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Music 004

Professor Costa

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End of Term Written Assignment: The Dark Knight

Upon my viewing of the 2008 film, *The Dark Knight*, it was abundantly clear that director, Christopher Nolan, executed a plan that made Batman more realistic than ever before. Nolan would not have been able to convincingly pull off this portrayal of the caped crusader without the composition from Hans Zimmer and John Newton Howard, who give the hero a memorable theme akin to the character's early appearances. With my selected clip from the film being 35:12 – 37:34, we are a decent way through the first act of the film. In the background of this clip, we know that Batman has been tasked with bringing the enemy, Mr. Lau, back from Hong Kong to Gotham City in order to try him in court against the mob. Before the selected scene starts, we see Batman scoping out Mr. Lau's place of work and planting sticky bombs on the window of Lau's skyscraper.

As the selected scene begins, we view Batman using his cape to glide above Hong Kong toward Mr. Lau's office. Batman then bursts through a window, into Lau's office to take out one of many henchmen Lau has protecting him from the dark knight. As the fight between Batman and the henchman ensues, gunshots and breaking glass are heard over a nondiegetic track full of low pitched, fast paced drums and higher pitched horns. The dichotomy between these two instruments gives the audience a sense of urgency which will further be expanded as the scene progresses. Along with the sounds, the selected clip evokes a sense of confusion and suspense as the office is dark, only being lit by emergency lights. The low-key light gives the scene an edginess which adds to the overall impact the scene has on the audience. As we move through each room, the camera follows Batman through multiple rooms as he fights off henchmen with martial arts. The camera angles throughout the scene flow as they match on action, creating a better temporal continuity for the audience to understand where Batman and Lau are in relation to each other.

After Batman is outnumbered by the amount of gunfire coming his way, he disappears from the sight of Lau and the camera. At this point the cut occurs to the ground level of the office building, which is queued by the music volume fading. This fade allows the audience to key in that the setting has changed, adding to the spatial continuity of the scene. The cut shows SWAT teams arriving to respond to Batman, and heading up the elevators to engage the dark knight. A cut back to Lau and his henchman occurs, and the music slowly begins to pick up pace, including sounds reminiscent of Batman's cape when he was flying, and a stopwatch, which conveys the emotion of time sensitivity/stress, as Batman is running out of time before SWAT arrives. A big swell then interrupts the slow-paced tune as Batman emerges from the darkness and takes on the rest of the henchmen. Quickly, a cut to Batman dragging Lau to the corner of the building occurs, along with the Swat team surrounding the hero. The sharp horns and loud drums make the music intense and the tempo is the fastest of the entire scene. Batman's sticky bombs explode to expose the corner of the office he is surrounded in. The music is, again, quickly turned down to allow for the sound effect of an approaching military-grade aircraft

which picks up Batman and Lau. As Batman and Lau are ripped from the building, the music crosscuts into the main theme of the film, allowing the audience to know Batman's plan was successful. The scene then culminates to a wide shot of the escape plane flying towards the ocean, with the main theme engulfing the senses of the audience.

Overall, the scene is directed in a way that allows the audience to understand where the key characters are at any given time. This task is no light one, as there are thirty-nine cuts within the two-minute span. Understanding the importance of spatial continuity and how it can allow the audience to feel as if they are in the movie as well. Paired with the soundtrack, I personally feel as it is one of the best examples of Nolan and Hans Zimmer allowing the audience to have this feeling of immense emotional draw towards action. As these Batman films were made to be a more modernized version of the character, everything from the set design, to the lighting, has a desire for realism. Overall, Nolan extends mise-en-scene to be as interactive for the audience as possible, while still having a narrative and underlying score.