

The Digital Title Sequence: Television Title Sequences in the 2010s

By

Lachlan Salt

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Thesis

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis:

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I acknowledge the contribution of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship to this thesis.

Signed Lachlan Salt

Date 7/10/2025

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this thesis to my Grandfather Robert and my dog Teddy who unfortunately both passed away during my candidature.

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First, a big thank you to my supervisors for all their effort and work over these three long years.

Without you, I would have never completed all of this, and my thesis would be some garbled mess. So, thank you for your time, patience and your help, I really cannot thank you enough.

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ABSTRACT

In the 2010s, the television marketplace became increasingly competitive due to the growth of streaming platforms across multiple regions. In response to streaming services' expansion, the television title sequence has become an increasingly prominent component of how networks and over-the-top services use prestige branding to differentiate their products. This thesis conducts a close investigation of the title sequence's aesthetic qualities, creation, viewing and branding in the 2010s for US produced television shows to understand how the title sequence contributes to the discursive construction of prestige television. To achieve this aim, this thesis investigates the industrial landscape of motion graphic companies to highlight the distinctive aesthetics of title sequences for prestigious television shows. This thesis studies two key motion graphic companies, Elastic and Imaginary Forces, that are responsible for the production of a number of major title sequence in the 2010s. This thesis examines the aesthetics of four key case studies: *Game of Thrones* (2011), *True Detective* (2014), *Counterpart* (2017) and *Stranger Things* (2016) to demonstrate how the title sequence's distinct visuals contribute to online branding in the 2010s. These case studies are part of what I call the digital title sequence. The digital title sequence uses a dense computer-generated aesthetic, and these sequences are increasingly detached from the show itself and replicated across online spaces for the purposes of networks' and over-the-top services' prestige branding.

This thesis commences with an historical investigation of the development of the television title sequence through an analysis of influential designers Saul Bass and Kyle Cooper, as well as major trends that are evident in Emmy award winners and nominees since the 1980s. The historical analysis indicates that past title sequences and designers have impacted the digital title sequence.

This historical investigation establishes that the digital title sequence is part of wider industrial, economic and technological television trends.

This thesis uses an industrial approach to understand the role of motion graphic companies in the development of the digital title sequence. Examining Elastic and Imaginary Forces' workforces and projects in various mediums such as film, television and advertising highlights how media convergence has affected the digital title sequence's form.

My thesis analyses the similarities between *Game of Thrones*' title sequence and video game aesthetics to show how media convergence affects title design in the 2010s.

Investigating the aesthetics of the title sequences for *Game of Thrones* and *True Detective* demonstrates that title sequence's visuals changed in the 2010s to become increasingly dense.

These title sequences were uploaded by HBO onto video sharing websites to promote the network's prestige branding. Starz continued the digital title sequence trend by emulating HBO and uploading *Counterpart's* and *American Gods'* title sequences onto YouTube to further engage viewers. HBO's and Starz's use of the title sequence as a branding device is evidence of its growing prominence in the television marketplace as a form of product differentiation.

In the late 2010s binge-watching became a dominant viewing practice and Netflix adopted it as a marketing strategy which fundamentally altered the title sequence's aesthetics and its role as a branding device. This thesis' analysis of the *Stranger Things* title sequence on Netflix suggests a distinct shift from elaborate dense aesthetics to shorter succinct designs. The examination of the digital title sequence's development as a discrete trend produces new knowledge of the broader changes which the television medium underwent in the 2010s. Overall, the title sequence became a more prominent component of how prestige is constructed by critics, viewers and the television industry.

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0 INTRODUCTION

On 23 March 2017, in a YouTube video by *Wired* which discusses title sequences, journalist Jason Tanz proclaims that “TV is way better than it used to be, and you can say the same thing for TV title sequences”. Tanz’s value judgement is emblematic of the larger prevailing discourse about the integral role the title sequence plays in the understanding of prestige and quality for contemporary television (Thompson 1996; Leverette et al 2008; Newman and Levine 2012; Mittell 2015; Dunleavy 2017; Keeler and Friedman 2022). During the 2010s, the television title sequence became an increasingly prominent component of how prestige is constructed and perceived by critics, viewers and the television industry.

This thesis argues that the title sequence’s role in the 2010s has shifted and carries broad implications for television aesthetics, reception and industry. From the 1940s to the 1970s, the role of a television title sequence generally was to introduce the viewer to the show’s narrative and characters. In the 1980s and 1990s, there are examples of the title sequence's elaborate aesthetics being a part of how networks have distinguished their brand identity as quality such as *Miami Vice* (1984) for NBC and *The Sopranos* (1999) for HBO.¹ I argue that the title sequence in the 2010s fulfills a different function and acts as a digital spectacle to retain viewer attention in a competitive television industry. The title sequences produced for quality US programs typically do

¹ This thesis is using the term networks to refer to the companies that distribute television programs through varying broadcast forms such as free to air and pay television using satellite or cable technology. The thesis uses the term over-the-top services (OTT) to refer to media companies such as Netflix that only offer their services online on demand through the internet. The thesis uses the term streaming services to refer specifically to the platform itself as both networks and over-the-top services can have streaming services.

not introduce characters or narratives but instead their computer-generated aesthetics act as a spectacle and showpiece for the network. Additionally, in the 2010s, these title sequences are typically uploaded by networks onto online platforms to exhibit these spectacles in service of their prestige branding. This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by examining prestige contemporary television title sequences in the 2010s such as *Game of Thrones* (Wall 2011), *True Detective* (Clair 2014), *Stranger Things* (Dougherty 2016) and *Counterpart* (Fong 2017).²

The title sequence's changing function in the 2010s as digitised spectacle is also part of wider industrial, aesthetic, technological and historical television developments. There were a variety of developments specific to the television industry: the emergence of streaming services (including but not limited to Netflix), the proliferation of digital technology (such as mobile phones) and the growing popularity of participatory platforms (YouTube) (Lotz 2014; Jenner 2023). While television still exists inside the living room, it can be viewed on mobile phones, on video sharing websites and now streaming services. As a result of these developments, audience attention is divided on these platforms, devices and online spaces. In turn, this thesis uses the terms *fragmentation* and *fragmented* to describe how audience attention is spread across these different media services (Wiard and Domingo 2017; Roncallo-Dow 2017; Dwyane 2022). The fragmentation of audience attention has complicated scholars' understandings of television as an object of study (Lotz 2014; Jenner 2023). Another complication that has affected the television object and the title sequence is media convergence. Media convergence is not a new development, but it has only intensified in the 2010s due to the large availability of channels, services and online platforms. Jenkins who discussed media convergence in his book from 2006, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New*

² Throughout this thesis the lead title creative designer will be identified for shows mentioned even in passing.

Media Collide, reflects upon media convergence in an article from 2018 and notes that “Convergence culture is a world where every story, every sound, brand, image, relationship, plays itself out across the maximum number of media channels” (Jenkins, 2018). As a result of streaming services and social media playing an increasing large part in viewer’s lives, this thesis will also discuss how the title sequence’s aesthetics, industry and the viewer’s response to them have been shaped by this intensified process of media convergence.

Scholars have risen to these complications when investigating the television as a discrete object by finding many ways to approach different problems relating to reception, aesthetics and industry concerns (Lotz 2014; Keeler and Friedman 2022; Jenner 2023). While there has already been extensive work undertaken by scholars on television in the 2010s, the television title sequence is relatively unexplored (Newman and Levine 2012; Lotz 2014; Mittell 2015; Jenner 2023; Balanzategui 2018; Keeler and Friedman 2022). Due to limited understanding about how the title sequence is integral to branding a television show in the 2010s, this thesis provides an original contribution to knowledge about the title sequence’s growing prominence in the fractured television landscape today through a robust and detailed aesthetic, industrial and reception analysis of the television title sequence from the 2010s by answering the following research question:

How have changes in television aesthetics, industry and reception affected the title sequence as a form of branding in the 2010s?

0.1 Aims

This thesis aims to demonstrate how the development of the digital title sequence in the 2010s ultimately altered the aesthetic qualities, creation, viewing and branding of contemporary title

sequences constructed for prestige television shows. To support this main aim, I have identified a key title design trend called the digital title sequence. I define the digital title sequence trend as title sequences that have a dense aesthetic design that is distinct from title sequences produced in the previous television periods. Thus, to provide a richer understanding of the digital title sequence, I have four subsidiary aims including, providing 1) an investigation of the digital title sequence's historical context, 2) a study of motion graphic companies' workforce and output, 3) an examination of the title sequence's digital aesthetic and 4) the role that the title sequence in online spaces plays in branding.

1) History of Title Sequences

An important foundational starting point for this thesis is the investigation of how the title sequence industry, and the aesthetics of title sequences themselves, have changed historically. I will identify patterns for both the historical trajectory of motion graphic companies and the digital aesthetics of title sequences themselves. In doing so, I will produce an original understanding of how historical processes have led to the digital title sequence trend in the 2010s. Understanding historical processes is important because it establishes how the digital title sequence is part of a broader trajectory and an intensification of pre-existing developments in the television industry.

2) Motion Graphic Companies

The development of motion graphic design companies is integral to understanding the title sequence's aesthetics and industry in the 2010s. Television title sequences are produced by design companies as part of an ever-changing portfolio of advertisements, visual effects, films, video games, title sequences and computer-generated imagery (Vimeo "Imaginary Forces" n.d.; Vimeo "Elastic" n.d.). Therefore, an investigation of large motion graphic companies will provide a better

understanding for researchers of how media convergence has affected the distinctive television title sequence aesthetics in the 2010s.

3) Digital Aesthetics

The next subsidiary aim investigates the television title sequence's increasingly digitised aesthetics in the 2010s. While there are television title sequences that do not use digital aesthetics, this thesis's focus is on title sequences that predominately use digital images. I use the term digital aesthetics to refer to images that are computer-generated. The term encompasses a whole range of media and relates to Hollywood blockbusters that typically use Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) for action set pieces, motion graphic design in advertising and computer-generated video game worlds (Manovich 2002; Isaacs 2013). I will focus specifically on the title sequence's visuals, and not predominately its sound design. This thesis will focus on the title sequence's visuals, to ensure that the thesis is not unwieldy in its scope and scale and to allow for a lengthier and focused discussion of the title sequence's aesthetic design. The role of sound in title design has already been robustly investigated by Annette Davison in her 2013 article "Title Sequences for Contemporary Television Serials".

4) Title Sequence Branding

The increase of streaming services in the 2010s has intensified competition and so necessitated varied approaches to branding. In the United States, Netflix became a streaming service in 2007. Hulu launched as a subscription service in 2007, and both have since expanded their services to different global regions (Johnson 2022). The growth of streaming services in conjunction with the growth of motion graphics has led to the prominence of the title sequence as an integral

component of how networks differentiate their programming and brand. Branding in relation to the television industry and the title sequence will be defined later in Section 0.5.

0.2 Methodology

To support each of my four subsidiary aims, I use a multi-modal qualitative methodology consisting of a robust historical, industrial, aesthetic and a reception analysis.

0.2.1 Historical Analysis

I use an historical analysis to establish my first aim of understanding how title sequence aesthetics and industry have transformed throughout history. I examine Emmy Award Winning and Nominated shows to highlight how the title sequence's aesthetics and technology have developed in different historical periods.

I chose Emmy Award Winning Shows because prize winning reinforces my central argument about the prestige marketing of title sequences in the 2010s. As Keeler and Friedman explain in the introduction of their edited anthology on prestige television, following HBO's original prestige programming, other networks such as AMC began to create distinctive original television shows to accrue "award show accolades" (2022, 9). The Emmys are chosen by industry professionals that are part of The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (ATAS) that vote on the nominations and winners. The Emmys awards ceremony provides insight into how the television industry wants to present itself to the public. In this thesis I do not consider the Emmys to be an objective marker of quality or prestige but rather a useful way to understand how the television industry brands itself.

I also selected Emmy shows to avoid cherry-picking title designs. A large problem when discussing any varied object of study is that the researcher can fall into the trap of cherry-picking to suit their

argument with little regard for industrial and aesthetic analysis. To solve this problem, I use the Emmy website as a source to categorise Emmy winners and nominees under each decade from 1980 to 2019. A limitation of examining Emmy Award Winning shows is that it only provides a partial overview of the typicality of the title sequence's aesthetics. Nevertheless, any method or approach to establishing the title sequence's typicality will always be partial and selective since an exhaustive list of every title sequence is unwieldy and not entirely accessible.

There are parallel bodies of scholarship that study the Academy Awards from which I draw methodological inspiration. For example, Miguel Saraiva's 2023 research on the Best Picture Award Category at the Academy Awards, like my own argument, uses nominations and winners' statistics. Saraiva sources data from the official Academy website. Saraiva states, "The database used was compiled by the author, based on historical information present in the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) and the Academy's official website" (2023, 7). Similarly, I also source information from official sources by using the Emmy website.

0.2.2 Industrial Analysis

This thesis will utilise in-depth industrial analysis of the most prominent design studios in the US specialising in title sequences within the 2010s. Employing an industrial analysis will support my second subsidiary aim of understanding how networks and motion graphic companies grew in the 2010s and to comprehend how the industry itself has affected the digital title sequence's aesthetics.

One source that provides a comparable methodology for my industrial analysis is Amanda Lotz and Jonathan Gray's book *Television Studies* (2019). They note that industrial analysis can consist of "statistical analyses, mine business, journalism and regulatory archives, interview industry

workers” among others (2019, 90). My industrial analysis uses a multitude of methods including a statistical analysis from the Emmy website, and discourse analysis of industry trade papers to understand how the current title sequence industry is discrete from earlier historical periods. To find data and statistics on employees and finances for these companies my analysis uses various sources. To find specific data I use LinkedIn as a specific source for employees. I supplement this with additional data from industry trade papers such as *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter* and *Deadline*.

0.2.3 Aesthetic Analysis

This thesis will use an aesthetic analysis to achieve the third subsidiary aim of better understanding the digital title sequence’s aesthetic and how it functions in the 2010s. Specifically, the aesthetic analysis draws upon Kristin Thompson’s concept of neoformalism. Neoformalism is a varied approach to film form (in this case television form) that uses flexible schemas to address specific problems (2010, 6). Thompson further elaborates on how neoformalism does not use one set method but uses various methods that treat each aesthetic object as unique and does not treat any aesthetic pattern as pre-determined (2010, 7). The formal approach is significant because viewer’s interpretations of the title sequence are predicated and based upon the formal structures that a title sequence exhibits (its use of sound, editing, mise-en-scène). Thompson asserts that a work’s meanings are created through the interplay between the viewer’s mental operations in response to the formal structures (2010, 26). The use of formal structures is pertinent to my focus on the title sequence’s aesthetics and how the viewers’ construct value judgements.

0.2.1 Reception Analysis

This thesis will analyse the title sequence's reception by examining viewer responses and consumption practices in online spaces. The reception analysis will support my fourth aim of providing an understanding of how title sequences contribute to the prestige branding of the television show. Due to many title sequences being uploaded by broadcast, cable networks and over-the-top services onto YouTube in the 2010s, I will specifically use YouTube comments as evidence of how the title sequence informs the prestige branding of the network, television show and motion graphic company.

For my reception analysis, I draw inspiration from Davison's article "The Show Starts Here: Viewers' Interactions with Recent Television Serials' Main Title Sequences" in *Sound Effects* (2013a). Her article makes a direct connection between contemporary title sequence aesthetics and how audiences have more control over when and where they view title sequences. Davison uses a qualitative behavioural audience study to briefly unpack questions concerning how the serial drama title sequence's aesthetics function in the TV IV period through focus groups employed by a mailing list (2013a). Her article provides a basis for this thesis's examination of how complex serials such as *Game of Thrones*, *Counterpart* and *True Detective* use their respective title sequences' dense digital aesthetics for prestige branding. While Davison uses a different method through focus groups compared to my use of YouTube comments, reviews, news articles and interviews with designers from *Art of the Title* and other outlets, both of our arguments focus on the relationship between viewer behaviour and the title sequence's promotion. I did not choose the YouTube comments haphazardly to suit my own claims. Instead, I use search terms and the amount of likes to establish how these comments are popular and not isolated opinion. Therefore, the sample chosen is selective and does not represent the opinion of every viewer but a limited

number of viewers engaging with the title sequence on YouTube. As such I acknowledge this thesis's sample range for YouTube videos is selective and limited to television viewers that have a high amount of engagement and appreciation with title sequences already. This thesis uses two types of data from YouTube videos. The first type of data is views. For a view to be counted on a YouTube video it has to be intentionally clicked on by the spectator and watched for more than thirty seconds. Repeat views on YouTube can be counted but not if there are in repeat succession and bots are not counted. The viewer count is a useful indicator to generally measure the general popularity of the title sequence. This thesis also uses comments to evidence how viewers have responded to the aesthetics of the title sequence. Anyone can make a comment on a YouTube video as long as they have an account and this thesis uses likes to measure the popularity of individual comments. YouTube automatically sorts YouTube comments by the most liked comments which further foregrounds their visibility to new spectators and indicates that these comments are not isolated opinion. In this thesis I also conceptualise YouTube as a social media platform due to users being able to upload video content and create comments which in turn makes it distinct from over-the-top services and television networks. As Marieke Jenner argues, YouTube is different from Netflix in several ways and is "closer to social media" (2023, 118). Therefore, this thesis examines YouTube comments to understand how networks and over-the-top services have branded themselves and viewers' response and appraisal of the title sequence.

0.2.1 Audio-Visual Essay Mode

A key mode in my thesis is the audio-visual essay. I created an audio-visual essay to further demonstrate the neoformalist close analysis of their aesthetics. In this section I orient the academic literature on audio-visual essays in relation to the aims of my video essay which is found in Appendix 1. Within the 2010s, the audio-visual essay became increasingly popular as a mode of

academic research. Online journals such as *[in] Transition*, *Screenworks* and *InMediaRes* provide rigorous and informative exhibition platforms for academic audio-visual essays (*[in] Transition*; *Screenworks*). The platforms have helped validate the audio-visual essay as a reputable form of academic inquiry. Furthermore, a plethora of academic literature discuss the audio-visual essay (Lavik 2012a; Lavik 2012b; Keathley 2012). There is the multitude of conferences and even the Netflix produced documentary miniseries on the video essay called *Voir* released in 2021 which validates the video essay as a distinct research approach (Society for Cinema and Media Studies Workshop- Visualizing Media Studies 2014). Two resources that are pertinent to contextualising the audio-visual essay are *Reframed* and the *Cine-Files* issue (2020) - “What makes a video essay scholarly?” *Reframed*, which is helmed by video essay practitioner Catherine Grant, has a collection of inquiries and reflections on the pedagogy, ontology, and academic status of the aural-visual essay by video essay practitioners (“The Audiovisual Essay” *Reframed*). One article on *Reframed* that provides a useful definition of the audio-visual essay’s two key forms is found in Cristina Álvarez Lopez and Adrian Martin’s “The One and The Many- Making Sense of Montage in The AudioVisual Essay” (2014). Álvarez Lopez and Martin assert that the first of the two forms is pedagogical while the second is artistic.

The pedagogical teaching tool is rooted in a written argument. Álvarez Lopez and Martin identify that the construction of an argument in the audio-visual essay is influenced by a myriad of traditions which include, “live, multi-media lecture; film magazine design and layout; audio commentaries on DVD” (2014). The pedagogical approach typically utilises a written script in conjunction with a voice over presenting the visual examples. The artistic form experiments with the aural visuals of film materials to construct new scholarly meanings. The artistic tendency is shaped by the making of visual images such as “video and digital media pieces that make collages

from found footage and other sampled material” (2014). The artistic approach remixes combinations of images and sounds from the source footage itself to investigate the object of study and produce new research. I combine these two functions of the aural-visual essay to create a rhetorical argument but take the opportunity to experiment with montage and aural-visual materials to demonstrate concepts and ideas directly from this thesis’s written component.

The 2020 article by Kathleen Loock in the *Cine-Files* issue is a useful aid in understanding the academic potentialities of the video essay and the confluence of different approaches to the aural-visual form as they have emerged in the social media dominated landscape of Web 2.0. Loock (2020) invites us to imagine the potential of an academic form in the digital age that forces the academic to rethink his or her approach to methodology and research questions when working with the object of study’s own materials:

Videographic criticism will probably continue to depend on the written word (on voiceover narration, onscreen text, or accompanying statements) if it wants to meet traditional academic standards, but that doesn’t diminish its potential to expand the idea of what research and scholarship can look like in the digital age.

My video essay takes advantage of both the pedagogical and artistic approaches to better achieve my third subsidiary aim which is to gain a better understanding of the title sequence’s aesthetics in the 2010s. Furthermore, the video essay supports my analysis and uses the formal components of the title sequence itself to underline the title sequence’s aesthetics beyond the written word.

0.2.2 The Video Essay

The video essay uses a mix of voice over narration, written text and the poetic employment of audio and visuals to argue that the title sequences utilise spectacle for the purposes of prestige

branding. This video essay will add to this argument by manipulating the aesthetics of the title sequence itself to directly suggest how the audio-visuals operate as a form of spectacle through small minute aesthetics. The video essay adheres to the thesis's neoformalist methodology, which is the idea that to understand an object of study's different formal layers we need to unpack them from the main text and reconstruct them to understand the inner workings of the text in question. Additionally, the video essay allows the reader to view the temporality of the title sequences under study and so compliments the screen captures throughout this thesis as they cannot display the title sequence in motion.

The video essay's first section uses a poetic assemblage of different overlays that intermingles audience's reaction to footage of digital title sequences and early trick films and blockbusters that have been discussed by various authors as an attraction that places the title sequence as part of a broader historical continuum. The video essay also investigates how the novelty of editing software produces spectacle through digitally elaborate title sequences. Through completing my video essay, I was able to unpack and finesse my ideas and discussion in the thesis. Specifically, I was able to better understand how title sequences can exhibit spectacle and contain minute details by directly manipulating the title sequences under examination. This audio-visual essay expands and actively takes advantage of aural-visual combinations to demonstrate how the digital title sequence is distinctive and ultimately how the title sequence contributes to various network's and over-the top services' prestige branding in the 2010s.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11uJqdyzhp8viPZFIEKWZJZQtaQabkZnK/view?usp=sharing>.

0.3 Periodisation

Periodisations, albeit simplifications, are a good way to offer a broad idea of television history. At the very least, they highlight that speaking of television at different times means speaking of different kinds of television. These different eras or periods tie together a number of technological, sociocultural, industrial or aesthetic discourses. In and of themselves, these discourses are complicated and complex and not always as neatly aligned as might be suggested by this terminology (Jenner 2018, 11).

To argue how the digital title sequence functions in the 2010s, this thesis requires an understanding of the broader historical changes in the television landscape. Therefore, this thesis identifies the period of study as 2010-2019. To comprehend this period, this thesis uses periods as a discursive construction and not objective signifiers of historical, cultural and aesthetic changes. This conceptualisation allows this thesis to focus on specific developments that pertain directly to the title sequence. While periods can be reductive broad sweeping historical classifications that simplify complex and nuanced historical developments, they are a useful framework to conceptualise some of the broader changes that the title sequences' industrial and aesthetic development reflect.

This thesis uses Mark Rogers, Michael Epstein and Jimmie Reeves' three television periods, TV I, TV II and III from their study of the political economy of US television (2002, 43-56) and Marieke Jenner's TV IV period for US television (2016; 2023). Epstein et al frames the vast history of television as a medium into three discrete periods: TV I, TV II, and TV III. In addition to those periods, Jenner creates another period to reflect the industrial and economic changes of the 2010s: TV IV (2016; 2018; 2023). The TV IV period encompasses the 2010s and the 2020s, but the scope of this thesis's analysis is the 2010s. The TV IV period is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

There are also other approaches to periodisations that scholars have identified such as Amanda Lotz's post network era that explains how digital technologies like DVD and online spaces have changed broader industrial practices and fragmented audiences (2014, 9). Lotz points to how new technologies such as computer screens and portable devices afforded the viewer a greater degree of temporal control (2014, 32). John Ellis when examining the British television industry has investigated television periods and divided them into an era of scarcity (1950-1970), availability (1980s and 1990s) and predicted a prospective period of plenty (Ellis 39). Ellis describes that "The first era is characterized by a few channels broadcasting for part of the day only" and lasted until the late 1970s (39). The second phase is where there was more competition from cable and satellite services (39). Ellis's third era is a prediction that television in the future will be instantly accessible and interactive (39). However, while these scholars' discussions of television periods are useful, I have elected to utilise Jenner's periodisations because her TV IV category encompasses specific changes in the 2010s that previous periods do not contain. She expounds further that there are significant changes that the emergence of streaming services has produced specifically in the 2010s (Jenner 2023, 34). Thus, she identifies key industrial and historical changes that are particularly useful to this thesis's focus on aesthetic, industrial and reception changes in the 2010s.

A limitation of the periodisation proposed by Jenner is that it does not work as well in regional contexts outside the United States that have their own respective distinct television histories. For example, Australia only received Netflix in 2015 (Lallo 2015). Netflix and other streaming platforms have expanded their platforms to other regions at different points in the 2010s. While television is distributed globally, there are still content differences between the US and other geographic regions due to licensing restrictions. The nuances of television distribution in various nations are a

valuable topic of debate (Lobato 2018; Oren et al 2011; Ogola 2023) but it is not within the scope of this thesis.

0.3.1 TV IV

The following table (Table 1) contains key industrial characteristics and historical shifts of Roger, Epstein and Reeves' TV I, II and III (2002, 43-56) and Jenner's TV IV period (2016; 2018; 2023).

Table 1: TV Periods

Roger, Epstein and Reeves TV I, II, III (2002)	Roger, Epstein and Reeves' Periods (2002, 43-56)
TV I (1950–1980)	Channel scarcity, mass audience, three network dominated distribution
TV II (1980–1999)	Channel Network expansion, quality television, and network branding strategies, Cable
TV III (2000–2009)	Digital Distribution platforms, more audience fragmentation, internet
Jenner's TV IV (2016; 2018; 2023) (2010–2019) The main focus of this thesis	Streaming Services, greater audience fragmentation, binge-watching, participatory practices

This dissertation focuses on what Jenner devised as the TV IV period (2016; 2023) (Table 1). Jenner defines TV IV as a “process” that incorporates “discourses of technology, audience behaviour,

industry, policy, national media systems” (2023, 19). Jenner’s focus is particularly on Netflix and its “specific location in transnational broadcasting” (2023, 20). She argues that the TV IV period can be defined as a “shift completely away from the television set” due to Netflix and other streaming services challenging “viewing patterns, branding strategies, industrial structures, the way different media forms interact with each other or the various ways content is made available” (Jenner 2016, 260). However, Jenner is examining how the TV IV period relates to Netflix as a streaming service. For the purposes of my thesis, three distinct developments in the TV IV period affected the title sequence. Firstly, in the 2010s over-the-top services offered the viewer the Skip Intro button on their user interface, providing audiences with the opportunity to skip title sequences. This function disrupted the traditional role of the title sequence as an introduction to the show proper and challenged conventional notions of flow. This is not a discrete change since historically, television viewers have been able to pause and rewind television shows through the advent of the VHS and DVD in the TV III period. Newman and Levine explain that DVD and DVR’s have allowed close and careful viewing and thus increased the television’s value as an aesthetic object (2012, 144). In the TV IV period, an intensification through over-the-top services like Netflix has only furthered viewer’s temporal control. For example, the Skip Intro button as part of streaming interfaces is a further development of new technologies disrupting television flow. Secondly, the growth of discussion forums and video-sharing websites such as YouTube have provided a distinct discursive space for viewers to engage closely with the television title sequence’s complex aesthetics. Thirdly, in a similar vein because of new digital tools provided by cheaper and more accessible software, the television title sequence represents a space for unique aural and visual combinations utilising live action and digital aesthetics to create a hybrid form that would not have been possible thirty years ago and was still emerging from the 1990s and 2000s onwards. Consequently,

the 2010s is an ideal period to analyse how the computer-generated title sequence design functions. While all three of the developments could be entire books and articles, the third development—digital aesthetics—is my central concern and I investigate the industrial, aesthetic positioning and function of television title sequences in the fragmented TV IV period.

0.4 What is a Title Sequence?

The main object of study is the title sequence, and this section will provide a definition of the title sequence and its key functions to support this thesis's main aim of understanding the development of the title sequence. The opening title sequence introduces a film/ television show to the viewer. The title sequence is defined by five key functions: crediting, aesthetic differentiation, branding, a liminal space between the real world and the text's diegesis and ritual form. Firstly, the title sequence performs a crediting function for the purposes of copyright. As Georg Stanitzek explains the title sequence credits who was "responsible for the film", who had "rights to the ownership and the terms of use" (2009, 44). Secondly, the title sequence is an aesthetic object in its own right. A title sequence will typically introduce the text's characters, mood, setting, genre and themes (Bednarek 2014). The title sequence will frequently have a memorable catchy main theme song or musical score that accompanies the visuals and further defines the boundaries between the title sequence and the text it is introducing (Bednarek 2014). In *Ideologies of the Real in Title Sequences, Motion Graphics and Cinema*, Michael Betancourt provides the most comprehensive definition of a feature film title sequence, seeing them as complex aesthetic hybrids:

Title sequences (and motion graphics) are formed from a complex mixture of multiple cues: speech, music/noises, written language (texts), and visual imagery of various types. These hybrids occupy a unique position in commercial cinema—fusing the graphic conventions of typography and design with the kinetic

and chronic modes of animation and live action photography, modulating otherwise assumptively incompatible concerns with experience and duration drawn from commercial design, avant-garde animation, and narrative cinema (2019, 2).

Betancourt's definition of title sequences being a combination of "commercial design, avant-garde animation and narrative cinema" indicates that the title sequence is a hybrid object of varying aesthetic sensibilities that are drawn from different media.

Thirdly, the title sequence also fulfils the function of branding for the intellectual property, network and studio (Davison 2013b; Bednarek 2014). The aforementioned typical aesthetic properties of the title sequence work to create a branding identity for the text and by extension, the studio, in conjunction with other advertising and promotional materials. Therefore, the title sequence is a form of product differentiation for networks and studios (Davison 2013b). The title sequence then is an integral part of how a television show or film is produced and how the viewer engages with the intellectual property.

Fourthly, title sequences are transitory or threshold spaces where the viewer crosses from the exterior reality of the real world to immersion in the diegetic story world. To better understand the transitional status of title sequences, Gérard Genette's concept of the paratext is useful (1997). Genette applies the term paratext to literature, noting the preface or a title page of a book as a transitional space (1997, 12). Genette further defines two types of paratexts: epitexts and peritexts. Epitexts are texts that are associated and in circulation with the main text, such as "advertisements", "interviews" and "news items" (1997, 38). Peritexts are a part of the main text and the elements that make up that text, such as the table of contents of a book. A title sequence is a peritext since it occurs before the main text and accompanies it. However, applying the peritext concept directly from Genette's literary conception to television and film title sequences

is problematic because the title sequence can function as part of the narrative and be incorporated into the midst of the action, such as in feature films *Touch of Evil* (Fitzgerald 1958) and *White Zombie* (Unknown 1932), or can occur after a cold open (a show that starts *in medias res*) in television shows such as *Breaking Bad* (Unknown 2008). My analysis focuses on title sequences that are placed at the start of the television show either before or after an opening scene. The thesis does not investigate end credits as they typically do not have a discrete aural-visual sequence and instead list the personnel involved in the making of the television show.

Finally, title sequences perform a ritual function; they act as an introduction for viewers to the television show. This function is specific to television given its historically distinct exhibition contexts. Feature films have conventionally screened in the public space of the cinema, and television is exhibited in the domestic private space of the home. In the 2010s, there was an intensification of convergence due to streaming services, playback services, pay TV, broadcast television and video sharing websites such as YouTube. Television and film can all be consumed on a multitude of platforms and devices inside as well as outside the household. Regardless of blurred exhibition and consumption boundaries and contexts, serialised television in the US remains distinct from feature films. Television can segment narrative into different consumption windows. While films can employ serialisation through sequels with distinct release windows, television is still separate as its narrative accumulates over segmented units of typically hour-long episodes. As a result, of this distinction between film and television, the title sequence performs a different function of having to introduce the viewer for each distinct consumption window. However, not all television shows utilise the same narrative format.

Within television itself, there are series and serialised approaches to narrative, and the title sequence's function changes between these two modes. In his article on contemporary serials,

Baretto Silva breaks down serialised television into macro and micro narrative units where the narrative continues and develops across seasons (macro) and episodes (micro) (2015, 128). Within these macro and micro units, the television show can be episodic (series) where episodes have their own self-contained narrative or a continuous narrative (serial) that culminates across seasons and episodes (Silva 2015). Television's serialised and series forms are largely governed by broadcasting schedules that dictate when the viewer consumes the television show. The scheduled programming in television is not present in feature films, that can usually be finished in one sitting given their shorter run time and self-contained textual nature. The consumption rituals are a key distinction made by Ted Nannicelli, who recognises that film and television have different temporal practices. Nannicelli argues "The two mediums comprise divergent practices of shaping the temporality of works therein; they also comprise distinct understandings, shared by both creators and viewers, of how the temporality of these works affects the ways in which viewers are to approach them" (2016, 64). I argue that the serial and series television modes create both repetition and the opportunity for creative variability at the start of each new episode. As a result of these different temporalities and consumption windows, television title sequences specifically perform a ritual function to introduce viewers to the show. This section has highlighted that the object of this study, the television title sequence, is defined five key functions: crediting, aesthetic differentiation, branding, a liminal space between the real world and the text's diegesis and ritual forms.

0.5 Key Concepts

The following sections (0.5.1, 0.5.2, 0.5.3, 0.5.4) will identify and define key concepts that will provide the foundation for this thesis's ideas.

0.5.1 Title Sequence and Title Card

Since networks and over-the top services have created title cards as well as title sequences in the 2010s, for the purposes of my argument, it is important to distinguish between a title sequence and a title card. A title card is a static piece of typography that introduces the text's main title. On the other hand, the title sequence has discrete shots with distinct aural-visual compositions. Many television shows utilise a title card, such as *Killing Eve* (Willey 2018), *Barry* (Freeman 2018) and *Fringe* (Kramer 2008), which showcase the main title over a background (Figure 0-1). Sometimes title cards will employ animation or add special effects to the title and background.



Figure 0-1: The Title Card *Killing Eve* (2018) ³

Television title sequences use editing with discrete cuts thus leading to the creation of a sequence of different compositions (Figure 0-2).

³ Captured from *Killing Eve* Sally Gentle (Showrunner). IMG. BBC America. Release Date: 8 April 2018. Timestamp: 00:00:05. YouTube (Source). Marcus Snigura. Killing Eve | Opening Credits. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucdKaqtrDHo>. 23 April 2020. Accessed 20/05/2021.
Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 0-2: The Title Sequence *The Night Of* (2018) ⁴

The boundary between the title card and the title sequence is not concrete because title cards can employ discrete shots, elaborate transitions and animation in the construction of the title itself. In other words, the title card is not necessarily a static aesthetic object. The key line to draw between the television title sequence and the title card is duration. The title card is presented within a short time frame and only present the formation of the title, while the title sequence has a lengthy and elongated series of discrete shots that typically build toward the presentation of the title.

⁴ Captured from *The Night Of* Richard Price, Steve Zallion (Showrunners). BBC Worldwide Productions. HBO. United States. Release Date: 10 July 2016. Art of the Title, *The Night Of* (2016), <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/the-night-of/>. Accessed 22/05/2021. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

0.5.2 Television Branding

In the 2010s the title sequence has become an increasingly prominent part of network branding.⁵ There has been extensive academic work on television branding (Lyn 2002; McDowell 2005; Johnson 2012; Bourdaa 2014). For instance, Melaine Bourdaa explains that HBO has promoted and branded its original programming through transmedia storytelling by presenting the show's narrative in different online spaces (2014). However, there is little academic attention paid to the function of the title sequence as a form of branding for television networks in the 2010s (Davison 2013b; Brando et al 2022). Recently, in a 2022 conference paper titled "Brand Identity in Motion. Structural Models of Brand Identity on TV Opening Credits", Joa Brando, Ricardo Maia Pestana and Daniel Reposa note that branding constitutes "a certain reputation" (2022, 137). Additionally, integral to creating this reputation and brand is a visual identity that connects the identity of the channel to the television show through using consistent visual elements to differentiate company products from competitors (2022, 138). The title sequence functions as a form of branding identity for networks and over-the-top services in the competitive television industry.

0.5.3 Defining Prestige and Quality Television

The concept of prestige television has a long historical standing, and scholars provide different definitions and criteria for what they deem prestige or quality television (Leverette et al 2008; Newman and Levine 2012; Mittell 2013 and 2015; Dunleavy 2017; Keeler and Friedman 2022).

⁵ This thesis understands branding to be distinct from marketing. Branding refers to how an intellectual property, company and institution presents an overall image to its consumer while marketing is comprised of the different methods that construct that overall image of the company.

Throughout this thesis, I use the terms quality and prestige to refer to separate distinct time periods as each term has its own origins in television studies (for more information see Section 1.4). Thompson defines “quality TV as what it is not, it is not regular television” (1996, 14). As such Thompson is claiming that quality television is a canon of shows on premium cable channels such as HBO that differentiate and elevate themselves from other television forms and practices (14).

Friedman and Keeler provide a definition of prestige and rationalise that it is constructed through “how producers and creatives align select shows with familiar cultural and artistic traditions (e.g., literary allusions) to enhance their pedigree and infuse them with textual (e.g., high production values) and extratextual (e.g., costly marketing campaigns) facets to establish their vaunted standing” (2022, 4). For the purposes of this thesis’s examination of title sequences I synthesise these definitions. I define the terms quality and prestige television as the means in which critics, viewers, networks and creatives legitimise television and position it as highbrow through a set of textual characteristics. Some examples of textual characteristics include high production values and complex narrative structures which are then reinforced by critical reception, awards ceremony and a foregrounding of the authors’ celebrity image in promotional materials (the showrunner that has a large hand in production). I also contend that the term prestige does not reside inherently within the text itself but is discursively constructed by academics, critics and audiences and actively encouraged by networks through their promotional strategies. I am using the term prestige to refer to a large array of television genres in a similar fashion to Trisha Dunleavy’s (2017) concept of complex serial drama. Dunleavy asserts that complex serial drama is a meta-genre that encompasses a wide range of television genres such as melodrama and science fiction and series and serials (Dunleavy 2017, 14).

0.5.4 Applying Prestige to the Title Sequence

Unlike other academic accounts of prestige that are discussed in relation to the narrative of television shows, this section will establish how I apply prestige to the title sequence. The link between prestige and title sequences is evidenced in an interview with Alan Williams from title-sequence production house Imaginary Forces (Perkins 2016b). In the interview Williams notes the hesitation companies like HBO have in creating “an anti-prestigious title sequence” (Perkins 2016b). Alan Williams does not specifically elaborate on what an “anti-prestigious title sequence” would entail. His comment highlights the competitive need to align the quality of the title sequence with the show itself and how the title sequence is an integral part of the prestige branding of networks. As such given that title sequences contribute to discursive constructions of prestige, I have created four broad criteria, and they are as follows: a virtuosic aesthetic style conveyed through digital spectacle; the viewers’ close engagement with the title sequence’s relation to the show’s narrative; awards; and network and streaming service branding. I claim the elaborately designed digital title sequences were utilised by networks for the purposes of prestige branding in the 2010s. Overall, I do not attempt to redefine the notion of prestige but rather explain that the title sequence contributes to prestige through distinct characteristics.

Another reason that prestige television is important to define at the outset is due to the legitimising discourses that are a large component of how serialised television title sequences are perceived by audiences, discussed by critics, and marketed by networks and over-the-top services. The serialised dramas from the United States that are chosen as key case studies, *Game of Thrones* (Wall 2011), *True Detective* (Clair 2014), *Stranger Things* (Dougherty 2016) and *Counterpart* (2017) all exhibit attributes of my synthesised definition of prestige television criteria such as critic and audience acclaim, awards and the romanticisation of the showrunner auteur (Thompson 1996).

This thesis studies prestige television shows due to their title sequences being increasingly elaborate in their digital aesthetic design within the 2010s, making them worthy of analysis in their own right. While this is a broad categorisation, I will particularly examine title sequences for prestige shows using two companies: Elastic and Imaginary Forces. I investigate these two studios since they are dominant in terms of both critical acclaim and output of title designs. Further justification for the selection of these companies will be provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

0.6 The Digital TV Title Sequence Trend

While scholars have discussed prestige and quality in relation to the narrative properties of multiple shows (Leverette et al 2008; Keeler and Friedman 2022), I investigate how the title sequence has become an aesthetically complex object and is ultimately employed for the purposes of prestige branding. There are two key characteristics that demonstrate how the title sequence's aesthetics and exhibition constitute a trend in the 2010s: dense digital aesthetics; and networks and streaming platforms uploading the title sequence onto YouTube and spreading through other online spaces. I assert that this digital title sequence trend started with HBO's *Game of Thrones* title sequence in 2011 as it exhibits both characteristics. Moreover, other networks and over-the-top services began to emulate HBO throughout the 2010s and thus cemented the digital title sequence trend.

I do not claim that these characteristics started in the TV IV period, but rather they become reconfigured and intensified by historical, industrial and reception changes. These changes are investigated through television title sequence case studies: *Game of Thrones* (Wall 2011), *True Detective* (Clair 2014), *Stranger Things* (Dougherty 2016) and *Counterpart* (Dougherty 2017). I

maintain that these four case studies indicate various industrial, reception and aesthetic changes within the TV IV period.

1) Dense Digital Aesthetics

The first key characteristic of the digital title sequence trend is dense digital aesthetics. I use the term to refer to title sequences that have a multitude of digitally constructed visual layers. To achieve this dense digital aesthetic, typically, the title sequence from the 2010s either use a hybridised combination of live action or digital elements or are entirely computer-generated.

The digital television title sequences from the 2010s can use a hybridised form of rhythmic montage through live action, painting, image processing, compositing, 2D and 3D animation. The hybrid form is part of a larger trend within the film industry and motion graphic design where digital capabilities and the internet have allowed different art forms to be combined. Kristen Whissel makes a claim for the convergent nature of cinema's digitisation and that it is commonly made up of varying different technologies (2014, 1). The title sequence's hybrid form is an example of this wider trend of convergent media.

Title sequences in the 2010s utilise completely computer-generated visuals. The computer-generated visuals highlight an aesthetic sensibility of the digital television title sequence that television scholar Annette Davison discusses in her chapter on new audiovisual aesthetics. She suggests that title sequences for television shows with high production on cable channels "have become progenitors of new audio-visual aesthetics" (2013b, 146-147). Davison examines these "new audio-visual aesthetics" through investigating the complex interplay and relations between music and visuals in lengthy HBO title sequences in television shows like *Six Feet Under* (McNeill 2005) and *The Sopranos* (Chase 1999) to explain that the title sequence functions as prestige

branding for HBO, similar to my argument. Davison claims that the title sequence is “vital” in conveying a brand identity for a network (2013b, 2). I argue that the key hallmark of new audio-visual aesthetics in the 2010s is the greater prominence of digitised computer-generated visuals. To see clear examples of my digital title sequences in motion please see 1:10 to 2:32 of my video essay located in Section 2.2.2 in this Introduction.

2) Branding through Online Platforms

At the end of her book on branding titled *Branding Television* (2012), Catherine Johnson argues that in the future “brands with longevity, transferability and multiplicity that facilitate extensions across multiple texts and platforms will become more common” (2012, 165). I argue that the title sequence as a distinct digital form has facilitated “extensions across multiple texts” through its exposure in online spaces (2012, 165). One particular online space that has contributed to the title sequence’s branding for networks and over-the-top services in the 2010s is YouTube. The title sequence’s exhibition on YouTube to contribute to the network’s prestige branding is the second key characteristic of the digital title sequence trend and is distinct for the 2010s. In examining the title sequences branding on YouTube I build upon Johnson’s comments that television branding can reveal more than just the economic conditions in which the program is created. Johnson also argues that branding is a “response to the new conditions emerging with the television industry in which the broadcast text is just one aspect of a more dynamic and open-ended context of production and consumption” (2012, 165). The title sequence’s exhibition on YouTube is suited to investigate how branding is part of this “open-ended consumption production and consumption”. The exhibition on YouTube is part of the broader trend in the 2010s where viewers migrate outside of the living room, the traditional viewing space to watch television, and into the online spaces of the internet to create fan communities. As Balanzategui elaborates, in TV IV period

television consumption is no longer structured around physical spaces or “water cooler spaces” (2018, 664). I add to Balanzategui’s claim that the title sequence as a paratext itself allows for fans to gather online and reflect on the television show. Television production has taken advantage of new digital possibilities outside of broadcast television. To investigate this possibility, I argue networks and over-the-top services promote their brand through uploading the title sequence onto YouTube. The video essay in Section 2.2.2 in the Introduction to this thesis at 7:47 to 8:41 highlights how networks upload the title sequence onto YouTube for viewers to create comments on their appreciation of the title sequence.

0.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is composed of nine chapters following the Introduction. The first part of the thesis focuses on an historical and industrial analysis of the digital title sequence trend. The second part of the thesis comprises the aesthetic analysis of key case studies supported by reception to these title sequences on YouTube. These parts clearly delineate between how the aesthetics, industry and reception of the title sequence have contributed to the digital title sequence. Chapter 1 is a literature review that analyses the key concepts of the cinema of attractions, prestige and flow, as well as the literature on digital aesthetics and the title sequence.

Part 1: Industry

0.7.1 Chapter 2: Saul Bass and Kyle Cooper’s Influence on the Digital Title Sequence

Chapter 2 is an historical chapter on the digital title sequence’s developments, particularly examining key title sequence practitioners that have influenced the form and aesthetics of title

sequence design. I will claim that the aesthetics of the digital title sequence have precedents in title sequence history.

0.7.2 Chapter 3: The Emmys and Television Aesthetics

Chapter 3 will use the Emmys category Outstanding Main Title Design, to discuss how digital technology and visual aesthetics has developed in title sequences since the 1980s. I will contextualise and provide a foundation for how digital technology has transformed the title sequence aesthetics leading to the increased use of digital technology by title designers in the 2010s.

0.7.3 Chapter 4: The Emmys and Production

Chapter 4 will consider Emmy Award Winning and Nominated designers to provide historical context for the current motion graphic design landscape in TV IV. I will examine Emmy Award Winning and Nominated motion graphic companies and how discrete motion graphic companies have become the dominant producers of title sequences.

0.7.4 Chapter 5: Elastic and Imaginary Forces

Chapter 5 consists of an industrial history of the two motion graphic companies under examination, Elastic and Imaginary Forces, encompassing their catalogues, the key designers and their histories to demonstrate how motion graphic companies are a part of television aesthetics and broader television trends in the TV IV period. Furthermore, Chapter 5 will analyse how the title sequence is utilised for the purposes of branding in the 2010s.

0.7.5 Case Studies

The second part of the thesis is focused on the aesthetics of the digital title sequence. These case studies emphasise how the aesthetics of the digital title sequence are an integral part of how over-the-top services and networks brand their products and retain audience attention in the TV IV period. Each of the case studies investigates a different aspect of the digital title sequence. None of these characteristics started in the 2010s, but their confluence and intensification in the TV IV period constitutes a trend. The following case studies are Emmy Award winning title designs, and I chose them to investigate how they are constructed by the industry, viewers and critics as prestigious.

Part 2: Aesthetics

0.7.6 Chapter 6: HBO's *Game of Thrones* — Media Convergence

Game of Thrones is an ideal example to study aesthetic and industrial convergence with video games through CG aesthetics. The production studios can make title sequences not only for television but for films and video games, which highlights how production practices have converged across different mediums for the title sequence. *Game of Thrones* indicates how media convergence has affected television aesthetics and particularly the trend toward television title sequences being created entirely by CG images in the 2010s. Chapter 6 will establish that HBO started the digital title sequence trend through large computer-generated worlds and uploading the title sequence onto YouTube.

0.7.7 Chapter 7: HBO's *True Detective* — Dense Aesthetics

True Detective's title sequence accentuates how the aesthetics of the title sequence have contributed to HBO's prestige branding in the 2010s. *True Detective*'s title sequence is distinct for its utilisation of the multiple exposure style and the large number of discrete shots (over thirty) that have a multitude of layers. The layers create an aesthetic density which in turn have constructed spectacle and aided HBO's prestige branding.

0.7.8 Chapter 8: Starz — Fan Communities

Chapter 8 will investigate how Starz has positioned and expanded its service to specific fan communities through the title sequences for *Spartacus* (2010), *Magic City* (2012), *Black Sails* (2014) and *American Gods* (2017). I will analyse how Starz has imitated HBO's utilisation of elaborate title sequences for prestige branding via an examination of *Counterpart*'s title sequence (2017). Chapter 8 will consider how the title sequence has become an important component of how fans engage with title sequences on the internet beyond the parameters of the show itself. This chapter will demonstrate how the television title sequences in different online spaces such as Reddit, YouTube and X have directly contributed to the branding of over-the-top services and other networks in the 2010s.

0.7.9 Chapter 9: Netflix —The Title Card

This chapter will examine Netflix Originals' title sequences made by Imaginary Forces and Elastic. Chapter 9 will unpack how the title sequence's aesthetics are not only encouraged by competition between different streaming services but also viewing practices. The chapter will establish that *Stranger Things*' typographic design represents a trend toward title cards and overall highlights a

shift in titles' aesthetic design due to binge-watching as an increasingly popular consumerist behaviour.

Throughout these chapters I will emphasise that there is a trend toward elaborate digital title design in the 2010s. The digital title sequence trend emerged due to an increase of computer-generated visuals, the rise of boutique motion graphic companies, the use of the title sequence as a prestige branding device for competing over-the-top services and its greater prominence in online spaces. Ultimately, this thesis will argue that the title sequence has become an integral part of how prestige is constructed for the television show, motion graphic companies and streaming services.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

Television studies is an interdisciplinary research area and uses a myriad of methodologies such as film studies, sociology and psychology. As such this literature review will navigate the fluid nature of television studies and provide a foundation for this thesis' study of the title sequence. This chapter is divided into seven key sections. The first section (1.2) examines the literature on different aspects of the title sequence's aesthetics, industry and reception to underscore and better understand its changing status and role in the 2010s. To understand how quality television and prestige television as terminology and concepts are relevant to the title sequence, the second section (1.3) is a historical overview of how scholarly examination of quality television has changed from the 1950s to the 2000s. The third section (1.4) investigates how the term quality has developed into the terms prestige and complex in the 2010s. The fourth section (1.5) examines television branding to better understand how the title sequence has become an integral part of the television industry. The fifth section (1.6) investigates audience reception studies within television studies to contextualise this thesis's methodological pursuit of using YouTube comments as research. The sixth section (1.7) investigates the literature on television aesthetics and digital aesthetics to better understand how I am applying these concepts to the digital title sequence. The final section (1.8) addresses the literature on spectacle as a discrete concept and how it directly applies to the digital title sequence.

1.2 The Television Title Sequence

To contextualise how the title sequence's function has changed in the 2010s this section will examine the pre-existing academic research on opening credits. In television studies, the title sequence has received more attention from scholars in the 21st Century than the 20th Century, regarding its aesthetics and potential for network branding.

1.2.1 Title Sequence Aesthetics

The most recent example of new-found academic attention is the comprehensive work undertaken on the title sequence, Michael Betancourt's series of four books (2016–2019), that investigate four key semiotic areas of predominantly feature film and television title sequences. Importantly, Betancourt's four books engage deeply in the title sequence's aesthetic construction and how their aesthetic patterns change in historical and industrial contexts. Betancourt covers a large range of title sequences in different historical periods to account for the aesthetic variability of the title sequence. In *Synchronization and Title Sequences: Audio-Visual Semiosis in Motion Graphics*, Betancourt (2017) analyses the title sequence's interplay and rhythmic relationship of visuals and sound, particularly their synchronisation, while *Semiotics and Title Sequences: Text-Image Composites in Motion Graphics* (2017) examines the relation between image and text. *Title Sequences as Paratexts: Narrative Anticipation and Recapitulation* (2018) investigates the title sequence's complicated paratextual nature and boundaries between text and title sequence through describing different creative approaches and modes. Finally in the recent book, *Ideologies of the Real in Title Sequences, Motion Graphics and Title Sequences* (2019), Betancourt synthesises his previous work to analyse the ontology of the title sequence, namely its relationship to reality,

through critiquing André Bazin's affinity for photographic realism in cinema which is different to the title sequence's deployment of artificial non-realist elements such as animation.

The topics that Betancourt examines through utilising semiotic methodologies are pertinent to defining the title sequence's aesthetic parameters and typicality. Betancourt outlines several distinct aesthetic modes that shift over historical periods, such as the allegory or summary modes (Betancourt *Synchronization and Title Sequences: Audio-Visual Semiosis in Motion Graphics* 2017; *Semiotics and Title Sequences: Text-Image Composites in Motion Graphics* 2017; *Title Sequence as Paratexts: Narrative Anticipation and Recapitulation* (2018). Betancourt stresses the importance of audience interpretation of title sequences. Consequently, Betancourt's main through line across the topics in his four books is that audience knowledge is key to the title sequence's aesthetic parameters because viewers can deftly identify and distinguish between the title sequence and the text proper through intertextual knowledge of how the title sequence form functions (2019, 2). Betancourt's argument is a valuable lesson for the relation between the viewer and title sequence which is important for this thesis's understanding of how viewers construct value judgements about the title sequence.

Kathrin Fahlenbrach and Barbara Flueckiger's article "Immersive Entryways Into Televisual Worlds Affective and Aesthetic Functions of Title Sequences in Quality Series" discusses how title sequences for quality television immerse the viewer through various stylistic cues such as metaphorical imagery. Fahlenbrach and Flueckiger conclude that "the title sequences of successful high budget primetime series are densely composed affective entryways into the atmospheres of a narrative world" (2014, 99). Fahlenbrach's and Flueckiger's most salient point for the purposes of this thesis is that the title sequences for series such as *Dexter*, *Six Feet Under* and *True Blood* use "high aesthetic density" to provide "an immediate sensorial immersion" to engage the viewer

(2014, 99). These claims are similar to my own argument around the title sequence's aesthetic density being a distinctive characteristic in the 2010s. However, while Fahlenbrach and Flueckiger are focused upon how the title sequence's immersive stylisation of metaphors elicits a specific viewer response either emotional or sensory, my attention is upon how the dense aesthetic is utilised in relation to network and streaming service prestige branding. Additionally, my thesis points directly to how the notion of spectacle is an important part of this distinctive aesthetic which is an aspect that Fahlenbrach and Flueckiger do not discuss.

A further key source is Monika Bednarek's 2014 quantitative survey from *Visual Communication*, "And They All Just Look the Same? A Quantitative Survey of Television Title Sequences". The article focuses on fifty contemporary North American television title sequences from various genres. Bednarek investigates several elements of the title sequences' aesthetic and branding functions through title sequence elements such as live action and duration. Bednarek explains that television title sequences are varied in their aesthetic approaches and that there is no single uniform title sequence. Bednarek's categorical approach to title design directly inspires my own approach to consider the digital title sequence as an object always in a state of flux.

The I.B. Tauris' collection of books and articles titled *Reading* followed by the name of the television program contains multiple aesthetic analysis of television shows such as *Sex and the City*, *The Sopranos* and *Dexter*. For the purposes of my argument, a brief chapter in *Reading The Sopranos* (2006) written by David Johansson analyses the show's title sequence and emphasises its importance as an introduction for the viewer to its narrative and themes as well as claiming that the title sequence is a "work of art" (Johansson 2006, 27). Moreover, Johansson expands on this by noting that the title sequence is a "tour de force" through the complex interplay between music and images (2006, 28). The appraisal of *The Sopranos* demonstrates the increasing

perception of the title sequence as a distinct artistic object and furthers my argument that the title sequence has increasingly become a part of quality discourse. Johansson analyses *The Sopranos* title sequence's structure and divides into three distinct elements including the images itself, character and the use of music and how the interplay between the three elements has created an "aesthetic pleasure" for the viewer. This notion of aesthetic pleasure is crucial for my argument that focuses on how viewers can appreciate the amount of time and effort put into the title sequence which in turn creates its own sense of pleasure.

Erin Högerle is another recent author that has written about the title sequence in relation to comic book feature films. In her article titled, "Comic to Film: The Title Sequence of Comic Book Adaptations as Transmedial Transitional Space" (2013), Högerle describes how the title sequence functions and changed in contemporary comic book films adaptations such as *Iron Man* (2008). Her comments about how the title sequence can be studied through the lens of genre is pertinent to my argument that analyses how the title sequence relates to prestige television. For instance, she claims that comic book adaptations of superhero films have genre specific action imagery (2013, 42). Högerle identifying specific aspects of the title sequence that relate to genre provided the inspiration for my thesis's argument that specific aspects of the digital title sequence's aesthetics relate to prestige television as a distinct evaluative category.

1.2.1 Title Sequence Music

Additionally, there are academic accounts of title sequence music and sound design. One key historical source is Phillip Tagg's book *50 Seconds of Television Music: Toward an Analysis of Affect in Popular Music*, (2011) that discusses theme music as part of its wider assessment of television music. Tagg also provides foundational framework and definitions of title music and its key

functions. He states that the music attracts the attention of “potential new listeners” (2011, 62) and prepares “the viewer or listener emotionally” which aligns with the key function of the title sequence as a liminal space to transition the viewer from the real world to the story world (2011, 63). Phillip Tagg’s and Bob Clarida’s *Ten Little Title Tunes: Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media* examines the importance of title music in relation to wider culture and how it informs people’s attitudes (2003, 677). This analysis also includes important research on the gendered implications of title music in television shows such as *Miami Vice* (1984) and how the title themes reinforce dominant gender stereotypes (Tagg and Clarida 2003, 677). Lawrence Kramer’s book *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (2001) conducts a formal analysis of the title sequences for *The X-Files* (1993) and *NYPD Blue* (1993) and their respective relationships between music and image (2001, 188). He stresses that the relationship between music and image is quite complex and that it is not a matter of simply matching the music to the image (2001, 153, 154). Kramer’s comments are important for this thesis’s close formal analysis of the *True Detective* title sequence in Chapter 7. I build upon Kramer’s comments by demonstrating how the different title sequence’s visual layers interact with the music. Jostein Gripsrud’s book *The Dynasty Years: Hollywood Television and Critical Media Studies* discusses the visuals and music of the title sequence for the television show *Dynasty* (1981). Gripsrud writes that the function of music in the sequence is to “contain and smooth the visual shocks provided by the fast-paced montage of so many narratively incoherent images” (1995, 195). Gripsrud’s analysis of the *Dynasty* title sequence demonstrates that music’s function is to provide both meaning and a structure to the visuals. While music is not a key focus in this thesis, these scholarly accounts of title music highlight that academics were increasingly taking the title sequence seriously as an object of study in the 21st century and this thesis will continue the legitimization of the title sequence as a study object.

Deborah Allison has written numerous publications on the title sequence. For example, she has written about wide screen aesthetics and title sequences (“Film Title Sequences and Widescreen Aesthetics 2015”) western iconography (“Title Sequences in the Western Genre: The Iconography of Action” 2008) and cartoons in title sequences “You Oughta Be in Pictures: Cartoons and Caricatures in Opening Title Sequences” (2020). Her most important source for the purposes of this thesis’s historical analysis is her recent book titled *Film Title Sequences: A Critical Anthology* (2021) which combines her previous publications into one anthology. In this book one of her key ideas is her justification for shifts in title sequence history. As Deborah Allison suggests,

Rather than considering the shifts in titling styles and norms that have taken place during the past two decades as a complete sea change, it is more appropriate to look on them as trends that emerged and mutated from key developments that occurred during the twentieth century (2021, 166).

Allison’s argument informs this thesis’s inclusion of the historical influences on the digital title sequence discussed in Chapter 2.

1.2.2 Title Sequence Branding

Branding is an integral function of the title sequence and the focus of this thesis. In addition to paratextual objects such as posters and trailers, the title sequence’s focus on iconography extrapolated from the television show either directly or indirectly can become part of the shows’ and network’s visual identity. One source that has discussed the branding of title sequence is John Ellis’ chapter “Interstitials: How the ‘Bits in Between’ Define the Programmes”, in *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube* (2011). In this book, John Ellis defines the term interstitials as paratexts that separate programs and includes “broadcaster identifications... adverts, trailers, announcements, sponsorship ‘bumpers’, theme night packaging,

anything, in fact, that cannot be classified as a programme” (Ellis 2011, 60). Ellis also argues title sequences can also be considered interstitials and have the characteristics of interstitials by claiming “They are short, synoptic, often repeated and high budget” (Ellis 2011, 62). Ellis notes that the title sequence informs the quality branding of prestige television shows. He explains that “the title sequence is becoming the audiovisual equivalent of hardback binding on a book, denoting quality, seriousness of intent and the buyer’s willingness to pay more” (Ellis 2011, 62). I build extensively on Ellis’s demands that title sequences contribute to quality through my robust close formal analysis of title sequences throughout this thesis.

Another source that relates directly to title sequence branding is Joe Brando, Ricardo Maria Pestana and Daniel Reposá’s conference paper “Brand Identity in Motion. Structural Models of Brand Identity on TV Opening Credits” (Brando et al 2022). The paper details how the title sequence contributes to television branding through various typologies. Brando et al examines key structural elements such as graphic design, typography and motion graphics that create a branding strategy for the respective network and or streaming service (2022). To determine how title sequences are integral to a branding strategy, Brando et al collected data pertaining to two key typologies. The first typology is autonomous credits that are separate from the narrative and have their own distinct images. The second typology is non-autonomous credits that are connected directly to the narrative and are credits that are superimposed over the show’s narrative (2022, 142). By establishing the parameters around the duration of the title sequence, Brando et al concludes by asserting two major patterns. From their data Brando et al claims that since there are more credits that play over the show’s visuals, there is less time devoted to a discrete title sequence (Brando et al 2022, 144). I will argue in Chapter 9 through my own data that particularly title sequences on Netflix were becoming increasingly shorter due to binge-watching practices.

However, Brando et al contends that title sequences from HBO and Netflix were becoming longer (2022, 145). Brando et al concludes that main title sequences are an important part of HBO's and Netflix's branding (145). Brando's claim corresponds to my own argument concerning title sequences becoming more elaborate and I will prove that title sequences have become an integral part of branding through examining title sequences exhibited on HBO, Netflix and Starz. However, this thesis differs from Brando's article since it analyses the aesthetics of the title sequences themselves and not the duration.

Other academic sources from the 2010s also study the television title sequence. Annette Davison's chapter on contemporary title sequences in the Oxford *Handbook to New Audio-Visual Aesthetics* (2013) argues that title sequences are used for branding purposes, through examining title sequence music and its relationship to the image in HBO shows from the 2000s like *Six Feet Under* (2001). Her argument is similar to my focus and so is an important contextual source for my research. Davison's main claim is that the title sequences for HBO such as *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under* utilise a theme song in conjunction with the visuals to brand HBO. She claims that these HBO series "visualize the selected music in a productive manner, matching the 'values' projected by the audio-visual complex to those of the serial in holistic terms, and in this way assist the generation of a strong brand identity" (2013, 7). This thesis will build upon Davison's analysis of music in Chapter 7 by investigating how computer-generated imagery has changed the relationship between visuals and music in the title sequence.

Enrica Picarelli's 2013 article "Aspirational paratexts: the case of "quality openers" in TV promotion" examines how "quality" title sequences have informed the branding and promotion of contemporary television shows such as *Dexter* (2006) and *American Horror Story* (2011). For the purposes of my thesis one key claim is that his so called "contemplative openers" act as an

effective programming tool through applying “the standards of advertising and cinema to title design to perform quality” (2013). Picarelli examines the aesthetics of title sequences created for the network showtime to argue that “Their [title sequences] cutting-edge style and artistic virtuosity aspire to position the channel as a competitive brand of entertainment” (2013). My own argument concerning the digital title sequence closely aligns with Picarelli’s particular category of “quality openers” and how title sequences help brand the prestige value of the networks.

However, my own argument will not only build upon Picarelli’s but also address how the digitised aesthetic of these title sequences uploaded by networks in online spaces help create a branding identity.

Additionally, Allison’s explanation of widescreen aesthetics and retro title sequences is pertinent to Chapter 2’s historical analysis. Moreover, while her focus is on feature film title sequences, she briefly mentions how HBO has utilised title sequences for the purposes of branding. She reasons, “the new ‘golden age’ of broadcast content, led by such subscription-based media giants as HBO and Netflix, has been matched by what many commentators have hailed as a golden age of title sequences” (2021, 165). Her comment speaks to how critics have applied historically legitimised canons of television aesthetics to the title sequence. I agree with Allison that the title sequence have been constructed as prestige by critics, and I will examine in depth how the title sequence has been employed by streaming platforms to brand their content as prestige.

Overall while scholars such as Re, Picarelli, Davison, Brando et al and Abbott have examined the title sequence’s role in quality branding demonstrating pre-existing research into the subject, their focus is on title sequences typically from the 2000s. My thesis makes a distinct contribution to knowledge through examining the dense digital aesthetics of title sequences from the 2010s.

1.2.3 Title Sequence as a Paratext

The concept of paratexts, already mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis and conceived by Gérard Genette in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, is useful to understand the title sequence (1997). The idea that the title sequence functions as a liminal space between reality and story world still holds true to the contemporary title sequence, as viewers fluently understand how the title sequence is separate and works autonomously within its own confines as an aural-visual synthesis of the show's key ideas. However, Genette does not discuss the title sequence explicitly. More recently Jonathan Gray in his book *Shows Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Texts* (2010) examines paratexts and specifically title sequences. He claims that the title sequence provides time for the viewer to reflect upon their memories of the show to anticipate the forthcoming episode (2010, 76). Gray notes the show's serialisation is an important component of how title sequences function as paratexts. Through the viewer experiencing the title sequence repeatedly in different consumption windows allows the spectator to formulate how they should interpret the narrative and characters (Gray 2010, 76). This notion of seriality and closer viewing comprehension practices will be investigated further in Chapter 8's exploration of Starz's title sequences in relation to fan engagement.

Max Dosser's article titled "Streaming's Skip Intro Function as a Contradictory Refuge for Television Title Sequences" in the *Velvet Light Trap* on the Skip Intro button and title cards in the 2010s is relevant to this thesis's assertions (2022). Dosser explains that on the surface, the Skip Intro button seemingly allows the viewer to skip the title sequence, thus forgoing viewing the elaborate title aesthetics. However, he claims that the functionality increases viewer agency and thus creates a distinct space for title sequences on streaming services (2022, 39). Dosser's argument as well as his engagement with the emergence of title cards on broadcast television is

pertinent to my focus in Chapter 9's on *Stranger Things*. However, my argument differs from Dosser because I will contend that binge-watching, and the Skip Intro button has encouraged a trend of title cards on streaming services in the 2010s.

Stacey Abbott's chapter "'I Want to Do Bad Things with You': The Television Horror Title Sequence" (2014) in the book *Popular Media Cultures* examines the title sequence in relation to the horror genre. Abbott's article provides a formal analysis of the title sequences for horror television shows such as *Dexter* (2006), *American Horror Story* (2011) and *Hannibal* (2013). In doing so, she explains that the title sequence, due to its liminality, has specific connotations for the horror genre. She argues that "the title sequence serves a multitude of textual functions for the show, most significantly serving as a threshold between the diegetic and non-diegetic world. This is particularly important for television horror because this is a genre that is often preoccupied with thresholds" (Abbott 2014, 112). Moreover, Abbott concludes by arguing that titles are a useful framework "to understand how the show's creators perceive the generic signifiers" of the horror genre (Abbott 2014, 124). For the purposes of this thesis's examination of branding, Abbott specifically points to how the title sequence from Momoco, Prologue Films and Digital Kitchen "serves to construct a brand image for these shows" (Abbott 2014, 124). This thesis will build upon Abbott's comments to demonstrate how the title sequence constructs a branding identity for the motion graphic company, program and network.

Valentina Re in an article titled "From Saul Bass to participatory culture: Opening title sequences in contemporary television series" in *Necsus* (2016) discusses how contemporary title sequences are transformed by viewers' participatory practices and that, when separated from the show proper, can consolidate a show's discourse when recirculated on a video sharing website such as YouTube. Re points to how fans can transform and appropriate a work which can then be shared on the

internet to highlight the fan's connection to the material and emphasise their technical ability (2016). The concept of fandom recirculating material is an essential component of Jenkins' *Spreadable Media* (2012) which deliberates how unofficial bottom-up forces such as online fans in interplay with official top-down networks recirculate media on different sites of discourse across the internet. My thesis investigates how the title sequence is transformed by fans when decoupled from its initial broadcast and recirculated on video sharing sites such as YouTube.

1.2.4 *Art of the Title*

Art of the Title is a crucial website for any title sequence researcher. Throughout this thesis I use *Art of the Title* to support my claims. It has a wealth of information on motion graphic companies, specific title designers and interviews. Lola Landekic, the editor in chief of *Art of the Title*, has experience as a graphic designer having worked for newspapers such as the *Toronto Star*. My thesis uses *Art of the Title* throughout and particularly for Chapter 5 which discusses factual information on title designers and production members in different motion graphic companies. *Art of the Title* is not an academic source and instead is limited like any other trade paper or news outlets in that they typically do not offer critical or self-reflective analysis. However, *Art of the Title* still has academic worth because it demonstrates how title sequence designers present themselves and their work. Additionally, the existence of the website is indicative of the continuing interest and legitimisation of the title sequence as its own discrete aesthetic object. The website is an industry publication with over 400,000 readers (*Art of the Title*) a month and is a key source of information that my thesis draws upon.

1.3 Quality, Prestige and Complex Television

This section relates to my central argument of the title sequence increasingly becoming a prominent part of how quality and prestige is discursively constructed. The following section contextualises how the discursive construction of quality and prestige television has historically developed to understand how the term is utilised in the 2010s and this thesis's employment of these terms as they relate to the title sequence. As such the next section will investigate the academic and critic literature on how the term quality television has been discursively constructed and been utilised to legitimate television as an art form and object of study. The second section will unpack how the quality television term has developed into the term prestige television. Finally, the final section will investigate how complex serial television has become its own distinct mode and genre based on these earlier quality discursive constructions.

1.3.1 Anthology Drama (1950s)

Quality television discourse has existed since the 1950s in the US. To understand scholarly accounts of quality television, I will first discuss the broader discursive construction of television by critics and the US government. An early example is how critics made positive value judgements of live anthology dramas in the early 1950s (Gould "A Plea for Live Video" 1952). Anthology dramas were live plays made for television that were not constrained by genre conventions or formulaic episodic series (Barnouw 1990, 154). The anthology drama was celebrated by critics for its use of liveness. One example of critical discourse is *New York Times'* critic Jack Gould who was "probably 1950s' television's most influential daily critic" (Boddy 1990, 74). He was an advocate for television's liveness during the 1950s (74). He states in his article from 1952, "A Plea for Live Video", that film programs "lack that intangible sense of depth and trueness" and that "On every

count— technically and qualitatively—the films cannot compare with ‘live shows’” (Gould 1952, 17). Critics advocated for the anthology drama and generally to take advantage of television’s intrinsic liveness in direct comparison to the cheap Hollywood telefilm (Boddy 1990, 73). Another avenue of positive appraisals by critics and industry was its conflation with the theatre. In an episode of ‘*Horizons*’ a public affair program titled *The Future of Television Drama* the producer Alex Seagal claims that one of the key potentials of television is bringing theatre into the household (1952). Live anthology drama’s quality pedigree was discursively constructed by industry through comparing television to an already legitimated medium- the theatre (Boddy 1990, 87). The comparison indicates that critics and industry were creating a hierarchy of mediums. Television in the 1950s lacks the cultural cache of higher already legitimated forms, and this perception of the medium has greatly influenced scholarly engagement with television as an object of study.

Overall, the positive evaluations of live anthology drama are an example of early quality television discourse. As Newman and Levine note that the live anthology drama was privileged by critics by giving the period the “label of Golden Age” (Newman and Levine 2012, 21). The golden age of television label that has become retrospectively synonymous with the live anthology drama has shaped academic accounts (Thompson 1996) of quality television that will be discussed further in Section 1.3.5.

1.3.2 The Vast Wasteland and Television Violence (1960s)

While anthology drama was largely celebrated by critics for its use of literary source material and liveness, during the 1960s, television received a large amount of criticism from the US government for its use of violence (Ellis 2020). Violence on television screens was positioned by the

government as potentially psychologically damaging. For example, in 1961 President John F. Kennedy ordered an investigation into the effects of television violence at Congress in the US (Ellis 2020). A further example of broader moral attitudes against television is the Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton Minow's 1961 "vast wasteland" speech to the National Association of Broadcasters. In this speech Minow calls television ostensibly boring and repetitious in its generic output. Newton Minow made this speech in agreement with the pervading cultural perception that television was too violent. As he states:

I can assure you that you will observe a vast wasteland. [...] You will see a procession of game shows, formula comedies about totally unbelievable families, blood and thunder, mayhem, violence, sadism, murder, western bad men, western good men, private eyes, gangsters, more violence, and cartoons. And endlessly, commercials -- many screaming, cajoling, and offending. And most of all, boredom (Minow 1961).

Minow's comments are not isolated opinion because there was a large amount of public criticism in the 1960s towards television's programming in the United States (Boddy 1990). William Boddy explains Minow's speech instigated a large public reaction, "including nearly ten thousand pieces of mail to the FCC", and his complaints were reinforced "by newspaper editorialists and reformers around the country" (Boddy 1990, 226). As scholar Mary Ann Watson details in the 1950s, popular television programs were seen as reflecting "self-indulgent values" in the US (1994, 4). The criticism directed at the US television industry highlights that there was a negative perception of television shows in the 1960s. In turn this created a stigma that has since coloured television scholars' discourse which will be investigated in the next section (1.2.3).

1.3.3 Early Academic Studies of Television (1940s-1960s)

During the 1950s and 1960s, television scholarship examined the effects of television violence. The earliest studies of television arose from the field of education in the 1950s. An example is “Television for Children” in the *Columbia Journal of Education* which discusses the negative effects of television violence on children (Gary et al 1957). Gary et al claims, that aggression is a problematic part of a child’s development and the action drama and particularly the western depicts physical violence (1957, 9). Further examples include “Television: Its Impact on School Children” (Maccoby 1951), and “Television: Dimensions of Violence” (Smythe 1955) that address concerns and anxieties related to television violence. Notably, during the 1950s and 1960s television studies is not yet a discrete discipline since these academic studies are derived from other fields.

1.3.4 Television Studies as a Growing Discipline (1970s and 1980s)

While early academic accounts are in response to the discursive criticism of television violence, during the 1970s, television scholars increasingly began to consider television as an aesthetic object and legitimise the discipline. One such example is Horace Newcomb’s *TV: The Most Popular Art* which is not only an important foundational text for the thesis but for the trajectory of television studies literature (1974). Contrary to the popular paradigm of the television as an object that affected the cognitive behaviour of the viewer (Maccoby 1951; Smythe 1955; Gary et al 1957), Newcomb’s book advocated for critically investigating the television image as an aesthetic object in its own right. Newcomb notes how the pervading popular opinion of television’s sociological effects on the viewer has affected television as a study object. He asserts, that there are countless studies of physiological and psychological effects of the medium (1974, 20).

Newcomb describes that as a result of this attitude, “serious study of the popular arts has often been ignored” (1974, 16). Moreover, Newcomb suggests that the aesthetics of television should be researched further and advocates for the development of a method that can address these aesthetic concerns (1974, 21). Newcomb’s comment suggests that academics were beginning to address television aesthetics as its own field of study.

In the 1970s other texts sought to legitimate television studies. For example, John Fiske and John Hartley’s *Reading Television* applies a semiotic perspective to the study of television (1978). They argue that television has aesthetic and textual components similar to cinema such as camera angles and lighting (1978, 29). The analysis of television’s textual components highlights how scholars were beginning to transition from discussing television violence to television aesthetics. While Fiske and Hartley are applying another disciplinary approach to television studies, semiotics, Newcomb and Fiske and Hartley’s respective books demonstrate how television studies in the 1970s was increasingly stressed as a serious object of study in opposition to how television was characterised as a psychological threat to a mass audience. This perception that television should be considered a serious object of research remains prevalent in television studies and has influenced a strand of academic inquiry in television studies. I call this strand quality television.

1.3.5 Scholarly Assessments of Quality Television (1980-present)

In the 1980s, academic literature in television studies began to critically analyse quality television as a discrete concept. Newman and Levine claim that television has continued to grow as a field in the 1980s as particular shows are labelled as quality (2012, 157). A key source that underlines the legitimisation of television studies in the 1980s is Jane Feuer’s *MTM: “Quality Television”* (1984). Feuer contends that MTM which is Mary Tyler Moore’s production company, through television

shows such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970), presented itself as a quality production company in the television marketplace. For example, MTM positioned itself as a quality production company through investing in improvisational actors such as Valerie Harper and Howard Hessmen while the rest of the television industry was investing in mainstream television actors (1984, 32). Additionally, Feuer points out that MTM actively pursued a “quality filmic look” while many other sitcoms had switched to using the video tape format (32). Feuer explains that MTM was discursively constructed by trade papers and critics in the 1970s as a quality production company (1984, 32). One example is an article by *The New York Times* that claims, “MTM has a reputation for fair dealing, and by, prime-time standards, high quality” (Buckley 1979). Feuer’s examination of quality television is evidence that scholars were not only starting to inquire into issues of television aesthetics but also interrogating how critics and journalists created their own value judgements about networks’ television shows.

The continued legitimation in the 1990s of television is amplified by one example: Robert Thompson’s book *Television’s Second Golden Age* (1996). Thompson investigates the industrial and discursive construction of television’s second golden age in the 1980s and 1990s. Similar to critics’ discursive construction of the golden age of television that is associated with the live anthology drama in the 1950s, the proliferation of cable in the 1980s is synonymous with another golden age of television programming. Thompson critically examines how the transition from mass audience to niche audiences brought forth a new era of innovative television programming to the screen (1996, 30). He argues that competition between cable services and network television encouraged “a new type of complex and sophisticated programming aimed directly at an upscale audience” (Thompson 1996, 30). Thompson’s critical examination of the “second golden age of television” and his quality television characteristics are useful for this thesis’s purposes to

understand how the television industry and critics construct notions of quality around a limited canon of television shows and title sequences. Thompson's quality television characteristics include the marketing of the showrunner, a blue-chip demographic, genre hybridity, explicit content and awards. In particular, Thompson's notion that quality television is showered with "awards and critical acclaim" (1996, 15) is important for my own study that analyses title sequences that have won Emmys. Thompson elaborates that drama series exhibiting the characteristics of quality television typically win awards (1996, 15). Quality television receiving awards in the drama category highlights how quality television has been historically conflated with the drama genre by the television industry. In my thesis, many of the title sequences chosen for examination that have won Emmy awards are attached to drama television shows, which indicates that the industrial construction of quality conflated with drama extends to the title sequence.

Overall, in stark contrast to the lack of any disciplinary parameters in the 1950s and 1960s, Thompson investigates how historical shifts such as audience demographics and the increase in cable channels have led to a wide variety of programs that includes quality television. The critical evaluation of the live anthology drama in the 1950s has provided a perpetuating hierarchy of images that scholars like Thompson have since critically unpacked (Newman and Levine 2012). The term "golden age" is also important because critics have applied the "golden age of television" to evaluations of title sequences (Sellers 2012; Ouellette 2019; Abascal 2022). For instance, John Sellers, a television critic, has applied the term "golden age" from anthology dramas to title sequences in the 2000s such as *Dexter* in the article "TV's golden age of opening credits" (Sellers 2012). Seller's article demonstrates that the term "golden age of television" continues to be an important part of how critics ascribe quality to certain texts over others which includes the prestige evaluations of the title sequence.

88Another important claim that Thompson's makes is that quality television constitutes a genre with typical characteristics (1996, 16). Thompson explains that viewers can readily identify the aforementioned quality television characteristics through their intertextual knowledge of television shows (16). Thompson's recognition of formulaic characteristics is reminiscent of Rick Altman's notion that genre can be discursively constructed by the viewer (Altman 1999, 17). Additionally, Jason Mittell in a journal article titled "A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory" has advocated for examining genre as a discursive construct to consider the cultural implications of genre (2001, 18). Thompson's emphasis of the viewer being able to recognise generic formulas inspired my own approach to examining YouTube comment sections and trade papers to understand how the spectator discursively constructs generic patterns in the title sequence. Thompson's identification of key characteristics that constitute the quality television genre influenced this thesis's examination into how digital title sequence trend can have typical formulaic aesthetic structures that will be analysed in Chapter 6, 7, 8 and 9. However, while Thompson advocates for quality as a genre through his twelve criteria he does not state a clear definition of quality television as a genre.

Quality television does not have a stable unifying characteristic that defines broader generic construction and is problematic as an evaluative category. Thompson in the preface to Janet McCabe and Kim Akass's book *Quality TV: Contemporary Television and Beyond* from 2007 reflects upon how unstable quality television is by stating that "I can find some spectacularly innovative programming- the first season of *Survivor*, for example- that aggressively resists the category of quality TV" (2007, xx). Jason Mittell has also argued that quality television functions as an evaluative category and not a genre (2015, 208). He states that quality television complicates "an already muddy terrain through a slippage between the established category and the type of

aesthetic possibilities that such texts offer” (2015, 208). Quality television is also problematic given that its evaluative criteria can create cultural hierarchies where certain texts are privileged over others. For instance, Newman and Levine’s *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* in 2012 discusses the industry and critics’ construction of a limited brand of quality television. Newman and Levine explain that in the current television landscape there are a myriad of different claims about television’s value including “complex”, “great art”, “rich television age”, and “golden age” (2012, 15). Newman and Levine challenge and interrogate how these claims create a hierarchy of taste, class and gender (2012, 15). Newman and Levine’s study raised my awareness for how particular genres and evaluative criteria can constitute an underlying set of cultural hierarchies. I considered Newman and Levine’s interrogation of these cultural hierarchies when selecting my own case studies.

1.4 Quality Television in the 2010s

I argue in this section that quality television has been discursively constructed by scholars as the terms prestige and complex television.

1.4.1 Prestige Television

Following from the quality discourses of the 1980s and 1990s, I argue that the term quality has changed into the term prestige. As Keeler and Friedman note, quality television was initially linked to network dramas from the 1980s and early 1990s (2022, 3) and the term quality gained traction following the publication of Robert Thompson’s *Television’s Second Golden Age* in 1996 as discussed in the last section (2022, 3). Moreover, Keeler and Friedman explain that prestige television is increasingly used by scholars because the term quality refers to an earlier period in

the medium's history (2022, 3). While the two terms refer similarly to the discursive construction of television shows which produce problematic gendered, and classist cultural hierarchies and binaries as discussed in the last section; academics have started to directly address this issue with the notion of prestige.

One key problem of quality television discourse is that it associated and typically conflated with a limited canon of premium cable channels such as HBO (Thompson 1996; Leverette et al 2008). Recent academic discourse surrounding prestige television has advocated for expanding these earlier quality discourse beyond quality just being conflated with HBO's quality discourse (Newman and Levine 2012; Fuller, Sean, and Catherine Driscoll 2015; Perkins and Schrieber 2019; Keeler and Friedman 2022). Claire Perkins and Michelle Schieber's special issue from *Feminist Media Studies* "Independent Women: From Film To Television" investigates the role of women both behind the scenes and on the screen in independent productions. Such academic work underlines that scholars should be examining diverse personnel both in front of and behind the camera. One source that advocates for expanding prestige television beyond HBO is Keeler and Friedman's *Prestige Television: Cultural and Artistic Value in Twenty-First Century America* (2022). They argue that the "inaccurate conflation of Quality TV with a limited brand of masculinist shows... has prompted disproportionate attention on HBO and its new streaming rivals, especially Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu, in accounts that chart television's changing cultural and artistic value" (2022, 4). To remedy this problem, Keeler and Friedman investigate a vast array of prestige television shows on broadcast networks and other cable channels outside of premium networks such as "Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu" (2022, 10). As such they broaden the term prestige by focusing on "programs and venues typically elided in most descriptions of prestige television" such

as Jane Campion, a female showrunner, (2022, 170), broadcast television (2022, 38) and the representation of minorities in prestige television shows including Native Americans (2022, 113).

Academics have also examined HBO's and other networks gendered programming in relation to notions of quality and prestige (Nygaard 2013; Gillian 2014; Lotz 2014). For instance, Taylor Nygaard in her article from *Feminist Media Studies* titled, "Girls Just Want to be 'Quality': HBO, Lena Dunham, and *Girls*' conflicting brand identity" elucidates that due to increasing competition, other networks like AMC and Showtime, have emulated HBO through creating shows with "darker thematic content, high production values, and morally ambiguous characters" and become legitimate competitors to HBO (Nygaard 2013, 370-374). HBO targeted female shows through one of their original flagship television shows *Sex and The City* (1998) that featured a female ensemble. However, since this commercial success HBO has failed to cater to women through original programming (Nygaard 2013, 370-374). Jennifer Gillan has written about Showtime, and a cycle of woman led bleak comedies in the late 2000s that includes television shows such as *Weeds* (2009) and *The Big C* (2010) (2014, 87). She writes that this gendered programming was large contributor to Showtime's success and "by January 2014 Showtime had reached 23 million subscribers compared to HBO's 28 million" (Gillian 2014, 92). Due to Showtime's success, HBO in the 2010s has capitalised and responded through targeting female audiences once again. Nygaard claims that HBO has used shows like *Girls* to expand its brand to female audiences beyond its canon of masculine focused shows including *The Sopranos* (1999) and *The Wire* (2002) (2013). In her 2014 book *Cable Guys* that investigates masculinity on television screens Amanda Lotz makes the instructive point that there are different specific facets of masculinity that scholars can assess on a case-by-case basis for particular television series (Lotz 2014, 30). These aforementioned scholars

have earnestly examined and subverted the conflation between HBO, quality television and masculine coding.

My own thesis does not directly challenge the popular paradigm of prestige television because the case studies I have selected such as *Game of Thrones* (2011), *True Detective* (2014), *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Counterpart* (2017) have male showrunners with a focus on flawed male protagonists targeting, in part, male audiences. By focusing on these television shows, this thesis could be reinscribing this limited canon of prestige television. However, many of the title sequence examples I analyse are created by female lead title designers. For example, the *Stranger Things* title sequence was created by a female designer, Michelle Dougherty (Imaginary Forces), and *Counterpart's* title sequence was constructed by Karin Fong (Imaginary Forces). While Keeler and Friedman expand the notion of prestige to other channels and networks not typically assessed in relation to prestige, my intention is to expand the prestige television label to paratexts such as the title sequence, title designers, and their signature works beyond the historical conflation with a small set of HBO shows.

1.4.2 Complex Television

I have discussed in the previous sections that there are different academic criteria and discursive constructions of prestige and quality television. This section examines Mittell's and Dunleavy's notions of complex television and complex serial drama. The complex television term and its components are important to analyse because it echoes the digital title sequence's dense aesthetic in the 2010s. Based on the quality discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, academics have utilised new terminology such as complex serial television (Mittell 2006; 2013; 2015; Dunleavy 2017; Balanzatugui 2019). Jason Mittell coined this term to avoid the problems of quality

television as an evaluative category and engages with aesthetic analysis in a more productive manner through the notion of complexity as an aesthetic category and mode of television (2015, 207). Mittell and Dunleavy examine their respective notions of complex television by examining technological and historical shifts from the early 2000s (2015; 2017). Mittell argues these shifts allowed the conditions for the emergence of complex television and maintains that this category represented a new mode of television storytelling (2015). Dunleavy claims these televisual shifts allowed for the emergence of complex serialised drama, arguing it is a meta-genre of American television programming (2017). Both Mittell and Dunleavy identify various criteria that constitute their concepts of complex television and complex serial drama respectively and these include complex narratives and aesthetic sophistication of the show's story worlds. As established in the introduction, Dunleavy reasons that complex serial drama is a discrete meta-genre that has emerged in the post-broadcast era since approximately *The Sopranos* (1999). In defining complex serial television Dunleavy identifies two typical core features of complex serial drama: serialisation and varied settings. As I will explain, both of these features are specifically integral to thinking about how title sequence aesthetics have shifted in the 2010s.

First, Dunleavy identifies that complex serial drama is grounded in its serialised form with a central narrative that continues across episodes and seasons. Dunleavy distinguishes serial drama and series forms through their economic contexts (2017, 6). She describes that over-the-top services typically allow for more complex serial drama while broadcast television still largely uses the series form (6). The complex serial form, as Dunleavy contends, is directly tied to the economic sensibility of over-the-top services that forgo advertising in favour of a monthly subscription (6). The lack of advertising revenue on over-the-top services allows for more experimentation for

different serialised forms that do not have to adhere to the programmed flow of advertising and linear broadcasting (6).

However, since Dunleavy's focus is not on the title sequence but instead on serialised drama, she does not mention how this distinction would relate to the title sequences for complex serialised dramas. I contend that the emergence of streaming services and the decline of broadcast television in the 2010s affected the title sequence's aesthetics, allowing longer and more elaborately designed title sequences for over-the-top services such as Netflix seeking a prestige label.

Second, Dunleavy explains that serial dramas are no longer confined to typical American settings like "police stations, hospitals, and lawyer's offices" in earlier broadcast television periods, and can have a large variability of settings (2017, 6). The greater range of settings in addition to the aesthetic sophistication of complex serials leads to greater product differentiation, being uniquely identified by complex serials' idiosyncratic aesthetic sensibilities and engrossing diegetic worlds. Dunleavy applies this attribute to the title sequence itself by noting that the setting is highlighted through elaborate use of *mise en scène*, musical scores and cinematography (2017, 6). Dunleavy's claim that title sequences emphasise the show's setting and that there is a discrete attention paid to the formal elements is investigated more robustly in this thesis. Her identification of title sequences as "elaborate" will be further investigated by closely examining the formal aesthetics of the case study title sequences in Chapters 6,7,8 and 9. My thesis builds upon Dunleavy's conception of complex serial drama as typically high budget prestige television shows by closely examining the title sequence in greater detail. I discuss that the digital title sequence functions as a spectacle, stressing the show's virtuosity and artistic merits for network and motion graphic company branding.

Inspired by Mittell's *Complex Television* and Dunleavy's *Complex Serial Drama*, scholar Jessica Balanzategui identifies a recent trend of prestige crime drama that emerged in the 2010s for shows like *True Detective* (2014) and *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017), pointing to their "highly stylised, surreal aesthetics and avant-garde formal devices" (2019, 657). Balanzategui notes how this surreal aesthetic is directly linked to broader trends such as digital water cooler events within TV IV. Balanzategui's argument is important to demonstrate how notions of quality are tied to broader historical, industrial and technological changes which I examine in relation to the title sequence. Particularly, my analysis will stress how the title sequence and notions of quality are linked to a practical economic motivation of increased competition due to over-the-top services growing their platforms.

Prestige television and notions of quality are contentious issues among television scholars. This section has traced the history of quality discourse into academic conceptualisations of complex and prestige genres. I outlined these changes for the discursive construction of quality into prestige and complex to argue that these terms are essentially a development of quality discourse. As a result, I use the term prestige throughout this thesis to refer to how quality is discursively constructed specifically in the TV IV period and I use quality in the TV II and III period to refer to programs and promotional discourses from that historical period. Overall, this thesis contributes to prestige and quality television literature by investigating how the title sequence is positioned by networks as a marker of prestige in the 2010s.

1.4.1 Emmy Awards

Given the methodological focus on how prestige television is discursively constructed by awards ceremony this section will address the literature on the Emmys. There is a large knowledge gap

about the history of the Emmy Awards and little academic literature on the subject. Two key academic books account for the history of the Emmys: Thompson O'Neil's *The Emmys: The Unofficial Guide to the Battle of TV's Best Shows and Greatest Stars* (2000) and Wesley Hyatt's *Emmy Award Winning Nighttime Television Shows from 1998-2004* (2006). Other research on the Emmys includes quantitative work by Peacock and Hu "Analysing Grammy, Emmy, and Academy Awards Data using Regression and Maximum Information Coefficient" (2013) and the quantitative study undertaken by Shi Ping Wang for the *Journal of Applied English* in "How Key Words Play a Role In Websites: Research on Grammy Awards and Emmy Awards" (2014). This latter source studies keywords and text used on the Emmys and Grammys website and is derived from linguistic studies and so is less useful than other sources in my thesis. A recent article in the *Hollywood Reporter*, is the only source that focuses on the history of the Outstanding Main Title Design as a discrete category and provides data on which title designers have won the award (Stephansen 2022). The *Hollywood Reporter* is an important source because it has data directly related to the title sequence, such as genre, top designers and associated networks that have the most wins and nominations. However, the observations in the trade paper of title designers and networks that have won this award only extends from 2002 to 2021. Chapter 3 will investigate Emmys' title design and award shows from the 1980s.

1.5 Television Branding

To fulfill my fourth subsidiary aim of investigating title sequence branding, this section will investigate the academic literature on television branding.

1.5.1 Branding throughout Television history

Academics have produced a large amount of literature focusing upon television branding (Brandt and Bellamy 2000; Epstein et al 2002; McDowell and Batten 2005; Stipp 2012; Johnson 2012).

Television branding since the 1980s has changed due to broader, economic, and industrial shifts. Stipp notes that historically in the TV I period branding played less of a role due to the television industry being controlled by three major networks- NBC, ABC and CBS (2012, 108). In the TV II period, the introduction of cable and satellite technologies effectively necessitated the growth of branding to differentiate multiple cable channels and networks from one another such as HBO (Stipp 2012, 110). In the TV II period, branding becomes an important element of competition for various networks (this will be investigated more in Section 1.7.1).

Michael Epstein's, Mark Rogers' and Jimmie Reeves' chapter "The Sopranos as Brand Equity: The Art of Commerce in The Age Of Digital Reproduction" in *This Thing of Ours: Investigating The Sopranos* argues that marketing differentiation is a key part of the TV III period. They explain, "Branding is a form of market differentiation... and market differentiation has traditionally been associated with industries in which a relatively large number of entrants struggle to 'stand out' from the competition" (2002, 57). Epstein et al also reinforce this point by discussing Robert Bellamy and Paul Traudt's chapter "Television Branding as Promotion" (2000) in the book *Research in Media Production* that focuses on defining branding. Traudt and Bellamy note that in the age of media conglomerates and many channels, branding is essential to differentiating "the sibling services of one corporation" (2000, 133). Additionally, Bellamy and Traudt point to specific aspects that help to promote the television brand such as "letters or an acronym, logo, company wordmark, theme, jingle, sound, or some mixture of these" for the purposes of product differentiation of "one station/ channel/ program from another" (Traudt and Bellamy 2000, 116).

Moreover, they also claim that in an increasingly competitive industry, branding is integral to retain viewer interest since the consumer can “only pay attention to a limited number of channels” (2000, 119). These comments anticipate how branding becomes important to large media conglomerates that have their own streaming services in the 2010s.

1.5.2 Television Branding and Marketing

Other academics have elaborated on defining branding in direct relation to television. In their outlining of television branding principles, Walter McDowell and Alan Batten argue that television branding is more than just promotion and refers to a network’s “reputation” (2005, 22). They note that “on air promos, advertising, public relations, product usage” all contribute to an integrated marketing campaign that informs the product’s branding (2005, 11). Catherine Johnson maintains that television branding is an important part of the industry given it has become difficult for television corporations to retain audience attention in the age of media convergence and increased television services such as cable channels (Johnson 2012, 1). She argues that television corporations convey their brand identities through “logos, slogans and trailers” (Johnson 2012, 1). She provides an additional definition of branding by noting, “In relation to the television channel, the brand is communicated to the viewer through programme production and acquisition, scheduling, on-screen advertising... and ancillary products related to the channel and/or its programming” (2012, 18). Johnson’s conception of a brand is then constructed through multiple components that create a unified and consistent identity and I argue that the title sequence is also a part of this unified identity.

Amanda Lotz in her book *The Television will be Revolutionized* (2014) makes claims about how advertising for branding changed during the 2000s. Lotz argues that a new advertising strategy has

developed in the post-network era named “branded entertainment” (2014, 178). “Branded entertainment” has a direct relation to the title sequence. Lotz explains that “branded content” are advertisements that audiences “actively seeks out” such as “slideshows on websites” and other online spaces and are integrated in the text itself (2014, 192). Lotz elaborates that “branded entertainment” has affected the underlying economic costs for advertising given that companies do not have to pay for distribution due to social media. Companies can use social media as a tool to push content and expose the brand to more viewers (2014, 192). I build upon Lotz’s observations in this thesis by arguing that branded entertainment has become far more popular especially in online spaces such as YouTube. In these online spaces companies use the title sequence as a form of entertainment and to create a distinct brand identity for the network and streaming service.

1.5.3 Branding on Specific Platforms

There has been a large amount of academic literature on specific platforms and their respective branding (Leverette 2008; McNutt 2022; Jenner 2023). There are four key sources that I use in this thesis including Jenner’s *Netflix and the Re-invention of Television* (2018), and Derek Johnson’s *From Networks to Netflix* that includes Myles McNutt’s chapter on “Starz: Distinction, Value, and Fandom in Premium TV” (2022), and Marc Leverette, Brian Ott and Cara Louise Buckley’s book *It’s Not TV: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era* (2008). While Jenner examines a range of topics including how Netflix has changed contemporary industrial, aesthetics and viewing practices such as binge-watching, her most relevant comments concerning branding come from her discussion of how Netflix has emulated HBO’s branding (2018, 5). Her comparison between Netflix and HBO’s quality branding strategy demonstrates that television branding is not just about how a television network can present a unified visual identity to brand itself, but how the branding is dictated by

competition with other networks. I will build upon Jenner's argument and contend how other networks can emulate another services' branding through the dense elaborate display of the title sequence which will be investigated more in Chapter 8.

McNutt is one of the few authors to write specifically on Starz's branding. McNutt's main claim is that Starz rebranded in the 2010s to differentiate itself from its competition and market itself specifically to fans through promotional materials such as trailers and social media. However, McNutt does not consider the title sequence and so Chapter 8 will address this knowledge gap by analysing how the title sequence factors into Starz's branding. Leverette et al's book asserts that HBO's brand differentiates itself from free to air broadcast television (2008, 31). Leverette elaborates that HBO's branding strategy is to present itself as a distinct site of exclusivity that "ranks above the riffraff who watch the standard broadcast and cable stations" (2008, 33). Leverette et al's examination of how HBO has positioned itself as prestigious to differentiate itself from its competition informs my argument concerning how the title sequence aids HBO's quality positioning in the 2010s discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.6 Temporality and Reception Studies

Due to this thesis's engagement with how viewers interact with title sequences in online spaces, I will examine reception studies including social media methodologies utilised by other scholars. To understand how viewers interact with online spaces, this section will first assess the literature on the temporality of television programs. One key theory is the notion of television flow which is not a core concept and consequently will not be addressed directly in my thesis, it is still relevant to this thesis's understanding of how title sequence aesthetics have transformed and function within the TV IV period of streaming services and binge-watching.

1.6.1 Temporality

The concept of television flow is defined in Raymond Williams' book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1975). Williams' original conception of television flow is defined as, "a sequence or set of alternative sequences of these and other similar events, which are then available in a single dimension and in a single operation" (1975, 87). In other words, flow is a planned sequence designed by the broadcasting network to keep the viewer watching as advertisements, promos and shows roll into one sequential stream (1975). Williams' conception is written in the 1970s before technologies and viewing practices have complicated television flow. For example, viewers having temporal control over when they watch has been facilitated by VCRs, DVDs and streaming services' user interface. Most recently, streaming services allow viewers to skip the title sequence entirely, rendering it a distraction instead of an integral component of the television text. Moreover, viewers can now make individual selective choices to watch what they want, when they want, on a multitude of devices, making the title sequence appear redundant.

However, despite these changes, flow is still significant because it shifted primarily from the network-controlled broadcasts in Williams' era, to viewer choice that can consist of selecting individual discrete shows. The user interface on streaming services can influence viewer behaviour since it can suggest the viewer continues to watch through their personalised algorithmic interface and queuing the next episode straight away. The interplay between streaming services' algorithmic interface and audience directed flow is important to consider, as the title sequence can be entirely skipped, watched in full or watched a different number of times. Still, the algorithmic streaming interface is limited to what it can exhibit as shows' availability is constrained by licensing agreements to pay television, catch up services and free to air broadcasters. While the focus of my thesis is on the aesthetics, reception and industry of title sequences, how television

flow has transformed through different historical periods is integral to understanding the TV IV period.

Lisa Perks' conception of Williams' flow in the 21st century in *Media Marathoning: Immersions in Morality* (2015) and Mareike Jenner's book *Netflix and the Reinvention of Television* (2018; 2023) both discuss flow dictated by viewer choice and streaming service algorithmic interfaces. Perks updates Williams' flow for the 21st Century in her analysis of the media marathon viewing practice. Perks proposes two overlapping types of flow: introduction and insular. The introduction category uses suggestions either by external sources such as friends and family or the algorithmic interface itself, while insular flow is the undivided attention from the viewer on one show through a viewing practice such as binge-watching and reinforced by the interface queuing up the next episode (2015). Perks' conception of insular flow is in direct contrast to Williams' conception of television flow that emphasises network controlled linear broadcasting. This updated conception of Williams' flow is an important component of the thesis for studying the feedback loop between individual viewing behaviour in online spaces.

Ramon Lobato, a television scholar, examines how flow is complicated by streaming services' use of algorithms. In "Rethinking International TV Flows Research in the Age of Netflix", Lobato notes the problematic conception of Netflix as both a transitional and national platform. He highlights how Netflix's catalogue of programs changes across nations, meaning that the Netflix platform is not a discrete static text but a fluid viewing experience (2018). While Netflix's expansion of its platform is similar to broadcast television because both are constrained by licensing agreements and transnational selections of television shows, broadcast television does not share the same degree of personalisation created by Netflix's and other streaming services' dynamic algorithmic

interface that reacts and changes depending upon viewer choice. I will discuss Netflix's user interface in relation to the Skip Introduction button in Chapter 9.

J.P. Kelly's chapter "Beyond the broadcast Text: New Economies and Temporalities of Online TV" in *Ephemeral Media* (2011) engages with the underlying textual characteristics, economics and temporality of online television in the 2000s. For the purposes of this thesis's focus on online spaces, Kelly indicates that the "unbundling of the text" into different "televisual ephemera" has created a fragmented and varied viewing experience (Grainge 2011, 135). To make this argument Kelly focuses on how Hulu circulates promotional materials on the internet which are extrapolated from its streaming service such as "clips, interviews, digital shorts, trailers, interviews, previews, and recaps" (Grainge 2011, 131). The extrapolation of these texts is similar to how the title sequence in the 2010s is unbundled from the television text into online spaces. Kelly also points out that viewers interact with these texts on social platforms and discussion boards (Grainge 2011, 132). While Kelly's argument is centred around the ephemerality of online texts, I will build upon Kelly's claims by arguing that networks have taken advantage of the spread-ability of social media by utilising the title sequence in online spaces to engage viewers.

1.6.2 Television Reception

Throughout the development of television studies Hall's Stuart Hall's *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (1973) examines how viewers construct meaning in television. Hall's book on an encoding and decoding model based upon a semiotic methodology has an impact on the general historical development of television studies, from social science methods and effects theories in the 1950s and 1960s to 2010s' audience reception studies and discourse analysis. His studies focus on what the viewer can do with television as opposed to what television can do to

the viewer. As such, Hall's primary claim is that viewers are active in the meaning-making process and can make oppositional and contradictory interpretations to those of the author (1973, 5). Two key scholars have updated Hall's theory which include David Morely in his book *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding* in 1980 and Lev Manovich in 2013. David Morely's book advances Hall's theories to conducting empirical research. As part of this research Morely suggests that messages within media are complex in their "structure and form" and that the meaning from a text can be polysemic as "messages encoded one way can always be read in a different way" (1980, 129). Lev Manovich updates Hall's theory by arguing that viewers not only construct the message but actively manage it as well (2013, 36). Manovich's updated argument of viewers' television experience is pertinent to my study of the television title sequence as viewers can manage whether they watch the title sequence in its entirety. Additionally, in the TV IV period viewers are highly active through creating, remixing and controlling their viewing experience within the confines of the streaming service interface and other sites of discourse such as YouTube. Therefore, my thesis takes the position that the viewer is not a passive receiver of information but can actively transform the meaning of the text in the TV IV period through interactions in online spaces.

To further examine viewers using online spaces to create meaning, Henry Jenkins' exploration of participatory culture is a key theoretical source for my discourse analysis. In *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992), *Convergence Culture* (2006), and *Spreadable Media* (2012), Jenkins accentuates the agency that fans have in this era of digital convergence because they are given greater tools to "sample dialogue, summarize episodes, debate subtexts, create original fan fiction, record their own soundtracks, make their own movies- and distribute all of this world-wide via the internet" (Jenkins 2004, 34). I contend throughout this thesis that

Jenkins' notion of viewers' gaining agency on the internet is similar to how viewers engage with title sequences by considering their virtuosity in YouTube comments. Furthermore, Jenkins' discussion of participatory culture is particularly pertinent to Chapter 7's focus on *True Detective* that examines how viewers remix the title sequence on YouTube.

This section focuses on three key academic sources from the 2010s that have used social media as a research method and so inspired the methodology utilised in this thesis (Erhart 2014; Burgess and Green 2018; González-Neira, Ana, Jorge Vázquez-Herrero, and Natalia Quintas-Froufe 2022). One key source that was integral for my own methodological use of social media and particularly YouTube is Julia Erhart's article titled "Chris Lilley 'Mr G is deffinately bringin' Sexy back': characterizing Chris Lilley's YouTube audience" (2014). The article addresses how audience have engaged with Chris Lilley's television shows on YouTube through leaving comments and interacting with one another to create a community around the show. Her methodology of using YouTube comments to identify themes such as fan appreciation within the response to Chris Lilley's television shows to assert that YouTube fans are "creators of cultural material in their own right" inspired my own approach to using YouTube comments throughout this thesis to support my claims that fans discursively create quality assertions about the title sequences under study (Erhart 2014, 184). Jean Burgess's and Joshua Green's book titled *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (2018) makes two key assertions about YouTube and participatory culture. Ana González-Neira, Jorge Vázquez-Herrero and Natalia Quintas-Froufe's article titled "Convergence of linear television and digital platforms: An analysis of YouTube offer and consumption" (2022) examines how television broadcasters in Spain have promoted their brand on YouTube. Neira, Herrero and Quintas use various metrics to collect their data for the study including video categories, and audience demographic to better understand television promotion

and consumption in Spain (2022). While this thesis does not utilise the same metrics as this article, my thesis also utilises a variety of metrics from YouTube such as likes and comments to gauge the popularity of the video or title sequence in question. Moreover, the article offers comparisons between various channels on YouTube similar to my own study that compares motion graphic companies' respective channels to television networks (2022, 431).

To further contextualise this thesis' use of social media, the following section will investigate academics that have engaged with the ethics of using social media as research (Moreno and Diekema 2013; Lunnay, Borlagdan, McNaughton and Ward 2015; Townsend and Wallace 2016; Bishop, Libby, and Gray 2017; Samuel and Buchanan 2020). Of these academic sources this section focuses on Moreno and Townsend's article titled "Ethics of Social Media Research: Common Concerns and Practical Considerations" (2013) and "Gabrielle and Buchanan's article Guest Editorial: Ethical Issues in Social Media Research in Sage Journals" (2020). Megan Moreno's et al article examines the ethical dilemmas for researchers using social media and makes certain recommendations crucial for this thesis's YouTube comment method (2013). One key recommendation is to not identify the participant's personal information beyond their social media identifier (Moreno et al 2013, 711). As such, this thesis has not identified the user's personal details or offline identify or their online YouTube username through referring to them only by numbers and letters. Another important recommendation is to "consider applying these principles by only collecting the essential data needed to answer the research question" (Moreno et al 2013, 712). This thesis does not provide any non-essential data and only includes likes, comments and views from YouTube to understand how the title sequence has become a more prominent component of networks and over-the-top services' branding. Gabrielle's and Buchanan's article in 2020 out of its observations and recommendations for researchers using

social media as a method and part of methodology is the use of bots “moving forward, researchers must pay greater attention to issues of data fairness, algorithmic manipulation, fake data, data created by bots or AI, and other emerging issues that can confound research integrity and responsibility” (Moreno 2020, 9). I acknowledge in my thesis that some of the YouTube comments could potentially be bots or industry professionals and not genuine fans or viewers. Moreover, Moreno also advocates for addressing how the data will be utilised beyond the initial research project (Moreno 2020, 8). In keeping with this recommendation, I clarify that I will potentially utilise the data in this thesis beyond the publication of this PhD dissertation.

1.7 Television and Digital Aesthetics

My argument concerns the digital aesthetics of the title sequence and as such this section will investigate the literature on both television and digital aesthetics.

1.7.1 Televisuality

John Caldwell’s televisuality is an important concept in the historical trajectory of television studies. Caldwell claims that televisuality is not just an aesthetic sensibility but emerged due to historical, economic and larger industrial concerns that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s. Caldwell identifies key characteristics of televisuality as follows.

First, televisuality is a “stylizing performance” with a distinctive look that works across multiple genres and is “conceived as a presentational attitude, a display of knowing exhibitionism” (Caldwell 1995/2020, 8). Caldwell also extends the notion of televisuality and this characteristic to his analysis of the title sequence for the television show *War and Remembrance* (1988)

(1995/2020, 255). Caldwell suggests that due to the extreme “visual density” and “kinetic movement” creating visual excess, “the viewer witnesses the title itself as a kind of spectacular gymnastic event” (1995/2020, 255). Caldwell’s argument is similar to my own that claims that visual density is an important component of digital title sequences and their display of exhibitionism. Second, the radical foregrounding of style over narrative. Caldwell argues that “televisuality represented a structural inversion” that challenged traditional aesthetic hierarchies within television production with more emphasis on its aural-visual properties (1995/2020, 9). Caldwell investigates how this dominance of style emerged during the 1980s through the influence of MTV’s aesthetic sensibilities that preference fast rapid cutting that draws attention to the editing. Third, Caldwell describes televisuality as fundamentally industrial: technologies do not alter television style on their own but through working conditions and industrial changes. Caldwell asserts that the conversation of television aesthetics requires an acknowledgement that “television is manufactured” (1995/2020, 10). Caldwell’s comment has shaped the construction of this thesis that does not just investigate the aesthetics of the title sequence but how the industrial and economic factors have affected the television form.

Caldwell elaborates that the advent of digital technology not only contributed to increased exhibitionism but radically changed the workforce. To utilise new video technology the workforce was required to learn new skills pertaining to editing software. As Caldwell stresses, the use of this new video technology to create distinct graphic and visual designs was motivated by competition in the television marketplace (12). Finally, televisuality is the result of increased competition as a form of product differentiation. As Caldwell explains, “Stylistic showcases, high-production value programming, and Hollywood stylishness” were used by networks as marketing strategies to differentiate themselves from the competition (15). There are two key reasons that led to

increased competition in the 1980s. The first reason is the proliferation of cable networks in the 1980s led to a televisual style to differentiate from and compete with free to air broadcast networks – ABC, NBC, CBS. The emergence of cable channels is a distinct change from the TV I period. During the TV I period, US television was led by the free to air oligopoly of ABC, NBC and CBS, all of which competed against one another (Johnson 2012, 5). However, the invention of satellite and cable technologies during the 1970s and 1980s increased the number of channels and networks in the 1980s and as such the greater need for product differentiation. The second key reason is the emergence of narrowcasting as a broadcast strategy in the 1980s. Caldwell's concept of competition influencing aesthetics is pertinent to my claims that networks and over-the-top services use the title sequence as a stylistic showcase in a similarly cluttered marketplace due to the growth of streaming services. While Caldwell was examining television during the 1990s, his characteristics are still useful to think about the television title sequence in the 2010s.

The term televisuality that examines television style has been a core part of other academics' analysis of television aesthetics (Butler 2010; Dant 2012; Caldwell 2025). For example, Jeremy Butler's proposed telepoetics in *Television Style* incorporates discussions of Caldwell's conception of televisuality into his own analysis of television's formal components (2010). Telepoetics draws from David Bordwell's analysis of mise-en-scène, editing, sound, and cinematography in cinepoetics that emphasises the importance of style in the creation of meaning (1989). Butler's rigorous close aesthetic analysis of television style, analysing different television genres and schemas such as zero-degree style in soap operas and the notion of televisuality in *Miami Vice* (1984), provides examples of how to undertake a close stylistic analysis and the key aesthetic parameters that can be noted when investigating television aesthetics. Butler's telepoetics does not consider the title sequence and so I will fill this knowledge gap by investigating the title

sequence's aesthetics in the 2010s. Therefore, Butler's telepoetics informs my interpretive aesthetic analysis in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. However, Dant explains in his own article titled "Televisuality and the Small Screen" televisuality and Butler's poetics are distinct from one another. Dant argues Butler has a "rather different take on televisual style that is less to do with technology and the political economy of the relationship between television and cinema and more to do with the aesthetic effect of the visual construction of moving images and the cultural capital of viewers in engaging with it" (Dant 2012, 83). As part of examining both Butler's and Caldwell's concepts, Dant adds to the concept of televisuality by also considering how television flow factors into the relationship between the viewer and the image. To this end Dant claims that "'Televisuality' no longer usefully refers to the style of the image but can still point to the features of audiovisual imagery on the small screen" (Dant 2012, 92). Dant examines how television flow has impacted the televisual's moral content through a linear broadcast flow can juxtapose "contrasting moral themes and perspectives... rather than a continuous, coherent moral outlook" (Dant 2012, 93). Further Caldwell in 2025 updated the notion of televisuality and its core characteristic of hyper-stylisation by applying it to on-set virtual production and the use of AI in creating images (Caldwell 2025, 17). As a consequence, Caldwell notes that these two factors have led to a disruption of the workforce as AI images and virtual production had led to "layoffs of storyboard artists and assistants" and "Location scouts and set builders" being made obsolete (Caldwell 2025, 19). In my own thesis I argue that the competition between over-the top services has led to the title sequence becoming an ever-important branding device and therefore necessitated a growth in the motion graphic design space in the 2010s.

1.7.2 Digital Aesthetics

Given this thesis's focus of digital title sequences, this section will address the academic literature on digital aesthetics. This section then will focus on how three scholars have both broadly defined and conceptualised digital aesthetics (Hansen and Lenoir 2004; Manovich 2013; Denson 2020). In *New Philosophy for New Media*, Mark Hansen sketches out some of the problems of theorising how the digital image affects the spectator differently in the digital age than the analogue. In doing so, Hansen advocates for considering the digital image "to encompass the entire process by which information is made perceivable through embodied experience" (Hansen 2004, 10). Hansen argues for examining the digital image not just on its surface level aesthetics but also the computational processes that are utilised to create the image. When examining title sequences that are created by digital processes I will examine both the process and the image itself. However, Hansen is writing about digital aesthetics in 2004 and so the following sections will address scholars that have addressed digital aesthetics more recently.

Another scholar who has investigated how digital aesthetics has fundamentally changed cinema is Lev Manovich. For instance, in his article, "What is Digital Cinema?" Manovich asserts that the "filmmaking process is being redefined" through the transition from analogue to digital (2016, 4). While there are many scholars that have discussed digital cinema, (Isaacs 2013; Williams 2017) Manovich's focus on hybridity in digital images on the internet is pertinent to my argument that the title sequence is a remixable object. The key concepts drawn from Manovich's exploration of digital aesthetics that informs my analysis of the title sequence are "hybridization" and "deep remix-ability" (2013).

These concepts not only highlight the aesthetic content of the text but the techniques, properties and processes that interact to create new hybrid forms with every variable and element of the title sequence controlled and manipulated; as Manovich states, “What gets remixed today is not only content from different media but their fundamental techniques, working methods, and ways of representation, and expression” (2007, 9). This informs a key component of my aesthetic analysis because not only is it essential to inspect the images themselves but also the software processes behind these images. In *Discorrelated Images*, Shane Denson argues that “digital and post-cinematic media technologies do not just produce a new type of image; they establish entirely new configurations and parameters of perception and agency, placing spectators in an unprecedented relation to images and the infrastructure of their mediation” (2020, 1). As part of arguing for this post-cinematic relationship between the viewer and the digital image, Denson explores the concept of what he calls the “crazy camera” (2020). Denson explains that the transition from analogue to digital has produced a virtual or physical camera that does not align with traditional diegetic continuity and fails “to situate viewers in a consistently and coherently designated spectating-position” (Denson 2020,26). In other words, the virtual camera does not embody the spectators’ perspective and in doing so intentionally draws attention to itself. Denson’s concept of “crazy cameras” then is integral to my understanding of how the virtual camera untethered from any physical apparatus can create a spectacle that draws direct attention to itself. The concept of spectacle within academic literature will be investigated in the next section.

1.8 Spectacle

Since the focus of my argument is that the title sequence in the 2010s functions as a form of computer-generated spectacle for networks and over-the-top services, the following section will investigate notions of spectacle in cinema and television to contextualise and support my claims in this thesis.

1.8.1 Shard Cinema

There are other television scholars that have investigate digital cinema. Evan Calder Williams' concept of shard cinema (2017) that he applies to the Hollywood blockbuster is instructive for how I analyse the digital title sequence. Williams is focused on the assemblage and composition of the spectacle in contemporary blockbusters that emphasises its own artifice through compositing and visual effects. The foregrounding of the blockbuster's artifice is similar to how title sequences operate aesthetically, with distinct shots creating a layered digital assemblage of various elements. Williams argues that title sequences typically have non-realist aesthetics and can contain "dissolves, overlays, titles, lead pixels, blotches, blurs" (2017, 74). Williams' observation indicates that the title sequence foregrounds an artifice through its own technological basis. I apply Williams' comments on shard cinema to the title sequence which has drawn attention to itself through the title sequence's increased digitisation in the 2010s.

Title sequences in the TV IV period utilise digitally computer-generated visuals but can draw from other sources to create a digital composition. In *Shard Cinema*, Williams defines a digital composite as "an assemblage that constructs a set of discrete elements from different moments and sites of recording, modelling, or animation into a unified visual field" (2017, 18). The title sequence can use live action in conjunction with digital techniques and elements representing a

hybridised form that is distinct from the television show's narrative and so occupies a non-diegetic space. The sources can range from archival photographs and the television show's diegetic footage.

Bruce Isaacs is another scholar that has focused on digital aesthetics. Isaacs is concerned with how cinema's identity and ontology has changed and shifted since the emergence of computer-generated imagery. Isaacs explains that the digital image "leaves a unique imprint on the mind of the spectator" (2013, 25). For the purposes of my claims about the title sequence and spectacle, Isaacs' comments on how digital technology in Hollywood blockbusters produces spectacle is particularly pertinent for Chapter 7's discussion of *True Detective* (2014). The notion of a "unique imprint in the mind of the spectator" will be investigated for how minute digital changes in title sequences such as *True Detective* have fundamentally changed the television title sequence's aesthetic.

1.8.2 The Digital Title Sequence and the Cinema of Attractions

A useful theory to understand the primary function of the digital title sequence is Tom Gunning's 1986 spectator theory, the cinema of attractions. Gunning defines the cinema of attractions as follows,

... the cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle- a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest. The attraction to be displayed may also be of a cinematic nature, such as the early close-ups just described, or trick films in which cinematic (slow motion, reverse motion, substitution, multiple exposure) provides the film's novelty (1986, 3-4)

Gunning examines "trick films" from the early 1900s as a discrete cycle of films that preceded narrative as cinema's dominant rhetorical mode. Before understanding how the cinema of

attractions applies to the digital title sequence, it is important to note that while Gunning's conception is historically specific to the confluence of technological and sociocultural factors in films of the early 1900s, the cinema of attractions has been applied to other historical periods and canons of film such as Hollywood blockbusters and avant-garde films (Gunning 1986; Strauven 2006). One such direct re-examination is Wanda Strauven's *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (2006). Strauven asserts that the cinema of attractions should not be limited to a particular period because the concept is transhistorical and can be applied to other film periods in history (2006, 20). However, while Strauven discusses the cinema of attractions as transhistorical phenomena, Nicholas Gulac and Andre Gaudreault in their section in the book note that the cinema of attractions occurs within specific historical contexts due to precise technological and socio-cultural factors (2006, 242). Therefore, there is already a precedent for applying Gunning's cinema of attractions to other historical periods beyond its original conception.

There are two broad concepts from Gunning's cinema of attractions that I apply to the television title sequence's digital aesthetics. One key concept is the favouring of spectacle over diegetic narrative absorption in the text. The television title sequence's digital construction favours spectacle over narrative. The television title sequence becomes increasingly digitised in the 2010s allowing more aesthetic options for the graphic designer due to advances in digital techniques using a wide variety of software and digital tools such as Cinema 4D.

Another key concept of Gunning's argument is that the viewer can marvel at the novelty of the technology and the large amount of work that has gone into creating the media object on display. Novelty is important to the title sequence in the 2010s, since many are entirely created within editing software with no tangible indexical physical relationship to reality or conventional recording of live action cinema or photography. Instead, typically digital constructions emphasise

their production processes, meaning that the viewer is keenly aware and treats the title sequence as an artificial construct.

In the years following Gunning's original 1986 conception, the cinema of attractions has been re-examined and reapplied in different contemporary contexts (Gunning 1986; Strauven 2006; Isaacs 2013). Isaacs explains that the spectacle in Gunning's conception of early cinema is similar to what he calls the "contemporary event film" that uses spectacular effects to impress the audience (138). While Isaacs updates Gunning's cinema of attractions and focuses on Hollywood blockbusters, I apply Gunning's cinema of attractions to the title sequence in how the technology itself creates a spectacular effect. I showcased this spectacular effect in my video essay located in the Introduction in Section 0.2.2. From 2:40 to 7:49 my video essay demonstrates how viewers appreciate the technology used to create the title sequence and how the sequence itself is a site of spectacle through small minute changes to its aesthetics.

1.8.3 Conclusion

Television scholars focus their efforts on a multitude of issues including the title sequence as an object of study, prestige television, branding, social media and digital aesthetics. The first section highlighted key areas of title sequence research that has informed and shaped my argument that the digital title sequence is a distinct trend in the 2010s. The second section highlighted how quality television has changed and mutated into prestige complex television in the 2010s which informed my understanding of quality, prestige and complex as discursively constructed and how it can apply to the title sequence. The third section on television branding highlighted how the title sequence could be conceptualised as part of the broader television industry. The fourth section explored how social media and online spaces are a key research method and so examining the

literature provided a solid understanding of how the title sequence can function as part of these online spaces. The final two sections highlighted how Gunning's notion of spectacle can be applied to the title sequence and how literature on digital aesthetics have informed my approach to analysing the digital aesthetics of the title sequence in the 2010s.

PART 1: INDUSTRY

2 SAUL BASS AND KYLE COOPER'S INFLUENCE ON THE DIGITAL TITLE SEQUENCE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is an historical overview of the key designers that have an influence on the digital title sequence in the 2010s. The goal of this chapter is to provide a historical foundation and context of how key title designers have influenced the digital title sequence trend in the 2010s. While Chapters 3 and 4 will investigate the historical development of television title sequences, this chapter will first highlight how prominent film title sequence practitioners, Saul Bass and Kyle Cooper, have influenced the television title sequence's aesthetic. I selected these two designers in particular because they have both had a large effect on the visibility of the title designer and they have influenced the aesthetics of the digital title sequence trend. I will argue in the first section of this chapter that Bass's high-profile visibility as a title designer and his metaphorical approach to title design heavily influenced the digital title sequence. Additionally, Kyle Cooper has had a large influence on contemporary title design studios and the title sequence's dense digital aesthetics. The focus on these two graphic designers in this chapter is not to discount other graphic designers or key creative collaborators' work that potentially also have an aesthetic influence on the digital title sequence and connotations for the wider trajectory of the film and television industry.

2.2 Saul Bass

2.2.1 Scholarly Attention

Bass has been discussed extensively by academics (Haskin 1996; Kirkham 2011; Horak 2014; Re 2016). This chapter focuses upon Paula Haskin's, Jan-Christopher's Horak and Justin Wyatt's investigations of Saul Bass's career. Paula Haskin's interview with Bass "Saul, Can you Make me a Title?: Interview with Saul Bass" in *Film Quarterly* (1996) is an influential source that I will utilise because Bass provides direct insights into his stylistic approach to title design. Jan-Christopher Horak has written a robust book on Bass's career trajectory and how Bass become a prominent designer within the Hollywood industry. Importantly, Horak makes the proclamation that, "Saul Bass seems to define an era... His graphic work resembled no one else's in Hollywood, and his film credits changed forever how audiences looked at the opening minutes of a film" (Horak 2014, 3). While Justin Wyatt's book *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (1994) focuses on his high concept idea, he examines Bass at length and defines his signature style which will be considered in the next section (2.2.2).

2.2.2 Overview of Influence on Contemporary Title Designs

Saul Bass is an influential title designer whose career and celebrity status has a large influence on contemporary designs. Bass transitioned from working for an advertising company in the 1940s and 1950s, to a title designer in the 1950s (*The Man with the Golden Arm* 1955, *Vertigo* 1958, *North by Northwest* 1959) to a film director in 1964 (*Phase IV* 1974). As Horak notes that Bass influenced a whole new generation of younger title designers as well other studios and filmmakers (Horak 2014, 3). As Wyatt notes, part of Bass's style is his recognisability across marketing campaigns. Wyatt discusses the visual similarities in Bass's work specifically and contends, "The

genius of his work” was due to his ability select key high concept images to reinforce the film’s themes and make other promotion materials like trailers recognisable and distinct (1994, 122). Bass’s designs for these advertising campaigns were atypical at that time, as Wyatt claims, that film marketing had not reached a point where it could take advantage of Bass’s designs because high concept films, where repeated iconography is used for a film’s uniform advertising campaign across different posters, trailers and advertisements, had not emerged in the 1950s (1994, 122). Wyatt’s claim characterises Bass’s title design work as seminal and avant-garde in the 1950s (122). Re deliberates how Bass’s advertising background informs the overall branding of films and that his background in motion graphic design provided him with key principles that he transferred to his approach to title design and “initiated the ‘branding’ of films” (2016). Re writes that Bass’s titles begun to utilise metaphor (2016). This metaphor notion will be discussed at greater length in Section 2.3 since it directly pertains to the digital title sequence’s visual construction.

2.2.3 Bass and Broader Industrial and Historical Developments

Broader historical developments have facilitated the emergence of Bass’s distinct title design aesthetics. One of the broader industrial developments is the collapse of block booking and vertical integration in the Paramount Consent Decree in 1948 (Horak 2014, 353). The Paramount Consent Decree stopped the practice of vertical integration where Hollywood studios could own their own theatres. Before the Paramount Consent Decree, the big five Hollywood studios controlled both distribution and exhibition (353). Furthermore, before the Paramount Decree, multiple films could be sold to independent theatres by major studios as a bulk package, a practice called block booking. As Horak argues, after the Paramount Consent Decree, young independent film makers “sought product differentiation” (2014, 353).

Aside from the Paramount Consent Decree there are other historical-technological factors that created the industrial space for Saul Bass's aesthetics to emerge in the 1950s. The advent of television as a discrete competitor to the major Hollywood studios in the 1940s and 1950s presented a commercial threat to the US film industry. As Allison reasons that movie theatres retained viewers through a marketing strategy promoting theatres as "spectacular and immersive" (2021, 124). To further compete with television Hollywood films utilised technologies including high-fidelity magnetic sound, colour film and widescreen formats to market feature films as prestige attractions (Bordwell 1985, 9). Bass's title designs employ wide-screen formats for major and independent Hollywood feature films to create an attraction and compete with the television industry and retain box office revenue. For example, Horak notes that Bass took advantage of the widescreen format in *The Big Country* (1958) through filling the screen with the titles (2014, 271). The competition from Hollywood is significant as it parallels what happened to the digital title sequences in the TV IV era whose elaborate aesthetics are primarily motivated by an abundance of competition between streaming platforms, television broadcasting and the major Hollywood studios to retain audience attention.

These two historical developments, the paramount consent decree and competition from television have provided the opportunity for the emergence of Bass's distinctive design. For example, many of his designs utilised geometric shapes to create a distinctive brand identity for the film's product. Stefan Jung explains Bass was able to use a recognisable and consistent image across a range of media (2017, 9). One example is *Vertigo's* poster that contains a geometric eye shape that appears in both the film and poster (Figure 2-1).

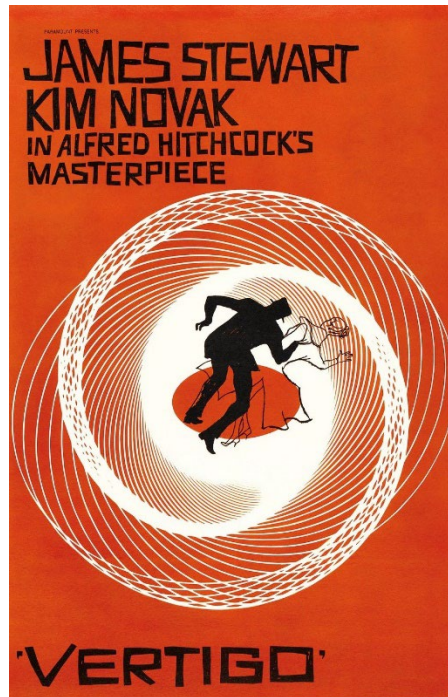


Figure 2-1: *Vertigo* Poster⁶

Furthermore, in Figures 2-2 and 2-3, Bass uses a visual motif- a geometric circle- throughout *Vertigo*'s title sequence, ensuring consistency for the individual product. This in turn creates a series of visual patterns that can be easily reproduced and recognisable across its marketing campaign, creating a distinctive aesthetic brand identify through a single marketable image. Bass's approach to creating a singular image that is easily transferable across varying marketing forms is an important historical foundation for Chapter 9's discussion of *Stranger Things*' promotion through its title sequence uploaded on YouTube.

⁶ Captured from *Vertigo*. Alfred Hitchcock (Director). HBO. Release Date: 9 May 1958. Etsy (Source). <https://www.etsy.com/au/listing/252926063/vertigo-movie-poster-alfred-hitchcock>. Accessed 21/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

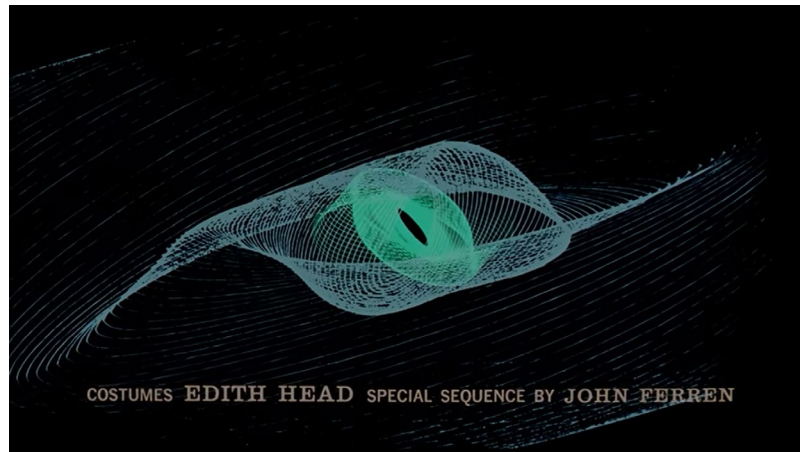


Figure 2-2: *Vertigo* Eye Motif 1⁷



Figure 2-3: *Vertigo* Eye Motif 2⁸

⁷ Captured from *Vertigo*. Alfred Hitchcock (Director). HBO. Release Date: 9 May 1958. Timestamp: 00:02:23. YouTube (Source). Movie Titles, *Vertigo* (1958) title sequence. 8 April 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkLn8mamU78>. Accessed 21/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁸ Captured from *Vertigo*. Alfred Hitchcock (Director). HBO. Release Date: 9 May 1958. Timestamp: 00:01:13. YouTube (Source). Movie Titles, *Vertigo* (1958) title sequence. 8 April 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkLn8mamU78>. Accessed 21/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

2.2.4 Bass's Celebrity Profile

To understand the historical development of the title sequence, this section will investigate Bass's celebrity profile. Before Bass went into title design, he worked in two advertising agencies: Buchanan and Company in 1946 (New York, Chicago) and Foote, Cone and Belding in 1951 (New York, Chicago). He later founded his own motion graphic company in 1952 named Saul Bass Associates (Horak 2014, 38). Bass's move from large advertising companies to his own studio is indicative of a larger trend in the 1950s. Horak elaborates that Bass's career trajectory led to him becoming so popular and thus links Bass to the wider narrative of creative individuals gaining more visibility within Hollywood's mass-produced films in the 1950s (Horak 2014, 4). Horak argues that given Bass's multi-faceted background in both advertising and film production allowed him to raise his status as a maverick and his overall celebrity profile (4).

An example of this trend toward designers becoming more important in the Hollywood system is exemplified by Bass achieving a higher degree of prominence partly through sending illustrations and samples of his work to journalists in the early 1950s. For example, Horak contends that Bass was increasingly becoming a much more visible figure through sending notes to *Variety* about his activities (2014, 15). Delivering notes directly to publishers demonstrates how Bass was personally cultivating his own celebrity profile. Bass further crafted his persona through his collaborations with Alfred Hitchcock and Otto Preminger. Bass worked with Alfred Hitchcock on title designs such as Otto Preminger on *The Man with The Golden Arm* (1955) and *North by Northwest* (1959). Horak explains that Bass was featured in European motion graphic magazines and so this increased his appeal to independent filmmakers (2014, 17). Bass also used these notable names to legitimise his own brand through sending images to publications and attaching his name to films and directors who as Horak argues "were considered legitimate auteurs" (2014, 17). Horak observes that Bass's

overall profile and visibility in paratexts such as magazines was increasing because of his title design for *The Man with The Golden Arm* with over sixty publications (2014, 16). *The Man in the Golden Arm* was popular as the image is replicable across different media. Jung notes that Bass and Preminger's primary goal was to make the title sequence a key part of the overall cinema-going experience (Jung 2017, 155). Overall, his publications and his attachment to high profile directors indicate that Bass cultivating his own brand identity. Bass's celebrity profile is an important concept for my focus on television branding since it highlights how the title designer was becoming an important part of how films and companies were branded by networks.

2.3 Saul Bass's Aesthetics and the Digital Title Sequence

2.3.1 Bass's Metaphorical Approach

The other key aspect that is directly relevant to title design in the 2010s is Bass's title design aesthetics that are consistent across his body of work. The main aesthetic connection between Bass's aesthetic designs and digital title sequences is the utilisation of metaphor. In a short documentary film called *Bass on Titles* he describes his metaphorical approach to title designs. He claims the primary function of the title sequence to "symbolize", "summarize", "establish mood" (Consecutiveframes 1977, 2:42). Bass further commented upon the notion of servicing the story through metaphor by stating,

My initial thoughts about what a title can do was to set mood and the prime underlying core of the film's story, to express the story in some metaphorical way. I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it (Haskin 1996, 12-13).

An example of Bass's "metaphorical way" that expresses the film's story is Preminger's *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) (Figure 2-4).



Figure 2-4: *Man With The Golden Arm* (1955)⁹

The title sequence is constructed through geometric shapes that culminate in a single image of a jagged arm. Bass is not the first title designer to experiment with title aesthetics. Michael Betancourt who has written extensively about Bass, notes that Bass's designs have an allegorical basis and are not that dissimilar from earlier designs in the 1930s (2019, 57). However, Betancourt also discusses how metaphorical designs were becoming popular in the 1950s indicating a shift in title design aesthetics. He observes that before the 1950s, title sequences typically used a credit function where the connection to the narrative is limited such as title sequences in the 1930s

⁹ Captured from *Man with the Golden Arm*. Otto Preminger (director). United Artists. RKO Studios. California. Release Date: 15 October 1955. Timestamp: 00:01:18. YouTube (Source). Movie Titles. The Man with the Golden Arm (1955) title sequence. 29 Jan 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhwsLS1XoIU>. 26 March 2019. Accessed 21/09/2022. Image has been entered into the public domain. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

(Betancourt 2018, 49). Betancourt elaborates that there is a discrete change in 1955 that he calls the designer period (Betancourt 2018, 48). Betancourt identifies that one of the key characteristics of this period is the use of “thematic imagery” (2018, 61). As such, Bass’s *The Man with The Golden Arm* is part of this broader trend toward title sequences containing symbolism.

The film’s narrative is about an addict and the crooked arm is a metaphor for the use of heroin. As Saul Bass commented, “The intent of this opening was to create a mood spare, gaunt, with a driving intensity ... [that conveyed] the distortion and jaggedness, the disconnectedness and disjointedness of the addict’s life which is the subject of the film” (Kirkham 2011). Bass’s approach was to take a marketable image, in this case a crooked arm, and place it within the titles to connote thematic connections to the film itself and make the image instantly recognisable to the audience rather than introduce characters and direct narrative linkages to the film’s diegesis.

Bass’s title sequences and the digital title sequence both approach the title sequence as a metaphor or allegory rather than a direct representation of narrative or characters.¹⁰ Similar to *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), the digital title sequence utilises metaphors to create a distinctive brand identity for the television show it is introducing. The connection between Bass’s designs and the digital title sequence is reinforced in an interview with Michelle Dougherty on *American Gods* (2017). Dougherty explains that *American Gods*’ title sequence is influenced by allegory where no characters or narratives are referenced (Landekic 2017). The concept “Allegory”

¹⁰ This thesis understands metaphor as distinct from allegory. Metaphor refers to a specific image or element within a title sequence that may symbolise a broader idea or concept while allegory is how the entire text can symbolise broader ideas or concepts.

that Dougherty remarks upon is similar to Bass's metaphor approach because both approaches seek to represent the story figuratively through suggestable images instead of a literal narrative.

Many digital title sequences employ Bass's metaphorical approach (some examples include *True Detective* (2014), *Jessica Jones* (2015), *Westworld* (2016), and *Altered Carbon* (2017). One example of Bass's influence on digital title sequence design is *American Gods* (Clair 2017). In *American Gods* (Clair 2017) the sequence consists of multiple religious icons such as a cross juxtaposed with images of American modernity like space travel and astronauts. One particularly poignant image is in Figure 2-5. The astronaut is placed in a crucifix acts as a metaphor for the show's central premise of ancient religious figures diminishing in response to American modernity.

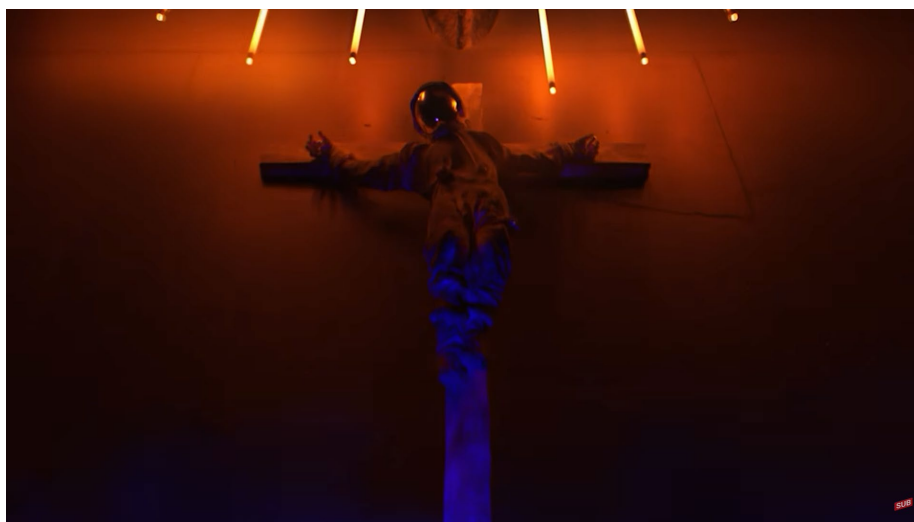


Figure 2-5: *American Gods* Title Sequence¹¹

¹¹ Captured from *American Gods*. Bryan Fuller and Michael Green (Showrunners). New Line Cinema. Release Date: 30 April 2017. Timestamp: 00:01:07. YouTube (Source). Amazon Prime Video UK & IE, *American Gods* - Opening Title Sequence | Prime Video. 1 April 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBkoG-8E-2w&t=10s>. Accessed 21/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 2-6: *American Gods* Motifs ¹²

Saul Bass's aesthetics are also influential because of how much his work has been referenced and directly imitated by other television title designs. Some examples include *Feud* (Tzuo 2017) by Prologue Films and *The Morning Show* (Bolan & Soletic 2019) by Elastic (Figures 2-7, 2-8). *Feud's* title design aesthetic is similar to Bass's design for *Vertigo* with its modernist design that also uses a geometric eye as a visual motif.

¹² Captured from *American Gods*. Bryan Fuller and Michael Green (Showrunners). New Line Cinema. Release Date: 30 April 2017. Timestamp: 00:01:18. YouTube (Source). Amazon Prime Video UK & IE, American Gods - Opening Title Sequence | Prime Video. 1 April 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBkoG-8E-2w&t=10s>. Accessed 21/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 2-7: *Feud* Title Sequence (2017)¹³

Reviewers have also made connections between *Feud*'s and Bass's designs. For example, Stacey Ritzen writes for Uproxx on *Feud*, "the sequence is clearly inspired by graphic designer Saul Bass" (Ritzen 2017). Similarly, Amber Dowling notes in an article for the *Hollywood Reporter* on *Feud*, "The Saul Bass-inspired intro (below) is a throwback to opening credits of a past era" (2017).

¹³ Captured from *Feud*. Ryan Murphy (Showrunner) FX. Release Date: 5 March 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:28. YouTube (Source) FX Networks. FEUD: Bette and Joan | Season 1: Main Title Sequence | FX. 9 Feb 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BllaOajamlk>. Accessed 19/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

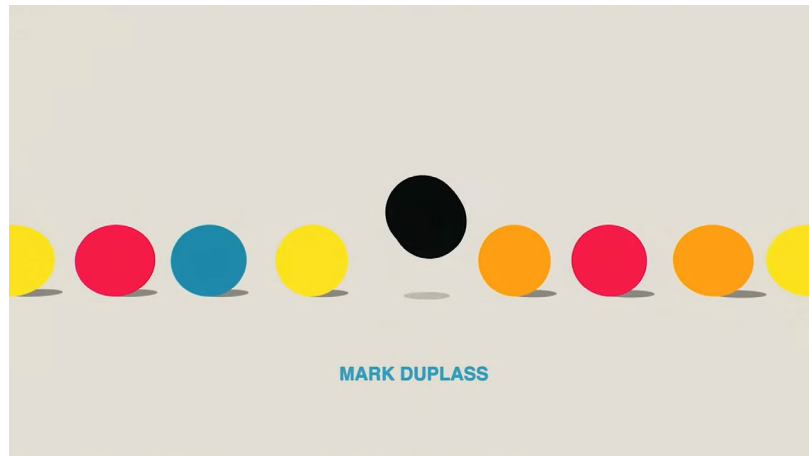


Figure 2-8: *The Morning Show* (2019)¹⁴

The *Morning Show*'s (2019) three-dimensional sleek and minimalist aesthetic is emblematic of Bass's and Paul Rand's modernist design. The sequence consists of colourful circles that move rhythmically and create a cascade of patterns. In an interview with *Deadline*, Hazel Baird who worked on the *Morning Show*'s title sequence states "that I looked at Paul Rand's work, and at Saul Bass's work, and the colours that they chose, and some other references, as well" (Grobar 2020). Baird examining Bass's work as a reference point highlights the sustained influence that his work has had on title designers working in the industry. These examples, their aesthetics, the title designers that have been influenced by Bass and the reception for them highlight the sustained and direct influence that Bass's designs have on television title sequence designs in the 2010s.

2.4 The Influence of Kyle Cooper

Bass had a large impact on the aesthetics and branding of title design for the digital title sequence.

While there has been a host of other important title sequence designers that have worked

¹⁴ Captured from *The Morning Show*. Jay Carson (Showrunner) Apple TV+. Release Date: 1 Nov 2019. Timestamp: 00:00:25. YouTube (Source). Apple TV. *The Morning Show* — Main Title Sequence | Apple TV+. 5 Sep 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NLSvaGTGP8>. Accessed 19/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

between 1960s and 1990s, the graphic design of Kyle Cooper has had a large impact on the digital title sequence's aesthetics. Cooper has also greatly influenced the title sequence industry by promoting the growth of new design companies like Prologue Films and the minute digital aesthetics of television title sequence design. Cooper graduated from Yale University with a Master of Fine Arts degree in graphic design in 1988 (Fong 2014). He started his career as a title designer with his first title design for the feature film *The Laser Man* (1988) (Codrington 2003, 110). He is particularly known for his work on the film *Se7en* has been held in high esteem discursively by critics and scholars (Codrington 2003; Gibson 2004; Byrne and Bryha 2012; Re 2016). For example, Bill Byrne and Yael Bryha claim that *Se7en* (1995) is a seminal title design due to its singular aesthetic (2012, 57). *Art of the Title* states that "its impact on the title industry is still felt almost two decades on, both as a legacy and in the countless knockoffs it has inspired over the years, having been co-opted almost wholesale by the horror genre as a house style" (Radatz, 2022). Jon Gibson from *Wired* writes of Cooper's elevated status as a result of *Se7en* (2004). Gibson conveys that Cooper is highly sought after by directors ever since *Se7en*'s highly stylised title sequence (2004). In a book on graphic design and titles called *Uncredited: Graphic Design & Opening Titles in Movies*, Gemma Solana and Antonio Boneu write that *Se7en* is "brilliant" and "hugely complex" and that Cooper's *Se7en* is seminal in contemporary title design (2007, 135-136).

Se7en has had a long-lasting legacy in both the film and television title design industry with both Cooper and the title sequence held in high regard. The title sequence is emblematic of broader aesthetic changes within the industry and particularly a shift toward small changes in the visual composition of title sequences. While the 1990s as a historical period are largely defined by a switch from analogue to practitioners embracing digital technology and computer graphics (see

Chapter 3), Cooper's title design largely still uses analogue technology such as an optical printer. To this effect Cooper points out that "People think that there's computer graphics in there, but having to deliver the thing as a traditional film optical and trying to encourage the guy working the optical printer to not throw away things that are accidents that we actually wanted in there, with fish hooks and razor blades going through the roll-up machine" (Radatz 2012). As such the aesthetic legacy of *Se7en* is not its technological influence but in its seemingly chaotic array of small changes to the aural-visual composition of each shot.

Cooper has had a direct influence on the title sequence's industry. As Re writes that Cooper's work was highly influential since it inspired a new trend of digital title sequence production such as the emergence of Imaginary Forces, Prologue Films and Digital Kitchen which in turn significantly impacted the production of title sequence production (2016). The impact of Kyle Cooper's designs on the television industry more broadly for these boutique design companies will be further investigated in this chapter in Section 2.4.2.

2.4.1 Minute Digital Aesthetics

Cooper's frantic and dizzying montage in *Se7en* (Kyle Cooper 1995) uses minute optical glitches and effects through Kodalith film. Kodalith is a special type of photographic printing paper that creates a high contrast image. The use of controlled optical glitches and scratches has two distinct functions that have been influential for title sequence design. The first function is how the optical glitches and scratches create a density of visual layers.

The use of optical glitches is an important precursor to the digital title sequence aesthetics which will be investigated in Chapter 6, 7 and 8 as it indicates a heightened level of direct control over the image itself (Figure 2-8). Michael Betancourt defines a glitch in a title sequence as,

...a visual breakdown that serves to signify not the fragmentation into multiple and independent shots, but the interruption- while- continuing of a singular take: they function not as a cuts or ruptures in the shot, appearing instead as deviations from its expected trajectory that nevertheless do not alter its course (2019 203).

In other words, glitches are still part of the same shot and are an alteration to the title sequence's mise-en-scène. There are visual glitches used in *True Detective's* title sequence which suggests *Se7en's* influence on the digital aesthetics of the title sequence in the 2010s (Figures 2-9, 2-10).

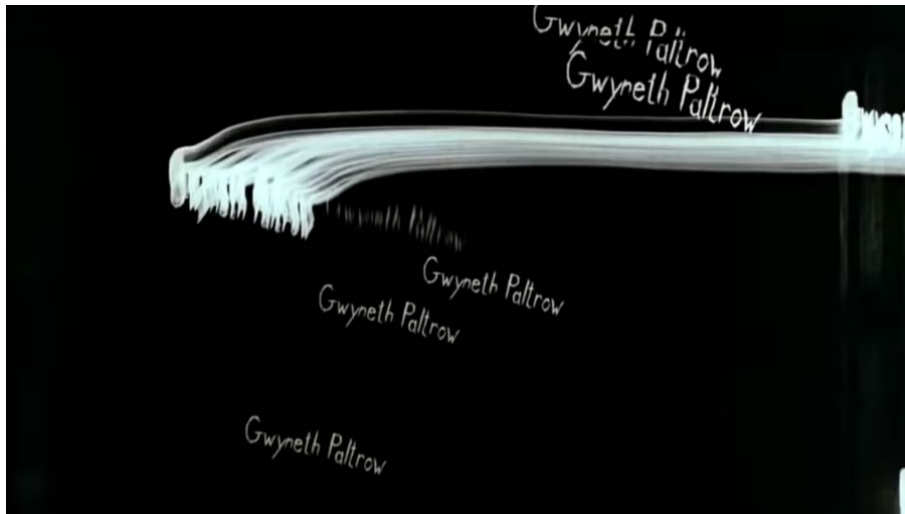


Figure 2-9: *Se7en* Title Sequence (1995)¹⁵



Figure 2-10: *True Detective* Micro Aesthetic Details¹⁶

The glitches that consist of small minute digital effects like the streaks in *True Detective*'s title sequence in the composition of the frame add to the aesthetic density of the title sequence

¹⁵ Captured from *Se7en*. David Fincher (Director). New Line Cinema. Release Date: 15 Sep 1995. Timestamp: 00:00:36. YouTube (Source). MovieTitles. *Se7en* (1995) title sequence. 13 Nov 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BJkDyCdw0c>. Accessed 21/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹⁶ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:13. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. *True Detective* - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

creating obscured and invisible aural-visual patterns. These glitches will be further studied in Chapter 7 on *True Detective*'s title sequence as an example of minute digital aesthetics in 2010s title design.

The second function is that the use of optical scratches and glitches in *Se7en* foregrounds the artifice of the technology itself. The use of optical glitches is an important historical development to the digital title sequence because it creates a different viewing mode where the audience is made to marvel at the novelty of the technology as opposed to the conventional absorption of the narrative. The minute changes in the density of the image creates a closer engagement with the title sequence itself outside of any thematic or narrative linkages. For example, throughout the *True Detective* title sequence, there are similar glitches and scratches, but they are rendered digitally and precisely controlled. Kyle Cooper in his audio commentary on the Blu-ray for *Se7en*'s title sequence states in relation to the hand drawn optical elements that "it was done to look accidental, but the methodology wasn't accidental" (Radatz 2022). The digital optical glitches in *True Detective*'s title sequence have a similar methodology, where the glitches offer the appearance of a degraded accidental mise-en-scène, and the technological imprint is foregrounded onto the image itself. Both *Se7en*'s and *True Detective*'s methodologies contain these glitches to produce visually dense images that in turn create a spectacular effect through the viewers' knowledge of the skill and talent needed to utilise the vast array of options that editing software provides the practitioner. The digital television title sequence primarily functions as spectacle. Bruce Isaacs offers an insightful comment on how digital effects function to enthrall the viewer in the title sequence's own constructed ontology: "...the subject gazes in awe at the spectacle of the impossible image and perceives with increasing acuity, the imprint of the

technology of its creation” (2013, 154). The viewers’ knowledge of the skill and talent of practitioners will be discussed further in Chapter 7 on *True Detective*.

2.4.2 The Influence of Cooper on Production Houses

Cooper has influenced the development of numerous production houses. As Re claims that “Cooper’s work inspired a new creative wave embodied by innovative post-production houses” including Imaginary Forces, Prologue Films and Digital Kitchen (2016). In 1996, a year after his design for *Se7en*, Cooper co-founded Imaginary Forces alongside Peter Frankfurt (executive producer at R/GA), Chip Houghton (managing partner at Imaginary Forces), and Karin Fong (creative director at Imaginary Forces). Cooper notes that other title designers saw *Se7en* and “it made them want to be a title designer” (Wolting and Vlaanderen 2009). One title designer who was inspired by Cooper is Patrick Clair. Clair has worked on title sequences for Elastic such as *True Detective* and *American Gods*. He explains that *Se7en* was “a big inspiration for me in joining the industry” (Barton 2017). Additionally, Danny Yount who was the lead creative designer at Digital Kitchen notes that Cooper’s creation of *Se7en* “was like was just like a bomb exploded” and every designer “wanted to do *Se7en*” (The Futur 2018, 1:05). Therefore, Cooper’s title design work and his subsequent involvement with production houses have influenced the growth of a new wave of “post- productions houses” and “impacted the development of digital graphic design significantly for films and television shows” (Re 2016). Cooper also impacted the motion graphic design industry through founding his own company called Prologue Films.

2.4.3 Prologue Films

In 2003 Kyle Cooper left R/GA to create his own studio called Prologue Films based in Venice, California and at the time of writing the company is still operational and successful. At the time of

writing, it has fifty-seven employees according to LinkedIn (“Prologue Films” n.d.). Similar to other large motion graphic production companies, Prologue Films offers a large range of services. For example, Prologue Films uses “visual effects, opening credit sequences, movie and show titles, videos, and trailers” (Prologue Films Website n.d.). It has produced a myriad of digital and live action projects for television, film, special effects and advertisements. Some key title sequences from Prologue films include *American Horror Story* (2011), *Of Kings and Prophets* (2016), *Feud: Battle of Joan* (2017), *Star Trek: Discovery* (2017), *Kong: Skull Island* (2017) (Vimeo “Prologue Films” n.d.). Prologue Films has a large quantity of work with over 900 projects featured on its Vimeo site “Prologue Films” Vimeo). Notably, the *American Horror Story* title sequence is aesthetically similar to *Se7en*’s title sequence given that *American Horror Story* employs small optical glitches within the frame to create a sinister mood (Figure 2-11).



Figure 2-11: *American Horror Story* Title Sequence¹⁷

The existence and vast catalogue of Prologue Films highlight Cooper's influence and enduring presence in the title design industry in the 2010s.

2.4.4 Conclusion

Saul Bass's metaphorical approach to title design and Kyle Cooper's optical glitches have all influenced the digital title sequence's aesthetics. This chapter investigated how broader industrial developments like the demise of the classical Hollywood system and block booking, the competition from television created the circumstances for the greater visibility of title designers and their prominence in the industry. The chapter provided historical context and a foundation for this thesis' discussion of the contemporary title sequence landscape. The following chapter will demonstrate, using the Emmys, how the technology and aesthetics of the title sequence has

¹⁷ Captured from *American Horror Story*. FX. Release Date: 5 Oct 2011. Timestamp: 00:00:36. YouTube (Source). MovieTitles. ★ TV-Series - Opening Credits / Intro ★. 30 Oct 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZXnkUXzoXs&ab_channel=%E2%98%85TV-Series-OpeningCredits%2FIntro%E2%98%85. Accessed 21/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

shifted historically which will in turn contextualise the digital title sequence trend in the TV IV period.

3 THE EMMYS AND AESTHETICS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the aesthetic and technological typicality of Emmy Award Winning and Nominated title sequences for the category Outstanding Main Title Design. This chapter has two central goals. The first is to explain how title design companies have increasingly adopted digital technology to change the title sequence's aesthetics to wholly computer-generated sequences that are typical in digital title sequences in the 2010s. The second goal is to examine how economic imperatives such as increased competition and historical circumstances have shaped and influenced title sequence aesthetics in the 2010s.

As established in the Introduction to this thesis, I selected the Outstanding Main Title Design Award because of my focus on prestige serial drama's title sequences. I will analyse title sequences from 1980 to 2019 to keep the results consistent from decade to decade since the category only started in 1976. Investigating nominees / winners within the Outstanding Main Title Design category allows this thesis to suggest how technology used in title sequences develops historically throughout different television periods including TV II, TV III and TV IV. My goal is not to provide an exhaustive list of every television title sequence ever made, or to create a limiting linear historical narrative, but to use the Emmys to signpost key aesthetic and industrial trends. I do not contribute directly to literature on the Emmys but instead use the Emmys as a tool to scrutinise how practitioners were using digital technology in title design and how the title sequence factors into larger television historical shifts. As established in the Introduction to this thesis, the following chapter does not investigate a musical category since my focus is on the visual content of the title sequence.

3.1.1 Periodisation

As discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, different scholars have identified schema for broad television periods such as Marieke Jenner's TV IV (2016; 2023) and Epstein et al's TV I, II and III (2002). As mentioned in the Introduction to the thesis, these periods are subjective discursive constructions that can highlight and preference the discussion of different elements of the historical periods under study. This chapter will highlight key developments that are pertinent to the title sequence specifically. To study these changes, I identified the title sequences from the archives on the official Emmys' website that listed every winner and nominee since 1980 (Emmy Nominees and Winners). As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I do not consider the Emmy Awards to be an objective marker of quality but an extension of promotional discourses and another avenue that networks utilise to brand themselves. As such they are a useful tool for this thesis to track visual trends as they pertain to prestige promotional materials.

I analyse digital technology by importing the Emmy nominees and winners into Adobe Premiere Pro editing software to observe and compare aesthetic differences. As the screenshot from Figure 3-1 exhibits I ordered the title sequences chronologically by decade. This timeline was created from the data in Appendix 1 that contains the data on the aesthetic and technological content of the title sequences sorted after decades.

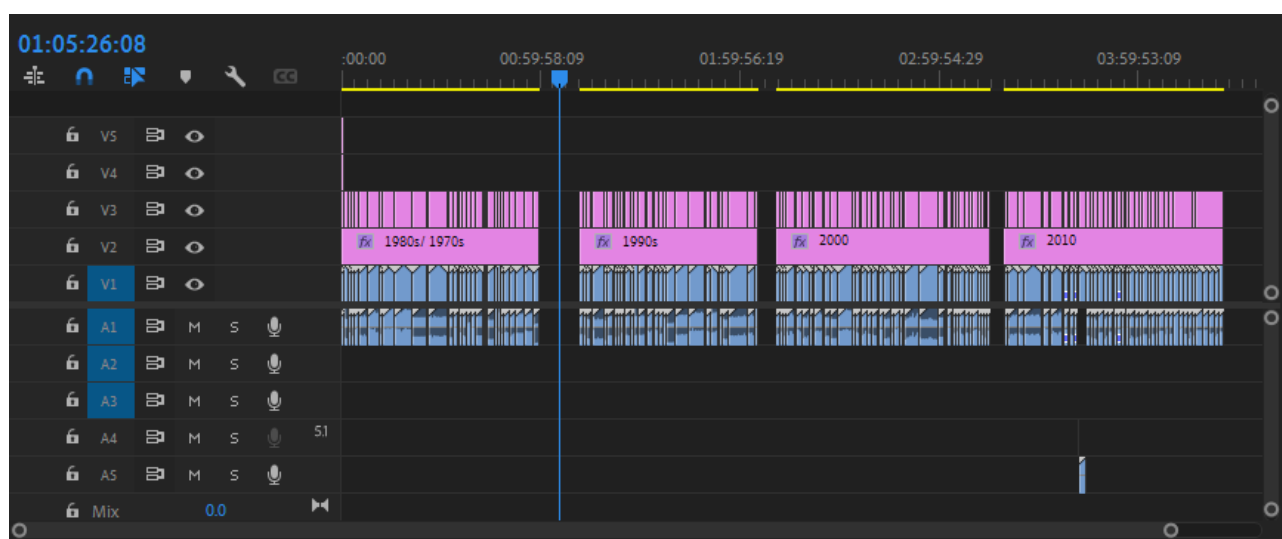


Figure 3-1: Screenshot of Adobe Premiere Pro Data (Appendix 1)

By utilising this method I was able to clearly identify and observe technological and aesthetic differences between title sequences across varying periods through comparing them directly in Adobe Premiere Pro. In the screenshot of Adobe Premiere Pro Data (Figure 3-1) the pink titles represent each decade, and the blue clips underneath are the title sequences that I sorted into each decade. The smaller pink titles that are above the titles representing each decade are the labelled aesthetic and technological differences. Once I had identified the aesthetic and technological differences between the title sequences, I was able to then use Epstein et al's (2002) discussion of broad television periods: TV II (1980–1999), TV III (2000–2009) and Mareike Jenner's (2018) TV IV period (2010–present) to correlate the title sequences' technological differences and continuities to wider industrial trends.

Table 2 on page 125 consists of the TV II, III and IV periods as defined by Epstein et al (2002) and Jenner (2023), and alongside in the middle column are my title sequence observations. I have placed the title sequence characteristics alongside Epstein et al's and Jenner's trends to indicate that the construction of title sequences is rooted in broader historical televisual developments. In Epstein's TV II period (1980-1999), networks took advantage of emerging technologies such as

cable and satellite and expanded and diversified their branding methods to compete with one another. The title sequence is a component of these broader industrial changes and I observed that during the TV II period title designers used multiple different technologies to create title sequences and a mix of varying aesthetic characteristics. The following period of Epstein's, TV III period (2000-2009) is characterised by audience fragmentation due to viewers adopting the internet which was growing in the 2000s and networks adopting digital distribution platforms. The title sequence reflects these changes as I examined title sequences in TV III period and identified a further rise of digital elements used to create title sequences and the growth of iconography as an aesthetic element. The final period, Jenner's TV IV (2010-2019), includes the emergence of streaming services and on demand catalogues, more audience fragmentation than TV III, binge-watching as a consumption habit and as part of promotional discourses and audience participatory practices. I identified two specific characteristics of title design in the 2010s which include a large growth of computer-generated visuals and a continued increase of iconography in TV III.

Table 2: Television Title Sequences Historical Changes

	My Observed Title Sequence Technological and Aesthetic Changes	Epstein et al. Periodisations (2002; 43- 56)
TV II (1980-1999)	Hybrid combination of live action and digital, mix of varying aesthetic characteristics	Channel Network expansion, quality television, and network branding strategies, Cable
TV III (2000-2009)	Large increase of digital technologies over live action, growth of iconography	Digital Distribution platforms, more audience fragmentation, internet
Jenner's TV IV Periodisation (2018; 2023)		
TV IV (2010-2019)	Increase of animated digital title sequences, continued growth of iconography	Streaming Services, greater audience fragmentation, increased binge-watching, participatory practices

I will utilise Epstein et al's periods- TV II, III- and Jenner's TV IV to contextualise the title sequence's aesthetic and technological developments. This chapter does not disprove or challenge any of these historical periods' characteristics but argues that the title sequence has been affected by these industrial developments. I will also claim that the title sequence is an important component of these historical periods. Therefore, title sequences create a better understanding of these broad industrial developments. Throughout the chapter for each case study, I provide an overview of Epstein et al's and Jenner's periods.

3.1.2 Overview of Outstanding Main Title Design Emmy Category

It is not necessary for this thesis to assess every single Emmy category in the history of the awards show, but rather to focus on Outstanding Main Title Design Winners and Nominations because it is directly pertinent to my object of study-the the title sequence. The category started in 1976 and was titled at the time "Outstanding Achievement in Graphic Design and Title". *Addie and the King of Hearts* (1976) won the first iteration of that award for CBS with Norman Sunshine, the credited title designer. Additionally, there has been little academic and journalistic attention directed towards the history of the category as discussed in the Literature Review.

Ultimately, the lack of any award for title design until 1976 and the minute amount of literature on the category indicates that the industry did to some extent not perceive the television title sequence as an aesthetic and industrial achievement, highlighting its history of industrial and academic neglect. The historical neglect of the television title sequence in the 20th Century is in direct contrast with the elevated status of Saul Bass as exemplified by Chapter 2. While the focus on Bass and other film title designers emphasises that title sequence design was receiving attention by the industry, there is still a large part of the television title sequence industry that did

not receive the same amount of attention. Additionally, unlike television shows that can typically win Emmy awards in multiple years, title sequences do not receive recognition repeatedly as the title sequence is generally the same across multiple seasons. Therefore, title sequences hold prominent cultural weight as its singular win highlights their capacity to endure beyond the bounds of the television show. Due to the lack of attention and my focus on title sequence design, the next section (3.1.3) will investigate digital aesthetics using the Outstanding Main Title Design Award through various periods.

3.1.3 The Categories

I focus on two key areas in this chapter: aesthetic and technology. For technology I created three key categories: live action, hybrid and animation. I devised the categories to assess the core question of this chapter: technology. I also chose them since they are broad categories, and it is difficult to discern whether analogue methods like the use of an animation camera to record animation frame by frame or graphics produced digitally by a computer are used in title sequences particularly in the TV II period. The animation category encompasses any method other than live action used by graphic designers in the title sequence. The hybrid category demonstrates overlap between different categories where title sequences can use animation in conjunction with live action elements. The live action category is where title sequences include real people, locations or shots from the television show.

To account for the differences in aesthetics across periods I devised four categories: characters, typography, iconography and setting. I devised these categories to prove the aesthetic typicality of television title sequence design. These title sequences overlap as title sequences typically establish characters as well as introduce the show's setting. To solve this problem, I identified title

sequences that fall under these categories because they predominantly display properties of their respective aesthetic category. Title sequences that have iconography predominately use symbolism and visual motifs that allude to the show's narrative rather than explicitly showing it. For example, the title sequence for *The Crown* (2017) features ornate computer-generated jewellery that alludes to the show's regal setting and narrative concerning the British royal family without explicitly showing them in the sequence. The character category is for title sequences that have foregrounded the show's cast in each shot of the title sequence. For instance, the title sequence for *Friends* (1994) foregrounds the show's cast in one shot. The typography category are title sequences that use text to present the show's title for the entire duration of the sequence. The typography typically might be animated or have additional effects placed on the text itself. For example, *Watchmen* (2019) animates the show's title without any additional visuals. The setting category consists of title sequences that showcase the show's locations in each shot within the credits. For instance, the title sequence for *The 10th Kingdom* (2000) display various shots of its fantastical version of Manhattan, New York. When examining the title sequences, I discovered a large majority showcased the television show's settings in discrete compositions. Out of the 171 Emmy winners and Nominated title sequences listed, I found 168 from my various searches on YouTube and Vimeo, Dailymotion, Internet Archive, and streaming services.

3.1.4 Technology Category Overall Results

In the technology category results I identify two key trends. One is the decline of live action from 1980 to 2019. During the 1980s there is no dominant type of technology and the majority being live action with 12 (40%) of forty-four Emmy winning and nominated title sequences. However, live action decreases to 11 (26%) of forty-one in 1990-1999 and 9 (18%) of fifty in 2000-2009 before finally dropping to 7 (13%) of fifty-two between 2010-2019.

The second key trend is the rise of animation and hybrid technology. Out of forty-four Emmy Winners and Nominees, eight (27%) use animation between 1980 to 1989. Animation does not grow significantly until the 2010s. The use of animation increased to thirty (58%) out of fifty-two Emmy Winners and Nominees in 2010-2019. Hybrid title sequences also increased from 1980 to 2009. Between 1980 and 1989 hybrid title sequences are twenty (33%) out of forty-four total Emmy Winners and Nominees and fifty-two (58%) between 1990 and 2009 out of a total forty-one Emmy Nominated and Winners. However, there is a decline in 2010-2019 with only fifteen (29%) out of fifty-two Emmy Winning and Nominated title sequences because animation becomes the dominant title sequence trend (Figure 3-2).

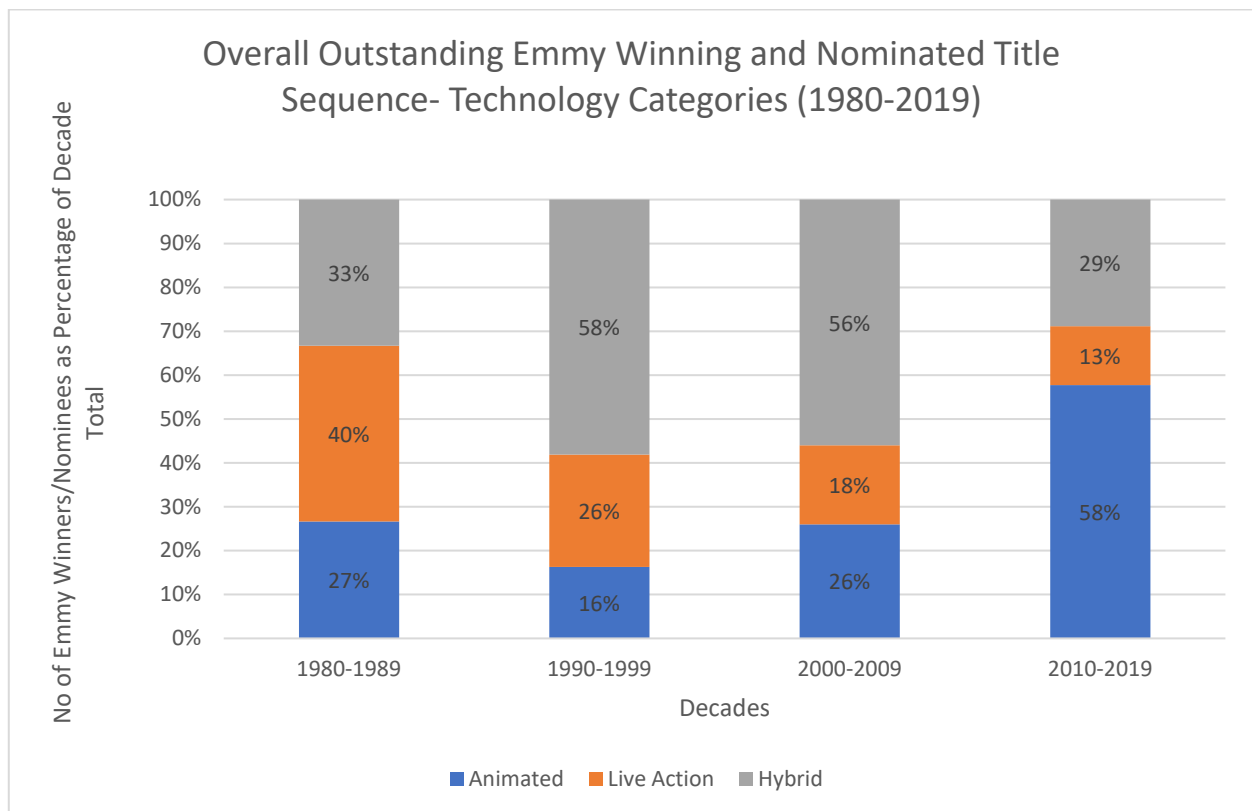


Figure 3-2: Title Sequence Technology

3.1.5 Aesthetic Category Overall Results

In the aesthetic category results, there is one major trend: the increase of iconography from 1976–2019, meaning more use of symbolism and visual motifs in title design. Between 1980-1989 there was no particular aesthetic trend. There are seven title designs that use characters (23%), nine that use iconography (30%), ten (33%) that utilise typography and four (13%) that primarily introduce setting out of forty-four Emmy winning and nominated title sequences. Iconography has become more dominant in the 1990s and 2000s which indicates a shift in aesthetic priority. In the 1990s iconography multiplied to sixteen (37%) out of forty-one total Emmy Winners and Nominees. By the 2000s iconography grew to thirty-two (64%) out of fifty Emmy Winners and Nominees. In the 2010s it increased again to forty-five (87%) out of fifty-two Emmy Winners and Nominees (Figure 3-3). The growth of iconography as a key trend suggests that characters, setting and typography were no longer key forms of product differentiation. These results will be further unpacked through the case studies and television periods in the next section (3.2).

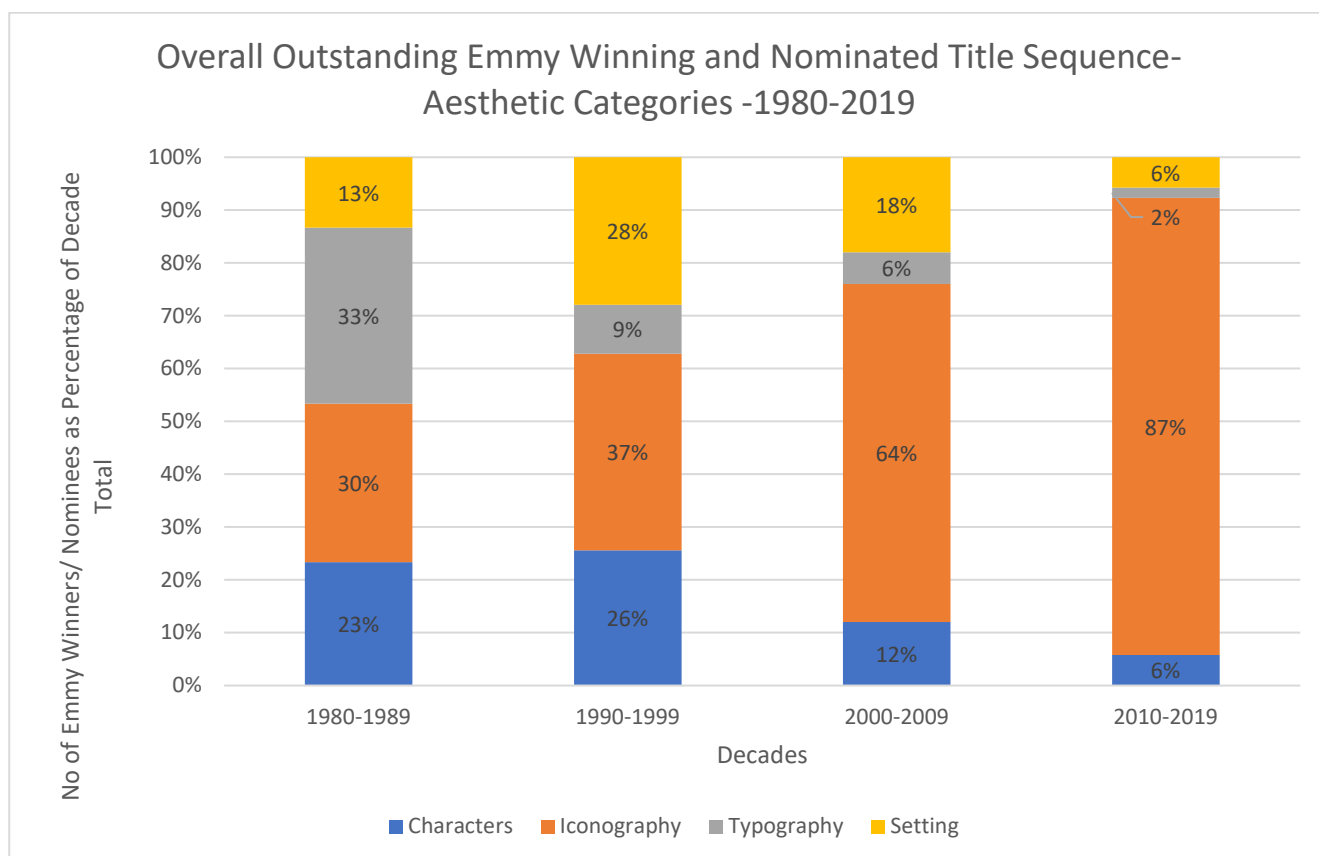


Figure 3-3: Title Sequence Aesthetics

3.2 The Television Periods Under Closer Examination: TV II – IV

To gain a greater understanding of the nuances of television title sequences from the different television periods I unpack each period in turn using a case study. I chose each case study as they address questions of historical typicality and provide a better understanding of industrial and aesthetic factors from decade to decade. I chose *Stingray* (1985) and *Friday Night Videos* (1983) because they emphasise how live action and emerging digital techniques were beginning to converge in the 1980s. I chose *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995) to underscore how digital techniques were becoming more sophisticated in the 1990s. For the TV III period I chose *Six Feet Under* (2001) to demonstrate how HBO was differentiating title sequences in the 2000s. The following section (3.3) provides an overview of each period followed by an analysis of each case study.

3.3 TV II: 1980 – 1999

3.3.1 Overview of TV II

For Epstein et al's TV II, the key characteristics are the emergence of satellite technology and cable (2002, 44). Satellite technology and cable led to channel network expansion resulting in growing competition in a cluttered television market. As Newman and Levine maintain, television is no longer controlled by an oligopoly of three networks and that flow in the television landscape is shaped by broadcast, cable and satellite channels as well as various other technologies that are used to attain content (2012, 4). Television historian Erik Barnouw notes that cable subscriptions grew exponentially in the 1970s to "4000" and 15 million homes had subscriptions (1990, 493). He adds that the advent of channels such as HBO, ESPN, CNN, MTV within a quick time span fundamentally changed the television landscape (1990, 494).

Amanda Lotz provides specific data on the uptake of these new viewing options as by 1990 fifty-six percent of households had subscriptions to cable and satellite and eighty-five percent by 2004 in the United States (2014, 26). Due to the emergence of cable channels and growth of companies such as HBO and MTV this increased the competition and further fragmented audience attention. The growth in competition necessitated new approaches to branding and product differentiation. Therefore, product differentiation becomes an important tool to attain and retain audience attention that is no longer influenced by the oligopoly of traditional linear broadcasting.

3.3.2 Televisuality and Product Differentiation

An important concept to understand broader aesthetic changes and how title sequences aid in differentiating products is John Caldwell's televisuality. As discussed in the Literature Review,

Caldwell argues that televisuality represents a shift in the aesthetics of the television industry from the 1980s (1995/2020). He claims that televisuality is a form of product differentiation and that MTV and the television show *Miami Vice* fundamentally changed the way that television looked (1995/2020, 132) (Figure 3-4). Caldwell explains that there are key characteristics that differentiates MTV from other programs such as “the appropriation of mass culture images, intertextuality, fractured subjectivity, and yes, even irony” (1995/2020 Xi). An article by Tilt Magazine describes the changing aesthetic sensibilities of television by reporting that People Magazine in 1984 wrote that *Miami Vice* was “the first show to look really new and different since color TV was invented” (Ricky 2022). Furthermore, Caldwell makes his claim about how show’s aesthetics were changing by arguing that there are two stylistic categories: the “cinematic and videographic” (1995/2020, 18). The cinematic likened itself to a cinema presentation on the television set (1995/2020, 18). Given my focus on digital aesthetics, the videographic style identified by Caldwell is important because the style is constitutive of digital effect laden television. Caldwell asserts that since the 1980s television creatives have become obsessed with using effects (19). This category is pertinent to the title sequence as it exists outside of the narrative diegesis of the television show and so there are potentially more opportunities for effect laden design. Caldwell in his analysis of the title sequence for the television show *War and Remembrance* (1988), claims that “The extended and elaborate opening sequence shows that stylistic excess is not merely a byproduct, overflow, or worse, a distraction to narrative as many critical theorists imply” (1995/2020, 251). Therefore, the title sequence is an integral part of Caldwell conception of televisuality. I maintain that the title sequence is a part of these changing aesthetic sensibilities and technologies which will be discussed in the following section (3.3.3).



Figure 3-4: *Miami Vice* (1984)¹⁸

3.3.3 Quantel Paintbox

The key technological characteristics of the TV II title sequence I observed includes a hybrid combination of both live action and digital technology since the latter was still emerging in television production. Two key technologies changed television motion graphics in the TV II period. The Paintbox System enabled more options in the television industry, transformed industrial practices and helped to develop new skilled work forces in the television industry. In 1985, Quantel released the Harry Effects compositing system which allowed for nonlinear editing which in turn enabled editors to edit footage in any order in real time (Perkins 2013). The Harry Effects system created a greater control over the image for effect artists in the 1980s and 1990s (Perkins 2013). However, technology alone does not dictate the aesthetic form and industrial trends of the television industry necessarily. As Pat Gavin, a title designer who worked with the

¹⁸ Captured from *Miami Vice*, Michael Mann (Showrunner). NBC. United States. Release Date: 16 Sept 1984. Timestamp: 00:00:49 YouTube. AMB Production TV. Miami Vice Theme HD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEjXPY9jOx8>. 6 Aug 2014. Accessed 27/06/2020. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

Quantel Paintbox system on the *Agatha's Christie Poirot* (1989) title sequence in the 1980s claims that technology is nothing without a human agent and creative collaboration (Perkins 2013).

Practitioners were able to take full advantage of the expanded creative options facilitated by these new technologies in the 1980s. In an interview with graphic design company, Pittard Sullivan asserts that Quantel and Paintbox have allowed designers to create “just about any image possible” (Meisler 1992). The paintbox system allowed graphic designers to paint directly onto the screen using digital tools and allowing designers an unprecedented level of control over the image. For instance, an article by Brooke Comer in 1986 discusses how new digital technologies were affecting television broadcast. The article has a quotation from Sony’s product manager Kurtis Chan in 1986. He explains that,

I believe that the marriage of digital audio and video technology brings about a new revelation in the recording, reproduction, and transmission of audio and video signals, and as a result, broadcasters, video production houses, manufacturers, and end users can now consider all the implications and possibilities of an all digital post facility (1986).

The comments by Sony’s product manager anticipate the current landscape of digital postproduction facilities in the 2010s where digital post facilities are widespread.

3.3.4 *Stingray* (1985)

One key title sequence that utilised both live action and other technology and that won the Outstanding Main Title Design Emmy Award in 1985 is *Stingray* (Green) made for NBC. Like other Emmy Award winning and nominated title sequences made in the TV II period, *Stingray*’s title sequence relies on live action. The *Stingray* title sequence visually is composed of two key elements: characters and locations from the television show that are displayed in live action and

animation elements. The sequence largely focuses on characters from the television show in conjunction with typography displaying the stars' names through a fast paced montage rhythmically edited to a synth theme song (Figure 3-5).



Figure 3-5: *Stingray* Title Sequence¹⁹

The sequence also has numerous shots of action and locations taken directly from the live action television show (Figure 3-6).

¹⁹ Captured from *Stingray*, Stephen J. Cannell (Showrunner). NBC. United States. Release Date: 14 July 1985. Timestamp: 00:00:25 YouTube. David Gideon. Classic TV Theme: Stingray (Full Stereo). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LellYirmgl>. 6 Nov 2020. Accessed 27/06/2020.
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Figure 3-6: *Stingray* Title Sequence²⁰

However, the *Stingray* title sequence anticipates the increase of digital technology in title sequence production. For example, Figure 3-7 uses live action footage in conjunction with a painterly- like effect.

²⁰ Captured from *Stingray*, Stephen J. Cannell (Showrunner). NBC. United States. Release Date: 14 July 1985. Timestamp: 00:00:45 YouTube. David Gideon. Classic TV Theme: Stingray (Full Stereo). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LellYirmgl>. 6 Nov 2020. Accessed 27/06/2020.
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Figure 3-7: *Stingray* Title Sequence ²¹

This title sequence is emblematic of other animated title sequences in the 1980s that utilised alternative technologies rather than shooting live action or using footage from the show. I argue that the use of alternative technologies and aesthetics where style is foregrounded over any narrative concerns is an example of Caldwell's televisuality as discussed in Section 3.3.2.

Therefore, the use of multiple technologies and aesthetics in this title sequence is emblematic of the larger industrial trend in the 1980s of networks and channels differentiating their products to compete with one another. A further example is the title sequence for 1983's *Friday Night Videos* as the title designers used computer graphics to create digital compositions (Figure 3-8). The sequence consists of an animated figure tied to a pole before they are shot in the eye. The sequence does not contain any live action elements and is entirely computer-generated (Figure 3-9).

²¹ Captured from *Stingray*, Stephen J. Cannell (Showrunner). NBC. United States. Release Date: 14 July 1985. Timestamp: 00:00:49 YouTube. David Gideon. Classic TV Theme: Stingray (Full Stereo). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LellYirmgl>. 6 Nov 2020. Accessed 27/06/2020.
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Figure 3-8: *Friday Night Videos* ²²

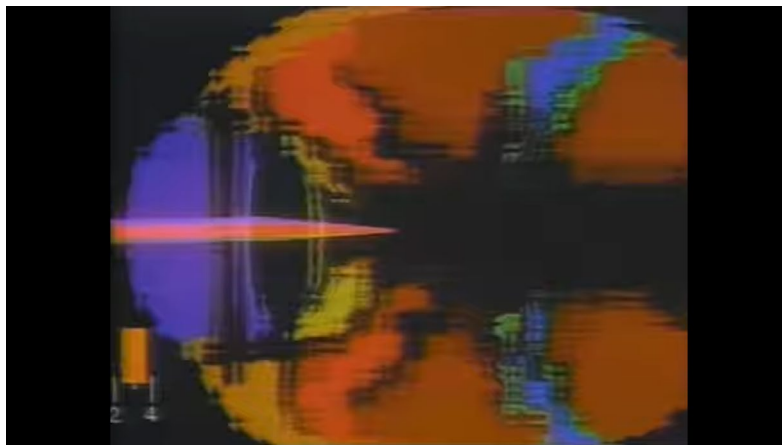


Figure 3-9: *Friday Night Videos* ²³

To further reinforce the cutting edge visuals, a blog titled “5 REASONS WHY FRIDAY NIGHT VIDEOS WAS AS IMPORTANT AS MTV TO '80S TEENS” as a retrospective on the show notes that “Friday

²² Captured from *Friday Night Videos*, Dick Ebersol (Showrunner). NBC. United States. Release Date: 29 July 1983. Timestamp: 00:00:10 YouTube. Trigon’s Trailers. Friday Night Videos Intro (Sep 30, 1983), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PMXbSqTYIY&ab_channel=Trigon%27sTrailers. 7 Oct 2014. Accessed 27/06/2020. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review

²³ Captured from *Friday Night Videos*, Dick Ebersol (Showrunner). NBC. United States. Release Date: 29 July 1983. Timestamp: 00:00:24 YouTube. Trigon’s Trailers. Friday Night Videos Intro (Sep 30, 1983), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PMXbSqTYIY&ab_channel=Trigon%27sTrailers. 7 Oct 2014. Accessed 27/06/2020. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review

Night Videos' intro sequence was cool with what we thought were futuristic sounds and graphics" (Charles 2022). While this is only one example, Wayne Fitzgerald, a prolific title designer also comments on how technology in the 1980s and new techniques were affecting television aesthetics in the 1980s. He explains that due to the adoption of different technologies by designers there are far greater potentials for image making (Meisler 1992). Fitzgerald's argument demonstrates how digital technology was increasingly becoming prominent in the 1980s. Therefore, the use of non-live action elements is a historical precedent for the digitised computer-generated title sequences in the 2010s period that will be discussed later in this chapter in Section 3.5.

3.3.5 Digital Developments and *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995)

In the 1990s as indicated in the results section (3.1.4) there is a further increase of digital elements in title design. As computational power and technology developed, title sequences were made by companies using computer-generated images. In an interview, Dan Curry, the creative lead designer on the *Star Trek: Voyager* title sequence (1995) which was nominated for Outstanding Main Title Design in 1995, argues that digital video allowed more "complex multi layered compositing" (Shaffer 2021). Curry elaborates by stating that these new complex multi-layered composites allowed shows to utilise both physical and digital solutions (Figure 3-10). For example, Curry notes that television shows such as *Deep Space Nine* (1993) and *Voyager* (1995) used a hybrid mix of physical models in the foreground and computer-generated imagery in the background (Shaffer 2021). Overall, in TV II there is a dominant trend toward digital technology through hybrid compositions used in the title sequence.



Figure 3-10: *Star Trek Voyager* Computer-Generated Visuals²⁴

3.4 TV III (2000 -2009)

3.4.1 Overview of the TV III Period

During the TV III period there were key changes to the television industry that are pertinent to the television title sequence. In Epstein et al's TV III period, the key historical trend is increased digital technology being incorporated in television production (2002, 42). Pearson explains that TV III is the period where "digital distribution platforms" proliferated and there was "further audience fragmentation" (2011, 107). As Lotz asserts, that digital distribution allowed more choice for viewers using subscription-based content (2014, 176).

Johnson argues that branding has extended to online spaces in the 2000s due to a "cluttered media environment" (2012, 57). Johnson explains that television networks increasingly took

²⁴ Captured from *Star Trek Voyager*, Michael Piller (Showrunner). UPN. United States. Release Date: 16 Jan 1995. Timestamp: 00:01:16 YouTube. Intro Master. *Star Trek: Voyager* | Opening - Intro HD, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDaOYj2wggg>. 4 June 2018. Accessed 27/01/2022.
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advantage of social interaction on the internet to further promote their brand (2012, 58). As such in the age of media convergence the brand is no longer tied to a particular channel but across a multiple services, programs, experiences and platforms (2012, 58).

Another way that audiences were fragmented is through the emergence of the DVD that was introduced in 1997 and become dominant part of the media marketplace (Jenner 2023, 111). The DVD allowed viewers to have agency over when and how they consumed their favourite television shows. While scheduled broadcasting with strict time slots for programming still exists, the emergence of DVDs made whole seasons available to audiences after its broadcast and free from the programming schedules and allotted time slots further dividing viewers' attention.

Additionally, television images increased their resolution because DVD had a higher audio-visual quality than what was capable using VCR. Keeler and Friedman argue that due to technology alterations and changes in business practices improved the cultural perception of television which in turn anticipated the growth of original scripted shows (Keeler and Friedman 2022, 8). Friedman and Keeler's notion of the shifting cultural perception and the "eruption" of original series highlights a pertinent development to the title sequence which is HBO's cycle of the quality television shows in the late 1990s and early to mid-2000s (2022, 8). Epstein et al argue that competitive branding was an intrinsic part of the TV III period due to intensified competition and digital technologies (2002, 47). They claim that "TV III must be the age of brand marketing" (48). To support this claim, Epstein et al elaborate that original programming became a large part of HBO's brand in the 2000s (2002, 51). Epstein et al also indicate that many networks stamp their corporate logo in the bottom of the screen to further reinforce their brand in a competitive environment (2002, 48). The next section will further investigate HBO.

3.4.2 HBO

Another historical trend in the TV III period is quality television branding through networks such as HBO. Following the increased competition from the emergence of cable and satellite technologies as outlined in the last section (3.4.1), HBO was establishing its dominance by the late 1990s. HBO was not restricted by the economic constraints of traditional broadcast networks while broadcast networks were reliant upon one advertising revenue stream (Edgerton 2008, 12). As Gary Edgerton elaborates, that after 1995 the cable and satellite industry was incredibly competitive and thus actively encouraged the upsurge of original programming for the purposes of product differentiation in which HBO was at the forefront (2008, 12).

As Keeler and Friedman note HBO's "eruption" of original scripted content was historically motivated due to increased competition by other emerging networks in the late 1990s like Warner Brothers Television Network and United Paramount Network that employed marketing to niche target audiences which in turn created the need for original shows for branding purposes (Keeler and Friedman 2022, 8). Edgerton explains how HBO cemented itself through its production of "original series, miniseries, made-for pay TV movies, documentaries, stand up comedy and sports" to effectively compete with other networks (2008, 8). Jenner argues that other US cable channels such as AMC, Showtime and FX like HBO built its respective brands around quality drama programming (2018, 5). Keeler and Friedman note that this original content is not built around attaining large profits but to elevate the network's status and brand value which in turn would garner revenue through "increased advertising fees" (2022, 9). However, scholars have not typically discussed that an important part of this quality branding strategy and product differentiation is the title sequence which will be analysed in the following section.

3.4.3 *Six Feet Under* (2006)

An example of a title sequence that is emblematic of aesthetics in the TV III period is *Six Feet Under* (Newman 2006) (Figure 3-11).



Figure 3-11: *Six Feet Under* (2006) ²⁵

Six Feet Under's title sequence is distinct from the other examples that are representative of their respective periods because it was created for HBO, a premium cable channel, not one of the three major networks that dominated the television industry during the TV I period. *Six Feet Under*'s title sequence was created by Digital Kitchen in 2001 and added distinct digital imagery to its montage of live action iconography. The sequence is composed of different images of iconography from the television show that allude to death and grief as the show's narrative centres around family-run funeral home. The entire sequence has a clear narrative trajectory as it conveys a corpse's journey from the hospital or morgue to the cemetery.

²⁵ Captured from *Six Feet Under*, Allan Ball (Showrunner). HBO. United States. Release Date: 3 June 2001. Timestamp: 00:00:10 YouTube. Zero Alfa. *Six Feet Under* opening credits HD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5JkGY1qC8Y&t>. 29 Jul 2013. Accessed 27/01/2022.

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For example, in the first part of the sequence there are various shots of corpse being prepared and subsequently being transported on what looks to be a hospital bed (Figure 3-12, 13).



Figure 3-12: *Six Feet Under*'s Title Sequence (2006)²⁶



Figure 3-13: *Six Feet Under*'s Title Sequence (2006)²⁷

The second half of the sequence contains the coffin arriving at the cemetery (Figure 3-14, 3-15).

²⁶ Captured from *Six Feet Under*, Allan Ball (Showrunner). HBO. United States. Release Date: 3 June 2001. Timestamp: 00:00:27 YouTube. Zero Alfa. Six Feet Under opening credits HD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5JkGY1qC8Y&t>. 29 Jul 2013. Accessed 27/01/2022.

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²⁷ Captured from *Six Feet Under*, Allan Ball (Showrunner). HBO. United States. Release Date: 3 June 2001. Timestamp: 00:00:40 YouTube. Zero Alfa. Six Feet Under opening credits HD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5JkGY1qC8Y&t>. 29 Jul 2013. Accessed 27/01/2022.

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Figure 3-14: *Six Feet Under* (2006) ²⁸



Figure 3-15: *Six Feet Under* (2006) ²⁹

The entirety of the sequence does not rely on shots of characters, action or locations from the show itself but rather alludes to them through pieces of iconography. These elements of iconography are shot in live action and enhanced by additional digital techniques.

²⁸ Captured from *Six Feet Under*, Allan Ball (Showrunner). HBO. United States. Release Date: 3 June 2001. Timestamp: 00:01:05 YouTube. Zero Alfa. *Six Feet Under* opening credits HD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5JkGY1qC8Y&t>. 29 Jul 2013. Accessed 27/01/2022.
Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

²⁹ Captured from *Six Feet Under*, Allan Ball (Showrunner). HBO. United States. Release Date: 3 June 2001. Timestamp: 00:01:15 YouTube. Zero Alfa. *Six Feet Under* opening credits HD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5JkGY1qC8Y&t>. 29 Jul 2013. Accessed 27/01/2022.
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Despite the rise of digital technology as per *Star Trek Voyager*, many of the title sequences during the 2000s still used live action in conjunction with digital effects. For example, Danny Yount, the lead creative designer of *Six Feet Under*'s title sequence, describes in an interview with *Art of the Title* that they utilised a new particle system in After Effects to create smoke effect when the typography used in the sequence disappeared (Tagudin 2012). Yount's comment corresponds to my own study in which I found upon examining the fifty Emmy's Nominated and Winning title sequences made in the 1990s and 2000s, the dominant trend is a hybrid aesthetic, enhanced by digital effects.

Six Feet Under's title sequence and its iconography that is enhanced by digital effects that alludes to the television show's narrative and themes without explicitly showing them is emblematic of quality branding strategies by HBO and its attempts to differentiate its brand from its competitors. The *Six Feet Under* title sequence presents this quality through foregrounding its budget by shooting a live action sequence especially for the title sequence as well as having a large motion graphic studio to work on the digital effects. To this end, Davison declares the HBO title sequences made during the 2000s that employ live action settings in conjunction with a musical track are "at the cutting edge of production and digital design" (Davison 2013b, 165). This notion of the cutting edge recalls one of the major tenets of Thompson's (1996) qualification of quality television which is television that differentiates itself from the aesthetic norm as discussed in the Literature Review in Section 1.3.5. Davison argues that "title sequences enable these shows — and, by extension, HBO — to present their brand identity with intensity in a highly compressed time frame" (2013b, 7). Moreover, Patrick Clair claims in his interview with ACMI that HBO was the channel that introduced the idea that opening titles "being a mark of a really high-quality television show" pointing shows such as *The Sopranos* (Lewis 2020). The show's title sequence (1999) maps out the

visual geography of the serial's narrative through having the protagonist drive from New Jersey to New York, showcasing a wide variety of locales to highlight the show's high production values as a marker of quality. Specifically, in *The Sopranos* title sequence, Davison explains that the close match between music and visuals connects "with the brand values of the show in more holistic terms and by extension with HBO's adult programming" (2013b, 152). Davison argues that this is achieved through visualising "the selected music" in a productive manner and encourage viewer interpretation to build a strong brand identity (2013b, 152). *Six Feet Under*'s title sequence, outsourced to motion graphic design studio Digital Kitchen, uses a montage of different iconography from the show. Davison argues that *Six Feet Under* (2001) is "just as successful at presenting the show's brand identity as that for *The Sopranos*" through its complex relationship between music and image (2013b, 14). Davison identifies that HBO title sequences function as an aural-visual display that acts as a showpiece for the network and the show itself (2013b, 151).

Davison is considering HBO overall and *Six Feet Under*'s title sequence is in service to HBO's ethos of quality programming through its poetic and elaborately designed combination of iconography and rhythmic montage that stands apart from other sequences. An interview with *Art of the Title*, designer Danny Yount from Digital Kitchen highlights my claim. Yount was asked about the state of the motion graphic companies in 2002. His response is key evidence of HBO's quality branding: He argues that during the 2000's title sequences "were not great" but he states that "HBO wanted something different" (Tagudin 2012). Yount's claim indicates that HBO was attempting to further differentiate itself from its competition as a quality network within the wider context of increased competition and new technologies in the 2000s. Therefore, the elaborate aesthetics of HBO title sequences are part of the wider trend of quality branding in the TV III period.

3.5 TV IV: 2010-2019

3.5.1 Overview of TV IV

In the TV IV period, as outlined in this thesis's Introduction, the increase of streaming services and video sharing websites has led to even greater audience fragmentation with viewers using different devices and exhibition platforms. The growth of streaming services has amplified competition leading to prestige branding as a continued method of differentiating the television show based on its aesthetics, for example, Outstanding Main Title Design Winners and Nominees such as *Game of Thrones* (2011) and *True Detective* (2014). The advent and expansion of streaming services led to various branding strategies which is historically like the advent of television in the US as a competitor to cinema and the advent of cable in the 1980s. Streaming services have led to binge-watching as a dominant viewing practice in the 2010s because their platforms allow self-scheduled viewing.

3.5.2 Digital Aesthetics

The digital title sequence from the 2010s relies on computer-generated aesthetics. Digital technologies have shaped the aesthetics of the title sequence in the 2010s. Title sequences in the 2010s rely on iconography using computer-generated objects to suggest mood, tone and atmosphere indirectly and ambiguously. These digital title sequences will be discussed through the case studies in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

3.5.3 Digital Changes in the TV IV Period

In the 2010s digital software and three-dimensional software has continued to develop with features and options increasing the software's capacity to be more precise with every single

aspect of the visual composition malleable. Particularly, there have been large advancements in the following software: Maxon Cinema 4D, X-Particles, Flame, After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator and Premiere Pro (Landekic 2018). As a key example of these advanced features, this section will investigate how lighting control is precise in the 2010s. The lighting can be manipulated through changing the position, direction and intensity which allow more precise and minute control over the visual composition. For example, in Figure 3-16 in the title sequence for *Counterpart* (2017) there is a key light from the doorway that serves as form of backlighting for the silhouetted figure.



Figure 3-16: *Counterpart* Lighting³⁰

The lighting is digital and artificial making it separate from naturalistic lighting with its position, high intensity and the carefully calibrated direction which provides a visual low-key contrast to the surrounding digitally constructed assemblage. Notably, this title sequence uses Octane Render which is a graphics processing unit render engine that has a wealth of different modules and

³⁰ Captured from *American Gods*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:36. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ *Counterpart* Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

features. One of the render's key features and modules is Spectron which allows for Procedural Volumetric Lighting. As such the lighting is not just something that is worked upon during production and modified during postproduction, but it is entirely constructed as its own entity in tandem with the digitally constructed mise-en-scène. As opposed to live action shooting, computer-generated title sequences' production occurs entirely within different editing software. Manovich's discussion of editing flow is pertinent for my investigation of how digital software has affected workflow. Manovich notes that the production workflow today creates two key results: a hybrid media language and similar techniques being used across different media projects (2007, 83). In other words, there is less of a distinct difference between production processes and techniques and instead "multiple operations" can be combined into a single project or editing timeline (83). However, as per the interview that Karin Fong conducted with *Art of the Title* (Landekic 2018), there are still storyboards, the examination of the screenplay and reference photos that form *Counterpart*'s title sequence's pre-production. The reference photos serve as a source of inspiration for the title sequence's mise-en-scène. As Fong claims that by researching cold war design she was able to immerse herself before making the title sequence for *Counterpart* (Landekic 2018). Fong's comment indicates that there is still pre-production where storyboarding and photos take place before the title sequence enters production. These different phases of production further complicate the overall workflow of the title sequence in the TV IV period.

3.5.4 Discursive Construction of Prestige of my Case Studies in TV IV

The second half of this this thesis will examine four key case studies: *Game of Thrones* (2011), *True Detective* (2014), *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Counterpart* (2017). This section will establish how these television show's title sequences are discursively constructed as prestige by networks, critics and the television industry. I use three criteria for how these show's title sequences are

constructed as prestige in the TV IV era: Emmy awards, the direct upload of these title sequences onto video sharing websites by networks and over-the-top services and viewers appreciating the title sequences on YouTube. Each of the television shows have received an Emmy award for Outstanding Main Title Design. While title sequences receiving prestigious awards is not a new phenomenon in the TV IV period, social media and the motion graphic's own websites circulate and foreground their Emmy wins and nominations (see Chapters 5 and 8 for more discussion). These title sequences winning and being nominated is not an objective marker of quality but demonstrates the overall perception of the television industry's perception of these paratexts. Additionally, *Game of Thrones* (2011), *True Detective* (2014) and *Stranger Things* (2016) have been uploaded onto YouTube by their respective network or over-the top service.³¹ For example, HBO uses YouTube as a video sharing platform to showcase the dense and spectacular computer-generated world as part of the show's branding (Figure 3-17).

³¹ *Counterpart* is an exception because it has not been uploaded by Starz but by the motion graphic company, Imaginary Forces.

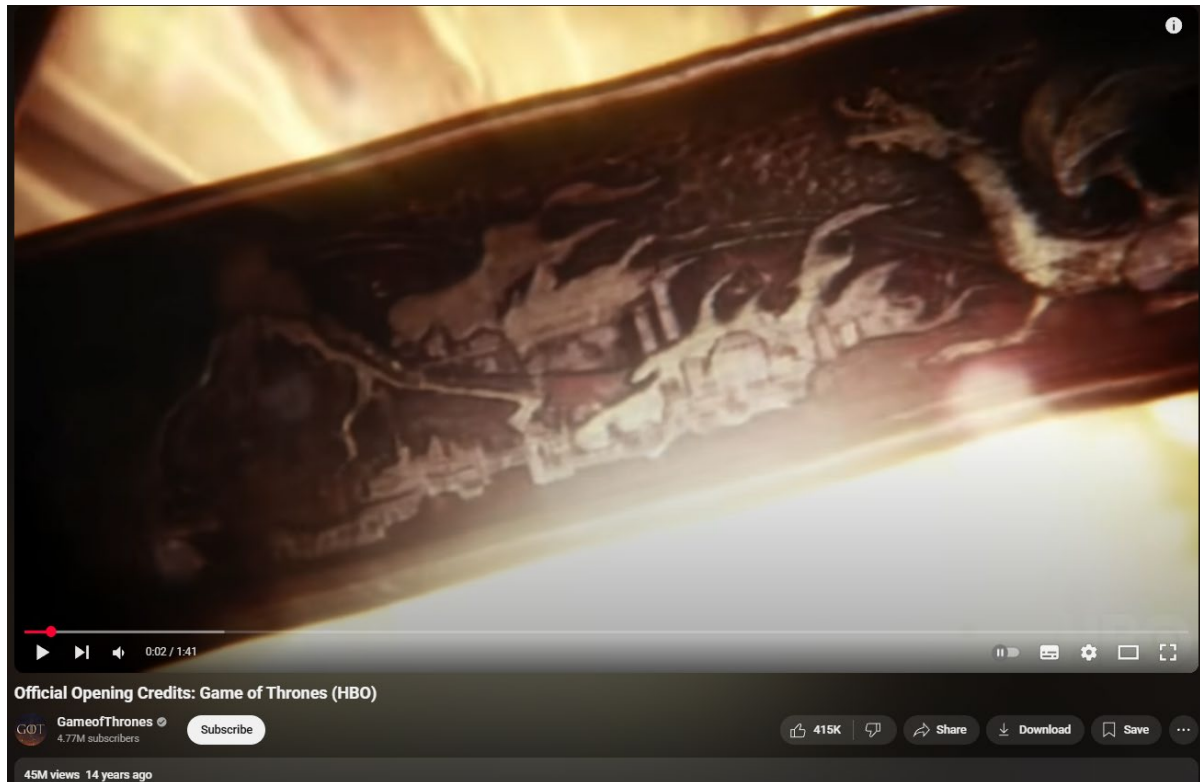


Figure 3-17: *Game of Thrones* Upload (2011)³²

The upload on YouTube also provides a discrete space where viewers can also voice their own admiration of the credits. For instance, on the *Game of Thrones* title sequence YouTube comment section User 3A states “The first time I saw this I was amazed! I repeated it 20 times. The best intro I have ever seen. The music, graphics and map are wonderful” (*Game of Thrones* 2011).³³ Viewer comments are also a part of the prestige construction of the show’s title sequence which is part of a wider trend in TV IV period of networks and over-top-services utilising social media to

³² Captured from *Game of Thrones* (Season 1 Title Sequence). David Benioff, D. B. Weiss (Showrunner). HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 17 April 2011. Timestamp: 00:00:02. YouTube (Source). Game of Thrones. Official Opening Credits: Game of Thrones (HBO). 19 April 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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³³ While this is one comment, this is not an isolated opinion and will be investigated at length in each of the case studies chapters.

target fan audiences. These case studies are emblematic of the broader trend of competitive over-the-top services distinguishing and promoting their brand as prestige in the TV IV period.

3.5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have investigated Emmy Award Winning and Nominated television title sequences to establish and contextualise the television title sequence's technological and aesthetic typicality from 1980 to 2019. My observations of Emmy Nominees and Winners served as an important foundation to discuss how the title sequence's use of technology and aesthetics speaks to larger economic and industrial shifts from different periods. In TV II I observed title sequences using both live action and adopting new digital technologies which were influenced by changing aesthetic sensibilities in response to competition from cable networks that threatened the ABC, NBC and CBS's control over the television industry. In the 1990s, digital technology becomes more prominent, which is reflected by the merging of live action and digital aesthetics in title sequences like *Star Trek Voyager*. The trend continues into the 2000s and there is an increased focus on iconography of the title sequence that I correlate to the quality branding of HBO's cycle of shows in the 2000s. In the TV IV period, the vast majority of title sequences are increasingly digitised indicating the industry's use of digital technology. The increase in computer-generated title sequences emphasises that there is a discrete aesthetic trend in the 2010s. The digital title sequence utilises its dense computer-generated visuals to create spectacle in a fractured and competitive market. While other academics have identified these historical changes, this chapter has endeavoured to contribute original knowledge by demonstrating how the title sequence has been an integral part of key historical and technological television trends. The historical contextualisation through the Emmy Award Winners and Nominees has demonstrated

that that the digital title sequence trend is a significant intensification and confluence of pre-existing sensibilities from previous television periods that will be elaborated upon by the case study chapters in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.

4 THE EMMYS AND PRODUCTION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate the history of television title sequence production and establish clearly the industry surrounding title sequence production. I will argue that television title sequence industry has developed from freelance title designers and in-house production to the large motion graphic companies that dominate the industry in the TV IV period. By investigating the historical development of key motion graphic companies this chapter's goal is to understand how varying factors led to the emergence of Elastic and Imaginary Forces and ultimately the digital title sequence. Chapter 4 uses a similar method to the last chapter since the following investigation will also use the Outstanding Main Title Design Emmy Award Winners and Nominees from the 1976 to 2019 to understand key industrial changes leading to TV IV. I chose Outstanding Main Title Design Emmy category as it is an indicator of prestige.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section (4.2, 4.3, 4.4) will first establish the categories and results. The second section (4.5, 4.6, 4.7) will analyse early historical precursors and the increase of motion graphic companies in the 1980s and 1990s. The final section (4.8) will demonstrate how companies have increasingly expanded globally. I selected the companies because they received the most amount of Emmy nominations and wins which is evidence of their prominence within the industry.

4.2 Categories

For the purposes of this chapter, I devised three discrete categories to indicate how the title design landscape has changed from 1976-2019. The categories include whether they were

affiliated with any known company, were individual freelancers or an existing member of the show's in-house production team. Motion graphic companies either work exclusively on title design or other title design along with other media such as video games, advertising and feature films. Freelance title designers are individual designers that work on a freelance basis for a multitude of companies. In-house title designers are production members that are a part of the television show's production team. Out of the 171 Outstanding Main Title Sequence Award Winners and Nominees I found the affiliation of 153 designers to the three categories: freelance, in-house and motion graphic company.

4.3 Overall Results

From around the 1980s, more motion graphic companies began to emerge, which aligns with a key industrial trend: the development of digital special effect houses in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1980s, there is a larger quantity of title sequences made by freelancers with twenty-five title sequences (48%), six title sequences that were made by companies (22%) and nine (30%) in-house title sequences out of a total forty Emmy winners and nominees (Figure 4-1). While freelance production was the dominant mode for Outstanding Main Title Sequence Award Winners in the 1980s, motion graphic companies were becoming prevalent with two major studios being Castle Bryant Johnsen and Pittard Sullivan which will be discussed in Section 4.7.1 and 4.7.2. Motion graphic companies devoted to feature film title sequences already had a long history such as Pacific Title and Art Studio, R/Greenberg Associates and Nina Saxon Film Design. In the 1990s twenty (63%) title sequences were created by companies in addition to ten (31%) that were created by in-house designers and two (6%) that were created by freelancers out of a total thirty-two Emmy Nominated and Winning designers (Figure 4-1). In the 2000s forty-five title sequence

are made by companies (98%), zero in-house (0%) and two title sequences (4%) made by freelancers out of forty-seven Emmy Winners and Nominees. These statistics demonstrate that companies were increasingly emerging in the 1990s and 2000s. In the TV IV period, forty-one title sequences are made by companies (98%) while there is only one is made by a freelance title designer (2%) out of forty-two Emmy Winners and Nominees (Figure 4-1). The data reveals a trend of title sequences made by discrete companies from 1976 to the 2010s instead of in-house or freelance production. I took the following data from Appendix 2 that contains information on title designers and whether Emmy Winning and Nominated title sequences were created by in house, freelance or by a discrete company and sorted under decades.

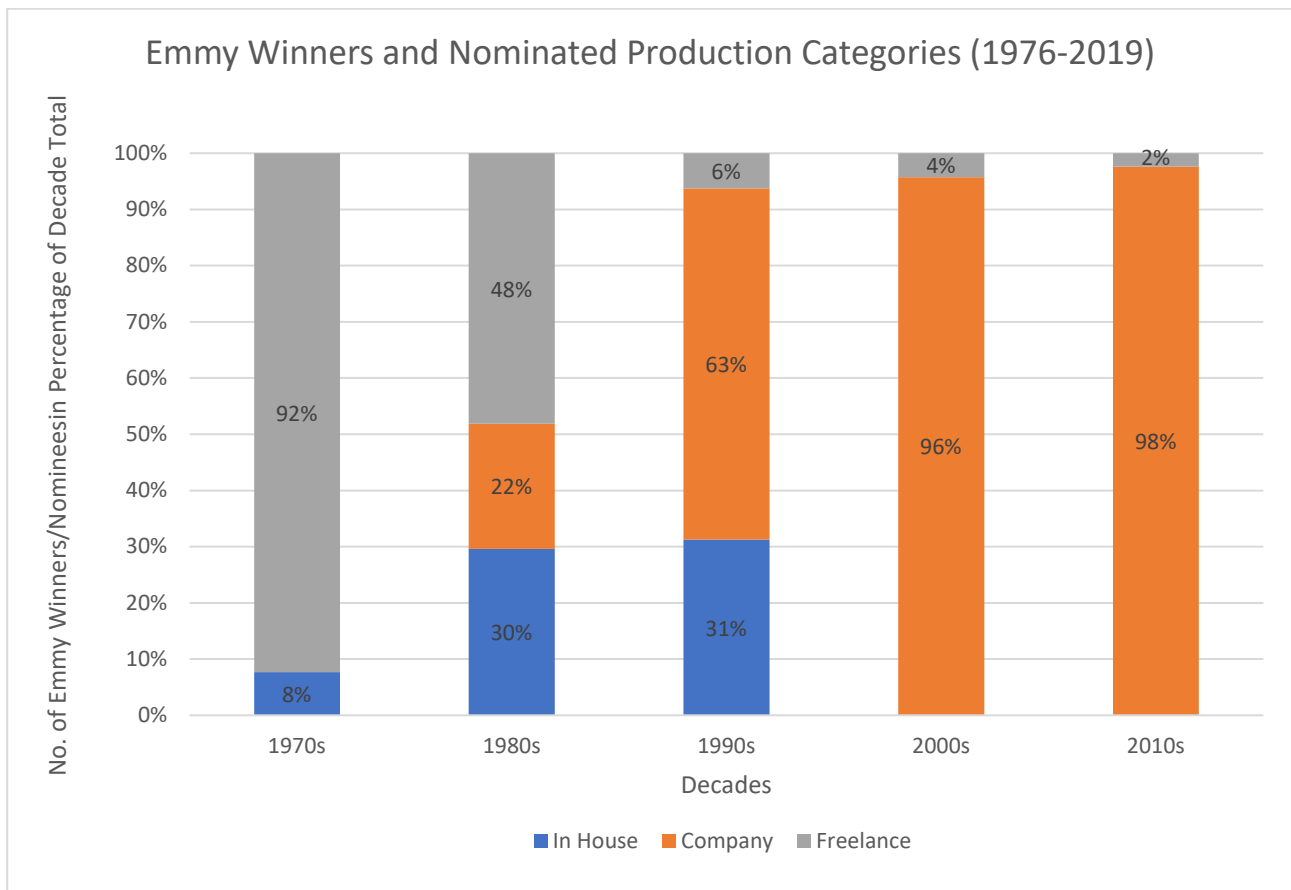


Figure 4-1: Emmy Winners and Nominated Production Categories (1976-2019)
(Appendix 2)

4.4 Company Profiles

In this section I will investigate motion graphic companies chronologically. I selected various companies as case studies to indicate the growth of production companies. I selected these companies based on the greatest number of wins and nominations for Outstanding Main Title Design Emmy Award category in each period which indicates the prominence of these companies in the industry. In the TV II period, I selected Castle Bryant Johnsen because it has five nominations and two wins, and Pittard Sullivan has two wins and thirteen nominations overall. I selected three key design companies that became quite prominent: yU+co. yU+co has six Outstanding Main Title Sequence nominations. I also selected Huge Designs and Momoco to establish how the title

sequence design was affected by broader industrial changes through expanding their business operations globally. By selecting the case studies, I will highlight the trajectory of motion graphic companies into the 2010s.

4.5 Early Historical and Industrial Examples

This section will investigate earlier examples of motion graphic companies to provide context for the rise of television motion graphic companies in 1980s and 1990s.

4.5.1 Pacific Title and Art Studio

Pacific Title and Art Studio is one of the prolific title sequence production studios of the 20th Century. Particularly, during the silent film period, it was unique and an outlier due to its title sequence production. Pacific Title and Art Studio started in 1918 in Burbank, California, making newsreel footage before adding title sequence design to their ever-increasing portfolio of work in 1924 (Harris 2000). The company was liquidated in 2009 and in 2013 was rebooted by Phil Feiner, its former CEO. *The Hollywood Reporter* notes that, “Feiner... recently acquired the Pac Title name after learning that it had become available” (Giardina 2013). Moreover, the company had a large workforce as *Variety* (1997) reports that it had 120 employees in 1997 (Karon 1997). Their portfolio later increased in the 1930s and 1940s and they became a prolific commercial business and included a variety of services for their clients (Warner Brothers, MGM, 20th Century Fox) such as “trailers, inserts, miniatures, montages, dissolves, wipe offs, special effects, optical printing, laboratory service” (Harris 2000, 75). Adam Duncan Harris discusses the origins of Pacific Art and Title in his dissertation, *Extra Credits: The History of Pacific Title and Art Studio* (2000). Harris makes an instructive point about the origins of the studio. He explains that the rise of Hollywood

coincided with the emergence of Pacific Title (2000, 53). He further elaborates that as Hollywood was solidifying its position on the east coast, smaller businesses that provided specialized services were also developing such as Pacific Title which was an ancillary business that made title sequences and optical effects for its Hollywood clientele (53).

The explanation by Harris suggests that Pacific Title and Art Studio was an early historical and industrial development to the contemporary television title sequence design studios because both share a common industrial function: ancillary services. Its existence in the 1920s largely defied the typical trend within the major Hollywood studios at the time: vertical integration. Major Hollywood companies like Warner Brothers, MGM, Fox and RKO had control over distribution and exhibition via their own cinema chains through a series of mergers and takeovers by the end of the 1920s. However, the emergence of Pacific Title and Art Studio in the 1920s as a discrete service not owned by the major studios defied this narrative. Pacific Title and Art Studio was and is an independent studio that while working for hire from the larger Hollywood studios, still has distinct autonomy over its paratextual production. While other optical houses created special effects like the Howard Anderson Company which will be discussed later in the next section (4.5.2), Pacific Title and Art Studio made title sequences which was atypical. There are historical conditions that allowed Pacific Title and Art to emerge under the studio system and its basic functionality was as an ancillary service to a major client. Elastic and Imaginary Forces are ancillary services that offer a range of benefits for its clients: title sequences, trailers, optical inserts and special effects. Consequently, the notion of media convergence in title sequences is not a new industrial shift but has its origins partly in the Pacific Title and Art Studio in the 1920s.

4.5.2 Howard Anderson Company

Pacific Art and Title Design is not the only large special effects studio that worked on title sequences from this period. The Howard Anderson Company was originally founded in 1927 and closed its doors in 2004 (Barnes 2015). The company is based in North Hollywood California and was an early visual effects studio that worked on a plethora of television title sequences in the 1950s, including *The Twilight Zone* (Klynn 1959) and completed the effects for the original *Star Trek* series (Dorney 1966). The company is owned by the Anderson family and has various of its family members have worked at the company. As *Variety* reports that four generations have now worked in the film industry (Maynard 2004). For example, the company was founded by Howard A. Anderson and his sons, Howard Anderson Jr and Darrel A Anderson ran the company from 1954. Howard A. Anderson III eventually took over the operation in the 1990s. Particularly notable television title sequences that the studio worked on in collaboration with other title designers include *The Andy Griffith Show* (Johnson 1960), *The Addams Family* (Johnson 1964), *Mission Impossible* (Citron 1966), *The Brady Bunch* (Unknown 1969) and *Cheers* (Bryant 1984) (Foundation INTERVIEWS 2012). Given its large range of credits and its multifaceted output of title sequence and visual effects for the shows themselves, the company is an early atypical historical development to Elastic and Imaginary Forces. While many title sequences in the TV II period were created in-house or freelance, some Emmy Award Winning shows' titles were outsourced to the Howard Anderson or Pacific Art and Title (see the table in Appendix 2 in the 1980s section). The emergence of Howard Anderson Company aligns with the broader trend of the increase of animation companies like UPA and Hanna-Barbera that are animators for CBS in the television industry and are historical developments that facilitate the needs and demands of motion graphics in the TV I period. For example, Hanna-Barbera worked on animated television shows like *The Yogi*

Bear Show (1961) and the television title sequences for *I Love Lucy* (1951) (Browsh 2022). These examples emphasise early points of convergence in the television industry across different production studios that become increasingly blurred throughout the subsequent television periods.

4.6 The Increase of Motion Graphic Companies in TV II

I identify broader industrial factors for the rise of larger motion graphic companies in the TV II period. While a broader industrial trend in the 1980s and 1990s is the emergence of large media conglomerates, many motion graphic companies remained autonomous as discrete companies. Instead, the increase of motion graphic companies correlates with the larger adoption of visual effects and digital technology in Hollywood and the television industry in the 1980s and 1990s. There is already a wide amount of literature on the growth of the visual effects industry in the 1980s and 1990s (Miller et al 2005; Rantanen 2005; Mayer et al 2009, Curtin 2015). One source is Michael Curtin and John Vanderhoef's article on global television that discusses how Hollywood was expanding in the 1990s (2015, 219-239). They describe that as businesses grew so did the workforce that consisted of "young white males in their twenties" and that they were working on the cutting edge of media projects (2015, 219-239). For example, in the case of the feature film *Forrest Gump* (1994), the film's opening sequence was a result of the collaboration between Nina Saxon Film Design who worked with the film's production team and Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects company that worked on the sequence. In an interview, Saxon explains that the floating feather in the film's opening sequence had been designed by ILM (Industrial Light and Magic) in San Francisco (Asbury 2019).

The collaboration between Nina Saxon Design and ILM highlights how title production was no longer a separate process but worked in tandem with different visual effect companies. Following the wider trend of visual effect companies in Hollywood in the 1980s and 1990s, the title design industry became cluttered and competitive in the TV II period with one particular company being R/GA.

4.6.1 R/GA's Connection to Imaginary Forces

A key motion graphic design studio is R/Greenberg Associates (R/GA) founded in 1977 by Richard Greenberg. The development of R/GA is an important historical development in the TV IV period as the west coast division of its company eventually become Imaginary Forces in 1996. In a *Variety* article on the opening of Imaginary Forces states that Imaginary Forces' "expertise has always been in the entertainment field... but we understand and have demonstrated that the same conceptual design and execution that have proven so successful in entertainment apply to advertising and the world of new media" (Weiner 1996). A description from *Art of the Title* concurs with the media convergent status of R/GA by explaining that "R/GA's organization is unique in that it has restructured its business model every nine years – from a computer-assisted film-making company to a digital studio to an interactive advertising agency, and, presently, to an advertising agency with a digital focus" (R/Greenberg Associates *Art of the Title*). The transformation and evolution of the company indicates the wider trend toward the development and emergence of companies in the TV II and TV III periods due to the greater demand for media convergent companies that fulfill a range of industrial needs for its clients.

4.6.2 R/GA and High Concept Marketing

R/GA is an important production studio to investigate because of how the increase of visual effects companies was changing the aesthetics of titles through high concept marketing design. For example, R/GA's campaigns for Steve Frankfurt's advertising agency, Young and Rubicam Advertising, designed the title sequence and the *Superman* (1978) teaser trailer in the film's advertising campaign (Figure 4-2). R/GA worked directly on both the title design and teaser trailer, demonstrating the convergence between commercial advertising and title sequence design which is significant due to the changing status of motion graphic companies becoming more integrated and a prominent part of a film's and television show's production. The *Superman* trailer functions as an experiment to test how the streaking effect in the title sequence proper was going to operate. Richard Greenberg in an interview with *Art of the Title* elucidates that the *Superman* typology was developed for advertising materials and then refined for the title (Landekic 2013).

R/GA's follow up title sequence endeavours were *Alien* (Greenberg 1979) and *Altered States* (Greenberg 1980). Of note is *Alien*'s teaser trailer. Similar to *Superman*, the graphic font (Helvetica black) is used in the teaser trailer and for *Alien*'s titles. During the logo period, there was to some extent an effort by networks and studios to match the graphics used in the marketing campaign with the titles. As Greenberg points out that in the late 1970s and early 1980s studios attempted to have the graphics of both the advertising and titles be cohesive (Landekic 2013). The use of *Alien*'s font and graphics in both commercial and title design emphasises that the title sequence is a paratextual object that converges and aligns itself closely with commercial advertising. Justin Wyatt's book *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* relates to the proximity of commercial and title design through unified graphics (1994). Wyatt defines high concept as a "form of narrative which is highly marketable" (1994, 12). Wyatt elaborates that to market these

films the promotional campaign will typically use striking graphic print and merchandise (Wyatt 1994, 19). Wyatt's comment illustrates that commerce is the dominant principle behind a unified approach to the positioning of paratext and text. Wyatt's high concept will be further investigated in Chapter 9 on *Stranger Things* (2016).

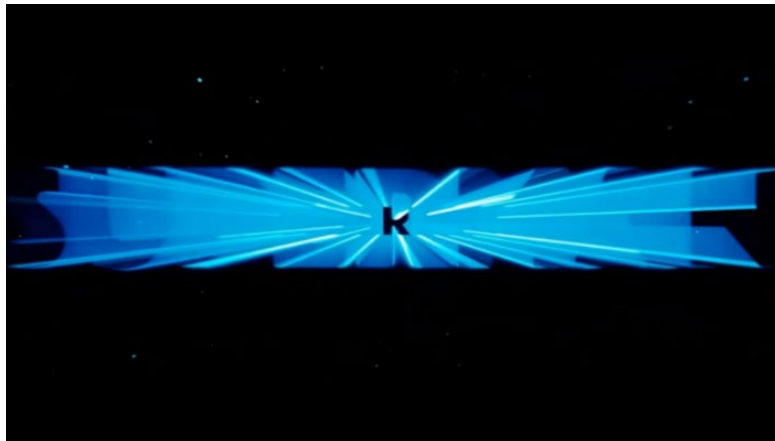


Figure 4-2: *Superman* (1978)³⁴

³⁴ Captured from *Superman*. Richard Donner (director). Warner Brothers. Release Date: 10 Dec 1978. Timestamp: 00:01:43. YouTube (Source). Damien MB. Superman [1978] - Opening Titles/Credits Sequence (720p). 29 Sep 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rk1aQx9hTaE>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 4-3: *Alien* Trailer (1979)³⁵



Figure 4-4: *Alien* Title Sequence (1979)³⁶

The high concept trend in the 1980s and 1990s that Wyatt identifies is also reflected by the increasing emergence of multidisciplinary companies that work across advertising and title design. One such example of a multidisciplinary company that was particularly prolific and specialised in television title sequence design in the 1980s and 1990s is Castle Bryant Johnsen.

³⁵ Captured from *Alien* Trailer. Timestamp: 00:01:55. YouTube (Source). HitmanTom. *Alien* (1979) Trailer. 23 Apr 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjLamj-b0I8>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

³⁶ Captured from *Alien*. Ridley Scott (director). 20th Century Fox. Release Date: 25 May 1979. Timestamp: 00:01:43. YouTube (Source). Damien MB. *Superman* [1978] - Opening Titles/Credits Sequence (720p). 29 Sep 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rk1aQx9hTaE>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

4.7 Television Emmy Award Winning Title Designers

4.7.1 Castle Bryant Johnsen

The Castle Bryant Johnsen media design company (1981 - present) has created title sequences for Hollywood studios and television networks ever since its breakthrough for the television show *Cheers* (1982). The company was founded by Bruce Bryant, Carol Johnsen and James Castle and consisted of three employees and is based in Vancouver in Washington, United States. Castle Bryant Johnsen has won seven Emmy Awards for the category Outstanding Achievement in Motion Design and some of its popular television title sequences include *Cheers* (Bryant 1982), *Roseanne* (Bryant 1988), *Frasier* (Bryant 1993), *The X-Files* (Bryant 1993), *Boy Meets World* (Bryant 1993), *Suddenly Susan* (Bryant 1996) (Byant/Johnsen Media Design) and *Becker* (Bryant 1998). Its clients include major Hollywood studios like Sony, Disney, Paramount, Columbia and Universal, as well as large US television networks like NBC and CBS. Its website states, “In the arena of broadcast graphic design Bryant/Johnsen has distinguished itself by producing top notch work for virtually every major Hollywood studio” (Bryant/Johnsen Media Design). The tag line characterises Castle Bryant Johnsen as a distinct boutique title design company with a prestige pedigree. Additionally, Castle Bryant Johnsen has worked on websites and logos for small businesses as well as posters, brochures and advertising. Importantly, Castle Bryant Johnsen offers its clients a range of digital options like CGI and cel animation and on set graphics. As such Castle Bryant Johnsen is part of a wider historical development leading to the TV IV period given that they not only work on title design but a range of other media and digital options.

In the 1990s television title designers received more industry recognition. In an interview with the *New York Times* in 1992 Bruce Bryant one of the co-founders of Castle Bryant Johnsen claims,

“What we are... are film makers. It’s just that we make very little films” (Meisler 1992). The notion that Bruce Bryant was making discrete small films and the fact a title designer was being interviewed by the *New York Times*, is further evidence of the rising visibility and profile of the television title sequence and its designers. Moreover, in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, James Castle notes that the price of creating a title sequence design had increased. He asserts that he has prospective clientele that want to do a title design for 50,000 US dollars and that ten years ago this would not happen (*Chicago Tribune* 1991). The *Chicago Tribune* comments that titles were priced at 40,000 to 60,000 in 1991 (1991). The increase in price explains how title design was becoming a more prominent part of television production in the TV II period. The example of Castle Bryant Johnsen highlights how motion graphic companies offered a large range of services to their clientele similar to Elastic and Imaginary Forces.

4.7.2 Pittard Sullivan

The size of motion graphic companies was growing during the 1980s, and one example is Pittard Sullivan. Pittard Sullivan was a major title sequence design company specialising in television title sequences from 1986 to 2001, having over fifty-five employees across Los Angeles, New York, London, Munich and Hong Kong just before they closed its doors in 2001 (Graser 2001). Billy Pittard and Ed Sullivan formed Pittard Sullivan in a Hollywood production house in 1986. Pittard and Sullivan offered a range of services like logos, graphics, and advertising campaigns like the Welcome Home campaign for CBS (Dretzka 1997). They received recognition from the Emmys by winning the Outstanding Main Title Design in 1995 for *ER*’s title sequence and *The Wonderful World of Disney*’s title sequence in 1997. In 1998 Pittard Sullivan expanded its company by creating divisions to provide new services. For example, *Variety* reports that “Billy Pittard and Ed Sullivan have formed Pittard Sullivan Prods., a division of Pittard Sullivan specializing in live-action

production for advertisements, TV network-identity packages and other television and film projects” (Muttalib 1998). This example demonstrates that Pittard Sullivan grew in the 1990s and specialised in various services. The company is another example of the growth of motion graphic companies in the 1980s leading to the contemporary landscape of motion graphic design.

Like Castle Bryant Johnsen, they worked on a range of television title sequences for multiple television networks and Hollywood studios such as ABC, NBC and CBS. Moreover, they worked on graphics packages for Showtime, Fox and CBS, designing their brand identities (Graser 2001).

Pittard and Sullivan are important because of the larger size of its workforce than Castle Bryant Johnsen, Saxon-Ross, Klasky-Csupo and Wayne Fitzgerald Film Design across a multitude of offices around the world. For example, Castle Bryant Johnsen has only three employees while *Variety* reports that Pittard Sullivan “at one time hired 200 people” (Graser 2001). Additionally, *The Chicago Tribune* in an interview with Castle Bryant Johnsen notes that in 1991 there is only a small number of title designers with there being no more than fifty estimated title designers (1991).

Castle Bryant Johnsen and Pittard Sullivan, in addition to the companies that worked on title design such as Saxon Ross (1988-1992) and Klasky-Csupo (1982-2008) increased title design competition in the 1980s and 1990s. As a result of competition Pittard Sullivan closed its doors in 2001 (Graser 2001). *Variety* reports that “smaller cheaper competitors” were taking up all of the projects from Pittard and Sullivan (Graser 2001). Overall, this section has argued that the studios that emerged in the 1980s are key precursors to the large motion graphic companies in the TV IV period.

4.8 Global Workforce

Motion graphic companies having workforces globally has enabled different branding opportunities and grown their businesses. Similar to the literature on visual effects, academics both in film and television have discussed how motion graphic companies have expanded globally (Goldsmith 2005; Kraidy 2005; Christopherson 2006; Baltruschat 2010). For instance, Doris Baltruschat in her book *Global Media Ecologies: Networked Production In Film and Television* explains how “Media producers, broadcasters, digital content developers and government agencies” are connected via their joint collaborations on film and television projects (2010, 1). Furthermore, Amanda Lotz in the book *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* argues that given the increasingly global state of production a researcher must understand international sales and distribution (Mayer 2009, 27). The globalised nature of the workforce with studio offices in different regions has transformed how motion graphic companies have positioned themselves in the 2010s. Elastic and Imaginary Forces are based predominately in the US but work in tandem with other designers and production studios when creating their title sequence designs. For example, *Counterpart’s* title sequence was designed for Imaginary Forces partly by a motion designer based in Lisbon, Portugal named Felipe Carvalho. Additionally, *The Expanse’s* title sequence is designed by Breeder in Brisbane, Australia and the lead creative director is Joyce Ho who is primarily based in Brooklyn, New York. Another example of the global trend in title design and motion graphics is *True Detective’s* title sequence. The title sequence was designed by Elastic in California, while Studio Breeder in Brisbane worked to support Elastic with additional visual effects. These companies have different workflows and are in varying time zones, so a project can be worked on continually over a 24-hour timespan. The *True Detective* example partially indicates a trend toward a global shared production. Working continually in motion graphic design is not

dissimilar from the larger trend within Hollywood where VFX studios will work long hours across various postproduction facilities creating a globalised workflow. In an interview with visual effects artist Hannes Ricklefs, author Hye Jean Chung notes that globalised workforce creates a “unified global talent pool” and that each facility is connected globally through this workforce (Chung 2011, 2). Therefore, title design is part of this broader trend toward globalised workflow and transformed how title designers work on projects for their clientele. Due to these global changes, motion graphic companies have grown their businesses and branded themselves to clientele internationally. The next section will analyse three examples of motion graphic companies, yU+co, Momoco and Huge Designs, that underscore how production has become more globalised in the 1990s and 2000s and how global production has affected branding.

4.8.1 yU+co

yU+co is a notable title sequence company being established in 1998 and is still active at the time of writing. yU+co was founded by CEO Garson Yu and its main headquarters is in Los Angeles, United States. The company is quite large with 104 employees at the time of writing according to LinkedIn (“yU+co” n.d.). It has expanded its services beyond title design and engages in project management, digital content design, project management, CG experiences, VR/AR and many more. It has worked for a multitude of clientele including high profile television networks such as HBO, MTV, AMC and CBS and film studios such as Disney, Universal and MGM. Additionally, its clientele includes video game companies such as Ubisoft, Capcom and Sony. Moreover, it has produced a plethora of television, feature film title sequences and video game designs. Some of the television opening credits that yU+co has created include *The Walking Dead* (2010) seasons three and five, *The Leftovers* (2014) season one and feature film title sequences *Mission Impossible 2* (2000), *300* (2006) and *The Lion King* (2019) (Vimeo “yU+co” n.d.). It has garnered

Emmy nominations for television title sequences such as *Olive Kitteridge* (2014) and *Silicon Valley* (2014). yU+co has branched out into other commercial avenues: video game cinematics (*Resident Evil 5*, 2009), and trailers for video games (*Call of Juarez: The Cartel*, 2011 and *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*, 2012). yU+co is comparable to Elastic and Imaginary Forces companies because it has a large portfolio of advertisements, branding and title sequence design work with over 190 different works.

yU+co has a large catalogue of title sequences and has expanded internationally. The title sequence is an important component of how television is produced as part of the larger TV III trend of global production. Design studios have increased their global presence in the TV III and IV periods. For instance, yU+co in 2006 expanded its offices from Hollywood to Hong Kong and Shanghai. yU+co on its LinkedIn page underscores its global presence and links it to its boutique status. yU+co states, "With offices in Hollywood, Hong Kong and Shanghai, yU+co continues to offer boutique style creative and production services" (LinkedIn "yU+co" n.d.). The scope of yU+co production contributes to cultivating its own brand as well as being part of the broader trend toward global television production.

4.8.2 Momoco

Title sequence design does not occur entirely within the United States. Momoco is based in London and has worked in title sequence design since it was founded in 1999 for television, feature films, advertisements and network branding. It is comparatively smaller compared to the other design studios with two employees according to LinkedIn ("Momoco" n.d.). The key individuals who work across different departments include but are not limited to Nic Benns and Miki Kato, who are typically the lead designers on each new motion graphic design project for

Momoco. Its first project was in 2002, a title sequence for Channel Four's documentary miniseries *Shackleton* and the feature film for Paramount, *The Hours*, that same year. In the early 2000s, Momoco worked on a mix of UK and US productions and its title sequence projects remained sparse despite popular feature films such as *Johnny English* (2003), *Love Actually* (2003), *Alien vs Predator* (2004) and *Laws of Attraction* (2004) (Vimeo "Momoco Film Titles" n.d.). Notably in 2010, Nic Bennis directed and produced one of its key title sequences for a long running drama serial for the BBC, *Luther*, a UK production, and produced *Strike Back* for HBO and Cinemax. Having projects for US networks like HBO, Momoco has established its reputation outside of the United Kingdom (Vimeo "Momoco Film Titles" n.d.). Like Imaginary Forces and Elastic, Momoco has received prestigious awards. The Emmy Awards are not the only award shows for title sequence design work. The BAFTA and RTS Design (Royal Television Society Craft and Design Award) award title sequence design work. For example, Momoco won at RTS best title design for *Hannibal* (Nic Bennis 2013), *Humans* (Nic Bennis 2015) and won best title design at the BAFTAs in 2016 for *Fortitude* (Nic Bennis). In the "about section" on its website positions Momoco's prestige awards and global output to a worldwide clientele. The biography is as follows:

MOMOCO is an EMMY and BAFTA winning creative studio. The firm has produced film design, branding, commercials and live-action for 20 years. Well known worldwide for its main titles, Momoco has collaborated on over 100 sequences with directors such as Guy Ritchie, Richard Curtis, Ridley Scott, Gurinder Chadha, Mira Nair and Andy Serkis (Momoco).

This biography not only positions Momoco as prestigious through its Emmy and Bafta awards but emphasises its global and world-wide reach through listing international filmmakers.

4.8.3 Huge Designs

As a point of contrast Huge Designs has worked on international title sequence productions but foregrounds its national and local production through its branding. At the time of writing, it has three employees according to LinkedIn (“Huge Designs” LinkedIn n.d.). Huge Designs is a motion graphic design studio based in London and it has designed over 300 title sequences since it was founded in 1993. Hugo Moss formed the design studio and has since worked on a myriad of television title sequence projects such as *Any Human Heart* (2010), *Da Vinci’s Demons* (2013) and *The Son* (2017). The key lead designers include owner Hugo Moss, Paul McDonnell and Tasmin McGee (Vimeo Momoco “Film Titles” n.d.). Moreover, Huge Designs won *Any Human Heart* (Paul McDonnell) for RTS in 2011 and it also won the Royal Television Society Programme Awards for titles for *Fearless* (Hugo Moss) in 2017 and, as well as receiving six nominations between 2010–2020 for RTS, and BAFTA. In 2013 Huge Designs created an Emmy Award Winning title design by Hugo Moss, Tasmin Lee and Paul McDonnell for the television show *Da Vinci’s Demons*. As exemplified by the BAFTAs and the Royal Television Society awards, different regions have their own local industry awards in which they receive recognition. While Huge Designs utilises these prestigious wins and nominations as part of its branding, unlike Momoco, Huge Designs markets itself as local production studio. The Huge Designs LinkedIn page states that they “... are a multiple award-winning titles company based in London” (“Huge Designs” LinkedIn n.d.). The claim is evidence that Huge Designs have positioned themselves as a prestige company through mentioning awards. Huge Designs also foregrounds its Emmy wins and nominations through

labelling its title sequences with its RTS and BAFTA nominations (Figure 4-5).

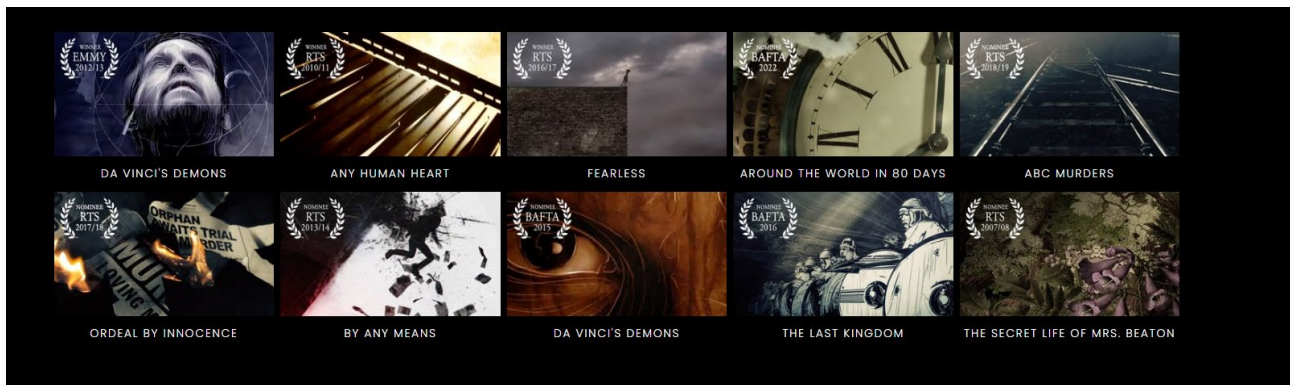


Figure 4-5: Huge Designs Website³⁷

However, unlike Momoco, Huge Designs foreground its UK nationality by mentioning “London” on their website. Therefore, explicitly referring to London indicates that Huge Designs has taken a different approach to Momoco. Huge Designs has branded its content as local as opposed to Momoco’s emphasised global output. Additionally, Huge Designs’ clients are not streaming or cable networks but are typically broadcast networks in the United Kingdom such as ITV, Channel Four and the BBC (Vimeo “Huge” n.d.). The difference between the two studios underlines how the broader global shift to international production has dramatically changed how different motion graphic studios brand themselves due to a cluttered and increasingly competitive visual effects industry. The globalised nature of television is a factor in the 2010s that has influenced how motion graphic companies branded themselves and their growth in different regions.

4.8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the context and development of motion graphic design studios that broadly affected television title sequence history. The chapter was not intended to be an

³⁷ “Huge Designs”, Accessed 18/03/2024 <https://www.hugedesigns.com/>. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

exhaustive account of every title sequence design studio. Instead, the chapter examined key motion graphic companies to better contextualise and understand the transition from freelance, and in-house production to larger motion graphic design companies. The key historical development that informs the industrial dimensions of Imaginary Forces and Elastic as boutique companies is the growth of large motion graphic companies that offer a range of services across different media. Globalisation has directly affected the title sequence industry's workforce and contributed to how companies were branding themselves. The next chapter will investigate these industrial trends in the TV IV period by examining two major motion graphic companies of the 2010s: Imaginary Forces and Elastic.

5 ELASTIC AND IMAGINARY FORCES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter's focus is the two US title design studios that were particularly prominent in the 2010s, Imaginary Forces and Elastic. The goal of this chapter is to establish how Imaginary Forces and Elastic are part of the digital title sequence trend. This chapter investigates how Imaginary Forces and Elastic have contributed to the television industry and created prestige connotations through its branding identity, key designers and signature projects.

The first section (5.2, 5.3, 5.4) will discuss Imaginary Forces and Elastic as dominant title design studios in the 2010s. The second section (5.5) will identify key trends from both studios to demonstrate how these two motion graphic companies have contributed to the digital title sequence. The final section (5.6) will investigate how these motion graphic companies position themselves as boutique which contribute to the prestige branding of their title sequences. Overall, this chapter will reveal how motion graphic design companies are an integral part of the television industry and prestige branding in an increasingly competitive television industrial environment.

The information in this chapter is drawn from three key sources: the official Vimeo channels of the production companies, *Art of the Title* and industry trade papers. The specific years of Elastic's and Imaginary Force's title sequences were located through its respective Vimeo channels (Appendix 3). I sourced the details of the production roles in each company and which designers can be attributed to different title designs through production information on Vimeo, with further details confirmed by using *Art of the Title* as well as news articles. My findings, including whether these works were title sequences, advertisements or trailers, are all in Appendix 3.

5.2 Dominant Television Title Sequence Design Studios

This chapter examines how motion graphic companies have contributed to branding itself, the show and the network. To achieve this goal, I analyse the most dominant and popular design studios. I have devised two criteria to determine which motion graphic companies have been particularly dominant in terms of their output and industry recognition in the 2010s. The first criteria is Emmy wins and nominations to establish how motion graphic companies have received prestigious acclaim. In this respect, Imaginary Forces, Elastic, Momoco, Huge Designs, YU+Co, Prologue Films, Shynola and Method Design have all won or been nominated for Emmys. The second criteria is the quantity of television title sequences to demonstrate which title sequence design studio has the most dominant output.

5.2.1 Popular Discourse (Emmy Winners/ Nominations)

Table 3: Emmy Winners 2010-2019³⁸

Elastic	Imaginary Forces	Momoco	Huge Designs	Curious Pictures
<i>Game of Thrones</i> x2 (2011, 2019)	<i>Stranger Things</i> (2016)	<i>Great Expectations</i> (2011)	<i>Da Vinci's Demons</i> (2013)	<i>Bored to Death</i> (2009)
<i>The Man in The High Castle</i> (2015)	<i>American Gods</i> (2017)			
<i>True Detective</i> (2014)	<i>Manhattan</i> (2014)			

³⁸ "Television Academy. Award Nominees and Winners". <https://www.emmys.com/awards/nominees-winners/2022/outstanding-main-title-design>. Accessed 05/06/2021.

Table 4: Emmy Nominations 2010-2019³⁹

Elastic	Imaginary Forces	Momoco	Huge Designs	YU+CO	Prologue Films	Shynola	Method Design
13	10	1	1	2	6	1	1

In the 2010s Elastic had four wins, and Imaginary Forces had three wins in contrast to only one win each for Momoco, Huge Designs and Curious Pictures. For nominations, Elastic and Imaginary Forces have thirteen and ten respectively in comparison to the other production companies only having one or two except for Prologue Films having six. Overall, Elastic and Imaginary Forces have dominated at the Emmys. As outlined in the Introduction, my focus is on the US motion graphic design studios instead of other regions. Huge Designs and Momoco are UK design studios and so fall outside this thesis's US focus.

³⁹ Television Academy. Award Nominees and Winners". <https://www.emmys.com/awards/nominees-winners/2022/outstanding-main-title-design>. Accessed 05/06/2021.

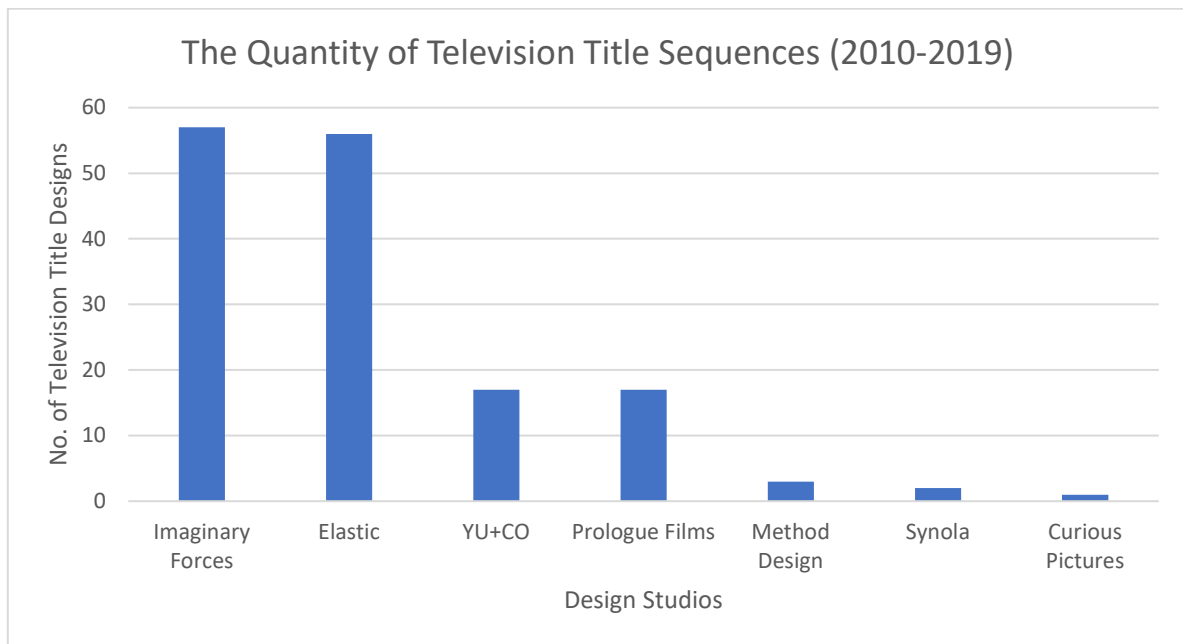


Figure 5-1: The Quantity of Television Title Sequences (2010-2019) ⁴⁰

Out of the major title sequence design studios that have won or been nominated at the Emmys for Outstanding Main Title Design, Imaginary Forces and Elastic have the largest amount of title sequences with fifty-six and fifty-seven respectively. While Prologue Films and yU+Co are both prolific design studios, they have a limited selection of television title sequences in the 2010s. Prologue Films and yU+Co have seventeen title sequences within their larger portfolio of feature film and video game title sequences and so the smaller quantity of television title sequences makes it less ideal to investigate as a focus in this dissertation despite Prologue’s six Emmy nominations in the 2010s for Outstanding Main Title Design.

⁴⁰ “Elastic”, *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/elastic>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “Momoco”. *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/momoco>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “Huge Designs”. *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/huge>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “Imaginary Forces”. *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/imaginaryforces>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “Prologue Films”. *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/prologuefilms>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “YU+CO”. *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/yuandcompany>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “Method Design”. *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/methodcreative>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “Shynola. Projects”. <https://www.shynola.com/shynola-past-work>. Accessed 31/04/2021.
 “With Curious Pictures (Sorted by Popularity Ascending)”, *IMDB*, <https://www.shynola.com/shynola-past-work>. Accessed 31/04/2021.

Using two criteria, the number of Emmy wins (four for both Imaginary Forces and Elastic) and the quantity of title sequences produced (fifty-seven for Imaginary Forces and fifty-six for Elastic), this section has established why I chose Elastic and Imaginary Forces to provide the greatest clarity on the dominant source of title sequence production and aesthetics in the 2010s.

5.3 Imaginary Forces

Imaginary Forces is an Emmy Award Winning motion graphic design studio tailored toward title sequence and advertisement design. It was founded in 1996 with offices located in New York and Los Angeles California. At the time of writing, it is a large company with ninety-five employees according to LinkedIn (LinkedIn “Imaginary Forces” n.d.). Imaginary Forces began originally from the West Coast division of R/GA and branched off in 1996 to become its own discrete independent company as discussed in Chapter 4 in Section 4.6.1. Furthermore, Imaginary Forces is a discrete company and offers a wealth of services like title sequences, branding, advertisements, trailers and promos and digital graphics.⁴¹ There are different departments that work upon various aspects of Imaginary Forces’ varied catalogue. For example, Leanne Dare and Ahmet Ahmet are the lead art directors for *Amanda Knox* (2016) and work was broken up into different departments (Vimeo “Imaginary Forces” n.d.). The main title photography was undertaken by Ernesto Lomeli and Kevin Anderson, the editing by Lauren Dellara, the compositing by Ekin Akalin and the animation by Jeffrey Jeong, Tony Kandalaft, Peter Murphy and Sam Sparks.

Imaginary Forces has designed prestigious title sequences such as 2008 Emmy winner *Mad Men* and the PBS program *Masterpiece Theatre’s American Collection* (2001 Emmy winner) (Vimeo

⁴¹ To clarify both Imaginary Forces and Elastic and not part of larger media conglomerates.

“Imaginary Forces” n.d.). Across its twenty-four-year history they have produced well over 300 projects for varying clients, including title sequence designs for feature films and television, advertisements, branding, logos, visual effects and trailers. During 2010 alone they produced fourteen different projects including key Emmy-nominated television title sequences like *Human Target* (Fong 2010) and *The Pacific* (Fuller 2010). Additionally, *Manhattan* (2014), *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Counterpart* (2017) have all won Emmy Awards for Outstanding Main Title Design. For example, on its website the *Counterpart* page foregrounds its Emmy Award Winner status by stating “The main title was recognised by the Television Academy at the 2018 Creative Arts Emmy Awards for Outstanding Main Title Design” (Imaginary Forces n.d.). The Emmy Awards ceremonies are an important part of the prestige boutique positioning of Imaginary Force’s branding identity.



Figure 5-2 Screenshot of Imaginary Forces Website⁴²

5.4 Elastic

Elastic is an Emmy Award Winning motion graphic design studio that was founded in 2008 and based in Santa Monica, California. Elastic boasts a large portfolio of advertisements, special effects and main title sequence design for television, feature films and video games. After Elastic was founded in 2008 by Angus Wall, its first title sequence was *Game of Thrones* in 2011. At the time of writing, it has fifty-five employees according to LinkedIn (LinkedIn "Elastic" n.d.). However, the company's history did not start with *Game of Thrones*. Wall was the editor for Kyle Cooper's seminal *Se7en* (1995) and in the early 2000s worked on the title sequences for two serialised drama television shows, *Carnivale* (2003) and *Deadwood* (2004) for A52.

Elastic frequently produces works in collaboration with its main partner companies and production studios which are all located within the same building: A52 (animation and visual effects), Rock Paper Scissors (editorial), Primary (colour, post processing), Jax (movie teasers) and Indestructible

⁴² Imaginary Forces "American Gods", <https://imaginaryforces.com/project/American-Gods>. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

(music supervision) (MakeMake Entertainment). The companies fall under the business collective MakeMake Entertainment with each company focusing on a different aspect of production. The business structure provides a pool of designers that work across distinct aspects of advertisements, trailers and television and film work. The business structure demonstrates two facets of contemporary television production: media convergence and versatile companies. The first facet indicates how businesses have become diverse in terms of their output. MakeMake has various companies that work on different mediums such as film, television and advertisements. The media convergence highlights the lines between production on different media objects have become blurred. The business structure is an intensification and direct historical development from the emergence of discrete motion design companies as discussed throughout Chapter 4. The second facet is the versatility of MakeMake Entertainment's services. For example, MakeMake Entertainment positions its brand and reputation as a large visual effects company that can cater to multiple various clients from different regions and industries. Networks have shifted their branding strategies to cater to different audience demographics, similar to how motion graphic companies specialise in different aspects of post-production and visual effects.

5.5 Elastic and Imaginary Forces Data

This section will first establish the data from Imaginary Forces and Elastic's output to identify key trends that have influenced the development of the digital title sequence.

5.5.1 Elastic and Imaginary Forces' Output Data (2010-2019)

I have identified several key patterns from Elastic and Imaginary Forces' projects created between 2010-2019. Overall, the quantity of advertisements far outweighs feature film, television and

video game titles. In total between 2010 and 2019 Imaginary Forces produced 217 advertisements, fifty-seven television title sequences, sixteen feature film title sequences and three video game title sequences. Elastic made 254 advertisements, fifty-six television title sequences, twenty-one video game advertisements or television title sequences and two feature film title sequences (Figures 5-4, 5-5).

5.5.2 2010-2014

I identify several patterns between 2010 to 2014. In 2013 Imaginary Forces produced fewer title designs than other projects. In that year Imaginary Forces only made three title sequences out of forty-three projects: *Hit the Floor* and *Pacific Rim* end titles and opening titles. The rest were advertising designs such as Dan Gregoras and Ronnie Koff's *IBM Healthcare* campaign and the advertisements projects for the video game *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* (Vimeo "Imaginary Forces" n.d.). Furthermore, advertising is an important component of Elastic's foray into main title sequence design in the 2010s because it was preceded by a plethora of advertising campaigns between 2008 and 2011 helmed by Andy Hall and Patrick Murphy (*Honda Accord Crosstour Snow Trip* 2010, *Spider* for Nikelab.com 2010) (Elastic "Elastic" n.d.). After this initial period of advertisements came Elastic's first notable title sequence, *Game of Thrones*. The title sequence was met with popular and critical acclaim by Winning an Emmy for Outstanding Main Title Design. After the success of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence, Elastic produced more advertisements and did not produce any more main title sequences until 2013 when Angus Wall created the titles for the television show *The Americans* (2013). Notably, Angus Wall worked on other advertisements such as *OnStar Joyride* during 2013, indicating that Elastic's creative graphic designers can and will work across both advertisements and title design.

Imaginary Forces' most prolific years were 2013 (forty-three projects) and 2014 (sixty-three projects), producing an enormous quantity of title sequences, advertisements and other projects, similar to Elastic's output during those same two years (MakeMake Entertainment) (Figure 5-3, 5-4). 2014 was arguably Elastic's most commercially successful year. Not only did they produce over twenty-five projects, both advertisements and title sequences, an increase of fifteen new projects from the previous year, but 2014 was the year of Patrick Clair's *True Detective* (2014): a key title sequence (Figure 5-3, 5-4). Between 2010-2014 Elastic created six television title sequences and Imaginary Forces created fourteen.

5.5.3 2015-2019

Between 2015 and 2019, I identify patterns from the data in Appendix 3. Four title sequence designs from Imaginary Forces in 2015 include *Jessica Jones* and *Manhattan* (Season two) as opposed to twenty advertisements for that year. For Elastic advertisements received a spike in 2015 with eighty-four advertisements. Elastic's main title sequences output increased, producing four new title sequences in 2015 compared to two in the previous years: *Daredevil* (Clair), *True Detective* season two (Clair), *The Man in The High Castle* (Patrick Clair) and *The Leftovers* (Wall), and this would continue for Elastic with six in 2017 and 2018 and nine in 2019 (Figure 5-3, 5-4). From the results, most notably the second half of the 2010s from 2015 to 2019 was when the output of Elastic's and Imaginary Forces' design studios peaked in terms of the title sequence quantity produced. Between 2015 to 2019 there was twenty-nine title sequences made for Imaginary Forces and fifty for Elastic which was a large increase from the 2010-2014 period.

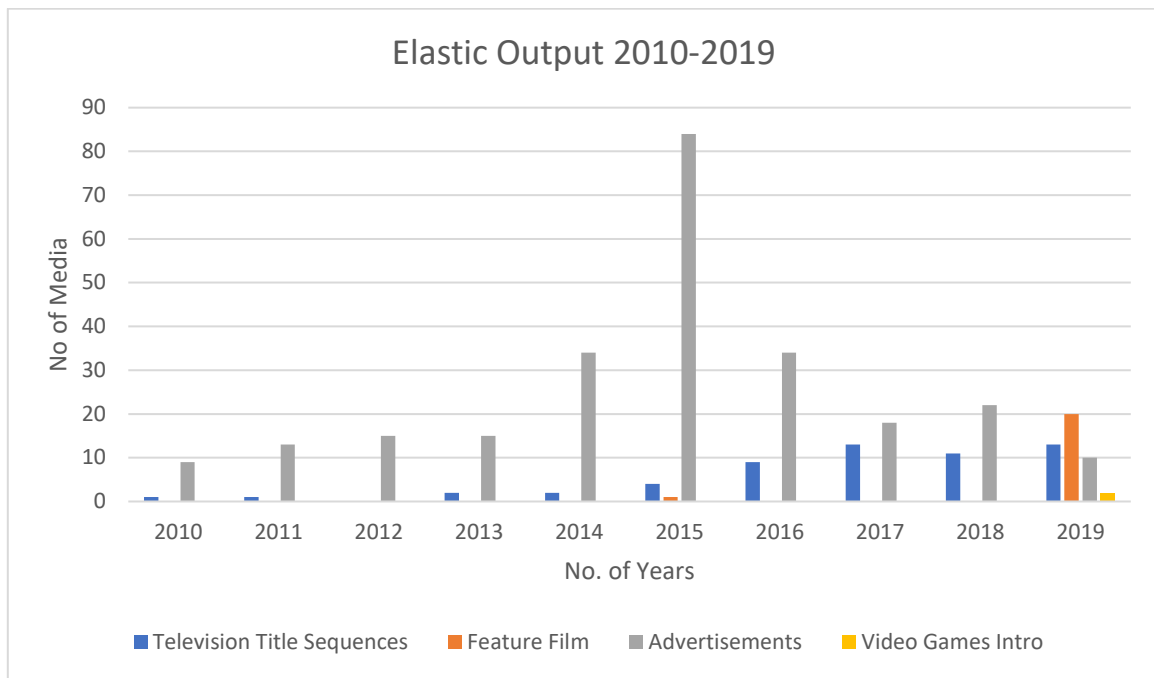


Figure 5-3: Elastic Output 2010-2019

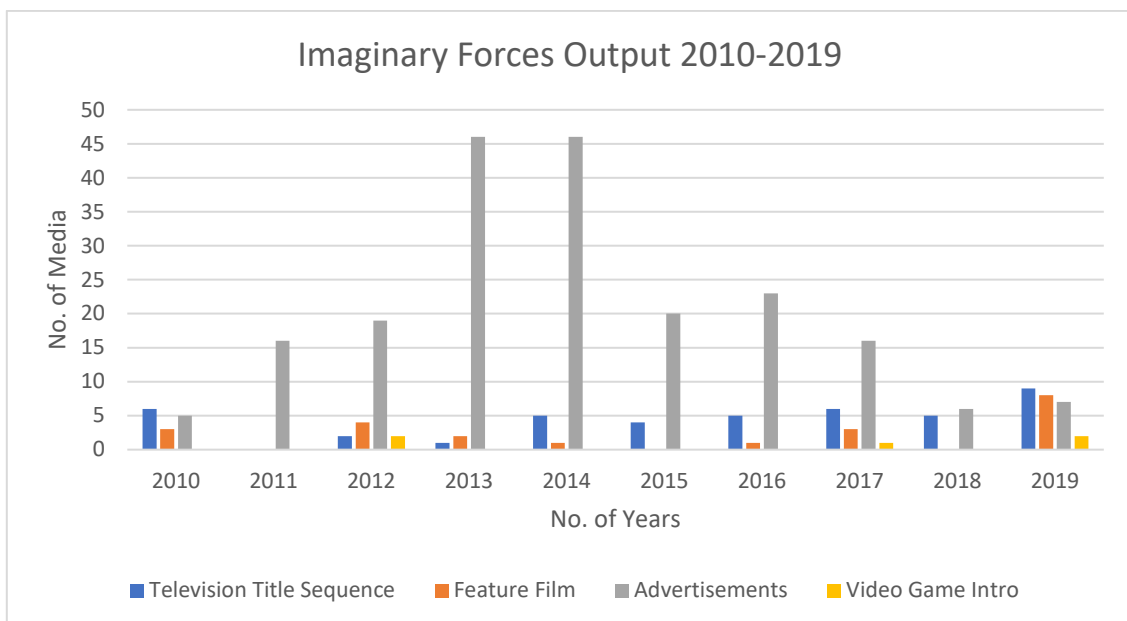


Figure 5-4: Imaginary Forces Output 2010-2019

5.6 Elastic and Imaginary Forces' Trends from 2010-2019

Within Elastic's and Imaginary Forces output in the 2010s, I identify two key trends from the data discussed in the last section: an increase in advertising and title sequence quantity from 2015-2019.

5.6.1 Advertisement Trend

One conclusion I draw from the data is the trend toward a large quantity of advertising work. Advertisements are the main output of Elastic's and Imaginary Forces' production. The proliferation of advertising campaigns in 2013 by Imaginary Forces highlights that, like Elastic, its main body of work is advertising which in turn provides a steadier source of income than title sequence designs. Clair explains in an interview that advertisements are a steady source of income and that "if I do a title sequence, I have to do an ad – it's the only way that I can pay the rent" (Brandt 2019). As such, commercials are more financially viable than title sequences which supports why there is a larger quantity of advertisements. The reliance on advertising to create revenue instead of the title sequence indicates that the title sequence's function is not to accrue financial gain for Elastic and Imaginary Forces. I argue instead that the purpose of title sequence is to elevate Imaginary Forces and Elastic's prestige branding which will be investigated in Section 5.8.

5.6.2 The Increase of Title Sequence Designs

The data implies that there was an increase in the quantity of outsourcing and subsequent rate of production of title sequences made from 2015 to 2019. There are industrial factors that can help explain this title design trend. For instance, the increase of these elaborate title sequences aligns

with the larger trend of an increase of television shows created in the 2010s. In 2015 various sources reported a large production boom which led to a rapid expansion in the quantity of original programming (Littleton 2015). For example, *Variety* reports in 2015 that “A surge in orders from streaming services and basic cable outlets pushed the number of original scripted series available in the U.S. this year to 409 – a staggering volume of programming spread across broadcast, cable and digital outlets that is up 8.7% from 376 in 2014” (Littleton 2015). The surge in original scripted programs was connected directly with the rush of streaming services in the latter half of the 2010s. Therefore, the rise in quantity of television show production led to a proliferation in title sequence production. The increase of title sequences contributes to the digital title sequence trend because more title sequences were being produced to brand the respective streaming platform.

5.7 Media Convergence

The digital title sequence aesthetics has also been influenced by title sequence designers working on both advertisements and title sequence production. For example, the *Dell Seeing More* campaign is created by Elastic. The advertisement has aesthetic similarities to title sequences through their similarly computer-generated visuals. For instance, the *Dell Seeing More* (2019) advertisement campaign has computer-generated visuals through an extreme close-up of an eye which closely resembles a shot from the *True Detective* title sequence (Figure 5-5, 5-6).



Figure 5-5: Dell Seeing More⁴³



Figure 5-6: *True Detective* Title Sequence⁴⁴

In the *True Detective* example there is an additional visual layer of a parking lot inside the eye (Figure 5-6). The example suggests an aesthetic overlap between advertisements and title

⁴³ Captured from Xbox Portal, Patrick Clair, Release Date: 14 Dec 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:29. Vimeo (Source). <https://vimeo.com/190260162>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review

⁴⁴ Captured from *The Expanse* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Syfy. Legendary Television. Canada. Release Date: 14 Dec 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:11. YouTube (Source). MaxCore. THE EXPANSE: Intro Opening Credits [4K]. 13 May 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y4wuVfV5G4>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

sequence designs through their utilisation of similar computer-generated images. Additionally, a more distinct change in the 2010s are the advertisements for video games produced by Elastic and Imaginary Forces which contributes to convergence between video game production and advertising. A myriad of other advertisements use computer-generated visuals within Elastic's and Imaginary Forces' catalogues. For example, the three-dimensional rendered objects in the advertisement for *Nighthawk* or the computer-generated animated graphics for the *iMac Pro* advertising campaign (Vimeo, "Imaginary Forces" n.d.). Moreover, Elastic have worked on the *Assassin's Creed Unity* (2014) trailer and Imaginary Forces has made the opening sequence for SXSW (South BY Southwest) Gaming Awards in 2015. These examples highlight how Elastic's and Imaginary Forces' workforce that create advertisements and title sequence design utilise digital aesthetics. Imaginary Forces' and Elastic's overlap further emphasises another point of aesthetic convergence that indicates how the diversification of these motion graphic companies across different mediums were affecting the aesthetics of title sequence design and advertising.

For example, the Xbox portal advertising campaign, Elastic had to work with in game footage from video games as well as live action (Adobe Creative Cloud 2018, 38:22). In an interview, Patrick Clair comments on how the Elastic team directly collaborated with a team from Microsoft to shoot in game and combine the different sequences in an editing suite (Adobe Creative Cloud 2018, 38:22). Clair explained in an interview that it is difficult to manage these various technologies as there are different cameras in various virtual environments which makes composing the final image with additional effects complicated (Adobe Creative Cloud 2018, 38:22) (Figure 5-7).



Figure 5-7: Xbox Portal Video Game Example⁴⁵

This example demonstrates that television production, advertisements and video game design has become increasingly convergent because visual effect houses work closely with video game companies. The convergence between video games and title design will be discussed at further length in Chapter 6 on *Game of Thrones*' title sequence.

I conclude this section by arguing the title sequence is an important object of study in the 2010s as its hybrid aesthetic and production processes are evidence of the lines between different media objects being blurred. The title sequence's short duration allows for an intensification of these complex hybrid processes in one succinct space, thus suggesting the title sequence is an integral part of understanding the intersection of hybrid practices in the 2010s. Overall, the development of the digital title sequence is not just attributed to the pursuit of prestige by networks, but the increase of title sequences created by Imaginary Forces and Elastic and their work across different mediums.

⁴⁵ Captured from Xbox Portal, Patrick Clair, Release Date: 14 Dec 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:29. Vimeo (Source). <https://vimeo.com/190260162>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

5.8 Elastic and Imaginary Forces Prestige Branding

Imaginary Forces' and Elastic's marketing of their brand contribute to the prestige status of the digital title sequence. For instance, on MakeMake Entertainment's LinkedIn page it proclaims, "Together, we are greater than the sum of our parts. United on one campus, as the modern-day equivalent of a studio from Hollywood's Golden era" (LinkedIn "MakeMake Entertainment" n.d.). The invocation of Hollywood's golden era is a clear prestige claim to differentiate itself from its competition. Imaginary Forces positions itself as a boutique company. For example, its LinkedIn profile states,

Across entertainment, media, technology, and culture, we connect audiences through beautiful, design-driven content. We are powered by talented individuals working together to push the limits of creative possibility. Partnering with high-profile entertainment properties (Netflix, HBO, Apple TV+) and top cultural tastemakers (Meta, Google, PepsiCo), from strategy through execution, we're always looking to create impact and ignite the imagination (LinkedIn "Imaginary Forces" n.d.).

Imaginary Forces advertises themselves to a range of clientele emphasising its range of services through "entertainment, media, technology" (LinkedIn "Imaginary Forces" n.d.). The positioning of Imaginary Forces is indicative of the historical development of motion graphic companies, as discussed in the last chapter, that has increasingly throughout different periods offered a range of motion graphic services for varying digital needs and mediums. Furthermore, Imaginary Forces positions itself in relation to prestige networks like Netflix, HBO and Apple TV + by stating that these platforms are "high-profile entertainment properties" (LinkedIn "Imaginary Forces" n.d.). In turn, the conflation between these networks and their high-profile status establishes a prestige status by creating a value judgement about the company.

5.8.1 The Brand Value of Title Designers

Title designers are present in marketing materials and so further contribute to the brand value of the network, program and motion graphic company. Imaginary Forces' key designers have included Michelle Dougherty, Karin Fong, Dan Gregoras and Ronnie Koff. Karin Fong has worked at Imaginary Forces for over twenty-eight years as a creative lead designer. During her extensive time at the company, she has worked on a plethora of title designs like the Emmy Award Winning *Black Sails* (2014), *Counterpart* (2017), advertisements for the video game *God of War 3* (2010) and video installations for the Lincoln Centre. The Imaginary Forces website indicates her contributions in a discrete profile that stresses her prestige pedigree. The Imaginary Forces' website states "the Emmy Award-winning director and designer has helmed iconic projects in film, television, gaming, and advertising" (Imaginary Forces n.d.). Fong has been in several paratextual interviews and YouTube videos that further emphasise her authorial authority with her body of work including, "Karin Fong- Interview by Motion Plus Design" (Motion Plus Design 2020) and on Imaginary Forces' own YouTube channel there is an interview with Fong and showrunner of *Counterpart*- Justin Marks called "*Counterpart: A Conversation with Justin Marks and Karin Fong*" (Imaginary Forces 2018). Presenting the motion graphic designer through paratextual elements has an historical parallel to Saul Bass's elevated status as a motion graphic designer as discussed in Chapter 2 in Section 2.2. The showrunner is an integral component of the television show's prestige positioning. The interview between Karin Fong and showrunner Justin Marks is evidence of the elevation of the motion graphic designer as a form of prestige branding through being conflated with the showrunner of *Counterpart*. While this is not necessarily a typical practice in the 2010s with every title sequence, other networks have created distinct videos linking the graphic designer to the title sequence and thus highlighting authorship as part of marketing the network's brand

and the show. For example, there is a behind the scenes video package on *Game of Thrones*' title sequence that highlights the title designers and showrunners together in the creation of the title sequence (GOT Extras 2022). Another example is Patrick Clair who has been marketed to service the prestige branding of Elastic. Clair has his own studio titled Antibody that is based in Sydney and is an independent company and has worked with Elastic on multiple projects. He has worked on television title sequence designs for *True Detective* (2014), *The Man in The High Castle* (2015), *Westworld* (2016), *The Crown* (2016), *The Night Manager* (2016), *American Gods* (2017), *The Terror* (2018), ("Patrick Clair" *Art of the Title*). There is a myriad of interviews with Patrick Clair. For example, a behind the scenes interview with Clair discusses how the *Daredevil* and *Halt and Catch Fire* title sequence were created for Netflix by *Variety* (2015). While this publication was not commissioned by Netflix or Elastic directly, being featured in a major news outlet like *Variety* increases the overall visibility of the title sequence and its authors to the viewer. The title designer then is a key method to differentiate the brand and network from competition in the 2010s.

5.8.2 Elastic and Imaginary Forces Branding Convergence

A key point of convergence between Elastic and Imaginary Forces' branding identity and clientele is AMC'S *The Terror* (2018). Elastic designed the title sequence for *The Terror* (Clair 2018), but Imaginary Forces handled part of the marketing by creating the teaser in the lead up to the show's release for AMC in 2018, which is not an unusual occurrence since they both offer a similar range of services to their clientele (Vimeo "Imaginary Forces" n.d.). These examples establish that in the TV IV period motion graphic companies have become increasingly competitive that have a shared clientele in television networks.

Likewise, Elastic and Imaginary Forces were both commissioned by Marvel for their Netflix original dramas demonstrating that they share the same clients. Elastic worked on television shows *Daredevil* (2015), *The Defenders* (2017) and *Iron Fist* (2017), while Imaginary Forces created the titles for *Jessica Jones* (2015). The larger quantity of title sequence design work for Elastic is not a multi-year deal but as per Patrick Clair's comment in his interview in *Art of the Title*, Elastic has a close working relationship and that it does not "feel like a client-vendor relationship, it very much feels like a genuine team collaboration" with Marvel (Perkins 2017).

Clair's comment suggests that the relationship between client and vendor is far more nuanced and is not a linear hierarchy of power between the two companies. The relationship is complicated by these design companies using their Vimeo channels, YouTube and websites as a discrete exhibition space for displaying their portfolios of work. Furthermore, Davison in her study of viewers' perception of title sequences explains that the title sequences promote the graphic companies themselves (2013, 17a). However, despite these industrial changes, there is still a client-vendor relationship evidenced by networks uploading these title sequences on YouTube on their official channels like Netflix and HBO. Thus, the networks highlight to the viewer their own branding identity as opposed to the title design studio. For example, the *Game of Thrones* title sequence has an HBO watermark. Additionally, Imaginary Forces and Elastic do not have the same degree of online visibility as networks that upload the title sequence on its official YouTube channels. For example, the *Stranger Things* title sequence on Imaginary Forces channel has 1,998 views while it has 22 million views on the official *Stranger Thing's* title sequence at the time of writing. Examples on Reddit demonstrate viewers' wider awareness of the motion graphic company. In a Reddit post titled, "There is a striking similarity in the opening credit sequences of shows like *Westworld*, *Daredevil*, *The Crown*, and *Black Sails*. Is there an origin for this type of sequence?" (TagProTyrus

2017). A comment responds, “Separate companies are usually hired to create the title sequences so similarities will often crop up from that. For example, of the shows you listed one company called Elastic made the ones for *Daredevil*, *Westworld* and *The Crown* and many more” (TagProTyrus 2017). The identification of title companies emphasises that while YouTube channels create a hierarchy where the network is foregrounded over the motion graphic companies, fan communities have a broader awareness of accounting and acknowledging the motion graphic company as a creative authority.

Overall, the vendor–client relationship and branding in the TV IV period become complicated when title sequences are uploaded by both motion graphic companies and television networks onto YouTube. While Elastic and Imaginary Forces have authorial collaboration and discrete space for their works, video platforms have become a space primarily for streaming services and network branding their content which will be analysed in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. The greater visibility of streaming services attached to title sequences on YouTube suggests how the platform has become a competitive space to attain viewers and positions a hierarchy of personnel attached to a brand.

5.8.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed Elastic’s and Imaginary Forces’ title sequence output, trends and branding in the 2010s. These motion graphic design companies have dominated the television title sequence industrial space through a large quantity of title sequences produced throughout the 2010s, as well as a large portfolio of other paratextual work in advertisements and branding design. Not only are the techniques and formal features of the television title sequence hybridised but the motion graphic design studios that create them converge across different mediums in their

own portfolios. The digital title sequences and advertisements, being hybrid paratextual objects, also indicate wider aesthetic and industrial trends. Of these trends I examined how the motion graphic studios position themselves as prestige companies to attain contracts from companies HBO, Netflix and FX. These previous chapters have discussed the historical and industrial dimensions of the digital title sequence trend to fulfill my first and second subsidiary aims. Chapters 2 and 3 provided an understanding of the digital title sequence's history to achieve my first subsidiary aim of understanding how the digital title sequence emerged. Chapters 4 and 5 achieved my second subsidiary aim of providing an understanding of the growth of motion graphic companies and how they aided the development of the digital title sequence. The aesthetic and reception of the digital title sequence will be studied in the following case study chapters.

PART 2: AESTHETICS

6 HBO'S *GAME OF THRONES*- MEDIA CONVERGENCE

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 will establish how HBO employed the title sequence's digital aesthetics and took advantage of digital platforms to further differentiate itself in an increasingly competitive marketplace. In doing so I will explain that the aesthetics of title design have changed due to medium convergence. The *Game of Thrones* (2011) television title sequence is an ideal case study for two key reasons. The first reason is that HBO has uploaded the *Game of Thrones* title sequence onto YouTube to contribute to its prestige branding. The other reason is that *Game of Thrones'* title sequence uses computer-generated environments which in turn has become a core stylistic feature for the digital title sequence trend in the 2010s.

This chapter is divided into two key sections. The first section (6.3) examines the reception to *Game of Thrones* being the first title sequence to win two Emmys for Outstanding Main Title Design in 2011 and 2019 respectively. This section will analyse how HBO has uploaded two different variations of the title sequence to YouTube to foster viewer engagement and service its prestige branding. The second section (6.4) investigates how the convergence between the *Game of Thrones* title sequence and video game aesthetics has impacted the digital title sequence in the 2010s. The *Game of Thrones* title sequence is indicative of the increase of computer-generated environments in title sequence design that presents itself through a disembodied virtual camera as it navigates geographic terrain (Figure 6-1). Through the geographical layout presented in a computer-generated world, the *Game of Thrones* title sequence is comparable to open world game design and turn-based and real-time strategy games, particularly *Civilisation V* (2010), *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011), *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt* (2015) and *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020).

An examination of computer-generated environments in television title sequences and videogames will create a more robust understanding of how the digital title sequence has been affected by convergence with other media.



Figure 6-1: *Game of Thrones* (2011) Season 1⁴⁶

6.2 The *Game of Thrones* Title Sequence

Game of Thrones is an HBO fantasy television show that aired on April 17th, 2011, and is based on the *A Song of Ice and Fire* novel series by George R.R. Martin. The show is set in the fictional world of Westeros. The show's narrative focuses upon different territories and factions vying for supremacy of Westeros by claiming the iron throne, the ultimate symbol of power within the social political structures of the fantasy setting. *Game of Thrones* has largely been discussed by

⁴⁶ Captured from *Game of Thrones* (Season 1 Title Sequence). David Benioff, D. B. Weiss (Showrunner). HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 17 April 2011. Timestamp: 00:00:11. YouTube (Source). *Game of Thrones*. Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). 19 April 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022.

Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

scholars in relation to the depiction of violence (Frankel 2014; Hannell 2016) as well as authorship (Steiner 2015) and fan culture (García-Rapp 2021). Tobias Steiner focuses on *Game of Thrones*' authorship and how it functions as an indicator of quality for HBO's branding (2015). He also specifically examines the title sequence (2015). Steiner writes a description of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence and how it is constructed to frame the diegesis. Steiner argues through a close formal description of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence that it functions as a "summary of the show's key features" (2015, 185). However, Steiner's description of the title sequence is brief and predominately scholars have not discussed *Game of Thrones*' title sequence digital aesthetics. One aspect that scholars have not considered is how the title sequence uses an isometric perspective.

This chapter uses the term isometric to describe the aesthetic form of *Game of Thrones*' title sequence. In video games, the isometric perspective creates a three-dimensional effect where the player can view multiple aspects of the environment. Isometric title designs utilise a video game aesthetic through an angled top-down perspective that reveals various aspects of the computer-generated environment. The *Game of Thrones* title sequence uses an isometric perspective through its computer-generated- three-dimensional rendering of Westeros. The *Game of Thrones* title sequence was completed in 2011 by Elastic's creative team, led by Angus Wall. The *Game of Thrones* title sequence depicts an animated computer-generated map that, through a series of discrete shots via a virtual computer-generated camera, showcases geographical locations that will feature in the show's narrative. Within different seasons there are many variations from episode to episode. Between seasons one to four, there are fourteen smaller variations of the different shots. For example, season two episode one introduces the island city of Dragonstone in the title sequence because it is featured in a major plot line during season two. This characteristic

demonstrates that the title sequence is a prominent part of the viewer's understanding of the physical interrelations between the numerous locations in the show's fantasy setting. As television shows story worlds have become more complex and expansive, the title sequence acts as an important concise summation of the show's narratives for the viewer's understanding of the narrative.



Figure 6-2: *Game of Thrones* Title Sequence Season 1 ⁴⁷

Another key characteristic is *Game of Thrones*' spectacle which is a distinguishing factor of the digital title sequence trend. The formal spectacle functions through Elastic's dedication to a detailed replication of the show's fantasy story world. Co-showrunner and executive producer of the show, D.B. Weiss, commented on this idea of a richly detailed title sequence that people will watch repeatedly for its own formal virtuosity and "the genius that went into the map" (Perkins

⁴⁷ Captured from *Game of Thrones* (Season 1 Title Sequence). David Benioff, D. B. Weiss (Showrunner). HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 17 April 2011. Timestamp: 00:00:11. YouTube (Source). *Game of Thrones*. Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). 19 April 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022.

2011a). To create such an elaborate showpiece for the show's fantasy story world, Elastic was inspired by the mechanics of Leonardo da Vinci's inventions. Elastic sampled different materials and woods in making the computer-generated renders of different objects and places, in addition to drawing from concept art used in the show itself. In an interview, Angus Wall, creative lead on the project, explains that,

Art director Rob Feng referenced Leonardo's machines which have a timeless sense of design. We wanted the title sequence to be rooted in world of the show, which is a technically unsophisticated place, but to also have a complexity that gives it life. It's definitely not contemporary! Everything is made of wood, metal, leather, fabric, all natural materials... stuff you could see human hands hammering out and molding (Perkins 2011a).

The quote highlights that Elastic's intention was to create an elaborate complex geographical map that introduces and orientates the viewer for the show's expansive serialised narrative. While the world of Westeros is in the fantasy genre, it still conforms to realistic aesthetics. HBO has taken advantage of the authenticity and sheer scope and scale of the computer-generated world through making the title sequence visible on social media to distinguish its branding identity from other networks. Viewers appreciating the aural-visual compositions in the title sequence will be examined in the next section (6.3).

6.3 HBO's Branding in the 2010s

As discussed in Chapter 3 in Section 3.4.2, in relation to *Six Feet Under*, HBO has positioned itself as a prestige network. HBO's prestige standing has been studied extensively by scholars (Jaramillo 2002; Leverette et al 2008; Bourdaa 2011; Dhoest 2014;). Historically HBO's original programs have been marketed to viewers by HBO's tag line, the network's targeting of niche demographics

and textual components that distinguish HBO's programming in opposition to network television through factors such as explicit content and high production values (Leverette et al 2008, 32). Leverette et al describes that HBO through its promotional activities has "reconceptualised quality" (Leverette 2008, 32). Furthermore, Davison notes that HBO relies on a myriad of factors to create a distinctive brand identity that positions itself as cinematic (2013b, 6). She rationalises that discourse surrounding "an emphasis on auteurism, more creative freedom and higher budgets" has positioned HBO as cinematic and thus elevated its branding status (2013b, 6). Furthermore, Epstein et al's study (2002) explains HBO's branding in direct relation to *The Sopranos* (1999). Epstein et al elaborate that *The Sopranos* builds HBO's branding by servicing its "It's Not TV. It's HBO" tag line through its showcase of "sexuality, graphic violence, profanity" that differentiates itself from censorship and rigorous guidelines of broadcast television (2002, 53).

HBO's prestige programming has continued into the 2010s. The introduction to this thesis established that prestige television shows have been discursively constructed by critics, award-winning, positioned by networks as quality. These shows have been celebrated by critics and accrued Emmy wins. For example, *Game of Thrones* has won four times in the 2010s for Outstanding Drama Series. However, there have been large changes since the TV IV period, and as such HBO has altered its brand identity to reflect these changes. Recently HBO has adapted to the growing number of streaming services through the introduction of HBO Max in North America in 2020. HBO's tagline "It's Not TV It's HBO" since the 1990s helped positioned its brand as quality television. However, it changed its tag line in the 2010s to "It's more than you imagined. It's HBO". The change in tag line is reflective of HBO expanding its brand beyond its connection to prestige discourses. One new method HBO has utilised to brand itself is taking advantage of viewers' interactions in online spaces. For example, Helen Morgan Parmett in a journal article from

Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies titled “It's HBO: Passionate engagement, TV branding, and tourism in the Post Broadcast Era” argues that in an era marked by media convergence and new technologies and viewing practices there is necessity to produce a strong television brand (Parmett 2015, 8). In this article Parmett explains that the television show *Treme* was used by HBO to create a strong brand identity through viewer interaction (2015, 4). HBO accomplished encouraging fan engagement beyond the text by presenting *Treme's* authentic depiction of New Orleans through a multitude of maps and guides of the city's layout such as a behind the scenes extras video on its website and on DVD titled “Beyond Bourbon Street” (Parmett 2015, 10). While HBO has used different methods to diversify its brand in the 2010s due to competition from streaming and transmedia online spaces, I contend that the title sequence has contributed to its prestige branding and newfound focus on engaging fans through its placement as part of HBO's social media marketing.

6.3.1 Branding and Title Sequence Variation

HBO has uploaded two different variations of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence on YouTube. The *Game of Thrones* title sequence changes aesthetically across its eight-season run to reflect the spatial geographic fluctuations in the narrative. *Game of Thrones'* last season uses only two key locations, King's Landing and Winterfell, instead of its usual plethora of geographical locations to reflect the narrative convergence of the show's subplots. The show was reaching narrative resolution and for the first time, the title sequence explored the interiority of two locations instead of the exterior shots that had featured in its title sequence from previous seasons. To further highlight narrative closure through the computer-generated rendered animated interior coming to life, the final shots before the title card are of the throne – the main objective that the characters within the narrative pursue. Since there needs to be large visual differences between

title sequences for them to be nominated again for an Emmy, *Game of Thrones* is the only title sequence to have won two Emmy Awards for Outstanding Main Title Design (Stefanson 2022). *Game of Thrones* winning two Emmy Awards did not go unnoticed by news articles in 2019, reinforcing *Game of Thrones*' title sequence as an important part of HBO's branding through detailing and comparing what had changed between the 2011 and 2019 variants. For example, an article from *Vulture* (VanArendonk 2019) is titled, "Why *Game of Thrones* Season 8 Got a New Title Sequence"; another article, this time from *The Verge* (Liao 2019), uses the title: "*Game of Thrones* New Opening Credit Sequence Holds a Lot of Clues For This Season". Both articles describe the visual changes between the season eight title sequence and previous title sequences. These articles were released following HBO uploading the season eight variation on its YouTube channel to underline the changes made to the title sequence and create audience engagement with the show's last season.⁴⁸ There are similar comments on the *Game of Thrones* season eight title sequence YouTube page (*Game of Thrones* 2019) to the season one title sequence. For example, a user 6A⁴⁹ states, "Who else has never skipped intro..." with over 62,00 likes. User 6B claims "Its a real fact that this intro is the only reason season 8 took 2 years" with over 11,000 likes. As a result, the title sequence becomes part of an integrated branding approach for HBO on YouTube. The concept of integrated branding where the title sequence becomes a meeting ground of both text and paratext is echoed by Erin Högerle's comment:

⁴⁸ It is important to note that people that watch the title sequence on YouTube and comment are unlikely to be viewers that skip the title sequence or think it is unimportant. Therefore, this thesis acknowledges that the sample size is selective.

⁴⁹ This thesis anonymises user names and instead refers to these viewers as specific letters. Each letter signifies when they appear chronologically in the chapter and are accompanied by the Chapter number.

In the interaction between narrative, aesthetics, and product identity, the title sequence functions as a meeting point for intertextuality and branding, integrating visual elements that promote product identity and may be reused in other contexts, for instance, the franchise's websites or the film's DVD cover (2013, 89).

HBO uploading the *Game of Thrones* title sequence onto YouTube stresses that the title sequence is reused for the purposes of branding. This strategy is not confined to the *Game of Thrones* title sequence and instead other networks such as Starz and Netflix have uploaded the title sequence on their YouTube channels which will be examined in Chapters 8 and 9. As discussed in Chapter 6, HBO uploaded the *Game of Thrones* title sequence on the official *Game of Thrones* YouTube channel, which had over 40 million views at the time of writing. For context, out of the Imaginary Forces and Elastic title sequences posted onto YouTube, the *Game of Thrones* title sequence has the greatest number of views. One of the top-rated comments on the *Game of Thrones* title sequence by user 6C poses an instruction to other viewers, "Rule 1 to watch GOT: Never skip the opening" with over 12,000 likes at the time of writing (*Game of Thrones* 2011). Other top-rated comments have similar sentiment. User 6D notes, "I never skipped the opening theme, not once in any episode which means I probably spent over 2 hours listening to this masterpiece" with 5,000 likes (*Game of Thrones* 2011). Similarly, user 6E makes the claim that, "When you watch the *Game of Thrones*, you sit through the intro or you die. There is no middle ground" with over 7000 likes (*Game of Thrones* 2011). Similarly, 6F uses dialogue from the show to show their appreciation of the opening specifically by stating, "A man likes this opening" with over 2,000 likes (*Game of Thrones* 2011). This comment highlights that *Game of Thrones* title sequence is appreciated as its own aural-visual object outside the original broadcast of the television show. User 6G directly admires the visual spectacle and virtuosity of the title sequence, "can I just point out how insanely well made the visuals are? This is easily one of the most creative ideas for an opening ever" with

over 400 likes at the time of writing (*Game of Thrones* 2011). Similarly, top-liked comment from user 6H with over 3000 likes demonstrates an appreciation of the title sequence as its own discrete form, particularly its formal components. The comment claims, “Amazing opening, both in terms of the music and the visuals” (*Game of Thrones* 2011). The comment reinforces how the virtuosic digital visuals encourage fan engagement on YouTube.

Aside from uploading the title sequence twice onto YouTube HBO has utilised the title sequence specifically on its other social platforms further cementing the title sequence as a branding device. For example, HBO posted on its Facebook page a 360 perspective of the title sequence during the marketing and promotion of the show’s sixth season (Solsman 2016). *The Wrap* reported that Facebook’s CEO, Mark Zuckerberg claimed that the title sequence was the most watched 360-degree video on Facebook with up to 5.3 million views in twenty-four hours emphasising its visibility and HBO’s strategy to use the title sequence to promote the series and its brand (Solsman 2016). The promotional strategy gained traction through news articles with *Variety* and *Wired* both reporting on HBO’s marketing strategy (WaterCutter 2016; Spangler 2016). The video was posted by *Game of Thrones’* Facebook account during the promotional campaign of the title sequence’s sixth season. The video was posted one week before the show’s sixth season aired on April 24th. Given the large coverage and number of views from the video posted on Facebook, this represents a method from HBO to use the title sequence directly as part of the promotion of the television show. The promotional strategy suggests that the title sequence’s computer-generated virtuosity is an important part of how HBO positioned its brand as prestige in the 2010s using different social media platforms.

6.4 *Game of Thrones* and Video Games

Another key change in the 2010s for the title sequence is the aesthetic convergence and influence of computer-generated video games. The pursuit of prestige branding in the 2010s is not the only historical factor that has facilitated the digital title sequence trend. The development of computer-generated images in the video game industry has an historical and aesthetic convergence with the digital title sequence design. The computer-generated environment in *Game of Thrones* invites a visual comparison with three-dimensional environments in open world video games and turn-based strategy games. However, before defining open world video games and their relationship with the *Game of Thrones* title sequence, this section will establish the ontological differences between television and video games.

Historically within game studies ontological definitions and analysing video games has been the product of large debates. One debate that is central to defining the player's experience is the distinction between narratology and ludology. While I will not necessarily advance or contribute to these debates given my focus on television studies, they are still worth acknowledging for the purposes of my argument in differentiating and comparing *Game of Thrones*' title sequence to open world video games. Game scholars have argued that video games can be analysed through narratology which is a broad term from literature studies that encompasses the study of narrative in media objects, which academics have applied to video games (Murray 1997; Ryan 2004; Green 2017). Ludology examines how the mechanics of gameplay are central to the user experience rather than narrative. As Gonzola Frasca claims that video games cannot just be understood by narrative theories (2001).

Overall, the contentious debate between different game scholars indicates a key problem with defining video games' ontology for the integration of narrative and gameplay elements. For the purposes of this chapter's analysis of environments, Henry Jenkins has discussed how video game narratives have been integrated into gameplay through various methods. Jenkin's conception of "evocative spaces" draws an interesting parallel with the *Game of Thrones* title sequence (2004). Jenkins reasons that this category allows for players to explore large environments beyond the narrative through various interactive environments (Jenkins 2004, 7). *Game of Thrones'* title sequence is distinct from video games because the player cannot interact with the computer-generated environment. However, the *Game of Thrones* title sequence is similar to open world video game design as it uses isometric perspective as the following section 6.4.1 will discuss at length.

In a journal article from *Games and Culture*, Pablo Fraile- Jurado defines an open world as "... a type of video game where the player is free to explore a virtual world and engage with various activities without linear restrictions, allowing for nonlinear gameplay and greater player autonomy in a virtual environment that resembles the real world" (2023, 873). Examples of influential open world video games that highlight distinct geographical regions through three-dimensional environments include *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011), *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015) and *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020). The examples, while containing fictional fantasy or science fiction environments, have an open world map that the player can use to navigate at their leisure like *Game of Thrones*. The computer-generated environments in video games pre-date *Game of Thrones'* use of computer-generated story-scape. Moreover, temporality is significant since it is a core functionality of the open world genre. The player's ability not just to decide what objectives to pursue but when to explore them at their own pace within the constraints of the sandbox

gameplay is a core functionality of the open world genre that distinguishes it from other video game genres.

6.4.1 Open World Video Games and *Game of Thrones*

For the following textual analysis, I draw upon Jenkins' notion of media convergence being both processes of industry and culture (2018, 12). Jenkins notes that media convergence is the process of the interplay and intersection between old and new media across various industries (2018, 2). Throughout this section I note how new and old media have converged industrially through the combination of old (television) and new media (video games) and how that has directly affected the aesthetics of the title sequence. Jenkins has also written about participatory culture where viewers can actively interact and potentially change the aesthetics of the text using new technologies and accessible platforms like YouTube as a key part of how global culture has been transformed (2018, 14). My textual analysis is supported by the cultural process of participatory culture where fans have greater control over remixing and changing the title sequence using new accessible technologies and platforms such as YouTube.

I identify key similarities between the *Game of Thrones* title sequence and video games: The interplay between the long takes, a floating virtual camera that is unrestrained and a computer-generated digital fantasy map is similar to the formal structures of an open world video game map that the player navigates. In this section I conduct a close formal analysis of the formal rhythms of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence to reveal its aesthetic similarity to the open world video game. The editing for *Game of Thrones'* title sequence was undertaken by Angus Wall. The *Game of Thrones* title sequence utilises long takes in conjunction with a floating unrestrained camera, employing a clear repetitious editing pattern. The title sequence oscillates between short discrete

shots of the cities and longer takes of the *Game of Thrones* environment as the camera travels from city to city through forests, oceans and across the vast Westeros continent.

6.4.2 Turn-Based and Real-Time Strategy Video Games

Turn-based and real-time strategy video games are different from open world video games in that the map is not just a navigation tool to orientate the player to points of interest, but the playable area itself. For example, in *Civilisation V* (Figure 6-3) the playable area is a vast space in which players choose distinct civilisations to compete against one another, attending to the economic, military and industrial strength of their factions through upgrades and conflicts. The mechanics of turn-based strategy truncate a large real world to interactable micro representations of cities, lands and armies. The *Game of Thrones* title sequence truncates larger fictional spaces full of peoples, cities, vast lands, varied environments and military forces into a computer-generated map to represent the vast scale of its fantasy world of Westeros. Consequently, there is an aesthetic convergence with turn-based strategy games. A thematic connection also exists because turn-based strategy games typically entail players engaging in politics, economics and military campaigns to outwit their opponent, which is similar to the *Game of Thrones* politically grounded narrative.



Figure 6-3: *Civilisation V* ⁵⁰

6.4.3 Detailed Cities

The *Game of Thrones* title sequence is similar to video games through long takes. There are two key patterns that oscillate throughout the sequence: discrete shots of the cities and the floating virtual camera that moves across large distances of geographic terrain to the cities with few cuts. Both patterns pertain to video games in separate ways. The former pattern where there are discrete isometric shots of the representation of the cities is like open world video games' computer-generated environment. The computer-generated similarity is demonstrated by the discrete shots of the scaled representation of the King's Landing city in the title sequence where the camera highlights different areas of this city's design (Figures 6-4, 6-5, 6-6).

⁵⁰ Captured from *Civilisation V*. 2K Games. Release Date: 21 Sept 2010. Timestamp: 00:00:44. YouTube (Source). 2K. Civilization V Explorers Map Pack Walkthrough. 1 May 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNpd9GnBhYU>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 6-4: King's Landing Season 1⁵¹

⁵¹ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:24. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: Game of Thrones (HBO). Game of Thrones. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 6-5: King's Landing (Season 1)⁵²



Figure 6-6: King's Landing (Season 1)⁵³

The discrete shots and the computer-generated overview of these cities in the *Game of Thrones* title sequence not only draw a comparison with open world video games but with turn-based strategy games like *Civilisation V*. *Game of Thrones*' computer-generated aesthetic is non-realistic and stylised like a turn-based and real-time strategy game aesthetic. Typically, open world video

⁵² Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:18. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁵³ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:23. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

games and turn-based strategy franchises like *Total War*, *Civilisation* and *X-Com* contain open world maps of vast fictional fantasy worlds that are interactable. The scale and micro depiction of small cities and settlements throughout the *Game of Thrones* title sequence is similar to how open world fantasy video games condense the vast scale and scope of large cities to small micro aesthetics through the isometric perspective that highlights a three -dimensional world. The computer-generated aesthetic is demonstrated by the discrete shots of the scaled representation of Winterfell in the title sequence where different shots showcase areas of this city's design (Figures 6-7, 6-8, 6-9).



Figure 6-7: Winterfell (Season 1) ⁵⁴



Figure 6-8: Winterfell (Season 1) ⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:24. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁵⁵ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:18. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 6-9: Winterfell (Season 1) ⁵⁶

This pattern of showing close up perspectives of the cities continue throughout the sequence through various examples such as through the Wall and Pentos (Figure 6-10, 6-11).

⁵⁶ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:23. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: Game of Thrones (HBO). Game of Thrones. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 6-10: The Wall (Season 1)⁵⁷



Figure 6-11: *Game of Thrones* Pentos (Season 1)⁵⁸

The cities are constructed using detailed computer-generated renderings that create the final composition. *Game of Thrones'* title sequence and video games both condense information into easily identifiable geography. Similarly to the discrete shots of cities in the *Game of Thrones* title

⁵⁷ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:23. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁵⁸ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:23. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

sequence, players in real-time and turn-based strategy games can zoom in to observe small details. For example, in *Total War: Medieval II*, which combines real-time and turn-based gameplay, players can zoom into cities and armies as demonstrated by the below Figure (6-12).



Figure 6-12: Close-up of Cities in *Total War: Medieval 2* ⁵⁹

The detail in the *Game of Thrones*' title sequence is reflected in its reception. One example is a Reddit AMA with an unnamed graphic designer from Elastic that worked on the 3D team for the *Game of Thrones* title sequence. The comments thread in the AMA highlights how viewers are conveying their appreciation for the detailed visuals. A Reddit user states, "Seriously, one of the best intro's for a TV show. It perfectly captures how important the geography is to the show, and how much people love to read the maps too" (pieheaven 2012). Other news articles have commented upon detailed setting conveyed in the *Game of Thrones* title sequence. For example, in an article for *The Observer* Brandon Katz argues that the *Game of Thrones* title sequence

⁵⁹ Captured from *Total War: Medieval 2*. *Total War Heaven*. "What is Medieval 2 What is Medieval 2: Total War? 2006, <https://medieval2.heavengames.com/m2tw/info/>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

focused particularly on establishing the geography through interviewing Kirk Shintani, the head of CG for Elastic (2019). Katz notes that, “Shintani adds that their goal has always been to entertain and inform the viewer while serving as a microcosm for the sprawling series” (Katz 2019). These comments confirm that the geography is an important component of how viewers understand the complex serialisation in the show’s story world. In turn this is similar to how the open world interface in video games condenses information to help the player to navigate the world in turn-based and real-time strategy games.

6.4.4 Long Take Aesthetics

The gliding camera that the player uses to navigate the map in turn-based and real-time strategy games is similar to the long take aesthetics of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence. For instance, the long take throughout the expansive map (Figure 6-13) that transitions from King’s Landing to Winterfell lasts over ten seconds. There are other instances of long takes throughout the duration of the title sequence. For example, in season one there is another long take as the camera glides effortlessly to The Wall which takes approximately nine seconds before there are discrete shots of the settlement on a large icy wall, one of the key locations in the show’s narrative (Figure 6-14). Following this shot there is a third and final long take that lasts fourteen seconds where the camera travels back to King’s Landing, the first location shown in the title sequence before moving to the city of Pentos on a completely different continent. The long takes help to clearly identify the geographic relations between the different cities similar to how the open world map, turn-based and real-time strategy games’ isometric perspectives also create concise summations of the spatial relations at any given point in the games’ playtime (Figure 6-13, 14, 15, 16, 17).



Figure 6-13: *Game of Thrones* Long Take (Season 1)⁶⁰



Figure 6-14: *Game of Thrones* Long Take (Season 1)⁶¹

⁶⁰ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:33. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁶¹ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:33. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 6-15: *Game of Thrones* Long Take (Season 1)⁶²



Figure 6-16: *Game of Thrones* Title Sequence (Season 1)⁶³

⁶² Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:33. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁶³ Captured from *Game of Thrones*. HBO. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:33. YouTube (Source). Official Opening Credits: *Game of Thrones* (HBO). *Game of Thrones*. 19 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7L2PVdrb_8. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

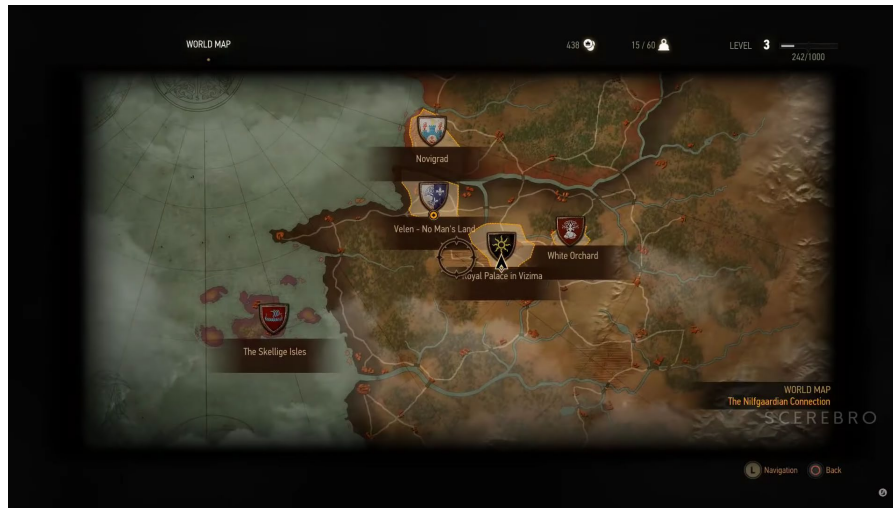


Figure 6-17: Comparison to *The Witcher 3* (2015) ⁶⁴

These formal characteristics highlight how computer-generated visuals from video games have influenced the form and development of the digital title sequence given the popularity of *Game of Thrones*. As an additional example, other viewers have converged video games and the title sequence through fan practices. An animator named Brady Wold re-created the *Game of Thrones* title sequence in the video game *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Jrefl3ct98 2014). The fan practice did not go unnoticed and was reported and exhibited by a games article titled, “‘Skyrim’ Video Recreates ‘Game of Thrones’ Intro Sequence” (*Game Rant* 2014). The combination of accessible digital technology, companies working across both video games and title sequences creates a feedback loop. The convergence between fan practices and video games further demonstrates how media convergence has increasingly blurred the distinct aesthetics of each medium.

⁶⁴ Captured from *The Witcher 3*. CD Project Red. Release Date: 19 May 2015. Timestamp: 00:02:12. YouTube (Source). ScereBro PSNU. *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt - BIG Open World Map Size (Full Map Showcase)*. 19 May 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO0FfGDldpQ>, Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

6.4.5 Production Convergence

The industrial proximity between video games and title sequences is part of media convergence. For instance, the visual effects studio Method Studios, formerly Iloura, creates promotional material like trailers and advertisements for television and video games. Method Designs made Xbox *Halo 5: Guardians: The Hunt Begins* (2015), a trailer for the popular *Halo* game series and also made the title sequence for the television show *See* (2019). The industrial convergence is like that of Elastic and Imaginary Forces as described in Chapter 5 in Section 5.7. The software used for video games and *Game of Thrones* differs because motion graphic design studios Blue Point and Method Designs use television specific effects. Both of these studios have worked on the special effects and the computer-generated compositing and use software like Nuke and Mari that are industry standards for film and television visual effects-based production but are typically not used for video game design. Instead, video games use large game engines to power their open worlds like Unreal Engine, used in an array of video games such as *BioShock* (2007), *Mass Effect* (2007) and *Borderlands* (2009) or an in-house engine created for making that video game. Creation Engine was used by Bethesda Game Studios to create the video game *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011). Even though there is overlap between production studios, the *Game of Thrones* visual effects software remains separated from video game production workflows and software. Despite the differences in production processes, there is still a strong aesthetic similarity between *Game of Thrones* and video games highlighting a media convergence thus indicating that motion graphic companies increasingly work across a variety of different mediums.

6.4.6 The Influence of *Game of Thrones*

The *Game of Thrones* title sequence's isometric design converging with video games has influenced the design of other title sequences. The title sequence that is closest to replicating the isometric perspective in the *Game of Thrones* opening credits is *The Expanse*'s title sequence (2015) (Figure 6-18) which features, through a moving computer-generated camera, locations that appear in the narrative. *The Expanse*'s stylistic choice to have discrete static shots of geographical locations created in three-dimensions closely resembles *Game of Thrones*' map design. Another recent title sequence that showcases a geographical map is the Netflix show *Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance* (2019) (Figure 6-19). In the opening to *Dark Crystal*'s first episode, different locations in an isometric perspective are shown that will play an important role in the show's diegesis as with *Game of Thrones*.



Figure 6-18: *The Expanse* (2015) ⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Captured from *The Expanse* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Syfy. Legendary Television. Canada. Release Date: 14 Dec 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:11. YouTube (Source). MaxCore. THE EXPANSE: Intro Opening Credits [4K]. 13 May 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y4wuVfV5G4>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 6-19: *Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance* Title Sequence ⁶⁶

Dark Crystal and *The Expanse* highlight the preference for distinctive geographical locations for their fantasy worlds, like *Game of Thrones*. These examples are all within the science fiction or fantasy genre and their expansive worlds are introduced within the peritextual status of a title sequence. However, there are only a few examples of computer-generated title sequences that utilise isometric perspective map design. As indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, *Game of Thrones*' larger influence is the use of dense computer-generated visuals and HBO uploading the title sequence onto YouTube for branding purposes. Subsequent chapters will investigate these two characteristics that constitute the digital title sequence trend because other networks have started to upload the title sequence onto YouTube and use dense computer-generated visuals for branding. The next chapter will further establish how HBO's dense visual design in *True Detective*'s title sequence is in service to prestige branding.

⁶⁶ Captured from *Dark Crystal* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Netflix. Release Date: 30 Aug 2019. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

6.4.7 Conclusion

There are two key facets of my argument that I have discussed in this chapter. In the first section I investigated the reception of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence Emmy wins, demonstrating how prestige is constructed through the title sequence's variation across seasons through examining the reception on YouTube and blogs in addition to websites. The second section (6.4) focused on how the *Game of Thrones* title sequence has converged with video games through aesthetics, technology and shared personnel in motion graphic design companies. The convergence is significant to this thesis's argument because it suggests that not only has the pursuit of prestige branding fuelled by competition in the TV IV period affected the title sequence's form, but that title designers have taken advantage of computer-generated technology and video game aesthetics which have both contributed to the digital title sequence's aesthetics.

7 HBO'S *TRUE DETECTIVE*- DENSE AESTHETICS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how *True Detective*'s title sequence has contributed to HBO's prestige branding through its multiple exposure technique that creates a dense aesthetic. This chapter's goal is to demonstrate that the title sequence's dense visuals exhibited in online spaces such as YouTube helped to brand HBO as prestigious during the 2010s and encourage fan engagement. I chose the *True Detective* title sequence because of two key reasons. *True Detective*'s title sequence won the award for Outstanding Main Title Design at the Emmys in 2014 and thus giving HBO's brand prestige. The other key reason is that *True Detective*'s title sequence uses multiple exposures where one image is placed on top of another image to create dense imagery making it ideal to investigate the aesthetics of the digital title sequence.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section (7.2) will establish key concepts that are pertinent to my argument. The second section (7.3) will conduct a close formal analysis of *True Detective*'s title sequence to assess how its dense multiple exposures are distinctive. The third section (7.4) of the chapter unpacks how the title sequence's minute aesthetics, which will be defined later in this chapter, contributes to creating a spectacle for HBO to distinguish its product. The fourth section (7.5) analyses how the lyrical music adds to the aesthetic density of the image. The fifth section (7.6) will investigate how *True Detective*'s title sequence also utilises narrative connections in addition to spectacle. The final section (7.7) will examine how the multiple exposure style has become a signature style for Elastic and other motion graphic companies and thus aided HBO's branding.

7.2 Key Concepts

7.2.1 From Isometric to Micro Title Designs

As established in the Introduction to this thesis, aesthetic density is a key feature of the digital title sequence. I define aesthetic density as a core aesthetic trait of digital title sequence design in the 2010s where the viewer can marvel at the highly detailed digital constructions and the small minute details in each frame. In the 2010s there are two different aesthetic styles that both use density. The first of these aesthetic styles I discussed last chapter: *Game of Thrones*' isometric title sequence design (Section 6.2). The second aesthetic style and the focus of this chapter is micro title designs. Micro title designs primarily use rapid cutting, metaphorical and figurative images in different diegetic spaces. The fundamental difference between micro and isometric title designs is scale. Where *Game of Thrones*' title sequence uses a large scale to evoke an enormous fictional world, the micro title sequences focus on smaller scale objects and characters. Some of these title sequences include *Daredevil* (Clair 2015), *Jessica Jones* (Dougherty 2015), *American Gods* (Clair 2017), *Lore* (Elms 2017), *Iron Fist* (Clair 2017) *The Alienist* (Wall 2018), *His Dark Materials* (2019), and *Catherine the Great* (Bolan 2019).

The detailed isometric designs on the map in *Game of Thrones* and the metaphorical and symbolic iconography in digital title sequences uses dense computer-generated images as spectacle. I am not arguing that iconography and metaphorical images are anything new in title design, as

discussed in Chapter 2 in Section 2.3, but that the layered digital constructions utilised in an array of title designs by Imaginary Forces and Elastic is a distinct trend in the 2010s.

7.2.2 *True Detective* Spectacle

The digital title sequence uses its computer-generated aesthetic for the purposes of spectacle. This chapter builds and robustly expands upon Picarelli's argument that networks use the title sequence as a form of spectacle to brand themselves as a premium service. Picarelli explains that "openers and other interstitials work as a branding vehicle and a means of differentiation for competing channels. Their stylish and engaging spectacle becomes a deluxe addendum that provides supposedly memorable entertainment to those willing to pay extra for their chosen pastime" (2013). One such opener that has an "engaging spectacle" is the *True Detective* title sequence. *True Detective* is an American anthology series that first aired on HBO on the 12th of January 2014, written by Nic Pizzolatto. Each season has a different narrative, cast of characters and thematic concerns. Moreover, each season's title sequence is aesthetically distinct with different characters, setting, compositions and musical theme. This chapter focuses on the show's first season that stars Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson and the narrative concerns a police investigation of a series of gruesome murders in the south Louisiana bayou located in the US. Scholars have discussed *True Detective* in relation to violence (Laycock 2015), quality television (Balanzategui 2018) and transmedia (Demaria 2014; Long 2015). Balanzategui in her article studies how *True Detective* uses surrealism as outlined in Chapter 1. Balanzategui has written specifically about *True Detective*'s title sequence's use of surrealism. For example, she explains that the title sequence visually alludes to surrealism through everyday objects superimposed over human appendages (2018, 671). Aside from Balanzategui's argument, largely academics have not

investigated the *True Detective* title sequence and as such this examination will fill this knowledge gap.

Out of the digital title sequences, *True Detective's* title sequence is useful to help examine the utilisation of spectacle. I discuss Gunning's (1986) cinema of attractions, in relation to the virtual camera, editing and computer-generated aesthetic in *True Detectives'* title sequence for the purposes of product differentiation for HBO's prestige marketing. This chapter will also study Isaacs' investigation of the use of digital technology in contemporary Hollywood blockbusters and Evan Calder William's shard cinema to clarify how minute changes in the aesthetic density of *True Detective's* title sequence contributes to spectacle and distinguishing HBO's branding.

While Gunning's comments are directed to films in the 1900s his distinction between narrative and attraction is still pertinent to my analysis of the *True Detective* title sequence. Without a direct narrative for the viewer to watch, *True Detective's* title sequence computer-generated aesthetic calls attention to itself. The act of viewing and sheer exhibitionism is key to Gunning's conception of attraction and further solidifies and reinforces that spectacle is one of its key structuring principles, as discussed in the Literature Review. However, the notion of spectacle should not be misconstrued as a strict binary that works in opposition to or stands apart from narrative. Even within Gunning's conception he claims that narrative and attraction were not entirely oppositional during the early 1900s, with narrative existing alongside the cinema of attractions, although he does distinguish between narrative and attraction by stating,

Attractions could be opposed to narrative construction in a number of ways. First, attractions address the viewer directly, soliciting attention and curiosity through acts of display. As moments of spectacle, their purpose lies in the attention they draw to themselves, rather than in developing the basic données of narrative: characterization (motives and psychology); causality (or the causal

concatenation of actions, which Roland Barthes calls the proairetic); narrative suspense (spectator involvement with the outcome of events, which Barthes calls the chain of enigmas); or the creation of a consistent fictional world (the diegesis of classical film semiotics) (Gunning, 1994, 190).

However, despite the differentiation Gunning asserts between narrative and the cinema of attractions, the title sequence's visuals, while functioning as a non-diegetic space for spectacle and to attract its audience, are constructed with the show's themes, tone and narrative in mind.

Therefore, this chapter will investigate how the title sequence is a spectacle while adhering to the narrative and thematic concerns of *True Detective's* story world.

7.3 *True Detective's* Distinctive Aural-Visuals

7.3.1 Multiple Exposure

True Detective's distinctive multiple exposure aesthetic allows different images to be combined into one cohesive visual whole, typically via a digital composite where images are taken from different sources. The elaborate and lengthy title sequence for *True Detective's* first season is designed by lead creative designer Patrick Clair and the motion graphic design studio Elastic in collaboration with Antibody (design/ animation/ compositing) and Breeder (additional compositing). The multiple exposure in *True Detective* can utilise live action in combination with digital effects available via Adobe Premiere Pro's Aftereffects suite, Photoshop and other editing software such as Cinema 4D. Manovich investigates hybrid media by arguing that it is not only the content that is remixed by practitioners "but also their fundamental techniques, working methods, and ways of representation and expression" (2007, 76). In the case of *True Detective*, the multiple exposure technique is remixed to produce characters, environments and objects that are intertwined and composited with a reduced opacity, to create polysemic and symbolically charged

imagery. *True Detective*'s title sequence functions through two key formal aspects: multiple exposure and music-image relations which will both be discussed at length in Section 7.4 and 7.5.

7.3.2 *True Detective* as a Hybrid Object

The television title sequence is a hybrid object that can use a plethora of different media from varying origins. Manovich explains that media software allows the designer to combine numerous visual elements together and control each element in this process (2013, 267). *True Detective*'s title sequence uses a combination of varying live action and digital elements. The spatial temporal relationship for the multiple exposure effect in the montage is aided by temporal manipulation. Throughout, the sequence images' speed is decreased to create temporally manipulated images (Figure 7-1).

The *True Detective* title sequence uses shots from the show itself, rushes and other photographic sources, including images of rural and industrialised American landscapes (Figure 7-2) (Perkins 2014). The title designers at Elastic were inspired by Richard Misrach's landscape photographs of rural America (Perkins 2014). The different combination of photographic sources creates a hybrid title sequence by remixing these visual elements.



Figure 7-1: *True Detective* ⁶⁷

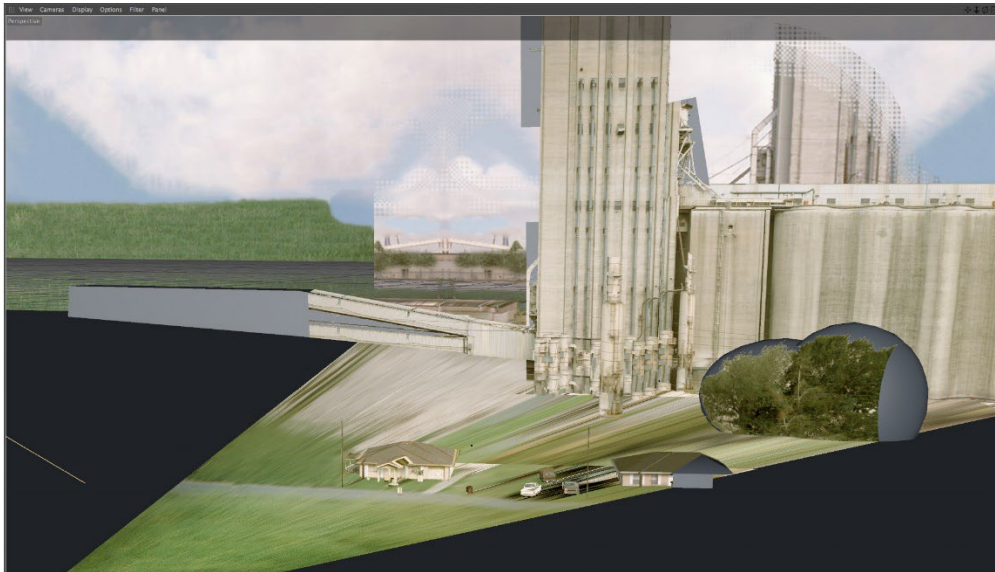


Figure 7-2: *True Detective* ⁶⁸

Figures 7-1 and 7-2 are useful examples of the hybrid style, containing a combination of live action and digital compositions. In an interview in *Art of the Title*, Clair explains that they took shots from Misrach and constructed them in three dimensions and he further elaborates that they created “low-poly geometry for truck stops, oil refineries, and more, and then projected landscape shots overtop, painting in details” (Perkins 2014). Low poly geometry refers to 3D computer graphics that have a low polygon count. In computer animation and computer-generated imagery, polygon shapes are used to build and construct images. The low poly environments were then projected onto landscape shots and had details painted in. The convergence of 3D technology and photographic images represents an intensification of changing digital practices as established in

⁶⁷ Perkins, Will. “*True Detective*.” *Art of the Title*, 14 Jan 2014, <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/true-detective/>. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁶⁸ Perkins, Will. “*True Detective*.” *Art of the Title*, 14 Jan 2014, <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/true-detective/>. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

Chapter 3 when discussing the development of computer-generated visuals. The combination of digital and live action images creates spatial montage that will be discussed at length in the next section (7.3.3).

7.3.3 Spatial Montage

The *True Detective* title sequence is distinctive due to its use of spatial montage. While the term “spatial montage” is used by various authors in different contexts (Spengler 2014; Ayiter, Elif; Yazicigil, Onur, Brooks, Lewis 2015), Manovich’s definition is pertinent as he relates it directly to digital aesthetics. Manovich states that spatial montage is an alternative to traditional cinematic montage through replacing a sequence with a mode where multiple images of varying sizes can be employed to create multi-image compositions (2001, 322). *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Pablo Ferro 1968) was a key development in the history of title sequence aesthetic design as an example of what Manovich calls spatial montage (2002). The sequence in the film consists of multi-image compositions that are placed together like a jigsaw puzzle through varying sizes and shapes within a single frame as seen in Figure 7-3.

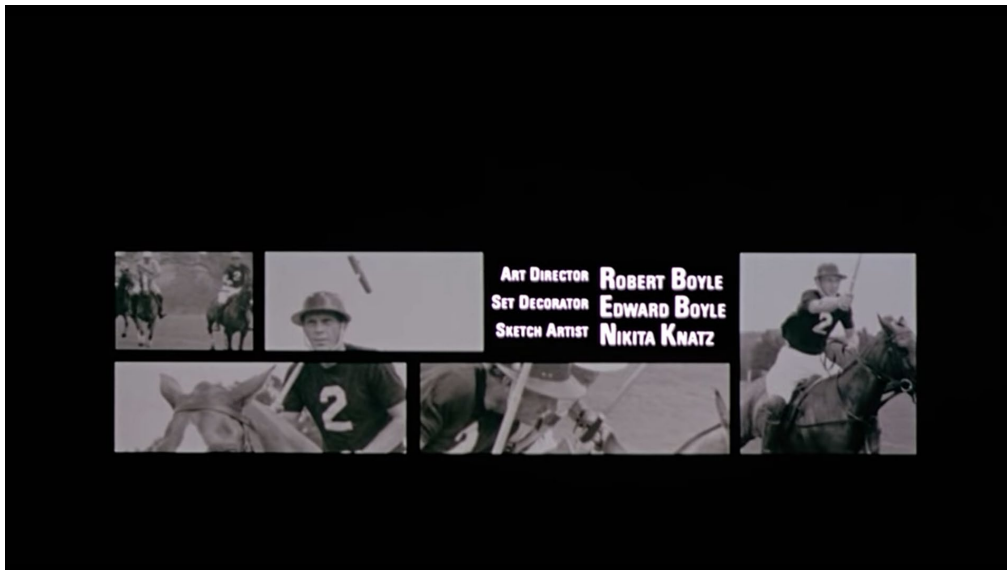


Figure 7-3: *The Thomas Crown Affair* Title Sequence (1968) ⁶⁹

Betancourt explains that spatial montage consists of multiple different images and thus creates juxtaposed imagery rather than one clearly defined subject (2016, 57). Betancourt is critical of Manovich's definition of spatial montage and instead argues for a broader scope of multi-image compositions that Betancourt labels windowing (2016, 57). Windowing not only uses juxtaposed imagery in a visual sense but presents wider implications particularly for temporal parameters. Therefore, the windowing used in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) not only functions through the spatial relationships between different screens in a single frame, but also in the way that screens move in relation to one another, and in the duration of their appearance, creating a multi-image composition.

Importantly, Betancourt's windowing extends beyond the digital and encapsulates earlier technological practices and a broader range of practices than just the digital computer aesthetics

⁶⁹ Captured from *The Thomas Crown Affair*. John McTiernan (director). MGM. Release Date: 6 Aug 1999. Timestamp: 00:00:56. YouTube (Source). MovieTitles. *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) title sequence. 23 April 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt0Y_vdxE_g. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

(2016, 6). As such, Betancourt's windowing concept is a useful reminder that *True Detective's* title sequence's aesthetic density is not just produced through digital images but live action through pre-existing photographs. Betancourt builds upon Manovich's conception of spatial montage that functions in opposition to temporal manipulation. Betancourt states that Manovich's "conception of spatial montage as an accumulation of immanent and graphically juxtaposed, rather than arranged over time, is a prominent, but limited, conception of the potentials for image relationships on screen" (2016, 4). Betancourt's comment supports this chapter's discussion of temporal and spatial manipulation in conjunction with one another. The spatial temporal relationship for the multiple exposure effect in the montage is aided by temporal manipulation. Outlining both Manovich's spatial montage and Betancourt's windowing reinforces how the formal components are integral to *True Detective's* aesthetic construction. These aesthetic components will be investigated for how they contribute to *True Detective's* aesthetic density (Figure 7-4).

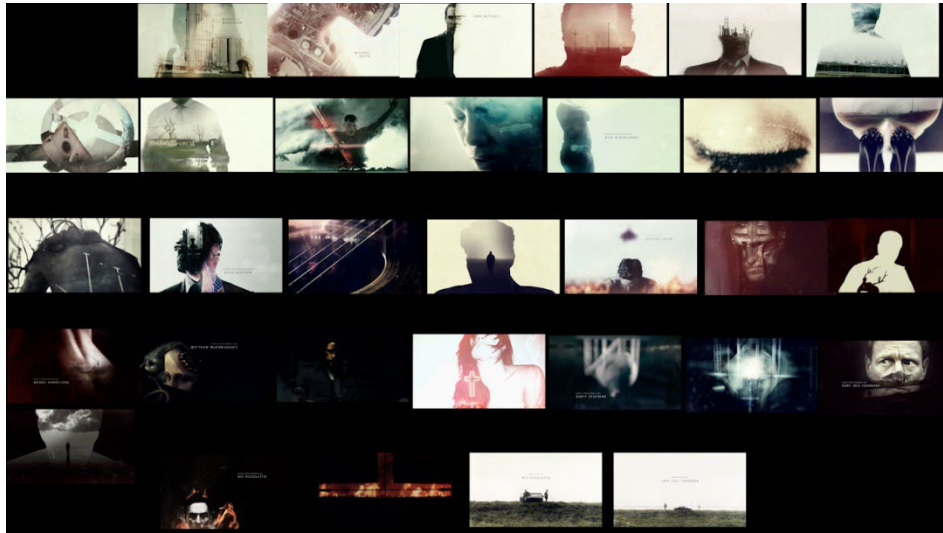


Figure 7-4: Every Shot in the *True Detective* Title Sequence (2014)

Spatial montage is not specific to *True Detective*'s title sequence. The multiple exposure in *True Detective*'s title sequence has an aesthetic resemblance to Joyce Ho's opening title sequence design for the motion graphic conference Analogue/Digital at Brisbane in 2013 (Figure 7-5). Joyce Ho's designs use multiple exposures where the opacity of different portraits of humans is manipulated to create multi-image compositions similar to *True Detective*'s title sequence. The similar use of multiple exposure in the two designs suggests that while *True Detective*'s visuals are distinctive in the title sequence design space multiple exposures were becoming increasingly popular in the 2010s.



Figure 7-5: Joyce Ho's Design (2013) ⁷⁰

7.3.4 Multiple Exposure in *True Detective's* Title Sequence

This section will conduct a formal analysis of multiple exposures typically double in specific shots. The first shot following the HBO production logo establishes the multiple exposure technique that defines the sequence overall. The multiple exposure consists of a rural pathway leading to an industrial factory (Figure 7-6). Superimposed over the image is the face of an indistinguishable human figure with the motion slowed down to 10% to 20%. The main melody of the song "Far From Any Home" also begins playing in this shot. The virtual camera moves back in 3D space accentuating the dirt path that leads to an industrial factory that makes up the digital composite, highlighting how the composition is akin to a parallax shot. The sense of parallax is constructed through the industrial digital still image being manipulated in editing software, where a virtual

⁷⁰ *Art of the Title*, "Analogue/Digital Brisbane", 2013, <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/analogue-digital-brisbane-2013/>. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

camera can move within computer-generated space and view this photograph from different angles or positions.



Figure 7-6: *True Detective* ⁷¹

Figure 7-6 establishes four separate elements for the entire sequence: the virtual camera, the multiple exposure, the credits/ typography and the non-diegetic musical track that guides the image. My analysis of the following shots will examine how *True Detective*'s title sequence employs minute aesthetics to distinguish the *True Detective* title sequence for HBO's branding.

7.4 Minute Aesthetics

I define minute aesthetics as specific formal details that create a deep aesthetic density to reinforce spectacle. Minute aesthetics are not particular to *True Detective*'s title sequence and are typical of the digital title sequence's aesthetic density and can be part of both isometric and micro title designs. The minute aesthetics are reflected in a draft image sourced from the interview with

⁷¹ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:08. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

Art of the Title (Figure 7-7) that has a caption that states, “elements of burning and fire begin to creep into our frame. Sometimes they just cast glows from offscreen, some embers float through our gaze. They are subtle at first but catch the eye by injecting the compositions with movement and colour” (Perkins 2014). The caption and draft image stresses that part of Elastic’s approach when designing the title sequence was to use specific minute elements of the composition to engage the viewer. These minute elements are not too dissimilar from the small details constructed via editing software in larger Hollywood blockbusters. For example, Williams argues that *Frozen*’s (2013) animation is carefully calibrated and foregrounds the amount of time it would have taken to render its dense animated visuals (131). However, the title sequence is not a narrative feature film and instead I claim that minute aesthetics throughout this sequence work apart from narrative as an attraction in their own right.



Figure 7-7: *True Detective* Draft Shot⁷²

7.4.1 Key Examples of Minute Aesthetics

A key example of aesthetic density is in Figure 7-8 which is a high contrast image of a woman trapped within a telephone. Figure 7-9 is a closer perspective of the same shot and indicates the subtlety of these minute details through small marks on the image. The aesthetics of the shot explicitly highlight the constructed nature of the digital title sequence through small scratches that create different textures and volumes in the black background in the image as investigated in Chapter 2's discussion of *Se7en* in Section 2.4 (1995).

⁷² Perkins Will, "True Detective", *Art of the Title*, 14 Jan 2014, <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/true-detective/>.

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Figure 7-8: *True Detective* ⁷³

⁷³ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:12. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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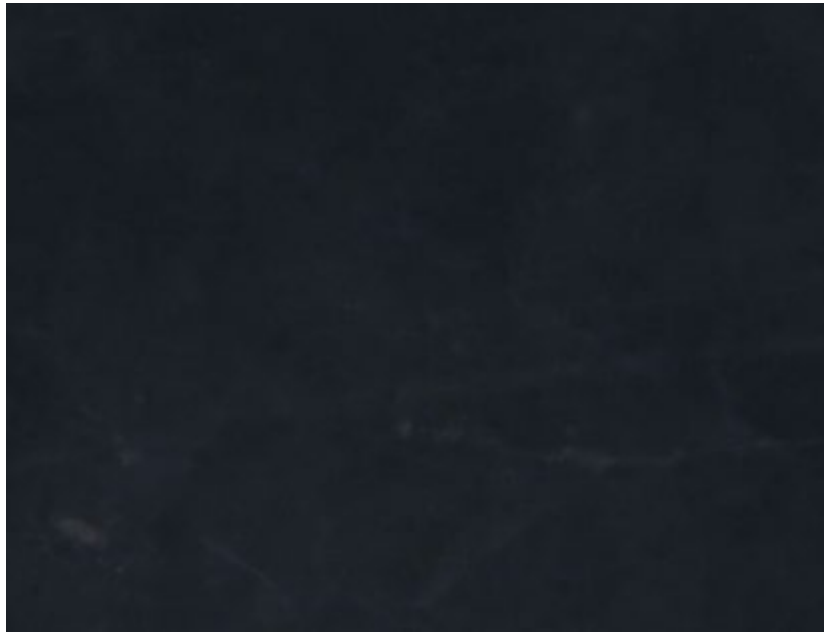


Figure 7-9: Closer Perspective

Figure 7-10 has minute numbers and scratches that are not foregrounded within the frame and could take multiple viewings to notice. For example, Figure 7-11 is a closer perspective of the shot and showcases the smaller scale of minute visuals. Such small minute details further contribute to the dense aesthetics of *True Detective*'s title sequence.



Figure 7-10: *True Detective* Title Sequence⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:21. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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Figure 7-11: *True Detective* Closer Perspective⁷⁵

Figure 7-12 establishes how minute aesthetic details and a triple exposure through the short duration contributes to dense visuals and creates a spectacular effect. The shot consists of three images through three layers of exposure: a suited silhouetted man, that could be the character Rust Cohle from the show, a map and an industrial factory. The duration of the map's appearance is brief (one second) so that it is difficult to understand the precise location to which it refers. Triple exposure also highlights an obscured geography through the map design, the industrial factory evokes the petro-chemical landscape of the show's narrative and finally the frontal shot of this indistinguishable character which links the corruption of the land to a human agent. The lyrics accompanying this shot state "A looming shadow grows" which matches the visual movement of the expanding map of unknown origin, creating a synchronous relation between image and music. The interplay between minute digital aesthetics and the music is a distinctive textual element of *True Detective* and will be discussed at length in the next section (7.4.2).

⁷⁵ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:21. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.



Figure 7-12: *True Detective*⁷⁶

7.4.2 Temporal Manipulation

Figures 7-13 and 14 below are further examples of aesthetic density and exhibit slow motion footage where the viewer can admire the minute movements of the different exposures. The character is moving at 10% speed of its original duration. The image in the double exposure is an industrial image that plays at a higher speed. The viewer potentially admiring the slow-motion effect is similar to Williams' description of shard cinema (2017). Williams defines shard cinema as outlined in the Literature Review as images of digital destruction typically emphasised through a slow-motion effect, allowing the viewer to admire the digital virtuosity and spectacle, particularly in contemporary Hollywood blockbusters. In a similar vein *True Detective*'s title sequence utilises moments of stasis for the viewer to admire the density of the visuals.

⁷⁶ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:21. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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Figure 7-13: *True Detective* (2014) Slow Motion Effect -00:00:02:00 ⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:02. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. *True Detective* - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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Figure 7-14: *True Detective* (2014) Slow Motion Effect- 00:00:03:02⁷⁸

7.4.3 Transitions

The minute aesthetic density is not only constructed through the multiple exposures but also through the transitions between shots. For example, the transition from Figure 7-15 to the shot in Figure 7-17 through Figure 7-16 only occurs within a short duration and has three distinct minute details. The first minute detail is a visual image: a target reticule from a gun, a digital effect. The second detail is the antlers which is another visual motif that reoccurs throughout the show's first season. The third detail are the small digital scratches, textures and particles. The density of the visual information in this transition is similar to Williams' discussion of a mosaic of screens as part of shard cinema. He argues that "broken mirrors, windows, windshields, and atrium roofs" form a mosaic of screens that constitute his conception of shard cinema (2017, 140). William's notion of a "mosaic of screens" is similar to the temporal and spatial manipulation of Betancourt's and

⁷⁸ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:03. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

Manovich's respective concepts outlined earlier in Section 7.3.1. William's notion explains how the multiple minute visuals in the title sequence function as their own mosaic to contribute to the dense visuals.



Figure 7-15: *True Detective* 1:12



Figure 7-16: *True Detective* 1:12



Figure 7-17: *True Detective* 1:14 ⁷⁹

7.4.4 Viewers' Appreciation of Minute Aesthetics⁸⁰

The minute aesthetics draw the viewers' attention to the editing and in some cases the editing software by presenting every pixel and vector that can be manipulated by the title designer. For instance, there are numerous examples on *True Detective*'s upload on YouTube by the user ProOMGHeadshot that establish viewers' admiring the imprint of editing and editing software in the title sequence (2014). Viewer 7A on YouTube appreciates the amount of work put into the title sequence by stating, "The people responsible for creating this opening sequence must so proud of themselves every time they see it on TV-- After effects skill level 2000p" (ProOMGHeadshot 2014).

⁷⁹ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:14. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

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⁸⁰ As mentioned in the Introduction, the sample comes from a limited source of this YouTube upload and some of the names suggest industry professionals.

There are examples of viewers underlining specific frames within the title sequence. Viewer 7B emphasises a specific shot by stating, “I love the shot at 0:56 where the freeway overlapping Woody's face makes it look like a skull. Amazing editing” (ProOMGHeadshot 2014). There are other comments that specifically reference this shot, such as user 7C who exclaims “0:56 - OMG, that double exposure is perfect!” and user 7D who notes, “The double exposure 'skull' at 0:56, done with the highways was beautiful” as well as user 7E comments “0:56 doesn't it look like a skull to any other of you? damn this is my favourite part!” (Figure 7-18). The density of *True Detective*'s multiple exposures is also reflected by news articles. For example, an article from *Slash Film* by Debopriyaa Dutta from 2022 celebrates Elastic's creative vision and admires the level of attention that went into the multiple exposure technique and various audio-visual layers (Dutta 2022). The viewers' and articles' appreciation of a particular shot highlights how the audience closely engages with the visual density of the title sequence and further elevates the *True Detective* title sequence as prestigious.



Figure 7-18: *True Detective* ⁸¹

This section has established that the *True Detective* title sequence is distinctive due to its minute aesthetic which is a key aesthetic component of the digital title sequence. The minute aesthetic is discursively constructed as prestigious through viewers appreciating the small changes in aural-visual density. The video essay in the Introduction to this thesis in Section 0.2.2 at 5:08 to 7:45 highlights instances of these minute visual changes and how viewers have voiced their appreciation of these elements. Additionally, the section in the video essay experiments with effects in editing software to manipulate various title sequence to demonstrate how viewers appreciate the amount of time and effort taken to create these aesthetic objects.

7.5 *True Detective* and Lyrical Theme Songs

The title sequence's aesthetic density is also constructed through music. *True Detective's* title sequence is guided by the relationship between the image and the song "Far From Any Road"

⁸¹ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:56. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

(2003), by independent New Mexico band The Handsome Family. Typically, whether accompanied by lyrical or instrumental musical tracks, title sequences such as *Game of Thrones* (2011), *Halt and Catch Fire* (2014) and *Stranger Things* (2016) have musical theme songs created by the show's main musical composer. The use of pre-existing popular music in title sequences is not uncommon. Pre-existing musical tracks are also utilised in other HBO television series such as *The Sopranos* (Alabama 3, "Woke up This Morning") (Figure 7-19), *The Wire* (Tom Waits, "Way Down In The Hole") and *The Leftovers* season two (Iris DeMent, "Perfect Strangers"). The lyrical theme songs for these prestige shows have indirect linkages to the shows' narrative which facilitate close engagement by the viewer where they can discern linkages between the show and the title sequence. For instance, user 7E on the *True Detective* title sequence exhibited on YouTube makes a linkage between the show's editing and the music, "The selected images, the way they overlap, the merely suggested transparency and above all, the theme song which is so damn beautiful are weaved together in an absolute perfection" (ProOMGHeadShot 2014).

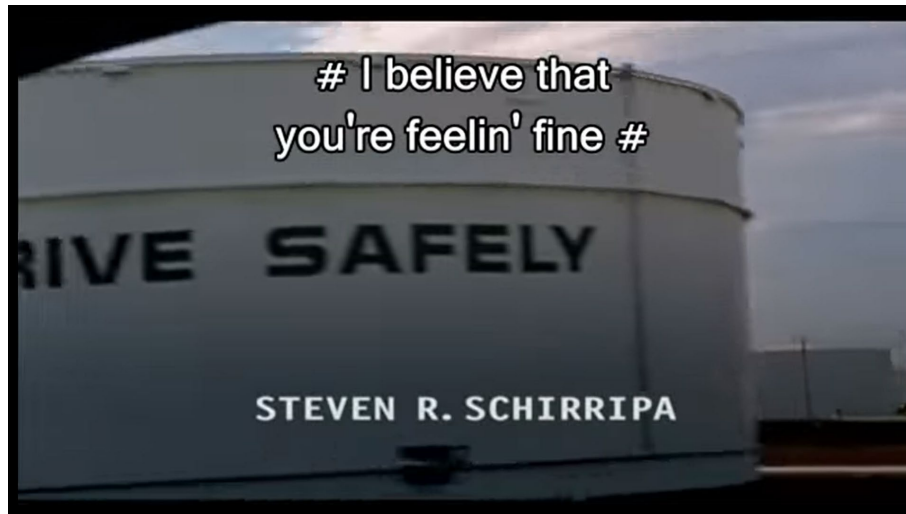


Figure 7-19: *The Sopranos* (1999)⁸²

Michael Betancourt has commented on the relationship between image and music when discussing title sequences. In his book *Beyond Spatial Montage: Windowing, or the Cinematic Displacement of Time, Motion, and Space*, Betancourt explains that visual abstraction linked to music enables the audience to interpret these visuals as a translation of the music into the concrete, visual realm of the image (2016, 35). In the case of digital title sequences, the narrative is not directly represented and so the link between the music and the visuals is not always clear. Nevertheless, the linkage between the visual and music is not just abstract for lyrical theme songs. The use of a lyrical theme song makes the translation from music to the visuals because the lyrics can guide the interpretation of the image.

Davison has analysed how the title sequence's lyrical and instrumental theme songs for HBO shows like *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under* contribute to repeat viewings (2013b, 19). Davison's argues that the music for these HBO programs encourages close intensive viewing practices

⁸² Captured from *The Sopranos* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Showrunner David Chase. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 10 Jan 1999. Timestamp: 00:00:45. YouTube (Source). Med Ali. The Sopranos Intro With Lyrics. 15 Oct 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRrciJ3yE6Y> Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

(2013b, 19). Davison defines these hit points as “the moments of synchresis across the media” meaning where the viewer makes a direct linkage from what they are seeing to what they are hearing (2013b, 19). While Davison’s comments are useful for analysing the relationship of music and visuals in title sequences, Davison is largely discussing title sequences made in the TV III period for HBO like *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*, not the computer-generated title sequences of the TV IV period. I claim that the synchresis that Davison (the term originated from Michel Chion 1994) applies to the title sequence does not only create a tight synthesis between the visuals and the music but contributes to the dense visuals since the viewer is invited to admire how the tempo of the music matches the rhythmic editing of the title sequence’s computer-generated visuals.

This section employs an in-depth investigation of how the lyrical theme in *True Detective* relates to the thematic and narrative concerns of the show’s serialisation and adds to the aesthetic density of the title sequence. There are two types of music-image relations that enable an aesthetic density that I call direct and indirect relations. Direct relations are instances where the lyrics match the composition of the frame, while indirect relations are lyrics that do not match the visuals and instead have broader thematic connotations and linkages to the show itself.

7.5.1 Direct Relations to the Visuals

A key example of direct synchronicity between the lyrics and the visuals occurs in Figure 7-20. The first verse in the sequence overall crescendos in a male/female harmony accompanied by a multi-exposure composition. There are three distinct images in this shot: the adult male praying or worshipping, the religious iconography through an inverted red neon glazed cross and the rural landscape that is the background layer for the ritual. The visual movement of the adult praying

and raising their hands in slow motion matches the lyrics “she twines her spine up slowly”. Both the lyrics and the image create a synchysis because they evoke a vertical movement. The raising of the hands is a vertical movement and the lyrics evoke the image of a spine twining vertically. The synchysis indicates the close relationship between the lyrics and the image. Given the density of the complex layers and the direct lyrical linkage to the image, the shot creates aural-visual relations that the viewer can engage with closely to discover thematic meaning between the lyrics and visuals. Davison argues this point by arguing that the interaction between music and the image allows the viewer to actively participate in the interpretive process (2013b, 19). I claim that the music complicates the aesthetic density of the visuals beyond the viewers’ interpretation through direct relations.



Figure 7-20: *True Detective*⁸³

Figure 7-21 is another example of direct lyric-image. In Figure 7-21 the lyrics state, “When I touched her skin my fingers ran with blood” and an industrial factory is presented in a double

⁸³ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:33. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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exposure with the outline of a sexually provocative image through the spiked high heels that conveys a different motif: sexual violence. The double exposure links the industrial landscape to sexual desire and the commodification of sex. The lyrics reinforce these broad thematic associations through the words “skin, finger, blood” with lyrics and visual image working together to add an additional layer of thematic interpretation concerning the misogynistic violence against women in these polluted landscapes. *True Detective* depicts domestic violence as well as violence against sex workers throughout its eight-episode run time. The lyrics support the main thematic concerns of the show’s narrative that becomes recontextualised as the viewer potentially progresses through the show’s serialised narrative.

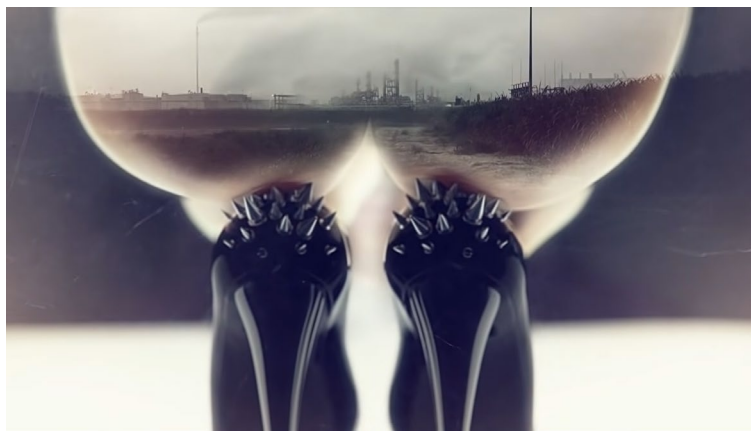


Figure 7-21: *True Detective*⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:44. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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7.5.2 Indirect Relations to the Visuals

There are also indirect thematic connections between the lyrics and the image that adds an additional layer of density. Accompanying Figure 7-22, the first verse from “Far from Home” begins on the fourth shot of the title sequence with the lyrics, “From the dusty mesa”. The lyrics do not match the visual composition directly. Instead, the double exposure and lyrics are working independently to evoke the same thematic connection. The image does not contain a dusty mesa explicitly and instead indicates the petro-chemical landscape.



Figure 7-22: *True Detective*⁸⁵

Figure 7-23 continues the high contrast imagery with a white double exposure on a black background. The reoccurring motif of sexual desire is repeated with another image of female nudity insinuating sexual availability onto the visually desolate image of a playground. The juxtaposition of female nudity and the desolate vacant spaces provides a direct linkage to the show’s serialised narrative that follows a series of serial killings of sex workers in Louisiana.

⁸⁵ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:15. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. *True Detective* - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

Furthermore, the conflation of sexual imagery and a playground evoking childhood innocence through the double exposure is evidence of the show's themes surrounding sexual predation. The lyrics in this shot are "Mountain cats will come" that implies a thematic linkage with the hunter prey dynamic that informs the crime drama narrative's serial killer mystery in the show. Both indirect and direct lyric-image linkages contribute to the aesthetic density of the double exposures by providing an additional layer of narrative and thematic interpretation that encourages the viewer to actively engage in the interpretation of the digital title sequence guided by these two formal relationships.



Figure 7-23: *True Detective*⁸⁶

7.6 Connections to the Show

While viewers can appreciate the spectacle of the title sequence's minute aesthetic density in interplay with the music, the title sequence is also guided by direct connections to the narrative

⁸⁶ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:04. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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toward the end of the sequence. As this section will explain, the title sequence has two functions of both spectacle and serving the show's narrative. The title sequence's connection to the narrative is clarified in an interview with *Art of the Title*, Patrick Clair, the creative director on *True Detective* for Elastic:

Nic said to us that what he was trying to do was look at the poisoned broken landscapes of Louisiana and use them as a metaphor for the poisoned broken characters, people who had been exploited, people who had been polluted and used up and I just kind of took that very literally and was like what if we made portraits of the characters out of poisoned broken landscapes (Perkins 2014).

In the same interview, Clair further illustrates Elastic's approach by stating: "Visually, we were inspired by photographic double exposures. Fragmented portraits, created by using human figures as windows into partial landscapes, served as a great way to show characters that are marginalised or internally divided" (Perkins 2014). The statement indicates how the double exposure and their juxtaposed imagery served as figurative symbols of characters entrapped by a petro-chemical landscape.

The different thematic allusions and references to the show through metaphorical images complicates the concept that the dense aesthetic is the only factor that contributes to spectacle. There are key examples of thematic allusions throughout the sequence. Figure 7-24 demonstrates this, where the double exposure consists of a woman and an industrial factory creating polluted and corrupted imagery that is thematically linked with the Louisianian setting in *True Detective's* narrative.



Figure 7-24: *True Detective*⁸⁷

Figure 7-25 exhibits how the virtual camera directs the viewers' potential attention to certain patterns. In Figure 7-25 the double exposure in this shot is not between a character and a landscape but instead between an object and a landscape via the religious iconography trapped within the confines of an industrial machine: a wagon wheel. The relation between these two images is reinforced by the virtual camera. The shot is not static; instead, the virtual camera moving from right to left accentuates the simultaneous motion of the wheel moving in the same direction and the double exposure directly links the wheel with the church. The virtual camera in conjunction with the double exposures creates a close visual proximity and can guide the viewers' attention toward making a thematic association between the industrial nature of the wheel and the religious sanctity of the church.

⁸⁷ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:10. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.



Figure 7-25: *True Detective*⁸⁸

Figure 7-26 is another key example where there are narrative and thematic connotations. Figure 7-26 is a 3D constructed double using geometric shapes that creates a white high contrast silhouetted figure. As such, the character in this shot is barely recognisable as human—a digitally constructed silhouette. With the character obscured, the viewer can focus on the two key motifs: the fire and the deer, to make thematic connotations to the show's narrative. Clair expands on fire as a motif throughout the entirety of the title sequence in an *Art of the Title* interview. He explains that fire is a key element within in the television series and so the title sequence transitions from light to dark to highlight the apocalyptic imagery (Perkins 2014). The transition from light to dark throughout the entire sequence is a motif and establishes that during its ninety second run time there is a clear visual trajectory.

⁸⁸ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:27. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.



Figure 7-26: *True Detective*⁸⁹

Clair's intent to create a thematic connection between the show and the title sequence is not necessarily anything new for title sequence design. However, what is distinct and new about *True Detective*'s title sequence design is its digital hybrid multiple exposure imagery that creates dense and layered compositions to create ambiguity around how the sequence relates thematically to the show.

While the majority of shots in the title sequence utilise metaphorical images, there are also images that directly reference narrative. In an early storyboard that the creative team at Elastic produced to pitch the project to the television show's showrunner, the creative team states, "as the titles build in energy and intensity, our symbolism becomes more focused and literal" (Perkins 2014). As such in the final shots the characters become more readily identifiable. In a shot Cohle is recognisable and is not obscured by double exposures, thus favouring narrative over thematically motivated compositions. This shot can become recontextualised if the viewer has watched the

⁸⁹ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:01. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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first episode in *True Detective*'s serialised narrative. Viewers may recognise Matthew McConaughey as an actor outside of the show but will recognise the image is from the show's first episode (Figure 7-27, Figure 7-28).



Figure 7-27: *True Detective*⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:10. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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Figure 7-28: *True Detective* Season One Episode One ⁹¹

Toward the end of the sequence, Figure 7-29 indicates the thematic and visual transformation the entire title sequence has undergone, from fragmented isolated bodies and faces to the fire motif that evokes self-destructive forces. The shot also continues the pattern of emphasising narrative over thematic or minute aesthetics as Woody Harrelson's face is identifiable.

⁹¹ Captured from *True Detective*. Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 55:12. YouTube (Source) Sideeffects, "Start asking the right fucking questions- True Detective scene", 15 Jan 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZGiXe76g9A>. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 7-29: *True Detective*⁹²

From identifying the characters, viewers can make connections between the multiple exposure imagery and their knowledge of the characters in the serialised story world. For example, user 7F on YouTube states that:

Although there are many incredible pieces of imagery in this intro, the significance is so much more layered. The way that Rust is portrayed shows a calm and emotionless demeanour, almost desensitized to all of the awful things he's seen. With Marty, his facial expressions are filled with anger, confusion and sadness. The case broke him, it's so unsettling and [sic] brilliant, particularly the shot at 1:17. An innocent man, trapped in a horrifying tale (ProOmgHeadshot 2014).

The show's narrative in these last few shots is recontextualised once the viewer has watched the show. These direct narrative allusions contribute to show's serialised viewing as the title sequence becomes recontextualised through several watches as the ambiguity can allow the viewer to engage with show's narrative.

⁹² Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:18. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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The entire title sequence ends with two extreme long shots, with the two central leads positioned against the backdrop of an industrial image. The first of these shots is a disruption in the aural-visual relations between shots previously established, because it is not a typical multiple exposure where two or more images are overlaid with reduced opacity. Instead, there is a temporal ellipsis where a portion of time is elided, creating a jump cut indicated by the two figures changing positions in space with an alternate perspective of the car (Figure 7-30, Figure 7-31). The shot itself features a similar composition to a shot in season one episode three (Figure 7-32). Therefore, these final shots in the title sequence have a direct resemblance to characters and images in the show that further reinforces that *True Detective*'s title sequence services the narrative and has its own distinct aural-visual patterns. This section has demonstrated that the title sequence has both utilised direct narrative linkages in addition to the spectacle of the image itself.



Figure 7-30: *True Detective*⁹³

⁹³ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:32. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.



Figure 7-31: *True Detective*⁹⁴



Figure 7-32: *True Detective* Season One Episode Three 14:59

7.6.1 Spectacle and the Image

The minute aesthetics used throughout the title sequence function as a form of spectacle. Isaacs discusses spectacle in 2010s Hollywood, arguing that “the autonomous image, the image detached

⁹⁴ Captured from *True Detective* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Cary Fukunaga (director). Showrunner Nic Pizzolatto. HBO. New York City. New York. Release Date: 12 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:01:34. YouTube (Source). ProOMGHeadShot. True Detective - Intro / Opening Scene HD. 14 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxXRkqXfhYM&t>. Accessed 21/09/2022.

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from the representation of the world as object or narrative, presents a uniquely affective register of cinema that works with, and yet also in some sense in isolation from, narrative progression” (2013, 106). The *True Detective* title sequence, and the digital title sequence more broadly, employ the dual aspects of narrative and spectacle; the title sequence primarily functions as a concise summary of the diegesis while functioning as a showpiece in the TV IV period in a paratextual capacity. A point of departure from Issacs’ analysis of blockbuster spectacle is that digital television title sequences are not directly connected to narrative and are instead self-contained peritextual objects. Through their indirect allusions to narrative in conjunction with the two key relationships – spatial-temporal and audio-visual – they represent a distinct hybridised aural-visual form that uses the show’s iconography.

7.7 *True Detective’s* Influence

The multiple exposure technique becomes quite typical in other television title sequences after its acclaimed use in *True Detective’s* first season title sequence. Multiple exposure has been adopted by other title sequences in the 2010s such as *The Jinx: The Life and Death of Robert Durst* (2015, Figure 7-33), *Queen Sugar* (Can 2016, Figure 7-34), by Prologue Films and *The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair* (Bolan 2018, Figure 7-35) by Elastic. Out of these examples, viewers have commented on how *The Jinx: The Life and Death of Robert Durst’s* (Unknown 2015) title sequence has an aesthetic similarity to *True Detective’s* title sequence. For example, one post on Reddit is titled “Influenced by True Detective opening? Or copycat?” and poses whether the title sequence imitated *True Detective* (skinnypup 2014). Viewer engagement with the title sequence has aided the *True Detective* title sequence multiple exposure as a discrete trend in the 2010s. A blog by

Kelsey Brannan titled “Opening Title Sequence Trends and How to Replicate Them” lists distinct recent trends in title design. One of the trends that Brannan mentions is *True Detective*’s multiple exposure style. Brannan states, “There is also a current trend of blending two or more videos together to produce what is called the ‘double exposure’ effect” (Brannan 2018). This double exposure effect and how it has been transformed by viewers in online spaces will be investigated in the next section (7.7.1).



Figure 7-33: *The Jinx* Title Sequence Double Exposure⁹⁵



Figure 7-34: *Sugar* Title Sequence Double Exposure⁹⁶



Figure 7-35: *The Truth about the Harry Quebert Affair* Double Exposure⁹⁷

7.7.1 Multiple Exposure and Fan Practices

Multiple exposure continued to be adopted by *True Detective* title sequences for season two (2015) and three (2019). The title sequence for the first season of *True Detective* was uploaded onto YouTube on HBO's official channels as well as fan channels. The greater popularity of HBO's *True Detective* title sequence on fan websites than its official upload is indicative of Jenkins' spreadable media and the concept of stickiness (2012, 5). The HBO upload is an example of the stickiness model that "privileges putting content in one place and making audiences come to it so they can be counted" (2013, 5). Jenkins argues the stickiness model is an economic strategy that gathers data of viewers to better sell advertisements and other products to gain more avenue (2013, 5). The HBO upload of the season one *True Detective* title sequence has 2.6 million views (HBO 2011). However, the title sequence is also part of Jenkins' notion of spreadable media because the title sequence has also been circulated around on fan channels. Spreadable media "refers to the technical resources that make it easier to circulate some kinds of content than others" such as "the economic structures", "attributes of a media text" and "social networks" (Jenkins 2012, 4). I argue anyone being able to upload on YouTube and the distinctive multiple

⁹⁵ Captured from *The Harry Quebert Affair* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Showrunner Jean-Jacques Annaud. MGM. New York City. New York. Release Date: 13 Nov 2019. Timestamp: 00:00:21. YouTube (Source). The Rap Sheet. "The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair" TV Intro. 15 Oct 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chYNHWItYmE>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁹⁶ Captured from *The Harry Quebert Affair* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Showrunner Jean-Jacques Annaud. MGM. New York City. New York. Release Date: 13 Nov 2019. Timestamp: 00:00:21. YouTube (Source). The Rap Sheet. "The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair" TV Intro. 15 Oct 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chYNHWItYmE>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

⁹⁷ Captured from *The Harry Quebert Affair* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Showrunner Jean-Jacques Annaud. MGM. New York City. New York. Release Date: 13 Nov 2019. Timestamp: 00:00:21. YouTube (Source). The Rap Sheet. "The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair" TV Intro. 15 Oct 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chYNHWItYmE>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

exposure style encourages viewers to share the title sequence. As a result, fan practices further conflate HBO and the multiple exposure style. The *True Detective* title sequence gained a large amount of popularity obtaining 3.9 million views (ProOMGHeadShot) and 7.2 million views (TheBestSoundEver 2014) on fan YouTube channels respectively. Various comments on the YouTube uploads establish engagement specifically with the title sequence's visuals (ProOMGHeadShot 2014). These comments prove that viewers not only engage with the content itself but also with the technology behind the creation of the title sequence's multiple exposure imagery. For instance, a viewer comments on the three dimensionality of one of the shots in the sequence. User 7H states, "Interesting fact, the shot of the woman sitting on her heels is completely 3D. There are some other 3d models but forget which ones...I think the semi-truck heads. Beautiful use of imagery and compositing" (ProOMGHeadShot 2014). User 7I specifically admires the editing in conjunction with the visuals by stating, "This intro is amazing. So artistic and goes perfectly with the imagery and the song, and of course it represents exactly what this show is about. Great editing. And the first season of the show is one of the best things I have ever seen on tv" (ProOMGHeadShot 2014). The upload of *True Detective's* seasons one, two and three title sequences on YouTube suggests that HBO wants to present the multiple exposure style as part of its branding which is compounded by fans spreading the content on YouTube.

Further, HBO continued to use Elastic and particularly Patrick Clair as lead creative designer to ensure a consistent aesthetic identity for the branding of the show, and, by extension branding HBO as a network. The consistent aesthetic identity across seasons one-three of *True Detective* has had a prominent engagement from critics. For example, an article from *Wired* titled "How They Made *True Detective's* Opening Credits So Eerie" (Stinson 2022) investigates how the title sequence contributes to the story through metaphor and vivid imagery in season two. Another

article by *Den of Geek* focuses on season three and explains its distinct visuals titled, “*True Detective* Season 3: Opening Credits Explained” (Bojlad 2019). Other articles reported on how *True Detective* won at the Emmys. *The Sydney Morning Herald* reports how “How Patrick Clair won the Emmy for 90 seconds of *True Detective*” (Kalina 2014). These online reports bolstered the visibility of *True Detective* outside its original broadcast on HBO aided by Elastic’s multiple exposure style.

Not only has the multiple exposure technique had a large effect on the engagement from critics but on fan remixes on YouTube. Searching the “double exposure *True Detective*” on YouTube produces a myriad of search results such as “*True Detective* double exposure in Photoshop, Double Exposure in Photoshop”, (Quintal 2014) “*True Detective* Effect In 3 Easy Steps” (Domi 2018) and “*True Detective* titles HBO aftereffects tutorial” (After Effects Tutorial w/Mikey 2014). User 7K comments on the increase of multiple exposure videos following *True Detective*. They state, “I’ve seen a shit load of double exposure tutorials lately and while the effect is sadly overused, this is one of the better tutorials I’ve seen on it. Good job” (Quintal 2014).

Two types of fan remixes demonstrate how YouTube has facilitated an engagement with *True Detective*’s distinctive multiple exposure. One type of video is tutorials which highlights how fans have become producers of their own content in the 2010s. In these videos fans showcase their editing skills to teach other fans about how to accomplish the double exposure technique. This positions viewers not just as consumers but as active authorities on the construction of *True Detective*’s title sequence. The other type is where fans have remixed other television shows in the *True Detective* multiple exposure style. Some examples of this type include “*True Detective* Opening [*Star Wars* Edition]” (Kajsca 2020), “*Breaking Bad* Title Sequence” (Detonator212 2020)

and “*Fargo* Title Sequence (*True Detective* Style)” (itemax 2024). The *Breaking Bad* title sequence has 7.5 million views, indicating the popularity of these fan creative practices (Figure 7-36).



Figure 7-36: *Breaking Bad* Title Sequence Remix⁹⁸

These examples prove not only viewers’ intertextual knowledge and their expertise of the multiple exposure style but establishes the multiple exposure style as a discrete trend due to fan engagement online. Re argues that title sequences create networked communities through sharing their passion for their favourite piece of media (2016). In the TV IV period communities on YouTube share their knowledge of the title sequences and the techniques used to create them through producing their own title sequences. Notably, the majority of these fan remixes include specifically *True Detective* in their title, and all were uploaded by various users after *True Detective*’s release date. While fan remixes are not particular to *True Detective* or its title sequence, the multiple exposure style did influence fan participatory practices and reinforces HBO’s branding by highlighting the distinctive multiple exposure style. The digital title sequence

⁹⁸ Captured from. YouTube (Source). Detonator212. “Breaking Bad Title Sequence (True Detective Style)”. 25 May 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQl86XDsqFo>. Accessed 21/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

and its relationship with fan communities will be investigated in the next chapter on Starz's branding.

7.7.2 Conclusion

This chapter undertook a close formal analysis of Elastic's *True Detective* season one title sequence. I analysed how the aesthetic function of *True Detective*'s title sequence is guided by two key relationships: image-music and spatial-temporal manipulation to create a dense aesthetic design. The minute aesthetics, multiple exposure style, metaphorical iconography and lyrical music all contribute to making the title sequence distinctive to further HBO's branding and aesthetic identity as a premium cable service. The distinctive multiple exposure became an aesthetic identity for HBO through its influence on other title designs, fan practices and close viewing engagement on YouTube and websites.

8 STARZ- FAN COMMUNITIES

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate how Starz has used the title sequence's dense digitised aesthetics and metaphorical ambiguity to engage fans online. While HBO has also branded itself to fan communities as established at the end of last chapter, it has not specifically redesigned its own brand to focus and target fans online to the same extent as Starz. Unlike HBO, Starz has utilised its marketing to intentionally target a younger audience demographic that are technologically adept and proficient in using social media for the purposes of fostering communities for television shows. This chapter will argue that Starz directly targets these fan communities through changing its tag line to "obsessable" in 2016. Ultimately, the chapter will demonstrate how following HBO using the title sequence as a prestige branding device, Starz has begun using the title sequence to distinguish its brand as prestigious and to market itself to fans.

This chapter is divided into three discrete sections. The first section (8.2) will focus upon how Starz used title sequences such as *Spartacus* (2010), *Magic City* (2012) and *Black Sails* (2014) to emphasise network branding and expand its audience demographic in the fragmented and highly competitive television landscape. I chose these examples because they are (except for *Spartacus*) designed by large motion graphic companies such as Imaginary Forces and Elastic and so further supporting my second subsidiary aim of investigating how these large motion graphic companies have contributed to the digital title sequence. I chose *Spartacus* as a counterpoint to the elaborate motion graphic designs of *Black Sails* to study how Starz increasingly used the title sequence in online spaces. The second section (8.3) will examine how Starz utilised the title sequence from 2015 onwards after its rebranding. This section will analyse how Starz was utilising title sequences

such as *American Gods* (2017) as part of its fan-centric marketing. The third section (8.4) focuses on how dense visual designs have contributed to Starz's prestige standing through winning Emmy Awards. I chose *Counterpart* (2017) to indicate how Starz uses dense aesthetics similar to HBO's title sequence approach to branding. In the next section I will investigate how the digital title sequence's metaphorical ambiguity has additionally influenced closer viewer attention.

8.1.1 Metaphorical Ambiguity and Viewers' Attention

The digital title sequence's dense aesthetics are not just a form of spectacle but use metaphorical imagery. While other title sequences, particularly Bass's, as discussed in Chapter 2 in Section 2.3 employs metaphor to evoke themes, the digital title sequence is distinctive due to how metaphorical ambiguity can inspire fan engagement on video sharing platforms, websites and discussion forums in the 2010s. Title sequences aid Starz's branding through the metaphorical ambiguity encouraging fan interpretations. The aesthetic density leads to close viewing engagement similar to the complex serial drama. The density of visual information that the viewer must glean demands intensive audience attention to notice small nuances and details. This notion of audience attention has been ascribed by scholars to the complex narratives in long form serialised television. For example, Dunleavy writes that complex dramas are not designed to be consumed casually, and that the viewer must always watch and listen carefully (2017, 3). However, Dunleavy's comment is referring to narrative exposition in long form serialised dramas whereas title sequences in the 2010s typically defy narrative explanations. Despite the aesthetic differences between the show and the title sequence, I reason that the aesthetic density in title sequences is constructed not to be viewed casually and instead encourages a closer viewing. For the purposes of this analysis Jonathan Gray's comments about title sequences encouraging close readings are more pertinent. Gray notes how opening title sequences inspire "close readings"

from the viewer (2010, 76). This chapter will bridge these two ideas of close viewing engagement by analysing *American Gods*' title sequence to study how digital title sequences inspire close readings in fan communities online.

Other digital title sequences cater to fan's knowledge of the serialised narrative. In an interview with *Art of the Title*, Michelle Dougherty of Imaginary Forces describes that it created the title sequence *Counterpart* with the show's serialisation and repeated viewings in mind (Landekic 2018). She explains that *Counterpart* was designed for viewers to repeatedly view the title sequence to find small details and additional meanings (Landekic 2018). The interplay between the digital title sequence's own aural-visual makeup and the show's serialised narrative encourages the viewer to continually reinterpret the title sequence with each new viewing.

8.1.2 Starz's Branding

Starz is a cable television network that launched in 1994 and that later launched a streaming service in 2012. Additionally, Starz is offered as part of Amazon Prime in 2015 as an add on. HBO has historically used prestige branding as discussed in Chapters 3 and 6 and Starz has also been influenced by HBO. As established in Chapter 3, from the 1990s and 2000s networks have employed original programming in a competitive television landscape. For instance, AMC have developed its own original television shows such as the highly praised *Breaking Bad* (2008) and the *Walking Dead* (2010). Some websites and blogs have noted that Starz has transitioned from a lowbrow to a prestige network such as "How STARZ Perfected the Lowbrow" (West 2015) and "Can Showtime and Starz Become Prestige TV's New Leaders?" (Jacobs 2022). The former claims that Starz wanted to be seen as a "purveyor of high quality drama" (West 2015). These examples indicate that Starz has attempted to reposition itself as a prestige network similar to HBO.

Another branding method that Starz uses is how it has marketed itself to fan communities through original programming television shows. As Myles McNutt (2022) makes clear, in the increasingly cluttered streaming era, Starz has distinguished itself through its genre orientated original programming like *Outlander* (2014), *Ash Vs the Evil Dead* (2015) and *American Gods* (2017). These shows all utilise genre to cater to discrete demographics of film and television fans such as horror fans in the case of *Ash vs Evil Dead* (2015). Furthermore, in 2016 Starz changed its tagline “obsessable” to brand itself as a network that caters to fan communities and to distinguish itself from its competitors. McNutt explains that Starz’s branding value was measured by generating fan bases instead of critical acclaim or award nominations and wins (2022, 171). McNutt elaborates that Starz’s “obsessable” branding was an attempt to affirm programming value through social media and a presence at Comic Con instead of an “Emmy nomination” (2022, 171).

Likewise, in an article by James Lyon titled “‘Are we having fun yet?’: The Starz television network and *Party Down* as Indie TV”, he asserts that Starz’s *Party Down* aligns with Starz’s marketing in the 2010s to target “indie-oriented subscriber base at that time” (2021, 2). Lyon agrees with Myles’s argument that Starz has targeted fans as part of its branding through its “obsessable” tag line (2022, 2). However, I argue, as discussed in Chapter 6, that HBO has targeted fans through online spaces. Thus, in the 2010s, HBO and Starz’s branding methods are not dissimilar. In a competitive streaming television marketplace both Starz and HBO have used the title sequence as a marker of prestige and to engage fan communities online. This chapter uses Starz as a case study because it has focused its entire brand identity to market itself to the fan in the 2010s. Overall, I will analyse how Starz has transformed its branding throughout the 2010s by investigating the *Spartacus* (2010), *Magic City* (2012), *Black Sails* (2014), *American Gods* (2017) and *Counterpart* (2017) title sequences.

8.2 Starz's Early Title Sequence Branding (2010 to 2015)

Starz competed with other streaming channels in the 2010s particularly through its original programming. This section will focus on Starz's original programs before its rebranding in 2016 such as *Spartacus* (2010), *Magic City* (2012) and *Black Sails* (2014). The title sequences from all three shows establish how Starz initially in the early 2010s did not use the title sequence as part of its branding and strategy to compete with HBO's prestige branding.

8.2.1 *Spartacus* (2010)

Spartacus has been discussed by academics in relation to prestige discourse. For example, McNutt claims that *Spartacus* is "too pulpy to register as prestige TV, but still appropriate to generate an 'edge'" (2022, 170). McNutt's comment highlights how the discourse surrounding *Spartacus* reinforces a dichotomy between lowbrow and highbrow which is typical for how prestige is constructed through its contrast with mass entertainment. However, Starz did not use the title sequence as part of its approach to present itself as prestige. In the case of *Spartacus* there is no title sequence, only a title card (Figure 8-1). The title card is limited to presenting the show's title and so Starz does not elect to employ an elaborately designed title sequence or dense aesthetics as part of Starz's branding (Figure 8-1).



Figure 8-1: *Spartacus* Title Card ⁹⁹

The gory period drama maintained a fan base over its four-season run, but Starz did not use the aesthetic density of a title sequence as part of that success.

8.2.2 *Magic City* (2012)

Another original show made by Starz is *Magic City* (2012) whose title sequence is created by Imaginary Forces. In stark contrast to *Spartacus* title card, the title sequence is over ninety seconds long (Figure 8-2).

⁹⁹ Captured from *Spartacus*. Steven S. DeKnight and Sam Raimi (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 12 Apr 2010. Timestamp: 00:00:05. YouTube (Source). Counter Boredom. *Spartacus* - All Opening . 6 Feb 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AnAR_Dyl30 . Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 8-2: *Magic City* Title Sequence ¹⁰⁰

Additionally, the title sequence while primarily utilising live action is reminiscent of micro title sequences that focus on metaphorical iconography divided into discrete compositions by rapid cuts (Figure 8-2). While not having the digital aesthetic density of micro title designs like *True Detective* discussed in the last chapter, *Magic City*'s micro design still indicates that Starz were beginning to promote the show using the title sequence. Despite the aesthetic differences in title designs between *Spartacus* and *Magic City*, the latter only lasted two seasons which would suggest that *Spartacus* was overall more successful through subsequent renewals of different seasons. However, *Magic City*'s title sequence was nominated for Outstanding Main Title Design which places the title design within prestige discourse. Its exhibition on Starz's YouTube page created a space where fans could note their disappointment over the show's cancellation (Starz 2013). For example, user 8A comments on the show's YouTube page claims, "Netflix should buy it and continue it this is a masterpiece man wtf.... still sad about the shutdown" (Starz 2013).

¹⁰⁰ Captured from *Magic City*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 18 June 2013. Timestamp: 00:01:05. YouTube (Source). YouTube Magic City | Magic City Theme Song & Opening Credits | STARZ. 18 Jun 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa_V76H5D-k. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

Another top-rated comment from user 8B asserts that *Magic City* is “A beautiful top class show, it's a real shame to cancel it” (Starz 2013). User 8C classifies the show as prestige television by expressing, “I miss this show so much. Quality TV” (Starz 2013). Although the engagement with *Magic City*'s title sequence does not represent popular opinion because the upload only received 100,00 views, far less than *Game of Thrones*' 40 million which implies that it was not a success for Starz's branding identity. However, HBO uploaded *Game of Thrones*' title sequence onto YouTube in 2011 and Starz uploaded *Magic City* in 2013. My analysis highlights that Starz has sought to emulate HBO's approach to using the title sequence as part of its branding.

The title sequence's upload by Starz provides a space for fans to voice their dissatisfaction of *Magic City*'s cancellation and further bolster the show's importance to fans. The reception to the cancellation on *Magic City*'s YouTube upload is not too dissimilar from other HBO television shows. For example, *Luck* (2011), a HBO show, was cancelled after one season and its title sequence was uploaded by YouTube and received similar comments. One comment on *Luck*'s YouTube page states, “Show was canceled [sic]... Just when I was getting into it. Loved the theme song” (HBO 2011). The quote emphasises that uploading the title sequence on YouTube creates another online space in which viewers' fan engagement endures beyond the show's cancellation or airtime.

8.2.3 Starz's Genre Marketing

Spartacus's longevity encouraged Starz to distinguish its branding increasingly with fostering strong fan communities. As Myles notes to build upon *Spartacus*' success it created other genre-oriented television programming such as period thriller *Da Vinci's Demons* (2013) and pirate drama *Black Sails* (2014) (2022). McNutt explains Starz used popular genres to further reach

different demographics like *Black Sails*' fantasy genre. McNutt contends that Starz uses populist genre shows to reshape the value of distinction for premium cable (2022, 172). McNutt elaborates that as a result the Starz catalogue was diverse and thus differentiated itself from HBO and Showtime through its emphasis on the fan (2022, 172). Moreover, the pursuit of individual genres to gain a fan audience is distinct from how HBO has treated genre. Historically, through its tag line "It's Not TV: It's HBO", the network has branded itself as distinct from broadcast television and instead positioned itself as ostensibly its own genre. However, Starz in the 2010s was also borrowing from HBO. From 2009 the previous CEO of HBO Chris Albrecht was hired as a CEO for Starz because of his record of oversight of HBO original programs (2022, 13). The hiring of Albrecht indicates how Starz was attempting to carve out its own programming to create its distinguished brand identity in the 2010s while also still directly borrowing from HBO's personal.

The critical reception to *Black Sails* reinforces the popular perception that Starz was emulating HBO. Reviews for the reception to *Black Sails* related the show's fantasy setting and explicit content to HBO's *Game of Thrones*. For example, a review by *the Hollywood Reporter* assess that *Black Sails* represents another step toward Starz distinguishing its network from its competitors (Goodman 2014). *The Hollywood Reporter* noted that Starz's brand identity has been largely defined by *Spartacus*'s focus on nudity and illicit content without the substance associated with *Game of Thrones*. *The Hollywood Reporter* argues, "What's been interesting to watch is how Starz seems to dictate the balance in an effort not to become the 'boobs-and-blood' channel. *Black Sails* may be an indication that it's an ongoing effort, and finding a balance like, say, *Game of Thrones* has found, eventually comes back to how well the show is written" (Goodman 2014, 14). Reviews have made this connection, creating the perception that Starz has been influenced by HBO. In the marketing campaign for *Black Sails*, Starz's revenue officer Michael Thornton elucidates that *Black*

Sails was an intentional attempt to target a similar target demographic as *Game of Thrones* as they both “garner a female viewership” (Reynolds 2014, 14). This quote indicates Starz’s acquisition of *Black Sails* is similar to HBO’s own diversification of original programming, as discussed in Chapter 6 in Section 6.3, and an attempt to target the same demographics as HBO’s popular *Game of Thrones*.

8.2.4 *Black Sails*’ Title Sequence

In lieu of Starz’s newfound strategy to target fan communities through its genre oriented original programming, the network opted to increasingly utilise the title sequence as part of its branding by uploading *Black Sails*’ title sequence onto YouTube to foster fan communities in online spaces (Figure 8-3). In the TV IV period, the uploading of title sequences on YouTube is a broader part of the shift toward corporations pursuing fan communities on the internet. The strategy proved far more successful considering Starz’s *Black Sails*’ title sequence has over 3 million views in contrast to *Magic City*’s title sequence which only had 105,081 views on YouTube at the time of writing. The difference in views is emblematic of *Black Sails*’ greater popularity than *Magic City* and suggests the success of Starz’s strategy to invest in popular genres to expand its audience.



Figure 8-3: *Black Sails* Title Sequence ¹⁰¹

While it is unclear if this was the network's intention, the online YouTube page provides an exhibition space to create a fan's community for the show's title sequence. For example, at the time of writing one of the top-rated comments on *Black Sails* states, "This intro has a separate fan base" (*Black Sails* 2014). The comment speaks to how Starz uploading the title sequence on YouTube and providing it with its own space allows fans to engage with the title sequence as its own discrete aesthetic object. The comment further highlights how the title sequence has become an increasingly prominent part of online fan discourse on YouTube. Out of the 1,813 comments 202 explicitly mention the term intro and fifty- three mention theme song. The data indicates that the fan base not only use the YouTube page to discuss the show but also the title sequence's dense aesthetics. For instance, one of the top-rated comments which has over 4,600 likes claims

¹⁰¹ Captured from *Black Sails*. Jonathan E. Steinberg. Robert Levine (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 25 Jan 2014. Timestamp: 00:00:28. YouTube (Source). Black Sails | Opening Credits | STARZ. 30 Jan 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFTcA4QLHw0>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

that “Never the Skip This Intro. Never. Ever” (*Black Sails* 2014). These comments demonstrate that there is a fan community for the title sequence on YouTube.

In the description for Starz’s upload on YouTube it emphasises the formal aesthetic virtuosity of the sequence to distinguish the title sequence as part of its branding. The video description states, “A masterpiece of macabre, the intricate sculptures (created entirely with digital special effects) are captured in the midst of an epic battle; skeletons and pirates, locked in a conflict of the ages. And Bear McCreary’s haunting music sets the perfect tone for a show that reinvents the pirate genre” (Starz 2014). The mention of genre explicitly in the title sequence description aligns with Starz’s increasing branding strategy to market itself to fan communities through diversifying its original programming into popular genres. Therefore, *Black Sails*’ title sequence is an early attempt to expand its audience demographic through popular genres to fan audiences.

8.3 Starz’s “Obsessable” Title Sequence Branding (2016 to 2019)

This section will investigate how the title sequence was utilised as part of Starz original branding from 2016-2019.

8.3.1 *American Gods*’ Fan Community

In 2016 Starz re-branded with the “obsessable” tag line. *Deadline* reports that “Also getting a refresh is the Starz logo, with the flagship channel getting a new tagline, ‘Starz: Obsessable,’ to reflect a focus on ‘fan-centric’ programming, including original series *Outlander*, *Ash Vs. Evil Dead*, *American Gods*” (Andreeva 2016). Additionally, *Variety* reported on Starz’s rebranding with comments from Starz’s executive vice president of marketing Alison Hoffman and Jeffrey Hirsch, the global marketing and product planning president (2016). *Variety* notes that as part of this

rebranding, Encore cable service was rebranded as Starz Encore. *Variety* reasons the aim of expanding the number of channels is to grow Starz's audience to other demographics such as "women and African Americans" (Holloway 2016). The move toward targeting a more diverse audience demographic is distinct from HBO's programming historically that focus on masculine protagonists. Alison Hoffman, Starz's executive vice president of marketing, explains in the report that Starz's rebranding decision was inspired by how fans were engaging on social media. Hoffman states, "We just kept seeing on social, 'I'm #obsessed,' whether it was on the Starz pages or on our show pages, ... We thought there was something there'" (Holloway 2016). The rebranding is evidence that Starz marketed itself to fans specifically on social media.

8.3.2 *American Gods'* Title Sequence

In the same year as Starz's re-branding to cater to fan audiences, Starz created the *American Gods* television show given it already had an existing fan base from the novel by Neil Gaiman. *American Gods* has a large fan base through online spaces such as Reddit, blogs and the show has had a presence at Comic-Con in 2016 before its air date. For example, Starz promoted the series before its air date at San Diego Comic-Con through a video titled, "*American Gods* | 2016 San Diego Comic-Con Booth Tour | STARZ" where fans of the book are interviewed to develop anticipation for the show. The example indicates how fan communities were foregrounded as apart of Starz's branding in the 2010s.

The *American Gods* title sequence was created in 2017 for Starz by Elastic and the designers that worked on *American Gods* includes creative designer Patrick Clair and lead designer Raoul Marks. There are three online spaces that clarify how Starz has marketed the title sequence to fan communities. Starz has not used the *American Gods'* title sequence specifically to brand its

product through uploading the title sequence to YouTube. However, Starz has used its *American Gods* US X page to market the show to its viewers. Viewers have discussed the title sequence on Reddit, news sites and blogs outside of official channels. The following section (8.3.3) of this chapter investigates how fans and critics have engaged with the title sequence's metaphorical imagery in different online spaces.

8.3.3 *American Gods*' Twitter

The Starz X page for *American Gods*' title sequence has posted about the title sequence specifically to further advertise it as part of its branding. For example, in 2018 the page posted "These opening credits will never ever get old. #AmericanGods". Another post asks the viewer to engage with the title sequence by stating, "what icon would you add to the opening credits totem?" (2018). In another post, on March 11, 2019, the page also posed a question to viewers, "Me every Time the American Gods# opening Credits comes on" with a gif taken from a shot in the television show (2019). This post received a high amount of engagement from fans because at the time of writing the post currently has 616 likes and 248 retweets while the other two posts in comparison received less than 100 likes. The popularity of the post stresses that X through the title sequence is another point of engagement that Starz engages fans. These comments still are evidence that the title sequence is an important part of how Starz has used titles sequences to foster discussion among fans.

8.3.4 News Articles

American Gods' title sequence's techno-fusion of religious iconography has encouraged fans to analyse how the title sequence relates to the show's lore and narrative. In a press release before the series began, showrunners Michael Green and Bryan Fuller accentuate the discrete nature of

the different gods that play a role in the show's narrative. They state, "Is it strange to want action figures from a main title sequence? Crucified astronauts, neon cowboys and S&M centaurs, we bow to Elastic and their spectacular vision. A totem of godly visions we didn't know we needed to worship until they showed us the light with this clarion call to the *American Gods*" (Evans 2017). This statement featured in numerous articles in the marketing and promotion of the series premiere on April 30, 2017, such as *Entertainment Weekly*, *Deadline* and *Collider* (Trumbore 2017; Snetiker 2017; Evans 2017). The statement highlights the title sequence is a part of Starz's branding strategy. Furthermore, the symbolic array of "crucified astronauts, neon cowboys and S&M creatures" caters to the participatory nature of the internet in the TV IV period where viewers can engage closely with the title sequence and how it relates to the show's array of fantastical and mythological characters. The notion of analysing the title sequence is reflected by news outlets such as *Nerdist* with the article, "*American Gods* Opening Titles Blend Iconography and Tech in Trippy Sequence" (Ratcliffe 2017). An article in *Looper* attempts to discern the meaning behind the title sequence in an article titled, "*The Real Meaning Behind American Gods*" (Meisfjord 2021). Similarly, a blog post examines the symbolism in the *American Gods*' title sequence titled, "*The Symbolism of American Gods' Opening Titles*" (Russel 2019). These articles emphasise that the title sequence's dense aesthetics and metaphorical images encourages a close engagement from critics.

8.3.5 Reddit and Blogs

Fans engagement with the title sequence on Reddit and blogs reflect how *American Gods*' title sequence's dense aesthetics has fostered fan engagement outside of Starz official channels. For example, on the Reddit page for *American Gods* a viewer posted an analysis of the title sequence titled, "*The entire American Gods opening sequence explained [OC]*" (PeppersGhostSCP 2017).

Throughout the replies on the page, other viewers also comment and provide their own interpretations on how *American Gods*' title sequence's iconography connects to the understanding of the show. For example, user 8D writes that, "The figure behind the cars is Ares, who is often depicted in a chariot, here shown by the two muscle cars being held by a chain like horses pulling the platform" (PeppersGhostSCP 2017). Moreover, another example and top liked comment on the post with over eighty likes by user 8E, provides additional analysis, "I'd like to add that Ganesh's pedestal is probably meant to be a lotus flower, like the one he is often depicted on" (PeppersGhostSCP 2017). The post has over 561 likes and sixty-four posts. Other posts on Reddit such as a comment that lists all the different religious references to Gods in the title sequence, titled "I made a list of references in the opening title sequence totem pole" (chewiecaramel 2017). Some of the comments to the post continue this analysis such as one post providing a comprehensive list of the Gods and their respective meanings (chewiecaramel 2017). Another comment admires the title sequence as its own discrete object by admiring its formal details. 8F states, "Awesome thanks. I love everything about this opening, fits perfectly with *American Gods* and the theme song is amazing as well" (chewiecaramel 2017). A comment by user 8G on this Reddit thread claims, "Thanks for the post. This has become my favorite opening title sequences already" (chewiecaramel 2017). These comments demonstrate that the title sequence is a point of engagement for fans to interact with the show further outside of official channels.

While the posts on Reddit do not constitute wider popular engagement with the title sequence in other social media outlets, the posts still suggest that fans intensively engage with the aesthetic density of the title sequence to find hidden details and easter eggs. As Jenner maintains in the TV IV period, fan practices have become increasingly mainstream and legitimised through the

internet (2023, 288). These fan practices analyse the title sequence through niche communities on the internet and discussion boards.

8.3.6 YouTube and Amazon Prime

The *American Gods* example does not just service Starz's fan community branding tagline but Amazon Prime who brought the exhibition rights from Fremantle Media International before the release date outside of the United States. As McNutt notes that Starz was added to Amazon Prime when it joined Showtime which allowed viewers to access Starz through Amazon Prime for nine dollars per month (2022, 171). Starz as an add-on to Amazon Prime demonstrates that the boundaries between different streaming services offered to viewers are increasingly blurred. In the age of media convergence, branding is complicated by viewers having access to multiple networks on the same streaming interface. Following Starz's branding practices using the *Black Sails* title sequence on YouTube, the *American Gods* title sequence was uploaded on YouTube not by Starz but by Amazon Prime's account for UK and Ireland with over 164,000 views. Amazon Prime emphasises exclusivity by stating in the description of the title sequence's upload, "The *American Gods* opening credits will blow you mind. Worship starts 1 May. Exclusively on Prime Video in the UK and 238 countries and territories outside of the United States" (2017). By uploading the title sequence on YouTube, Amazon Prime can further advertise the element of exclusivity in different regions as part of its original programming. While historically shows have been licenced to different territories, the upload on different channels highlights how the title sequence is a key component of how networks market their television shows in the 2010s. The engagement in the comments section on YouTube is evidence of how Starz and Amazon Prime similarly emulated HBO's strategy of uploading elaborate title sequences onto YouTube.

Amazon Prime's upload indicates how *American Gods'* title sequence encourages fans' close engagement not just with the metaphorical images but also the music. The *American Gods'* title sequence is accompanied by an instrumental rendition of Led Zeppelin "Immigrant Song". One of the top-rated comments on Amazon's YouTube channel notices this rendition and states the song's lyrics, "We come from the land of the ice and snow, from the midnight sun where the hot springs flow" (Led Zeppelin 1970). Throughout the sequence there are multiple references to the music. As viewer 8H comments on *American Gods'* title sequence, "Intro and music is sic! Amazing!". A viewer 8I exclaims "Such a divine theme!" (Amazon Prime Video UK & IE 2017). Similar to the discussion of direct and indirect linkages in the last chapter on *True Detective*, viewers create links between the instrumental music and the visuals. For example, a user 8J comments on YouTube for the *American Gods'* title sequence directly links their appreciation of the spectacle of the visuals to the sound of the music. They state "I've always thought the eagle was the most ominous one. It's the largest figure and looms high above the other ones and the eyes are shadowed over the hooded brow. Plus, the woman's vocal change as the camera slowly pans to it never ceases to give me me [sic] chills" (Amazon Prime Video UK & IE 2017). These comments stress that music in conjunction with the spectacle of the highly detailed computer-generated visuals are an attraction. There are similar sentiments expressed in the discourse of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence. For example, a comment by user 8K in the *Game of Thrones* YouTube comments page with 2,100 likes exclaims, "best intro song i've listened to" (*Game of Thrones* 2011). Additionally, user 8L with over 11,00 contends, "No matter how bad the ending goes, the music of GOT is still a masterpiece" (*Game of Thrones* 2011). The comparison suggests that there is a similar reception and a specific thread of viewers using the YouTube comment section to voice their appreciation of the music. The viewer revisits the title sequence not just to

interpret the synchronicity of the visuals and music but to enjoy and appreciate the memorable theme song as its own attraction. Therefore, the comments help to position the title sequence's elaborate aural-visual virtuosity and further brand Amazon Prime as prestige.

This ritualistic viewing behaviour on YouTube is particular to the 2010s and enabled by networks uploading the title sequence on YouTube. Davison claims that title music affects viewers' behaviour. In her article on contemporary title sequences, as discussed in Chapter 7, Davison argues that the music encourages certain behaviours such as "complete chores, prepare refreshments, end conversations, and sit and watch" (2013b, 3). I add that in the TV IV period, online spaces promote viewers to proclaim their admiration of the music on YouTube as a distinct ritualistic behaviour. Fans engaging with the title sequence on YouTube is similar to their appreciation of it on other forums and websites (2013, 1). The viewing behaviour on the internet also elevates the visibility of the title sequence and so is an important component of how Amazon, similarly to Starz, emulates HBO's uploading of *Game of Thrones*. Overall, Amazon Prime is another example of how networks have continued to use the title sequence's aural visuals on YouTube to foster fan engagement.

8.4 Starz and Prestige

While Starz has utilised the title sequence as a form of branding in the 2010s to expand its audience to different demographics and fan communities, the elaborate title sequences made by Elastic and Imaginary Forces that have Emmy wins and nominations indicate that the title sequence has functioned as a form of prestige branding for Starz. For example, out of Starz's original programs from 2010 to 2019, there are three nominations for the Outstanding Main Title Design, and two wins, for *DaVinci's Demons* in 2013 and *Counterpart* in 2017. While HBO has the

highest total amount, with ten nominations and four wins in the 2010s, Starz has the third highest number of nominations and wins out of the networks and over-the-top services nominated for Outstanding Main Title Design after Netflix. Both of its long-standing cable competitors AMC and FX, have three and four nominations respectively. Therefore, Starz, by using Elastic and Imaginary Forces, the same motion graphic clients as HBO, has pursued prestige branding through the title sequence specifically. These Emmy wins help to situate Starz's title sequences as distinguished objects similar to how HBO has used Emmy Award Winning motion graphic companies to position title sequences as prestige objects. One example of Starz's Emmy Award Winning title sequence approach to its branding is the *Counterpart* title sequence that won in 2017 for Outstanding Main Title Design. *Counterpart*'s television title sequence was created by Imaginary Forces creative designer Karin Fong. While Starz did not highlight the Emmy wins on its social media platforms, instead news outlets on the internet reported on the win for *Counterpart* in 2018. For example, Tim Surette at *TV Guide* made an article ranking the contenders for Outstanding Main Title Design in 2018 (Surette 2018). An article from *Variety* describes a myriad of different Emmy Award Winning title designs including *Counterpart* (Marsh 2018). Additionally, the designers have been highly visible because various channels have uploaded the original video of them winning the Emmy for *Counterpart* through YouTube videos. For example, Foundation INTERVIEWS which is a YouTube channel that uploads interviews with television casts, uploaded the designers celebrating its win for *Counterpart* in a video titled, "Emmy winning main title design team ('*Counterpart*') in the 2018 Creative Arts Emmys Press Room" (Foundation INTERVIEWS 2018). Imaginary Forces have also posted several videos on YouTube further demonstrating its win such as "Emmy 2018 Meet the Outstanding Main Title Design Nominees" and "2018 Creative Arts Emmys Main Title Design". The exhibition of these videos on YouTube help to align *Counterpart* and its title

sequence with prestige discourses online. The next section (8.4.1) will investigate how *Counterpart*'s title sequence employs dense aesthetics similar to previous title sequences from HBO to present the network as prestige.

8.4.1 *Counterpart*'s Title Sequence

This section argues how Starz has sought to emulate HBO's title sequence approach through employing dense aesthetics using the accumulation of motifs during *Counterpart*'s title sequence. *Counterpart* is a science fiction television show created by Justin Marks for Starz on December 10, 2017. The show's narrative is about a reality in which a parallel Earth exists that was created during an experiment by East Berlin during the cold war in 1987. The motifs are another facet the digital title sequence's aesthetics density in addition to minute aesthetics as discussed in the *True Detective* chapter in Section 7.4. While other title designers have utilised motifs historically in their respective title designs, as Chapter 3 established a majority of Emmy Winners and Nominees use iconography which I observed typically consist of a sequence of motifs. *Counterpart*'s title sequence has metaphorical ambiguity through motifs from a Chinese board game called Go. This board game aims to surround one's opponent on a grid with a greater amount of game pieces as the visual comparison to the *Counterpart* title sequence demonstrates through Figures 8-4 and 8-5.



Figure 8-4: Go Game¹⁰²

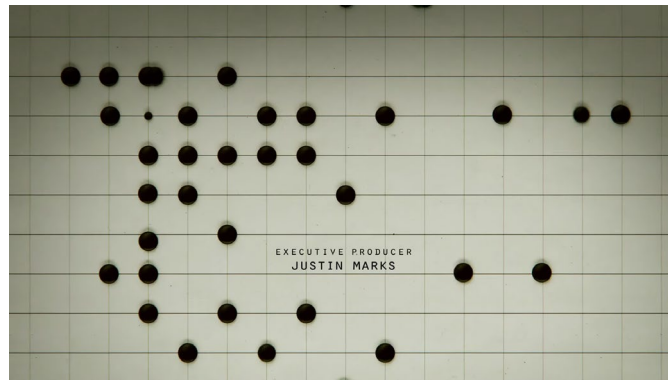


Figure 8-5: *Counterpart*¹⁰³

8.4.2 *Counterpart* and HBO

The *Counterpart* title sequence is another example of a micro title sequence (see micro digital title sequences in Section 7.2) and is similar aesthetically to HBO's *True Detective*'s title sequence. Both

¹⁰² Wikipedia, "Go Game", 2 Oct 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Go_\(game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Go_(game)). Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹⁰³ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:01:08. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ *Counterpart* Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

Counterpart's and *True Detective's* title sequence uses rhythmic editing governed by the non-diegetic musical score. Karin Fong in *Art of The Title* noted that the editing was instrumental to *Counterpart's* title sequence's construction (Landekic 2018). Fong has highlighted a stylistic hierarchy where editing is a key structuring principle that governs the title sequence's form. While the *Game of Thrones* title sequence also employs editing, *Counterpart's* and *True Detective's* title sequence uses faster cuts to segment discrete motifs into different diegetic spaces. Further, the faster cuts indicate that the title sequence's form is more than just a series of static motifs but rather a synthesis of different pieces of iconography. Therefore, the next section (8.4.3) will investigate another facet of density through how editing constructs a relation between different motifs in *Counterpart's* title sequence (2017). The title sequence utilises motifs throughout to provide an aesthetic density. To see an example of how *Counterpart's* title sequence is manipulated via editing software to create a distinct aesthetic identity see 1:10 to 1:35 in the video essay located in the Introduction in Section 2.2.2.

8.4.3 Motifs and Aesthetic Density

The motifs build upon their relations from shot to shot as evidenced by their different variations that accumulate throughout the entire sequence to create aesthetic density. Throughout *Counterpart's* title sequence, there are a multitude of repeating images, compositions and aural-visual patterns. There is one motif throughout the sequence: the abstract patterns of the board game Go (Figures 8-6, 8-7, 8-8, 8-9, 8-10, 8-11, 8-12, 8-13), which is a key piece of iconography throughout the entirety of the sequence. The seven shots suggest that Go was a structuring metaphor for the thematic trajectory of the sequence overall. The black and white abstract circles reoccur through various images.

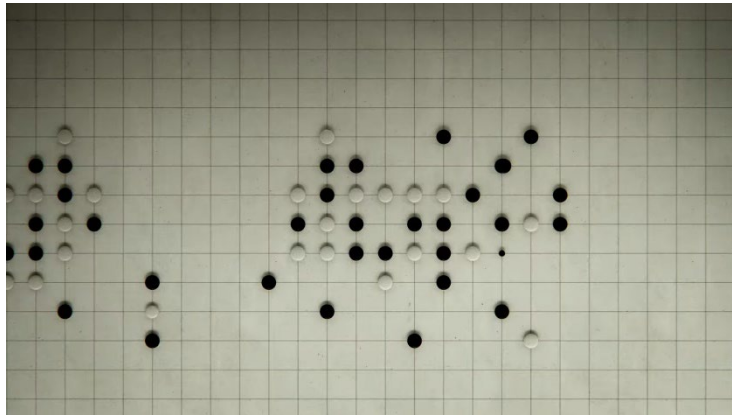


Figure 8-6: *Counterpart*¹⁰⁴

Figures 8-7, 8-8, 8-9 take on different visual variations of the abstracted Go game. In Figure 8-7 a magnifying glass distorts this reoccurring abstraction. In Figure 8-9 the bases of bullets become stamps, and in Figure 8-11 they become luminescent lines of digitised data.

¹⁰⁴ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:04. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ *Counterpart* Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 8-7: *Counterpart*¹⁰⁵



Figure 8-8: *Counterpart*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:15. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ *Counterpart* Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹⁰⁶ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:25. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ *Counterpart* Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 8-9: *Counterpart*¹⁰⁷



Figure 8-10: *Counterpart*¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:19. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ *Counterpart* Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹⁰⁸ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:01:08. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ *Counterpart* Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 8-11: *Counterpart*¹⁰⁹

In Figure 8-12 the Go motif is combined with the other key motif within the sequence: the figures within the clinical architecture of the Berlin landscape.



Figure 8-12: *Counterpart*¹¹⁰

The various windows in Figure 8-12 resemble the abstracted motif of Go. This system of motifs contributes to the aesthetic density of the title sequence similar to *True Detective*.

¹⁰⁹ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:37. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ Counterpart Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹¹⁰ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:56. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ Counterpart Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

8.4.4 Stylistic Devices and Aesthetic Density

The motifs are not merely static images or iconography but contribute to an aesthetic density through key stylistic elements like the computer-generated camera, the rapid cutting and mise-en-scène. The camera engages the audience by the impossibility of its gliding movements and the way its unreal movement reveals the constructed artifice to the viewer. The computer-generated camera is also utilised in *Game of Thrones*' title sequence to glide across vast terrains of content. In both micro and isometric design, the computer-generated virtual camera has no physical rooting and so is not constrained by any limitations of a particular technological apparatus. Instead, the computer-generated camera can move anywhere in space allowing the movements to call attention to their impossibility in conjunction with the highly stylised imagery. For example, in Figures 8-13 and 8-14 the camera moves seamlessly backward in computer-generated space between two distinct shots and compositions. The movement of the camera and rack focus, in conjunction with the deep space composition, layered mise-en-scène and distinct planes with the Go motif in the foreground and the two figures in the background, creates a graphical match. The camera's seamless movement between the two planes creates an accumulation of aesthetic density and ambiguity that encourages a closer engagement with the title sequence from the viewer.



Figure 8-13: *Counterpart*¹¹¹ 0:24



Figure 8-14: *Counterpart*¹¹² 0:25

Overall, the use of editing and the virtual camera aids the meticulously designed aesthetic density. Furthermore, the formal analysis of *Counterpart*'s title sequence implies that Starz has employed aesthetic density similar to HBO, emphasising that the digital title sequence is a distinct trend in the 2010s.

¹¹¹ Captured from *Counterpart*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:24. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ Counterpart Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹¹² Captured from *American Gods*. Justin Marks (Showrunner) Starz. Release Date: 10 Dec 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:25. YouTube (Source). Imaginary Forces. STARZ Counterpart Main Title. 23 Jan 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZze5DHxbF4>. Accessed 20/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

8.4.5 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that Starz has utilised the title sequence as part of its branding to compete with HBO and other networks. To achieve this goal, Starz employed the title sequence to market its brand as prestige and differentiate itself from other networks by specially targeting fans. I discussed how *Black Sails*' title sequence's upload on YouTube has been a factor in how Starz transitioned to its "obsessable" brand positioning and marketing. I analysed how *American Gods* is marketed to Starz's fan communities in online spaces such as X and Reddit to create fan engagement.

This chapter examined *Counterpart*'s title sequence to underline how the title sequence's dense aesthetics have contributed to prestige discourses and helped brand Starz as prestigious. The aesthetics of *Black Sails*, *American Gods* and *Counterpart* title sequences indicate the continued development of the digital title sequence in the 2010s. Overall, this chapter highlighted that the digital title sequence trend is a key part of how networks and over-the top services compete with one another in the 2010s and further increasing the prominence of the title sequence in the discursive construction of prestige and the brand value of networks.

9 NETFLIX- THE TITLE CARD

9.1 Introduction

This chapter will demonstrate how Netflix has used the title card as a branding device instead of the digital title sequence. This chapter has two main goals. The chapter will utilise *Stranger Things'* title sequence as a case study to indicate how its typographic design is distinct from HBO's digital title sequence approach. I will claim that Netflix has employed high concept marketing on YouTube through the title sequence. The chapter will analyse how there is a discrete trend toward title cards in response to binge-watching on streaming services. As such, this chapter will stress that changing viewer behaviour and a broader trend toward shorter form content on YouTube has affected title sequence aesthetics.

The chapter is divided into two sections, covering *Stranger Things* (9.4) and title cards (9.6). The first section of this chapter discusses how *Stranger Things'* retro aesthetic (which will be defined later in this chapter in Section 9.3.1) is different from HBO's digital title sequence approach. The section assesses how the popularity of *Stranger Things'* title sequence on YouTube uses high concept marketing to engage the viewer on YouTube. The second section will examine how title cards have become a distinct trend later in the 2010s due to the emergence of binge-watching and the Skip Intro button. This section will highlight a tendency toward shorter form content in the TV IV period. Overall, this chapter will emphasise that while the digital title sequence has continued to be an important part of streaming services' branding in the 2010s, changes in viewing behaviour on streaming platforms have prompted a different approach to the title sequence's aesthetics by over-the-top services.

9.1.1 Netflix Original Programming

I will discuss Netflix's original drama programming from 2013 (the beginning of Netflix's Original Programming) to 2019, corresponding with the date range for my thesis. Broadly speaking, the label Netflix Originals can apply to titles produced by Netflix, as well as titles that are licensed by Netflix and exhibited on its platform. Therefore, there is a difference between the original shows that Netflix develops and produces and programs that Netflix acquires as a distributor, although depending on geolocation, both can be labelled a Netflix original. Karyn Petruska and Faye Woods argues in their analysis of Netflix's original streaming content in a transnational context that by Netflix claiming false originals that they acquire instead through licensing assists "Netflix's building of its brand as not just a library, but a streaming channel with buzzworthy content and awards potential, at a cost lower to production" (Petruska and Woods 2019, 61). While examining what shows Netflix chooses to acquire and subsequently brand as originals could be an interesting avenue of research, the original properties I have selected for the purposes of my thesis are intellectual properties that Netflix has developed to stream exclusively on its platform as opposed to shows for which Netflix has acquired the exhibition rights from other networks and international regions. Through selecting properties that Netflix has developed itself, this chapter directly investigates how Netflix intentionally create programs in service of its branding.

9.2 Netflix, Binge-watching and the Title Card

While there has been a large amount of scholarship on binge-watching and Netflix (Lotz 2014; Jenner 2023; Matrix 2014; Perks 2015), this section will focus specifically on binge-watching in relation to the emergence of the title card. Throughout the 2010s, Netflix has utilised a distinct exhibition schedule by releasing a whole season at once, thus encouraging binge-watching. Jenner

claims that in 2013, Netflix's brand become conflated and synonymous with binge-watching "and its [binge watching] significance to Netflix suggests its centrality to the brand" (Jenner 2023, 25). Jenner explains that Netflix employed a "vast marketing effort" in the promotion of binge-watching (2021, 3). She further maintains that the cast and crew of early original Netflix productions such as *House of Cards* and *Arrested Development* in 2013 actively promoted and marketed the term binge-watching to audiences (Jenner 2023, 185-188). Moreover, Jenner explains that as part of *House of Cards*' marketing campaign, the lead actor Kevin Spacey "went on a number of late-night talk shows to highlight the control given to viewers through binge-watching" and thus conflates Netflix with binge-watching (2023, 186). To summarise, there is a concentrated effort by Netflix to differentiate itself from the competition through offering binge-watching as a key feature of its service.

Later in the 2010s, in response to viewers skipping the title sequence due to binge-watching as a popular consumer practice, Netflix introduced the Skip Intro button in 2017. For instance, in 2017 *Business Insider* reported that viewers were increasingly binge-watching, and so Netflix was testing an option "that allows viewers to skip the intro altogether" (Nededog 2017). Furthermore, Cameron Johnson, the director of product innovation at Netflix, reported that they discovered that fifteen per cent of Netflix subscribers skipped the title sequence manually within the first five minutes and that this result gave Netflix the impression that subscribers wanted to skip the title sequence (2022). Since the advent of the Skip Intro button, Johnson also commented that it has been pressed 136 million times "saving members an astonishing 195 years in cumulative time" (2022).

The Skip Intro button has become a popular method of temporal control for viewers, and I argue it has given rise to the title card, indicating an aesthetic change from the digital title sequence trend

to the title card in the 2010s. Television critics and journalists have examined binge-watching in connection to the Skip Intro button and particularly the title card (Heritage 2015; Richardson 2017; Dosser 2022). As discussed in the Literature Review Max Dosser has written an article about the Skip Intro function. Dosser notes, the skip intro button has been considered largely in relation to binge-watching (Dosser 2022, 41). Dosser elaborates that television critics have written about the advantages of the viewer having access to a Skip Intro button (2022, 41). As a result of the support for the Skip Intro title sequences critics have become sceptical of lengthy title sequences (Heritage 2015; Richardson 2017; Charlton 2020). Stuart Heritage writing for *The Guardian* advocates for shorter title sequences, proclaiming that season three of *True Detective* cannot get any longer and that “Shorter is sweeter” (Heritage 2015). This comment indicates fatigue and trepidation directed towards the lengthy elaborate title sequences. Another article that discusses elaborate title sequences in the age of the Skip Intro function is *The Verge’s* “In the age of streaming TV, who needs title sequences?” (Richardson 2017). The article details responses from title designers and investigates the positives and negatives of elaborate title design in the streaming era. For example, Lance Richardson, the author of the article asked various title designers about the Netflix skip button and “reactions ranked from wry amusement to open disgust” (Richardson 2017). The mixed reaction from title designers emphasises that there is opposition towards using elaborate title designs and title cards. Additionally, an article from *NME* suggests apprehension from television journalists around the purpose of the title sequence in the 2010s titled “Skip Intro: Thanks to Netflix, the TV title sequence is a thing of the past” (Charlton 2020). For example, Matt Charlton, the author of the article claims that title sequences are a waste of space and that there should be more time devoted to the show’s narrative (2020). These articles demonstrate that within the reception to title sequences, critics are concerned with the longevity of the elaborate

digital title sequence because of how viewers were increasingly consuming television in one or multiple sittings through binge-watching.

9.2.1 The Title Sequence's Ritualistic Function

To understand how viewing behaviour on streaming services has affected the title sequence's function in the 2010s, this section provides an understanding of how the title sequence has historically functioned in other television formats. The television title sequence's ritualistic function (as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis in Section 0.4) is linked to broadcast television and the format's commercial need to typically introduce new viewers to a particular show. For instance, on broadcast television since the 1950s, television title sequences function as a ritualistic space where returning viewers become attuned to the repetition of similar aural-visual patterns and new viewers are given a formal introduction, such as with *The Lone Ranger* (Unknown 1949) or *Get Smart* (Badiyi 1965). Jonathan Gray commented on this dynamic between new and old viewers: "I maintain an interest in paratexts' abilities to create proper interpretations that audience members are encouraged to adopt, by discussing television opening credit sequences and their roles as both mini trailers for new viewers and ritualistic anthems for returning viewers" (2010, 18). As a result of this ritualistic function many title sequences employed exposition where title sequences such as *The Twilight Zone* (1959) utilised voice over to explain to new viewers the premise of the story world they are about to enter. Early television titles used voice over narration to introduce the title and the actors on the show, which was carried over from radio's aural and similarly serialised form. Examples of early television shows that have title sequences with voiceover are *Easy Aces* (Unknown designer 1949), *The Lone Ranger* (Unknown designer 1949) and *The Jack Benny Program* (Unknown designer 1950). Using voice over in title sequences on broadcast television fulfilled the function of introducing new viewers to the show as

one of its primary objectives. However, different technologies such as the remote control and DVDs in the 1990s have provided the viewer with more agency to skip the title sequence partially or in its entirety. For example, Davison in her 2013 study on audience behaviour in relation to the title sequence found that several viewers used a DVD fast forward to skip the title sequence (2013a, 15). As a result, Davison elaborates that to skip the title sequence effectively, viewers have an established “familiarity with the visual structure” of the title sequence (2013a, 16). For the title sequences in long form serials, such as *The Sopranos* (1999) and *The Wire* (2004), DVD box sets enable the viewer to binge watch the show. Thus, binge-watching has created a ritualistic behaviour where viewers use their mastery of the DVD’s fast forward functionality to skip title sequences. This additional ritualistic consumption behaviour anticipates the introduction of the Skip Introduction button for streaming services and highlights how the television title sequence’s functionality has changed in different historical contexts.

9.2.2 Television Title Sequences and Streaming Services

Title sequence visuals on streaming services have been affected differently than title sequence aesthetics on other exhibition spaces such as cable, catch-up services and linear broadcast television. These platforms have different methods of acquiring revenue that influence the run time of the television title sequence: broadcast television uses advertisements, while over-the-top services use a subscription model to gain revenue. The title sequences on broadcast television are shorter than their streaming service counterparts because on broadcast television there is a linear schedule of programs, promos and advertisements thus limiting their potential run time (see Appendix 4). In Appendix 4 the run times are ordered from smallest to largest for both CBS and Imaginary and Elastic’s title sequence catalogues to highlight the minimum and maximum run times. For example, the average run-time for Imaginary Forces and Elastic title sequences that are

made for over-the-top services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime is one minute and seven seconds (The Movie Database 2013; “Elastic” Vimeo” n.d.; “Imaginary Forces” Vimeo n.d.). Conversely, the average run time of title sequences made either by freelance, in-house or by another studio for CBS, one of the three major broadcast networks in the US, is twenty-two seconds (Appendix 4) (The Movie Database 2013; “Elastic” Vimeo”; “Imaginary Forces” Vimeo). The comparison demonstrates a difference between the duration of title sequences on over-the-top and network television. One possible reason is that streaming services lack a programmed sequence of advertisements which in turn allows for larger run times for title sequences in the 2010s. Davison in her article on viewers’ consumption practices when watching title sequences notes a distinction between “blink and you miss it” title sequences and longer elaborately designed title sequences (2013a). She suggests in her findings that title sequences made for US broadcast networks or basic cable channels typically feature shorter run times (2013a, 16). Davison argues that viewers conduct a wide range of participatory practices when watching title sequences and that consumers had a high amount of engagement with extended sequences (2013a, 18). Davison’s argument is evidence of a distinct difference between premium cable channels and broadcast television that has directly affected the aesthetics of the title sequence. I build upon Davison’s comments to suggest that the subscription model for over-the-top services has encouraged the title sequence to become more elaborate. However, Davison’s “blink and you miss it” title cards have become more popular in the later 2010s and so the next section will address the historical development of the title card.

9.2.3 Historical Examples of the Title Card

While this thesis has largely discussed elaborate and lengthy title sequences in the 2010s starting with the likes of *Game of Thrones* (2011) and *True Detective* (2014), another key aural-visual form

and trend that emerged during the late 2010s is the title card. The title card is not a new aesthetic form and has a long-standing history in television as alluded to in Section 8.2.1 when I examined *Spartacus*' title card. Dosser discusses the Skip Intro function and claims since the mid-2000s network television has been moving from traditional title sequences towards brief title cards (2001). Dosser elaborates that the success of television shows such as *24* (2001) and *Lost* (2004) allowed an extremely short duration where the audience can easily transition from one program to the next (2022, 46) (Figures 9-1, Figure 9-2).

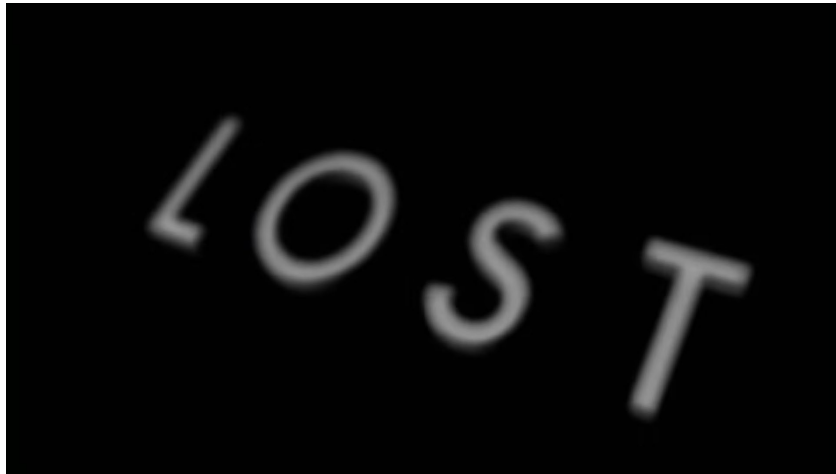


Figure 9-1: *Lost* Title Card (2010)¹¹³



Figure 9-2: *24* Title Card (2001)¹¹⁴

Additionally, John Ellis has argued that for broadcast television in the 2000s “the title sequence has begun to disappear, replaced with a simple sting” (2011, 62). Ellis attributes the increasing prevalence of shorter title cards on broadcast television to “new top-of-the-hour rush into the next programme” (2011, 62). Picarelli agrees with Ellis and also notes that on broadcast television

¹¹³ Captured from *Lost* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Damon Lindelof (Showrunner). ABC. Release Date: 20 Dec 2004. Timestamp: 00:00:5. YouTube (Source). fwdlabsblog. *Lost*- opening titles. 22 May 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LDh8DefWpl>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹¹⁴ Captured from *24* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Joel Surnow (Showrunner). Fox. Release Date: 6 Nov 2001. Timestamp: 00:00:7. YouTube (Source). Real Talk Laughs. *24* opening sequence + previously on *24* (Kiefer Sutherland). 5 May 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKJQ8jJ4dl0>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

“In an effort to discourage viewers from switching channels between programmes, the networks are either doing entirely away with openers, switching to title cards” (2013). While Ellis and Picarelli discuss the increase of title cards on broadcast television, I add that the title card has continued to be an important component of television aesthetics into the late 2010s and particularly on Netflix. One example of a popular title sequence that has characteristics of a title card is *Stranger Things*.

9.3 *Stranger Things* (2016)

This section will analyse how Imaginary Forces designed the *Stranger Things* title sequence to explicitly reference the 1980s through its typography. On July 16, 2016, the retro science fiction show was released on Netflix as part of its original programming. The show is set in the 1980s and follows strange supernatural occurrences in the fictional town of Hawkins in Indiana in the US. The show was created, written and directed in large part by showrunners Matt and Ross Duffer and received a large number of views. On the 26th of January 2022, *The Hollywood Reporter* reported “‘*Stranger Things*’ Is (Obviously) 2022’s Most Streamed Show” with over 52 billion minutes viewed according to Nielson (Porter 2023). Furthermore, according to *The Guardian*, the third season of *Stranger Things* broke records for Netflix by “becoming the most watched film or series in the first four days of release in the streaming service’s history” (Mumford 2019). The viewing numbers and generally positive response and interest by audiences and critics alike make *Stranger Things*’ title sequence a suitable object of study.

The description of *Stranger Things*’ title sequence on Netflix’s official YouTube account reveals Netflix’s intent to market itself as a popular streaming service. The description claims that “Netflix is the world’s leading internet entertainment service with 130 million memberships in over 190

countries enjoying TV series, documentaries and feature films across a wide variety of genres and languages” (*Stranger Things* 2016). Through this comment, Netflix uses *Stranger Things* to present itself as a popular streaming platform. Jenner contends that Netflix recently has created more “popular fare, solidifying an idea of Netflix as ‘normal’ or ‘default’” pointing to Netflix’s acquisition and subsequent exhibition of popular situation comedies such as *The Ranch* (2003) (2023, 172). Furthermore, *Stranger Things* as part of Netflix’s global outreach reach targets children. Djoymi Baker, Jessica Balanzategui and Diana Sandars in their book on *Netflix, Dark Fantastic Genres and Intergenerational Viewing* claim that there are numerous child-oriented marketing campaigns “such as official kids’ clothing lines (including with major fashion brand Zara), toys, games, and an extensive array of other official merchandise via the Netflix shop” (Baker et al 2023, 181). Moreover, Tracey Mollet has written about *Stranger Things* as mainstream entertainment for Netflix and argues that the show’s popularity is similar to the Marvel Cinematic Universe because of the show’s transmedia output such as films, comic books, television programmes and merchandise (Mollet et al 2021, 2). Mollet’s comparison between *Stranger Things* and Marvel is supported by Netflix’s direct attempts to attain their own Marvel Cinematic Universe. Netflix had its own cinematic universe and commissioned shows such as *Daredevil* (2015), *Jessica Jones* (2015) and *Luke Cage* (2016). *Luke Cage* which came out in the same year as *Stranger Things* was designed to appeal to a wider audience by carrying Netflix to black audiences (Narcisse 2016). However, Disney took back the rights for the advent of its streaming service in 2022. Additionally, *Stranger Things* itself was intended by Netflix to create their own unique cinematic universe using Marvel’s cinematic universe as inspiration. For example, in an article by *Variety*, Marc Malkin interviews *Stranger Things*’ executive producer and director Shawn Levy who notes that they are creating their own *Stranger Things*’ cinematic universe titled the “STCU” and that Shawn Levy has

spent time getting advice from chief creative officer of Marvel Entertainment, Kevin Feige (Malkin 2022). Netflix's intent to attain their own cinematic universe is directly linked to its efforts to target a mass audience.

Netflix's attempts to attain a wide public audience is not too dissimilar from HBO's own attempts to create a large popular franchise through *Game of Thrones*. However, a key aesthetic distinction between the *Game of Thrones* and *Stranger Things* is the title sequence. This section has established that *Stranger Things* is incredibly popular, similar to *Game of Thrones* for HBO. However, instead of utilising the spectacle of an elaborate title design, Netflix has opted to use a retro aesthetic. In the next section I will explain how *Stranger Things*' title sequence is aesthetically distinct through its retro aesthetic.

9.3.1 Retro Definition

While scholars have largely discussed retro aesthetics in film (Brown 2001; Guffey 2006; Cattaneo 2012; Sielke 2019), video games (Garda 2013; Thomas 2017), music (Hogarty 2015) and television shows (Bayman 2016), they have not typically considered retro in relation to title sequence design (Deborah Allison as an exception as mentioned in Chapter 2). The term retro has been defined differently by these scholars and journalists, particularly in regard to marketing trends. For example, Simon Reynolds' book *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* argues that the term retro refers to a "a self-conscious fetish for period stylisation expressed creatively through pastiche and creation" (2011, xii). However, Reynolds is largely discussing marketing in relation to retro and not the aesthetics of title design.

A scholar that investigates retro marketing is Stephen Brown. For the purposes of demonstrating how retro characteristics appeal to an entertainment audience, Stephen Brown's different retro

typology provides a useful conceptual framework for this thesis's understanding of *Stranger Things*' title design. For example, Brown defines one category of retro which is pertinent to *Stranger Things*' title sequence as Repro de Luxe. Brown asserts that Repro de Luxe is defined as a work that references another media text that was already perceived as nostalgic (Brown, 14). Brown further elaborates that retro has been increasingly popular as a marketable commodity since the start of the 2000s such as through George Lucas's *Star Wars* prequels (Brown 18, 2001). While Brown discusses the *Star Wars* prequels in relation to his Repro de Luxe category, I apply this category to *Stranger Things* and its title sequence because it also revives or reproduces the past through a broad evocation of formal elements associated with the 1980s. Many of these 1980s films that *Stranger Things* is referencing such as *The Goonies* were already themselves nostalgic acts in of themselves. *Stranger Things* is set during the 1980s and as Mollet explains that title designs use digital techniques to "simulate" a 1980s aesthetic (2021, 134). Additionally, the soundtrack is evocative of the synthesiser utilised by filmmaker John Carpenter (2021, 134). Therefore, Brown's repro de Luxe category is important to understand how the *Stranger Things*' title sequence evokes musical and visual characteristics associated with 1980s films.

However, like Reynolds, Brown is largely examining marketing trends and not branding which is the focus of this thesis. A more suitable definition is Louis Bayman's explanation of retro aesthetics in European television shows in his article "Retro Quality and Historical Consciousness in Contemporary European Television" in the journal of *Film and Screen Media*. Similar to Reynolds, Bayman identifies fetish as a key aesthetic component of the retro aesthetic and in particular Bayman notes that retro aesthetics place special emphasis on replicating the past (2017, 83). Due to academics and journalists' application of retro to various media objects, and for my focus on the title sequence, I synthesise these claims by defining retro as a media object that

emulates an aesthetic style from history. In this case, *Stranger Things*' retro typography is distinctly different to the media objects that affected HBO's title sequences.

9.3.2 *Stranger Things*' Title Sequence Influences

HBO's *True Detective* and *Game of Thrones* title sequences were influenced by different aesthetic forms than *Stranger Things*' typographic inspirations. As established in Chapters 6 and 7, *Game of Thrones* and *True Detective* were inspired by other media and texts such as Leonardo da Vinci's inventions and double exposures respectively, to create an elaborate showpiece for the show and the network. In contrast, both Netflix and Imaginary Forces have intentionally created the *Stranger Things* title sequence to reference 1980s science fiction films. Netflix identifies the show's retro aesthetic through the description of the *Stranger Things* title sequence video uploaded on Netflix's official YouTube channel. The description asserts, "A love letter to the supernatural classics of the 80's" (*Stranger Things* 2016). Similar to Netflix explicitly referencing the 1980s, Michelle Dougherty (creative director at Imaginary Forces) in her interview with *Art of the Title* states that there was a conscious effort to replicate the optical aesthetics of films from the 1980s (Perkins 2016a). Dougherty explains that the Duffer Brothers had references in mind when outsourcing the title sequence project to Imaginary Forces including "Richard Greenberg and all the greats that he'd created – *Alien* (1979), *The Goonies* (1985), *Altered States* (1980), *The Untouchables* (1987), and *The Dead Zone* (1983)" (Perkins 2016a). The unifying factor between those title sequences is typography. The Greenberg film designs use similar typography as cover designs for 1970s and 1980s printings of Stephen King's novels such as the first edition of *The Dead Zone* (1979) (Figure 9-3, Figure 9-4, Figure 9-5). There is a direct line of influence between the King designs and the Greenberg typography. The Greenberg films and Stephen King novels both use the same type face, Cortez. The evocation of 1980s films and King novels' typography are

examples of emulating a past aesthetic style to create a retro design. Dougherty notes that from the outset the Duffer Brothers wanted titles from Stephen King and so Dougherty “knew they were looking for something that felt ’80s and tapped into this nostalgia by using that typography” (2016). Dougherty using the typography in Stephen King novels as a reference point in the creation of *Stranger Things*’ title sequence highlights that the *Stranger Things* title design has more in common with typographic designs. The *Stranger Things* title sequence’s use of elaborate typography draws a visual comparison to the title card’s aesthetic form as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis. The Stephen King examples and the key inspirations such as *Alien* (Greenberg 1979), *Altered States* (Greenberg 1980), *The Dead Zone* (Greenberg 1983) and *The Goonies* (Greenberg 1985), are title sequences that have longer run times than title cards but have are reminiscent of title card design through their focus on elaborately designed typography.



Figure 9-3: Stephen King *Carrie* (1974)¹¹⁵

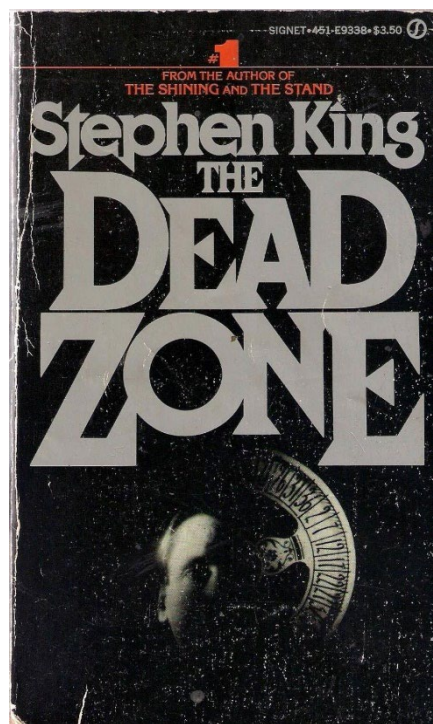


Figure 9-4: Stephen King *The Dead Zone* (1979)¹¹⁶

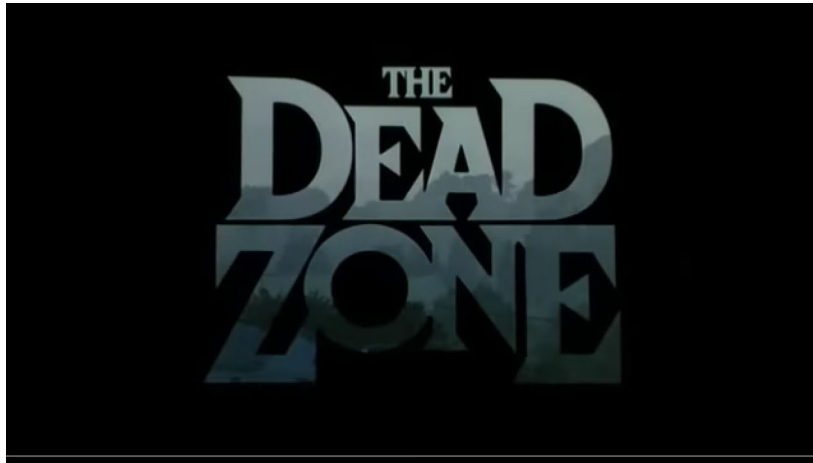


Figure 9-5: *The Dead Zone* Feature Film (1983)¹¹⁷

9.3.3 The *Stranger Things* Title Sequence and High Concept

The intention of Imaginary Forces’ to directly reference the 1980s typography and the synth score in *Stranger Things*’ title sequence is a clear example of Justin Wyatt’s high concept marketing (Section 4.6.2 in Chapter 4 for a definition of high concept marketing). As Wyatt asserts, one characteristic of high concept style is the self-conscious referencing of other media. He states, “high concept films offer a vast network of references to other films, television shows, and forms of mass media” and further elaborates that the references themselves offer a “shorthand” of conveying information to the audience (Wyatt 1994, 58). I argue that *Stranger Things*’ typographic design works as shorthand to cater to audience’s intertextual knowledge of the 1980s through

¹¹⁵ Perkins, Will. “*Stranger Things*” *Art of the Title*. 9 August 2016. <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/stranger-things/>. Accessed 19/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹¹⁶ Perkins, Will. “*Stranger Things*” *Art of the Title*. 9 August 2016. <https://www.artofthetitle.com/title/stranger-things/>. Accessed 19/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹¹⁷ Captured from *The Dead Zone*. David Cronenberg (Director) Warner Bros. Release Date: 21 Oct 1983. Timestamp: 00:02:24. YouTube (Source). *The Dead Zone* 1983 Title Sequence. 6 March 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2pHk2ln8Q4>. Accessed 19/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

evoking the King and Greenberg typography from the 1980s. Thus, the typographic design and its intertextual reference points enable more opportunities for marketing through the extrapolation of the 1980s science fiction inspired typography onto YouTube. Netflix's high concept approach is distinctly different from HBO's approach with *Game of Thrones* that seeks to impress the viewer with a distinctly elaborate title display. Instead, the high concept design of the *Stranger Things* title sequence establishes intertextual reference points for Netflix's intent to market itself to a mass audience. Section 9.5 will further analyse how the *Stranger Things* title sequence's 1980s references are exhibited on YouTube for the purposes of high concept marketing.

9.3.4 The *Stranger Things* Title Sequence

Stranger Things received Emmy nominations in 2017 for Outstanding Drama, Writing, Cinematography and Production Design. The only Emmy Awards that *Stranger Things* won in 2017 was for its title sequence. The title sequence won Outstanding Main Title Design and Outstanding Main Title Theme Music in 2017, making it ideal to study the aesthetics of the title sequence. *Stranger Things* is an example of a typographic title sequence because it revolves entirely around the presentation of the show's title (Figure 9-6). *Stranger Things'* title sequence was created by Imaginary Forces' lead creative designer Michelle Dougherty and designers Arisu Kashiwagi and Eric Demeusy.



Figure 9-6: *Stranger Things*' Title Sequence (2016)¹¹⁸

Within Imaginary Forces' body of title design work, the *Stranger Things* title sequence is atypical because it does not align with Imaginary Forces and other designs studios' use of elaborately computer-generated aesthetics. *Stranger Things*' title sequence uses a mix of a title card and digital title sequence aesthetics. *Stranger Things* is largely unusual for television title design in the 2010s as it combines the title card's presentation of the show's title with the discrete shots of a digital title sequence. There are eight discrete shots across the entire sequence. The first six shots consist of the red neon glow of digital artifacts (Figure 9-7).

¹¹⁸ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things* | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-7: Shot 1¹¹⁹

These digital artifacts move within the frame both vertically and horizontally. For example, in shot 2 the artifacts move slowly from the bottom to the top of the screen space vertically.

¹¹⁹ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-8: Shot 2¹²⁰

In shot 3 the digital artifacts move from left to right horizontally.

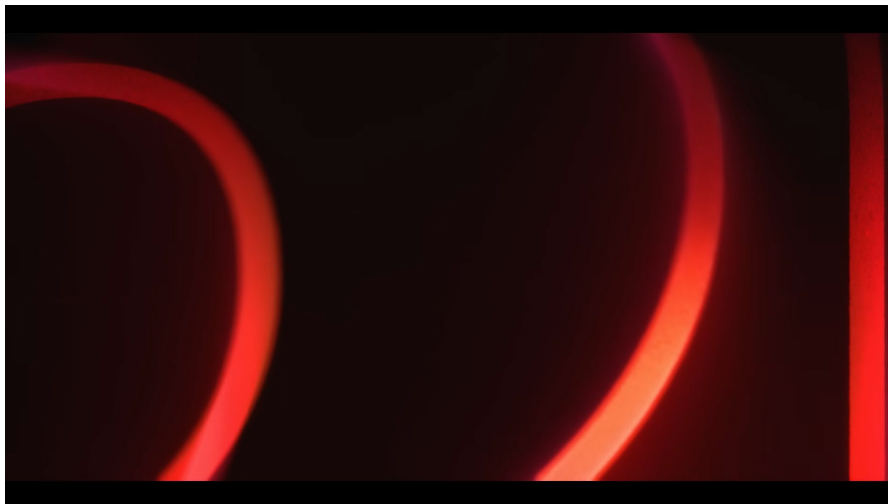


Figure 9-9: Shot 3¹²¹

¹²⁰ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹²¹ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

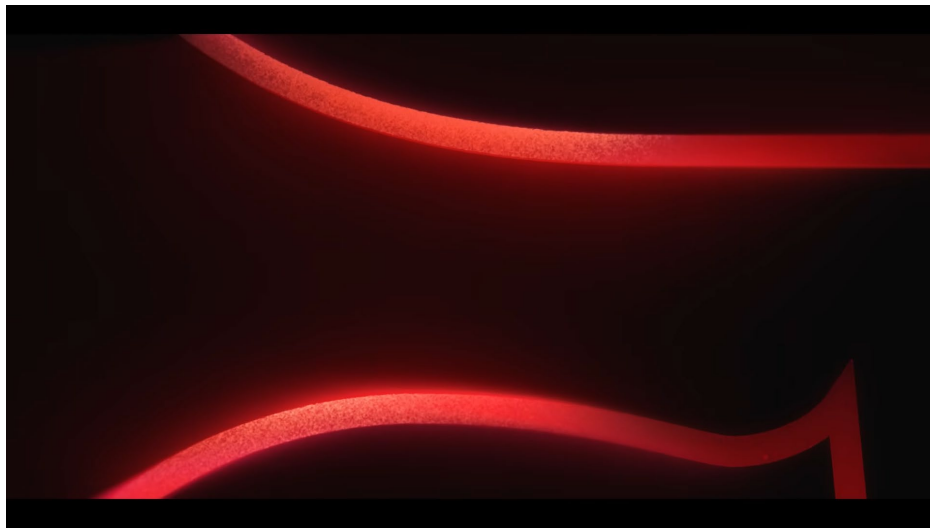


Figure 9-10: Shot 4¹²²

In shot 4 (Figure 9-10) one neon artifact moves from right to left in the top half of the screen and the bottom hand side moves from left to right. For a first-time viewer, the subject of the visual composition may not appear clear (Figures 9-11 to 9-12).

¹²² Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-11: Shot 5¹²³

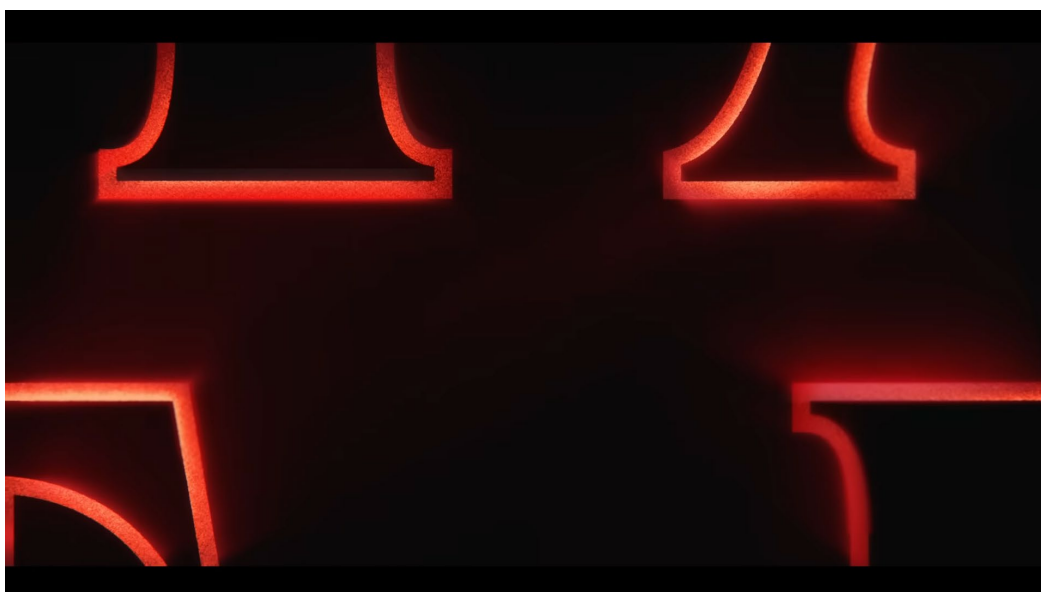


Figure 9-12: Shot 6¹²⁴

Imaginary Forces animated each letter using digital computer-generated animation, but the creative team used Kodalith in the early drafts to construct the typography. A Kodalith is an analogue technique in which a special black piece of film with a transparent area reacts to light, producing different visual results (Perkins 2016a). The Kodalith became a reference for the completed final product, which was digitally constructed using Cinema 4D and After Effects. The combination of optical and digital technology in the title sequence contributes to *Stranger Things*' retro aesthetic. To simulate the analogue effect, Imaginary Forces used Gorilla Grain, a plugin that simulates 35 mm film that is available online (Gorilla Grain 2024). Furthermore, the scanned 35mm film grain in the otherwise digital title sequence creates a retro effect by integrating the visual sensibilities of the 1980s with modern digital technology.

This retro effect continues in Shot 7 which displays typography with letters such as “A” and “N”. As the virtual camera slowly pulls back more letters are shown before the title is “*Stranger Things*” title is revealed in Figure 9-13.

¹²³ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹²⁴ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-13: Shot 7¹²⁵



Figure 9-14: Shot 7 Continuation¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

¹²⁶ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City Release Date: 15 July 2016. Timestamp: 00:00:42. YouTube (Source). *Stranger Things*. *Stranger Things | Title Sequence [HD] | Netflix*. 6 Aug 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

In the shot and throughout the sequence, Imaginary Forces used Lens Distortion 4k, “which is real shot optical lens flares” to add additional visual effects to the animation used for the lettering (Perkins 2016a). Dougherty discusses the initial designs of the *Stranger Things* title sequence early in production and how they wanted to emulate the visual language of the 1980s (Perkins 2016a). The emulation of the 1980s in the *Stranger Things*’ title sequence produces a retro effect. Due to this retro effect, the opening credits is distinct from the digital title sequence trend due to the focus on typography itself, and the presentation of the show’s heading is reminiscent of the title card. However, it is still a title sequence because there are the multiple shots of the animated typography that are elaborately animated in conjunction with the synth theme song. Therefore, the *Stranger Things* sequence is a hybrid object because it blurs the lines between a title sequence and title card which will be further investigated in Section 9.5 in regard to the rise of title cards in Netflix’s original programming. Overall, this section stressed that the *Stranger Things* title sequence is a retro evocation of the past rather than a virtuosic showpiece for the network.

9.4 *Stranger Things* and YouTube Branding

This section will investigate how the *Stranger Things* title sequence’s retro typographic display is uniquely suited for marketing and branding on YouTube. Jenner examines Netflix’s relationship to YouTube and the discourses that surround both technologies (2023, 115). Jenner explains that YouTube, while being similar to Netflix as a streaming service, is distinct due to “amateurs” being able to participate and upload their own content (2023, 115). Jenner reasons that the aesthetics of YouTube videos are tied to daily viewer consumption patterns (2023, 117). As a result, YouTube videos tend to be shorter to enable “the possibility to ‘squeeze them in’ while doing other things on the computer” (2023, 117). Lotz also points out that cable and broadcast networks increasingly

uploaded content onto YouTube and this process “indicated how the site might also serve as a repository that could help viewers manage the abundance of post-network video” (2014, 69). In other words, due to the large amount of content on streaming services, YouTube becomes an important tool to further exhibit network and broadcast content such as trailers, title sequences and excerpts from episodes. In this section I contend that Netflix has taken advantage of the shorter duration of the title sequence and content generally on YouTube to market *Stranger Things* (2016) to a wide online audience.

The following section has two key parts. The first part (9.4.1) highlights that the upload onto YouTube represents a different branding strategy than Netflix’s other digital title sequence originals. The second part unpacks how uploading the title sequence on YouTube enables a meeting ground for fans to reminisce about the show in the YouTube comments and anticipate the next season of *Stranger Things*.

9.4.1 *Stranger Things* Season One Title Sequence on YouTube

The *Stranger Things* season one title sequence on YouTube has over 22 million views and 18,000 comments at the time of writing. Netflix have emulated HBO’s approach to uploading the title sequence onto YouTube. However, the *Stranger Things* title sequence is distinct from HBO’s elaborate title design because the *Stranger Things* title sequence’s high concept typographic design is uniquely suited to be incorporated into shorter form marketing materials. There are ten title sequences posted on YouTube by Netflix’s official YouTube channel between 2010-2019 including *Hemlock Grove* (2013), *Orange is the New Black* (2013), *BoJack Horsemen* (2014), *Daredevil* (2015), *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015), *Narcos* (2015), *Stranger Things* (2016), *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2017), *Gypsy* (2017), *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018). Notably,

Netflix does not upload every original title sequence onto its YouTube channel but selects specific title sequences to promote its brand. Uploading these titles onto YouTube indicates the title sequences that Netflix wishes to promote its brand with.

From the shows that Netflix has uploaded onto YouTube, I have identified two key promotional strategies: digital and high concept title sequences. *BoJack Horsemen* (2014), *Narcos* (2015), *Daredevil* (2015), *Gypsy* (2017) and *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018) are digital title sequences. While *Orange is the New Black* (2013), *Hemlock Grove* (2013), *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015), *Stranger Things* (2016), *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2017) are high concept due to their succinct singular striking image that is integrated into marketing campaigns and other promotional material such as posters and promos. These two branding methods can overlap but are distinct. Digital title sequences feature the elaborate and dense digital aesthetics that have been discussed throughout this thesis as a discrete title design trend. These digital title sequences are in service of prestige branding through being uploaded onto YouTube. While digital title sequences position Netflix as prestigious through dense digital aesthetics, the high concept title sequences typically contain one central visual image to appeal to a wide audience (Section 4.6.2 in Chapter 4). The focus on one central image is specifically designed to be easily incorporated into a myriad of marketing materials such as trailers and promos and in this case onto YouTube.

9.4.2 Netflix's Digital Title Sequences

Netflix's digital title sequences are part of its objective to brand itself as prestigious. Since its advent as a streaming service, Netflix has emulated HBO and has positioned its brand as prestigious. A *GQ* profile of Netflix's founder CEO Reed Hastings titled "And the Award for the next HBO goes to..." contains a quote from Hastings who claims "The goal is to become HBO faster than

HBO can become us” (Hass 2013). The article describes how Netflix has employed similar strategies to HBO through its original programming such as having David Fincher, a renowned film director, attached to *House of Cards* (2013). Jenner also contends that Netflix has defined and subsequently marketed itself in direct competition with HBO (Jenner 2023, 25). She writes that *House of Cards* was “a highly ambitious project that emulated HBO” (25). Jane Shattuc reinforces Jenner’s comments and argues in her chapter of *A Companion to Television* on Netflix and online television, that *House of Cards* established Netflix’s pursuit of prestige and distinctive programming (2020, 157). As *House of Cards* was one of the first originals, Netflix from its advent as a streaming service, positions itself to a young adult audience through high production values, explicit content and an established showrunner that is incorporated into the marketing. As part of this strategy, Netflix emulated HBO’s approach to elaborately designed title sequences that in turn presents Netflix as a prestigious streaming service such as *Daredevil* (Clair 2015) (Figure 9-15).



Figure 9-15: *Daredevil* Title Sequence¹²⁷

These digital title sequences demonstrates that similar to Starz, Netflix has emulated HBO's title sequence approach and used YouTube as a discrete online space to specifically showcase the elaborate digital aesthetics for the purposes of prestige branding. Therefore, YouTube is an important online space for Netflix to achieve its aim of presenting itself as prestigious brand to compete directly with HBO.

9.4.3 Netflix's High Concept Branding

While HBO has used the title sequence to promote its respective television series primarily for prestige branding, the *Stranger Things* typographic design specifically enables opportunities for Netflix to utilise high concept marketing. For Netflix to achieve its aim of making *Stranger Things* a massively popular television show (see Section 9.2), the *Stranger Things* title sequence's intertextual reference points allow it to be easily integrated into promotion marketing campaigns.

¹²⁷ Captured from *Daredevil* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Showrunner Drew Goddard. Netflix. Release Date: 10 Apr 2015. Timestamp: 00:00:8. YouTube (Source). Netflix. Marvel's Daredevil | Official Title | Netflix. 17 Jul 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDPtWLbL3QI&ab_channel=Netflix. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

As Wyatt explains that the high concept film is differentiated because of its emphasis on style and being incorporated into marketing materials (Wyatt 1994 23). The *Stranger Things*' retro typography and title have been incorporated into marketing materials such as the film's poster (Figure 9-16).



Figure 9-16: *Stranger Things* Season 2 Poster¹²⁸

One key example of *Stranger Things* and the use of high concept marketing is on YouTube. Netflix used the *Stranger Things* title sequence's highly marketable typographic design in trailers to promote the show and to further foster anticipation and discourse about seasons three and four.

¹²⁸ Captured from *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers (Showrunner) Netflix. New York City. Release Date: 15 July 2016. YouTube (Source). *Esquire*. *Stranger Things* Season Two Has an Ominous New Teaser Trailer and Poster. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RcPZdihrp4>. Accessed 27/10/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

Season one of *Stranger Things* has 23 million views while *Stranger Things*' season three and four title teasers have over 7.2 million and 2 million views respectively on YouTube at the time of writing, which is an impressive number considering *True Detective*'s season three title sequence, also a subsequent season, has approximately 500,000 views. The higher number of views for *Stranger Things* is evidence of the show's sustained popularity beyond its first season. To underline how the *Stranger Things* title sequence employed its typographic design for the purposes of directly promoting the show's serialised return to Netflix, I used the search terms "episode" and "season" in the YouTube comments. My intention in selecting these terms was to investigate the extent to which the title sequence is a key component of Netflix's marketing. Netflix has promoted subsequent seasons of *Stranger Things* by using the title design as a teaser. For the Season 3 teaser, over 337 out of 16,390 comments mention "season" and 209 mention "episode" while the comments for the Season 4 title teaser mention "episode" 306 times and "season" 310 times out of 5,727 comments. For example, user 9A shares the excitement for the upcoming season by arguing, "I just watched the first 2 seasons, and oh my God. It's rare that I find something that hits me like that. Now I'm super excited for *Stranger Things* 3" (*Stranger Things* 2018). Another comment by user 9B similarly notes that, "I've watched all the episodes in season 1 and 2 repeatedly just because it's so awesome plus the intro" (*Stranger Things* 2018). User 9C indicates their excitement and reminisces about their love for the show: "I like how everybody is getting excited off titles think how people would be when it actually releases" (*Stranger Things* 2018). Netflix's using the title sequence for the promotion of future seasons encourages fan engagement in YouTube comment sections, which enables the promotion of the television show and Netflix's brand.

This practice of uploading title sequences onto YouTube is part of a broader trend on video sharing websites: short form content. There is a large amount of academic literature addressing shorter form content in the age of streaming and video sharing (Shutsko 2020; Ambalov 2022; Rajendran et al 2024) and literature analysing YouTube comments to indicate fan interest (Erhart 2014). For instance, scholars Prajit Rajendran, Kevin Creusy and Vivien Garnes note, in a journal article titled “Shorts on the Rise: Assessing the Effects of YouTube Shorts on Long-Form Video Content”, that, there is an increase of short form videos being consumed by viewers and “align well with the fast-paced lifestyle of the contemporary audience” (2024, 2). Short form content has also existed on the platform before YouTube shorts in the 2020s.¹²⁹ Rosamund Davies explains in a chapter in *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube* that online videos in 2011 are typically short due to “technical limitations” and “fluid viewer attention spans” (Grainge 2011, 217). She describes that short form content on YouTube privileges “the moment over the narrative” (217). Moreover, J.P Kelly in the same book notes that by 2011 Hulu allowed viewers to extract segments of episodes and embed them on social media and as a result the programs themselves become short-form promotional content to raise the visibility of the show (Grainge 2011, 131). In a similar fashion, I argue that the title sequence is a key part of this broader trend of shorter form content on YouTube that predates the advent of YouTube shorts in September of 2020. The title sequence as a short form media object is uniquely suited to being uploaded onto YouTube and extrapolated from its original context given its already short duration. Netflix has utilised the recognisable high concept *Stranger Things*’ title sequence to function in a shorthand capacity across paratexts such as trailers. Therefore, Netflix has taken advantage of the title

¹²⁹ YouTube shorts are shorter form content on YouTube’s platform.

sequence's inherent short format and created a title sequence that can be easily spread across YouTube and other video sharing websites in the TV IV period.

Overall, this section has demonstrated that Netflix has adopted HBO's strategy and uploaded the title sequence onto YouTube. *Stranger Things'* typographic design represents a high concept form of branding for Netflix that is specifically designed as a shorthand and to be incorporated in paratexts such as trailers to promote the show through YouTube. Netflix's approach to the *Stranger Things* title sequence highlights that in the TV IV period, the title sequence's aesthetics are not just constructed to compete with other over-the-top services but lend themselves to marketing on YouTube thus demonstrating the title sequence's prominence as a branding device. This analysis then not only teaches us about branding but the title sequence's growing prominence as part of viewers' consumption and interaction with television in a fragmented landscape on online platforms. The next section will underline that there is an increase of title cards following *Stranger Things'* popular typographic design which establishes a trend toward shorter form content towards the end of the 2010s.

9.5 Netflix's Title Cards (2017-2019)

The last section argued that the title sequence as a short form media object can be extrapolated from the show onto YouTube for the purposes of branding. I maintain that title sequences in Netflix original programs have also become increasingly shorter due to binge-watching as a popular viewing practice on Netflix. After the *Stranger Things* title sequence, there is an increase of title cards used in Netflix's original programs from 2017 to 2019. From using Netflix originals listed on the website "What's on Netflix", I observed a discrete change from title sequence to title card (2024). I chose this fan site as a source because it contains a complete list of Netflix originals

and is updated regularly. However, this fan site is limited due to there being no differentiation between a Netflix original production, and those that Netflix acquires from another distributor and subsequently branded as a Netflix original. For the purposes of this study, I checked whether Netflix was the sole distributor of the original program through IMDB, and I divided shows into two periods. I started at 2013 since that was the year Netflix originals become popular with *House of Cards* (2013). I selected the period of 2013 to 2016 to examine title sequences before the advent of the Skip Intro button. I chose the 2017 to 2019 period because 2017 was the year the Skip Intro button was introduced.

Out of a total of 263 original drama shows released in 2013 to 2019, approximately 140 use title cards. Within these 263 original programs, between 2013 and 2016 forty-eight are title sequences. Of these forty-eight title sequences, thirty-four are discrete sequences and fourteen use title cards. Therefore, discrete title sequences were predominantly used for Netflix original programming between 2013-2016. Netflix distributed 203 original programs between 2017 and 2019 after the Skip Intro function was introduced (Appendix 5). Out of these 203 Netflix originals, 126 use title cards and seventy-seven use title sequences (Figure 9-17). This data consisting of Netflix original programs from the website “What’s on Netflix” (2024) is in Appendix 5 and is sorted by year to highlight how title cards and title sequences have changed from year to year.

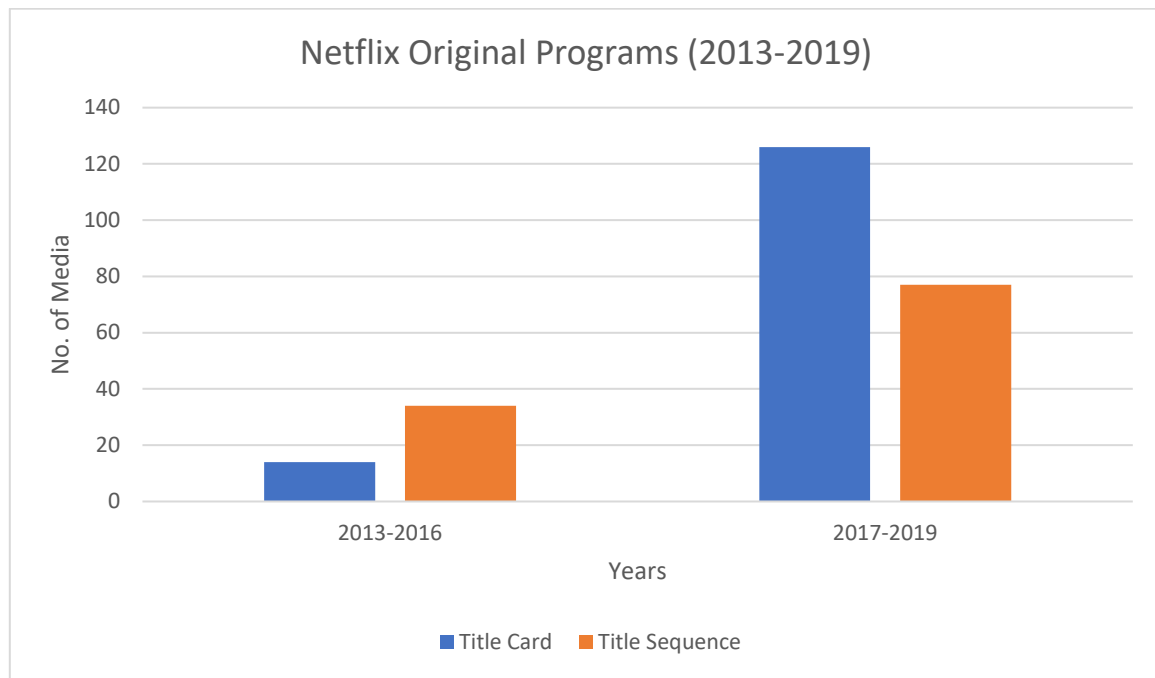


Figure 9-17: Netflix Original Programs (2013-2019)

The comparison between the two periods suggests that there is an increase of title cards after the Skip Intro button was introduced in Netflix’s original programming. As a result, there is a surge toward short form content on Netflix’s original programming. In the following sections I will investigate two types of title cards that indicate how Netflix was reacting to consumer behaviour in the 2010s: the hybrid sequence and brief title cards. Hybrid sequences blur the line between title sequence and title card. They have a longer run time and discrete shots of different compositions which is typical of the title sequence. However, these sequences also focus entirely on presenting typography which is reminiscent of the title card. For example, as discussed in Section 9.3.4, the *Stranger Things*’ title sequence is a hybrid sequence. While brief title cards present the title without any elaborate sequence containing discrete shots.

9.5.1 Hybrid Sequences in Netflix's Original Programming

Following from *Stranger Things*' title sequence that utilises a mix of title card and title sequence, there are examples in Netflix's original programming that feature hybrid sequences. One key example that has these characteristics is *The Witcher* (Niewiara 2019) Figure 9-18).



Figure 9-18: *The Witcher* Title Card (2019)¹³⁰

Out of Netflix's original drama programming, only *The Witcher* has the closest aesthetic proximity to the *Stranger Things* title sequence's title design. Each episode has a different symbolic iconographic image that depicts the houses in the show's fantasy setting. While its first seven episodes use title cards, the eighth and final episode of the first season uses computer-generated rendered typography in a similar fashion to the *Stranger Things* title sequence. The symbols then culminate when each typographic image combines to form one cohesive composition (Figures 9-19, 9-20). The digital transformation of these figures is similar to how *Stranger Things*' title sequence consists of discrete shots of letters that become the full title at the end of the sequence.

¹³⁰ Captured from *The Witcher* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Lauren Schmidt Hissrich (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 20 Dec 2019. Timestamp: 00:00:36. YouTube (Source). Zoran. Netflix The Witcher intro | Episode 8. 21 Dec 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SjV1e-B4Ns>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-19: *The Witcher* Typography Formation (2019)¹³¹

¹³¹ Captured from *The Witcher* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Lauren Schmidt Hissrich (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 20 Dec 2019. Timestamp: 00:00:36. YouTube (Source). Zoran. Netflix The Witcher intro | Episode 8. 21 Dec 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SjV1e-B4Ns>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-20: *The Witcher* (2019) Episode 8¹³²

The transition from title cards to title sequence across the episodes in *The Witcher*'s first season indicates how Netflix was experimenting with the duration of title sequences in the age of binge-watching through employing both elaborate sequences and brief title cards.

Another example is *Glow* (Kenworthy 2017) that transitions from title sequence to title card. The first episode has an elaborate title sequence and the subsequent episodes have title cards (Figure 9-21, 9-22).

¹³² Captured from *The Witcher* (Season 1 Title Sequence). Lauren Schmidt Hissrich (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 20 Dec 2019. Timestamp: 00:00:36. YouTube (Source). Zoran. Netflix The Witcher intro | Episode 8. 21 Dec 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SjV1e-B4Ns>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-21: *Glow* Title Sequence Episode 1¹³³

¹³³ Captured from *Glow*. Liz Flahive. Netflix. Release Date: 23 Jun 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:20. YouTube (Source). Scott Rossi. *Glow* Animated Intro. 26 Jun 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOKqf1Xsgww>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-22: *Glow* Title Card Episode 2¹³⁴

Glow was released in the same year as the Skip Intro button was introduced. *Glow*'s utilisation of both a title card and title sequence is emblematic of how title sequence designs were changing due to binge-watching and the Skip Intro button. An article by the *AV Club* comments on how the title sequences for Netflix originals were increasingly brief title cards, citing *Glow* as a key example (McNutt 2017). McNutt claims that Netflix is intent on "killing opening title sequences" to support subscribers who wish to consume programs as quickly as possible (McNutt 2017). Both *The Witcher* and *Glow* represent not only a trend towards title card but how Netflix was altering the title sequence's duration due to changes in viewer behaviour to retain their audience. This indicates that there is a discrete trend toward short form content as opposed to elaborately designed digital title sequences.

¹³⁴ Captured from *Glow* Episode 2. Liz Flahive. Netflix. Release Date: 23 Jun 2017. Timestamp: 00:01:38. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

9.5.2 Brief Title Cards in Netflix's Original Programming

As established at the outset of this section (9.5), title cards are becoming more commonplace as Netflix actively encourages a new shift in viewing practices that is a key characteristic of TV IV – the emergence of binge-watching. Between 2017 and 2019 there has been an increase of title cards. Some examples include shows such as *Ozark* (Willey 2019) and *The Order* (Unknown 2018). These television shows highlight the broader trend toward shorter form content through extrapolating marketable iconography from the show to better retain audience attention.

Each of these examples have a brief title card that condenses the show's large diegetic narrative and visual identity to a single typographic design. The *Ozark* title card briefly presents key iconography that references that episodes' specific plot details throughout its four seasons. For instance, in Figure 9-23, the title card is from the show's first episode and displays four symbols: a figure with their hands tied, a skyscraper, a gun and a figure falling. Each of these symbols is visually reminiscent of each of the letter of the show. For example, the man with his hands tied is visually similar to the letter "Z" thus simultaneously presenting the show's typographic design and foreshadowing the narrative.

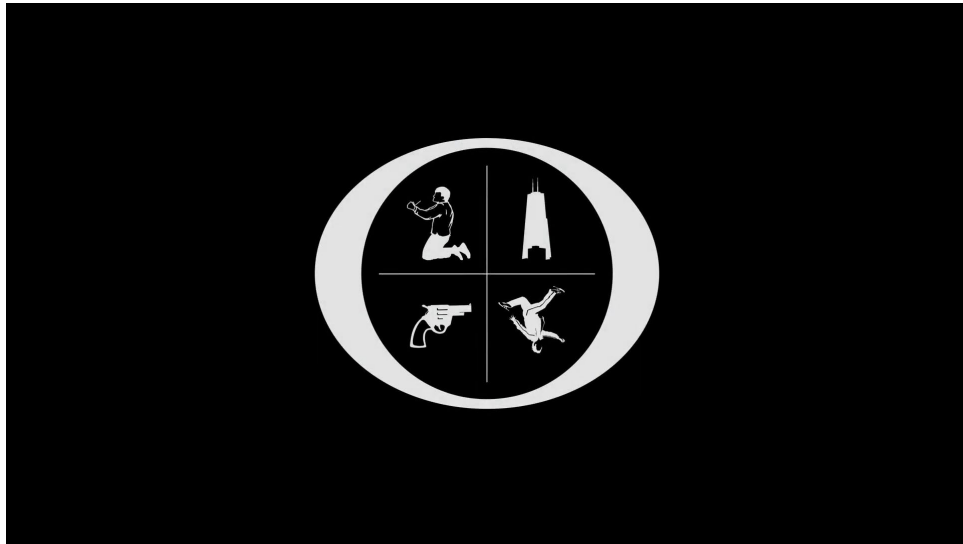


Figure 9-23: *Ozark* Title Sequence (2017)¹³⁵

The figure with the hands tied refers specifically to a scene in the show's first episode where the protagonist, Marty Bryde, played by Jason Bateman, becomes a captive of a drug cartel (Figure 9-24).

¹³⁵ Captured from *Ozark* (Season One Title Sequence). Mark Williams (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 21 Jul 2017. Timestamp: 00:00:8. YouTube (Source). Just The Titles, *Ozark – Title Sequence* (Season One). 21 Dec 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJQxWhRIQE0&t=22s>. Accessed 26/09/2022. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-24: *Ozark* Episode 1¹³⁶

The skyscraper image refers to a specific building in the Chicago skyline where the show is set for the majority of the first episode (Figure 9-25).

¹³⁶ Captured from *Ozark* (Season One Title Sequence). Episode 1. Mark Williams (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 21 Jul 2017. Timestamp: 00:25:08. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-25: Chicago Skyline¹³⁷

The gun symbol refers to the main antagonist in the episode named Del, played by Esai Morales, and uses the gun to threaten the protagonist (Figure 9-26).

¹³⁷ Captured from *Ozark* (Season One Title Sequence). Episode 1. Mark Williams (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 21 Jul 2017. Timestamp: 00:35:45. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-26: Gun¹³⁸

The final symbol of a figure falling refers directly to a murder that occurs later in the first episode's climax (Figure 9-27).

¹³⁸ Captured from *Ozark* (Season One Title Sequence). Episode 1. Mark Williams (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 21 Jul 2017. Timestamp: 00:26:02. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-27: *Ozark* Title Sequence¹³⁹

Another example of condensing visual information out of Netflix's originals is *The Order* (2019).

Instead of using images like *Ozark* to indicate certain plot points in each episode's unfolding narrative, *The Order* evokes the show's university setting through presenting the university's crest along with the title (Figure 9-28).

¹³⁹ Captured from *Ozark* (Season One Title Sequence). Episode 1. Mark Williams (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 21 Jul 2017. Timestamp: 00:39:45. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.



Figure 9-28: *The Order* Title Card¹⁴⁰

The Order's title card example indicates that instead of making an elaborate virtuosic display, there is a discrete trend in the title cards for Netflix originals, towards focusing on a central piece of iconography from the show. Thus, both examples highlight Netflix condenses the show's narrative to a shorter form title card in direct response to viewers binge-watching the show in quick succession.

The increase of title cards as a trend in the 2010s is evidenced by a comment made by Patrick Clair, the title designer of *True Detective*. Clair proposes that,

... some shows benefit from having a really nice long epic title sequence but the year we made *True Detective* the *Silicon Valley* title sequence came out and it is eleven seconds and it is one of my favourites... You know they can only exist on shows where they serve the story. And I think we're going to look at a trend in the next few years where much less shows are going to have title sequences... It won't be completely all over the place but it tends to move in waves. You know we've been lucky in

¹⁴⁰ Captured from *The Order* (Season One Title Sequence). Episode 1. Dennis Heaton (Showrunner). Netflix. Release Date: 7 Mar 2019. Timestamp: 00:03:11. Reused under Fair Dealing for Criticism or Review.

the last five years there's been a trend towards title sequences and I think we're going to see with Netflix and other places that's going to swing back the other way (Adobe Creative Cloud 2018, 26:13-27:03).

Clair's comments confirm that there is a trend of elaborate television title sequences that emerged during the mid-2010s and have since waned in the later 2010s. I argue that digital title sequence trend has declined because binge-watching has become more popular as a form of consumption. My assertion is further supported by another comment from, Michelle Dougherty, creator of the *Stranger Things* title sequence. In response to the question "Have you noticed a pushback at all in this era of binge-watching? Are producers looking for shorter sequences?", Dougherty answers that there are over-the-top services and networks that have metrics to optimise streaming service algorithms and to establish if a certain title is too long and concludes by stating "The audience has spoken!" (Perkins 2016a).

Dougherty and Clair's comments reinforce that the digital title sequence was a trend that rose to prominence in the middle of the 2010s. However, over-the-top services have since opted to utilise title cards reflecting how binge-watching as a viewing practice in the streaming era has directly affected television's aesthetics. Overall, the trend toward shorter form content encouraged by binge-watching suggests how the title sequence's aesthetics is not just dictated by competition but also by viewer behaviour.

9.5.3 Conclusion

This chapter underlined that the title sequence is not only source of competition between networks, but an integral part of how over-the-top-services services are responding to viewer behaviour on streaming services. The *Stranger Things* title sequence is aesthetically similar to title cards, which is out of step with the elaborately dense digital designs, thus indicating a shift in

aesthetic design from title sequence to title card. Netflix has employed title cards due to contemporary binge-watching practices, highlighting how the title sequence's aesthetics are dictated by both competition and consumer behaviour in the TV IV period. Overall, this chapter emphasises that the title sequence is a fluid aesthetic form that has become a prominent part of how viewers consume television in the TV IV period. Chapter 6, 7, 8 and 9 through my aesthetic analysis supported by reception have fulfilled by third and fourth subsidiary aims of providing a better understanding of the digital title sequence's aesthetics and how networks and over-the-top services have uploaded them onto online spaces and particularly YouTube for branding purposes.

10 CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have argued that title sequences are an important part of prestige branding in an increasingly competitive television industry from 2010-2019. By examining the digital title sequence's history, industry, aesthetics and reception I claimed that in the 2010s, over-the-top services and networks were using the title sequence as a prestige branding device to retain and gain audiences through their dense aesthetics, outsourcing to major motion graphic companies and extrapolating them onto online spaces such as YouTube.

10.1 Key Findings

This thesis has successfully fulfilled its main aim of demonstrating how the digital title sequence trend fundamentally altered the prestige television landscape. This thesis achieved this goal through its four subsidiary aims, providing: 1) an investigation of the digital title sequence's historical context, 2) a study of motion graphic companies' workforce and output, 3) an examination of the title sequence's digital aesthetic and 4) the role the title sequence exhibited in online spaces plays in branding.

1) History of Title Sequences

The first subsidiary aim was fulfilled through investigating two key precursors to the digital title sequence trend, Saul Bass and Kyle Cooper's title designs. I found that Bass's metaphorical approach is similar to the aesthetics of the digital title sequence trend. Additionally, I argued that Bass's celebrity profile during the 1950s increased the prominence of title design to the public eye and provides a historical precedent for the title sequence's elevated status today. The chapter contended that Kyle Cooper himself has had a lasting impact on the title sequence industry and his

title sequence for the film *Se7en* and its use of optical glitches has an aesthetic relation to the digital title sequence. I claimed that both Bass's and Cooper's title designs have influenced contemporary digital title designs.

I also utilised Emmy Winners and Nominations to chart the trajectory of the title sequence's visuals and the technology used. This thesis employed the Emmys as a marker of prestige to analyse the aesthetic typicality of title sequences. By treating periods as discursive constructions this thesis was able to focus on specific historical developments that are pertinent to the title sequence and its branding. In doing so, I highlighted how the digital title sequence is a distinct trend in the 2010s. Moreover, through examining Emmy data, I proved that title sequences using digital images and iconography increased from the 1980s to 2010s. These two key aesthetic trends are the distinguishing features of the digital title sequence trend in the TV IV period. Overall, this discussion of the title sequence's history demonstrated that the digital title sequence trend in the TV IV period did not constitute a tumultuous sea change in aesthetic and industrial methods but is a significant intensification and confluence of pre-existing sensibilities from previous television periods. This is an integral point because it is evidence that the digital title sequence trend did not emerge on its own but is part of a wider industrial and historical trajectory and thus, I achieved the first aim in my thesis.

2) Motion Graphic Companies

To achieve the second subsidiary aim of providing an understanding of motion graphic companies' workforce and output, I examined the growth of large multi-faceted companies leading to the 2010s. Thus this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by charting out the history of these motion graphic companies and visual trends in title sequence design that does not exist yet

in scholarship. From the Emmy data, I established that there was an increase of discrete motion graphic companies and a decrease of in-house production and freelance title design since the 1980s. Moreover, this chapter asserted that motion graphic companies expanded their businesses globally in the 21st century. The chapter analysed how various high profile motion graphic design companies have positioned themselves to a global audience due to this industrial space being increasingly competitive. By analysing these motion graphic company websites, I argued that companies' global outreach is another form of branding, in addition to prestige branding, due to the larger trend of global production in the 21st century.

Furthermore, I investigated two case studies, Imaginary Forces and Elastic, as large motion graphic design companies that were prominent in the 2010s. I examined and collected data of these companies to identify how they have contributed to the digital title sequence. I found that there was an increase of title designs in the 2010s due to the growth of streaming platforms and their original content and thus emphasised the title sequence's growing prominence as a branding device in a competitive marketplace. I indicated how the television title sequence production companies Elastic and Imaginary Forces working across various media like video games, television shows and feature films affected the digital title sequence's aesthetics in the 2010s. Through comparing advertisements to title designs, this section explained that production processes being shared across different media has greatly influenced the visual construction of digital title sequences in the 2010s. The chapter also discussed that in the 2010s the lines between various discrete objects have become blurred and the title sequence through its short run time is uniquely suited to highlight the fluid and dynamic changes in television production and aesthetics. This chapter considered how Elastic and Imaginary Forces promote their title designs as prestigious through examining their portfolio of work and awards in their promotional material and

particularly their respective websites. This suggested that motion graphic companies were branding themselves as prestigious to differentiate themselves in the competitive title design marketplace and to gain more streaming service clientele. Through my analysis of the motion graphic industry, I demonstrated that the growth, media convergence, workforce and global expansion of these companies are an integral part of the broader television industry and have directly affected the digital title sequence's aesthetics and their prominence in the industry.

3) Digital Aesthetics

To fulfill third subsidiary the aim of examining digital aesthetics, this thesis analysed the title sequences for *Game of Thrones*, *True Detective*, *Counterpart* and *Stranger Things*. The thesis asserted that the digital title sequence's aesthetics are influenced by open world video game design through an aesthetic analysis of the *Game of Thrones* title sequence's long takes. The thesis argued that there is a close aesthetic similarity between the isometric perspective of open world video games and *Game of Thrones'* virtual camera and long duration. This underlined how increasingly, other digital mediums influence the title sequence's form. I contended that *Game of Thrones'* dense isometric design started this trend toward the digital title sequences. I claimed that there was a transition from isometric design to micro title designs such as *True Detective* that consisted of smaller scale objects and characters that I call micro title designs. I studied the *True Detective* title sequence to contextualise and provide an understanding of the aesthetic parameters and typicality of the dense digital aesthetic. Through this close aesthetic analysis, I affirmed that *True Detective's* dense aesthetics consisting of minute changes to the aural-visual form contributed to a sense of spectacle. I contended that other networks such as Starz had emulated this approach and accentuated how Starz's *Counterpart* title sequence like HBO's *Game of Thrones* utilises a dense visual aesthetic. However, I reasoned that binge-watching and the Skip

Intro button has affected the title sequence's aesthetics, prompting a shift from elaborate title designs to brief title cards. I provided data that demonstrated there is a trend toward shorter title cards in the latter half of the 2010s which I maintained indicated the end of the digital title sequence as a discrete trend. I showed through the aesthetic analysis of my case studies that a discrete trend of distinctive digital aesthetics in title sequences contributes to our knowledge of title design cycles and how spectacle is a large part of digital aesthetics in titles in the TV IV period.

4) Title Sequence Branding

The final subsidiary aim that I fulfilled was investigating the role the title sequence played as a form of branding in online spaces. I established how HBO utilised *Game of Thrones'* title sequence for the purposes of prestige branding and employed YouTube to engage fans in online spaces. I claimed that the title sequence operates as an extension of HBO's prestige branding for its shows through displaying its elaborate visuals on YouTube. I reasoned that the visibility of the title sequence's brand has increased via fan remixes on the internet and viewers uploading title sequences onto YouTube. I investigated how Starz used the title sequence on YouTube and other online spaces to create fan engagement and reinforce its branding as a fan friendly streaming platform. I stressed how the upload of the *American Gods* and *Black Sails* title sequences on YouTube have contributed to their own fan communities. I also assessed title sequences such as *Counterpart* to prove that Starz take cues from HBO's strategies to position the network as prestige. Starz's original programming underlines that the title sequence is a key part of how the network was engaging fan communities in the 2010s to contribute to its "obsessable" branding strategy. As such my analysis of these case studies demonstrated that networks and over-the-top services were taking advantage of the digital title sequence's dense aesthetics and uploading them onto YouTube and other online spaces to distinguish their brand as prestigious to compete with

other networks. Thus, the title sequence, through becoming a prominent part of prestige branding, has been discursively constructed by networks and over-the-top services as a high brow object and raised the overall cultural cache of title sequences within a hierarchy of mediums. Moreover, the title sequence became an increasingly prominent part of how viewers consume and interact with TV in a plethora of different online spaces in the TV IV period.

I examined how Netflix has also uploaded the *Stranger Things* title sequence to YouTube for the purposes of branding. While HBO and Starz have employed this strategy, the *Stranger Things* high concept design allows the title sequence to be replicable across different marketing materials including YouTube. Netflix has used its retro design to promote subsequent seasons on YouTube and thus underscores how integral the title sequence for Netflix's brand. I concluded that binge-watching has directly affected the title sequence's aesthetics and its duration in addition to how competition between over-the-top services has influenced the title sequence's form. Moreover, viewing practices influencing the title sequence's form stresses that the title sequence is not just an important component of branding and competition but offers critical insights into fluid viewing practices in the TV IV period.

10.1.1 Future Research Pathways

Overall, the analysis of title sequences has suggested future pathways for researchers to investigate digital title sequences and motion graphic companies. My hope is that this thesis inspires other scholars to take the title sequence as a serious object of investigation in television studies. Academics could analyse other motion graphic design studios or designers and their industrial contexts. The relation and interplay between binge-watching and the title sequence's role in the streaming era could be scrutinised through an investigation of the Skip Intro button on

steaming services. While I have focused on title sequences from two motion graphic companies and over-the-top services and networks, the aesthetics of other title sequences on television formats is another research area. For instance, title sequences on broadcast services could be studied further for their own impact on viewer behaviour and how they contribute to our understanding of the title sequence as a discrete aural-visual form. Since this thesis largely focused on the title sequence's visuals, an area of inquiry could be to unpack how sound or the title sequence's theme song has changed and transformed in the 2010s. As indicated in the Literature Review, a pathway could be how the title sequence contributes to gendered conceptions of television or how the title sequences' aesthetics are coded by gender. A future potential project could examine title sequences for shows that have female showrunners or are specifically targeting a female audience, or other diverse audience sectors.

10.1.2 Research Outcomes

This thesis has significant implications for the television researchers, the television industry and for teaching curriculum. The key findings will be of interest to television studies scholars and researchers that have an investment in the title sequence as an object of study. In terms of the established literature on quality and prestige discourse, my argument expands on prestige and applies it to the title sequence and thus creates possibility for future researchers to study prestige in other television texts and not just the narrative and aesthetics of television shows. Additionally, my thesis is a key contribution to digital aesthetics studies and so is of interest to scholars that want to understand more about the title sequence's digital aesthetics and how minute changes in visual compositions can influence viewers' responses and create multi-faceted images.

The findings in this thesis are important for the television industry given my focus on branding which is a large part of a company's success especially in the current television landscape. The analysis of motion graphic companies and branding will be of interest to motion graphic companies and television networks seeking to understand past business practices and trends in the industry to better market and position their own company to compete in the cluttered marketplace.

I assert that due to the increased prominence of the television title sequence in the 2010s as an aesthetic object, the title sequence should be incorporated more into television courses at universities. I suggest that given the prominence of title sequences and the myriad of paratexts in the 2010s, there should be university courses devoted to paratextual theory, aesthetics and industry, giving students the skills to enter the large workforce that create such paratexts including title sequences for clientele.

Ultimately, I argued that the digital title sequence is a trend that broadens our understanding of TV IV convergent industrial practices, hybridised and computer-generated digital aesthetic forms and the pursuit of different approaches to televisual branding in online spaces, particularly the pursuit of prestige. My argument has bridged the knowledge gap by extending scholarly investigation of prestige television into the neglected area of the digital television title sequence. This thesis made an original contribution by proving that the development of title sequences is an important part of how over-the-top services and networks have positioned their brand to retain and attract viewer attention in the 2010s. This study teaches us that the title sequence and the paratext are an important part of how critics, viewers and the industry discursively construct prestige and thus shows the rising cultural and critical status of the title sequence in the contemporary television landscape.

11 Films, Video Games and Television

300 Dir Zack Snyder, Warner Brothers (2006)

Addie and the King of Hearts, Dir. Joseph Hardy, CBS (1976)

Alice in Wonderland, Dir. Cecil Hepworth, Percy Stow, Biograph Company (1903)

Alien Dir. Ridley Scott, 20th Century Fox (1979)

Alien vs Predator, Dir. Paul W.S. Anderson, 20th Century Fox (2004)

Altered Carbon, Creator Laeta Kalogridis, Netflix (2018)

Altered States, Dir. Ken Russel, Warner Bros (1980)

Amanda Knox, Dir. Brian McGinn, Netflix, (2016)

American Gods, Creator, Bryan Fuller, Michael Green, Starz (2017)

American Horror Story, Creator Ryan Murphy, FX (2011)

Any Human Heart, Creator William Boyd, Channel 4 (2010)

As the World Turns, Creator Irna Phillips, CBS (1965)

Barry, Creator Bill Hader, HBO (2018)

Bass On Titles, Dir. Saul Bass (1977)

Becker, Creator Dave Hackel, CBS (1998)

Big Country, United Artists, (1958)

Bioshock, 2K (2007)

Blade Runner, Dir. Ridley Scott, Warner Bros (1982)

Borderlands, 2K (2012)

Boy Meets World, Created by April Kelly, Michael Jacobs, ABC (1993)

Breaking Bad, Created by Vince Gilligan, AMC (2008)

Call of Juarez: The Cartel, Techland (2011)

Catherine the Great, Creator Philip Martin, HBO (2019)

Cheers, Creator Glen and Les Charles; James Burrows, Paramount Network Television (1982)

Civilisation V, Firaxis Games, Aspyr (2010)

Cyberpunk 2077, CD Project Red (2020)

Daredevil, Creator Drew Goddard, Netflix (2015)

Dark Crystal, Creator Jeffrey Addiss, Will Matthews, Netflix (2019)

Davinci's Demons, Creator David S. Goyer, Starz (2013)

Deadwood, Creator David Milch, HBO (2004)

Easy Aces, Creator Goodman Ace, DU Mont Network (1949)

Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, Bethesda (2011)

Feud, Creator, Ryan Murphy, FX (2017)

Forrest Gump, Dir. Robert Zemeckis, Paramount Pictures (1994)

Frasier, Creator David Angell, Peter Casey, David Lee, NBC (1993)

Fringe, Creator J.J. Abrams, Fox (2008)

Game of Thrones, Creator David Benioff, D. B. Weiss HBO (2011)

Get Smart, Creator Mel Brooks, Buck Henry, NBC (1965)

God of War 3, PlayStation (2010)

Gypsy, Creator Lisa Rubin, Netflix (2017)

Halt and Catch Fire, Creator Christopher Cantwell, Christopher C. Rogers, HBO (2014)

His Dark Materials, Creator Jack Thorne, BBC (2019)

Hit the Floor, Creator James LaRosa, VH1 (2013)

Human Target, Creator Jonathan E. Steinberg, Fox (2010)

Iron Fist, Creator Scott Buck, Netflix (2017)

Jessica Jones, Creator Melissa Rosenberg, Netflix (2015)

Killing Eve, Creator Phoebe Waller-Bridge, BBC (2018)

Kong: Skull Island, Dir. Jordan Vogt-Roberts, Warner Brothers (2017)

Laws of Attraction, Dir. Peter Howitt, Entertainment Film Distributors (2004)

Lore, Aaron Mahnke, Creator Gale Anne Hurd, Ben Silverman, Howard Owens, Amazon Prime Video (2017)

Love Actually, Dir. Richard Curtis, Universal Pictures (2003)

Magic City, Creator Mitch Glazer, Starz (2012)

Manhattan, Creator Sam Shaw, WGN America (2014)

Mass Effect, Bioware (2010)

Masterpiece Theatre's American Collection, PBS (2001)

Miami Vice, Dir. Anthony Yerkovich, NBC (1984)

Mission Impossible 2, Dir. John Woo, Paramount Pictures (2000)

Mission Impossible, Dir. Brian De Palma, Paramount (1966)

Of Kings and Prophets, Creator Adam Cooper, Bill Collage, ABC (2016)

Olive Kitteridge, Dir. Lisa Cholodenko, HBO (2014)

Ozark, Creator Bill Dubuque Mark Williams, Netflix (2017)

Pacific Rim, Dir. Guillermo del Toro, Warner Brothers (2021)

Poirot, Creator Clive Exton ITV (1989)

Se7en, Dir. David Fincher, New Line Cinema (1995)

Silicon Valley, Creator Mike Judge, John Altschuler, Dave Krinsky, HBO (2014)

Six Feet Under, Creator Allan Ball, HBO (2006)

Splinter Cell: Blacklist, Ubisoft (2013)

Stranger Things, Creators The Duffer Brothers, Netflix (2016)

Strike Back, Creator M. J. Bassett, Sky One (2010)

Suddenly Susan, Creator Clyde Phillips, NBC (1996)

Superman, Dir. Richard Donner, Warner Brothers (1978)

The Addams Family, Creator Charles Adams, ABC (1964)

The Alienist, Creator Caleb Carr, TNT (2018)

The Americans, Creator Joe Weisberg, FX (2013)

The Andy Griffith Show, Creator Sheldon Leonard, CBS (1960)

The Brady Bunch, Creator Sherwood Schwartz, ABC (1969)

The Crown, Creator Peter Morgan, Netflix (2016)

The Dead Zone, Dir. David Cronenberg, Paramount Pictures (1983)

The Defenders, Douglas Petrie, Marco Ramirez, Netflix (2017)

The Expanse, Creator Mark Fergus Hawk Ostby, SYFY (2015)

The Jack Benny Program, Creator Jack Benny, CBS (1950)

The Leftovers, Creator Damon Lindelof, HBO (2014)

The Lion King, Dir. Jon Favreau, Disney (2019)

The Lone Ranger, Creator George W. Trendle, Fran Striker, ABC (1949)

The Man in the High Castle, Creator Frank Spotnitz, Amazon Prime Video (2015)

The Morning Show, Creator Jay Carson, Apple (2019)

The Night Of, Creator Richard Price Steven Zaillian, HBO (2018)

The Pacific, Creator Tim Van Patten, HBO (2010)

The Son, Creator Philipp Meyer, Lee Shipman, Brian McGreevy (2017)

The Sopranos, Creator David Chase, HBO (1999)

The Terror, Creator Max Borenstein, Alexander Woo, AMC (2018)

The Thomas Crown Affair, Dir. John McTiernan, MGM Distribution (1968)

The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair, Creator Jean-Jacques Annaud, MGM (2018)

The Twilight Zone, Creator Rod Serling, CBS (1959)

The Untouchables, Dir. Brian Dep Palma, Paramount Pictures (1987)

The Walking Dead, Creator Frank Darabont, AMC (2010)

The Wire, Creator David Simons, HBO (2002)

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, CD Project Red (2015)

The Witcher, Creator Lauren Schmidt Hissrich, Netflix (2019)

The X-Files, Creator Chris Carter, Fox (1993)

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier, Ubisoft (2012)

True Detective, Creator Nic Pizzolatto, HBO (2014)

Vinyl, Creator Mick Jagger, Martin Scorsese, Rich Cohen, Terence Winter, HBO (2016)

Voir, Creator David Fincher, Netflix (2021)

Westworld, Creator Jonathan Nolan, HBO (2016)

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13 APPENDIX

13.1 Appendix 1: Television Title Sequence Outstanding Main Data

	1980- 1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-2009	2010-2019
Live Action	12	11	9	20	7
Animation	9	7	13	20	30
Hybrid	10	25	28	53	15
Characters	7	11	6	17	3
Iconography	10	16	32	48	45
Typography	10	4	3	7	1
Setting	4	12	9	21	3

13.1.1 Inaccessible TV Title Sequences

Moyers: God and Politics (1988)

Now Hear This: MTV's Guide to New Music (1989)

Rave (1993)

13.2 Appendix 2: Outstanding Main Title Design Emmy Award

The following table is divided into three columns, in-house, company and freelance and is sorted by decade. For each Emmy winning and Nominated title sequence the title designer is identified, the title of the show and the network.

	<u>In-House</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Freelance</u>
1970s	Title Designer(s): Girish Bhargava/ Bill Mandell (1976) Show: <i>The Adams Chronicles</i> Network: PBS		Title Designer(s): Anthony Goldschmidt (1976) Show: <i>Elanor and Franklin</i> Network: ABC
	Title Designer(s): Girish Bhargava/ Bill Mandell (1976) Show: <i>The Adams Chronicles</i> Network: PBS		Title Designer(s): Phil Norman (1976) Show: <i>The New Original Wonder Woman</i> Network: ABC
			Title Designer(s): Norman Sunshine (1976) Show: <i>Addie and the King of Hearts</i> Network: CBS
			Title Designer(s): Martin Sheon/ David Summers (1977) Show: <i>Previn and Pittsburgh</i> Network: PBS
			Title Designer(s): Betty Green (1976) Show: <i>Stingray</i> Network: NBC Gene Kraft

			<i>Freebie and the Bean</i> Gene Piotrowski (1977) Title Designer(s): Arthur Hailey's <i>The</i> Show: <i>Money</i> <i>Changers</i> (1977) Network: NBC Title Designer(s): John DeCuire, Maury Nemoy, Robert Branham and John DeCuir (1978) Show: <i>Ziegfeld: The</i> <i>Man and His Woman</i> Network: NBC (1978) Title Designer(s) Bill Davis (1978) Show: <i>NBC: The First</i> <i>Fifty Years</i> Network: NBC Show: <i>Washington:</i> <i>Behind Closed Doors</i> (1978) Network: ABC Show: <i>Vegas</i> (1979) Network: ABC Show: <i>Visions</i> (1977) Network: PBS
1980s	Title Designer(s): Richard L. Froman and Ron Hays (1982) <i>Omni the New</i> Show: <i>Frontier</i> Network: Syndicated	Title Designer(s): Bruce Bryant, James Castle, Carol Johnsen (1982) Show: <i>Hollywood The</i> <i>Gift of Laughter</i> Network: ABC	Title Designer(s): Gene Kraft (1980) Show: <i>Salem's Lot</i> Network: CBS Show: <i>The French</i> <i>Atlantic Affair</i> (1980)

	Title Designer(s): Tim Donahue and William Mesa, Show: <i>Inside the Third Reich</i> (1982) Network: ABC Tim Donahue and William Mesa, Show: <i>Inside the Third Reich</i> (1982) Network: ABC Title Designer(s): John Ridgway, Pam Bloch and Harry Marks, (1983) Show: <i>Entertainment Tonight</i> Network: Syndicated Title Designer(s): John Ridgway, Pam Bloch and Harry Marks, (1983) Show: <i>Entertainment Tonight</i> Network: Syndicated Title Designer(s): Alex Weill/ Charles Levi (1985) Show: <i>Sat Night Live</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Chris Kogler (1988) Show: <i>Moyers, Gods and Politics</i> Network: PBS Title Designer(s): Paul Bollington <i>Friday the 13th Series</i> (1988)	Title Designer(s): Richard L. Froman and Ron Hays (1982) Show: <i>Omni the New Frontier</i> Network: Syndicated Title Designer(s): Castle/ Bryant/Johnsen (1983) Show: <i>Cheers</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Bryant/ Castle/Johnsen (1984) Show: <i>The 56th Annual Academy Awards</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel, title designers; Dick Ebersol, (1985) Show: <i>Friday Night Videos</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Alex Weill/ Charles Levi (1985) Show: <i>Sat Night Live</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Wayne Fitzgerald, David Oliver Pfeli (1987) Show: <i>The Bronx Zoo</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Bryant, Castle,	Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Michael C. Gross (1981) <i>Network 90</i> Network: Syndicated Title Designer(s): Phil Norman Show: <i>Shogun</i> (1981) Network: NBC Title Designer (s): Michael C Gross, Alex Tkach, Wayne (1982) Show: <i>Schneider</i> Network: SCTV Title Designer(s): Valerie Pye (1982) Show: <i>Brideshead Revisited</i> Network: PBS Title Designer(s): R.O. Blechman, Seymour Christ (1983) Show: <i>The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby</i> Network: Syndicated Show: <i>The Scarlet and the Black</i> (1983) Network: CBS Title Designer(s): Ted Woolery and Gerry Woolery (1984) Show: <i>The Duck Factory</i> Network: NBC
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	Network: Syndicated Title Designer(s): Martin Brierley and Steven Lowe Show: <i>Now Hear This</i> (1989) Network: MTV Title Designer(s): Prudence Fenton (1989) Show: <i>Christmas at Pee Wee's Playhouse</i> Network: CBS Title Designer(s): John Semerad, Chris Harvey and Alex Weil Show: <i>Later with Bob Costas</i> (1989) Network: NBC	Johnsen, Vic Lowrey (1988) Show: <i>The Slap Maxwell Story</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): John Semerad, Chris Harvey and Alex Weil <i>Later with Bob Costas</i> (1989) Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Boortz, Pittard, Sullivan (1989) Show: <i>The Tracey Ullman Show</i> Network: Fox Title Designer(s): Boortz, Pittard, Sullivan (1989) Show: <i>The Tracey Ullman Show</i> Network: Fox	Title Designer(s): John Tribe (1985) Show: <i>Agatha Christi��s Partners in Crime</i> Network: PBS Title Designer(s): Chris Allies (1985) Show: <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Sandy Dvore (1987) Show: <i>A Carol Burnett Special: Carol, Carol, Whoopi, and Robin</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Liz Friedman (1987) Show: <i>Strong Poison: A Dorothy L Slayers Mystery</i> Network: PBS Title Designer(s): John Payson (1989) Show: <i>Just Say Julie</i> Network: MTV
1990s	Title Designer(s): Harry Dorrington (1990) Show: <i>Downtown Julie</i> Network: MTV Title Designer(s): Steve Martino and Jeff Doud, Jon	Title Designer(s): Steve Martino and Jeff Doud, designers/directors; Jon Townley, creative director; Thomas Barham (1991) Title Designer(s): Pittard/ Boortz (1991)	Title Designer(s): Anthony Geffen (1995) - Passion Pictures/ Title Designer(s): Judy Korin, Michael Kory and Jeff Wunderlich (1995)

	Townley, Thomas Barham (1991) Show: <i>ABC World of Discovery</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Stephen Roloff, title sequence designer; Bret Culp Show: <i>Tek War</i> (1994) Network: Syndicated	Show: <i>Sunday Best</i> Network: CBS Title Designer(s): Sullivan/ Ron Crabb, Jeff Boortz (1991) Show: <i>American Dreamer</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Sullivan/ Boortz/ Scott Milne, (1991) Show: <i>Shannon's Deal</i> Network: CBS	Show: <i>Museum of Television and Radio Presents</i> Network: Fox Title Designer(s): Mike Jones (1997) Rocket 5 Show: <i>Dark Skies</i> Network: NBC
	Title Designer(s): Mark Pellington (1993) Show: <i>Homicide Life on the Street</i> Network: NBC	Title Designer(s): Ken Pearce, Mark Malmberg (1992) Show: <i>Liquid Television</i> Network: MTV	Title Designer(s): Nancy Giandomenico, Nancy Laurence, Kelly Moseley and Mark Woods (1998) Show: <i>Politically Incorrect</i> Network: ABC
	Title Designer(s): Hal Gurnee, D. Wallace Colvard (1994) Show: <i>Late Show with David Lettermen</i> Network: CBS	Title Designer(s): Martin Ansolabehere Show: <i>In Living Colour</i> (1992) Network: Fox	Title Designer(s): Nancy Giandomenico, Nancy Laurence, Kelly Moseley and Mark Woods (1998) Show: <i>Politically Incorrect</i> Network: ABC
	Title Designer(s): Joel Gallen/ Pan Thomas (1994) Show: <i>Rolling Stone 93: The Year in Review</i> Network: NBC	Title Designer(s): Ed Sullivan, Suzanne Kiley (1992) Show: <i>Brooklyn Bridge</i> Network: CBS	
	Title Designer(s): Dan Curry (1995) Show: <i>Star Trek Voyager</i> Network: UPN	Title Designer(s): Billy Pittard, Frances Schiffrin, Jennifer Grey Berkowitz, Dale Everett, title (1993) Show: <i>Dudley</i> Network: CBS	
	Title Designer(s): Nicholas Livesey (1998)		

	Show: <i>The Hunger</i> Network: Showtime Title Designer(s): Yarrow Cheney/ Carrie Cheney (1999) Show: <i>Dilbert</i> Network: UPN	Title Designer(s): Sullivan/ Pittard (1993) Show: <i>Rave</i> Network: A&E Title Designer(s): Billy Pittard, Judy Korin (1993) Show: <i>Sisters</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Billy Pittard, Suzanne Kiley, (1994) Show: <i>Birdland</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Stephen Roloff, Bret Culp Show: <i>Tek War</i> (1994) Network: Syndicated Title Designer(s): Castle, Bryant, Johnsen (1994) Show: <i>The X-Files</i> Network: Fox Title Designer(s): Billy Pittard, Suzanne Kiley (1995) Show: <i>ER</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Michael Kory (1995) Michael Kory, Rick Simone and Jeff Wunderlich Show: <i>Future Quest</i> Network: PBS Title Designer(s): Bryant, Castle,	
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		Dennison, Johnsen (1996) Show: <i>Caroline in the City</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Billy Pittard and Paul Newman (1996) Show: <i>Central Park West</i> Network: CBS Title Designer(s): Pittard and Paul Newman (1996) Show: <i>Discovery Journal</i> Network: Discovery Title Designer(s): Kasumi Mihori and Billy Pittard (1997) Show: <i>The Burning Zone</i> Network: UPN Title Designer(s): Earl Jenshus and Billy Pittard (1997) Show: <i>Gun</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Yvonne Gensurowsky and Billy Pittard (1997) Show: <i>The Learning Channel's Greatest Books</i> Network: TCL Title Designer(s): Clark, Kasumi Mihori and Billy Pittard (1997)	
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		Show: <i>The Magical World of Disney</i> Network: Disney Title Designer(s): Pittard/ Sullivan (1998) Show: <i>The Wonderful World of Disney</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Bryant, Mark Dennison, Carol Johnsen (1998) Show: <i>Union Square</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Halbo van der Klaauw (1999) Show: <i>First Wave</i> Network: SCI-FI	
2000s		Title Designer(s): Pittard/ Sullivan (2000) <i>Nature</i> Network: PBS Title Designer(s): Pittard/ Sullivan (2000) Show: <i>The West Wing</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Michael Goedecke and C. Ryan Riccio Show: <i>AudioFile</i> (2001) Network: Tech	Title Designer(s): Tim Webber (2000) Show: <i>The 10th Kingdom</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Clark and Wilfred Wong, Quico Encinias and Ricardo Silva (2001) Show: <i>Norm</i> Network: ABC

		Title Designer(s): Adam Byrd and Stephen Kirklys Show: <i>MadTV</i> (2001) Network: Fox	
		Title Designer(s): Karin Fong, Grant Lau, Peggy Oei, Dana Yee (2001) Show: <i>Exxon Mobil Masterpiece Theatre's American Collection</i> Network: PBS	
		Title Designer(s): Michael Riley, Michelle Dougherty, Jeff Milner, Jason Web (2002) Show: <i>Band of Brothers</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Eric Anderson/ Danny Yount, Scott Hudziak, Paul Matthaeus (2002) Show: <i>Six Feet Under</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Anderson, Paul Matthaeus, Mason Miccoll, and James Webber (2002) Show: <i>The Mind of a Married Man</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Thomas Cobb, Blake Danforth, George Montgomery and John Narun (2002)	

		Show: <i>Wolf Lake</i> Network: CBS Title Designer(s): Laurent Fauchere, Chris Haak, Antoine Tinguely and Jakob Trollback (2003) Show: <i>Hysterical Blindness</i> Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Laurent Fauchere, Jasmine Jodry, Antoine Tinguely and Jakob Trollback (2003) Show: <i>Normal</i> Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Dave Foss (2003) Show: <i>The Anna Nicole Show</i> Network: E! Klaski Title Designer(s): Sylvie Talbot (2003) Show: <i>Napoleon</i> Network: A &E Title Designer(s): Kyle Creative Kyle Hollingsworth and Justin Leibow (2003) Show: <i>Penn and Teller</i> Network: Showtime Title Designer(s): Angus Wall, Patrick Murphy, Vonetta Taylor (2004) Show: <i>Carnivale</i> Network: HBO	
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		Title Designer(s): Dan Brown, Dave Molloy, Matt Mulder and Jake Sargeant (2004) Show: <i>The Grid</i> Network: Fox	
		Title Designer(s): Grag Hahn Jakob Trollback Show: <i>Nicole Kidman: An American Cinematheque Tribute</i> (2004) Network: AMC	
		Title Designer(s): Eric Anderson, Vince Haycock, Paul Matthaeus, Paul Schneider (2004) Show: <i>Nip/Tuck</i> Network: FX	
		Title Designer(s): Josh Bodnar, Colin Day, Paul Matthaeus and Dade Orgeron Show: <i>Stephen King's Kingdom Hospital</i> (2004) Network: ABC	
		Title Designer(s): Randall Balsmeyer, J. John Corbett, Jim Rider and Amit Sethi (2004) Show: <i>Angels in America</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Garson Yu (2005) Show: <i>Desperate</i>	

		<i>Housewives</i> Network: ABC Title Designer(s): Dan Brown, Dave Molloy, Matt Mulder, and Jake Sargeant (2005) Show: House Network: Fox Title Designer(s): VooDooDog Paul Donnellon, David Z. Obadiah, John Sunter and Andrew White Show: <i>The Life and Death of Peter Sellers</i> (2005) Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Shilo Design: Tracy Chandler, Jose Gomez, Christopher Markos and André Stringer Show: <i>Huff</i> (2005) Network: Showtime Title Designer(s): Robert Bradley and Thomas Cobb (2005) Show: <i>Weeds</i> Network: Showtime Title Designer(s): Robert Cribbett, Nate Homan, Yolanda Santosa, Garson Yu (2006) Show: <i>The Triangle</i> Network: SCI-FI Title Designer(s): Paul Matthaeus, Erin	
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		Sarofsky, Anthony Vitagliano and Shangyu Yin (2006) Show: <i>Ghost Whisperer</i> Network: CBS Title Designer(s): Kirk Balden, Andrew Hall, Angus Wall, Brad Waskewich (2006) Show: <i>Rome</i> Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Kirk Baxter, editor; Larry Ewing, creative director/producer; Maurice Marable, director; Angus Wall Show: <i>Big Love</i> (2006) Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Kirk Baxter, Larry Ewing, Maurice Marable, Angus Wall, (2006) Show: <i>Big Love</i> Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Garson Yu, Yolanda <i>Santosa</i> (2007) Show: <i>Ugly Betty</i> Network: ABC Title Designer: Matthew Mulder, Dave Molloy, Colin Day and Lindsay Daniels (2007) Show: <i>The Path to 9/11</i> Network: ABC	
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		Title Designer(s): Thomas Cobb and Robert Bradley, Patrick Loungway (2007) Show: <i>The Lost Room</i> Network: SCI-FI	
		Title Designer(s): Eric Anderson, Josh Bodnar, Lindsay Daniels, Colin Davis Show: <i>Dexter</i> (2007) Network: Showtime	
		Title Designer(s): Michele Riley, Bob Swenson, Dan Meehan, Brad Simmons (2007) Show: <i>Standoff</i> Network: Fox	
		Title Designer(s): Garson Yu and Synderela Peng, Etsuko Uji, Edwin Baker (2008) Show: <i>Bernard and Doris</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Johanna Marciano, Wendy Brovetto, Bryan Keeling (2008) Show: <i>New Amsterdam</i> Network: Fox	
		Title Designer(s): Matthew Mulder, Ryan Gagnier, Igor Choromanski and Cody Cobb, Noah Conopask (2008)	

		Network: TNT Title Designer(s): Mark Gardner and Steve Fuller, designers/directors; Cara McKenney (2008) Show: <i>Mad Men</i> Network: AMC Title Designer(s): Karin Fong, Jonathan Gerhson, and Dana Yee (2008) Show: <i>Chuck</i> Network: NBC Title Designer(s): Joe Berger and Wse Joe Berger, main title Pascal Wyse (2008) Show: <i>Hustle</i> Network: AMC Title Designer(s): Rama Allen (2009) Show: <i>True Blood</i> Title Designer(s): James Spindler, Mike Wasilewski, Ahmet Ahmet and Grant Lau Show: <i>The Story Makers</i> (2009) Title Designer(s): Michel Riley, Dru Nget, Dan Meehan, Bob Swenson (2009) Show: <i>Taking Chance</i> Network: HBO	
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		Title Designer(s): Robert Bradley and Thomas Cobb (2009) Show: <i>Lie to Me</i> Network: Fox Title Designer(s): Jamie Caliri, Dave Finkel, Brett Baer, Alex Jukasz (2009) Show: <i>United States of Tara</i> Network: Showtime	
2010s	Title Designer(s): Conn Reilly, Veva Burns, John Priday (2012) Show: <i>New Girl</i> Network: Fox	Title Designer(s): Karin Fong, Jeremy Cox, and Cara McKenney (2010) Show: <i>Human Target</i> Network: Fox Title Designer(s): Michael Riley, Zee Nederlander, Dru Nget, Bob Swenson (2010) Show: <i>Temple Grandin</i> Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Tom Barham, Marci Ichimura, Dean Haspiel, and Anthony Santoro (2010) Show: <i>Bored to Death</i> Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Michael Riley, Bob Swenson, Adam Bluming, Cory Shaw (2011) Show: <i>Too Big to Fall</i>	

		Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Karin Fong, Michelle Dougherty, Lauren Hartstone, Cara McKenny (2011) Show: <i>Boardwalk Empire</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Karin Fong, Jeremy Cox, Theodore Daley, Cara Mc Kenney (2011) Show: <i>Rubicon</i> Network: AMC	
		Title Designer(s): Angus Wall, Robert Feng; Kirk H. Shintani, Hameed Shaukat, (2011) Show: <i>Game Of Thrones</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Paul McDonnell, Hugo Moss, Justin Lowings, (2011) Show: Any Human Heart Network: PBS	
		Title Designer(s): Heiko Schneck, CG lead; Fabian Poss, producer/ animator; Csaba Letay, compositor; Jan Bitzer (2012) Show: <i>Halo 4</i> Network: Machina.com	

		Title Designer(s): Nic Bennis, Miki Kato, Joe Lea (2012) Show: <i>Strike Back</i> Network: Cinemax	
		Title Designer(s): Kyle Cooper, Juan Ruiz Anchía, Gabriel Diaz, Ryan Murphy (2012) Show: <i>American Horror Story</i> Network: FX	
		Title Designer(s): Nic Bennis, Rodi Kaya (2012) Show: <i>Great Expectations</i> Network: PBS	
		Title Designer(s): Michael Riley, Danny Zimmerman, Cory Shaw, Justin Gerstein (2012) Show: <i>The Newsroom</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Kyle Cooper, Ryan Murphy, Juan Ruiz Anchía, Kate Berry (2013) Show: <i>American Horror Story: Asylum</i> Network: FX	
		Title Designer(s): Simon Clowes, Benji Bakshi, Kyle Cooper, Nate Park (2013) Show: <i>Elementary</i> Network: CBS	

		Title Designer(s): Paul McDonnell, Hugo Moss, Nathan Mckenna, Tamsin McGee, (2013) Network: Starz	
		Title Designer(s): Garson Yu, Mehmet Kizilay (2014) Show: <i>Silicon Valley</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Raoul Marks, Eddy Herrington, designer, Paul Kim (2014) Show: <i>True Detective</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Curtis Doss and Shaun Collings, creative directors; Randall Smith, Tom Connors, Troy James Miller (2014) Show: <i>Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey</i> Network: Fox	
		Title Designer(s): Leanne Dare, Yi-Jen Liu, Jon Forsman, Gabriel Britz, (2014) Show: <i>Masters of Sex</i> Network: Showtime	
		Title Designer(s): Garson Yu, Synderela Peng, Michael Lane Parks, Alex Pollini (2015)	

		Show: <i>Olive Kitteridge</i> Network: HBO Title Designer(s): Grant Lau, JJ Gerber, Michael Radkte, Rod Bashham (2015) Show: <i>Bosch</i> Network: Amazon Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Raoul Marks, Eddy Herrington, Paul Kim (2015) Show: <i>Halt and Catch Fire</i> Network: AMC Title Designer(s): Ryan Murphy and Kyle Cooper, Lee Nelson, Nadia Tzuu, (2015) Show: <i>American Horror Story: Freak Show</i> Network: FX Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Andrew Romatz, Miguel Salek, Shahana Kahn (2015) Show: <i>Daredevil</i> Network: Netflix Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Paul Kim, Jose Limon, Raoul Marks, (2016) Show: <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> Network: Amazon Title Designer(s): Michelle Dougherty,	
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		Arisu Kashiwagi, Rod Bashman, David Mack, Eric Demusey, Thomas McMahon (2016) Show: <i>Jessica Jones</i> Network: Netflix Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Raoul Marks, Devin Maurer, Jeff Han, (2017) Show: <i>American Gods</i> Network: Starz Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Raoul Marks, Javier Leon Carrillo, Jeff Han (2017) Show: <i>The Crown</i> Network: Netflix Title Designer(s): Michelle Dougherty, creative director; Peter Frankfurt, executive creative director; Arisu Kashiwagi, designer; Eric Demeusy, compositor/designer (2017) Show: <i>Stranger Things</i> Network: Netflix Title Designer(s): Ryan Murphy, Alexis Martin Woodall, Kyle Cooper, Nadia Tzuo, Margherita Premuroso (2017) Show: <i>Feud: Bette and Joan</i> Network: FX	
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		Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Raoul Marks, Jose Limon, Savva Tsekmes, (2018) Show: <i>Westworld</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Lisa Bolan, Thomas McMahan, Yongsub Song and Byron Slaybaugh, Carlo Sa and Mert Kizilay, (2018) Show: <i>Altered Carbon</i> Network: Netflix	
		Title Designer(s): Angus Wall and Lisa Bolan, Yongsub Song and Charles Khoury, Heidi Berg, Felix Soletic (2018) Show: <i>The Alienist</i> Network: TNT	
		Title Designer(s): Patrick Clair, Nic Pizzolatto, Kyle Moore and Victor Joy, Raoul Marks, Woosung Kang, (2019) Show: <i>True Detective</i> Network: HBO	
		Title Designer(s): Lisa Bolan, Peter Murphy, Alyssa Oh, June Cho (2019) Show: <i>Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes</i> Network: Netflix	

		Title Designer(s): Ana Criado, Nader Hussein and Zachary Kinney, Francisco Sánchez de Cañete, Christian Antolin, Kyle Cooper (2019) Show: <i>Star Trek Discovery</i> Network: CBS Title Designer(s): John Likens, Wesley Ebelhar, Arisu Kashiwagi (2019) Show: <i>Warrior</i> Network: Cinemax Title Designer(s): Angus Wall, Kirk Shintani, Shahana Khan, Ian Ruhfass, Rustam Hasanov (2019) Show: <i>Game of Thrones</i> Network: HBO	
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Unknown Outstanding Main Emmy Award Designers: 18

Michael Levine/ Michael Holey (1982)

Fame

Network: NBC

Eytan Keller/ Stu Bernstein (1977)

The Bell Tower Jubilee

Network: NBC

50th Annual Awards of the Motion Pictures (1978)

Network: ABC

Cinderella at the Palace (1979)

Network: CBS

Edie Baskin and Bob Pook (1976)

Saturday Night Live

Network: NBC

Bob Pook, William Shortridge Jr. and Arlen Schumer (1982)

Network: NBC

Edie Baskin and Jeff Carpenter (1983)

Square Pegs (1983)

Network: CBS

Jim Blashfield, designer; Robert Hoffmann (1990)

Alive from Off Centre

Network: PBS

Gary Dorrington (1990)

Downtown Julie Brown

Network: MTV

James House

The Very Best of the Ed Sullivan Show 2 (1992)

Network: CBS

Michael D Smith/ Dave Spafford (1993)

MTV Music Awards

Network: MTV

Orest Woronewych, director of design; Adam Chin, animator; Tom Gericke, designer; Cliff Iwai, co-designer (1995)

Cinemax Movie Open

Network: Cinemax

Mark Dwyer and Greg Pecknold (1998)

Popular Science

Network: TLC

The Promised Land (1998)

Network: Discovery

Shannon Davis Forsyth and Jin Lim (1999)

Private Screenings

Network: TCM

Earl Bateman, designer; Lee Dyer, co-designer; Alexander Lebedev (2000)

Now and Again

Network: CBS

Michael Goetz, Kevin Goetz and Michael Goode (2001)

The Wonderful World of Disney

Network: ABC

Renato Grgic and Kristijan Petrovic, creative directors; Alen Petkovic, producer/creative designer;
Jon Teschner (2006)
78th Annual Academy Awards
Network: ABC

13.3 Appendix 3: Elastic and Imaginary Forces Catalogues

Elastic:

2003/4

- *Carnivale* (A52)
- *Deadwood* (A52)- Not Elastic

2009

- Newport Beach Film Festival Trailer- Andy Hall- AD
- FUEL TV "Fight or Flight" Andy Hall - AD
- *Verizon Droid "iDon't"*- AD
- "Peel" for Nikelab.com- AD
- Spider for Nikelab.com- Andy Hall- AD
- Adidas "It's on me for we"- Patrick Murphy- AD
- Adidas "It's On Derrick Rose"- Patrick Murphy- AD
- Honda Accord Crosstour Boxes- Andy Hall- AD
- Honda Accord Crosstour Instruments- Andy Hall- AD
- Adidas "Lesson in Style"- Andy Hall- AD

2010

- Justified- Rock Paper Scissors- Angus Wall- AD
- Nike All Together- Angus Wall- AD
- Verizon Droid HTC- AD
- Verizon Droid X- Patrick Murphy- AD
- Juicy Juice Lumberjacks- Andy Hall- AD
- HP Ants- AD
- Toyota Venza 2:0
- Honda Accord Crosstour "Snow Trip"- AD
- Honda Accord Crosstour Squirrel- AD
- Adidas Game Changer- AD

2011

- *Game of Thrones*- Angus Wall- TS
- Arrowhead Natures Fix the Drop- Andy Hall- AD
- Arrowhead Natures Fix The Kingpin- Andy Hall- AD
- Arrowhead Natures Fix the Lab- AD
- Arrowhead Natures Fix The Raid- AD
- Arrowhead Natures Fix The Shipment- Andy Hall- AD

- Yahoo Video Installation- Lisha Tan- AD
- Ben and Jerry's Bonnaroo Buzz- AD
- Ben and Jerry's Chocolate Fudge Brownie- Andy Hall- AD
- Ad Council Frozen- Patrick Murphy- AD
- Verizon Droid Surfer- AD
- Togos Puny Pulled Pork- Lisha Tan- AD
- Educate our State- Lisha Tan- AD
- Lexus Step up- Patrick Murphy- AD

2012

- American Cross Resolution- Andy Hall- AD
- American Red Cross "Holiday 2012"- AD
- American Red Cross Stuff- AD
- Allstate Calculation- Patrick Murphy- AD
- ESPN Team Spirit- AD
- Google Fiber Talent Show- Adam Pertofsky- AD
- Google Fiber Injured- Adam Pertofsky- AD
- Ben and Jerry's Banana- Andy Hall- AD
- I Love NY- Andy Hall- AD
- I love NY- Andy Hall- AD
- Starbucks Refreshers- Andy Hall- AD
- Ben and Jerry's Strawberries- Andy Hall- AD
- Lexus Techworld- Patrick Murphy- AD
- American Red Cross – Andy Hall- AD
- ESPN Global- Angus Wall-AD
- Nike- Angus Wall- AD

2013

- Safeway Paper- Andy Hall- AD
- *Masters of Sex*- TS
- *The Americans*- Angus Wall- TS
- Chevy Spark- Angus Wall- AD
- Ben and Jerry's – Andy Hall- AD
- Sprite Collaboration- AD
- Honda It's Here Collaboration- AD
- Honda Owner's Manual- AD
- Honda Stampede- AD

- King Maxwell- Henry Deleon- AD
- Onstar Joyride x4 (commercial series)- Angus Wall- AD
- Jose Cuervo x2- Andy Hall- AD
- Lexus December- Jonas Akerlund- AD

2014

- *True Detective*- Patrick Clair- TS
- Starbucks x2“quality”- AD
- *Halt and Catch Fire* – Patrick Clair TS
- T Mobile- AD
- Taylormade- Patrick Murphy- AD
- Chevy The New Us- Angus Wall- AD
- Jack and Frank- Jake Banks- AD
- Google Tonight- Angus Wall- AD
- Oscars Pod C- AD
- Oscars Pod A- AD
- Oscars B- AD
- Oscars Popular Heroes- AD
- Oscars Everyday Heroes- AD
- Starbucksx3- AD
- Pixelville Longform- Hall- AD
- Googlex2- Hall- AD
- Sony Playstation World Cup- Patrick Clair- AD
- Fema Show You Care- Headless- AD
- Nike ID- Angus Wall- AD
- Adidas World Cup- Andy Hall- AD
- Onstar x3- Angus Wall- AD
- Adidas, Two Teams One Trophy- Patrick Clair- AD
- *Assassins Creed* Unity - Patrick Clair- Trailer
- MTV 2014 – Patrick Clair- AD
- Memorial Museum- Andy Hall- AD
- Memorial Sloan Kettering “Finding Out”- AD
- NBA Everybody Up- Angus Wall- AD
- Riot Games the Harrowing- Andy Hall- AD
- Riot Games- AD
- *Interstellar* Time Capsule Introduction- Angus Wall/ David Brodie- AD
- Walmart A Little More Joy- AD

2015

- *The Man in the High Castle*- Patrick Clair- TS
- *Daredevil*- Patrick Clair-TS
- *True Detective S2*- Patrick Clair- TS
- *The Leftovers*- Angus Wall- TS
- Jose Cuervo- Andy Hall- AD
- The Whispers- Henry Hobson- AD
- 2015 Oscars Opening- Patrick Murphy/ Leanne Dare- TS
- Oscars Best Picture- Movie
- Oscars- In Memoria- Movie
- Oscars- Production Design- Movie
- Oscars-VFX- Movie
- 87th Oscars Main Show Open- TS
- Fiji Advertisements x4- AD
- Lennox- Andy Hall- AD
- Emic Trailer- David Brodie- AD
- Run All Titles
- T Mobile- Krystal Sojourner- AD
- Call of Duty Black Ops 3 Embers- Patrick Clair- Trailer
- Honda Andy Hall- AD
- T Mobile x15- Unknown- AD
- Bacardi- Patrick Clair- AD
- Cree- Patrick Murphy- AD
- Patron Authenticity- AD
- Game Of Thrones: The Sight Case Study- AD
- Jose Cuervo- AD
- Google Interstellar- AD
- Independent Lens Case Study- Leanne Dare- AD
- Hot Dog Pizza Bites- Leanne Dare- AD
- Tundra Endeavour Study- Unknown- AD
- Lennox x2- Andy Hall- AD
- Reliant Power- Andy Hall- AD
- Audience of One Adidas – Patrick Clair- AD
- Flipogram- AD
- Adidas- AD
- MTV 2015 Patrick Clair and Lee Lodge- AD
- The Massively Mixed-up Middle School Mystery- Andy Hall- AD
- Think it Up Peggy Oei x 2- Lisa Bolan- AD
- *Wired Design*- Patrick Clair- AD
- Minority Report- Patrick Clair- AD
- Riot Games Worlds x2- Andy Hall- AD
- Winter on Fire- Titles- Patrick Clair- AD

- Clippers- Angus Wall- AD
- Riot Games Worlds- AD
- Flesh and Bone Titles- Angus Wall- AD
- Making a murderer Laura Riccardi- AD
- Lexus DSE x2 Pat Murphy- AD
- Lowes Black Friday x3- Andy Hall- AD
- First Pitch- Angus Wall- AD
- MTV Sext Life- Angus Wall- AD
- 2015 Happy Holiday- Unknown- AD
- Rocket Mortgage x10- Patrick Clair- AD
- Jose Cuervo (Collaboration)- AD
- Lowe's 2015 Season's Stroll- AD
- Kingdom -Earl Burnley- AD
- Eureka-AD
- Turkish Air x2- Patrick Murphy- AD

2016

- *Hitman* Trailer- Patrick Clair
- Making a Murderer GFX
- Mercy Street Title Sequence- Ahmet Ahmet- AD
- *Far Cy Primal*- Patrick Clair- Trailer
- *Love* – Ahmet Ahmet- TS
- *The Night Manager*- Patrick Clair- TS
- *The Outcast*- Angus Wall- TS
- *Amanda Knox*- Leanne Dare- TS
- *Luke Cage*- Patrick Clair-TS
- *Westworld*- Patrick Clair- TS
- *13th*- Leanne Dare- TS
- *The Young Pope* Ahmet Ahmet- TS
- *The Crown*- Patrick Clair -TS
- *The History of Magic In North America*- Andy Hall- AD
- Nike Kobe- AD
- Riot MSI- Andy Hall- AD
- *Game of Thrones* Facebook 360- Melissa Eccles- Angus Wall- AD
- The Origins of Ilvermorny- Andy Hall- AD
- Xbox Family Friendly- AD
- Xbox Portal/Forza- AD
- Celebrity Cruises- Ahmet Ahmet- AD
- The Magical Congress of the United States of America- Andy Hall- AD
- Chance Title- Ahmet Ahmet- AD

- Infiniti SUV- Patrick Clair- AD
- Subaru- Angus Wall- AD
- Cirque Du Soleil- Rob Feng- AD
- Fitbit- Rob Feng- AD
- Heroes Defy- Patrick Clair- AD
- GE build a city -Max Ulichney- AD
- Celebrity Cruises- Ahmet Ahmet- AD
- Space Jam Directors Cut- Angus Wall- AD
- Honda Yearbooks- Angus Wall- AD
- NBA Yearbooks Collab- AD

2017

- *Iron Fist*- Patrick Clair- TS
- *American Gods*- Patrick Clair- TS
- *Dave Chapelle*- Angus Wall- TS
- Back to School- Paul Mitchell- AD
- Let The Show Begin- Paul Mitchell/ Lisa Bolan- AD
- *Five Came Back* - Andy Hall- TS
- American Express- Andy Hall- TS
- *Berlin Station* TS- Angus Wall
- *Hot Girls Wanted* -TS
- Heroes 2.0 Launch- Patrick Clair- Trailer
- Jack Daniels- Daryn Wakasa- AD
- Aetna Freedom- Andre Stringer- AD
- *Pacific Rim*- Andy Hall- TS
- Fruit of the Loom Collaboration/ Paul Mitchell- TS
- Manhunt Bomber – Lisa Bolan
- MTV 2017- Duncan Elms- AD
- NFL Collaboration/ Paul Mitchell- AD
- Wired Love in Time of the Robots- Andy Hall- AD
- Royal Caribbean Collab- AD
- NFL Collaboration/ Lisa Bolan- AD
- *Fantastic Beasts*- Andy Hall- TS
- *The Punisher*– Patrick Clair- TS
- *Love Season 3*- TS
- NFL/ Paul Mitchell- AD
- My Next Guest Needs No Introduction- Jeff Han- AD
- Dirty Money Main Title- Duncan Elms- AD
- *Alienist*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Altered Carbon*- Lisa Bolan- TS

- Toyota Frozen – Patrick Clair- AD
- Sport Chek- Collaboration- AD
- *The Outsider*- Duncan Elms- Patrick Clair- TS

2018

- *The Alienist*- Lisa Bolan-TS
- *Altered Carbon*- Lisa Bolan-TS
- *The Terror* – Patrick Clair- TS
- *Westworld S2*- Patrick Clair- TS
- *Yellowstone* – Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Harry Quebert Affair*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- Dirty Money Main Title Director's Cut- Duncan Elms- AD
- Nike Until We All Win- AD
- Legendary- Andy Hall- AD
- James Cameron Ad- Jeff Han- AD
- Adobe "This is not a store"- Postproduction- Angus Wall- AD
- Bobby Kennedy for President- Jeff Han- AD
- The Fourth Estate Main Title Sequence Design- Jeff Han- AD
- *Pose* Season 1- TS
- Strokes of Genius- Jeff Han- AD
- Adidas FW18- Postproduction- Duncan Elms- AD
- "Dell Power Within" Postproduction- Paul Mitchell- AD
- *Pink Collars*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Westworld* TS
- Amazon Music- Alberto Ponte- TS
- *One Dollar* Main Titles- Lisa Bolan-TS
- *Antman and the Wasp*- Andy Hall- TS
- Eli Roth's *History of Horror*- Andy Hall- TS
- *Lore*- Duncan Elms- TS
- Patriot Act- Jeff Han- AD
- Stand Up to Cancer- Simon Clowes- AD
- Shut up and Dribble- AD
- Toyota- Collaboration- Live Action Angus Wall/ Jeff Han- AD
- Christopher Robin- Nadia Tzuo, Andy Hall, Lisa Bolan- AD
- Planters Big Rig Collaboration- AD
- Planters Snack "Snack Time"- Andy Hall- AD

2019

- *Conversations with a Killer*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *I am The Night*- Lisa Bolan- TS

- *Velvet Buzzsaw* - TS
- *Captain Marvel*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Game of Thrones S8*- TS
- *The Black Godfather*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Men in Black: International*- Jeff Han and Nadia Tzuo- TS
- *Semi-Permanent* Sydney- TS
- *Control* - Duncan Elms- TS
- *Girl in The Spider's Web*/ Nadia Tzuo- TS
- *Carnival Row*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *The Politician*- TS
- *Catherine the Great*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Watchmen* - Paul Mitchell- TS
- *The Morning Show*- Angus Wall- TS
- *His Dark Materials* - Clarissa Donlevy- TS
- *Spies in Disguise*- Andy Hall- TS
- *Metro Exodus*- Andy Hall- TS
- *Nancy Drew*- TS
- *Cosmos: Possible Worlds*- Duncan Elms- TS
- *Slay the Dragon*- Duncan Elms- TS
- *Truth be Told*- TS
- *The Inventor*- TS
- *Doom Patrol*-TS
- *Girl in the Spider's Web*- Nadia Tzou- TS
- *Dragonstone Commercial*- AD
- *Me Too*- Heidi Berg / Lisa Bolan- AD
- *Xbox Gears 5*- Andy Hall (Postproduction)- AD
- *Captain Marvel Main on End*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Ghost Hunters Vortex*- Paul Mitchell- TS
- *Gears 5*- Andy Hall Collab- TS
- *Gear 5* - Noah Harris Collab- TS
- *Dave Chapelle*- Angus Wall- TS
- *Dell Seeing More*- Collab- Paul Mitchell- AD
- *New Republic Pictures*- Jeff Han- AD
- *The Truth About The Harry Quebert Affair*- Lisa Bolan- TS
- *Mindhunter Promo*- Jeff Han- Trailer
- *Who Will Write Our History*- Lisa Bolan- AD
- *Fear the Walking Dead Season 5*- Title Card- AD
- *Bombshell* End Crawl- TS
- *The Killer Inside*- Lisa Bolan- AD
- *Kevin Hart- Don't Fuck This Up*- Jeff Han- AD
- *Oreo GOT*- Andy Hall- AD

- Ancestry Suffragette- Clarissa Donlevy- AD

Creative Designers:

Patrick Clair/ Raoul Marks- Main Title Sequence Designer

Angus Wall- Main Title Sequence Designer

Lisa Bolan- Main Title Sequence Designer

Leanne Dare- Main Title Sequence

Hazel Bairid/ Heidi Berg/ Felix Solectic- Main Title Sequence

Jeff Han- Main Title Sequence Designer

Andy Hall/ Patrick Murphy/ Duncan Elms/ Paul Mitchell- Advertising

Others

Imaginary Forces:

1994

-*Se7en* Main Title

2002

- Marvel Entertainment Comics

2003

Herman- Miller-Get Real

2005

-Team One Advertising

2007

-*Mad Men* Title Sequence- Mark Gardner and Steve Fuller

2009

-Warner Brother Productions

2010

- *Rubicon*- Karin Fong tv
- *Cats and Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore*- Brad Peyton- Movie
- *The Pacific*- Peter Frankfurt and Steve Fuller- TV
- *500 Days of Summer*- Michelle Dougherty in collaboration with Marc Webb- Movie
- *Human Target*- Karin Fong- TV
- *Nurse Jackie*- Mark Gardner, Steve Fuller- TV
- *Boardwalk Empire*- Karin Fong, Michelle Dougherty- TV
- *Mildred Pierce* Teaser- Lauren Hartstone- TV
- Scion tcmy2011- Charles Khoury- Commercial
- RAM Trucks- Ahmet Ahmet- Commercial
- *Transformers- Dark of the Moon*- Unknown- Movie
- Real Steel- Shawn Levy - Ad
- Times Square Visitor- Karin Fong- Ad

- Dolby 7-1 Surround- AD

2011

- Powerade- Charles Khoury and Brian Mah- Ad
- Tropicana Flip Book- Ronnie Koff Ad
- Dead Man on Campus- Charles Khoury and Brian Mah Ad
- FVAP- Brian Mah Ad
- Starhawk e3 Trailer- Unknown Ad
- Science Channel Rebrand- Ronnie Koff Ad
- Science Channel Rebrand- Ronnie Koff Ad
- Magic City Montage- Karin Fong Ad
- Curiosity Promo- Michelle Dougherty Ad
- Southern Company- Brian Mah Ad
- Hunter Douglas- Unknown Ad
- Reel Steel- Unknown Ad
- Reese's Halloween Ad
- Tetley Ad
- Reel Steel- Unknown Ad
- Magic Trip- Karin Fong Ad

2012

- Florida Natural- Ronnie Koff Ad
- Nike- Charles Khoury Ad
- Natural History Museum- Michelle Dougherty Ad
- Hillshire Farms- Karin Fong Ad
- Propel Zero- Brian Mah Ad
- *Magic City*- Michelle Dougherty TV
- Firefall Intro Video Game- Grant Lau Ad
- God of War Teaser Ascension Trailer- Karin Fong Ad
- The Host- Grant Lau Ad
- Blue Plate Mayonnaise Extinction- Unknown Ad
- HBO Spring Image Spot- Lauren Hartstone Ad
- Ad Council GLSEN- U Ad
- This Means War- Karin Fong Movie
- Lagoon- Joan Lua, Michelle Dougherty- Movie
- The Elder Scrolls Online- Grant Lau: Using Cinema 4D- Video Game
- Dolby Atmos- Ronnie Koff- AD
- Transformers The Ride 3D- Ronnie Koff- Movie
- Blue Plate Light- Michelle- AD
- 21 Jump Street-U- Movie

- 02- Ronnie Koff AD
- Future of Storytelling- Charles Khoury AD
- Cricket- U- TV
- Walgreens- Michelle Dougherty/ Joan Lau AD
- Crime Scene Pictures- U AD
- *Person of Interest*- Miguel Lee TV
- Nike VRS Covert- Charles Khoury Ad
- Tangled Bank- Mark Gardner AD
- God of War Teaser- Karin Fong AD

2013

- Goodwin Games- U AD
- Star Trek Mazda- Charles Khoury AD
- The Moment- Karin Fong AD
- Natural History Museum: Title Sequence- Joan Lau AD
- Target- Christina- Karin Fong AD
- Beautiful Creatures- Joan Lau AD
- *God of War* Superbowl Trailer- Karin Fong TV
- *Hit the Floor*- Michelle Dougherty TV
- Lexus Intensity- Michelle Dougherty, Karin Fong AD
- Splinter Cell- Dan Gregoras Video Game
- Swiffer Bissell- Ronnie Koff TV
- Ice Breakers Duo- Ronnie Koff AD
- Quiznos BBQ- Ronnie Koff AD
- *Pacific Rim*- Miguel Lee Movie
- *Pacific Rim* main on end- Miguel Lee Movie
- Toyota: Love in One Mile- Michelle Dougherty AD
- DC Collectibles- Grant Lau AD
- Atand at- Harmony AD
- AT&AT- U AD
- Strife Rook- Ryan Summers AD
- Splinter Cell Blacklist- Dan Gregoras Video Game
- Janus- U AD
- IBM Healthcare- Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD
- IBM Healthcare- Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD
- DTOUR- Mark Gardner AD
- IBM Watson Finance- Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD
- IBM Watson Intro - Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD
- IBM Watson Reel- Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD
- IBM Watson Customer Service- Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD

- IBM Healthcare Practice- Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD
- IBM Healthcare Practice- Dan Gregoras, Ronnie Koff AD
- High School Music- U AD
- South Park- Karin Fong AD
- Owens Corning: Eco Touch- Karin Fong AD
- *The Walking Dead*/ Hyundai- Dan Gregoras and Alan Williams AD
- Reign- Ronnie Koff AD
- Oral B Black- U AD
- Alpha House- Dan Gregoras AD
- *Hit the Floor*- U TV
- Marvel Studio Logo- Charles Khoury AD
- Paramount Star Trek AD
- S2 Games Strife Rock AD
- Supergoover Toyota- U AD
- Steam Boost Launch- U AD
- 2013- The Moment- U AD
- Splinter Cell sizzle- U AD
- NBC Sports AD

2014

- *American Gods*- Michelle Dougherty, Karin Fong TV
- *Carmax*- Slow Bark TV
- Nike Covert- U TV
- *9/11 Memorial Astronaut*- Alan Williams TV
- *Crest* Be TV
- Sapporo- Michelle Dougherty and Karin Fong AD
- 9/11 Memorial- Alan Williams- Collab AD
- Jeremy Cox- Deadliest Week Ever AD
- League of Legends- Dan Gregoras AD
- Helix Helix AD
- Deadliest Week Ever- Jeremy Cox AD
- Battlefield Hardline- Miguel Lee, Charles Khoury AD
- The Bridge- Grant Lau AD
- *Swamp Murders*- Grant Lau TV
- Oral B- Michelle Dougherty, Charles Khoury AD
- NRG- Dan Meehan AD
- Dolphin Tale 2- Joan Lau AD
- *Hell, on Wheels*- Grant Lau TV
- *Manhattan*- Dan Gregoras TV
- Gillette, Shave after Shave- Michelle Dougherty AD

- A To Z- Joan Lau AD
- Schlage- Jeremy Cox AD
- Slow Moments Blow- Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama AD
- Slow Moments- Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama AD
- Slow Moments- The Social Network- Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama AD
- Slow Moments- Doubt AD
- Slow Moments- Step Brothers AD
- Slow Moments- Twilight AD
- Slow Moments- X-Men AD
- Slow Moments- The Girl in the Dragon Tattoo AD
- Slow Moments- Salt AD
- Slow Moments- In Time AD
- Age of Extinction- Charles Khoury AD
- Outlander Main Title- Dan Gregoras AD
- A Crime To Remember- Grant Lau AD
- Toyota Dominoes- Michelle Dougherty AD
- Boardwalk- Jeremy Cox AD
- Nicholas Sparks Logo- Miguel Lee AD
- Toyota Dominoes- Michelle Dougherty AD
- Sainsbury's Poppies- Dan Gregoras AD
- Momentum: Action- Peter Frankfurt AD
- Momentum Comedy- Peter Frankfurt- Tosh Kodama AD
- MPAA Anthem- Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama AD
- MPAA Spark- Grant Lau, Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama AD
- Slow Moments Baby Mama- Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama AD
- Momentum Drama- Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama AD
- Maxon- Saved by Solo- Ryan Summers AD
- See Political Prop 42- Michelle Dougherty AD
- See Political- Michelle AD
- See Political- Michelle AD
- Seventh Son- Main on End- Charles Khoury, Michelle Dougherty Movie
- Grant Lau- *Bosch* Main Titles TV

2015

- *American Family*- Aleen Kim- AD
- Reese's All Not New- Alan Williams- AD
- Oral B- Charles Khoury- AD
- Google Times Square- Charles Khoury, Tosh Kodoma - AD
- *American Gods* Season 2- Alan Williams -TV
- SNL- Alan Williams, Jeremy Cox- AD
- SNL- Alan Williams, Jeremy Cox- AD

- Gaming Awards- Jeremy Cox- AD
- Vape Lies- Dan Gregoras- AD
- Vape Lies- Dan Gregoras- AD
- *The Last Ship* Season 2 Promo- Miguel Lee AD
- Netflix Australia- Charles Khoury, Tosh Kodoma AD
- Heart Felt- Alan Williams AD
- Mad Men Mashup- U AD
- The Perfect Murder- Alan Williams AD
- Microsoft Times- Jeremy Cox AD
- Heartfelt- Alan Williams AD
- *Manhattan*- Dan Gregoras AD
- *Manhattan*- U
- Sc-fi- Peter Frankfurt, Tosh Kodama, Charles Khoury AD
- Sonic Sea- U AD
- Late Night- Alan Williams TV?
- *Jessica Jones*- Michelle Dougherty TV
- Blunt Talk- Michelle Dougherty

2016

- Reese's Mouthwatering- Alan Williams AD
- Battle Banner- Jeremy Cox- GOT Promo AD
- Battle Banner- Jeremy Cox AD
- Battle Banner Jeremy Cox AD
- National Graphic- Jeremy Cox AD
- *Better Call Saul*- U AD
- Reese- Amped Up AD
- How do we choose a president- U? AD
- Vinyl- Peter Frankfurt, Alan Williams, Michelle Dougherty TV
- Sonic Sea- Michelle Dougherty AD
- How do you museum x 14- advertising campaign- Will Ferrell? AD
- Underground- U AD
- Gaming Sequence- U AD
- Cisco- U AD
- National Geographic- Michelle Dougherty, Dan Meehan, Charles Khoury AD
- MTV Awards- U AD
- Euro Cup Opening- Cox AD
- ESPN Euro Cup- Jeremy Cox AD
- Zero Days- Karin Fong AD
- Skydance Media- Charles Khoury AD
- *Baby Boom*- Karin Fong AD

- Honest Political- U AD
- A Monster Calls AD
- National Geographic Main Titles: Years of Living Dangerously- Michelle Dougherty TV
- Dolby Cinema- Jens Mebes AD
- *Stranger Things* Main Titles TV
- *Outpost* Main Titles- Pharrell Williams TV
- Transformers: The Last Knight- U MOVIE

2017

- HBO 2017- Dan Gregoras AD
- Gaming Awards- Jeremy Cox VIDEO Games
- *Annie with an E*- Alan Williams TV
- National Geographic AD
- A California Heist Main Title- U Movie
- Elysium: Living in the Future AD
- Elysium- Jeremy Cox AD
- Happy Earth Day- Nathan Goodell AD
- Girl Boss- Michelle TV
- AARP Reputation- AD
- National Geographic AD
- Reese's Pictures Cup3 AD
- Lego Star Wars AD
- Book of Henry AD
- *Transformers* A look Back- AD
- *The Mist* main titles- U TV
- I'm Dying Up Here- Titles- U Movie
- *Gypsy* Main Titles- U TV
- Big Hero 6- U Movie
- Lego Star Wars Teaser- U AD
- *Star Wars* Falcon- Karin Fong AD
- SCI Arc- U AD
- Threads Series- Imaginary Forces and New Form Digital- Grant Lau, Tosh Kodama AD
- The Story of US- U Ad
- HBO Featurette The Making of- U Ad
- *Stranger Things* 2- Michelle Dougherty TV
- *American Gods*- Karin Fong TV

2018

- *The Terror* Teaser AD
- *I Mac Prox2*- Michelle TV
- Charlotte Web's- Karin Fong AD
- *Lost in Space* Main Titles- U TV
- National Geographic- U AD
- *Castle Rock*- U- Jeremy Cox Ad
- Cinemax Warrior- U TV
- *Castle Rock*- U AD
- Clash Royale AD
- *Darkest Mind* TV

2019

- Netflix Identity AD
- Axios on HBO Ad
- Epix Brand AD
- *Stranger Things* Season 3- Michelle TV
- *The Rook*- Grant Lau TV
- *Jack Ryan* Main Title- U AD
- *Tell Me A Story*- Karin Fong TV
- *See*- Karin Fong TV
- *For All Mankind*- Alan Williams TV
- Netflix Originals AD
- Riot Games Logo Ad
- HBO Stories "Like No Other" Ad

13.4 Appendix 4: Run Times

The following run times are in ascending order to highlight the minimum and maximum run time.

CBS Run Times (2010-2019)

Extant (2014), None

The McCarthys (2014)- None

Rush Hour (2016), None

Brain Dead (2016), None

Hunted (2017), None

Chaos (2011), None

Live to Dance (2011)- None

Doubt (2017)- 0:03

The Case of Jon Benet Ramsey (2016), 0:02

Catfish Trolls (2018), 0:02

Friend Me (2012), 0:03

The Unicorn (2019), 0:03

Carol's Second Act (2019), 0:04

Seal Team (2017), 0:04

FBI (2018) 0:04

TKO: Total Knock Out (2018), 0:04

A Gifted Man (2012), 0:04

Lucky Dog (2013), 0:04

Bad Teacher (2014), 0:04

The Inspectors (2015), 0:04

Kevin Can Wait (2016), 0:04

American Gothic (2016), 0:05

Angel from (2016), 0:05

Fam (2019), 0:05

Candy Crush (2017), 0:05

Living Biblically (2017), 0:05

Man with A Plan (2016), 0:05

The World's Best (2019), 0:05

All Rise (2019), 0:06

Code Black (2015), 0:06

Pure Genius (2016), 0:06

The Red Line (2019), 0:06

Stalker (2014), 0:07

Me Myself and I (2017), 0:07

Rob! (2012), 0:07

Henry Ford's Innovation Nation (2014), 0:07

The Briefcase (2015), 0:07

9JKL (2017), 0:08

Life in Pieces (2015), 0:08

Man with a Plan (2016), 0:08

Superior Donuts (2017), 0:08

Madam Secretary (2014), 0:09

2 Broke Girls (2011), 0:10

Salvation (2017), 0:10

The Great Indoors (2016), 0:10

Dogs in the City (2012), 0:10

Friends with Better Lives (2014), 0:10

Love Island (2019), 0:11

Under the Dome (2013), 0:11

Shit My Dad Says (2010), 0:13

The Talk (2010), 0:13

Mad Love (2011), 0:15

Mike and Molly (2010), 0:16

Criminal Minds: Suspect (2011), 0:17

The Crazy Ones (2013), 0:17

Evil (2019), 0:18

The Defenders (2010), 0:19

Young Sheldon (2017), 0:19

Happy Together (2018), 0:20

Made in Jersey (2012), 0:20

Magnum PI (2018), 0:20

NCIS New Orleans (2014), 0:20

Partners (2012), 0:20

Criminal Minds Beyond (2016), 0:21

The Odd Couple (2015), 0:21

Blue Bloods (2010), 0:22

Bob Hearts (2019), 0:22

Vegas (2012), 0:22

Limitless (2015), 0:23

The Millers (2013), 0:23

Ransom (2017), 0:23

CBS This Morning (2012), 0:24

Miami Medical (2010), 0:25

NYC 22 (2012), 0:26

Mom (2013), 0:27

Blood (2019), 0:28

The Late Show with James Corden (2015), 0:28

Instinct (2018), 0:29

Battle Creek (2015), 0:31

Celebrity Big Brother (2018), 0:31

Elementary (2012), 0:31

Golden Boy (2013), 0:31

SWAT (2017), 0:31

Zoo (2015), 0:31

Hawaii Five-O (2010), 0:32

We Are Men (2013), 0:32

The Neighbourhood (2018), 0:35

Bull (2016), 0:37

CSI Cyber (2015), 0:37

Supergirl (2015), 0:39

Underground (2016), 0:43

The Late Show with Stephen Colbert (2015), 0:46

Scorpion (2014), 0:48

Intelligence (2014), 0:50

Person of Interest (2011), 0:50

The Code (2019), 0:52

Hostages (2013), 0:57

Wisdom of the Crowd (2017), 0:59

The Bridge (2010), 1:00

Undercover Boss (2010), 1:26

The Dove Keepers (2015), 1:35

Unknown

The American Baking Competition (2013)

13.4.1 Imaginary Forces and Elastic Title Sequence Run Times (2010-2019)

Pink Collar Crimes (2018), 0:29

Lore (2017), 0:30

Hell on Wheels (2011), 0:31

Halt and Catch Fire (2014), 0:31

Hell on Wheels (2011), 0:31

The Alienist (2018), 0:33

Anne with an E (2017), 0:41

Underground (2016), 0:43

The Leftovers (2014), 0:43

Carnivale (2003), 0:47

Truth be Told (2019), 0:57

True Detective (2014-2019), 0:58

One Dollar (2018), 1:00

I Am the Night (2017), 1:00

The Bridge (2010), 1:00

Boardwalk Empire (2010), 1:02

Daredevil (2015), 1:02

The Rook (2019), 1:03

The Americans (2013), 1:03

Dirty Money (2018), 1:05

Human Target (2010), 1:05

For all Mankind (2019), 1:05

The Punisher (2017), 1:08

Jessica Jones (2015), 1:09

Doom Patrol (2019), 1:11

The Crown (2016), 1:11

Luke Cage (2016), 1:12

Carnival Row (2019), 1:12

The Defenders (2017), 1:12

Yellowstone (2018), 1:12

Catherine The Great (2019), 1:15

The Pacific (2010), 1:15

Bosch (2014), 1:19

American Gods (2017), 1:22

See (2019), 1:23

The Politician (2019), 1:23

Iron Fist (2017), 1:24

Undercover Boss (2010), 1:26

Conversations with a Killer The Ted Bundy Tapes (2019), 1:27

The Outcast (2015), 1:27

Westworld (2017), 1:30

American Gods (2017), 1:30

Rubicon (2010), 1:30

Gypsy (2017), 1:31

Tell Me A Story (Season 2) (2018), 1:31

Magic City (2012), 1:32

Justified (2010), 1:35

Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey (2014), 1:35

Lost in Space (2018), 1:35

The Harry Quebert Affair (2018), 1:36

Five Came Back (2017), 1:38

Altered Carbon (2018), 1:38

Game of Thrones (2011), 1:42

His Dark Materials (2019), 1:45

The Man in the High Castle (2015), 1:48

The Morning Show (2019), 1:51

Jack Ryan (2018), 2:50

13.5 Appendix 5: Netflix Original Programs

2013-2016

2013- *Bee and PuppyCat* TC

2013- *House of Cards* TS

2013- *Orange Is the New Black* TS

2013- *Ever After High* TS

2013- *Best.Worst.Weekend.Ever.* TC

2014- *Marco Polo* TS

2015- *Narcos* TS

2015- *BoJack Horseman* TS

2015- *Daredevil*- TS

2015- *Jessica Jones*- TS

2015- *Chef's Table* TS

2015- *Making a Murderer* TS

2015- *Everything Sucks!* TC

2015- *Dragons: Race to the Edge* TS

2015- *Grace and Frankie* TS

2015- *Master of None* TC

2015- *Sense8* TS

2015 *F is for Family* TS

2015- *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* TC

2015- *W/ Bob & David* TS

2015- *Dinotrux* TS

2015- *Love* TC

2015- *Care Bears & Cousins* TS

2015 *Bloodline* TS

2015- *Project Mc* TS

2016- *Stranger Things* TS

2016- *The Crown* TS

2016- *The Get Down* TC
2016- *Ask the StoryBots* TS
2016- *Cooked* TS
2016- *Travelers* TC
2016- *The OA* TC
2016- *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* TC
2016- *Beat Bugs* TS
2016- *The Ranch* TS
2016- *Chelsea Does* TS
2016- *Flaked* TS
2016- *Fearless* TS
2016- *World of Winx* TS
2016- *Easy* TC
2016- *Kulipari: An Army of Frogs* TS
2016- *Roman Empire* TS
2016- *White Rabbit Project* TS
2016- *Fuller House* TS
2016- *Real Rob* TC
2016- *Chelsea* TC
2016- *Word Party* TS
2016- *Haters Back Off* TC
2016- *Aggretsuko* TS
2016- *Netflix Presents: The Characters* TC
2016- *Chasing Cameron* TC

14- TC

34- TS

Overall- 48

2017-2019

2017- *Dave Chappelle* TS
2017- *Anne with an E* TS
2017- *MINDHUNTER* TS
2017- *Daughters of Destiny* TC
2017- *Atypical* TC
2017- *Five Came Back* TS
2017- *Iron Fist* TS
2017- *Luke Cage* TS
2017- *The Punisher* TS
2017- *The Defenders* TS
2017- *Lost In Space* TS
2017- *Godless* TS
2017- *Julie's Greenroom* TS
2017- *American Vandal* TS
2017- *Castlevania* TS
2017- *The Keepers* TS
2017- *The Toys That Made Us* TS
2017- *Big Mouth* TS
2017- *GLOW*- TS
2017- *Santa Clarita Diet* TC
2017- *Jack Whitehall: Travels with My Father* TC
2017- *Buddy Thunderstruck* TS
2017- *The Confession Tapes* TC
2017- *Free Rein* TC
2017- *Ultimate Beastmaster* TS
2017- *Girlboss* TC
2017- *Greenhouse Academy* TC
2017- *Wormwood* TS
2017- *Dope* TC

2017- *Gypsy* TS
2017- *Ari Shaffir: Double Negative* TC
2017- *Friends from College* TC
2017- *Disjointed* TC
2017- *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On* TS
2017- *The Standups* TC
2017- *Fire Chasers* TC
2017- *Insatiable* TC
2017- *Stretch Armstrong & the Flex Fighters* TC
2017- *Dear White People* TC
2017- *13 Reasons* TC
2017- *Dave Chappelle: Equanimity & The Bird Revelation* TS
2017- *A Series of Unfortunate Events* TC
2017 *Abstract: The Art of Design* TC
2017- *The Magic School Bus Rides Again* TC
2017- *Neo Yokio* TS
2017- *Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan and Jane* TS
2017- *We're Lalaloopsy* TS
2017- *Bill Nye Saves the World* TC
2018- *Car Masters: Rust to Riches* TC
2018- *Norm Macdonald Has a Show* TC
2018- *The Haunting of Hill House* TS
2018- *Hilda* TS
2018- *Queer Eye* TS
2018- *James Acaster: Repertoire* TC
2018- *Medal of Honor* TS
2018- *Narcos: Mexico* TS
2018- *The Dragon Prince* TC
2018- *Bobby Kennedy for President* TS
2018- *Dogs* TS

2018- *Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj* TC
2018- *The Kominsky Method* TC
2018- *Wild Wild Country* TC
2018- *Altered Carbon* TS
2018- *Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee* TC
2018- *Dirty Money* TS
2018- *On My Block* TC
2018- *Somebody Feed Phil* TS
2018- *Explained* TS
2018- *Flint Town* TS
2018- *Brainchild* TC
2018- *Motown Magic* TS
2018- *You* TC
2018- *Bumping Mics with Jeff Ross & Dave Attell* TC
2018- *Salt Fat Acid Heat* TS
2018- *Seven Seconds* TS
2018- *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina-* TS
2018- *Stay Here* TC
2018- *Dark Tourist* TC
2018- *I AM A KILLER* TC
2018- *The Innocent Man* TS
2018- *Battlefish* TS
2018- *Girls Incarcerated* TC
2018- *Kulipari: Dream Walker* TC
2018- *The Joel McHale Show with Joel McHale* TC
2018- *Disenchantment* TS
2018- *Fastest Car* TC
2018- *The Hollow* TC
2018- *Magic for Humans* TC
2018- *Rotten* TS

2018- *Paradise PD* TC
2018- *The Good Cop* TS
2018- *Wanderlust* TC
2018- *Dancing Queen* TC
2018- *Drug Lords* TC
2018- *First and Last* TC
2018- *The Honeymoon Stand Up Special* TC
2018- *Amazing Interiors* TC
2018- *The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants* TS
2018- *The Who Was? Show* TS
2018- *The Boss Baby: Back in Business* TS
2018- *Death by Magic* TS
2018- *The Degenerates* TS
2018- *The Comedy Lineup* TC
2018- *Evil Genius: The True Story of America's Most Diabolical Bank Heist* TS
2018- *Prince of Peoria* TS
2018- *The Break with Michelle Wolf* TC
2018- *Follow This* TC
2018- *Dance & Sing with True* TC
2018 *Alexa & Katie* TC
2018- *Spy Kids: Mission Critical* TC
2018- *Manifest* TC
2018- *Harvey Girls Forever!* TS
2018 *Afflicted* TC
2018- *Nailed It!* TC
2018- *Nailed It! Holiday!* TC
2018- *Nailed It! Mexico* TC
2019- *Queer Eye: We're in Japan!* TS
2018- *3Below: Tales of Arcadia* TS
2018- *7 Days Out* TC

2018- *A Little Help with Carol Burnett* TC

2018- *Stand Up and Away! with Brian Regan* TS

2018- *All About the Washingtons* TS

2018- *Reboot: The Guardian Code* TC

2019- *When They See Us* TC

2019- *The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance-* TC

2019- *Ozark* TC

2019- *Unbelievable* TC

2019- *The Witcher-* TC

2019- *Green Eggs and Ham* TS

2019- *The Chef Show* TS

2019- *Dead to Me* TC

2019- *Hyperdrive* TC

2019- *Charlie's Colorforms City* TS

2019- *Inside Bill's Brain: Decoding Bill Gates* TC

2019- *The Mind, Explained* TC

2019- *Unnatural Selection* TS

2019- *Carmen Sandiego* TC

2019- *Russian Doll* TC

2019- *Diagnosis* TC

2019- *Maniac* TC

2019- *The Movies That Made Us* TC

2019- *Dolly Parton's Heartstrings* TC

2019- *The Devil Next Door* TS

2019- *Hello Ninja* TC

2019- *The Last Kids on Earth* TC

2019- *The Politician* TS

2019- *Virgin River* TC

2019- *Basketball or Nothing* TC

2019- *Tales of the City* TC

2019- *The Confession Killer* TS
2019- *Tuca & Bertie* TS
2019- *Spirit Riding Free: Pony Tales* TS
2019- *The Last Czars* TS
2019- *BONDING* TC
2019- *Jailbirds* TC
2019- *Raising Dion* TC
2019- *Dino Girl Gauko* TS
2019- *Mr. Iglesias* TS
2019- *Trinkets* TC
2019- *The Society* TC
2019- *Love, Death and Robots* TC
2019- *Astronomy Club: The Sketch Show* TS
2019- *Happy Jail* TC
2019- *Sugar Rush Christmas* TS
2019- *The Order-* TC
2019- *Blown Away* TC
2019- *Broken* TS
2019- *Chip and Potato* TS
2019- *Trigger Warning with Killer Mike* TC
2019- *Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner* TS
2019- *Daybreak* TC
2019- *You vs. Wild* TC
2019- *The Disappearance of Madeleine McCann* TS
2019- *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* TC
2019- *Twelve Forever* TS
2019- *Chambers-* TC
2019- *Narcoworld: Dope Stories* TC
2019- *Shadow* TC
2019- *Styling Hollywood* TC

2019- *Dating Around* TC
2019- *I'm with the Band: Nasty Cherry* TC
2019- *The Family* TC
2019- *Wu Assassins* TC
2019- *Family Reunion* TC
2019- *WHAT / IF-* TC
2019- *Exhibit A* TC
2019- *Merry Happy Whatever* TC
2019- *Singapore Social* TC
2019- *V Wars* TC
2019- *Awake: The Million Dollar Game* TC
2019- *No Good Nick* TC
2019- *Pinky Malinky* TS
2019- *Extreme Engagement* TC
2019- *Selling Sunset* TC
2019- *Fast & Furious Spy Racers* TC
2019- *Historical Roasts* TC
2019- *Prank Encounters* TC
2019- *Another Life* TC
2019- *The I-Land* TC
2019- *Team Kaylie* TS
2018- *The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants in Space* TC
2019- *The Umbrella Academy* TC
2018- *Trolls: The Beat Goes On!* TS
2019- *Our Planet* TC
2018- *The Curious Creations of Christine McConnell* TC
2019- *I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson* TC
2019 *COMEDIANS of the World* TS
2019 *Black Summer* TC
2019- *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes* TS

2019- *Age of Samurai: Battle for Japan* TC

2019- *It's Bruno!* TC

2019- *Kevin Hart: Don't F**k This Up* TS

77 TS

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Overall- 203