audio-visual portrait. Given the context of the discourse analysis in the third chapter of the study, we pose one research question referring to the empirical objective as defined above:

**RQ: In what ways does the film use diegetic and extradiegetic music in order to celebrate Queen’s songs and utilise them as narrative tools?**

2 On Film Music and Its Cultural and Economic Significance

According to Burnett, music production is a key type of media product; it is an important component of the entertainment industry. According to Kuhn and Westwell consider (film) music as “a central component of a film’s soundtrack, including the score and any other musical elements”. As they explain, film music is usually discussed in relation to, but distinct from, the other audio-based structural components of film (sound, namely dialogues and sound effects). Kalyanak explains that film score revolves around an essential set of functions: music sustains the film’s complexity and meaning, since it bridges potential gaps in the narrative structure caused by editing, often emphasising narrative-based actions driven by both music and the moving image. Music also outlines connotations by setting a particular mood and atmosphere, letting us know more about the time and environment in which the story takes place. Moreover, music is used to underline the characters’ natures and goals, accompanying dialogues and connecting the audience to the narrative by appealing to their emotions.

According to Greinär, film music may fulfil the following functions: 1) informational (related to time and space) – music functions in historical, geographical
and social frameworks, often outlining various life situations; 2) psychological – music influences mentality of
the individual recipient; 3) technical – music often smoothens the cuts between scenes caused by editing
and visual and narrative transitions between different scenes. It may establish connections between otherwise
contrasting movie scenes or start prior to a following scene in order to outline its presumed expressive means
and emotional impact.10 Kuhn and Westwell underline the fact that the importance of film music increased
rapidly in the post-studio era, i.e., in the 1960s and 1970s. This shift was driven by corporate cross-
ownership between the film and music industries that heralded further transformations of both segments and
depening synergetic interconnections. In this era, conventional scoring was often combined with the
placement of contemporary rock tracks at key junctures of movie narratives. Therefore, it is no surprise that
according to film studies, music, especially in its diegetic form, is an integral element of mise-en-scène within
a number of movie genres, mostly notably musicals and biopics.11 However, diegetic music might seem to be
the key driving force of the biographical drama, but extradiegetic musical elements are immensely important
as well.

The once clear distinction between diegetic and extradiegetic sound (or music) is not as obvious as it
once used to be. According to Chandler and Munday, the term “diegesis” most often refers to a narrative
world. Considering the theoretical framework of film studies, we might claim that it is “the spatio-temporal
world depicted in the film”. In contrast, anything originating from or happening outside this narrative world
is labelled non-diegetic or extradiegetic. Understandably, this distinction especially associated with film music
and sound in general.12 Hazward states that the term “diegesis” covers all actions and events depicted on-
screen, that is, fictional reality. Diegetic sound thus “naturally occurs within the screen space (such as an actor
speaking, singing or playing an instrument on screen)”. In contrast, “non-diegetic sound” is sound which is
definitely not being produced within the on-screen space (such as voice-over or added music). It is also necessary
to understand the term “intra-diegetic sound”. It is sound “whose source we do not see but whose presence we
know to exist within the story”. The most obvious example is the voice-over of a person narrating a story, who
is also this story’s protagonist, i.e., appears on the screen, is portrayed within the narrative, although they are
not directly depicted at the moment of speaking. However, the diegetic/extradiegetic binary also applies to
audiences, i.e., spectators present on-screen and those watching a motion picture. Diegetic audiences appear
both within and outside the screen, while extradiegetic audiences are found outside the screen. Drawn into the
screen like this, the extradiegetic audiences then experience the “illusion that we too are part of the diegetic
audience”.13 Naturally, filmmakers strengthen the appeal of this principle in many different ways, most notably
by placing the camera’s “eye” amongst the crowd present on-screen or behind the performing musician’s back,
i.e., directly on the stage.

It may seem that in terms of biographical dramas depicting musicians, diegetic music is much more
important that extradiegetic musical moments. However, Winters claims that what is often considered
extradiegetic (non-diegetic) music may actually play a large role in the creation of narrative and cinematic
space.14 Mindful of the many uses of music in film tend to blur the boundaries determining the
diegetic/extradiegetic distinction, Holbrook works with the term “ambi-diegetic music”. According to the
author, it is “an important element in the product design of motion pictures”, namely a situation when a musical
performance actually appears on-screen (diegesis), but it also helps to advance the film’s dramatic development
(non-diegesis). This strategy “plays a key role in shaping the consumption experience of a movie audience”.15
Furthermore, ambie-diegetic music in films may be perceived as a kind of product placement, since a particular
offering – a musical performance – is inserted into the work in a manner intended to structure the
movie’s meaning and shape its appreciation. Most often, such “ambi-diegetic cinemusical moments work to develop the
characterisation of a lending protagonist”.16 Holbrook further explains that these kinds of cinematic situations

Top-selling film soundtracks in the United States over the years include *The Bodyguard* (1992, directed by Mick Jackson) with 11.7 million sold copies, *Titanic* (1997, directed by James Cameron) with 10 million albums and *The Lion King* (1994, directed by Roger Allers) with 7.7 million sold units.28 These movies’ popularity was strongly driven by their title songs. *The Bodyguard* is inherently associated with the love song *I Will Always Love You*, interpreted by the movie’s female star, the late singer and actress Whitney Houston. *Titanic* applied a different strategy, as its title song, My Heart Will Go On, was not interpreted by one of the actresses appearing on-screen, but rather by the Canadian popstar Celine Dion. Being an animated movie, *The Lion King* presents a collection of extraordinary songs, most notably the Oscar-worthy piece *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*, composed and performed by Elton John. Quite understandably, this kind of economic performance is nowadays practically unreachable due to wide availability of multimedia distribution platforms and subscription-based digital services. However, *Bohemian Rhapsody*’s soundtrack was still able to hold a top 10 position in 25 different album charts during 2018 and 2019, becoming one of Queen’s top selling albums.29 It initially debuted at No. 22 on the U.S. Billboard 200 with 24,000 album-equivalent units, which included 12,000 pure album sales.30

One would presume that most people interested in purchasing a movie soundtrack album do so after seeing the movie and hearing the music included in it. However, Keown’s research suggests that there is no significant difference between whether soundtrack albums are purchased before or after viewing the film of the soundtrack. On the contrary, these purchase decisions depend on a number of different factors. The obtained research data outlines that some of the most frequent circumstances leading to purchasing soundtrack albums amongst film music enthusiasts are related to the composer, watching the film, desire of owning the newly expanded (or extended/remastered/reissued) edition, and limited pressings/low quantities available for purchase.31 In other words, some buyers may purchase a soundtrack album (or a part of it via digital distribution) just because the music was composed by Hans Zimmer.

### 3 Music as a Part of Storytelling in Bohemian Rhapsody

The first important musical aspect included in *Bohemian Rhapsody* is driven by Queen’s song *Somebody to Love*. The introductory part of the movie consists of a sequence that shows Freddie Mercury (Rami Malek) while he is preparing for Queen’s Live Aid performance. The sequence also includes images of excited audiences entering Wembley stadium and technicians getting ready for the show. This is an extra-diegetic move, fulfilling its ambi-diegetique purpose. Isolated from his true family (parents, sister, Mary Austin) and ‘brothers’ (Queen members Brian May, Roger Taylor and John Deacon), Freddie Mercury sees the event as an opportunity to find ‘somebody to love’. The song thus outlines the movie’s general atmosphere, pivotal idea and message: “Somebody to love” also applies to the people present at Wembley who impatiently wait to see and celebrate Queen and the band’s lead singer, i.e. the diegetic audience.

This opening sequence is followed by showing young Freddie Bulsara in his rather miserable day job at the Heathrow airport in 1970. While waiting for the bus, Freddie tries to create a new song. This moment is accompanied by Smile’s well-known song *Doin’ All Right*. Initially, the music appears to be meta-diegetic, since it is presumably ‘playing’ inside Freddie’s head (the context of the following scenes suggests that he has


been attending Smile’s concerts repeatedly and that he is familiar with the band’s work). This song encourages optimism, ‘telling’ the characters that everything is going to be all right, even towards the men’s restroom. This scene is a clear reminder that Freddie Mercury starts to explore his homosexuality in the United States, specifically during this tour. The song’s lyrics (‘Oh, won’t you take me home tonight, oh, don’t hesitate your red-fire light, oh, and you give it all you give...’) are checky and even though they originally refer to admiration and desire related to curvy women, a specific moment occurring during one of the concerts (Freddie playfully slapping Brian’s bottom, exclaiming that he has a big backside, too) metaphorically expresses Mercury’s sexual awakening, clearly indicated by the truck driver scene, but with less explicit exposure.36 The daring and challenging lyrics of the song complement the outlined scenes, but also establish the atmosphere of the environment (‘I’ve been singing with my hand, across the water, across the land...’).37

Bohemian Rhapsody, the song the analysed movie is named after, plays a crucial role within the film’s narrative. Its opening part is briefly used early in the movie, during a rather quiet scene when Freddie and Mary spend some time together. Freddie uses his piano to play a small part of a song he has been carrying inside his head (diedgesis). Not aware that Bohemian Rhapsody is to become one of the band’s most successful songs, Mercury remarks that this melody has potential. However, the indicated potential is clear when Mercury and his bandmates start to record a new album at the Rockfield studio. Freddie remembers the initial melody after he leaves the other Queen members, uninterested in hearing them argue about Roger’s ‘not strong enough’ song I’m in Love with My Car and an excerpt from Brian’s new text. He lights a cigarette and thinks about the song he has written, trying to combine the lyrics with the right melody. When it does happen, Bohemian Rhapsody first represents meta-diedgesis as it only resonates inside the singer’s head, turning into diegetic expression the moment Mercury starts to play the piano and sing it. The band members then record the song in the studio, trying to comply with Freddie’s ongoing critical notes and demands. The film uses diedgesis to point the viewer’s attention towards specific parts of the song. Such light-hearted, playful moments allow us to pay attention to Bohemian Rhapsody’s uniqueness in detail. These dynamic shots thus depict the artists as

34 SMILE, Don’t All Right (L. Revisited). Track No. 3 on the Original Soundtrack Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen (CD). USA: Universal International Music, 2018.


37 REMARK BY THE AUTHORS: The truck driver is played by Adam Lambert, the young American singer cooperating with Queen, i.e., with the band’s founding members that are still alive—Brian May and Roger Taylor. Lambert is known to be a gay man.

autonomous creative personalities able to shine even in Mercury's presence (most attention is focused on May's guitar solo and Taylor's exceptionally high 'Galileo' vocals, not on Mercury's lead vocals that were presented quite spectacularely in the previous scene). The individual segments are repeated until Freddie is satisfied, which underlines his creative dominance at this stage of the group's career. The way the band members work together is simple, yet impressive; it is a bit reckless, full of joy and free of any personal conflicts or frustrations expressed before (Figure 1). This allows the song to function as an amb-diegetic narrative item, as it brings the band back together.

Figure 1: Freddie, Brian, Roger and John having fun while recording Bohemian Rhapsody

Queen's song "Now I'm Here" represents the development of Freddie's personal conflicts and troubled private life ("I'm just a, just a new man, yes, you made me live again..."). Oscillating between diegetic and extradiegetic use of the song, the film's creators initially use this piece of music to spectacularly depict Queen's popularity booming across the world. The sequence shows down in Rio de Janeiro where this song is performed by Queen during a concert. The sequence's amb-diegetic qualities are clear when Freddie decides to call Mary, making excuses why he has so little time to talk to her. The music non-diegetically outlines the following course of events – Mercury openly acknowledges homosexuality (expressed by men around him as well as his own) when he watches the manager Paul Prenter (Allen Leech) and his young lover entering their apartment and later orders Prenter to throw the young man out, because he is interested in Prenter and thus jealous.

This motive is further explored when Mercury returns to his fiancée and together, they start to watch a recording of Queen's performance in Rio de Janeiro, especially the moments when the audience starts to spontaneously sing along during "Love of My Life", the song Freddie composed for Mary. The extradiegetic audience (the film's viewers) were able to hear this melody earlier, during Queen's stay at the Rockfield farm. Back then, Prenter watched Mercury singing this song and attempted to establish physical contact between them, but his advances remained unanswered. Insisting that his love for Mary is stronger than his physical needs, Freddie reacted in an indiffierent manner. Now, while talking to Mary, Mercury admits to her that he "might be beardy" while Love of My Life still resonates in the background, on TV. The couple's emotional break-up is thus accompanied by the ballad's lyrics ("Love of my life, don't leave me, you've taken my love, and now desert me, love of my life, can you see? Bring it back, bring it back, don't take it away from me, because you don't know what it means to me...". Once again, Queen's music completes the narrative and deepens its emotional framework.

The next two songs, both used diegetically and each of them taken from the portrayed Live Aid performance in which they are not included, at least not in the cinematic version of the film, help the narrative to confront Mercury's personal struggles with the conflicts escalating within Queen. Crazy Little Thing Called Love accompanies Freddie's arrival to a lavish party taking place at his mansion. The song is used to present the main character in this crucial phase of his life. Dressed in an extravagant outfit resembling royalty and trying to suppress his sadness and loneliness that result from Mary's absence, Mercury embraces his true nature, but does not consider any possible consequences ("This thing called love, I just can't handle it, this thing called love, I must get round to it, I ain't ready..."). It is obvious that other members of the band feel neither comfortable nor welcome, showing their disapproval and leaving early. The same conflict develops during a following recording session. While waiting for Freddie to show up, the band temporarily tames the previous disagreements by creating one of its rock 'anthems' – We Will Rock You. The song serves as a driving force of closer interaction between the band and its fans, but also between the individual band members. The concept of amb-diegesis allows the film to show Freddie, Brian, Roger and John having fun together once again, first in the studio and then on the stage. While performing live, the band members experience the song's true energy – at Madison Square Garden in New York, thousands of hands are clapping and feet are beating against the wooden floor in perfect unison, as the band intended.

The very same idea is explored when the band meets at the recording studio once again, this time arguing in relation to Freddie's impulsive decision to fire the band's manager, John Reid. The conflict is further fuelled by Prenter who articulates his unsolicited opinions on the latest musical trends (especially disco music) and tries to influence Queen's creative decisions. However, music is what calms everybody down. John's new song Another One Bites the Dust also captures the group's lawyer Jim 'Miami' Beach (Tom Hollander) who eventually agrees to become their manager as well. The song's suggestive interpretation merges diegetic and extradiegetic moments. Deacon first uses the initial bass riff to interrupt the quartet. Mercury then decides to interpret the song's intro while facing the still upset Taylor. The following montage partly takes place in the studio, but also includes non-diegetic footage of Mercury and Prenter entering a gay club. The song is thus used to show the band's passionate, ecstatic recording session visually intertwined with Mercury's risky personal venture. This is an amb-diegetic interpretation of the moment when Freddie contracts HIV/AIDS that does not require any direct depiction of a homosexual intercourse or other explicit details. The viewer is able to understand this concept very well, watching a tasteful and rather symbolic portrayal of the reason why ("another one bites the dust"). Quite paradoxically, while making music with Queen, Mercury seems to be more excited than during his wander across the club. The song's lyrics refer to his endless search of passion, contentment and physical satisfaction; however, even though Freddie seems to be happiest when making music, this does not mean he does not keep searching elsewhere, which foreshadows his personal tragedy.

However, another song in Queen's extensive repertoire, I Want To Break Free, is met with public approval and moral panic. What should have been a parodic portrayal of four female characters (reflecting one of the world's longest-running television soaps, Coronation Street) is misinterpreted as Freddie's moment of coming out ("This life still goes on, I can't get used to, living without, living without, living without you by my side").

41 Remark to the authors: The complete Live Aid performance (including Crazy Little Thing Called Love and We Will Rock You) is available on DVDs and Blu Rays carrying the film – as a bonus material. See: MINGE, B. (director): Bohemian Rhapsody. [Blu Ray]. Bontonfilm: Bonn, 2019.
Mercury's interaction with the television screen then moves from Prenter's pathetic 'confession' to a series of concerned TV reports regarding the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst gay communities, especially in the United States. The musical framework of this turning point is provided by Queen and David Bowie's Under Pressure, quite literally leaves his temporary home and decides to leave Prenter for good. Disgusted by Prenter's callousness and indifference, Freddie, accompanied by extradiegetic use of Queen and David Bowie's Under Pressure, quite literally leaves his temporary home and walks away in heavy rain, which corresponds with the song's lyrics: 'Pressure, pushing down on me, pressing down on you, no man asks for, under pressure that burns a building down, splits a family in two, puts people on streets... These are the days it never rains, but it pours...'. Under Pressure continues to play during Prenter's 'exclusive' television interview which Mercury watches stoically on TV. However, Freddie does not seem to be concerned about his secrets becoming publicly known; the only thing he cares about is getting rid of Prenter, that is, relieving the pressure he has been feeling since he left Queen.

The viewer sees him talking to his cats, seeking Jim Hutton (Aaron McCusker), his future lover, at his home and visiting the Bulsaras after many months (or presumably years) of ignoring their absence. Mercury's family calmly accepts the tentative announcement that Hutton is now Freddie's boyfriend. Freddie thus makes sure that everyone he cares about will watch Live Aid, either up close or on TV. This list includes the Bulsaras, Jim, Mary and her new partner, as well as the band's manager Beach and Mercury's cats back at his house. This connection established between different parts of Freddie's life thus solves the ongoing conflicts; now he truly has 'something to lose'.

The long-expectated Live Aid performance practically turns the movie into an autonomous musical experience. All included music is, of course, diegetic, interpreted by Mercury, May, Taylor and Deacon and their diegetic and extradiegetic audiences singing along. At certain moments, the viewer sees Brian, Roger and John, even Beach, Hutton and Austin being as fascinated as average spectators are, so they are well aware how much power Mercury holds over the audience (especially during his trademark interactive segment 'Ay-Oh'). This hyperreal portrayal of Live Aid points out the event's cultural significance and remarkable atmosphere, Queen's live session is able to overwhelm not only the audiences at the stadium, but also all the public watching their performance on TV and the extradiegetic audiences (the film's viewers) as well.

Thus, the viewer experiences a parasocial transfer of emotions; the pure joy of seeing Queen back together is intertwined with sentiment and a sense of nostalgia. The scene completes the celebratory nature of the film story that presents Mercury as a person who is complicated and eager to live on his own terms, but who is also inimitable and charismatic.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to identify and interpret the ways in which the biographical drama Bohemian Rhapsody uses Queen's music in order to dramatize Freddie Mercury's life story. This discussion necessarily leads to the conclusion that biopics portraying musicians are amongst the most important media products which represent the cinema/music synergy. Regardless of the (often negative or mixed) critical reception of the biographical drama genre, biopics about musicians still portray real people and/or events. We have to keep in mind that the used degree of dramatization differs based on the course of the actual events and producers' decisions as to what kind of a portrayal they aim to create. While evaluating these movies' quality and significance, both critics and viewers form their specific opinions on the depicted personalities or events. But the viewer's subjective opinion, i.e., the image of the protagonist, is an important factor that should be minimized when assessing the quality of such a movie, but it is highly questionable if the involved parties are either capable or willing to do so. Loyal fans of musicians or bands tend to interpret such biopics from a purely emotional point of view, showing dissatisfaction when their perception of a star is different from how the movie portrays them. The mentioned tendency to harassly evaluate most biopics is thus understandable, which makes the synergy of two large media industries work at a financial level, but less so at an ideological one.

Nevertheless, in the case of biopics depicting musicians, their music obviously helps to tell whether the portrayed personalities were and how the values they represented. This allows movie producers to present famous musicians as opinion leaders or advocates of important social affairs often concerning human or civil rights. Thus, biopics about musicians not only emphasise the power of an individual, and also 'revive' significant public figures who shaped the social and cultural framework of the relevant era – even though some parts of these films are necessarily hyperbolised and different from the actual events, which is also the case of Bohemian Rhapsody.

This repeatedly used strategy allows Queen's music to function as a key element of the film's narrative which ensures the continuity and logical as well as emotional connections between different moments and environments. The ways in which diegesis and non-diegesis are combined (and ambidiegetic and meta-diegetic aspects are used) are usually subject to music itself. The film carefully works with music to establish a close connection between the story and its recipient, driven by Queen's most popular songs. As expected, diegetic music is dominant and plays the key role, but extradiegetic, ambidiegetic and meta-diegetic moments allow the narrative to better (that is, more vividly) communicate what the protagonists think and why they act the way they do. We may also note that it is not clear whether the particular pieces of music used in the movie were arranged to emotionally deepen its narrative or, vice versa, whether the narrative was arranged to provide the used music with a new set of meanings.

45 Remark by the authors: This scene also indirectly confronted Freddie with an ordinary young man obviously dying of AIDS he briefly talked to or reconnect with prior to Live Aid. The viewer see him talking to his cats, seeking Jim Hutton (Aaron McCusker), his future lover, at his home and visiting the Bulsaras after many months (or presumably years) of ignoring his absence. Mercury's family calmly accepts the tentative announcement that Hutton is now Freddie's boyfriend. Freddie thus makes sure that everyone he cares about will watch Live Aid, either up close or on TV. This list includes the Bulsaras, Jim, Mary and her new partner, as well as the band's manager Beach and Mercury's cats back at his house. This connection established between different parts of Freddie's life thus solves the ongoing conflicts; now he truly has 'something to lose'.
46 The movie's spectacular ending is driven by Somebody to Love, the song used at the beginning to set the atmosphere and determine the story's main idea and purpose. However, this song's extradiegetically accompanies the movie's plot... (and other living beings) who live Mercury and those he wants to talk to or reconnect with prior to Live Aid. The viewer see him talking to his cats, seeking Jim Hutton (Aaron McCusker), his future lover, at his home and visiting the Bulsaras after many months (or presumably years) of ignoring his absence. Mercury's family calmly accepts the tentative announcement that Hutton is now Freddie's boyfriend. Freddie thus makes sure that everyone he cares about will watch Live Aid, either up close or on TV. This list includes the Bulsaras, Jim, Mary and her new partner, as well as the band's manager Beach and Mercury's cats back at his house. This connection established between different parts of Freddie's life thus solves the ongoing conflicts; now he truly has 'something to lose'.
One way or another, Queen’s music is used efficiently to deepen the emotional engagement of the viewer. For example, Love of My Life associates Mercury’s old and new love lives, first accompanying the scene in which Paul Prenter kisses Freddie (who will later become his lover) and then the scene focused on Freddie’s coming out and break-up with Mary Austin. The latter situation literally associates the song’s lyrics with what is happening on the screen – Freddie is losing Mary’s affection, but he is not ready to let go and therefore asks her to keep wearing the engagement ring he gave her. The song Bohemian Rhapsody is mentioned multiple times throughout the movie; various sources of its inspiration are present in key sequences, establishing subtle contexts and associations. Thus, the film’s title not only outlines Freddie Mercury’s uniqueness and conveys a convincing and appealing portrayal of a true bohemian; it also explains that Bohemian Rhapsody results from a diverse spectrum of inspirations and determines the band’s musical style, often referred to as ‘rock opera’. The film repeatedly uses structural analogies related to both temporal and spatial levels; the cutting sequences are carefully adapted to correspond with the musical tempo and the used songs’ lyrics.

Bohemian Rhapsody is an extraordinary display of the cinema/music’s creative and economic synergy, an exceptional case of truly understanding where these media industries meet and merge, but maybe even a convincing model of the biographical drama of the 21st century. Even though the movie, like all biopics about musicians, tends to involve easily identifiable connotations and spectacular visuals related to stage performances, there is much more to observe. In this case the value of the narrative lies in its ability to include music as a complex semantic system, i.e., as a driving force that motivates the extrageneric audience to experience Freddie Mercury’s dramatized story while singing along to Queen’s carefully picked songs whose lyrics often ‘comment’ on what is happening in the movie. Therefore, the principles of social semiotics (as defined by Chandler) are used in a manner that allows us to gain wider awareness of why and under what conditions the recipients of the movie might interpret it (and the music included in it) in different ways. These interpretations are, according to Danesi, necessarily conditioned by our social conventions, education, upbringing, individual cultural experience and many other factors related to the film’s sociocultural context. In other words, we may presume that people who do not favour Queen’s music and do not speak English (i.e., like all biopics about musicians, tends to involve easily identifiable connotations and spectacular visuals related to stage performances, there is much more to observe. In this case the value of the narrative lies in its ability to include music as a complex semantic system, i.e., as a driving force that motivates the extrageneric audience to experience Freddie Mercury’s dramatized story while singing along to Queen’s carefully picked songs whose lyrics often ‘comment’ on what is happening in the movie. Therefore, the principles of social semiotics (as defined by Chandler) are used in a manner that allows us to gain wider awareness of why and under what conditions the recipients of the movie might interpret it (and the music included in it) in different ways. These interpretations are, according to Danesi, necessarily conditioned by our social conventions, education, upbringing, individual cultural experience and many other factors related to the film’s sociocultural context. In other words, we may presume that people who do not favour Queen’s music and do not speak English (i.e., do not fully understand the individual songs’ lyrics) may overlook many of the music/narrative synergies as unimportant or they may even not identify them at all.

Acknowledgement: The study was elaborated within the research project supported by Slovak Research and Development Agency (APVV) No. APVV-21-0115, titled ‘Hypermodern Media Culture – Film and Television Production as Mirror of Sociocultural Phenomena of the 21st Century’.44

BIBLIOGRAPHY:


