

## The novel The War Of The Worlds, compared to the musical version, by Jeff Wayne

Having read the science fiction novel The War Of The Worlds, by H G Wells, which describes the enchanting yet gruesome story of the Martians invading, attacking and destroying earth, we have decided to compare the musical version, by Jeff Wayne, to the first five chapters of the book.

H G Wells' novel is a fantastic representation of what science fiction should be. However, I do not consider that the music does justice to the breathtaking words of Wells.

The opening line of the script is "No one would have believed, in the last of the nineteenth century, that human affairs were being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own", and this is a wonderful line to unlock the tale. It tells us all that we need to know to launch the fascinating insight into people's lives and possible futures; it is direct and does not present us with insignificant information before giving us the principal facts.

The narration by Richard Burton, is a credit to the music. His voice is calm, steady and direct. He has a deep tone, which generates a commanding manner. He makes you feel that you want to listen to him, rather than feeling that you have to listen to him. Yet there is something evil about his voice; but as we know from reading the novel, he is only the storyteller, but his voice undoubtedly gives us the sense that something bad is about to happen.

Wells then goes on to provide facts about why it hadn't even crossed people's minds that Martians may be about to pay them a visit, or even that creatures from outer space existed at all, and one of the lines to show this is "Yet so vain is man, and so blinded by his vanity, that no writer, up to the very end of the nineteenth century, expressed any idea that intelligent life might have developed there far, or indeed at all beyond it's earthly level".

After the introductory narration, the music was fast and exciting, but I felt that it was not suited to the part of the book that it was aimed at, which was when people 'busied themselves'. It was rather like a dance anthem and was very upbeat. If normal people were meant to be doing normal everyday things, the music would have been less lively. Everyday things, include going out to work, doing the shopping, washing, cooking, nothing too wild, but to me, the music seemed to imply that people were frantically running around all over the place.

As I discovered in a class discussion, this music is dependent on a personal view, and I felt that on numerous occasions in the music, it does not relate to the novel in an appropriate way. For example, the last line of chapter one, says "It seemed so safe and tranquil", and the first line of chapter two reads "Then came the night of the first falling star", and for me, this was a significant part of the script; nobody knows or suspects anything about Martians, and then suddenly, out of the blue, something happens, that will change their lives forever. There was tension, a build up and anxiety when reading the book, but I felt that this was very 'played-down' in the music. Others would disagree, but I was not generally aware of change, and there was very little tension in the music, which was disappointing.

During the part of the music dedicated to chapter two, when the Martians are coming and people are attacked, not only by the alien creatures, but also through shock, H G Wells' style changes. He has short, sharp sentences, which are brought out by Jeff Wayne in the music, with clashing synthesized notes underneath the main music, which are sustained throughout the musical interpretation of the aliens coming.

Although I feel, that over all, this piece of music does not reflect this novel well, there are some amazing musical effects in it; such as the Martians noises, perhaps speech, gave a very realistic other space theme. When the cylinder landed, musical effects were added

too give an atmosphere of terror, and a sense of not knowing what to expect.

For the majority of the music, I was not very conscious of variation in the music. It seemed to be rather repetitive. The music obviously could not keep changing dramatically, as it would not really be a real piece of music, but even when the music did change, it still carried very much the same theme. The music can get very monotonous, so the listener may lose concentration.

To conclude, I do not think that, as a whole, this music by Jeff Wayne fits the novel The War Of The Worlds by H G Wells. Parts of the music were very good, but I felt that they were misplaced. Personally, I like the music very much, but not for this book. It sounds, for me, too much like music that I would listen to anyway, not a piece to study.

(Word Count: 865)