

Music and Noise: Independent Film and Globalization

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Abstract

This article proposes to study as a test case the use of popular music in *Xiaowu*, a Chinese underground film released in 1997. The three recurrent pieces of music underline the importance of a male bond between two former thieves, one of whom remains a pickpocket, while the other has become a model entrepreneur in the wake of economic reform. This bond is disrupted by the process of globalization, which has provided a different value system. Through the disruption of this bond, the film casts a critical light on the effects of globalization, which has contributed to a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The voices of the localized population can be heard through popular music, which is often submerged by a cacophony of machinery, or, at a different level, by a cacophony produced by state censorship and global capitalism.

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