

An deygas managed
to incorporate and
interpret the essay



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The opening title sequence for the movie *Catch Me If You Can*, designed by Olivier Kuntzel and Florence Deygas, establishes the era, style and tone of the movie's narrative by its eye catching use of retro inspired graphics and a finger snapping jazz theme tune. I chose this title sequence to illustrate my answer to the above question because while it embodied the basic narrative of the film – the ongoing cat and mouse chase between the conman (Frank Abagnale Jr) and the FBI agent (Carl Hanratty) – the titles designers also interpreted different themes and applied them to the titles in a way that isn't apparent until after the film has finished. I intend to approach this paper by looking at how the sequence manages to evoke a feeling of the sixties, the period when the film was set, how the designers chose to interpret and incorporate different aspects of the story into the title's narrative and finally what contribution the score by John Williams has on the title sequence.

The handmade visual style of the titles for *Catch Me If You Can* (CMIYC) summons up memories of several classic film titles by the master of the art, Saul Bass. Bass said, asking a main-title was like making a poster – you're condensing the event into this one concept, this one metaphor...a backstory that needs to be told or a character that needs to be introduced. (...) A Bass title that probably inspired CMIYC's title was the crazy sequence for *Mad Mad World* in which Bass playfully integrated imagery with the credits via a hand drawn animation. It is interesting to note that CMIYC's graphics have a much high level of sophistication about them as they are designed for a more contemporary audience.

The titles, like the film, are reminiscent of the period, whilst reminding the audience that despite its retro flavour this is a contemporary movie that is

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bringing the caper movies of the sixties to modern sensibilities. The title sequence with which critics drew obvious comparisons, in terms of visual imagery, a playful narrative and a memorable score, was that of *The Pink Panther*, which quintessentially invokes memories of the tongue-in-cheek humour of the crime comedies of that era. Designer Olivier Kuntzel recalls the director, Steven Spielberg, instructing him and Deygas to give the titles a sixties feel. Back then, film openers had a graphic look.

Spielberg wanted the sequence to place the audience in that period while introducing the story to them. " (...) Kuntzel and Deygas did a great job of incorporating different elements from the movie's narrative into the film titles, the most obvious being the chase between Frank and Hanratty. The characters move through various locations that reference scenes in the film, with Hanratty always one step behind but getting closer and closer to Frank, until they both share the screen at the end of the titles. The credits fade to black just as Hanratty is about to catch up with Frank, leaving the ending open and emulating the suspense that features throughout the movie. A subtle touch of humour in the title credits, which work to establish the light-hearted tone of the film, is introduced when the credits are juxtaposed with corresponding imagery.

For example, the novelist, Frank W. Abagnale, is credited during the library sequence, and the names of title designers Kuntzel and Deygas are displayed on the spines of two books. Similarly, the musician John Williams' credit is displayed next to a grand piano. The idea of connecting technical credits with related images was often used during the sixties, most famously in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) where author Harper Lee's credit appears <https://assignbuster.com/an-deygas-managed-to-incorporate-and-interpret-the-essay/>

over one an image of a crayon and pen nib, while the musician's name is placed alongside a tin whistle. Another clever take on the film's narrative is the use of handmade stamps to create the title's characters, which alludes to Frank's hand-forged documents. Every time Frank's hand stamped character flits from location to location in the sequence, the titles are referencing the documents Frank forged to grant him access to those locations in the movie.

The designer's also used the comparative size of Hanratty's stamped character compared to Frank's to highlight how young Frank is, despite the fact that he passes for, and is perceived as, an adult throughout the film.

While the score of the title sequence was not a result of the designer's interpretation of the film's narrative, I still feel that it deserves a brief mention. The music sets a lively pace to the animation and by its similarities the jazzy score from *The Pink Panther*; it helps to set the mood for the main film. CMIYC's producer, Walter Parkes, recalled that, When we got that music, we were starting to animate in earnest, and we were able to heighten the sense of story and drama.

(...) In conclusion, I think that the designers of the film titles for *Catch Me If You Can* do a great job of incorporating and interpreting the narrative of the film into the title sequence by reinterpreting the ' chase' and ' caper' title sequences of the 1960's for a modern audience. Bibliography (and breakdown of research) DVDs Bass on Titles (2004) I included this reference in my bibliography as I used a quote from the film. *Catch Me if You Can* (2002) This DVD was included, as I need to re-watch the title sequence several times before starting my research paper. Journals Inceer, Melis (2007) *An Analysis of the Opening Credit Sequence in Film.*
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University of Pennsylvania, College of Arts and Sciences There is a chapter in this journal that briefly examines the narrative of CMIYC's title sequence.

Magazines Entertainment Weekly (24 Jan 2003) Contains several quotes from producer Walter Parkes on the titles. Internet <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=96033> (accessed 03/03/2008) Provides a description of Nexus Productions and their input into the titles. www.geocities.com/FilmDweeb/archives/catchme/page.html (accessed 28/02/2008) Info on sixties titles, John Williams score, Spielberg's influence on titles and design style. http://www.senseofcinema.com/contents/03/26/retro_titles.html (accessed 28/02/2008) Analysis of the narrative and inspiration from 60's film titles. http://www.moviemaker.com/editing/article/using_movie_title_sequences_effectively_20071227/ (accessed 03/03/2008) Info on Saul Bass' approach to titles. http://www.neplusoneequalsthree.com/2004/06/the_cinematic_r.html (accessed 03/03/2008) <http://www.feedmelinks.com/t/203165> (accessed 04/03/2008) Saul Bass quotes on titles. http://digitalcontentproducer.com/mag/video_titles_throughout_time/ (accessed 02/03/2008) Brief history of titles. <http://www.playafter.com/blog/index.php?paged=4> (accessed 10/03/2008) Making of the titles, inspiration. www.telegraph.co.

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