Music as a rhetorical form: The use of audio in "America's Most Wanted"

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MUSIC AS A RHETORICAL FORM: THE USE OF AUDIO IN

"AMERICA'S MOST WANTED"

by

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ABSTRACT

Music as a rhetorical form: the use of audio in “America’s Most Wanted”

by

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In the roughly fifty years since television programming began, the medium has gone from being a mere novelty to a major cultural force. Television is pervasive and widespread - nearly every home in America has one. It is hard to deny that because of its presence in our culture that some of its messages get through. My project is centered on the extent to which those messages affect the lives of its viewers.

The purpose of the project is to examine music as a rhetorical form by analyzing a ten-minute segment of “America’s Most Wanted” (AMW) on the Washington D.C. sniper case in October 2002. Various theories will be employed to help investigate the ability of the show’s music to heighten the emotions of the viewers. The goal is to bring further awareness to a topic not often ignored in the world of academia. Music is a norm in popular culture and its presence will only continue to grow.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Tiny...striking quicker than lightning...shooting out of a barrel at more than 3000 feet per second. You can find it almost anywhere but army rifleman and sharpshooters prefer it. Police call the .223 caliber bullet the perfect killing machine because it rips holes the size of coffee cups through its targets. Washington D.C. and its suburbs were rocked by the bullet early one morning in October 2002. Two gunmen picked off people as if they were clay pigeons a single round at a time. But unlike Sunday afternoon target practice, this shooting spree was far from a game. In fact, it was so random and terrifying that Washington D.C. residents behaved like schoolchildren, bobbing and weaving under tarps while pumping gas, while others refused to go outside. News media converged on the area like sharks in bloody waters reporting on a killer with a deadly eye.

With television as popular as it is, it is hard to deny that some of its messages get through and help form our perceptions of the world. Not that television show creators consistently chose their shows on the basis of their social messages, according to literature professor and author Ronald Berman. On the contrary, creators would like to be as neutral as possible. This
becomes difficult when television also strives to be relevant to their audience's lives. As creators strive to attract viewers and address topical issues, ideology inevitably enters the picture. "When programming insists on being timely, when it makes the plot of sitcoms revolve around issues in the news it does more than attract our attention. It draws us into the argument. And arguments have winners and losers (Berman 14)." The purpose of the project is to alert viewers of the ways informational but not traditionally journalistic television programs such as "America's Most Wanted" (AMW) shape our perception and our understanding by controlling the aesthetic elements of acoustic properties and sound technology.

Mass communication studies provide a number of theories concerning media's influence on our images of the world. But most media research studies focus on programming content (Althiede 1997; Comstock 1980). Newcomb and Hirsch believe if we only focus on its content, we are looking at television as "communication" instead of "art" (561). San Francisco State professor and author Herbert Zettl is one academician who sees that the "medium" of television has been ignored. In Television Aesthetics, he blames the one-dimensional look on history.

Firmly rooted in the tradition of literary analysis, we feel more comfortable in discussing the aesthetic merits of content and style than in analyzing the characteristics and potentials of the medium through which such content is communicated. In the aesthetics of literature, the transmission medium...has precious little influence
on the message, the literary content and the structure of
the work. (115)

Zettl is among the first scholars to study the field television aesthetics,
including both audio and visual components. He believes that “As media
producers, we can no longer rely solely on instinct when it comes to encoding
messages” (ix). Instead, Zettl says we need to recognize how aesthetics affect
an audience’s relationship with television.

Growing out of radio, television is widely recognized as a visual medium.
But just like its predecessor, it is the audio elements of broadcast that can
often have a large impact on a viewer’s experience. While visual images within
the frame have been widely studied and scrutinized by media scholars
(Schroeder 2001; Kraus 1999), video’s counterpart has often been ignored,
especially secondary audio like music. Syracuse University professor and
media scholar Stanley Alten believes this neglect has caused audiences to
downplay its importance on television. He says, “We speak of seeing a film
and watching TV, suggesting that sound is subordinate to picture. So it
follows, although mistakenly, that in its supporting role sound has less import
and impact than picture” (5).

This project seeks to investigate and analyze the rhetorical powers of
music in television. The Beltway sniper case was voted to be the nation’s top
news story of 2002 above the potential for war in Iraq, the one-year
anniversary of the September 11th, 2001 attacks and the Catholic Church sex-
abuse scandal (Harper A03). Pew Research group found that it was followed
"very closely by 65 percent of the country. About nine out of 10 people followed the story at least "fairly closely" (Harper A03). This project however is not specifically about the Beltway sniper case but how it was talked about on AMW. I argue that AMW's coverage shaped perceptions of the sniper case and the show's agendas. It is my strong desire that this study (its purpose, methodology and results) be accessible and understandable to anyone interested enough to read it.

   Zettl defines Media Aesthetics not as an abstract concept, but as "a process in which we examine a number of media elements, such as lighting and picture composition, and our perceptual reactions to them" (4). In this sense, story content is not the main focus. Instead, the centerpiece becomes the audience interpretations resulting from the aesthetics chosen by television creators to construct a particular view of reality.

   Zettl's theory on applied media aesthetics, along with Kenneth Burke's belief of terministic screens that construct one's reality through the selection, reflection and deflection of meaning and Susanne Langer's look at the power of non-discursive language like music will be used to look closely at AMW's special sniper show. No one would argue with the fact that when a sniper is randomly shooting victims around a major metropolitan area it is a surreal event. But the goal of this project is to take a closer look to see how the show's music was capable of heightening the emotions of viewers. Zettl will be used to look deeper into the aesthetics of music used while Burke will be used to determine its rhetoric and persuasive power. And Langer will help
strengthen the notion that music has a profound effect on listeners and viewers, even if they think they are only “listening.”

Marshall McLuhan believes “All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered” (26). A ten-minute segment of AMW’s coverage of the October 2002 sniper attacks in and around Washington D.C. will be studied as the artifact of analysis. It will serve this project as a way to look closer into the persuasive power of music on television.

While there are many aspects of television production, the project will apply Zettl’s Media Aesthetics theory to the chosen artifact to demonstrate how television newsmagazine show producers, directors, editors, etc. are able to manipulate and articulate intended emotions through music. Along with trying to get closer to the answer of how it is done, the project will also examine why the industry’s producers would want to frequently use music that for example, has high intensity and a lot of activity.

Music is the project’s focal point because little academic research has been done of the topic despite its popularity on television. Robert Root, a popular culture researcher says “The small body of research on popular music that has been done has chiefly demonstrated the difficulty of such study and analysis and the diversity of approaches available to do it” (105). But while the discipline is still forming and has not been fully developed, by analyzing a ten-minute segment of AMW and using Zettl’s theory of applied media aesthetics
along with theories from Burke and Langer, this project cross-examined the power music has on viewers.

Much research has been done on one of music's popular counterparts, the visuals, perhaps because they are the most visible. This project has chosen instead to focus only on music. Creators consciously select music to complement the process of visual interpretation because background melodies have the subtle ability to go straight to your emotions while your head is trying to interpret what you are seeing.

This document reports the results of research that has taken place over two years, analyzing the key problems and issues when confronting media coverage of violence in America. More specifically, the project is aimed at understanding how the use of dramatic music in the AMW response to the sniper attacks uses a media aesthetic and creates what rhetorician Kenneth Burke calls a “terministic screen” to influence the audience’s perception of this reality. Briefly, Burke’s theory is germane because he believes all forms of communication have meaning and our own filters color the way we see things. In terms of this project, the production skills used by AMW will be an example of a terministic screen for reality.

The project has the ability to add a significant contribution to the growing study of music as rhetorical form and the increasing use of technology in television production. Popular culture author Deanna Sellnow says she believes there are two primary reasons for the growing interest in the rhetorical processes of music:
First, music has the potential to function as persuasive communication. Second, this unique form of persuasive communication pervades our society, thus potentially impacting broad audiences. For example, we are exposed to music in automobiles, shopping centers, and waiting rooms, as well as in our homes. If music functions rhetorically and pervades the fabric of society, it follows that music's potential impact as a rhetorical form warrants continued examination (66).

This in-depth look at AMW and its use of music was accomplished through the project's principal research tasks:

- Gather and review relevant scholarly literature
- Analysis of AMW's sniper episode
- Interviews of Washington D.C. residents along with crime, communication, and media experts

The report is divided into five sections. Chapter 1 took a brief look at the background of the artifact of analysis and how it is going to be studied. It also assessed the viability of the study and its possible contribution to relevant scholarship. Chapter 2 reviews related literature to the areas of the study and methodology (Review of Related Literature). Chapter 3 details the theories chosen and how they will be applied to the artifact (Data and its Treatment). Chapter 4 describes the analysis of the artifact and how it can then be applied to larger mediated context (Analysis and Discussion). The final section,
Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions and limitations of the study along with recommendations for future research (Conclusions).

As with any project there are limitations. One limitation of the study is the small amount of academic research into both the rhetorical communication of music and AMW. There have been decade's worth of studies regarding the effects of televised violence seen by audiences, but it seems academicians have left out the power of music. Also because of music almost taking a backseat to television's visuals, they will not be the focus of the study. They will however be discussed as to help contextualize the music and to help readers understand what visuals were laid on top the music.

Another limitation is the personal meaning of music. While theories will be used to help analyze the music, the opinion of only one reviewer will be given. Admittedly, music can have different meanings to different people. "Although sounds can produce certain common behavioral effects, tests have shown that individuals provide their own interpretation of sounds" (Metallinos 38). In other words, music is very subjective, but within that subjectivity there are still some culturally agreed upon interpretations of music. There are cultural norms that we may not totally subscribe to but that we are aware of. Most people having been exposed to the music and images that come out of the culture would get the intent behind the music. The type of music one would use in the background of a Disney movie, for example. You would be hard-pressed to find someone to say that the music in "Cinderella" is somber. Likewise, the strings swelling in the background during a movie scene symbolize that
romance is in the air. You can generally interpret that as drama having grown up in this culture. Nonetheless, author Christine Waitling believes music still has a similar interpretation to most:

Some might argue that the music of one culture does not sound like music to another culture and that the other's music is no more comprehensible than that produced from the randomly-generated piece. But music of any culture follows formulaic principles, and while one culture may not appreciate the music of another, that the music has form cannot be denied, though recognition of what that form is may take some work (111).

Though this study seeks to address the rhetorical power of music on a show known for televising violence, it also acknowledges the very real risk of using television as scapegoat for violence in America. This in-depth look at music on AMW must not redirect attention from deadlier and more significant causes of brutality like drugs, low wages, unemployment, and poor parenting. Therefore, AMW and the entire industry's role in contributing to violence in America must be kept in perspective when compared to these immense societal issues. I along with many others believe it will take a lot more than simply cleaning up television programming if we really want to combat America's long-standing problem with violence (Cole 10).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The first phase of this project involves the collecting of relevant literature regarding the issues of music and the news media. Scholarly writings that deal with topics such as television criticism, music as an aesthetic field, and the rhetorical literature regarding the theorists Kenneth Burke and Susanne Langer were looked at.

To understand how and why different audio techniques are used in television, one must first understand the history of television and what some have to say about why we watch. The chapter will also outline the method of analysis, including how the artifact was looked at.

On Television

After World War II television was beginning to boom in popularity, providing the perfect instrument with which to accomplish the goal of reaching people on a different level (Spigel & Mann 5). Here was a medium that had the ability to deliver a uniform message to the entire nation, unlike newspapers with their limited circulation or movies that could not assure as large or consistent an audience. By 1960, 150 million Americans lived in homes with television. Children were spending more time with television than they were with radio,
comic books, babysitters or even playmates (Cole 1995). The number of households with televisions has only increased since then to a point that one may think it is odd if you do not own a television. Americans are still watching around seven hours of television a day. Add to that time to video games, movies, and the Internet and it seems that mass media are almost inescapable.

Even though the audience share of network television (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox) has gone from a high of 90 percent in the mid-1970s to a more modest 60 percent in 1995 (and this is now divided among four networks instead of three), network television is still viewed by the largest number of people (Cole 9). Today there are nearly 300 broadcast, cable, and satellite networks. Until the mid-70s, local news programs were a prestige item but barely a moneymaker. Not only is local news coverage now a norm, sixty-eight percent of American households subscribe to cable and another 11 percent to satellite systems (Jones 2001). Add that to the popularity of online news sources and Greenfield says there is no denying that America is a media-obsessed nation:

Television is the pervasive American pastime. Cutting through geographic, ethnic, class, and cultural diversity, it is the single binding thread of this country, the one experience that touches young and old, rich and poor, learned and illiterate. A country too big for homogeneity, filled by people from all over the globe, without any set of core values, America never had a central unifying bond. Now we
do. It is possible to answer the question, What does America do?.

(qtd. in Biagi 151)

From 150 million in 1960, television sets now reside in around 162 million American homes (Silver and Thoman 38). With numbers such as these, it is easy to understand that Americans receive the bulk of their information from their family room centerpieces. Image creation, depiction, and subsequent processing play a key role in communicating a message to viewers. As television viewing continues to increase, so does its influence on mass audiences. Media scholars Rosalind Silver and Elizabeth Thoman believe, "You may turn off the television set, but you can't 'just say no' to the pervading influences that mold all our lives" (41). This influence poses media researchers with a common question; can viewers properly make an adequate distinction between fact and fiction?

Media scholar Bonnie Dow is known for her in-depth looks at the television, particularly its representation of women. "Whether or not television 'reflects' reality outside the tube is beside the point: we watch television and it is therefore part of life" (5). Dow goes on to argue that to deny the influence television has on social construction of reality is dangerously naïve: "It is possible for television to be acknowledged as fiction yet be experienced as realistic in its characterization or treatment of issues" (5).

The feminist group Women on Words and Images say that each of us takes an interpretive approach to what we see on television. The organization focuses on sex and race stereotypes and the subsequent messages children
learn about their place in society from literature and television. Their book *Channeling Children: Sex stereotypes in Prime-time TV* tells us that as television viewers, the frame that we watch serves as a piece of reality's pie. It contains some sort of a window that allows each of us to take something from the outside world:

Every television program does make some impression on a [person].

Beyond its particular plot, the program tells that [person] something about the way the world is: whether it is that men kill each other and women cook, or that women spend their husband's money on ludicrous hats, or that some women and men live happy, single lives. [Viewers] may listen with only one ear, but that ear is being bombarded with sometimes distorted data on the way women and men live today. (Women on Words 3)

The rhetorical use of television imagery has brought many household problems to the front row in the American home theater. Real issues such as teenage pregnancy, divorce, and single parent homes have been broadcast to people in greater numbers than ever before. “Particularly when television programming is studied with an eye toward its role in social change, it is useful to view it as a rhetorical discourse that works to accomplish some end” (Dow 7). No image has been more common to viewers than violence. But it is also true that the top rated shows are also some of the most violent and most gruesome, such as “Crime Scene Investigators” (CSI) and the long running “Law & Order” series which has now spawned several spin-offs. Violent acts
have raised concern in both the private sector and various media outlets around the country.

Television news is grounded in featuring content that is made to appear 'live,' with the audience a part of the action. Storytelling is the central concept to cultivation analysis. Gerbner believes that "the basic difference between human beings and other species is that we live in a world that is created by the stories we tell" (qtd. in Salwen & Stacks 112). With this knowledge at hand, it is no wonder society's television viewers have a problem separating fact from fiction. It has been suggested that television shows add to the increasing "blur effect" Adorno and Horkheimer addressed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In this spirit, author Kevin Glynn more recently examined the current debate over what he calls "Trash TV." Glynn says the 'blur effect' suggests it is increasingly difficult to separate "real" life from actual crime statistics:

It 'panders' to the people, stressing storytelling over facts and conflating 'reality' with fiction.' It eschews the mission of public edification and 'enlightenment.' It serves unrefined tastes for the scandalous and grotesque. It encourages video voyeurism. It sensationalizes the news, short-circuiting reason through excessive emotionality. It threatens the viability of the 'real' news. (16)

Media scholars Gray Cavendar and Mark Fishman also took a closer look at the blurring lines of fact versus fiction on television. In their book,
Entertaining Crime: Television Reality Programs, they took one of the first looks into this new genre of television. They suggest that the reality shows "blur the line between news and entertainment; some even blur the line between fact and fiction" (3). They go on to discuss particular shows and their effects:

Programs like "Hard Copy" cover real people; often these are celebrities, although occasionally, qtd. in the coverage of the O. J. Simpson trial, stories are about celebrities and crime. Programs like "Rescue 911" and "America's Most Wanted" reenact actual events. Perhaps the defining feature of reality television is that these programs claim to present reality. The TV reality crime programs that are the subject of this volume claim to present true stories about crime, criminals, and victims. In this, they are a hybrid form of programming: they resemble aspects of the news, but, like entertainment programs, they often air in prime time; some even show as reruns. (3)

A tragic example of the continuously disappearing line between fact and fiction occurred on September 11th, 2001. After a small group of fanatics used commercial jetliners as bombs to attack the heart of New York City, the images could be seen repeatedly all over the world. The pictures of the two gigantic towers falling towards a city full of innocent victims will remain an image few will be able to forget. But soon after, network stations were advised against televising the images because of various studies showing that viewers
were unable to bifurcate reruns and actual live footage. In plain terms, rebroadcasts from September eleventh may have led some viewers to believe the events were happening all over again.

The tragedies of September 11,\textsuperscript{th} 2001, unfortunately allowed media researchers to examine a large number of effects that viewing disasters through the eyes of a camera lens can lead to. Polls conducted after the event show that Americans have a heightened fear of terrorism and a belief that another terrorist act is more likely to occur in the near future. Cavender and Bond-Maupin believe “Television is especially suited for evoking fear. As a visual medium, television conveys situational cues that elicit fear, such as dark, isolated areas or menacing strangers” (312). Rubin et. al believe fear comes from a belief system about others. “Fright or fear stems from basic human reactions to portrayals of distressing events and uncertainty...Fear is an emotional response closely tied to feelings of safety and faith in others. People feel afraid and unsafe when frightening media-depicted events are perceived to be possible or likely” (11). Dr. Carl Jensen of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) behavioral science unit feels watching constant crime coverage can have definite effects on the average television viewer:

When the message is reinforced consistently it really causes you to pay attention exactly to what is going on, looking at it, and reinforces that I can be a victim; It can throw perception off kilter. For a lot of people, perception is reality. When you see something like that on a continual basis, you forget that your chance of becoming a victim is as
small as really as it is and forget the more mundane risks. Dying of a heart attack vs. dying from a terrorist attack. But what are people afraid of—the rare, somewhat random, terrifying events that are out of the ordinary. (Personal Interview 23 July 2003)

There is no definitive conclusion about media’s effects. Some researchers believe it is more complex than simply that television viewing equals fear of crime. Rubin, et. al’s findings suggest that viewer characteristics, rather than television exposure as found in many cultivation analysis studies, are the most consistent predictors of fear, safety, and faith in others. They sampled participants approximately six months after the September 2001 attacks to determine how they were affected by the high amount of television coverage the events were receiving. Combine the sheer nature of the terrorist attacks with the dramatic coverage, and one would assume people would feel unsafe and afraid. They defined fear as being “an emotional response closely tied to feelings of safety and faith in others” (130). They added, “People feel afraid and unsafe when frightening media-depicted events are perceived to be possible or likely” (130). Not surprisingly, they found women were generally more fearful than men. But their results also found that “watching terrorist-related stories did not significantly correlate with perceptions of safety or faith in others, or predict fear, safety or faith in others. Exposure to the stories only correlated with the fear of being a victim of terrorism” (136).

The argument over media’s impact on society will long be debated amongst scholars, critics, and the viewing public. As the access to technology
increases and choices become more available it seems apparent consumers must become more aggressive because the media is only going to be more visible. Popular culture author Mihaly Kubey says answers to the question of media's impact have not been fully answered.

Assumptions about the nature of television viewing often lead to particular kinds of conclusions about the medium's ultimate impact. But at least as far as some critics are concerned, social scientists have not yet sufficiently answered many questions about how television viewing is used and experienced."

Mass communication scholar Leo Bogart also stresses that the impact of television is hard to prove with scientific accuracy. He instead compares the impact of television, or of the mass media in general, to water dripping on a stone. He says, "Any individual drop might not leave a detectable trace, but over time a long succession of drops would wear away an impression." (169)

While it is known that violence is a large part of today's media coverage, it is still uncertain why there is such high interest and intrigue. As mass communication critic and professor Jeffrey Goldstein says, "Few scholars, researchers, or parents will contest the notion that children are fascinated by violence, whether it takes the form of Bugs Bunny in a pot of boiling water, Snow White opening the door to an old hag handing out red apples, or Max squaring off with the Wild Things" (69). There is always an option to simply turn off the television but America is a media nation. Americans watch news, debate news, and wait for news. Were there any injuries? Is there traffic?
What is the weather going to be tomorrow? Who is Jennifer Lopez dating now?

You may think television news is becoming more about entertainment than important information, but it is high ratings that ultimately keep stations in business. Stations would be forced to change programming if ratings fell because of the lack of interest in watching 24-hour coverage. Goldstein believes, "While parents, teachers, politicians, and social scientists often bemoan the violence in entertainment, they neglect to ask why a significant market for violent literature, films, cartoons, video games, toys, and sports exists in the first place (xiii)." He goes on to address its place in society by looking at what others have said about violent behavior shown on television: "Politicians and others who debate violent entertainment focus only on its production while ignoring its public reception. Psychologists, too, have ignored the appeal of violent entertainment, focusing untiringly on its effects" (Cole, qtd. in Goldstein xiii). Goldstein's results found various reasons for the attraction to televised violence:

It is obvious that the attractions of violent imagery are many. The audiences for images of violence, death, and dying do not share a single motive—some viewers seek excitement, others companionship or social acceptance through shared experience, and still others wish to see justice enacted. For some, the immersion in a fantasy world is its primary appeal. (222)
Media, television in particular, has become the victim of many attacks and as part of the demise of American society. Critics claim viewers may get an inaccurate or distorted understanding of crime from information shown on television (Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz 2000; Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz 2003). But as media critics Potter and Kappeler explain, “The media is only one half of the equation. The audience is the other half” (19).

Carl Jensen agrees, stating that more than ever, the television viewer must analyze what is being seen:

We as citizens have a role that we can have sensory overload when you’re exposed to things on a regular basis. What that requires on our parts is turn off the TV, get involved with other things, try to keep things in perspective as much as possible. Try as we can to have a realistic sense of perception of risk and try to understand what’s out there.” (Personal Interview 23 July 2003)

Along with the need for viewers to analyze what they are seeing, they also must look at what they are hearing. Dictionaries will tell you that sound is a disturbance of the atmosphere that human beings and most animals can hear. Such disturbances are produced by practically everything that moves, especially if it moves quickly or in a rapid and repetitive manner. Aristotle writes in his essay on sound and hearing that hearing is the most instructive human sense (1). He believes that for sound to occur there must be two objects and space between them, therefore making it impossible for one object
alone to generate a sound. We are surrounded by so many sounds it seems impossible to imagine a world without it.

It often plays second fiddle to the visual aspects of television, but the audio components are equally, if not more important than their visual counterparts. Before audio was a fundamental part of television, silent movies and radio programs were part of the popular culture. To switch between characters, radio program actors simply had to change their dialect or voice inflection. Sound effects were also routine part of the programs to help convey mood. But in silent movies, actors had to "overact" to convey that same mood. They did not have the luxury of being able to ring a bell to signal a scene change or play sad music to reflect the scene's mood. Alten believes "Sound is a force: emotional, perceptual, physical. It can excite feelings, convey meaning, and, if loud enough, resonate the body" (4). Therefore, the ability to produce sound without images on radio broadcasts, made it easier to understand, while image without sounds required producers, directors, and actors to make extra efforts to help audiences comprehend the scene.

On News

Large proportions of Americans watch local news coverage and can name their favorite station's newscasters but have never seen the inside of a newsroom. It may help the general public come to a better understanding of the media if it was known just how the newsmaking process works. In the business world, deadlines are often movable, but in the media industry, deadlines are final. Reporters work under very specific deadlines with
mandates to report news first, fast, and accurately. In the news business, old news is no news. If a reporter has been assigned a story for the 5:00 newscast, the story must be shot, written, and edited by that time. The story will be erased from the schedule if it cannot be completed by the time it is needed.

And just like every other organization, its members look for advancement and recognition. For those in the media industry, it means being a part of major story. The job of a journalist is similar to that of a law enforcement officer who dreams to be part of a major case. Journalists track down leads, talk to victims, witnesses, and suspects. They must work fast and accurately, investigating a story from its beginning to its end. Every reporter and photojournalist wants to be part of the big story like Watergate or the September 11th terrorist attacks. The search for newsworthy material is a journalist's job. It must be interesting, intriguing, and be able to arouse readers' emotions. And it seems reporters most often look for interest and intrigue in crime stories. Crime is the most reported issues by news stations not only in the United States but also across the globe (Williams & Dickinson 1993; Ditton & Duffy 1983).

The average television viewer may watch hours of television every day but continue to be passive consumers rather than seeing the fundamentals that create the shows they are watching. To better understand and become a critical consumer one must know how the pieces come together in order to
have a good knowledge base. Music is just one aesthetic viewers need to become more aware of because of its growing presence in all areas of media.

Because sound is intentionally made to be invisible and working in the background, you may think it is rudimentary. Alten believes this is because "sounds emanating from the TV speaker closely resemble the sounds that surround us in our everyday lives—unlike television's two-dimensional images, which are fundamentally different from our visual experience of the three-dimensional world" (196).

Jump forward fifty years from the beginning of television and you have television that is rarely without sound. Critic and author Jeremy Butler says the sounds heard on television can be separated into three parts (188).

- Speech
- Sound Effects
- Music

Speech is the most common and familiar audio feature. As viewers, we come to recognize the voices of actors and may tune in simply to hear them. Butler cites an example about an experiment done by a network in the 1980s during a football game. They broadcast the game without any announcers rather than the typical play-by-play and color commentators. It turned out to be a one-time experiment after viewers and fans were very upset. In response to the failed experiment, Butler says, "Apparently, television visuals are lost without speech" (188).

Sound effects are what separate Western movies from soap operas. What would a Western be without the sounds of gunfire and soap operas without
slapped faces and slamming doors? Some of these sounds are entered into the scene during post-production editing, but some are also produced live on set. Butler says these natural sounds heard in the background, otherwise known as ambient sound, encompass the category of sound effects (191). Ambient sounds can range from the ocean being heard over a couple as they walk along the beach to a band playing in the background of a school dance.

There is no doubt music plays a big part in our everyday lives. From the morning commute to the evening news, music is everywhere. It can make us instantly feel happy or sad and has the ability to bring back memories we thought were gone forever. Zettl says this is one of the reasons why we can quickly accept music as part of a television scene despite whether it is needed or not (320). He looks deeper into the power of music and says if a viewer watches a neutral scene like family dinnertime, varying the music can change the perception of the scene (320). If it is upbeat and serene, it appears all is well; but if it is somber and serious, we will see that as a sign of turmoil coming. In a montage, particularly when quick cuts are edited together in a frenzied manner, music can serve a vital function—holding it together with some sort of unifying musical idea. Without music the montage can become just chaotic and incomprehensible. Concordia University professor and scholar in the field of television aesthetics, Nikos Metallinos believes along with music's ability to add new dimensions to the sense of sight. “Sound forms the basis of speech, our most powerful means of communication” (38).
On Music as an Aesthetic Field

Most of us can recognize the opening tunes of shows like *Friends*, but television sounds have more purposes than just letting us know a show is starting. Butler says some of the purposes relative to this study are:

- Capture viewer attention
- Manipulate viewer understanding of the image

Capture Viewer Attention

If a television was muted so the sound could not be heard, you may not even be aware it is turned on. But when sound is added, it becomes a multisensory experience. While pictures may interest your eyes, sound appeals to both your eyes and your ears. As Metallinos says, “a television picture without its accompanying sound is perceived differently; it assumes a different meaning and at times is meaningless. Sounds emphasize mood and provides meaning in a predominantly visual medium such as television” (32).

Another way music can help to capture viewer attention is familiarity. If sounds are recognizable, such as a show's theme song or a popular song being sung by an actor, it helps to increase viewer's involvement and enjoyment. Advertisers also like to know that music can aid in viewer identification with products seen on commercials. For example, the car company Cadillac using Led Zeppelin as background music perhaps to gain attention from a new, younger demographic. Viewers may even watch a particular show simply to see a particular band that is scheduled to perform. Butler believes the familiarity factor could be a reason why sound is used in
television because of its need to compete with other distractions. He also feels the importance of being able to grab and hold onto a viewer's attention is what sets it apart from the theater:

Most of us watch television in a brightly lit room, with the TV set positioned amid a variety of visual stimuli (unlike the darkened room of a theater). While television is on, conversations continue, the phone rings, a teakettle may start boiling. In sum, television viewing is an inattentive pastime. Our gaze may be riveted to set the set for brief, intense intervals, but the overall experience is one of the distracted glaze (192).

Manipulate Viewer Understanding

Sounds (in particular, music) can help shape a viewer's perception of the scene. If a couple is at a candlelit dinner table and not talking as they eat, it is the music that will help to form an opinion of the mood. If it were a romantic serenade, it would probably lead you to believe the couple is in love and glad to be spending time together. In that situation the music is in agreement with the scene, but if dark and somber music was heard instead, the opposite may be believed. Viewers may think the couple does not want to be there together and may not be talking because they are fighting. Butler recalls a situation in which the music does not reinforce the viewer's understanding of a contrasting sound-image. He says it happens infrequently on television and says a good example of this belief can be found in recent politics:
If audio of George Bush making his 1988 campaign pledge of "Read my lips: No new taxes" were dubbed over an image of him signing the authorization for taxes a couple of years later, the contrasting sound and image would be used for obvious political commentary. (193)

Butler goes on to explain that the sound-image relationship does not have to be in agreement or disagreement. He says neutral music or sound may be used simply to draw attention from one part of the scene to another. For example, if college students are gathered at a loud party filled with rock music, and producers want the attention to shift from partygoers to a particular actor, his/her voice would then be louder than the music. The sounds are not agreeing or disagreeing, just shifting.

Deanna Sellnow also looked at the ability of music to either be agreeing or contradictory. She used a popular country song by Mary Chapin Carpenter to examine the ability of music to persuade listeners to reject hegemonic masculinity. She asserts that music enriches meaning by either reinforcing or contradicting lyrics emotionally. Reinforcing musical patterns may make the meaning of the lyrics more poignant for listeners while contradictory emotional messages conveyed in the musical score alter the meaning in some way. She says there are several reasons for not using incongruous music on television:

Such incongruity between lyrics and score may (a) result in listener misinterpretation of the intended message, (b) usurp the lyrical message altogether, resulting in an emotional message devoid of linguistic meaning, or (c) "couch" the potentially defense-arousing
discursive message in ambiguity, allowing the rhetor to persuade the
listener gradually and systematically toward accepting the ultimate
conclusion. (4)

Timothy Scheurer looked at music not on television, but in a popular film.
He provides an analysis of the capability of music score in “Casablanca” that
he says, “illuminated and connected the political romantic conflicts and themes
in the film.” He asserts that music has the innate ability to embody a film and
vice versa: “You can't mention Casablanca and not think of ‘As Time Goes By’
or mention ‘As Time Goes By’ and not think of the film (32) " Scheurer
believes the film's music composer used music in various ways to showcase
various meanings. It is evident that song was used to symbolize virtue, sharp
conflict, reconciliation, and transcendence.

Television Aesthetics

Everywhere you turn, there is music. From commercial jingles, to the
newest pop tune on the radio, it is an everyday part of pop culture. What would
Jaws be without the dark, two-note melody alerting viewers about a possible
shark attack? Viewers do not have to even see the shark do not that it is
coming because of the recognizable leit motif used. Zettl's major theories state
that applied media aesthetics (light, space, time/motion, sound) goes beyond
traditional aesthetics. As Zettl says, “Music is one of the most direct ways of
establishing a certain mood. Music can make us laugh or cry, feel happy or
sad" (320). He believes says messages on television are no longer neutral;
instead, they're "essential elements in the aesthetic communication system" (3).

As consumers of television, we take a lot of what Zettl says about applied media aesthetics for granted. Viewers know they are watching television, but may not realize its ability to have an influence on them. It may also be that they do not care about its possible impact or perhaps think they are immune to it. In terms of self-opinion, most people do not want to think of themselves as passive, manipulated consumers of the media. To consider ourselves manipulated consumers takes away our image of being capable of individual thought. People want to think of themselves as informed and not as pawns. We thrive on being independent thinkers in America with the ability to come to conclusions on our own.

Zettl defines applied media aesthetics as the branch of aesthetics dealing with sense perceptions and how television and other electronic audiovisual media are able to influence audiences through fundamental image elements, such as light, space, time/motion, and sound (362). He says, "Lighting is the deliberate control of light. The basic purpose of lighting is to manipulate and articulate the perception of our environment" (18). In other words, soft and harsh lighting can manipulate a viewer's attitude towards a setting or a character. The way light is used can make objects, people and environments look beautiful or ugly, soft or harsh, artificial or real. Zettl also compares light to music by adding "Very much like music, lighting seems to be able to bypass
our usual perceptual screens—our rational faculty with its judgment—and affect us directly and immediately" (18).

In a journal article entitled “The ‘Illusion of Life’ Rhetorical Perspective: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Music as Communication,” Deanna and Timothy Sellnow say “The rhetorical potential of music has intrigued critics for centuries” (395). They go on to make a case for Zettl’s notion of music not being neutral by stating, “Music has meaning...In short, music sounds the way feelings feel. And where words fall short in expressing the inner emotions of the inmost being, music is able to do so” (Sellnow 397).

This theory was demonstrated in fall 2002 with “America’s Most Wanted” (AMW’s) coverage of the sniper attacks in and around the Washington D.C. area. In this instance, music was used by AMW to showcase viewers' perceptions of the events. Mass communication scholar Horace Newcomb believes this is where producers and writers come in. He calls them “cultural interpreters” because they respond to real events as they seek to “create new meaning in the combination of cultural elements with embedded significance” (505). There was an hour-long show of images and words, but behind various scenes, music could be heard. In a sense, the producers chose various pieces of music to work on the emotions of viewers in a subconscious matter, ultimately completing the picture, and the sensory experience that watching television has become.

To further understand how music can help shape a viewer’s emotion, here is a simple exercise. Visualize a movie scene. In it, a young boy is walking
down the street alone. If, for example, playful music were introduced, you would probably think he might be on his way to a playful or joyful experience. For the sake of example, maybe he is headed to a friend’s house to play. But what if, instead of playful music, eerie or dark music was introduced? Your perception of what is to come may change, and you would probably think the boy is on his way to an unhappy, or even dangerous occurrence. Music has the ability to shape not only a scene, but how we perceive that scene, and to some extent, the scenes to come. You do not have to process music in the same fashion you have to process pictures because it gives you distinct, yet invisible clues.

The profound effect music has on popular culture can even be demonstrated in young children. Research led by Wendy Josephson for the Department of Canadian Heritage looks at the effects of music on preschoolers. Her team’s conclusions found that most young children will respond quite consistently to the subtle formal feature of a child’s or woman’s voice on a sound track – a feature that signals material that is likely to be interesting and comprehensible to them (Josephson 1). Others studies have looked further into the topic of music and children and concluded that advertisers use unusual sights and sounds to grand and hold the attention of children (Barcus 1980; Brucks et. al 1988).

To some, Zettl’s applied media aesthetic theory may seem elementary. It seems common knowledge would tell us that music makes us feel a certain way, but it is far more complex. Zettl, however, is not alone in his quest to
understand the power of media in popular culture. Because Zettl is not concerned with rhetoric in a traditional sense, theories from rhetorician Kenneth Burke are needed to look at music as a rhetorical device. While Burke does not speak directly about television, he is useful to the project to bridge a gap from Zettl’s applied media aesthetics to music used in a journalistic video as a particular way through which we develop a certain or alternative understanding of the rhetorical artifact.

Burke defines rhetoric as the “use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 41-43). Rhetoric, as he describes, is seen as a component of a larger phenomenon, symbolic action. As humans, we are "symbolic animals" to Burke and are not able to view anything without the use of certain symbols. In most cases these symbols are what we call “language,” but it can be argued that music has the same sort of symbolic power. Just like with verbal language, music allows us to communicate with one another in a way that is comprehensible and understandable. Different cultures use languages native to their culture and so to their music. Beating on a drum in a rhythmic fashion may not mean anything to Americans, but to others it can have profound significance.

Persuasion is also essential in Burke’s view of rhetoric. Although persuasion involves evoking actions in other human agents, speakers must first look for identification with the other speaker. In terms of television, news anchors and hosts look to connect with viewers to create a common bond and
establish credibility. Therefore it is necessary to first identify with that person's speech, attitudes, and beliefs before persuasion can take place.

Burke believes every individual interprets language through filters and clouds our language, which construct the meanings of the world. He calls them "terministic screens," and they act like viewfinders on a camera. It is through the screen that we view, or more accurately construct, our reality (Language 45). In short, author Craig Waddell asserts, "a terministic screen provides a meaning system that constrains our ability to turn reality into information, provides tools for evaluating and naming situations, and encourages us to adopt certain roles within those situations" (76). Waddell conducted a rhetorical analysis of *Silent Spring* by environmentalist Rachel Carson. He concluded that by constructing a terministic screen where care for the environment becomes the most practical course through which we all should live, she incorporates society's economic, legal, and political functions.

When Burke says "every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" (1965, 49), he is referring to a terministic screen that directs the attention of the perceiver. Language choice directs our attention toward some things and away from others. Thus, all language is innately rhetorical and intentional. The screen is a set of symbols, and words are a large part of those symbols, regardless of the format they come in. Every set of words or symbols becomes a certain screen through which we perceive the world. Music is a screen in an audible form that can symbolize a feeling. It has been a traditional form of communication in most parts of the world throughout history. Drums
were banned during slavery because owners did not want them to send messages of rebellion to other slaves, so the slaves sang songs to express personal feeling and to cheer on one another as they worked on the plantations. In more recent times, songs have tried to end everything from the creation of nuclear weapons to war. Music in many ways gives us a more precise picture of people and events than any other existing format.

To more clearly illustrate the theory of terministic screens Burke explains how he discovered this significant idea in an unexpected place in his book *Language as Symbolic Action*:

> When I speak of ‘terministic screens,’ I remember some photographs I once saw. They were different photographs of the same objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here something so factual as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded. (46)

And just as the various colored filters changed perceptions of the pictures, so can music influence perception of the message of AMW. In chapter 4, Burke’s theory will be more thoroughly applied to the production skills used by AMW to help not only to select meaning for viewers, but also to reflect a certain ideology or philosophy, and to deflect viewer attention from other aspects of this case.

That was an example of a physical filter, but it can also be applied to emotions and the way viewers feel about television shows. Most people would
probably say they watch television for entertainment and escapism. They do not realize they are interacting with it rather than just passively watching. The viewer then becomes subconsciously trained to interact with television this way and starts to believe its role is to entertain. This may lead to viewers to judge a show with less of an entertainment element as substandard. In the end, the message loses out and the entertainment value soon becomes more important to the viewer (Keller 12).

Catherine Fox applied Burke's theory on terministic screens as a research method for professional communication. She conducted a case study to examine the relationship between an organization of technical writers and engineers as they tried to negotiate changes to a manual (372). Fox says that she had to look at the situation through various terministic screens or she would not have been able to see the "nuances" in the negotiation process had she not be able to "see" the situation from different viewpoints and "only looked at the negotiation process through a terministic screen that construes a rigid dichotomy between the content specialist who holds the knowledge (and therefore power) and the writer who is the scribe for the knowledge holder" (383).

Fox used Burke's theory of dramatism and the pentad—purpose, act, agent, scene, and agency to see the drama of the workplace. She chose the pentadic ratio of agent-scene because it offered a terministic screen that helped her analyze the ways in which individuals got along in the workplace. She says it enabled her "to see that the negotiation process involved both
learning to communicate and communicating to learn; the agents’ actions were shaped by the educational scene (380). Because she witnessed a lot of tension between the writers and the engineers she wanted to observe the workplace drama through the ratios of purpose-agent, purpose-scene, and purpose-act. She did this in part because she felt “each actor had a different purpose (purpose-agent) and was attempting to move the other to be ‘consubstantial’ with her/him” (381). The purpose-agent terministic screen helped her to see that both groups (writers/engineers) were operating under different constraints, while the purpose-scene ratio offered a terministic screen that let her see how the work of individuals shifted to meet workplace deadlines. Fox says the purpose-act ratio as terministic screen led her to “gain a multilayered perspective on this negotiation process” (382). Moving away from rigid thinking and moving towards new terministic screens helped her see how individuals gained a willingness to learn something new and worked together in a workplace drama.

In this project, the music used in the AMW segment chosen will be looked at as a “terministic screen” through which we develop a certain or alternative understanding of the rhetorical artifact. Just as Burke believes language is not a neutral tool, the same can be argued for music. And like the example of the young boy walking down the street with a particular type of music in the background, the music chosen for the AMW segment will show the ability of music as rhetoric to heighten viewer’s feelings.
Like Burke, philosopher Susanne Langer also looked at humans as being symbol-making creatures beginning with her seminal book *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*. She addresses symbols as language, and the philosophy of music in particular, by discussing the separation between discursive and non-discursive forms of language. She believes focusing on only the discursive aspect of language leads to a restricted sense of our most powerful tool to symbolize (88-89). She says symbolism underlies all human knowing and understanding, and symbols can be either discursive or non-discursive. Discursive symbolism, to Langer, is language-based thought and meaning, while non-discursive symbolism is nonverbal-based emotion and meaning such as music, dance, and other art forms.

Music is non-discursive because it can convey the forms of feelings an individual may not be able to express in words. She does not give it a label like Burke, but Langer too believes music is an important medium by which humans construct their concept of reality. Langer feels that music stands alone in its ability to match sounds with what humans feel. She theorizes that music provides a window in which a producer can create a vantage point to one's point of view (in Bowman 199). She says it “can express the forms of vital experience which language is particularly unfit to convey” (qtd. in Bowman 32).

But there is some confusion over her theories that are troublesome to this project. To Langer, music is not the cause or the cure of feelings, but their
"logical expression" (218). Music is not a real language to her because it is "an unconsummated symbol" rather than having a vocabulary and grammar rules like words (240). Therefore “[articulation is its life, but not assertion; expressiveness, not expression” (240). She believes that instrumental music is not a language or a discursive symbolism because it lacks a vocabulary with fixed meanings. It fits into a category of “an unexplored possibility of genuine semantic beyond the limits of discursive language” (86).

The Sellnow’s take a closer look at Langer’s theory of aesthetic symbolism “by creating a rhetorical perspective that can be used to analyze systematically music as communication (399). They argue that music communicates by “creating the illusion of life for listeners through the dynamic interaction between virtual experience (lyrics) and virtual time (music)” (399). They looked at songs for which the music was both consistent and non-consistent with the lyrical message. By looking at the use of music in various songs, their results found “music’s unique potential to convey multiple messages...makes it a primary means by which to direct different persuasive appeals simultaneously toward diverse target audiences, and to do so effectively” (413).

Zettl’s theory on applied media aesthetics, Burke’s terministic screens, and Langer’s non-discursive look at music were applied to the portion of the show chosen for analysis. Zettl will help to show that music is a very important part of context on television. In this project, the production used on AMW is the terministic screen through which viewers got a sense of reality. Burke’s theory
will help conceptualize the ways in which the show's music has the ability to
heighten the emotions of the viewers. Susanne Langer's theory will
demonstrate the ability of music on television to construct our concept of
reality.

Music is inevitably a major part of television programming and becoming
ever more present. The music of AMW's special sniper segment served as the
artifact of analysis due to the pervasiveness of the story across the country
and the powerful music they used. The next chapter will help to situate the
show historically and take an in-depth look at their production methods.
CHAPTER 3

DATA and ITS TREATMENT

Terror Hits Home

Crime is nothing new to America. By the time it takes you to read this project, there will be about 21 violent crimes including two murders, 10 forcible rapes, 50 robberies, and 35 aggravated assaults. And that does not include the property crimes that are committed every three seconds in America (FBI 4). Crime is so pervasive in America that in The Rich Get Richer, the Poor Get Prison sociologist Jeffrey Reiman says crime has now become the national pastime. By the end of 2001 close to six million U.S. adults were either imprisoned or had served time in the past (6). But the crime spree that began on October 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2002 in Montgomery County, Maryland was something not seen before in Montgomery County or America. They averaged less than 15 murders a year with a population of nearly 850,000. But during one day alone their murder rate increased 25 percent. Four people were killed in less than hour doing the things all of us do everyday—cutting grass, pumping gas, waiting for the bus, and cleaning out the car. Like the typical spree killers there was an older, angry leader and a younger, submissive follower working
together as a team. According to the FBI, a spree killer is someone who goes over the edge but it is hard to determine when he or she will strike.

[They go on] a rampage of crime, often including multiple murders, but usually during an extension of one basic episode. The description may encompass more time than the frenzied explosion of typical mass murderer, however. This offender differs from the serial killer in time of activity and emotional disposition (Giannangelo 109).

In the Beltway sniper spree, the shooters worked so fast that law enforcement was still responding to a crime scene when a report of another shooting was coming in. The pair would go on to shoot and kill 10 people and wound three more in just three weeks before a truck driver who heard and wrote down the car description helped capture them. The victims were of all ages and races including a 13-year-old boy on his way to school. They were parents getting snacks for their child's church youth group, a woman in the process of building a house with her husband, a man helping out an elderly neighbor.

One only had to turn on the television in any part of the country during the sniper's three-week rampage to have seen the evidence of the seemingly random killings. In this case, "America's Most Wanted" (AMW) and other news media outlets did not have to exaggerate the message of the snipers; the situation itself was terrifying.

I was paranoid. I thought he would come back. I believe my anxiety was justified because it happened again. I thought he would come back and shoot me and my family.

Pam, 42 (Personal Interview 23 July 03)
The incidents that happened were scary and unfortunate, but one positive outcome was the increase in time spent together with the family.

Andre, 47 (Personal Interview 12 June 03)

I watched all the coverage and when a crime was committed outside of our community, I would meet my friends at the store and grocery shop because we knew he wasn’t in the area.

Sheila, 54 (Personal Interview 16 July 03)

AMW’s special segment and most other news programs showed stirring images of a young child walking through a parking lot in a zigzag fashion because it is said to be a method said to help avoid a sniper’s shot. Tarps were being hung from the front of gas station pump areas to protect customers from becoming targets. People were physically hiding behind car doors and using them grocery carts as shields while loading groceries into their vehicles.

Crime is undoubtedly a large part of news coverage. New York Times contributor Walter Goodman explains, “Violent crime is made for the tube...the small screen world is composed largely of villains and victims” (H33). The news media are one of the few industries that can profit from crime, especially a high profile terrorist attack. Rival stations compete for the most recent and exclusive information in hopes of high ratings and even industry awards. Cavender and Bond-Maupin further this belief with the notion that “The media serve to stimulate our interest in crime. Newspapers, for example, detail the exploits of criminals, while television news and crime drama focus on crimes” (305).
So AMW, of course, was not the only outlet focusing a majority of their programming on the hunt for the Washington D.C. area snipers. Local and network stations all across the country were sending resources to the nation’s capital to cover the case. Mike Fitzsimmons, the Assistant News Director at WNBC-TV in New York City, says he believes it was a major media event. He sent a reporter and photographer to the scene and had at least one news story about the sniper’s spree, and sometimes a few, in every broadcast for a month (Personal Interview 25 Sept. 2003). He and other media insiders say the story was newsworthy because of the nature of the crime; the public was the target and the shootings continued over a period of time.

Due to the nature of the project being about the persuasive abilities of music in a television show, the data all come from video. The artifact was viewed and analyzed according to its style of music. AMW’s footage helped to display the powerful rhetorical effects created by the music and shown on television throughout the country. Each track of music was studied individually to determine both its musical and rhetorical grouping. For example, there is a somber track used while Walsh’s track introduces a shooting at a middle school in Bowie, Maryland. Visuals of parents running with their children in hand away from the school past yellow caution tape are shown while the music is low and full of activity. The case’s lead investigator Chief Charles Moose talks about the case getting personal and kids not being safe anymore. Drums hit long, sustained notes to create a high level of drama and suspense.

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While listening to the musical track, one is left wondering how anyone could shoot a 13-year-old child.

America's Most Wanted

America's Most Wanted was chosen for this critical interrogation because unlike local newscasts, it has a singular focus and agenda; it does not have to include sports and weather. Instead, the focus is just on crime. And my professional experience at AMW serves as a foundation to say they have a well-developed crime reporting background.

When AMW aired its first broadcast on the Fox Network in February 1988, some would say it spawned the genre known as “reality television.” But it has gone beyond watching couples test their loyalty on Temptation Island or backstabbing cast members on Survivor. Goldstein says, “America's Most Wanted...is after the fashion of eclectic postmodern hybridity, part telethon, part newscast, part documentary, part cop show, and part family drama” (2).

The show and its host, John Walsh, are both known for their reenactments of gruesome crimes. Every week, they profile several missing fugitives and even missing children. But during the sniper case, they did something different. This time, the whole hour-long show was devoted to the hunt for the snipers and even gave out a special hotline number rather than the number they’d used every week for more than a decade for viewers to call in with any information. The show was full of dramatic reenactments, haunting music, and sobbing soundbites from the families of the victims.
AMW and its viewers have helped catch 828 fugitives, while the show continues to help the public search out the worst criminals in our society (amw.com). Network executives once cancelled the show but due to high numbers of loyal viewers and law enforcement agencies around the country writing and calling in, it was brought back on air and has been around ever since. The show’s notoriety and the nature of the program is one reason it was chosen to be the only artifact of analysis.

Crime is undoubtedly AMW’s focus. They have both an east (Washington D.C.) and west (Los Angeles) coast bureau devoted to researching and producing segments on fugitives wanted for everything from stolen vehicles to murder, along with missing children across the country. They do not have to spend time talking about court proceedings like Court TV or talk to celebrities about upcoming movies like other network news magazine shows. All AMW does is feature ongoing criminal investigations. They have the luxury of spending more time on one story than most news outlets.

It is an hour-long program, consisting of several segments, each about a different fugitive or missing child. Witnesses or eyewitnesses, family members, and law enforcement officials are used to tell the story with soundbites. Goldstein says the show is part of the device that generates a continuous buzz of “low-level fear that permeates U.S. popular culture: naturalized fear, ambient fear, ineradicable atmospheric fright, the discomforting affective Muzak that might come to be remembered as a trademark of the late-twentieth-century America” (4).
The show is known and recognized for its re-enactments. They are typically made with actors bearing striking resemblance to the perpetrator and locations are turned into near exact replicas. Dr. Z.G. Standing Bear, chair of the Criminal Justice Department at Valdosta State College in Georgia says this is where reality and fiction meet. “They sensationalize the most horrible, spectacular crimes, making people believe they live in a more dangerous society than they do,” he says. “It promotes a fear of crime, which in turn [helps] political opportunists who push for tougher laws on crime and more prisons (qtd. in Curriden 32).”

While it seems critics do not have much good to say about the show, those who put it together every week feel they are serving the viewing community well. Kara Kurcz, AMW’s breaking news producer believes a major part of her job is keeping viewers interested so they stay involved.

Because it’s a television program you have to entertain in order to keep people’s attention and therefore catch more fugitives. We tried using less re-enactments but large numbers of viewers complained. People feel invested in the story and feel like they have to catch them. AMW makes you feel like a good citizen and doing something good.

(Personal Communication 2 Aug. 2003)

Brian Lee, an AMW re-enactment producer adds that John Walsh has world-appeal. “They remember John Walsh’s agonizing story and then standing next to Ronald Reagan fighting for victim’s rights. He’s an expert in his field and motivated by his own pain” (Personal Communication 2 Aug. 2003). Probably
due to a combination of those reasons for watching, their ratings only continue
to stay strong despite their Saturday evening slot (not typically a place for
highly rated shows). Executive Producer Lance Hefflin says “We have one of
the most loyal audiences in television history” (Personal Interview 26 Sept.
2003). And Dr. Standing Bear says it could be worse. “I guess it’s better than
running soap operas 24 hours a day (qtd. in Curriden 32)”

For the Washington D.C. Beltway sniper case, they show went further than
ever before. Police asked them to join in the manhunt and on October 11th,
2002, AMW did it a little different. Rather than feature the usual 4 to 7 different
cases, show number 694 devoted the entire hour to one investigation for the
first time ever in show history. The show’s host felt this case was different and
needed the extra attention because he believed the sniper was “homegrown,”
“an American psycho,” and “would kill anyone” (Personal Interview 6 June 03).

Every week, Walsh releases the show’s hotline number several times for
viewers to call in with any information on the cases featured that week—1-
800-CRIME-TV. They have used the same hotline number every week since
the show began in 1988. But during their sniper special they released for the
first time a special hotline number devoted solely to information to help solve
the case. Perhaps due to the special number, the show had a record number
of viewers calling in with tips. On any given show night operators may get a
close to one thousand calls, but one show source says that night they got
more than five times that amount (Personal Interview 1 Aug 03).
The AMW show featured an hour-long special on the hunt for the D.C. sniper aired on October 17, 2002. The segment that will be analyzed is the beginning ten minutes of the show, as will be explained further. It was broken into four parts to help make it easier to talk about and more graspable to the common reader.

The following table helps separate the different parts of the show that will be discussed. It is broken up into segments and their total running time (TRT). Only the first ten minutes of the show are included in the table because the show will not be analyzed. The show, however, is a one-hour program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Show Segments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show Segment</td>
<td>TRT (Hours, Minutes, Seconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold Open</td>
<td>0:00:00 to 1:17:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1:17:00 to 1:41:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package</td>
<td>1:41:00 to 8:20:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag</td>
<td>8:20:00 to 10:40:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cold open is the first thing shown to viewers. It features the show's standard weekly graphics as the narrator outlines the subjects or topics for that week's episode. John Walsh is presented in the introduction and gives a short description of what is to come. For the sniper special, he was at the sniper task force's headquarters in Virginia surrounded by police cars and officers. The package has both Walsh's voice and music playing while pictures
of the crime scenes around Washington D.C can been seen. The package's tag has Walsh again enter the scene as he interviews Montgomery County, Maryland police chief and lead investigator in the case, Charles Moose. He asks him about how the search is going and what they are doing to capture the fugitive. Finally, the first segment ends after ten minutes and a commercial break begins.

Because the cold open is a standard part of the show and never changes, it will not be examined. AMW does not subscribe to the typical newscast theory of using multiple anchors sitting at a desk to introduce the show. Their cold open is full of graphics, sound, and voice-overs to keep viewers from turning the channel. As longtime producer and author Graeme Newell says, “A talking head introduction will not hold viewers. Great sound and video will grab their attention at the top, then lure them into the body of the tease” (1).

Once the viewer's attention is grabbed with the colorful cold open, the open begins. It consists of John Walsh introducing the Washington D.C. sniper case and subsequent feature story without any music or natural sound. It will also not be looked at due to its lack of elements being analyzed in this project. It is simply Walsh standing in a darkly lit landscape in front a police car.

The package is comprised of a 6 minute and 41 second montage, with 14 different pieces of music. To help organize and understand each selection, it will be broken up and discussed as tracks. The next table (Table 2) will add categories of tempo, activity, and intensity in the following chapters to simplify
the discussion of the artifact’s production skills. It will also serve as an outline as to the methods AMW uses in its musical score for the package.

Because of a lack of research in a similar topic, I was forced to create categories on my own to operationalize the methodology. Tempo, activity, and intensity were chosen because they are basic concepts that should be understood even by those not familiar with musical theory. The categories are meant to contribute to the rhetorical structure of the project. They will serve as a way to hold the analysis of the artifact together and give the project a language to speak about the emotion behind each musical track.

Tempo is the rate of a musical piece or passage. The tempo or pace that an audience senses on television can be influenced by the actual speed of cuts, by the accompanying music, and by the content of the story. It can be described many ways but I chose to only use either “rapid” or “slow” so as to keep it readable to a wider audience.

Tempo was chosen because of its ability to move the piece along and create a frame of mind. Music in the movies Poltergiest and Godfather for example use slow tempo to set a tone. Poltergeist has a haunting tone to establish it as a horror movie. The Godfather Waltz is played at a wedding where upbeat and celebratory music is typically heard but instead it is melancholy. The same thing you say about the song, you can say about the movie. The song “Pretty Woman” in the movie with the same name on other the hand uses a fast tempo. Whereas the night before, the actress was trying to find a way to make a rent payment, she is now shopping on the exclusive
Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, California. It is meant to be a very exciting and happy panorama because the actress is accustomed to living in a tenement and working the streets as a prostitute.

The category dubbed “Activity” will symbolize how much is going on musically in the track. In short, activity is how many notes and instruments are being played. Activity was chosen because it is another way to invoke emotions. If there is a lot going on in a musical track, high activity shows action. This is typical method used in action and horror movies. For example, an actor seen running from a threatening predator is usually alongside music that is very busy and has a lot going on to help audiences understand the emotion of the actor. There will probably be a lot of percussion, strings, and brass instruments playing a lot of notes in a rapid tone. It was named as either being high, low, tiered, and sparse. High activity demonstrates a lot is going on in the track, while low activity is the opposite. Tiered activity describes activity that not consistently high or low, but continues to grow in activity. Sparse explains that there are moments of low activity versus constant low activity.

Intensity will encompass how powerful the music is. It was chosen as a method of analysis because the more intense the music, the more emotion it can pull out. There are a number ways to do this—volume, range, syncopation (an emphasis in unexpected places), rhythm, the number of instruments, or the higher the note being played. Heavy metal, for example, creates intensity primarily increasing volume; Orchestra music uses sound change; and someone like James Brown uses rhythm.
The following table helps to illustrate how each selection of music will be talked about in the following chapters. They are broken down into tracks along with their TRT in minutes and seconds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track Number</th>
<th>TRT (in Minutes and Seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>1:52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>:17</td>
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<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
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<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>:7</td>
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<td>#10</td>
<td>:25</td>
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<td>#11</td>
<td>:13</td>
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<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13*</td>
<td>:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14*</td>
<td>:45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 *denotes a repeat in music

To apply each method to the music, the music was studied as tracks. The categories—tempo, activity, and intensity were listed in a graph format as the music was playing. The tracks were listened to with both the visuals turned off and then back on to see how congruent it was with the video that was seen by
viewers. Each track was timed as a way to separate and talk about them. It proved helpful because it seems AMW ends and starts a new track with a soundbite. The track ends when the soundbite begins and a new one starts when it is over as way to flow the story to the next point. Deciding the track's tempo, activity, and intensity was similar to the argument made about pornography—"I know it when I see it." It is hard to rigidly define and put into words, but it is recognizable to the human ear.

Because the rest of the show following the package is more of the same, it will also not be looked at. The next segment is a packaged story on the type of firearm the snipers were using in the various crimes. Its few tracks are of the same intensity, activity, and tempo of the package being looked at in the project. Following the package on firearms, the next story is on another package on similar case in which a man was shot by a sniper while washing dishes in his home. There is a reenactment with music, but again, more of the same. Another story follows about the power of tipsters in other cases and what to be on the lookout for. There is no music throughout the package; just soundbites from viewers who have called the show with information to help law enforcement agents with their search for a fugitive. The final segment is a documentary-style, long packaged story more about the community than the events of the case. While it is very creative and interesting, there is no music; just ambient sound and soundbites.

The next chapter will discuss what the analysis of data says about the larger question of music in newsmagazine shows. It will also look at the worth
of using Zettl, Burke, and Langer as a methodological lens for studying the topic of music on a larger scale.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS and DISCUSSION

Study Findings

More than three and a half million viewers tuned in to see "America’s Most Wanted’s (AMW) one-night only presentation ("Who Says Crime Doesn’t Pay"). It was full of sinister music, fast edits, and plenty of interviews with investigators and scared residents fearful of their safety. But the question is whether the show’s music has the ability to affect viewers and their perception of the case. As George Washington University Media Professor Sean Aday believes, "This is obviously a very important story, especially here in Washington, where people feel fearful because it's such a random event. No matter how you report a story like this, it is in essence scary" (Personal Interview 21 June 03).

Zettl, Burke and Langer all work in tandem to help explain the artifact. Zettl’s theory on media aesthetics looks specifically at music and its production value. Whereas Burke and Langer look at rhetorical theories, Zettl is a media scholar and understands its dimensions. Kenneth Burke’s look at terministic screens proved to be particularly germane to this section because of its ability to move beyond musical aesthetics and figure out how music can persuade or...
reinforce our perceptions of reality. AMW used the music as a terministic screen, not only to select meaning for viewers, but also to reflect a certain ideology or philosophy, and to deflect viewer attention from other aspects of this case. Like Burke, Langer believes that humans are symbol making and using animals. But where both Zettl and Burke leave off, Langer picks up. She takes each track of music and helps to apply the meaning that lay behind it. Langer goes beyond just its aesthetic value and determines its non-discursive value.

The show has a clear lineage of the world that reinforces the culture beliefs of good versus evil. The music in AMW is used predominantly to promote awareness and action in viewers because of the evil in the world. Every case selected is a fugitive wanted for a horrific crime that law enforcement agencies, victims, and entire communities alike want to see captured. Getting to the emotions of the viewers to help them see that they can do something good by becoming a vigilante against crime is how the show has made its success. The show got its start with a man that had his son kidnapped and subsequently killed by a child predator who then went on to fight on Capitol Hill for better ways to find missing children. That man was John Walsh—the show’s creator.

The segment analyzed was the first package after the open. A montage begins with upbeat instrumental music to grab the viewer’s attention from the onset. Popular culture music does not use clever themes like symphony music does simply because it does not have the time. They do not also have the time
in a short segment or show to continue building drama and the story. It is about grabbing attention by hitting viewers with the basics to give very immediate impact. If you do not capture an audience’s attention immediately, they may turn the channel. Symphonies have the luxury of starting out slow and less dramatic because the audience is together in a dark room and not able to simply turn off the channel for something else. Music on television however has to focus on shorter intervals of music to keep viewers hooked and interested.

The first musical track is about one minute long and full of orchestral sounds. Upper string instruments (violas and violins) are playing in unison, making the sound really powerful because it directs focus. The notes are being played in a minor key with a lot of activity causing intensity. This follows a theory asserted by the Sellnows when they say that “music that uses a great number of varied instruments—especially a great deal of brass (e.g., trumpets, trombones, tubas, etc...) and percussion (e.g. drums, mallets, cymbals, etc...) and electrical guitars—is more likely to symbolize intensity” (407). Intense is definitely what the first track and most of the following tracks are. Walsh is talking about “how everything changed” for the residents living in and around Washington D.C. The visuals are a mix of reenactment and real scenes. You can see a reenacted faceless assassin moving through the woods with a large gun and then real military men standing guard on the freeways. Residents say things like “life is not the same anymore.” As the track continues there is a
calming by bringing the range of the instruments down. What was a high piercing noise constructed by rapidly playing short notes, is now slower.

The second track continues the calming ending of the first. This track has the effect of setting up something with recorded percussion sounds and low activity. Brass instruments are playing long, sustained sounds to create a mood. It creates a low intensity by music that is building. The low horns provide an ominous quality to the sound. Listening to the track, one would get the sense of traveling to the bad side of town where there is impending trouble.

The second track helps introduce track #3, which has high activity with string instruments. Strings playing in their upper registers create the intensity as well. The track also incorporates a musical technique known as layering. Rather than simply playing louder like heavy metal, layering gets more people playing at the same time. In this case it is an increase in the number of string instruments.

Track #4 introduces a relatively uncommon percussion instrument in American popular culture music. The clave is the foundation of Afro-Cuban and Latin music, but rarely seen in the United States. It is two sticks, usually made of ceramic. In this track it helps to set a mood with a rhythmical feel as investigators are seen looking for evidence at one of the crime scenes. The rhythmical feel aids in creating a track with low activity because there are not a lot of notes being played, but having more instruments layered in to make a bigger sound creates intensity.
In these first few and nearly every track, a fast tempo and loud music is in harmony with quick cuts to move the viewer along through the montage of scenes around Washington D.C. The music is meant to convey a sense of urgency and serves to give the viewer an uneasy feeling. Zettl says music helps to establish mood, and when applied to the AMW segment, the music was sinister and mysterious. It helped to demonstrate what cops had to come to believe about the younger sniper, Lee Malvo—that he was a young thug responsible for some of the shootings. On the other hand, if the music were more innocent, viewers may have felt sympathetic for the teenager. People also may have placed the entire blame on the older sniper and felt he manipulated Malvo. The intended emotion was to express the panic felt by the Washington D.C. community during the killing spree. There was a lot of confusion and unrest that blanketed the area in close proximity to the crimes. Jeffrey Cole of The University of California, Los Angeles Center for Communication Policy says, "Light or funny music implies that what the viewer is seeing is not so serious or profound. The same scene of a shooting or stabbing can leave vastly different impressions based on the music in the background (7)."

Track #5 also incorporates the clave to help give the music a rhythmical feel. It begins with a very clear distinction with an electronic beat to work alongside an editing effect meant to move viewers to the next scene where Walsh talks about more people being shot. In this track, the package becomes like the typical action movie—lots of quick action and sound. It has a rapid
tempo and lots of activity with intensity being created by not only the instruments increasing in volume but also layering. The synthesizer sound heard helps to generate the mood of something bad happening soon. Burke cautions, "Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality (Language, 45). AMW can influence audience perceptions or interpretations of the world by electing to talk about their selection of reality. The music functions as a terministic screen which in this case helped viewers interpret the case, the shooters, and fear.

The next track trades the clave for a drumbeat, but the effect is the same—creating a particular mood. In this case, it is energy. Track #6 incorporates high string instruments. The music is not very menacing, but as it progresses in tiered activity the strings are moving rapidly between two notes in a musical term called tremolo. This helps to give the musical track energy and create a sense of urgency or anticipation. The rhythm is more complex with accents landing on unexpected beats manufacturing a lot of intensity. This method, known as syncopation, is very common in Salsa music to help create different energy.

The seventh track continues this theme and again uses syncopation for effect. It uses more synthesizers and high strings to help elevate intensity. The track incorporates high strings to also heighten intensity as Walsh continues to describe more crimes that have been committed, but this time in areas that are further away from the epicenter of Washington D.C.
The pace of the music was meant to mirror the turn of events themselves. No one would disagree that five random murders in one day is out of the ordinary. Needless to say, the music adds to the already gloomy mood. The music sends a message about the evil and appalling nature of the crime. Zettl says “sounds can express a variety of internal conditions, such as an unstable environment or a person who feels calm, excited, or agitated” (320). He cites an example of men trapped in an engine room as the waters rise. Zettl says one would need to put another layer of internal fear sounds on top of the sounds that depict the squeezing of space if revealing the panic and fear of sailors was desired (320).

The next two tracks move from high activity to less activity. Track #8 uses another tremolo to create a loud sound along with synthesized sound. The tremolo lends a hand to alert viewers that something bad is going to happen. Walsh talks about more crimes being committed and what police are continuing to learn about the criminal as there is a lot of musical activity going on in the background. Continuing to layer in more instruments and increasing the volume creates the track’s intensity.

But whereas track #8 has an upbeat tone, track 9 turns to a downbeat melody. Track #9 is a short seven-second segue to move from the package track from a weekend with no shootings to the next morning waking up and a young boy being shot and wounded on his way to school. The voice track even uses the word “silence” and the sparse activity in the musical track is in agreement. The intensity is low but created by a sequence of four low notes in
a slow, descending scale, which would typically express menace or drama. The four-note melody in a descending scale created a dissonance that allows listeners to reinforce the transition by using low action but alerting them that the worst is yet to come.

The worst does seem to come as Track #10 begins. The voice track talks about a young boy being shot outside his middle school while the musical track uses a concert bass drum because of its ability to hit really low, deep notes. It starts to build by adding string instruments playing long, sustained sounds. The congruity of the music to the scene helps heighten emotion. “Congruent linguistic and aesthetic symbols reinforce each other, making the didactic message more clear” (Sellnow 399). The track’s activity is categorized as tiered because it starts with low activity and continues to grow higher. The rhythms are complex and use syncopation or the exaggeration of notes in unexpected places as a way to create intensity and drama. The low notes help depict the mood as Walsh shows a tarot card find at a crime scene that said “Dear Policeman, I Am God.” The track also incorporates layering to add intensity in another way. The increasing number of instruments playing becomes more evident as the track continues.

Zettl's media aesthetic theory says this track is an example of an inner orientation function of sound because it helps create a mood (320). This is also an example of the “illusion of life” Langer talks about. She describes it as being similar to looking at perception as reality. The illusion of life is different from actual reality because of the artist’s influence. In this case, AMW slows
down the activity to expand the story and interweave drama into the story being told musically.

Track #11 is also in a slow tempo and goes back to Sellnow's look at congruity and incongruity. A synthesized piano is playing while Walsh is talking about lives being shattered and folks around Washington D.C. being afraid to do anything anymore. You see families hugging with tears streaming down their faces. It would be considered by most to be inappropriate and tasteless to use rapid and highly intense music over such a scene. And to help add to the visual drama, the track's activity is low as is tempo is slow. There is not a lot of intensity in this track because it would be incongruent, but its tempo helps to add a little drama.

To help wrap up the package, track #12 is working in the background while Walsh begins to give characteristics and descriptions of the wanted. He talks about eyewitnesses seeing a white box truck leaving several crime scenes and the type of weapon being used. The music uses a synthesized drum set to help the mood along with a synthesized piano playing fast notes. Synthesized percussion facilitates an edgy sound and creates more tension.

The last tracks, #13 and #14 are the same selections just separated by a soundbite. Track #13 begins with a synthesized effect to match the visual effect of a police siren with flashing lights. Strings build by going up in their upper register and punctuating that by rolling on a cymbal with a timpani mallet. Activity is tiered in track 13 to help build to the conclusion after the last soundbite.
In the final track, the strings create a lot of activity by increasing in both dynamic and range to the end of the package. The instruments are going up in pitch to build and finally the music is simply turned up in volume to finish it.

Increasing the volume is a clear distinction of intensity and a signal to let the viewers know the package is ending.

To further illustrate the role that each musical track plays, the following table grows out from Table 2 in which only tracks and TRT were listed. Table 3 lays out the three categories chosen that help to explain the music's rhetorical value used in the chosen AMW artifact. It is outlined according to tracks to make it understandable to readers.
### Table 3  Artifact's Categorical Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>TRT</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>:53</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>:24</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>:14</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High Strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>:18</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Layering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>1:52</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Volume, Layering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>:17</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Tiered</td>
<td>Syncopation, Volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>:19</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Tiered</td>
<td>Syncopation, High Strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>:17</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Layering, Volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>:7</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Sparse</td>
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<td>#14*</td>
<td>:45</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Volume</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 *denotes a repeat in music

### Discussion

Deanna and Timothy Sellnow believe “the rhetorical potential of music has intrigued critics for centuries” (395). From songs sung on pre-Civil War plantations urging slaves to escape, to today’s rap music, they argue music
has strong rhetorical power (395). Without speaking a word, music has the ability to get to the heart of one’s emotions. It is a human condition that everyone recognizes, even if they are not aware of its power. Music almost seems inescapable. Everywhere you turn, there is music. It has become a public peek into someone’s private life. The new cell phone ring tones, for example, are a way to make a statement about yourself and your feelings toward others. The ring tones allow users to assign particular instrumental songs to a particular caller, so when you hear that song you have added an additional layer of meaning to it beyond simply recognizing the song.

The fact that some sounds can produce physical and emotional effects is actually pretty remarkable. Music is such a powerful tool that I do not think we have even begun to tap what is can do to our emotions and adrenaline. As Alten says, “Sound is omnidirectional; it is everywhere. The human eye can focus on only one view at a time. When the eye shifts, the original view is displaced” (4). Even if you have never seen a “Friday the 13th” movie, you probably remember the haunting music of the villain’s chase. While the nighttime scenery and costumes are working on viewers visually, the music is working on your emotions in the background.

Both Zettl and Langer believe music has the distinct ability of reaching directly to our emotions. The overwhelming emotion in the package and the community was fear. Zettl believes the type of music used can create or emphasize mood (320). “Happy music can underscore the overall happy context of the screen event; sad or ominous music will do the opposite” (320).
The context behind the music in the AMW sniper episode was definitely ominous. The music’s intensity had the ability to grab the attention of the viewer and pull them into the action; its high levels of activity had the ability to evoke emotions out of viewers, and the tempo moved them along and helped viewers understand the situation.

The overwhelming theme is the music during the package is building intensity by adding instruments and increasing range. Cole says music on film and television gives a strong prompt to a viewer or listener:

Music adds texture to the story and a nonvocal cue to warn or reassure the viewer. Sound tracks can exaggerate, intensify or glorify the violence on screen. Scary movies are not nearly as frightening without the music and some viewers turn off the sound during some scenes to lessen their fright. On the other hand, music can trivialize the seriousness of violence or make it seem acceptable. (24)

Burke and Langer both agree that we cannot know the world as it 'really' is, but only those aspects that get refracted for us by symbols and are thus rendered conceivable (Bowman 199). Langer does not give them a name like Burke's terministic screens, but in the case of AMW's music, that is what they do—construct reality. It is hard to argue that the show purposively attempted to persuade viewers to be afraid, but it also hard to argue that they did not do the reverse. The highly intense, active, and fast music allows the show to reinforce already-held beliefs. The music was helpful to the message by increasing awareness. When Walsh or eyewitness had something important to
say the music was dropped. The scene around Washington D.C. was scary largely because an event like this is rarely seen—random victims, random times, random places.

AMW obviously realized the importance of music is a show is going to be highly successful as they have been. Without the added music, the package and entire show would be boring. In the artifact, there were overhead shots of traffic in the D.C. area during the traffic while law enforcement officers were using roadblocks. If there was no music, it would simply be traffic. But the music adds another dimension. It is fast and highly active music emphasizing the fact that the sniper is still on the loose and agents are doing everything they could to find him. The music also lowers in intensity when it needs to. When Chief Moose is talking about kids not being safe anymore the music lowers in intensity. And as already mentioned, the music has the same effect when Walsh talks about lives being shattered.

Drama is what helps keeps viewer’s attention to the package and exactly why Burke and Zettl work well together. Burke calls it dramatism while Zettl calls it dramaturgy. Zettl believes it is possible to find that using musical structures as the basis for the analysis and production of films and television dramas will help in various ways to help put a show together (344). He says melody and plot are very similar because they both form horizontal vectors. “One thing happens after another and especially leads to the other in some kind of logic” (344). Burke’s theory on dramatism goes beyond just why
someone did something with a particular object. He instead looks at the motive behind the actions.

To apply both theories to the artifact, the AMW package uses compositional techniques to keep viewers interested. If a music track or song puts the high point too early, its ascent back down is anticlimactic. The music in the artifact instead builds because just getter louder is not sufficient. In *Philosophy in a New Key*, Susanne Langer asserts that music sets forth examples of emotive life.

The tonal structures we call 'music' bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience; and the pattern of 'music' is that same form worked out in pure, measured sound and silence. 'Music' is a tonal analogue of emotive life. (27)

The music shows the ability of AMW to present the world as frightening. It is not merely a show about crime but its depictions of crime. There were motives about the sniper that AMW did not present because perhaps it does not fit into their image of crime, like the
relationship of John Mohammad with his ex-wife and children. As the case developed, more information about his life prior to the spree came to the surface. The sniper task force created to be in charge of all aspects of the case has information about the motive being extortion, while others have hypothesized it was racially motivated or even revenge on his ex-wife for taking their children away from him. The young boy traveling with him and involved in the crimes was not his son. Muhammad had met and dated the young boy’s mother when he moved to Jamaica. He befriended the boy and convinced his mother to allow him to take Lee Malvo stateside.

Interestingly, although most people have never had direct experience with acts of crime, “the public remains convinced of the imminent danger—changing their personal habits and lives to accommodate those fears and voting for politicians who promise solutions to the problem” (Potter & Kappeler 2). AMW plays into that feeling of imminent danger in the lives of its audience. Rather than exploring the sources that may have drove him to crime, the show simply introduced the drama. If there is no cause or no source, it makes crime seem like something that can happen to anyone at anytime—it makes the world a scarier place. A vast majority of the time there is a motive behind the crime although it may not be comprehensible to others. It may make not make sense to the general public, but it may be due to societal sources. Crime is influenced by a number of social
issues that are rampant in this country—inadequate parenting, access to weapons, low incomes, but they are not mentioned on the show. Instead, it is about crime and punishment. No rehabilitation, just time in prison for the crime committed.

To be fair, the other side of the argument must be discussed as well. Some people do not care whether murderers and terrorists are victims of a bad childhood or ugly past. While some would like to see prisoners allowed to receive education in prison, others think prison should be an empty and lonely place. Those that are not interested in trying to find a reason for crime appreciate John Walsh’s tough talking, take-no-prisoners attitude. He has even been known to call perpetrators names like thugs, creeps, and losers during shows.

An important part of scholarly research is its ability to apply to a larger context. While this project looked at the music in a ten-minute segment of one AMW episode, it has the ability to be applied to television in a wider range. No television show will provide a return on the investment if it conveys the wrong message, or to the wrong person, or seen in the wrong format at the wrong time. It is a wasted effort, wasted time, and wasted money. And with networks looking to get shows on as quickly as possible and for as little as possible, there is no time to do it over. Zettl says this is where it becomes important for media creators to get hold of the know-how and ability to select and use the proper aesthetic elements to translate messages “efficiently,
effectively, and predictably" (ix). He goes on to say that "Media aesthetics provides us with the techniques and criteria to produce the optimal messages the first time around" (ix).

The next and final chapter will take a final look at the study's conclusion. It will wrap-up the study with a glimpse at the effectiveness of the artifact, and take a look at how this particular method/theory mix might be used for other media artifacts. It will also discuss the study's limitations along with how they were dealt with. And lastly, the chapter will give opinions of the study and make suggestions for future research.
Television has proven its ability to become a model to all viewers of adult life in America both through its pervasiveness (there is hardly a home in America that does not own at least one) and its subtle messages. It is to the point now where you do not even watch television in order to be affected by it in some way. Television programs and actors are featured in magazines, newspapers, forms of advertising, etc. Expressions or sayings from television have even worked their way into everyday conversation.

"America's Most Wanted" (AMW) has been a mainstay on Saturday night programming for almost 20 years. But there is no doubt that before and after this project, AMW has been recognized for its violent depictions of crime. The show is known for its tough-guy approach with crime with Walsh leading the forces. There is never any mention of the background of the fugitives because the show instead deflects that aspect of reality. You would never know by just watching AMW's special sniper show chosen as the project's artifact that you are much more likely to be killed in a car accident than by a sniper. Viewers and perhaps even show producers do not know about the struggles criminals may have gone through. Growing up in a drug-ridden neighborhood and
having a low-income job does not justify robbery and theft, but it does help explain it. The show instead chooses only to look at the crime in the present tense without contextualizing it.

Like other media programs, AMW presents an ideology and frames events for viewers. The question is whether the created frame is positive or negative. An argument can be made for either position. On the one hand, it can be good because it helps people make sense of the world. On the other hand, it spoon-feeds us ideas of the world and can be an obstacle to our own interpretations. The solution is being aware of the messages media gives us and not letting them supersede our own perceptions of the world.

It is similarly hard to prove the purpose behind the show and the music they chose to lay behind a package. John Walsh is a man who has dealt with tremendous grief after his son died and I truly believe he wants to put every criminal behind bars. But I also know that the show would not continue to be on the air if it was not a money-maker for its network. This project shows that the music does exactly what it is meant to do be it generate money or awareness. It grabs viewer attention instantly with high intensity music—something musicians have tried to do from the beginning of time. It is the essence of musical therapy and aiding people with illnesses to experience the power of music. And when placed under close scrutiny it becomes apparent music was used to evoke and reinforce particular emotions from viewers. If the music is not ear-catching at the onset viewers have the ability to do what every show creator dreads—simply turn the channel. The tracks incorporate
string instruments, brass, and percussion to help create mood. High activity with a number of different instruments playing together help add intensity and drama. Likewise, instruments playing in unison at the onset of the package are really poignant because it directs attention. So from the beginning the music set the tone—dramatic, powerful, intense.

Production skills both typical and atypical in other news magazine shows were found in the artifact. For example, techniques commonly seen in Latin music helped to create different energy. While the clave is not a percussion instrument usually heard in America’s popular culture, it is fitting in this musical score because of its ability to set a rhythmic feel. The use of music to create intensity is nothing new, and very applicable to AMW. Strings, percussion, and brass instruments used layering and a lot of notes to create drama and intensity.

Burke’s terministic screens along with Zettl’s look at applied media aesthetics and Langer’s non-discursive take on music served an appropriate and scholarly theoretical lens for studying this topic. They helped the project be able to say more than just the ability of music to heighten the emotions of viewers. Zettl is a media scholar who worked in the television industry as a producer and director before he went on to teach television production on the University level. He helped to give the project the tools to interpret the artifact was able to intensify the D.C. sniper event to the AMW audience.

Kenneth Burke helped to situate the artifact rhetorically. The idea of Burke’s terministic screens would suggest that the producers of AMW filter the
way audiences perceive crime in this country, and in particular, the sniper case around Washington D.C. in October 2002. Burke warns that any terministic screen inevitably selects and deflects as well as reflects whatever reality we describe with it. In this project it was AMW's coverage of the sniper case that constructed a certain reality through production methods. Burke's theory worked well as a method of analysis because of its basic concepts. Burke believes all people function by their own inner map created from their own personal experiences that have now shaped their reality.

Susanne Langer takes a mix of both and looks directly at the rhetorical effects of music. Her belief of music as non-discursive was very useful to the project because it helped me be able to study the music as a powerful piece of persuasion. She has done similar studies but instead of instrumental sound used lyrical content to determine a song's hegemonic themes.

The methodology enabled the project to say something about the larger question of music in newsmagazine shows. Regardless of your feelings about AMW or other reality programs, they are popular and sometimes long-lasting programs. And because of their popularity in our television programming guides, understanding the effects of their musical selections is important for both researchers and the common viewer.

The purpose of this project was not to just add new findings about the rhetorical powers of music, but also to generate awareness of the topic. This project has the ability to demonstrate fresh knowledge about the persuasive abilities of news coverage. Because terrorism and national security have
become the mainframe in the American society post September 11th, 2001, fear is a language now spoken by all humans. It is more important than ever that American television viewers have a better understanding of television's role in an information-crazed society.

As with every study, there are limitations of this project. In this case one of them was the lack of academic research on the topic. Empirical research on the role of music in television is very limited. Many rhetorical studies have been done about everything from the effects television violence and sexual explicitness have on viewers, to the changing roles for female actors. But little has been done on non-traditional rhetorical forms like the rhetorical power of music despite its mainstay in our culture. As television networks continue to invent new programming, it is becoming more important than ever that viewers understand how to evaluate what they are watching and listening to.

Also, I have chosen to focus on one single artifact—a ten-minute segment from an hour-long television news magazine show. In some cases, limiting a project to one artifact may be detrimental to the project's credibility, but this is one of the longest running shows and one of the most reputable for its search for some of America's worst criminals. While some may argue its journalistic merits, having worked at AMW I feel very strongly about the abilities of the show's staff and know they hold themselves to strong standards. Stories are highly researched by production teams before managers approve them and further investigations and interviews begin. Bureau chiefs, producers, editors,
reenactment directors, and a host of other positions watch them before they are placed into a show schedule.

The package chosen as the project's artifact was the best representative sample of the types of music used not only during this show and every show. There were other packages in the show, but the music was sparse and more of the same. This package however, was full of a variety of music styles that made it better to examine and easier to comprehend to readers.

This project is my interpretation of how this music sounds to me; it may sound different to someone else. Music has long been a cultural form recognizable to most. It may not evoke the same meanings and feelings in everyone, but most people understand what it could mean to others. A slow, sad country song has the ability to bring a heartbroken woman to tears, maybe not every woman, but everyone could probably identify it as being sad. Likewise, a couple has "their song" that evokes emotions for them but likely would not evoke the same feelings in another couple although they can recognize it. But despite how strongly the music in this episode was interpreted by each individual, I feel this project did what it was intended to do—bring awareness to a subject that is rarely studied by academicians but only continues to become more present on television. As other non-traditional forms of communication continue to grow as technology increases, it is more important than ever that creators and consumers understand its production and effects.
If one were going to look at music in a larger scope, it may be helpful to also talk about the interrelationship between the visual and the aural. It was not appropriate for this study because I chose instead to only look at something less frequently discussed in academic circles. Separating the musical aesthetic from the visual is difficult, but possible. Most plot-driven shows use music to create a mood, but it does not drive the show like music does on AMW. Admittedly, the music would not have made sense if the pictures were turned off, but it certainly would still have had the ability to communicate the sense of urgency and tension. We would know that it all fits together because the entire piece is very organized and played in the same key. But instead the artifact is fairly formless—there is no clear beginning, middle, and end as there is in a symphony for example.

The project hopefully has the ability to spawn interest in studying music and other media aesthetics. Since no debate over media's accountability has been larger than that of media violence, recommendations for future research may be to study the use of media aesthetics in other crime-driven programs. Violence and its causes have become a debate by politicians, academicians, and the public. Media has the potential to influence what its audience thinks about—it says what is important and what to be concerned about. But critics argue that if media continues to be censored the public will have to trust the government has their best interests in mind. Future studies could take a historical look at the combination music in AMW to see how their use of music has changed over the years. I would hypothesize that music has become
increasingly more present in their show since 1988. But perhaps researchers could determine if their use of music has helped to keep audiences tuning in every week and keeping it on the air.

Future research should also continue to look to television and film for critical analysis. Rather than just consider it "entertainment" and thus not a legitimate form of rhetorical communication, it would be interesting to look at more programs known for their "info-tainment" value. An attempt to apply Burke's theory on incongruity to shows like "Dallas" and "Beverly Hills 90210" found that viewers were able to criticize the show's messages because they saw them as harmless entertainment (Rockler 2002). Employing the method/theory mix of Zettl, Burke, and Langer would enable researchers to alert viewers that even the shows they think are bland and innocent actually are able to affect us in some way.

If the situation was reversed and there were pictures and no sound, we probably would not even be watching AMW anymore. It creates mediocre news and certainly is not a hit series. The music is vital to the show and helps capture interest. Pictures without sound would not make sense either because viewers would just see the shots of traffic but not be able to contextualize it. Put both visuals and audio together and you have total stimulation. While this study has ignored the impact visuals have on viewers, other studies may choose to look at the interplay of music and visuals. The positioning of the show on a certain night, the teases and promotions the show ran that day or the days prior to the air-date also have an impact on viewers.
The music in this AMW episode was selected to help viewers understand what many residents in the D.C. area were feeling. The show's producers did not have to use music in a way to try to scare viewers; the music simply reflected what others were feeling—despair, fear, but yet hope that the person or persons that were killing randomly for two weeks would be caught and brought to justice. To serve as an important source of news and information, broadcasters must be free to report these stories, no matter how unpleasant they are for the audience. On the other hand, non-traditional informational programs like AMW serve needs of the audience that traditional journalists cannot. AMW is free to manipulate and create perceptions of reality because some consider it to be "info-tainment" and not traditional journalism that strives to report local and national news on a daily basis.

No one would argue that the beltway sniper case was not a newsworthy event. It in fact was voted as the number one news story of 2002. But it is also the media's job to try and connect the pieces in order to make sense of complex issues and twisting and turning events such as this. News organizations have described themselves as watchdogs on behalf of the public, holding both law enforcement and government accountable while being a mediator between them. It is important to remember that news organizations have a job to do and at some point the public becomes responsible for analyzing what they are watching.
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