MTO 8.4 Examples: Holm-Hudson, Your Guitar, It Sounds So Sweet and Clear

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.02.8.4/mto.02.8.4.holm-hudson.php
Example 5. Transcription of the introduction to the Carpenters’ “Superstar,” with annotated sign-functions after Tagg (2000)
Example 16. The “semantic range” of the introduction to the Carpenters’ “Superstar”

SURVEY OF UNDERGRADUATE MUSIC MAJORS:

(No affective response)

[1] "I get nothing from this."
(Contrast of genres)

[2] "That had no effect on me."

(Emotion: depression/loneliness)


[5] "Something that’s got you down because of the instrumentation and minor key."
(Emotion: love)

[6] "Passionate, romantic. As if preparing or in the middle of a soulful revelation to a loved one."


[8] "I would call this a cheesy love song - the singer’s been done wrong but it was good while it lasted kind of thing."


[10] "love song definitely - any popular piece w/oboe is a love tune."

(Cinematic connotations)

[12] "Sounds like one of those really cheesy sections on 'Something About Mary' when Ben Stiller is in slow motion running in a big poppy-seed field."


[15] "Sounds like modern church music. I guess the increased use of electric keyboards and other such 'technology' ruins anything considered music."

(Love: genre; cinematic connotations; reference to Tagg’s ‘episodic marker’)

[16] "Heavy metal power love ballad, this is serious. Hollywood gliss. to the opening melody? Wow."

SURVEY OF UNDERGRADUATE NON-MUSIC MAJORS:

(Emotion: sadness)

[17] "At the beginning of the song the horn makes it sound like the song is going to be about something emotional. Towards the end, the drum and/or bass, whichever it is, the song a somber turn, setting up for a mournful or sorrowful song."

[18] "I’m thinking it’s about some kind of past relationship gone sour or the singer misses someone…maybe. The woodwind at the beginning has a mournful tone, as do the horn(s) the bassy “boom boom boom” sounds pretty dark, mournful or angry. Lastly there’s the chorus which represent dreams or past in just about everything. Of course these associations are learned and might not be consistent across listeners, but there [sic] are still there."

[19] "The strings and harp along with an easy drum beat make me think that it is an easy going song, but then at the end of the clip, the cord [sic] change almost makes a darker tone. Maybe is [sic] going to be a sad song. I feel like it's going to tell a story though."

[20] "I think the song is probably some sort of sadness piece. The high note running at the beginning, before it gets deeper[,] seems to bring on an uplifting tone."

(Emotion: affection)

[21] "I believe the song is trying to communicate a sense of affection. This is b/c [because] of strings and slow tempo."

(Genre)

[22] "The way the song brings the bass, clarinet [sic - oboe], and horns, it conveys a melow [sic] type of music. As a listener, I am expecting to hear a deep soft voice, with loving & slow lyrics. The harp at the beginning makes it almost a sappy love song."

(Reference to Tagg’s ‘episodic marker’; perhaps also cinematic connotation)

[23] "The harp struck me most giving it a nostalgic feel - transitional into a dream - the deep drum beat indicates to me that the body of the piece is about to begin. I think I’ve heard it before but can’t place it."

(Genre)