

# No Time to Die

- Billie Eilish's James Bond theme song from a feminist perspective

Master Thesis

by

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## Introduction

“You’re really the only guy for the job. You’re the guy.”

- Logan Ash to James Bond in *No Time to Die* (2021, 00:35:00).

The film character James Bond has become one of the most iconic male figures on screen, and ever since the soundtrack to the first Bond-film *Dr No* (Terrence Young, 1962) was released, the characteristic chromatic bassline (B – C – C# – C) hook, and the rhythmic guitar-riff has become the musical signature for this epic spy-film genre. When Adele Jenkins and Paul Epworth wrote the theme song ‘Skyfall’ (Sam Mendes, 2012), celebrating 50 years of James Bond films, musical inspiration is clearly derived from the *Dr No* soundtrack, orchestrated by John Barry. I find the piano chords for ‘Skyfall’ particularly interesting as they are based directly on the ‘Dr No’ bassline, both in verse and chorus. By moving the chord progression freely between the subdominant minor and major in the chorus the same way that the ‘Dr No’ bassline moves from C to C# to C again, Jenkins/Epworth created the impression of a Bond theme song coming full circle after fifty years, still musically relevant today.

In this master thesis, I intend to analyse the theme song for *Skyfall* linking it to the theme song for *Diamonds are Forever* (Guy Hamilton, 1971) written by John Barry & Don Black and performed by Shirley Bassey. However, my aim will be to analyse if Billie Eilish’s Bond song ‘No Time to Die’ (2021) is a musical continuation of an admiration for a misogynist-type Bond, or if she is indeed moving Bond forward into a different direction for a new generation. Likely selected partly because of her strong appeal to a young generation, I find it relevant to analyse to which extent she seems to relate to Bond from a young female perspective, and also how her music challenges or re-establishes traditional perceptions of Bond. One might argue, that unless the misogynistic Bond character and the submissiveness of the women associated with him is transformed for a modern audience, then perhaps 007 in the shape of James Bond as we know him, really is better off finally laid to rest.

The research questions for this dissertation are:

How to undertake a feminist analysis of the performer Billie Eilish, through her music, lyrics, vocal performance and visuals in ‘No Time to Die’? In what way does the artist challenge or confirm stereotypical views of the female associated with James Bond in terms of the fictional film character and the film franchise?

To this end, my prime objective is to study the selected Bond music, from a cultural point of view grounded in gender and feminist literature. Susan McClary's work in her book *Feminine Endings: In Retrospect* (2002) has been essential for this analysis. Significantly, she points out that "with the rise of opera in the seventeenth century, composers worked painstakingly to develop a musical semiotics of gender: a set of conventions for constructing 'masculinity' or 'femininity' in music (p. 7)". Even though genres have developed and changed over time, many of these conventions are still very much present, perhaps especially in film music, which like opera music, has been created in order to follow a certain narrative. McClary points out that perceptions change over time, and so does the perception of gender in musical narratives. However, many perceptions on certain musically gendered codes still remain.

She has observed that music of a given time period tends to reflect the gender organization of that particular society and that the idea of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' change over time with these societies (...) However, some gendered codes within music have remained the same over centuries. Examples of this are found in the similarities between the musical representations of masculine bravura or feminine seductiveness in Indiana Jones movies (in Reitsma, 2014, p 43).

Indeed, the same musical reference to both 'masculine bravura' and 'feminine seductiveness' can be found in the James Bond soundtracks. Based on conventions on the musical narrative, as Stan Hawkins argues, "musical structures and forms are never gender-free. Rather they are heavily coded narratives. (Hawkins, 2012, p. 7)." Along these same lines, Kramer and McClary both argue that the patriarchal system *embedded within the music itself* is "used to reinforce the autonomous subject while excluding the Other; the masculine subject, for example, becomes empowered musically by the formal (but precarious) subordination of the sensuality associated with the feminine (See Hawkins 2012, p. 8)." The point I find particularly interesting, is that if music itself can maintain or challenge perceptions in society of men being empowered and holding on to privileges and entitlements that women are excluded from, then musical references of such, if found in the Bond-music, can contribute to a broader understanding of where the Bond franchise stands today on gender equality. Would the franchise be able to replace 007 with a female actor, and still hold on to the essence of Bond? Would a female Bond be as popular and commercially valuable as the male Bond has been? As much as I do not intend to answer these questions, nor to join in on the speculations of which actor, if any, will be replacing Daniel Craig, I do wish to discuss gender issues related to Bond, mainly through what can be found within the Bond music. I will start to analyse the theme song for *Dr No*, and then continue the musical analysis by investigating its musical influence on the three selected theme songs; 'Diamonds are Forever', 'Skyfall' and

‘No Time to Die’. My aim is to analyse the selected Bond music together with its lyrics and visuals.

Focusing on the music related to the Bond character and franchise, my gender-oriented analysis is very much influenced by the philosopher Kate Manne’s work on the concept ‘misogyny’. She argues that misogyny is based on a desire to maintain patriarchal law and order, and that rather than focusing on the psychological mechanisms in the misogynistic man, the focus should be on the *reaction* that women are faced with in society, when challenging patriarchy.

In my view, misogyny need not and usually will not arise from specialized and, to my mind, fairly puzzling putative psychological attitudes, like the idea that women are seen as sexual objects, viewed as subhuman, or as having a hateful, detestable “essence”. Rather, it’s generally about the enforcement and re-establishment of patriarchal order, and the protests when it gets challenged (Manne, 2019, p 69).

I find Manne’s view on misogyny particularly relevant for a critical analysis because it focuses on actual evidence without getting too lost in the psychological process of what may or may not have been intended. “What matters is (...) the extent in which they (the misogynists) tend to police and punish women (Manne, 2019, s 62).” This is indeed relevant when we study the history of Western music. The Anglo-European musical tradition has, for centuries, and for various reasons, excluded women systematically from participating in musical performance and composing. Women has been regarded weaker than men in body and mind, or too emotional and unstable to fully concentrate on musical studies (Reitsma, 2014, p. 39). Some female composers, such as Clara Schumann and Hildegard von Bingen, did compose, but had to be rediscovered by feminist musicologists in the 1970s, as they had been “hidden from history and (were) in need of discovery” (Reitsma, 2014, p. 38). Even though the Bond franchise, has made no attempt to hide away it’s female singers, it certainly has a long tradition of linking their music to the naked female body, creating an objectification of ‘her’ that resembles the objectification of the Bond Girls. Most strikingly, this is seen in the title credits for *Diamonds are Forever*, where diamonds are used to cover naked silhouetted female bodies (Murugan, 2020, p. 278-280). John Barry undoubtedly had a great influence when it came to deciding on who would be singing the Bond-themes and how. He selected Shirley Bassey and gave her very direct instructions on how he wanted her to interpret the lyrics (Murugan, 2020, p. 280). Notably, *all* the soundtrack composers for *all* of the Bond films, consisted exclusively of men: Monty Norman, John Barry, George Martin,

Marvin Hamlisch, Bill Conti, Michael Kamen, Eric Serra, David Arnold, Thomas Newman and Hans Zimmer. From a feminist point of view, the argument is that the total absence of women composers of Bond soundtracks, will have influenced its sound. John Barry's sound is indeed very orchestral, with the use of a full orchestra and band. McClary argues, that women traditionally have been discouraged from composing orchestral music because they were "often subject to ridicule by the 'masculine' culture for either being 'feminine' (a trait from which women could not escape criticism) or pretending to be 'masculine' (a trait that was not acceptable for women to emulate)" (Reitsma, 2014, p. 48-49). I would like to investigate whether such perceptions have affected co-songwriters Adele Jenkins and Billie Eilish in their process of co-writing their Bond theme songs respectively, particularly focusing on the musical codes referencing masculine bravura. Lucy Green points out: "Musical identities are forged from a combination of musical tastes, values, skills and knowledge; and from the musical practices in which an individual or group engages (Green, 2012, p. 40)." One could argue that the Bond franchise, heavily influenced by John Barry's personal musical tastes, values, skills and knowledge, for decades has established, and maintained, the musical identity of James Bond and the spy genre through Barry's legacy. This musical tradition has created an inner consensus within the franchise of what a Bond soundtrack or theme song *should* sound like, a consensus that is now so established through male dominance, that drastically moving away from this musical style, would be unthinkable. If female composers had been involved in establishing and maintaining the musical identity of Bond over the years, then 'female' musical elements would probably have been more present within the music today. However, since not a single female composer has been involved in *any* musical soundtrack (apart from the theme songs) of any Bond film for over sixty years, it would be fair to assume, that radical musical changes from a female perspective, would be met with skepticism. Indeed, a Bond song that doesn't include the stereotypical musical Bond-elements would probably be subject to policing and punishing acts, as described by Manne to be misogyny, by having their song pulled from the film. In fact, as musical producer on 'No Time to Die' Stephen Lipson confirms, this was almost the case with Billie Eilish (in Scheps, July 2021). Given that the Bond franchise is controlled by men both musically by its male soundtrack composers and narratively by its male directors, traditional male perceptions of what sort of music that should be accompanying the Bond narrative, consequently follows. From a feminist point of view this is problematic if it thereby simultaneously excludes female intervention. As Hawkins puts it, "if Western performance and composition have marginalized the feminine, then music has been a gendered practice. (Hawkins, 2012, p. 7)."

For my analysis, I will be employing methods from ‘critical musicology’ which is a sub-discipline, as Derek Scott claims, “driven by a desire to understand the meanings embedded in musical texts (...) It is distinct from ‘popular music studies’ in that its primary concern is in criticism and analysis of the music itself although it does not ignore social and cultural contexts (Scott, 2009, s. 2)”. Its main purpose is to “uncover the meanings and myths embedded in musical texts” (Hawkins, 2002, p. 6) through investigating the “interaction between individuals and texts” (Choen, 1993, p. 132). The James Bond *Dr No* soundtrack certainly has a great amount of meaning and myth attached to it, and I will aim to discuss some of its meanings and to place them in a musical context by referring to socio-culturally established interpretations of various gendered musical signals. Music is always created in accordance with norms and beliefs within a cultural setting of a particular time in history. As such, the music, is not just music *per se*, but rather a language for expressing emotions and perceptions on gender, sexuality, class, race, diversity (or lack of it), power, politics, rank, social status, matters of life and death, misogyny and so on. This is referred to as the “social and cultural semiotics extending beyond the music itself (Hawkins 2012, p. 7).” As argued by Sara Cohen, “identity is (...) not a fixed essence to be assembled and possessed (...) Rather, identity is always in the process of being achieved, negotiated, invented, symbolised, of becoming, and is itself a source for social change” (1993, p. 132). Allan Moore explains that analysis of music in the field of musicology, was for a long time, especially in the field of classical music, focused on interpreting the intentions of the composer by analysing structures and musical elements in the score. However, as Moore points out, the *experience* of that music, is also an interesting subject for interpretation of musical meaning. In critical musicology, questions like ‘why was the experience like it was?’ and ‘why did the music sound like it did?’, ‘for whom does it sound like that?’ and ‘why does it matter?’ are just as important as understanding the “objectifiable details of musical structures” (Moore, 2003, p. 6). Nonetheless, musical structures are important elements in understanding the experience of the music and should not be ignored. The music analytic focus needs to also fall in on the effect the music has on its listeners as much as the dynamic relationship between the composer, the music, the listener and the social context(s), in which the music is both written and perceived. As pointed out by Christopher Small, the meaning of music, needs to be understood in the context of being socially constructed. “What each of us holds to be reality is not objective or absolute (...) How we acquire that sense of what is reality is a dialectical process between, on the one hand, the experience and the inborn temperament of each individual and, on the other, the perceptions of the various social groups to which he or she

belongs” (1998, p. 131). As such, musical meaning can be interpreted as a social construct created within a certain time and space by certain people. McClary emphasizes the understanding of a paradigm shift in musicology from analysing the musical text itself as an expression of the composer’s intentions, into analysing music in a socio-cultural context. She argues that the previous scholarship “has seized disciplinary control over the study of music and has prohibited the asking of even the most fundamental questions concerning meaning” (2002, p. 4). By fronting the method of critical musicology, a different type of scholarship, in which, the search for meaning lies in analysing both the music itself and its socio-cultural context, is now a fully recognised sub-discipline of musicology.

In critical musicology, understanding music, is very much related to understanding the formation of *identity* through music. Stan Hawkins argues that popular music, to a significant extent, influences and shapes the formation of identity on a social-cultural arena. In *Settling the Pop Score*, he theorizes the connection between popular music and identity politics: “In my research into identity formation in pop music, it has become more and more evident that pop culture forms a site where identity roles are constantly evolving to fit social needs (Hawkins 2002, p. 12)”. It means, that representing a young generation, Billie Eilish, through her music, lyrics and visuals, has the potential to either challenge or re-establish, traditional norms on gender and feminism. Identity formation is indeed a process. Lucy Green points out that “the concept of ‘identity’ refers to a historically and a socially specific condition which undoubtedly does not apply universally across all history and all humanity” (2012, p. 39). As such, for identity to be prompt change, new perspectives must be allowed in. If women composers are excluded, then it would follow that male gendered musical preferences are present in the music itself. Even when women composers have been included in the discipline of composing, they “still face the problem of how to participate without unwittingly reproducing the ideologies (of a male-dominated profession)” (McClary, 2002, p 19). I would like to investigate, to which extent the three selected female performers of the theme songs, Bassegy, Adele and Billie Eilish, have been given artistic freedom to contribute with their own interpretation of what Bond sounds like, within this male dominated franchise.

The James Bond character has a long history of being reinforced as the autonomous subject, whilst most of his female counterparts or ‘love-interests’, the so-called the Bond Girls, all play a seductive part in the narrative and their fate is almost always ending with rejection or death. Even though the character James Bond has been replaced by several male actors over the years, his character and essence substantially remains the same. Moya Luckett makes the



point that the Bond Girls, in comparison to Bond, are portrayed very differently to him. “As replaceable, disposable figures in a franchise that shows no sign of ending, who serve and undermine narratives of progress, Bond Girls function as serial constructs: they follow each other but do not necessarily coexist” (Luckett, 2012, p 166). An important question, then, would be whether female performers of Bond theme songs, like Shirley Bassey, Adele and Billie Eilish, take on the role of being associated with the Bond Girls, or if they are given the artistic freedom to provide an independent female voice reflecting on Bond from their own point of view, being able to fully apply their own musical taste and preferences. I intend to discuss how Billie Eilish, through her musical composition and performance of ‘No Time to Die’, musically relates to her own feminine role in the film. Do Shirley Bassey, Adele Jenkins and Billie Eilish come across as James Bond’s musical Other, thereby submitting to a Bond Girl like status, or do they liberate themselves from Bond through their own music performance? To quote McClary, in her interpretation of Madonna, do these female artists refuse to be “under masculine control” and are they refusing “to be framed by a structure that will push (them) back into submission or annihilation” (McClary 2002, p. 152)? My analysis attempts to shed some more light on this very important issue, in order to contribute to a critical feminist debate. The question I wish to raise is: To which extent are the two current globally influencing female artists Adele Jenkins and Billie Eilish continuing to move musical feminism forward on the path paved for them by other artists, and to which extent are they rather an example for the argument that the music- and film business is moving feminism backwards, re-taking the stance of pushing female artists as desirable objects for a male gaze?

## Musical analysis from a feminist perspective.

“To create music within a male-defined domain is a treacherous task.”

- Susan McClary (2002, p 154)

### Dr No and The Bond Theme Song

The 1962 *Dr No* title sequence introduces the legendary agent, James Bond in silhouette, as he turns towards the audience firing his gun followed by a full swinging brass band (Young, 1962, 00:00-00:45). The brass section ends in a staccato off beat rhythm with a low-bass note and brass sequence (00:42-00:45) before the now so well-recognized and loved bassline: B –

C – C# – C is introduced (00:45-00:48). The bassline resembles the sound of Bond’s determined footsteps chasing his enemy and adding to the tension, follows the rhythmic guitar riff of repeating the notes E – F# and E – G (00:49-01:02).



Figure 1: Bond theme guitar-riff and chromatic bassline: B – C – C# – C

Together, the bassline and guitar are creating the chromatic tension and energy of the Bond theme that has become representative of the spy-film genre. In my further analysis, I will be referring to the chromatic bassline as the Dr No-bassline, indicating that this musical motif, represents the main musical code for the male character James Bond. The repeated semi-quavers occasionally hitting accented off-beat long notes, create a musically syncopated image of an intensive chase with twists and turns, before the music is then followed by descending semitones signaling heightened tension before the guitar-riff returns (01:03-01:38) and the Bond-theme is taken over by the sound of rhythmic hand drums. The quintessential Bond-arrangement provides us with a stylish musical image of Bond that has been his trademark for six decades: a male well-tailored suit wearing hero, switching between martinis and elegant women, cars and gadgets, fist fights and explosions, yet like a cat, he always lands on his feet with a cheeky smile and a cocky line. Vic Flick, who played the guitar riff for *Dr No*, says that he specifically chose a guitar with thick strings, and by performing the notes with accentuated force, he was able to create the right “urgency” for the riff, before Barry then added “lots of reverb and echo on it.” (John Cork, 2000, 18:57-19:30). The idea of using chromatic notes and musical dissonance to express tension, is not new in film music, classical music, or in jazz. Indeed, the exact same musical motif can be heard in Artie Shaw’s 1938 recording of ‘Nightmare’. In ‘Nightmare’, the chromatic notes do not function as a bassline, but as a chord progression on a sustained A minor following the notes E – F – F# – F. Interestingly, Vic Flick also plays the bassline as part of a motif using a sustained E (see Figure 1) in his full guitar-version of the Bond theme (Cork, 2000, 21:20-21:40). As much as Monty Norman has officially been credited for writing this motif, one could argue that the *Dr No* chromatic bassline, was neither original for Bond nor written by Norman. However, over time, it has become culturally associated with Bond, to the extent that we now associate it with him and the spy-film genre. Moore explains that a musical code is “how we make sense

of a sound” (Moore, 2003, p. 8), and being such a substantial part of the Bond theme, over time, this particular musical motif combined with the reverbed guitar-riff, has become so embedded in our collective musical coding, that it has become the essence of our cultural understanding of what the musical signal of the spy-genre is. As Small explains, “it is our minds that place the sounds we hear into those, often extremely complex relationships with one another (Small, 1998, p. 112)”, and over time, the meaning and context of that sound establishes collectively within our culture, as the sound is repeated. Bond film composer David Arnold describes the significance of the Bond-theme like this: “When James Bond does something James Bond-esque, there is really only one piece of music you can play” (Cork, 2000, 17:50-17.57). He thereby confirms that the image of Bond, and the musical code associated with him; the Bond theme, has become so intertwined that they can no longer be separated. According to Arnold, “John Barry was one of the few people that created a genre of film music: He uniquely, single-handedly, created the spy genre (in Murugan, 2020. p. 277).” Arguably, the Bond theme, orchestrated by Barry, has played a significant part in constructing the image of Bond and the music associated with him has participated in shaping our cultural understanding of who he is, which also includes our understanding of his ‘masculinity’.

## Diamonds are Forever

When I heard Adele’s ‘Skyfall’ (2012) for the first time, my immediate reaction was the feeling of having heard the song before. The first line of the chorus; ‘Let the sky fall’ is melodically almost identical to Shirley Bassey’s first line; ‘Diamonds are forever.’ In both songs, the melody starts on the tonic note, repeating it rhythmically before ascending to the 5th note of the scale in an off-beat syncopated rhythm, and then held for a long note (see figure 2).



Figure 2: The two almost identical musical motifs; 'Diamonds are Forever' and 'Skyfall' both using the 5<sup>th</sup> interval from tonic to dominant, and rhythmic pattern of repeated quavers ascending to a long off-beat note.

The tonic note, being the first and last note of the scale, is often regarded as ‘home’ or ‘at rest’. The 5<sup>th</sup> degree of the scale, in comparison, is called the dominant, and in a traditional cadenza chord progression, the dominant chord leads back to the tonic. Susan McClary points out that the relationship between the tonic and the dominant key holds long historical traditions in classical music, especially opera, as representing the narrative between the main character ‘him’ and the Other, ‘her’. McClary explains that the co-existence between the keys is a way to bring out the narrative:

In sonata, the principal key/theme clearly occupies the narrative position of masculine protagonist; and while the less dynamic second key/theme is *necessary* to the sonata or tonal plot (without this foil or obstacle there is no story), it serves the narrative function of the feminine Other. (McClary 2002, s 15)

As such, the 5<sup>th</sup> interval holds a significant meaning as a musical code in our cultural perception. It certainly plays an important part of the main musical motifs in both the songs.



Figure 3: The 5<sup>th</sup> interval in ‘Diamonds are Forever on the words ‘forever’ and ‘please me’

According to McClary, there is a traditional perception attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> interval in classical music, or what she calls “the old semiotic principle that movement by fifth is strong (i.e., masculine), while movement by thirds is weak (i.e., feminine).” (2002, p. 77), and performed with Bassey’s the deep voice, it does provide the song with ‘masculine’ strength. Some may argue, that despite the historical practice of using the 5<sup>th</sup> interval as pointed out by McClary, it is possible to imagine that Barry chose the tonic-dominant interval for ‘Diamonds are Forever’ simply because it sounded good, and that there was no further meaning attached. This is indeed very possible, yet when viewed in connection to the lyrics and visuals of the song, the sexual reference attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> interval becomes evident. Murugan points out that although the song “is a lament about men and love, it has a brazen sexuality in its performance” (Murugam 2020, p. 280). She further argues that “it is easy to hear Bassey’s song as one of resistance. Yet, while the lyrics warn us of about the treachery or men, the powerful sensuality of her siren-like voice also lures us further into the narrative” (ibid. p. 278).

Where the 5<sup>th</sup> interval is repeated in the melody, the lyrics are as follows (the intervals are marked in Italics):

<b>Text:</b>	<b>Melody &amp; Harmony:</b>
<b>1st verse:</b>	
Diamonds are <i>forever</i>	(melody interval: B - F# harmonic key: B minor)
They are all I need to <i>please me</i>	(melody interval: B - F# harmonic key: B minor 7th/E minor)
They can stimulate and <i>tease me</i>	(melody interval: A - E harmonic key: A major)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> verse:</b>	
Diamonds are <i>forever</i>	
Hold one up and then <i>caress it</i>	
Touch it, stroke it and <i>undress it</i>	(same melody/harmony)
<b>3rd verse:</b>	
Diamonds are <i>forever</i>	
Sparkling 'round my little <i>finger</i>	
Unlike men, the diamonds <i>linger</i>	(same melody/harmony)

Murugan also argues that the visuals of the title credits “and sound are brought together to titillate and seduce” (ibid. p 280). Furthermore, according to Burlingame, Barry had advised Black to write the lyrics “as though she (the female singer) is thinking about a penis” and by substituting the word diamond with penis, the tune “has a very conflicted meaning about the importance of sex, love, men and jewellery (ibid.)”. When combining the lyrics with the musical relationship between the tonic and the dominant interval/chord progression, and adding the visuals of the naked female body, then the sexual connotation becomes too clear to be overlooked, and the ‘he’ and ‘she’ relationship in the song is obvious. Singing about diamonds with words like ‘please’, ‘stimulate’, ‘tease’ ‘touch it’, ‘stroke it’ ‘caress’ and ‘undress’, is a metaphor for sex. It means that ‘he’ is for ‘her’, exactly what the tonic is for the dominant; a place where she longs to go, be and rest.

Although Bassey’s performance of the song is “more slyly seductive than powerful, she still eventually crescendos to her clear and resounding vibrato” (ibid.) Combined with the highly sexual visuals of the song’s title credits, the bodily implication in the lyrics leaves no room for doubt about the phallic connection between the woman and her diamonds.



*Figure 4: Visuals from title credit for Diamonds are Forever and the 007-logo is showing the phallic connection between Bond through his gun being directed at the naked female body.*

Diamonds are placed practically hanging in the shape of a bikini from the naked woman's lower torso. The camera is then zooming in on the pendant covering the woman's crotch, so that the "elaborate diamond waist belt now looks more like a diamond necklace as the film's title appears in blue font right above the pendant (Murugan, 2020, p. 279-280)". Also, a silver gun is pointed directly towards her crotch, symbolizing her body being desired by Bond (as the gun is indeed part of the 007-logo). The woman is being completely objectified, as her face is not shown together with the naked body. If the reference between diamonds and sex wasn't clear enough, a blonde pussycat, also wearing a diamond necklace, is seen walking out from between the woman's legs being placed in a lying down position. Bassegy's live performances of the song may have been filled with humor and irony, and her "meticulously constructed diva-excessiveness has contributed to her simultaneous endurance as both a national treasure and gay camp-icon" (ibid. 281), but the song's lyrics and visuals, seen in connection with the misogynistic Bond image, still does not seem anything other than inappropriate by today's standards. Its visuals from the opening sequence, are often removed when the song is performed live. One example of this is during her performance of the song at the BAFTA 2022, when title credits were not shown, but replaced by other clips from 60 years of James Bond. The music, lyrics and visuals of 'Diamonds are Forever', clearly objectifies the woman even if Bassegy herself is perceived as powerful and a diva in control. Interestingly, in Kanye West's version of the song, 'Diamonds from Sierra Leone' (2005), he fully removes all the sexually referencing lyrics from the original song, sampling only the phrase 'Diamonds are forever' then moving straight to 'they won't leave in the night, I've no

fear that they might desert me'. By re-writing the song and re-directing the focus away from sexual glamour, Kanye is placing it within a new context, using parts of the song to raise awareness about the unfair trading of jewels from Africa. 'Kanye's song is reminding us of the blood that has been shed behind the façade, the very same façade that the Bond franchise promotes. Through Kanye's version, the 5<sup>th</sup> interval (tonic-dominant) still stands out as the musical symbol of the self-obsessed and abusing man, only that this time, the focus is on how 'he' is abusing the poor, not just women, for his own personal good and his need to show off his possessions.

From a critical musicological point of view and returning to McClaryian analysis of the chord progressions representing the narrative of the man and his other, interestingly, 'Diamonds are Forever' does contain the opera- and sonata practice of transposing the song from the tonic key into another key, traditionally often the dominant key or parallel key. Barry does this on the word 'love' when the line goes 'I don't need love' as the song moves away from B minor, the tonic, to the very uplifting G flat minor. This is the parallel key to the dominant key of B minor, G flat *major*. By transposing the song to its dominant parallel key, Barry is using the compositional technique of moving away into a non-tonic key area for the purpose of musical variation and creating a narrative. However, just like in the sonata, the transposition is only temporary, and the song goes back to its tonic key, B minor, soon after. "Satisfactory resolution - *the ending always generically guaranteed in advance* by tonality and sonata procedure – demands the containment of whatever is semiotically or structurally marked as 'feminine', whether a second theme or simply a non-tonic key area" (McClary, 2002, p. 15, my emphasis). The main point here, is not primarily to which key the song transposes, but that it is *destined to return to the tonic key by musical tradition or form*. Arguably, the musical structure of 'Diamonds are Forever' follows the pattern of what McClary points out to be re-positioning the patriarchal position through the music:

The first theme establishes the tonic key and sets the affective tone of the movement: it is in essence the protagonist of the movement (...) Its character is usually somewhat aggressive; it is frequently described as having "thrust"; and it is often concerned with closure. Midway through the exposition of the movement, it encounters another theme, the so-called feminine theme, usually a more lyrical tune that presents a new key, incompatible with the first. Given that a tonal, sonata-based movement is concerned with matters of maintaining identity, both thematic and tonal, the second area poses a threat to the opening materials. Yet this antagonism is essential to the furthering of the plot, for within this model of identity construction and preservation, the self cannot truly be a self unless it acts: it must leave the cozy nest of its tonic, risk this confrontation, and finally triumph over its Other." (McClary, 2002 p. 68-69)

McClary's description of the musical narrative here, is remarkably akin to the narrative we know from James Bond films. Bond re-establishes his identity through the plot, in which he generally confronts the enemy. In this narrative, the Bond Girls play an equally important part of representing challenges he meets (and overcomes) on his way to triumph. Arguably, the fact that Barry uses the same musical narrative as described by McClary in this song, confirms the patriarchal position of Bond and his misogynistic approach towards the Bond Girls. From a feminist point of view, this is problematic, because the musical male narrative, or what McClary calls the 'satisfactory resolution', once again gets the final say. In comparison, my previous analysis of Amy Winehouse's song 'You Know I'm No Good' (2006), shows that a feminine ending, which means to end the song in another key than the tonic key, is indeed possible, and can work really well. Winehouse also chooses to create a musical narrative between herself and her male love-interest by transposing the song back and forth between two different keys, as her lyrics change from 'him' to 'her' (and vice versa). She does, however, not end the song in 'his' tonic key D minor, but rather chooses to end the song away from the tonic key and in her own key, A minor. She establishes the feminine ending away from D minor, by the use of E major, which is the dominant key for D minor. In comparison, 'his' dominant key, A major, is used in the verse when the lyrical focus is on 'him'. In the bridge, she moves towards her own key, D minor (again through E major), and she uses the A major chord of 'hope' just as she sings 'Roger Moore'. The reference to Roger Moore here, is simultaneously a reference to James Bond, who was played by Roger Moore in seven Bond films.

<u>Dm</u>	Gm	Gm	Dm
Meet you downstairs in the bar and hurt		'Cause you're my fella, my guy	I cheated myself
A	<u>Dm</u>	E	Am E/G# Am
<u>Your</u> rolled up sleeves in your skull T-shirt	Gm	Hand me your Stella and fly	Like I knew I would
<u>Dm</u>		F	Dm Am
You say "what did you do it with him today?"		By the time I'm out the door	I told you I was trouble
A	<u>Dm</u>	E A	E/G# Am
And sniffed me out like I was Tanqueray		You tear me down like Roger Moore	You know that I'm no good

Figure 5: Musical and lyrical analysis of Amy Winehouse's *You Know I'm no Good* (2006); verse, bridge and chorus

By the use of A major on 'Roger Moore', is Winehouse making a reference to Bond on a hopeful chord in major. However, by being hopeful that in her man will accept her for who she is, she is simultaneously being led right back to D minor, but instead of being accepting of



this, she chooses to continue the move towards ‘herself’ and the parallel key to A major: A minor. As such, Winehouse opts for a feminine ending, as well as stating that even though she is ‘no good’, she accepts herself for who she is, and does not take the submissive stance of ending in ‘his’ tonic key. As such, she does not go back to him in her musical narrative, but chooses herself over him in the end. When Bassey, on the other hand, for a moment dreams of love, moving away to another key, she is soon being pulled back again, back to ‘his’ domain of B minor. Had the song continued and ended in the new key, it would have been a musical example of a ‘feminine’ ending. McClary reminds us that “the feminine never gets the last word within this context: in the world of traditional narrative, there are no feminine endings” (2002, p. 15). As such, the female singer’s dream of love, is by musical structure in this context, not a real option, and it never was. One could say that the music itself confirms the narrative fate of the Bond Girls; they too all necessarily fall into the male Bond’s net, often with a fatal outcome, because this is the shape in which the narrative of the films were all constructed from. All, but perhaps not *No Time to Die*? In *No Time to Die* the tables have turned in the sense that the Bond Girl, Madeleine, survives, when Bond apparently does not. However, the patriarchal power that Bond still conveys of being the acting and deciding male, making the crucial decisions for his family, places her in a submissive position still.

## Skyfall

As previously mentioned, ‘Skyfall’ repeats the same distinctive 5<sup>th</sup> interval and rhythmic musical motif as heard in the first line of ‘Diamonds are Forever’. The line ‘Let the sky fall’ is so similar, that one could argue, that it represents an intended musical celebration of Shirley Bassey and her Bond-sound as a vocalist. Indeed, according to Daphne Brooks, there is a link to be made between the 1960s girl group singers look, such as the Supremes and the Ronettes and “the vocal stylings of R&B and jazz greats – from Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughn to across-the-pond Afro-Welsh pop legend Dame Shirley Bassey” (in Murugan, 2020, p. 283). Murugan herself reflects the following:

*Skyfall* (...) and *Spectre* (...) “strive to keep the franchise fresh, sexy and relevant while still being faithful to its 1960s imaginary of international glamour. In particular, ‘Skyfall’ (...) is deeply indebted to Bassey’s vocal style. The way Adele elaborates and nostalgically waxes on Bassey’s vocal performance, demonstrates some of the (...) gendered tensions found in Bassey’s star text. With a detached delivery somewhere in between Shirley Bassey and Dusty Springfield, Adele’s contralto swoons. While she shows off her range, it is clear that her voice does not have the same throaty sensuality as Bassey (...) Yet, while both Adele and Bassey are

remarkably talented singers, I wonder what is lost in Adele's detached earnestness as opposed to the sexuality that is loudly displayed in Bassey's performances. (Murugan, 2020, 282)

One way of interpreting the more 'detached earnestness' of Adele in comparison to Bassey, can be found in an analysis the lyrics, as well as Adele's vocal interpretation of the lyrics. In the film, *Skyfall* is a property in the Scottish Highlands where James Bond grew up and it becomes the scene where the enemy is conquered, but at a great cost for James; his superior, and mother figure, M (played by Judi Dench) dies in his arms after being wounded in the battle. Paul Epworth explains that both he and Adele had read the film script for *Skyfall* before writing the song and were both familiar with the narrative of the film. They knew that the film- and song title was a reference to Bond's childhood and to his relationship with M, and this story can clearly be found in the lyrics, melody and musical arrangements. Epworth explains that he knew the title credit had to start in the moment when Bond hits the water and it looks as if he is about to drown. The first verse is about Bond feeling that his time has come to die, and that this is a moment he has waited for.

This is the end.

Hold your breath and count to ten.

Feel the earth move and then.

Hear my heart burst again.

For this is the end.

I've drowned and dreamt this moment.

So overdue I owe them.

Swept away I'm stolen

In the second verse of 'Skyfall', Adele clearly references the battle that goes on at Skyfall as well as the fact that Bond is going back to his origin of inheritance:

Skyfall is where we start

A thousand miles and poles apart

Where worlds collide and days are dark

You may have my number, you can take my name

But you'll never have my heart

It is as if the lyrics reference what goes on in Bond's mind in *Skyfall*, making clear that it is personal to him ('you'll never have my heart') and that he will give away his number (007) and his name (referencing the iconic phrase 'My name is Bond. James Bond') but not himself.

The chorus is grand and hopeful, almost heroic in style underlining that ‘we’ (Bond, M and the MI6) will stand tall and be victorious no matter what. Jones & Higson argue that “in the Craig Bond films, Bond remains identifiably British – and indeed English (...) At the end of the film (*Skyfall*) Bond appears on the rooftop of the MI6 building, facing the British flag, with the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben prominently positioned in the London skyline behind, visually symbolizing the British nation-state” (2020, p. 106). Seen in this context, the music and lyrics for ‘Skyfall’ emphasizes Bond’s love for, and contribution to, his country. The song is about heroism and legacy; something or someone worth dying for, and more than being a song about romantic love, it is a song about his love for M, and for his country; Great Britain.

Let the sky fall.

When it crumbles.

We will stand tall.

Face it all together.

Let the sky fall.

When it crumbles.

We will stand tall.

Face it all together.

At Skyfall.

The bridge of the song, which also signals a dynamic and orchestral peak, clearly narrates the moment when M dies in Bond’s arms. He suggests that he will never be the same without her, and that he intends to join her in death after she is gone (‘Where you go, I go’) He also insinuates her death being a great loss (‘without the security of your loving arms’), referencing her role as a mother figure to him.

Where you go, I go

What you see, I see

I know I'd never be me

Without the security

Of your loving arms

Keeping me from harm

Put your hand in my hand

And we'll stand

Moya Lockett points out, that compared to the replaceable Bond Girls, the only constant women in Bond’s life is Money Penny and M. They do, however, “bear a tenuous relationship to the Bond Girl – typically older, these long-term colleagues are not sexually involved with 007” (2020, p. 150). Adele sings about M, about their personal as well as professional relationship, and their shared love for, and duty towards, the UK and the Crown. Altogether, the song, is summing up the most significant moment in the film; the battle at Skyfall, where Adele’s lyrics, perfectly blends in together with the melody and arrangement, in telling us the main story of the film. There is no reference to any Bond Girl nor any other sexual reference in the song, and as such, for Adele to be performing it in a sensual way like Shirley Bassey, would not make sense.

Returning to the music, the song ‘Skyfall’ is an impressive musical tribute to the Bond franchise, and to John Barry in particular. Epworth tells Mix with the Masters that he had watched several Bond-films just before starting to write the song and explains that “in order to give the demo the necessary grandeur and atmosphere, we had to construct a sort of rudimentary orchestral arrangement quite early on to try and give it the atmosphere” (1:28-1:37). This confirms that already early on, the intension was to recreate music that reflected the orchestral grandeur, that John Barry is known for. According to Epworth, he was sitting by the piano and “had this weird experience of feeling how the chords just dropped into my head” (02:04-02:09). Arguably, the chords came together as a result of his extensive listening to previous Bond music, and cleverly fell into place for the purpose of the film: To create a musical tribute to 50 years of James Bond, by use of the Bond-theme and grand orchestration, in order to transform what was already there into a new dimension for another Era.

A closer look at the chords, provides an interesting analysis of how this was done. For the verse, Jenkins & Epworth have included the Dr No-bassline into the chord progression, just were Adele sings about Bond going back to his origin at Skyfall (‘Skyfall is where we start’):

The image shows a musical score for the verse of 'Skyfall'. It consists of two staves: a vocal line in the treble clef and a piano accompaniment in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked with a '7' (seventh note). The lyrics are: 'fall Sky-fall is where we start a thou-sand miles and'. The piano accompaniment features a prominent bassline with a 'Dr No' pattern, consisting of a half note in the bass and a quarter note in the treble, alternating between the two hands. The chords are primarily triads and dyads, often with a moving bass line.

Figure 6: The chords for the verse of 'Skyfall'

In the chord progression Cm – Ab – F – Fm, we find the Dr No bassline in the notes G – Ab – A – Ab of the chord progression. The chords, still including the Dr No-bassline, takes the narrative of the chords even further in the chorus: Cm – Ab – Eb – F (could also be Ab/F) – D dim – G<sup>1</sup>

Figure 7: The chord progression for the 'Skyfall' chorus.

The chords, by use of their bass notes, continue to descend before D diminished brings back the minor third of the subdominant, which then leads the chord progression back to the dominant key, G major, before ending the chorus in C minor, the tonic key. Indeed, most of ‘Skyfall’, both in verse and in chorus, moves rather freely between F major and F minor, creating an interaction between hope and despair, reflecting the lyrical theme of the song; ‘Let the sky fall, when it crumbles, we will stand tall, face it all together at Skyfall.’ This harmonic variation creates an interesting narrative and provides associations to the cat- and mouse play between Bond and his ‘Other’, hero and villain, Bond and Bond Girl, joy and sorrow, major and minor. However, in the same way that the Dr No-baseline always returns to C from C#, the unexpected F major subdominant chord in ‘Skyfall’ always returns to F minor. Just like Skyfall in the film, becomes a place of sorrow for Bond, the theme song ends in its tonic, A minor.

As I have argued above, Adele repeats the 5<sup>th</sup> interval for ‘Skyfall’ in the melody in the same way John Barry did in ‘Diamonds are Forever’. However, the rest of the phrase (‘when it crumbles’), more resembles a struggle than in ‘Diamonds are Forever’, as Adele’s melody stretches further away from the tonic note into a minor 6<sup>th</sup>. This interval contains the second chromatic note of the Dr No bassline. Adele’s melody then ascends even further away up to

<sup>1</sup> I have left out the baseline note of the chords progressions here to make the progression easier to follow.

the tonic octave ('We will stand tall. Face it all together'), which is then repeated before falling back into the tonic C ('at Skyfall').



Figure 8: The melodic phrase for 'Skyfall' is following the lyrics like a sonic graph, in which the 5<sup>th</sup> is the relationship between Bond and his mother figure M, as they stand tall against the enemy in the octave on C.

As such, the melody and chords follow the narrative of the lyrics, almost like a sonic graph: When the lyrics imply a struggle, the notes move away chromatically from the tonic, before literally 'standing tall' in the octave, before falling back down to the tonic, referencing Skyfall, or the home where James grew up as a child. What is particularly interesting here, and rather cleverly done by Adkins/Epworth, is that, when the melody moves up to the octave, C, and she sings of Skyfall, is also where the key is transposed to F major instead of the expected F minor. Together with the lyrics and melody, the uplifting chord provides the listener with a sense of hope and triumph, as the note Ab is replaced by A.



Figure 9: The chord progression for 'Skyfall' are following the Dr No-bassline, creating the hopeful effect of a subdominant in major (f major) before returning to F minor

The arrangement of the song is grandiose, almost to the point of being pompous. Epworth humorizes that it is the only song he has produced that has included a gong-instrument. The dynamic build-up from piano and vocals to full orchestra accompanied by choir and drums together with and Adele's characteristic full-bodied high-pitched ascending notes on the final 'at Skyfall' is grand and impressive. They end the song with Adele ooh-ing her way back to rest in the tonic note, C9, brass-instruments (the same brass section that started the song).

'Skyfall', although modern in sound, contains all the traditional musical effects for portraying the successful struggle of a hero, descending its inheritance all the way back to Beethoven's

3<sup>rd</sup> symphony, the Eroica, originally written in tribute to Napoleon Bonaparte. The full orchestral sound, the variation in dynamics, the build-up, the chromaticism, the brass section representing the hero and the grand finale towards the dynamic climax at the end with its struggle for release, is in its structure essentially too familiar to be ignored. As McClary reminds us, operas and symphonies where a male hero is included, such as the Eroica, often exhibit considerable anxiety with respect to feminine moments and respond to them with extraordinary violence (2002, p. 69). As much as ‘Skyfall’ does not, to my mind, exhibit the same level of masculine violence as Beethoven’s Eroica, the orchestration and reference to the Dr No-bassline within the chords and melody, as well as the musical link to ‘Diamonds are Forever’ places ‘Skyfall’ within the musical tradition of celebrating the male hero through masculine bravura, although lyrically, creating the impression of gender equality between Bond and M, the song still fits the narrative of the male hero, conquering the obstacles on his own domain, landing safely back in the tonic key with his signature (shaken but not stirred) twist of the 9<sup>th</sup> interval (Cminor 9).

## No Time to Die

Billie Eilish’s Bond song ‘No Time to Die’ bears a musical resemblance to ‘Skyfall’ as ‘Skyfall’ has to ‘Diamonds are Forever’ - however, not so much in the melody as in the chord progressions. Set in E minor, Eilish’s chord progression is almost identical to parts of the chord progression in the verse for ‘Skyfall’. The chord progression Cm – Ab – F – Fm in ‘Skyfall’ is in ‘No Time to Die’ transposed the original ‘Dr No’ key of E minor: Em – C – A – Am.

The image shows a musical score for the first four measures of the song 'No Time to Die'. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'for this is the end. I've drowned and dreamt this moment so over-due I'. The piano part starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a bassline with a 9th interval twist.



Figure 10: The chord progression are showing the similarity between the verse in 'Skyfall' and the repeated chord progression in 'No Time to Die'; Cm – Ab – A – Fm and Em – C – A – Am respectively.

Eilish creates variations on the A throughout the song, sometimes using only minor, and sometimes major to minor. In her melody, however, she stays in minor throughout the song, as seen in the first part of the verse ('I should have known' 00:29-00:33), where her vocals are singing the first five notes of a subdominant minor: E – D – C – B – A (in bar 9-10 and 13-14 in this transcript):



Figure 11: Melody showing that Eilish in her melody is staying in A minor

Although the chords move swiftly from A major to minor, the melody leaves no doubt that Eilish in her vocals remains firmly in A minor. When singing 'We were a pair' and 'Too much to bear' she repeats this melodic motif, which together with the lyrics, is creating a musical distance to Bond through her vocals. As 'he' is still represented by the subdominant major to minor change, by distancing her vocals from the chromatics of the Dr No-bassline, she comes across as less emotionally invested in him, indeed to the point of exhibiting emotional resignation.

Even in the music, such emotional distancing is found in the chords. Compared with 'Skyfall', in which this musical element of heroism and triumph of the major subdominant is on full display, Eilish remains predominantly on a subdominant minor in the piano, and when she uses the major third, it is only in a distant quiet way without the emphasised grandness that it is given in 'Skyfall'. In so doing, she comes across with less investment in the Dr No-bassline, hardly giving any attention to the 'hope' from a major subdominant, and even if the chromatic bassline is still there within the chords, she seems less emotionally invested in it. It is as if she is taking a musical step away from Bond, in the sense that his bassline seems less important to her as it is not to the same extent emphasised in her musical landscape. It seems that while less invested in the triumph of the major subdominant, there are musical elements



pointing to an interaction between musical signals representing Bond, and her own style. This musical interaction creates a dialogue-like impression in the song much like the interaction between characters that we find in other types of narrative music. In operas, characters are represented and identified through musical codes and signals, which is often the case also in film music. One could say that there is a contrast to be found in the chords that is the narrative between ‘him’ (musically referenced by the Dr No-bassline, guitar sound and musical motif, string arrangement and the final E minor #7 chord) and ‘her’ (piano, melody voice and lyrics)<sup>2</sup>. This narrative is found already at the start of the song when Eilish’s piano chords are introduced, and a slow faded guitar (00:16-00:27), referencing Bond, touches on the major third of A major, at the same time as Eilish is playing A minor. The effect is rather striking. Blending minor with major, the two parallel keys, simultaneously is highly unusual, as it would normally create a sharp dissonant sound. Since the guitar is low in the mix and is merely suggesting the major third through bending the note upwards gradually in a faded and distant sound, we do not immediately pick it up in our listening ear.

In the string section, we also find the major subdominant chord, but as with the guitar, it doesn’t affect Eilish’s own mood that much through voice and piano. The strings come across more like a distant memory of what used to be, than they are blending in with her presence. Together this creates a harmonic musical distance, which emphasises the musical narrative of ‘her’ being distinct from ‘him’. Just after Eilish has ended the chorus with the line ‘there’s just no time to die’ do the strings fully blossom (02:02-02:15), clearly adding the major chord of hope in the string section as well as continuing the musical tradition of the famous John Barry string arrangements. It is revealing how Eilish is still seemingly unaffected by the strings’ temptation to engage her into their grand orchestrated sound, and she continues to sing the second verse and chorus with hardly any involvement from the strings (02:17-03:08). The overall effect is a feeling of *emotional distance* between her and Bond, because she neither in voice nor in piano engages in the ‘hope’ of the major subdominant, or in the grandeur of the strings. Rather, her own arrangement continues with soft and minimalistic

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<sup>2</sup> One could argue, that the piano chords, since they are based on the Bond Dr No-theme and ‘Skyfall’, are not related to Eilish here. One might also object, that the chords were composed and performed primarily by her brother Finneous O’Connell. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I do not wish to enter the discussion of what is written by Eilish and what is written by O’Connell, simply because I consider their work to be a reflection of ‘her’ sound pre Bond. The aim of this thesis is to investigate ‘her’ sound (as composed by both her and her brother) in relation to the Bond franchise.

sound, giving a sense of sadness to the song, and it makes her come across as much more heart-broken and detached than both Shirley Bassey and Adele were before her.

Also contributing to the feeling of distance, is the old-sounding piano, making a quiet, almost out of tuned sound, that provides the listener with a feeling of *distance in time*. It is as if she has entered an old and deserted house and has sat down to play a piano that has not been played for a while. The floating piano sound also provides a feeling of water, and the accented octaves are resembling water dripping. Adding to the water sound effect is the instrument that sounds like water-filled glasses being played, a reference not only to water itself, but to the imaginative play of a child experimenting with music on a homemade water instrument. The slow tempo in which the song moves forward, adds to the water association, providing a feeling of heavy movements through the dense sea. The descending notes on the guitar, referencing Bond, has been given so much reverb that it sounds as if it is heard from under water (01:00-01:05), as it is blending in with the line 'we were a pair'. The water association adds to the distance between her and Bond. It also gives the impression of being a musical narrative of the film's opening sequence, in which the character Madeleine Swann falls into a frozen lake as she flees from the film's villain Luytsifer Safin. However, the reference to water, also occurs in many of Eilish's songs, amongst them, two of her most popular songs; 'Ocean Eyes' (2016) and 'Everything I Wanted' (2019), in which she sings about sinking into water, hinting at drowning. These two songs both contains the same floating sound in voice and arrangement. As such, she may equally be continuing her own lyrical/musical style as much as referencing Swann being scared to die in the water.

The musical arrangement in the intro and first verse, is significantly toned down, and couldn't be further removed from the swinging brass be-bop arrangement of *Dr No* of the majestic pull of 'Skyfall'. When the chorus enters, we recognize the Dr No-like Fender reverb guitar sound, yet it is still sounding distant consisting of slow and airy notes. In the second verse, the arrangement is toned down again, only to rise back in a slight crescendo as her voice intensifies when she sings 'you were never on my side' (02:48-02:55). The orchestral strings and percussion, enters after the first verse, and is the first real reminder that this is indeed a Bond theme song, as it gradually fades in with her voice towards the end of the verse. The string arrangements pick up with her again as she sings 'there's just no time to die' (03:07-03:09) and her voice rises along with the string arrangement into a bigger crescendo this time, in which her voice goes out of the intimate whispering sound and transforms into a desperate scream on the word 'die' before it quickly calms down again (03:10-03:34). When the strings

stop, she whispers intimately like before: ‘fool me once, fool me twice, are you death or paradise, You know you’ll never see me cry. There’s just no time to die’(3:34-03:50). The song then ends on the Bond style E minor 9 #7 guitar chord, leaving Bond himself slightly hanging in the air.

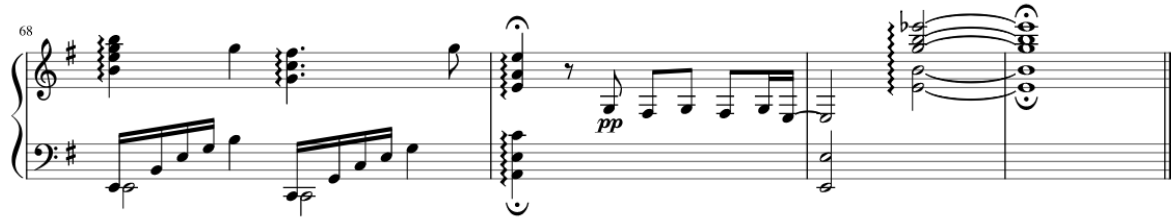


Figure 12: 'No Time to Die' ending in the tonic key of E minor before the signature guitar sounding Edim #9, the classic Bond-guitar chord gets the last and final say.

In contrast to the feeling of distance between Eilish and Bond, her whispering voice sounds remarkably close and intimate. The way she slowly bends the notes, her jazz like vibrato and the extremely airy tone in her voice, creates a seductiveness and at the same time, a distant coolness together with her effortless pronunciation. Furthermore, the slow tempo provides her with plenty of time to bend and twist the long notes. In a study at Ohio state University, the effects of Billie Eilish’s music on the listeners feeling of calmness and relaxation, ASMR, from her intimate voice was examined. They found that “techniques like breathing sounds, close miking, whispering, and binaural effects can be described as exhibiting sonic intimacy. Using this definition, the music, of Billie Eilish (...) contains a multitude of sonically intimate sections (...). When listening to sonically intimate moments, listeners may feel the same sense of relaxation and pleasure as being physically near a loved one. (Warrenburg, Centa, Li, Park, Sari & Xie, 2021, p. 142). This intimate way of singing brings the listener closer to her and at the same time creates a calm sensuality that carries the song.

It is as if she whispers the words closely into her listener’s ear, but then, who is she singing to? Shirley Bassey’s performance is arguably ironic in its over-emphasized focus on the phallic similarity between Bond, diamonds and his Bond girls, nonetheless an erotic relationship between Bond and his Bond Girls. And while Adele sings about Bond standing together with his female mother-figure M at Skyfall, we might ask: who is Eilish addressing? Is she singing to him or about him, and is the song performed from a lover or a daughter’s point of view? Since Bond’s ‘lover’ and ‘mother’-relationships have already been a theme in the films, the ‘daughter’ relationship would make an interesting male-female focus point for a

theme song, especially since Bond does become a father of a young girl in *No Time to Die*. Thus could Eilish be referencing Bond's daughter-relationship in this song?

<b>Verse 1:</b> I should have known I'd leave alone Just goes to show That the blood you bleed Is just the blood you owe	<b>Verse 3:</b> I let it burn You're no longer my concern Faces from my past return Another lesson yet to return
<b>Verse 2:</b> We were a pair But I saw you there Too much to bear You were my life, but life is far away from fair	
<b>Bridge:</b> Was I stupid to love you? Was I reckless to help? Was it obvious to everybody else?	
<b>Chorus:</b> That I'd fallen for a lie You were never on my side Fool me once, fool me twice Are you death or paradise Now you'll never see me cry There's just no time to die	<b>Chorus:</b> That I'd fallen for a lie You were never on my side Fool me once, fool me twice Are you death or paradise Now you'll never see me cry There's just no time to die

In this study, however, I find little indication of the lyrics bearing any reference to a child or a daughter, which would suggest that the song comes more across as a love-relationship between the female singer and her love-interest. It could be a matter of singing about what goes on in Bond's own mind at the time when he thinks that he has been fooled by Madeleine Swann. It seems more likely, however, that the lyrics come from Eilish's own point of view

and that it reflects her own compositional style of singing about lost love, anxiety and sadness. The interpretation of this being a song about Madeleine and Bond's romantic relationship, is further strengthened by which scenes, in which the song is used in the film. When Bond declares his love for Madeleine, the background music is a slow orchestrated version of the chorus in 'No Time to Die' (01:31:27-01:33:10), and this is also the case towards the end of the film, when they kiss good-bye on the villain's island (02:12:44-02:13:10). The lyrics give the impression that Eilish's artistic persona is not just distanced from Bond musically, but also, she seems distanced and disillusioned in the lyrics. This would be in line with her previous songs, that are often about anxiety and sadness over "unresolved grief, hopelessness caused by loved ones, abandonment, society's toxic standards, family pressure, isolation and insignificance; (...) feeling unloved, (...) left behind, negative criticisms causing despair, self-pity, misery or loneliness, prolonged helplessness, (...) mental breakdowns, longing for appreciation and acceptance" (Bernaldez, Ilustrisimo K.J.O, Makiling & Lito, 2022) etc. Compared to 'Skyfall', the lyrics for 'No Time to Die', seem to be less about re-telling the narrative of the film, and rather about providing more of a feeling of lyrical alienation, a lyrical style that Eilish is well-known for, and has helped to position her as an icon for a young generation.

#### *Title credit for No Time to Die*

The title credit starts after an Aston Martin car chase and shooting scene, in which Madeleine desperately tries to convince Bond that she hasn't betrayed him. and when Bond and Madeleine are embracing at a train platform and Madeleine is about to board the train. She asks: - "So, this is it?" He replies: - "This is it". She then starts to cry as he pushes her away and onto the train. She then asks: - "How will I know that you're OK?", upon which Bond answers: - "You won't. You'll never see me again". His face is full of resentment and anger, believing that she has betrayed him, whilst she expresses disbelief, anxiousness, and sadness. The door closes and as Madeleine runs down the middle of the carriage to catch another glimpse of him, the soft piano chords start to blend in with the sound of the train moving. The long-noted sound and pitch of the train moving is remarkably similar to the faded guitar and makes a nice overlap from the background sound to the theme song. (Mendes, 2021, 00:22:00-00:23:00) Madeleine being placed on the train by Bond in this way seems cold and punishing, and it brings us back into Eilish's musical and lyrical narrative of loneliness, self-pity, isolation and feeling unloved. It seems clear from the context, that Eilish is singing from Madeleine, the Bond Girl's point of view, and that her whispering love song is an expression

of sadness. As George Lipsitz argues, in popular culture, “all entertainers assume onstage personas onstage” (in Hawkins, 2020, p. 239) and indeed so does Eilish for ‘No Time to Die’ come across as a personified female resembling the film character Madeleine Swann. The onstage persona Billie Eilish is also perceived within the categories of a “performer, composer and protagonist” (ibid. p. 240), whilst at the same time, she is bringing a lot of her personal style and image into the narrative of the film. Eilish and Madeleine Swann, look very similar and the emotional vulnerability Swann expresses when being placed on the train by Bond, is reflected well by the intimate sound of Eilish’s voice. The personal narrative of Billie Eilish, or the “recounting of one’s own life circumstances when performing song” (ibid. p. 241) provides another personal touch to Madeleine’s sadness as it is expressed through her “pitch, melody, rhythm, timbre and texture” (ibid.) of her voice in particular as well as the lyrical content of being disillusioned and anxious. Eilish’s emotional state of mind exhibited in her music and lyrics, clearly reflects the emotional look on Madeleine’s face and in her body language, as she is being rejected by Bond. The major third bending guitar sound in the first verse is heard at the same time as the name ‘Daniel Craig’ is seen on the screen, confirming that the major third of the subdominant relates to Craig/Bond. An image of Madeleine inside the frozen lake with her hands on the ice trying to get through, is seen before the image is becoming part of a Roman Neptune statue fork being frozen and disintegrating as bits of it falls down towards the bottom of the sea. The statue being a Roman soldier represents protection, but is also referencing the Roman Empire, or in the case of Bond; the British Empire, of which him protecting the Crown and her Majesty is a continuation of. We then see the inside of an intricate clockwork, symbolizing passing time and also how details come together in perfection. Bond is seen standing on one arrow in the clockwork, and Madeleine is seen on the other arrow as Eilish sings ‘We were a pair’ (00:23:27-00:23:33), and as Madeleine reaches out for him, he doesn’t respond, and so they drift away in different directions (‘but I saw you there’), Also seen in the water, is an Aston Martin-looking car descending through towards the bottom of the sea, resembles Eilish’s video for ‘Everything I Wanted’ (2019), in which she and her brother Finneas sink into the sea whilst sitting in a car that gradually fills with water. Just like the car in Eilish’s music video, the Aston Martin heard lights in the Bond opening credits are still on as it sinks through the water, which is creating a dramatic vision within the darkness of the sea. The sand, at first looking like the sand at the bottom of the sea, turns into the sand of a time glass, representing time running out for Bond as the debris of a gun, Neptune and Bond himself is pulled through the glass and disappears through together in the sand. (‘Are you death or

paradise? Now you'll never see me cry', 00:24:22-00:24:31) Just like Bond always seems to find his escape route from any situation at the exact right time (as clockwork), the sand here running through the hourglass, is yet a reminder that it does not last forever. Bullets from several guns are then being shot through water as Eilish sings 'there's just no time to die', and the pattern of lines created in the water from the bullets resembles a DNA-looking chain together with the Hans Zimmer strings, which confirms that the strings are referencing Bond, and not Eilish. As the strings cool down, and Eilish sings 'I let it burn. You're no longer my concern' (00:24:47-00:24:46), we see two floating images of Madeleine Swann, once again establishing the connection between Eilish's vocal/lyrics and this film's Bond Girl. The images continue with other film characters as Eilish sings 'faces from my past return'. Upon ending the verse with the line 'another lesson yet to learn', the camera closes in on images of a naked body, bringing us slightly back to *Diamonds Are Forever*, only this time, it seems to have a more artistic look, as the camera highlights the skin in cold white/grey shades as the broken statue is being brought back to life on the word 'learn' (00:24:58-00:25:09). Growing vines are shown as if creating new blood veins from beneath her skin, but also blended in with the revival of the Neptune statue, Bond. It seems as if the connection between Madeleine, Bond and their child is being visualized here, as Eilish for the first time in the song performs with a more full-bodied sounding voice, and the song peaks in volume and intensity. At the time of this peak, Bond's gun is seen firing in an explosion, that comes across as phallic, and appears as if Bond has his sexual release (00:25:43-00:25:57). This returns us to Susan McClary's interpretation of the masculine references that is being tied in with the musical narrative. Interestingly, the producers have left out the final line of the song and the title credits ends with 'no time to die' as the dominant chord is left nearly unresolved hanging in the dominant key (the strings end in the dominant key) before the music then finds its rest in the tonic chord followed by the characteristic Bond chord of Em9 in the guitar.

The music, lyrics and visuals in the title credit confirms the alienation that Eilish/Madeleine feels from Bond. As described in the musical analysis, Eilish is sounding distant from him and the musical signals of the Bond chromatic bass line. It is as if Eilish musically as well as visually through the opening credit, by referencing Madeleine as well as herself, really is left on her own. The growing vines emerging beneath the skin and the statue's surface gives the impression that after the cold winter, new life will blossom. The shots from the guns in the water, become the symbol of DNA; either Bond's DNA (as if referring to the phrase it was 'in his DNA' meaning he was born to do the task) or possibly the DNA of Bond's daughter

carrying his inheritance. This may perhaps provide us with some hint towards the future that Bond's offspring might be following in his footsteps, but it may equally be a reassurance that Bond will once again be re-booted.

## Bond, Misogyny and the Theme Song

“Misogyni is still with us.”

- Kate Manne (2019 )

Arguably, while the image of James Bond as a character is unrealistic and to a certain extent fantasy-like in his image, he has remained a much-loved character and role model for men and women since the moment he entered the screens in 1962. Bond was not created to reflect the real life of an MI6 agent, although Fleming's own “work in wartime intelligence and later drawing-room liaisons with trans-Atlantic security elites” (Miller, 2020, p. 127) confirms that “nothing but the finest actual tobacco, coffee and cars sufficed” (ibid) and that some aspects of the culture within the wartime intelligence is reflected in the Bond story line. The “seemingly irresistible, everlasting desire to extrapolate from 007 onto the world we live in is a sign that Bond exhibits the rarest of capacities: (...) to transcend the screen and become a mass icon of the everyday (Lotman 1996, in Miller, 2020, p. 127). As such, the fascination with Bond and his lifestyle is found in his iconic image and style, associated the luxurious lifestyle of a man in power; cars and cigars, casinos and cocktails, all the time surrounded by enemies and beautiful women.

Financially, the films have been hugely successful. It is one of the longest running movie franchises and with nearly \$ 7.9 billion made in worldwide box office, it is the 5<sup>th</sup> most successful franchise in the world. By April 2023, *Skyfall* (2012) had grossed \$ 1.11 billion in worldwide box office revenue, which makes it is the most successful Bond film ever. *Spectre* (2015) has grossed \$ 879 million worldwide, and *No Time to Die* (2022) has grossed almost \$ 760 million worldwide (*The Numbers*, 16.04.2023). With box office numbers like this, there is a lot at stake for the producers when making decisions about the content, including choice of actors, composers and indeed the theme song performer. In terms of the market, Europe “represents about one third of the worldwide revenue for the Bond films” (Jones & Higson, 2020, p. 104). According to Bond historian James Chapman, some key reasons why the Bond



franchise has stayed so successful over many decades are: “high production values; spectacular visual qualities - notably fast-paced action, dramatic stunts and special effects; the play on British national identity; and most importantly for Chapman, the ability of the producers to “find the right balance between repetition and variation, between continuity and change” (Jones & Higson, 2020, p. 105). Even though *No Time to Die* has not yet proved to be as successful as its two predecessors and is only the 5<sup>th</sup> most popular Bond film in the US, it has done remarkably well. It is fair to say, that casting Daniel Craig as Bond in 2006, has increased the franchise’s popularity significantly. The total worldwide revenue has nearly doubled for each of the last three films compared to the film before he became Bond; *Die Another Day* (2002), which has sold \$ 432 mill in box office worldwide (*The Numbers*, 16.04.2023). Not only commercially, but also artistically, “the Craig Bond films have gone much further than previous Bond films in terms of re-positioning them (the franchise) as a ‘serious’ drama, thereby seeking to renew the appeal of the franchise” (Jones & Higson, 2020, p. 109). Commercially and artistically, the reboot of Bond through Daniel Craig, modernizing him in his emotional repertoire whilst simultaneously bringing him back to his *Dr No* and *Casino Royale* roots, has turned out to be a success in terms of attracting new audiences.

The character James Bond has been a role model since 1962, and his persona is still influencing both men and women today. Being a hugely popular cultural phenomenon, he has for decades been able to adopt to new generations, and as the box office figures show, many, in fact an increasing amount of people in the past ten years, hold a great admiration for him. Bond’s relationship with women, the so-called Bond Girls, however, seems to have kept a rather consistent narrative, since its original formula was created. The formula was specifically instructed to Roald Dahl upon his writing of the screenplay for *You Only Live Twice* (UK: Lewis Gilbert, 1967): First girl is to be “bumped off” by the enemy, preferably in Bond’s arms; second girl is anti-Bond, works for the enemy and is also to be “bumped off” in an original fashion; third girl is violently pro-Bond and must “on no account be killed” (Dahl (1967) in Jones & Higson, 2020, p. 104). The plot confirms what Moya Luckett refers to as the Bond Girls having their agency limited as they are always being substituted by a replacement, either within the film itself, or from one film to the next. Bond, on the other hand, despite being replaced by new actors, is constant. “(T)he Bond Girl’s seriality both atomizes her and renders her replaceable” (Luckett, 2020, p. 150). Notably, Burlingame points out that the *musical theme* of *Dr No* was first just repeated throughout *Dr No*, but became so popular and significant that it continued throughout the franchise, providing “a

strong sense of continuity and definition to the series and more largely to the espionage genre in film and television” (in Murugan, 2020. p. 277)”. As such, the musical signal of Bond himself; the chromatic bassline, the repetitive guitar riff along and the descending semitones, has played a significant part in positioning Bond, and as Luckett argues, that consistency has helped him position himself *over* the disposable Bond Girls.

Even in looks, Bond has portrayed consistency in his style over the years. The Bond Girls all change in look and style, often according to the fashion of the time when the film is made, whilst Bond remains classic looking wearing a dark or white suit. Unlike the Bond Girls, this is “placing him in that conventionally masculine role of a seemingly stable, unchanging subject” (ibid. p. 151). Often using both sex and violence to position himself, and making inappropriate remarks by today’s standards, such as “I didn’t order anything – not even you” (to Eve Moneypenny in *Skyfall*, 2012, which considering that Moneypenny works as a secretary at MI6 ties Bond directly into the #metoo-movement), he always seem to have the upper hand. The image of Bond, from a cultural and feminist point of view, is a sexist man using women for his (or the country’s) own benefit. Moreover, the consistency in the Bond soundtrack, has played a major role in maintaining this image, and to such an extent that the spy-genre soundtrack now on a global scale makes us identify the Bond sound with the alpha male agent James Bond. Arguably, the way in which any performer, especially a female performer, relates to the musical signals of Bond, is significant, as it becomes either a way to conform to, or rebel against, Bond’s superiority over the Bond Girls.

Even if Bond is indeed just a fictional character, some of his fans have established themselves as influencers with the intention to promote, and re-establish, this patriarchal gender representation of Bond to a large audience. One such influencing person, with a particularly damaging and aggressive view on women, is the social-media personality Andrew Tate. In the documentary *The Dangerous Rise of Andrew Tate* (Vice Media Group, 2023) he proclaims: “It’s a means to an end. Every single Bond Girl was exploited. That is exactly what I do (2023, 14.30-14.39)”. When explaining her understanding of misogyny, Kate Manne makes a distinction between sexism and misogyny that places the former concept as ‘world-guided’ and the latter as ‘world-guiding’, the difference being that “misogyny goes beyond simple prescriptions and norms and also encompasses the desires (...) and aim to change the world – or, just as importantly, to maintain the status quo” (2020, p. 243). The difference, as such, is that misogyny to a much further degree aims to influence its culture by promoting or maintaining patriarchal dominance in our society. Misogyni, for Manne, is understood by

“what it does to women. Namely, I argue that we should think of misogyny as serving to uphold patriarchal order” (2019, p. 12). She further goes on to say that “misogyny upholds the social norms of patriarchies by policing and patrolling them, whereas sexism serves to *justify* these norms (...)” (2019, p. 88). In the example of Andrew Tate, his aggressiveness towards women, reflects what Manne describes to be a reactive attitude from not having succeeded in (re-)establishing male dominance, or in other words, when a patriarchal position is being challenged. “This in turn can lead to the kind of resentment and explosive fury that has driven so many so-called incels in recent years, together with many perpetrators of (...) domestic, dating, and intimate partner violence (ibid)”. Without wanting to go much further into what drives Andrew Tate mentally in trying to make male aggression towards women acceptable, it is significant that he points to James Bond as a motivator for his own actions and as a role model for him personally. It is as if he wishes to justify himself through our cultural acceptance of Bond. As much as we cannot blame the creators of Bond for general male aggression in our society, we do need to consider, how identity roles are created in music and film, as much as it is created on other social arenas involving role models. Through pop culture, “identity roles are constantly evolving to fit social needs (Hawkins 2002, p. 12)”. This means, that it is not just the narrative in the Bond films, or the Bond character himself, but also the female singers within the Bond franchise, that make a difference when cultural identity is being expressed and formed. Since music and visuals are explicitly connected in films, and the Bond theme song is added to the narrative, the way, in which, it represents the film in general, is relevant for how we perceive gender roles within the film. The music is a social and cultural expression, which has the potential of being both world-guided (reflecting norms in society) and world-guiding (reflecting what norms should, or should not, be). As such, the way in which Billie Eilish comes across as a female artist in relation to Bond, makes a difference for our cultural understanding, and in the case of Billie Eilish, in particular, the social and cultural understanding of gender within a young generation.

There have been speculations in the media, that the next James Bond character, following the exit of Daniel Craig, might be a woman, although there is no indication of this actually happening just yet. Like character Logan Ash tells Bond in *No Time to Die*; “You’re the only guy for the job. You’re the guy” (2022, 00:35), and so far, this does indeed seem to be the case. When Bond, in *No Time to Die*, returns to the MI6 from his retirement in Jamaica, he is introduced to his replacement; the new 007, a female agent called Nomi. It may seem as if the

writers of the James Bond franchise would like to reassure us, or at least to give us the impression, that a female 007 is an actual possibility, and that the franchise is (finally) promoting gender equality. However, as politically correct as it may seem to include a black female agent as 007, the apparent gender equality in the film is only temporary, and it does not even last to the end of the film. The female agent Nomi may have been given the iconic 007-code number in James Bond's absence, but upon his return, she ends up giving it back to him asking M for permission to do so: "Sir, permission for commander Bond to be redesignated as 007", upon which Bond silently looks at her, and she replies: "It's just a number" (01:48:43-01:48:54). Bond's response to her is: "Very well" as M replies: "Agreed. Good luck". By giving the 007-code back to him, she is indeed confirming his superiority, thereby re-establishing his patriarchal position and privilege over her. This is an example of putting "women in their place when they seem to have 'ideas beyond their station' (Manne, 2019, p. 69). In many cases of misogyny, women do voluntarily give away their own self-acquired privileges back to men, if they do not feel entitled to that position or privilege. Reasons for this, can be related to various norms associated to restrictions women when wishing to participate on a man's domain, or making use of some of 'his' privileges: "don't ask for or take the kind of thing you're meant to be giving' (...), don't ask for the kind of goods or services that *he* once might have provided' (...) and don't ask for or try to take masculine-coded perks and privileges" (2019, p. 112-113). Manne points out that women trying to share a man's privilege, to enter his domain, even today could be faced with a long list of protests, some of them being: "belittling, ridiculing, humiliating, mocking, slurring, vilifying, demonizing, sexualizing, or alternatively, desexualizing, silencing, shunning, shaming, blaming, patronizing, condescending, and other forms of treatment that are dismissive or disparaging in specific social contexts (Manne, 2019, p. 68)." It may not even be that it was Bond himself, who gave Nomi the impression that she was morally wrong in talking his 007-code, (although he does react with the surprised line: "*You're double 0?*"), but it is still problematic from a feminist point of view, that she does not take for granted that her being the new 007 is perfectly OK. The overall impression is that by placing a black female actor in his place, gender (and race) equality is only temporary, and not actually real. Rather, her returning the privilege back to him, becomes a clear example of *gender inequality*. It reaffirms the statement made by character Logan Ash, that James *really is* the only guy for the job. Just like the subdominant major chord, the chord of 'hope' in *Skyfall* and *No Time to Die*, always returns to minor, so do the scriptwriters of *No Time to Die*, make the hope of gender equality through a female 007, go right back to good-old male dominance, and the fact

that Bond dies at the end, does not change this fact. Once again, the bassline pattern of *Dr No*, in which the C# always returns back to C, continues to rule the narrative even here.

When viewing the Bond official online store (<https://007store.com/>), it seems obvious that a female replacement of Bond, would indicate a radical change of the franchise's image. As of today, the overall selection of products is typically directed at men, or at least directed towards the stereotypical image men, an image that is being re-manifested through the stereotypical products. Even the tailor-suit wearing Dr No Musical Teddy Bear resets the masculine tone (quite literally) for the younger generation.

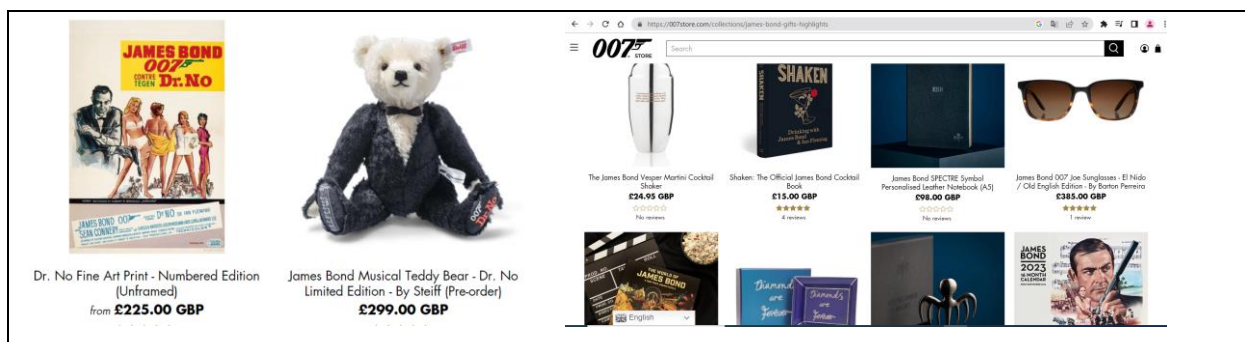


Figure 13: From the official Bond store, 27.03.23, 00:01 <https://007store.com/collections/james-bond-gifts-highlights>

The Bond franchise, inasmuch as it has tried to modernize over the years, has, in fact, not changed its promotion of stereotypically gendered products associated with Bond very much. One might wonder, what a female Bond product on this website would look like, and how the franchise would promote a female Bond-character whilst keeping the essence of the hero(ine) image intact. Would she still be wearing a suit, and if so, would it then come with a cleavage? Would the colors change from black/dark blue to pink, and would the Bond Girls still be portrayed by girls, or be replaced by Bond Boys? It already feels likely that the Andrew Tate-influenced part of the male generation, would rather quickly be looking for a Bond exit than adapting to a female Bond. We may humor ourselves over these silly consequences of turning the tables, but the more we consider it, the more evident it becomes: James Bond was written about a man, in a world where men are agents and women are his (sometimes equal but disposable) counterparts, and he lives in a world where women are always submitting to his superior position or facing physical death. It seems difficult to change his gender and at the same time keep the essence and commercial appeal of James Bond. One important question

related to the aim of this dissertation is this: Does this male dominated climate, imply that Billie Eilish as a female artist and composer was faced with ‘male’ restrictions musically, when performing and co-writing ‘No Time to Die’? Within this so well-established gendered, and commercially successful, perception of James Bond, how much freedom did she have to write Bond music from a woman’s perspective?

## Billie Eilish and the production of No Time to Die

“Always shaped by social, political and cultural conditions, pop is about patterns in consumption and production.”

- Stan Hawkins (2002, p. 2)

When co-producer of the song No Time to Die, Stephen Lipson, refers to the Bond franchise, he calls it a “Bond empire” (Scheps, 2021: 03.50), implying that a huge amount of money is involved when decisions are being made for each film. As we have seen from the box office numbers, this is certainly the case. According to Lipson, when Billie Eilish was selected amongst other potential contenders, what mattered the most, was not the song itself, but *who she was* and *who she represented socially*. He explains that one of the main factors for choosing Eilish, was what she would be bringing to the table, namely a new young generational interest in Bond. It was primarily Eilish’s cultural position that had convinced him that she was the right artist for the job. He describes the conversation between himself, Hans Zimmer and Barbara Broccoli, head of Eon productions, like this:

Lipson: “It’s a complete no-brainer. It is obvious that this should be it.” Hans Zimmer: “Why?” Lipson: “Because it’s Billie Eilish and Billie Eilish is the zeitgeist. It has to be Billie Eilish. She has to do it, it’s brilliant her doing the Bond theme. You know; the song – the song is good! Billie Eilish, no brainer. (...) That’s the deal. You can’t not have this. This is perfect, you know, you’re gonna introduce a whole new audience to Bond. It’s a no brainer. (Scheps, 2021: 03:07-04:12)

It is clear from this conversation, that Lipson felt that Billie Eilish, being the ‘zeitgeist’ of the young generation, generation Z, was too good of an opportunity to be missed for the Bond franchise. Through her, Bond would be placed in a better position to remain his cultural iconic status as well as to ensure that the franchise would continue to be a commercial success. As

such, Billie Eilish, was potentially in a powerful position when it came to being in control of her own music. As pointed out by Christopher Small, being selected for a big performance, whether it be a concert performance or a theme song, always, depends on many factors, and is often controlled by people in power to make such decisions. “(T)he prize we pay for perfection is high. The price is that the majority of people are considered not to have the ability to take an active part in musical performance” (1998, p. 73). As much as Eilish, being the 'zeitgeist' of her time, was, in theory in a position to control her music, even she, was subject to the politics that goes on behind the scenes when music for a large audience is selected and created. What follows from the conversations within the franchise, as quoted by Lipson, it seems, that rather than taking this opportunity of negotiating the control of her music based on her global status, she was rather being exploited by the franchise, and her status as composer was being downgraded by the male producers Stephen Lipson and Hans Zimmer. When Broccoli, although being positive about the song in general, expressed some concern about the song, she was, according to Lipson, being reassured by him like this: “The song will be *fine*, we'll make the song to work (...) *We'll* get the song to work, you know that thing, you get it to work 'cause that's what you do, that's what I do for a living, I'll get it to work. Don't worry about the song (Scheps, 2021: 04:24-04:34)”. Already there, lies the masculine tradition within the franchise, that it has proven so difficult to break free from: The musical tradition in which the Bond music is run by men having excluded women composers in the process, and ultimately leaving out the female musical influence from the final product. The down-grading of Billie Eilish's own influence when it comes to the production of her own song, is an expression of what both Manne and McClary point to as being an expression of the negative treatment women receive when wanting to join in on the “masculine-coded perks and privileges” (Manne, 2019, p. 113) and also how men tend to prefer their “own desires, both in life and in artistic production” (McClary, 2002, p. 68). Ultimately, leaving Eilish herself out of the production, will have influenced the musical product once the male producers Lisson and Zimmer have been given the freedom to shape the song into their own liking.

Even when women composer are included in the music writing process, they are often at risk of “unwittingly reproducing the ideologies that inform various levels of discourses” (McClary 2002, p. 19). McClary goes on to say:

Thus I am especially drawn to women artists who, like myself, are involved in examining the premises of inherited conventions, with calling them into question, with attempting to reassemble them in ways that make a difference inside the discourse itself, with envisioning

narrative structures with feminine endings. The work of these women broadens the range of possible musics, as it comments both on the assumptions of more traditional procedures and on the problematic position of a woman artist attempting to create new meanings within old media” (McClary, 2002, p. 19).

My musical analysis of both Adele Jenkins and Billie Eilish’s contribution to the female point of view, confirms that neither of them really go very far in challenging the Bond-sound. On the contrary, their musical celebration of Bond and adaptation to the musical Bond narrative, most strikingly through submitting to the Dr No-bassline in their chord progressions, reaffirms traditional procedures more than they attempt to create new musical meaning from a female perspective. If anything, the grand orchestration of Adele’s ‘Skyfall’, certainly is as virtuosic as John Barry himself would have written it, and there are no feminine endings included in the chord progressions. Even Eilish’s intimate voice, is given a musical climax towards the end of the song. It seems, that this demo first presented to Lipson/Zimmer from Billie Eilish, was not aiming for orchestral grandness, but rather, her theme song is intimate and emotionally distanced. The main issue with both of their songs, is their musical submissiveness in relation to Bond, as they both follow the musical pattern as laid out before them by the Bond franchise.

When Daniel Craig entered the screen as, perhaps, the final James Bond actor, he was praised for his performance in *Casino Royale* (2006) for combining “Sean Connery’s athleticism and cocksure swagger with Timothy Dalton’s thrilling undercurrent of stone-cold cruelty (Jones & Higson in Verheul, J. (ed.) 2020, p. 107)”. Casting Craig as Bond was a reboot that would take “Bond back to the beginning of his spy career, thereby removing some aspects of narrative continuity with previous Bond films” (ibid). Inspired by the success of Jason Bourne, they wanted a more “hero’s soul-searching vulnerability (ibid.)” to his character and thereby re-position the franchise as a more “serious” drama. Producer Stephen Lipson tells *Music Week* (2021) that it was essential to convince actor Daniel Craig that the song was right, in order to get the necessary approval for Billie Eilish’s theme song for the film. Lipson explains that Craig was at first sceptical towards Eilish’s version when hearing it for the first time, and that it was only after intense work in the studio, in which Lipson according to himself “set the volume of the song so that it was pretty muscular, knowing that the climax would be earth-shattering”, that Craig got convinced. From a feminist point of view, it is rather thought provoking that Eilish’s intimate and whispering voice had to be dialled up so much on the volume button, that it provided associations of ‘muscles’ and an ‘earth shattering climax’, the very incarnation of male sexuality, before the song was finally approved by



Craig. It confirms the criticism by McClary that gendered preferences is found within the music, in this case; the need for a musical climax in order to be representative for Bond and necessary in order to excite the listener. It further confirms that this male musical preference was necessary for Eilish in order to get her song approved by the Bond franchise. Eilish herself was seemingly unsure if she wanted that long note towards the end, however, for the influential males of the film; producer Lipson, composer Hans Zimmer and actor Daniel Craig, that climax became the very selling point for using the song at all. This confirms the misogynistic approach still being present within the Bond franchise when selecting its female singers and how their music is still being shaped by male composers and producers in the process.

It is not, however, the first time, that composers of a theme song has been met with restrictions from members of the musical team connected to the Bond Franchise. In the documentary *A-ha: The Movie* (Robsahm, 2022) the band members talk about their experience writing ‘The Living Daylights’ with John Barry for the 1987 Bond film. Morten Harket says: “When we were doing the Bond song with John Barry as producer, it turned out, without us knowing this in advance, that he had to be co-writing it”. Paul Waktaar-Savoy adds that “there were a few chords in that song that I was particularly fond of that he (Barry) sort of wiped out in the string arrangement. So we had to manipulate an 80 piece orchestra into playing another note than what he had put in, and I think it sort of pissed him off.” Magne Furuholmen confirms that “he (Barry) met a band full of confidence, and he wasn’t used to that. He was quite dictatorial.” (in Robsahm, 2022, my translation) Although Billie Eilish never worked with Barry himself, her music is subject to the weight of the legacy that he left behind, a legacy that is still musically prominent and composer-guiding in the Bond franchise. Seen from a feminist point of view, the experience of A-ha makes Eilish’s own situation problematic, because it seems that unlike the all-male band A-ha, who rather boldly decided to go against the franchise’s musical preferences, she decides not to provoke musical changes after her demo has been made and submitted to the producers, but rather chooses to adapt to the expectations. Like so many women before her, she wishes to make “everybody happy” (Entertainment Tonight, 28.03.2022). If Eilish in her musical contribution to popular culture simply repeats and continues the tradition of submitting to established musical preferences; in this case what the Bond sound is, or is not (lacking a dynamic climax), then it would be important to discuss the extent to which she re-establishes the patriarchal male dominance for the next generation who are in a process of shaping their identity and sense of social value in

relation to gender and sexuality. According to Eilish herself, she had a strong intention to honour Bond with the song, particularly in the shape of Daniel Craig, but also the franchise itself. When Eilish is asked at the Oscars in 2022 how she felt about starting the process of writing the theme song, considering the huge success of her predecessors, she replies:

Scared. Very intimidated but we've looked up to the music and the Bond franchise for pretty much as long as I can remember (...). There was no confusion at all about Bond and the music (...). The approach was very exhilarating (...) but we wanted it to be perfect and to represent Daniel Craig's last film and all of his films, and how much he put into it (...). The biggest challenge was to make it sound authentic (...) and I didn't want to disrespect the franchise in any way, and I wanted to make everybody happy (Entertainment Tonight, 28.03.2022)

Her statement verifies, that she did aim to adapt her music to the musical expectations within the franchise, and that she in no way intended to make radical musical changes in her theme song. It is also clear from her statement, that she wanted to contribute to the admiration of Daniel Craig as the actor of Bond. So the question remains: How far did Eilish, in her desire to write a theme song in tribute to Bond, especially to Bond played by Daniel Craig, perhaps avoid challenging Bond from a feminist angle, and reinstate the musical stereotype of a heart-broken and submissive female?

Considering that Billie Eilish is one of our time's most popular and influential artists and a role model for a new generation, I have attempted to argue, that she has been given very little leeway to maintain the Bond theme song as she first wrote it: lyrically disillusioned, emotionally distanced, the musical Bond-references being toned down, and lacking a dynamic climax. Ironically, the franchise initially chose her as their artist for the bond song, for those very reasons (as this is the style that has made her the 'zeitgeist' of the very generation that they wished to appeal to), and yet they still saw the need to model her into the musical style of orchestral grandeur. I have argued, that from a feminist point of view, this is problematic because it confirms the musical tradition of systematically excluding female musical preference if it does not suit the existing male-dominated tradition that her music is a part of. The fact that the musical structure of a climax, is necessary in order for her song to be selected by the franchise, is an example of the punitive reaction that Manne explains is a misogynistic reaction a woman may receive when trying to challenge established male preferences and ideas of what is desirable. In my view, it would have been refreshing if Eilish had indeed been given full freedom to recreate the Bond music in her own way, as seen from

the perspective of a young female songwriter and performer representing a young generation. It seems, that the Bond franchise has not quite trusted that her musical style alone, would be enough to sell the film. A survey from the European Commission (2014) of *Skyfall* shows the film, in Europe, was more appealing to men more than women (46 % men and 25 % women said they liked the film) although its main audience in terms of age was 16-25 year olds, which would confirm why Eilish was a good choice in terms of her appeal to a young generation. (statistics quoted from Jones & Higson, 2020, p. 114-115). It may also be an indication of why the franchise felt that the 'male' musical input was needed in order to keep the male audience happy.

## Conclusion

During the course of this study, I have argued that both 'Skyfall' and 'No Time to Die', in the same way that McClary describes the sonata- and operatic musical elements of the narrative 'Other', have used the subdominant major to provide a sense of hope in the music, although it is used in a much more triumphant way in 'Skyfall' than in 'No Time to Die'. I have also emphasized that the 5<sup>th</sup> interval, a representation of male power, in 'Diamonds are Forever' and 'Skyfall' is a coded reference of patriarchal dominance of Bond over his female counterparts. I have also pointed at the influence of the Dr No-bassline as well as the guitar-riff as repeated musical elements in all of the three selected theme songs and argued that the dominance of the bassline reassures his masculine position over the female singers. The chromaticism of the bassline ensures that the patriarchal musically gendered pattern of returning to the original minor from major, is ensured. Bound by the pattern of the Dr No-bassline, I have indicated that the subdominant surprise major, always returns to minor, in the same way that the Bond Girls have always traditionally been subject to the patriarchal dominance of James Bond, as their presence in the films is also just temporary. I have also argued that both Adele and Eilish are captured in the bassline, because it, being the musical manifestation of Bond, controls their chord progression. However, compared to Adele, as much as Eilish appropriates the chord progression and thereby uses the same narrative element of the surprise subdominant major chord, she emphasizes the subdominant major to a lesser extent. Rather, we rather find the major subdominant to be far more present in the strings and guitar, whilst she stays mainly in minor in both vocals and piano throughout the song. My analysis finds that John Barry, in 'Diamonds are Forever', temporarily transposes the song into another key for narrative purposes, but that he does not allow for a feminine

ending of the song. The fact that the song returns to its tonic key area and indeed ends in the tonic key, might be interpreted as an expression of Bond continuing to win back his superior position. Of the three singers, Shirley Bassey, Adele Jenkins and Billie Eilish, I have discovered that Eilish is less influenced by the Dr No-bassline and guitar-riff in her vocal performance, and that she is less emotionally engaged in Bond musically than the other two female singers are. Her detachment from Bond, musically and lyrically, is probably the closest we get out of the three selected songs of being an attempt to create new musical meaning within old media. However, her attempt is in part rejected by the male producers of the song, and by Barbara Broccoli, in their desire to maintain the musical Bond tradition and hold on to established perceptions of what a Bond theme song should sound like. One could also posit, that Eilish's emotional resignation is not a very powerful feminist statement to make, and that her disillusioned musical and lyrical expression could rather be said to represent a young generation Z in their feeling of being powerless to make a difference.

One could say that, despite the musical influence from Lipson & Zimmer, it is Eilish, in her slow, intimate and whispering vocal sound, who primarily carries the song forward and sets the moods of the song. It is primarily her intimate voice that draws the listener towards 'her' more than towards 'him'. The fact that she is still trapped in the Bond net of the Dr No-bassline through her chords, guitar and string section, with a somewhat less emotional investment in him, does not make her more liberated, rather it confirms her emotional resignation. In my opinion, a strong, empowered female composer who liberates herself through her music, would have been a preferred choice. Alas, her whispering vulnerable voice, her resigned lyrics and control rendered by her male producers, confirms her submissiveness to the franchise of Bond.

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