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MUSIC&SERIES THE VERBALIZING ROLE OF SOUNDTRACKS IN CONTEMPORARY TV SERIES

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In 1984 the creators of *Miami Vice* – a famous NBC detective drama – added pop and rock hits to the original themes of the soundtrack. This new use of music, later defined as “*MTV-inspired*”, has progressively increased in the last 10 years and has now become one of the widely accepted standards for music and images integration in US TV series and movies. Recently, it has also been fully exploited by users of social networking platforms like YouTube in designing their own videos.

Actually, this metalinguistic use of songs influences the communicative structure of the filmic text because it modifies the function associated to musical comments. As a matter of fact, the prominent role is here given to lyrics, which literally ‘verbalize’ the characters’ emotions and often vehicle the authors’ point of view. The soundtrack is thus turned into a narrative instrument, a function that integrates the traditional role of melodies to “emotionalize the abstract and aestheticize the sensory” (Van Leeuwen, 1999).

The aim of my paper is to analyze this new semiotic scenario within the methodological framework of multimodality (Kress&Van Leeuwen, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2007) with a special focus on two “resemiotization processes” (Iedema, 2003). The first process takes place at a macro level and involves the narrative strategies chosen to convey meaning through this new semiotic resource. The second process takes place at the level of each ‘musical moment’ and involves the concept of “transduction” - the shift of semiotic material across modes (Kress 2003). To be examined here is the reification of meaning stemming from the recontextualization of songs. Finally, it will be studied how these processes have to be considered in translating any filmic text in order to avoid the loss of a relevant portion of the actual meaning.