

Alexis Pavone - 1913815 - Creation Assignment - Element 1 - Written Proposal

Title

Producing a film and TV music portfolio in a post-COVID industry.

Introduction

In this essay I will explore the theory and practice of music production for film, with the aim of producing a musical portfolio and formulating a delivery strategy to relevant outlets factoring the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The desired outcome is to produce a portfolio of original music, of up to 30 minutes or 10 tracks, that demonstrate my music production abilities. The portfolio will demonstrate various themes and motifs typical of film music, enabling a wider scope of creation to filmmakers and writers. Drawing inspiration from Slash's 2010 self-titled album, the portfolio may include collaborations and featured musicians, allowing the option to combine stylistic elements of guest musicians. The theme will remain cinematic in order to appeal to the film industry's musical requirements, but I plan to explore and experiment with composition and production techniques, and develop my current skills through collaboration and direction. I plan to incorporate supportive visual content in the delivery of the musical material; that may include swatches and mood boards, reference tracks and videos, conceptual art, audio samples and written text. To measure the success of the final outcome I will use market research strategies to obtain feedback to support or refute the suggestions, and ultimately identify the weaknesses and means of improvement. Review methods can include statistical and theoretical analysis, personal reflection, peer feedback, performance reviews, client feedback and playback sessions. The sum of this data can offer insight to producing improved results for industry-standard content.

Theory and practices

Composing for film is a complicated matter that requires confidence in your hardware, interpretation skills and music theory knowledge. Three points can affect the outcome of a project; finding your voice, responding to directional feedback, and utilising technology.

Film music typically falls into the diegetic or underscoring category wherein lie Leitmotif, Atonal, Ostinato and Mickey Mousing, the nature of which depends on the use of film in its conception. The arrangements in this project will merge my expertise in sound design and composition to blend soundtrack music and film score; it will also reflect the contrast of album and original music typical of *The Matrix: Music from the Motion Picture* (1999) and *The Matrix; Original Motion Picture Score* (1999).

Two extraordinary contributors of album music sync are Nine Inch Nails (*The Fragile*) boasting over 150 musical contributions since 1988 (Nine Inch Nails: Soundtrack, Composer, Music Department, 2020), and Moby, whose album *Play* is 'the first album ever to have all of its songs synced in film, television and commercials' (Behind Moby's *Play* – one of music's most unlikely success stories, 2020). The diverse production values of these albums will offer insight and support my production process. I will study their uses of structure, instrumentation and arrangement to direct and construct my compositions. The video-centric approach was inspired by Hannah Lewis (2015) who states 'Both the pop soundtrack model and the director-composer collaboration model allow for music to shape the meaning in a film substantially, but they do so in different ways' (p599). This led me to study the albums *Play* and *The Fragile* as musical works unconnected to their respective music videos or films. The data from this technical and artistic analysis revealed the

numerous potential uses and expressions for those tracks, and the conclusion that film and soundtrack music can lend themselves to many genres and imagery.

Film soundtrack and TV music are typically connected by theme or arrangement, combining pop music conventions with certain genres to produce remixes can bridge the gap between unusable and safe for broadcast, and the success of that music-film combination indicates current or cultural trends. However, in instances such as the 'Open Your Eyes' Fiat Grand Punto advert (Fiat, 2006) Marilyn Manson's cover of *Sweet Dreams* is used to demonstrate contrast and create conflict with the imagery, yet it is culturally accepted, artistically innovative and an avenue I will explore.

To achieve the ideal song list, I will match the genres and arrangements according to popular music conventions. Research into film music preferences (Davis, 2008) concludes that audiences generally recognise and prefer traditional musical arrangements, while a minority believed an alternate, more electronic instrumentation offered an 'artistic or avant-garde' voice to classic films (p87). This justifies my freedom to experiment with technology and theory, and explore conveying emotion through the concept album model. During composition and production, I plan to refer to *Film music and film genre*. In this doctoral thesis Mark Brownrigg (2003) states 'Hollywood movies are inherently hybrid in nature' (p1) and explores film music form, function and ideology. He goes on to examine their methodology, application and meaning. This work is essential when considering how to adopt the appropriate devices and maintain the correct tonality when composing. During times of uncertainty and tension the need for and value of escapism increases immeasurably, so my production practices and standards must remain high.

The sound and image form the USP with which art is delivered, so the task of finding your voice is an artistic and commercial necessity. UK-based *Erase The Rat* drummer John Derry describes his recording and touring experiences as 'challenging but obvious' (Derry, 2020), he recalls 'we could do a "clean" version of the album so we could send the edits to radios etc...when Chris completely wrecked his voice we had to pull out of the shows, we weren't going to fill his place'. As an ensemble they prioritised editing to release their album, but made no exceptions on live performances or public image. This sentiment is supported by Botzenhardt (2020) who states 'Be yourself and do what you do best. Play to your strengths, whatever you do make sure people are blown away by it...Don't try to do what you aren't good at...Don't be shy, it's not going to get you anywhere in this industry'. Adversely, Searls (2020) recommends 'Pick up all the briefs you can. Even if it's not your film music, do it and improve your production skills...Get your name out there'. These arguments are both valid and can be adopted in parallel, in the same way that a musician can work in multiple bands on multiple projects, I too can manage different working styles. Laskow (2016) instead argues the importance of being artistically flexible stating 'What makes one piece of music more usable than another? For film, TV, and commercial synchs, it's all about how well it works with the video...Music is hardly ever the "star" of the scene. It's there to play a supporting role'. In essence my music must reflect the tone, ambience and pace of the imagery in a supporting capacity. Berman (2019) suggests taking an innovative approach to production and writing 'Find your style and develop it so that you can present it as something fresh and original to producers'. These professional opinions point to finding a commercial-artistic balance in each project; my creative requirements now extend to being recognisable, relevant and commercial but also original, unique and memorable.

Themes and motifs

Taking inspiration from composers John Williams, Hans Zimmer, Angelo Badalamenti, and Trent Reznor, I expect to adopt various elements of their production devices and techniques when composing. However, using Audionetwork's 50 categories of musical moods I

compiled a list of the 10 most popular genres based on the top 40 most downloaded tracks dated 01/11/2020. A cross-examination (Appendix A) and peer discussion concluded that the best moods in which to write are hypnotic, driving, magical, dreamy, ambient, emotional, uplifting, vibrant, dramatic and ethereal. These moods are found in both film and game music, so the commercial application becomes broader.

Ambient / Textural Feels	Anger / Aggression	Anthemic
Background / Wallpaper / Lift Music	Beautiful	Beds / Underscore
Bright / Optimistic	Celebration	Cheese / Kitsch
Cold / Barren	Cumbersome / Plodding	Dark
Dawn	Drama (General)	Dramatic
Dream / Heavenly / Flight	Driving / Exciting / Exhilarating	Drone
Frantic / Busy	Funny / Comedy	Ghostly / Eerie / Spooky
Happy / Sprightly / Jolly	Heroic / Courageous	Horror
Hypnotic	Inspiring / Stirring	Jaunty / Whimsical
Laid Back	Light Tension	Luxury / Glamour
Magic / Mystical	Neutral	Nostalgic
Panoramic	Peaceful / Pastoral	Power / Energy
Quirky / Strange	Regal / Formal / Majestic	Romantic
Sad	Sci-Fi / Space	Sea / Water
Sexy / Erotic / Sleaze	Simple / Sparse / Minimal	Slow Motion
Stealth	Tension	Thoughtful / Reflective
Violence	Warm / Uplifting	

Fig. 1 Audionetwork.com Mood/Emotion page.

Visual content

Studies by Murphy (2019) and Aguiar and Martens (2016) report that since 2000 music consumption has almost entirely changed from physical sales to paid streaming. Furthermore the 2018 Music Consumer Insight Report counted 1 billion+ monthly YouTube users, a rise in viewers aged 36-67, and 52% of music streams have video (Moore, 2020). In addition, Zepeda (2018) discusses how MTV's focus on reality TV in the 2000s and the evolution of technology allowed the internet to become the primary source of music; she suggests consumer demand was for music video and was 'crucial to the development of an artist's success' (p14). However, Tessarolo (2001) studies the relationship between music and its video clip, describing the purpose of music videos 'not to tell a story, but rather to affect and excite the audience' (p3). This suggests that video is necessary in the delivery of music but its content need not be relevant as music is the main attraction, and that music videos are in high demand.

Utilising technology can enable me to purchase or licence videos or access them free via social media. Producer Rich Buck states 'by offering an exchange for free music I expanded my network and increased my followers, I then got commissioned for an additional 20 tracks, paid this time...It's better than buying from Shutterstock or Videoelephant' (Buck, 2020). I will utilise the internet similarly, in keeping with film industry trends I plan to obtain live briefs and original material or reach out to filmmakers for videos that match my chosen moods. Upon completion, carefully selected online platforms will host my portfolio and facilitate sourcing feedback.

Commercially speaking, optimum results are obtained through observing trends when writing to brief, yet this can result in suppressed creative freedom even when scoring film. Alternatively, composer Mattias Holmgren supports the director-composer collaboration which involves responding to directional feedback when Spotting and advocates scrutinising choice and placement. His philosophy of ‘Less is more’ (Holmgren, 2019) is vital in constructing intricate layers of texture. Massey (2000) counter argues this with ‘Paul McCartney has said there’s something to be said about the immediacy of making a record—how it can be productive to not have too long to think about what you’re doing’ (p20). McCartney’s approach endorses instinctive creativity and responding to feedback efficiently planned between writing and recording, and post-mixing. I personally favour Hans Zimmer’s 3 scoring tips; ‘Start simple, and serve the film’, ‘Let the film’s characters inspire your musical themes’, and ‘Remember it is ultimately the director’s film’ (MasterClass, 2020). Zimmer’s techniques also echo Ben Winters’ ideology that background music ‘plays a constitutive role in shaping our construction of the diegesis’ (Winters, 2020, p243), one that I intend to follow.

The Scope - Culture, Education and Industry Responses

2020 is linked to radical cultural, legislative and financial changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as of June 2020 the UK has suffered a rise in unemployment and a 78% drop in shopper footfall (Jones, Palumbo and Brown, 2020). The impact on hospitality, education and the arts mean film releases have been postponed, events have been halted and projects have been cancelled, affecting everyone from investors and producers to vendors and customers. Prior to New National Restrictions on 5th November Government safety measures meant imposing closures and restrictions, and later providing economic support for the national infrastructure. Subsequent funding was pledged to support venue-based live arts programmes and film industry insurance for COVID-related losses, and later ‘musicians could apply for the Coronavirus Self-Employment Income Support Scheme...producers and composers are all now working from home’ (Botzenhardt, 2020).

The education sector has experienced similar repercussions, yet online learning has grown exponentially via video-conference technologies. New opportunities between partner organisations have aided growth (Robinson, 2020) and enabled writing camps and tutor/mentor sessions to continue via internet. Technology has also facilitated entertainment channels. Notable responses have been social media-based live premieres and album releases, numerous closed-door and socially-distanced livestreams and virtual concerts for entertainment and charity support, and innovations such as Ellie Goulding’s music videos for *Brightest Blue* and *New Heights* that utilise XR-Technology. All activity indicates that the music industry is unrelenting and adapting, and in some areas thriving with new or alternate opportunities of audience engagement. For myself, this translates to opportunities that can be unlocked by networking and establishing new connections in the media industries to help strengthen the impact of my music with video.

SWOT and Strategy

Talking with freelance Assistant Director Alyn Luker I learned that the film industry is suffering, its associated services are highly discerning and many people have ‘had to take a downgraded job’ (Luker, 2020), he suggests ‘Get in touch with sound department and speak to music supervisors...They decide what music is synced and what gets cut...Make a good impression because word travels fast in this industry, good or bad’. This can also be an opportunity to prepare or strengthen a portfolio of work to industry standards based on a personalised SWOT analysis (Appendix B). Examples of my professional competition include Geoff Lawson, David John Bartlett and Laura Rossi. Their online presence is strong,

instead of an EPK they each have an industry standard website, and collectively they are connected to all the major social networks and streaming platforms.

Producer Amit Dhiman (2020) supports this strategy and emphasises the importance of operating multiple platforms, he states ‘Pick a suitable long-form and short-form platform depending on your goal and where your audience lives, then use a platform like Linktr.ee.com to drive them to wherever your content lives. You could put a long form on YouTube and snippets on Instagram for instance’.

By comparison my weaknesses are lack of industry experience, a website to promote my work, network and portfolio size, studio quality, and client list, all of which can be resolved sequentially. Networking and employment opportunities can develop into portfolio and income growth, which can enable investment in production assets, branding and marketing, and then expand my outreach of the digital content to a wider audience and further grow my network. The advantages of collaborations, such as featuring artists or scoring sourced film, can increase my understanding and knowledge of industry behaviour, enhancing the quality and value of my work and capitalise on network and audience engagement. This process can increase the effect of online marketing and promotion strategies; when factoring in the uncertainty of the foreseeable future, engaging regularly and meaningfully with my audience can ensure I remain active, current and relevant. Based on tutor/mentor feedback stating that my mixing and mastering skills can be improved, I will continue to study and explore production techniques and technology and request appraisals and extrapolate data from my audience responses.

Conclusion

Having explored film music theories and modern uses of digital media, I feel more prepared to launch this project and begin creating and engaging with my audience.

I have identified a valid pathway which with ongoing reflection and support from my peers and mentor, I believe I can learn to adapt to the uncertainty that lies ahead. When taking the creative path, it is essential to be capable of making fast-paced decisions and staying on-brief. It is therefore my objective to incorporate frequent self-reflection to ensure I keep a healthy and active mindset and build working relationships with like-minded individuals. Through discussions with industry professionals I have discovered relevant methods of networking and resourcing, I have chosen a strategy for song writing and release, and I am planning for my professional future as a business as well as a creator.

Studying advanced-level film music theory has helped me begin to understand the philosophy behind certain musical devices and tools, and in the same way, interviewing industry professionals has demonstrated to me the level at which I am expected to perform to be considered their equal. I will reflect on this prior to starting every project to guide my vision and drive my progress. My future success relies on how I select the nature of my work, both the concept album and commercial album model require as much deliberation as writing for film or radio, however all industry feedback advises taking on all possible contracts for self-development, exposure and recognition. It is apparent that with experience, musicians lean toward stylistic freedom as their success, stability and network increase. It is my conclusion that going forward I will simultaneously produce work in 2 parallel avenues to cover all bases, commercial and artistic.

Finally, I believe that once complete this should provide a demonstration of my skill in working collaboratively, and this portfolio will make a strong impact on prospective employers.

Word count: 2718

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Fig. 1 Audionetwork.com Mood/Emotion page.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Audionetwork cross comparison

Track title: Going For It

Artist: Tristan Ivey

Qualities: Driving, pop/indie rock, upbeat and positive energy.

Uses: Advert, trailer, film. high energy scene/sequence, racing game.

Similar tracks: Just a day - Feeder, Jesus of Suburbia - Green Day.

Track title: Found

Artist: Alex Arcoleo

Qualities: Emotional, atmospheric, melodic, warmth, ambient.

Uses: Advert, trailer, film, montage, story progression or love scene.

Similar tracks: I Giorni - Ludovico Einaudi.

Track title: Wake The Stars

Artist: Philip Guyler

Qualities: Uplifting, inspiring, strong.

Uses: Advert, trailer, film, montage, love, growth, struggle, reveal.

Similar tracks: Samsung Knox - The Next Enterprise Evolution Beyond Mobile (Advert).

Track title: Rivers

Artist: Alex Arcoleo

Qualities: Dreamy, fuzzy atmosphere, warm spacy textures, uplifting ambience.

Uses: Advert, trailer, film, love/tranquillity scene, montage of passing everyday life.

Track title: My Kingdom

Artist: Philip Guyler

Qualities: Vibrant, driving, climactic, uplifting and orchestral elements.

Uses: Advert, trailer, film, perfume, elegance, chocolate, classic, strong.

Similar tracks: Samsung Knox - The Next Enterprise Evolution Beyond Mobile (Advert).

Track title: Moving Images

Artist: Philip Guyler and Paul Clarvis

Qualities: Hypnotic, percussive, driving, ambient tones.

Uses: Advert, trailer, film, jungle, journey, discovery, pensive, adventure, learning, mystery, puzzle.

Track title: Building Tension

Artist: Philip Guyler and Paul Clarvis

Qualities: Mystery, atmosphere, tension.

Uses: Trailer, film. Storytelling.

Track title: Interoperability

Artist: Joe Henson and Alexis Smith

Qualities: Pulsations, synths and pads, layered textures, building tension and echos.

Uses: TV, film, advert, cinema, digital mystery, inner city struggles.

Track title: Icon

Artist: Philip Guyler

Serious, drama, energy, inspirational and uplifting.

Uses: Music video, film, advert, big show, powerful message, intro music.

Similar tracks: Scottish Widows 'Looking good for your investment' Advert

Track title: Tundra

Artist: Alex Arcoleo

Qualities: Ethereal feel, minimalist instrumentation, earthy and natural.

Uses: Advert, music video, film, TV, remix concept, pop song reference.

Strength

The skills I have that set me apart from other individuals are categorised into various areas and levels. My inventory contains the following gear:

an assortment of microphones and stands, mixing desk, iMac, MacBook Pro, Focusrite 2i2, KKR Rokit 5, Mackay CR5, BlackWeb 3, NI A61, M-Audio Oxygen 61, Stands, Epiphone G300, 'Fender' Telecaster, Thunderbird, Fender Starcaster, Yamaha Acoustic, Beyerdynamic DT770 Pro 80 Ohm, Sennheiser HD 595, Native Instruments 12 UCE, Spitfire Audio Labs and Spitfire BBC Orchestra. My current portfolio contains works dated from the early 2000s and includes examples of music, film score, audio for short film, crowd funder, Idents, product release, trailers and show reel. My film industry c.v. is also extensive, I have worked as an actor in formats such as film, TV, music video, crowd funder, short film, trailer and voice acting. My skills expand to knowledge of film score, music theory, sound design, mixing and mastering, film production, learning and adaptation, teaching and communication, technical problem solving and lateral logic, alternate thinking, responsive foresight, action planning and mind mapping, driving and spatial awareness, physical and mental agility and resilience, aural skills with attention to focus and detail, teamwork and delegation abilities, ability to plan in accordance to strengths. These skills are valuable to discerning musicians and creatives because they offer confidence in the high-paced environment that is the creative industries. The skills that I am most proud of are alternate thinking, problem solving, and lateral perspective. These skills are less to do with learning and more about a lifelong personal development and individual growth. Throughout my life I have learned and understood things via differentiated methods like alternative perspective and practical visualisation. These are also the methods I adopt when teaching and supporting the learning of others.

My inspirations of film and tv music are famous and historic composers including:

Ennio Morricone (1928-2020)

James Horner (1953-2015)

John Barry (1933-2011)

John Williams

Hans Zimmer

Howard Shore

Danny Elfman

Alan Silvestri

Angelo Badalamenti

Trent Reznor

Richard Melville Hall

I believe my strengths include the knowledge of and the passion for the works of all these tremendously talented composers and artists, this is a skill that I believe gives me a commercial value that many other pop industry creators and artists do not have.

My most valuable asset and strength is my network, this refers to my close network consisting of music-based specialists and knowledgeable industry professionals:

Goetz Botzenhardt

Ciaran Robinson

Themis Toumpoulidis

Stuart Rowe

William Brown

Cesc Moyaserra

Marek Zelinger
Michael A Di Ricci
Alyn Luker
John Derry

These are the people with which I discuss the most important musical matters, I believe that with their support I can get almost any information on matters linked to learning, performance, commercial strategies and audience behaviour.

Weakness

My weaknesses are the cause of struggles and the reasons I occasionally avoid particular issues and activities; the list is short but poignant. My equipment and production assets are of an acceptable quality for a home setup and I have achieved many successes and accomplishments to a very high standard. In the long term this is not an ideal industry quality/specification if I am to measure myself to my industry competition.

My industry competitors and threats include:

Sheridan Tongue (DCI Banks, Sea of Souls, Silent Witness)
Joe Donohoe (The Missing, Baptiste, Great Asian Railway Journeys)
Martin Gratton (The Apprentice, Samsung Lights On, Eyes Wide Open)
Bobby Tahouri (Rise of the Tomb Raider)
Toumas Kantelinen (Purge)
Shigeru Umebayashi (House of Flying Daggers)
Geoff Lawson
David John Bartlett
Laura Rossi

This small list of professionals is not only my competition but also forms part of my personal and professional threats. They are directly endangering my career and increasing the difficulty of operating within the music and film industries.

The quality and variety of my portfolio content is not to industry standard yet, I believe it can be presented in a more strategic way to address the requirements and appeal of prospective employers and recruiters. In addition, I lack a website, which is a problem for someone who needs to display their portfolio in order to present their skills and abilities in the search for briefs and contracts. The solution for this is to use a free version of a website until the time when it can be upgraded to the full-paid version, this requires start-up money and high-quality content to display.

My production skills are strong but more practice is needed with industry standard plugins and production tools to make a strong impact. The film score I produce can be more expansive and encapsulate more variety and technicality, this again is a matter of personal development and growth as a musician. My music theory knowledge doesn't translate to physical performance as I do not sight play, there are methods of adaptation and differentiation to accommodate this handicap and I intend to explore all techniques that can help me compete in the work market. I am relatively inexperienced as a teacher. I am passionate and enthusiastic about teaching and supporting learning in myself and others, but the area of study I specialise in is not one for which teachers are sought after. It is therefore challenging to gain experience in teaching those subjects. An alternative to this would be starting up a YouTube channel that delivers all the subject matter and share the content in an online tutorial package.

I am a slow reader and I require a kinaesthetic and visual approaches to learning. This means that I learn more effectively through a practical, more time-consuming way. My communication skills and technical vocabulary can be improved with practice and working

experience, being bilingual has benefits but I find I am frequently discovering new and previously unknown terms and expressions. I am technically minded but lack industry experience, I have mechanical and engineering skills but little industry experience. I experience difficulties when singing due to voice box damage, but I can communicate theory and techniques to coach individuals with vocal exercises.

My contacts and industry connections are limited, the work I have done to date has produced some lasting relationships but I plan to increase that in the future.

Opportunity

The opportunities that can aid me the most are technology-based; I must exploit digital platforms to create a dynamic online presence. My portfolio would benefit from a professional layout on a website to make it more presentable. The nature of YouTube is to facilitate sharing and offer the opportunity of ad-based monetisation, I believe that with the creation of Premium services and the saturation brought on by ads, it is more important now than ever to have a website that doesn't distract the viewer from the product or service. Following this I would benefit from a selection of social media accounts to capture all other viewers and users. I am currently running a small social media presence consisting of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, each effective in different ways. With strong content and an effective strategy, I could put out material and reach the right users to support my online growth. The second stage of this is to facilitate and support my network and deliver my content through secondary avenues. The digital platform may even be of use to me with game and film music, once the original content has generated interest, followers and money, it may be wise to invest in distributing the music via Spotify, Amazon and Apple etc. Further valuable opportunities lie in the composer agencies/networks that employ such creatives, this offers an effective start point and can be the right conduit for the right individual. Additional information can be obtained from the following companies:

SMATALENT

THE COMPOSERWORKS

MCASSO

MANDY

StarNow

Shooting People

Tileyard

Restless Creatives

Blue Top Music

Oticons

Another important area is distribution and self-publication, with online music distribution now available for all genres there is a growing number of service providers offering competitive products and rates. Many services can be tailored however many companies offer package deals and levers of service, while delivering your content over a wide choice of platforms. These licensing companies include:

Music Vine

Artlist

Musicbed

Marmoset

Soundstripe

Epidemic Sound

Ascaph

BMI

TAXI
SESAC
Musicgateway
Jingle Punks
Broadjam
Music Xray
Audio Network
Notable Mentions
Tunepocket
Commamusic
Premium Beat
Triple Scoop Music
Songfreedom
Pond5

Threats

The threats to me as a business are many and various. Millions of people are making music, game and film music may be high in demand but the effect of library music and royalty free music is causing a negative impact. This applies to employers and clients, previous and present. The uncertainty of the times means there is a low sense of security and no employment is safe. Current problems include the threat of insecurity that is pushing people into working commitment-free, new employments are seizing and redundancies are rising. This results in high competition for fewer jobs and contracts.

Another major threat to making music is the distribution system, services like Spotify are offering proportionally lower rates to musicians compared to the revenue they are generating from subscriptions. The rates of pay for artists are low in proportion to the host's take. Subsequently, another major threat is the current global climate.

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