

# A Star Is Born Music Analysis

Berklee Online

Gabriela Castro

Nicki Loveday

David Stevens

Holly Winn

## Review

### 2018 Version

In this version, there's a small portion of Cooper's character talking in the beginning, but not as an outside narrator. We like this more personal approach, as it gives a closer look inside his character's thoughts.

The instruments used in this trailer were actual instruments played in the movie. Acoustic guitar and piano were most prevalent. The music was interrupted only a few times, but otherwise the underscore played in the background to support dialogue which conveys the plot. Drums are used in the big performance at the end to make it more anthemic for what seems to be Gaga's character's big debut.

The film's soundtrack contains elements of blues, rock, country and "bubblegum" pop. There is a full rock-country band at various points with orchestra featured at the very end. Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper are primarily featured in the trailer as they're the main characters.

The trailer highlighted Gaga's character getting over her fear, watching Cooper's character shine and taking his queue. The ending of the last song has them coming together vocally, which highlights their musical and romantic connection that formed throughout the movie.

It seems there are three songs in the trailer. It was smart to avoid putting too many songs in there, because the actual movie would lose its luster. Wikipedia lists 17 songs on the without-dialogue movie soundtrack, but most soundtracks and trailer songs will not be the same as in the movie. Production may not be complete or it could be more costly to do so.

### 1976 Version

In this version, there are five songs featuring Barbra Streisand, who was an A-list name of that time, performing the majority of singing in the trailer. There's narration, but we don't believe it tells us much about the story. The narrative is actually a bit out of place, as the person reading is doing so from a script with the separate higher volume recording.

The trailer music features mostly rock and pop-ballads. Electric guitars, drums and synthesizers are heard. This version is more about the relationship between two singers, played up by the romantic piano in the marriage scene.

The songs that appear on the soundtrack are, in most cases, alternate (live) and studio recordings that didn't appear in the film. These songs may have been also used in the trailer.

The alternate version of “Lost Inside of You” appears in the movie and was finally released in 1991. The only element missing from the movie version is the final piano melody. There are only 12 songs on the movie soundtrack, much lower than the 2018 version.

The leads don’t appear to have any duets in the trailer. We believe this trailer ends on a much more sad and melancholy note than the 2018 version.

### **1954 Version**

The 1954 version features a big band orchestra. Most orchestral instruments are represented here. It’s interesting to note that music of each time period influenced the music of the individual trailer/films.

Judy Garland stars in the lead role both acting and singing. We noted 8 songs including 1 sung in a group in the trailer, and 14 songs on the soundtrack. Her male counterpart doesn’t sing at all in the trailer, which makes him more of a supporting rather than partner role. As a result, there may be money saved.

The music drops in certain places to allow Judy to speak, This could save on syncing costs. We noticed a narrator and overlay caption text, which takes away from the storyline. It seems like the narrator is telling you what to feel. One should let the viewer interpret for themselves.

## **Final Evaluation**

### **Trailer Cost Summary**

It’s hard to do a comparison of cost unless we bring all from before the most recent 2018 version to future value amounts. For instance, a dollar in 1954 may have been more than a dollar today. It would be better to know the costs of the film entirely and then what percentage the cost was for music to compare percentages. We were also not privy to what kind of deals were made with each individual artist’s record label, publishing company, or general syncing costs of the time.

We reviewed how many songs seemed to be featured on each trailer and the percentage use of it in the whole. All trailers used a lot of music, because each version of the film is about musicians. Assuming the orchestra players were works for hire with AFM calculations and that most big names demand payout in royalties. We do have questions of whether rates may have been different during the time the other versions were in production.

AFM rates are \$450.00 for side musicians. There’s a 3-hour session scale rate and \$300.00 as the side musician’s 1.5 hour “special session” rate, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the above rates for

each half hour of overtime. Take 38 musicians at \$100 per hour of studio time, it could have potentially cost \$14,850 per musician times \$564,300.00 plus \$10,000.00 for recording time to come out to \$574,300.00 for the 2018 version. In 1976, it might have been double the amount, because there were no digital keyboards to emulate other instruments, so everything had to be played out. For the 1954 version, we might quadruple that number, because of the orchestra and everything having to be recorded to tape. Studios were also not as efficient as they are now.

### **Best and Worst Trailer Summary**

We believe the 2018 is the best trailer and provides the most balance. It uses effective cinematography and doesn't go overboard on special effects. This trailer was done without narration and lets the characters tell their own story. It had good movement, enough screen time and dialogue for both of the main characters, and a brief yet intriguing look into the storyline of the film. The audience is given a brief background of both Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper's characters and a taste of how their relationship develops, without focusing solely on romance.

The other trailers were longer than the 2018 trailer and seemed to drag on and focus too much on the characters themselves, rather than the actual storyline. The 1954 trailer seemed like flashy advertising for WB.