BoJack Horseman Season 3

Ep. 4 – Fish out of Water

2018-19 Term 2

UGED2133 Music in Film

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(Montage Project)

About this Project

This project aims mainly at combining the music of Radiohead and the animation of BoJack Horseman while applying various film music techniques learned in the course. On top of that, I also created quite a few sound effects using foley techniques which I researched online. This particular episode was chosen due to its special "zero-dialog" and "minimal sound effects" style. I started this project with absolutely no sound, that is, I only captured the plain video of this film without audio, and arranged all the sound effects and music using iMovie. The music of Radiohead was chosen because I always find that alt rock music is a perfect match for adult animation series. It turns out to be quite true after completing this project. I will describe the choice of my music and the film music techniques I applied in details after the Montage Slide.

Plot Introduction

The plot and characters related to the montage will be briefly introduced so that the clip is understandable.

BoJack Horman, a famous actor in the 90s had been working with Kelsey on a film called Secretariat. However, Kelsey was sacked from the film crew due to certain events done by BoJack. The montage starts here, when BoJack was visiting a foreign country (the underwater world) to attend the Premier of Secretariat. It happened that Kelsey was also there, promoting another movie she worked on. BoJack wanted to apologize to Kelsey, but he was nervous and they couldn't talk due to the oxygen tank they were in. Later on, BoJack tried to write Kelsey an apology letter, but failed to deliver it. He was unfortunately pushed into a bus by sardines while he confronted Kelsey, and a mysterious seahorse appeared on the bus...

Main Characters

BoJack Horseman

Kelsey

Montage

Leitmotif of Kelsey

I designed a four-note leitmotif for Kelsey: Do-Si-Fa-Mi. Whenever BoJack notices Kelsey or is thinking of her, this rhythm starts.

1. At 0:01, 0:13, 0:21, this leitmotif is played three times whenever the camera switches to Kelsey.

2. At 0:43, even though Kelsey doesn't show up, the leitmotif is played. This means that BoJack thinks of Kelsey attentively when writing her the apology letters.

3. At 1:03, the first three notes followed the leitmotif while the last one is misplayed. This represents BoJack's shock when Kelsey is gone.

4. At 1:36, between the busy traffic, the leitmotif is played along with the zooming of the camera when BoJack finally locates Kelsey.

5. Note that after 1:45, when BoJack finally confronts Kelsey, the leitmotif is absent. It is because that BoJack is nervous and awkward, messing up his chance to apologize to Kelsey. That is, the absence of Kelsey's leitmotif represents the lost hope of BoJack to make it up with Kelsey.

Timbre of Kelsey's Leitmotif

1. At 0:01, 0:13, 0:21, the leitmotif is played by the marimba, guitar, and bass guitar. The marimba gives the feeling of surprise and shock, since it is the first time BoJack notices the presence of Kelsey. Guitar and bass guitar plays along the background music with low pitch and blends with it, meaning that BoJack is trying to avoid the presence of Kelsey.

2. At 0:43, the leitmotif is played by the violins. This generates a more emotional atmosphere since BoJack is pondering on how he should apologize.

3. At 1:03, the leitmotif is played by the electric keyboard. The high pitched (and misplayed) leitmotif alerts the audience, emphasizing the truth that Kelsey is gone.

4. At 1:36, the leitmotif is played by the bass guitar so that it fits in the low pitched traffic noise. This implies that Kelsey is hidden in the busy traffic and is hard to locate and reach.

Music of the Hotel Lobby

Starting from 0:04 to 0:33, the background music is captured from A Punch Up at a Wedding, a Radiohead song from the album Hail to the Thief (2003). It is a non-diegetic music since it begins no where and stops when BoJack starts concentrating on writing the letter. I find this song best to represent the relaxing yet energetic atmosphere of a hotel lobby. The moderate but clear-cut tempo matches well with the footsteps and talking of people (fishes). BoJack pretends to be careless about the presence of Kelsey just like the easy music. However, he finally makes up his mind to stop at a desk and write Kelsey an apology letter. The music thus stops there.
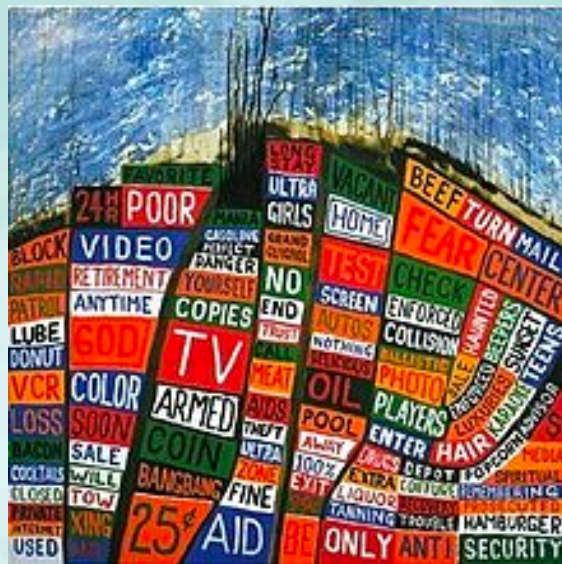
Music of the City

Starting from 1:18 to 1:46, the background music was captured from The National Anthem, a Radiohead song from the album Kid A (2000). It is a fast-tempo non-diegetic music, representing the chaos of the city's traffic and BoJack's panic of not finding Kelsey. This song also serves well as a progressive music to stitch the montage scene of BoJack running around the city because the beats are clear and energetic, just like the city crowd. On top of that, there are tons of weird electrical sounds filled in the background of this song. I find it suitable to symbolize the exotic and bizarre feeling of the city (since this "underwater world" serves as a "foreign country" in BoJack Horseman series). The music stops abruptly after BoJack meets Kelsey, this not only marks the end of the "searching for Kelsey" scene but also magnifies the awkwardness of BoJack confronting Kelsey.

Music in the Bus

From 2:06 to 2:41, the music was captured from Stop Whispering, a Radiohead song from the album Pablo Honey (1993). The song is diegetic, being played in the bus. Whenever the camera switches out of the bus, the song is dimmed. This generates a strong contrast between the atmosphere inside and outside the bus. On top of that, the dimmed song makes the pounding of BoJack on the window seems more pointless. Lastly, the song title and lyrics somehow relates to the plot, it goes "stop whispering, start shouting" as BoJack is annoyed by the babbling of sardines. The music and all other sound effects gradually disappears as BoJack falls asleep. This is a frequently used technique in films.
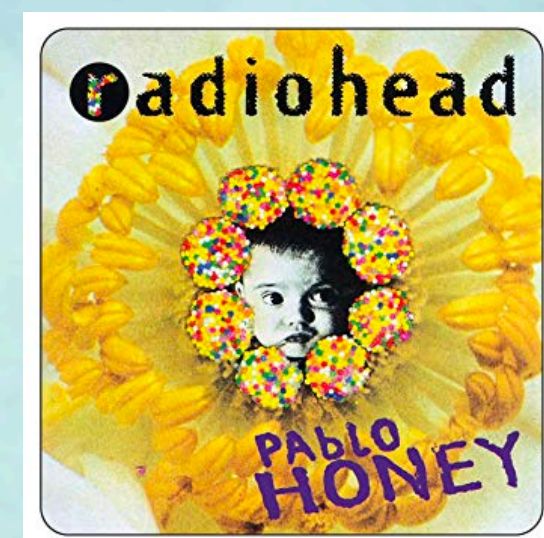
Music Before Seahorse Delivery

The music from 3:01 to 3:29 is Morning Mr. Magpie, a Radiohead song from the album The King of Limbs (2011). This song is played non-dietetically when BoJack finally understands the urgent situation of the seahorse. The fast beats and repeating rhythm enhances the nervous atmosphere of the seahorse delivering babies. It stops out of the blue just before the babies are born. This serves two purposes. First of all, it marks an important emotional change in the plot. Secondly, it represents the end of the nervous moments.
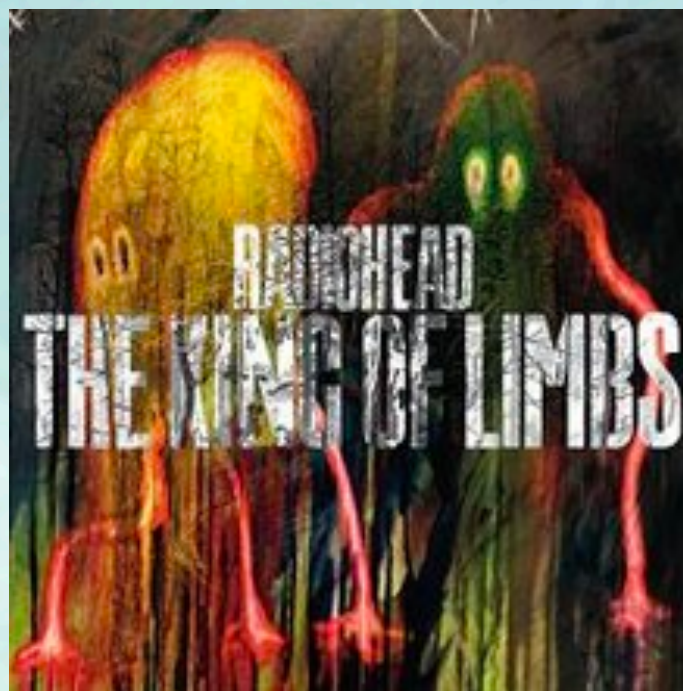
Baby Seahorse Music

The song from 3:37 to 4:00 is Radiohead's Weird Fishes/Arpeggi, from the album In Rainbows (2007). The drums start while the seahorse daddy is arranging his clothings. The beats are strong and rhythmic, meaning the condition of the seahorse daddy is good again. Then the guitar kicks in, synchronizing with the switching of the camera to the seahorse babies. The music stops when BoJack is thrown out of the bus. Looking from the stopping time, it seems that the music is diegetic, however, I regard the guitars as a reflection of the calm mood of BoJack. After the fast pacing and tense moments of the seahorse's delivery, BoJack finally completes the task and gains a moment of relaxation. However, just as he starts to enjoy the peaceful time, he is thrown out of the bus, and becomes annoyed again. Thus the stop of the music. Also, the title of the song "Weird Fishes" is related to the weird looking seahorses.

Sound Effects

There are also some notable sound effect designs:

The dialogs: All the dialog/speaking sounds are made by reversing random clips of existing dialogs in the BoJack Horseman series. Since the underwater world is a "foreign country" to BoJack, I consider it the best way to make the dialogs sound exotic and nonsensical. After some experiments, it turned out quite well.

Theremin usage at 2:45: Theremin is used here to build up suspense. When BoJack wakes up, he first notices that the bus is empty, then a mysterious seahorse crawls out. With the Theremin sound, the audience will grow more worried about BoJack, and anticipate more from the scene. The suspense continues until the song Morning Mr. Magpie starts, which turns the atmosphere into anxiety.
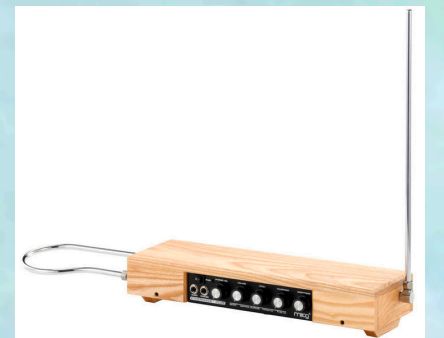
Credits - The Montage

The montage was captured on Netflix with QuickTime Player from the show BoJack Horseman (Season 3, episode 4 - Fish out of Water), starting at approximately 6:35 to 10:45.
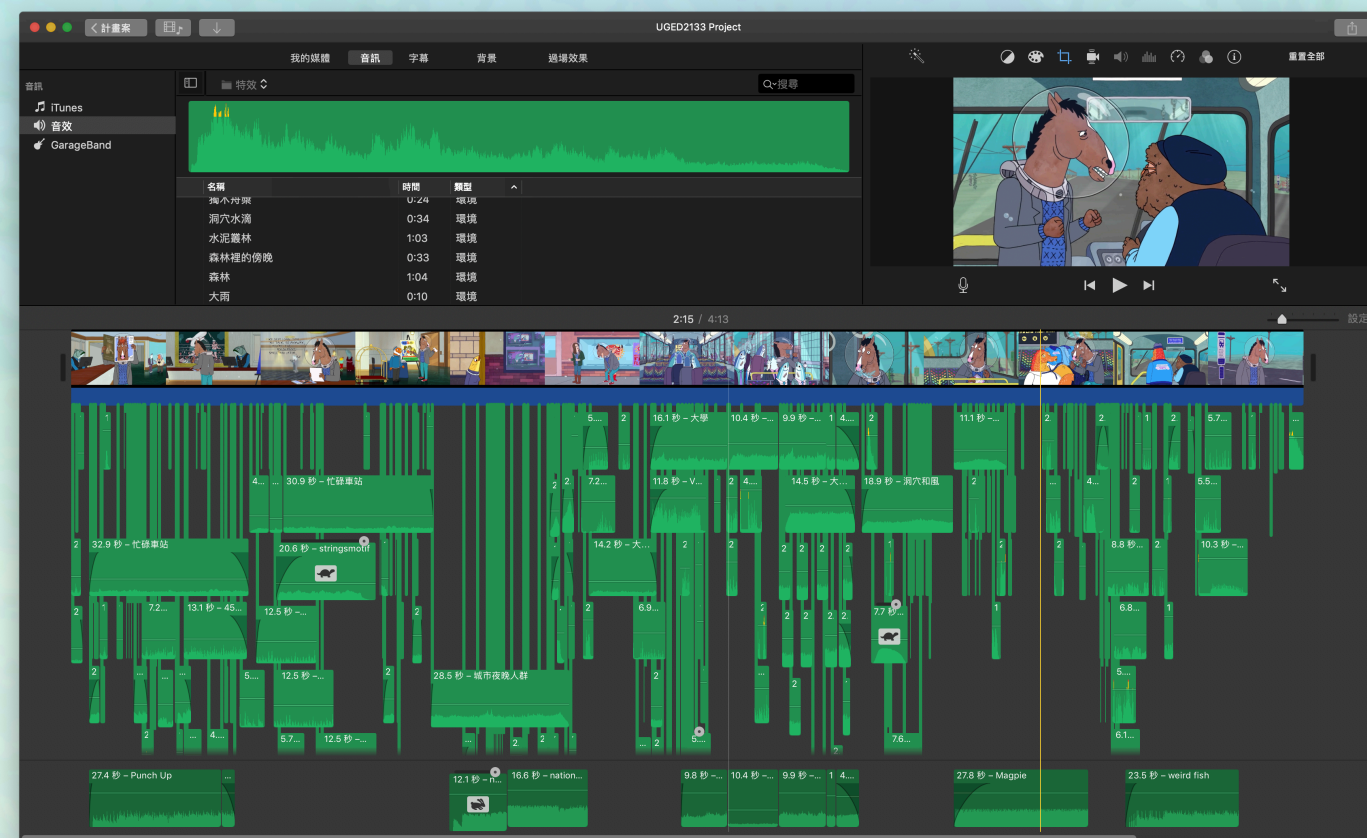
Credits - Softwares

QuickTime Player: Film capturing.

GarageBand: Audio editting.

iMovie: Video editting, audio recording.

Credits - Music

All music was captured from Spotify using QuickTimer Player.

Song 1: A Punch Up at a Wedding – Hail to the Thief. Radiohead, 2003.

Song 2: The National Anthem – Kid A. Radiohead, 2000.

Song 3: Stop Whispering – Pablo Honey. Radiohead, 1993.

Song 4: Morning Mr. Magpie – The King of Limbs. Radiohead, 2011.

Song 5: Weird Fishes/Arpeggi – In Rainbows. Radiohead, 2007.

Credits - Sound Effects

Most sound effects were created by myself using foley techniques (that is, knocking and scratching on random objects). However, the following sound effects were taken from other sources:

Bicycle Bell: https://freesound.org/people/lechufly/sounds/405572/
Typing and Mouse Clicks: https://freesound.org/people/imagery2/sounds/456906/
Luggage Cart: https://freesound.org/people/yottasounds/sounds/232136/
Whistling: https://freesound.org/people/InspectorJ/sounds/423285/
Theremin: https://freesound.org/people/realtheremin/sounds/119009/
Baby Noise: https://freesound.org/people/skyangel38/sounds/133742/
Baby Giggle: https://freesound.org/people/jamesmbock/sounds/458645/
Baby Laugh: https://freesound.org/people/gumballworld/sounds/398550/

The following sound effects were taken from iMovie Audio Assets:

City Ambient Sounds, Crowd Ambient Sounds, Bus Driving Ambient Sounds, Car & Bike Sounds, Bus Destination Indicator Spinning Sound, (some of the) Footsteps.

The voices of Fish and Dolphin was captured randomly from dialogs in other episodes of BoJack Horseman and reversed (to sound nonsensical).

Thank You