



WP5 – Original Scores

Project: Reviving, Boosting, Optimising and Transforming European Film Competitiveness - REBOOT

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1. INTRODUCTION: FILM MUSIC SCORING

The REBOOT project explores how competitiveness of the European film industry could develop by providing research-based knowledge and strategic suggestions for action. By presenting different layers of the process of this Industry, the REBOOT project can connect stakeholders in the European film industry at various levels, from local to global, both in Europe and beyond. Work package 5 aims to explore one underrated researched dimension of film production and appeal, music. Music is an essential part of the Film creation, and thus the creative process in music for the screen is one of the many factors involved in competitiveness. The aim of this report and of this study is to present how this process can be understood.

Indeed, the soundtrack improves the quality, the originality even more the singularity of a piece of work, and then participate to more than 50% of the listener engagement and involvement (H. Bolduc-Cloutier, 2018). Following Solenn Hellégouarch (S. Hellégouarch, 2020) but also Nicholas Cook (1998), music (and sound) is less a matter of *adding* some information to the media than a question of emergence is today well documented. Composing and scoring music for media is a part of the film industry, in Europe, and also a part of the economic resources and value, and also a part of the value chain. Considering its involvement through the production process is an important aspect, contributing to the cultural diversity of the European Film and audiovisual production. Saying that, there is no debate about considering that scoring music is an integral part of the media, and that focusing on this aspect by giving details about the different steps and explaining the concrete work of a composer can increase its efficiency.

The composer encounters numerous challenges (reports from the ECSA), including the integration of various technologies and digital tools such as Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs), artificial intelligence, and plug-ins. Considering the competitiveness of film music today requires taking into account streaming platforms, music publishers, and the ability to carve out a space within the vast galaxy of audiovisual music production. Furthermore, it is crucial for the composer to ensure that their music enhances and amplifies the emotional connection of the audience to the film, game, or medium it accompanies. The ability to complete a full composition within a limited timeframe is a critical concern, requiring the composer to possess a wide range of skills. These include empathy, understanding, teamwork, adaptability, creativity, and, naturally, technical expertise such as music writing, scoring, and, importantly, the performance of the scores. Because composing within a restricted timeframe allows productions to reduce costs and, consequently, remain competitive in a crowded market, this efficiency is crucial. However, the composer must also demonstrate creativity, adhering to key principles essential for integrating music with visual media: its ability to generate initial musical ideas: This involves ideation and transforming these concepts into rough drafts; the technical mastery of musical language: the composer must demonstrate the ability to generate initial musical ideas, transforming abstract concepts into tangible drafts that serve as the foundation for



the final composition. A high level of technical mastery in musical language is essential, allowing the composer to convey complex ideas through metaphors such as tension, relaxation, balance, symmetry, and contrasts. The selection of sounds must be executed with precision to ensure they align with and reinforce the intended atmosphere of the visual medium. The composer must consistently strive for originality, bringing a distinctive and innovative quality to their work that sets it apart in a competitive field.

These elements collectively ensure that the music not only aligns with the visual narrative but also enhances its emotional and conceptual depth. The creativity and expertise of European composers represent a major asset and a key driver of competitiveness, because of its rich artistic diversity, cultural depth, and innovative approaches, which distinguish it from other global markets. The unique ability of European composers to merge tradition with innovation allows them to craft soundscapes that resonate with audiences worldwide, offering a cultural richness that adds significant value to audiovisual productions.

This creative expertise serves as a powerful accelerator of competitiveness by enhancing the overall quality of European audiovisual content. High-quality, emotionally resonant music not only elevates the artistic and commercial appeal of films and series but also strengthens Europe's position as a global leader in cultural exports. Some composers, in particular, bring a heritage of musical excellence and innovation that is deeply rooted in both classical traditions and modern experimentation. Their ability to navigate complex creative processes, including composing for orchestras and integrating cutting-edge technologies like AI, positions them as indispensable contributors to the audiovisual industry.

Furthermore, investing in the development and recognition of European composers supports the broader creative economy, fostering job creation, cultural exchange, and economic growth. By leveraging the unique creative capabilities of its composers, Europe can reinforce its competitive edge in the global market, ensuring that its audiovisual productions remain at the forefront of cultural innovation. Supporting these talents through fair remuneration, access to advanced technologies, and cross-border collaboration will unlock their full potential, enabling European creativity to act as a catalyst for sustainable economic and cultural leadership.

That's the reason why this deliverable focuses on music scores. These scores are the result of a comprehensive process of overseeing musical creation for visual media, offering the rare opportunity to follow every stage of the composition journey. This process spans from the initial contact with the production team to the final delivery and orchestral recording. These musical scores are the outcome of a comprehensive process involving meetings, interviews, feedback sessions, video-elicitation, and recording.



The French composer Julien Vega was closely monitored throughout the entirety of this project, as he composed music for the French documentary film *Notre-Dame*, which was broadcast on the television channel TF1 and is available online (<https://www.tf1.fr/tf1/notre-dame-328/videos/notre-dame-episode-1-le-jour-davant-04725484.html>). The deliverables include original scores specifically composed, edited, and produced within the framework of the REBOOT project. These scores represent a distinct type of data, as elaborated on page 20 of the project documentation.

The aim of this report is to present Deliverable 5.5 (the scores), associated with Task 5.4, and, more specifically, Sub-task 5.4.2: *Understanding processes, options, and decision-making*. This deliverable is framed within the broader objective of providing "an account of the creative process in music for visual media, with a practical case study." It focuses on examining "the strategies developed by composers to optimize production time and costs without compromising aesthetic quality." The report emphasizes the critical role of dialogue with the production team, the act of composition, and the performance process, culminating in the recording of the music by an orchestra.

2. THE PATH TO THE SCORE

A critical analysis of the creative process in film music is a key objective of Task 5.5, particularly through the lens of a practical case study. At each stage of the production process, this report examines the strategies employed by composers to optimize production time and costs while maintaining the aesthetic quality of the final product. This analysis aims to provide actionable insights and replicable methodologies, contributing to enhanced competitiveness in future film music production.

These analysis of these scores can be used to understand the different phases of the composition process and how the central idea arouse and was further developed in different parts for the whole documentary. This is a rare occasion to study these steps and the way they generate music, as very few examples of this kind can be found in the literature. Usually, there are many ways of considering the functions of music (J. Rossi, 2021), but very few analyses of the creative process, except those from Solenn Hellégouarch, (S. Hellégouarch, 2020), which is based mainly on archives.

A detailed analysis of the creative process behind composing music for a documentary, including a musicological perspective, can highlight the positive impact of musical creativity on a film's competitiveness. Music in documentaries not only complements the visuals but also enhances the emotional resonance, guides the narrative interpretation, and reinforces the project's aesthetic identity, making it more distinctive in a competitive market. Such an analysis can showcase how specific artistic and technical choices, such as harmony, orchestration, or rhythm, contribute to the film's unique character. Moreover, it can underline the advanced expertise of European composers



in crafting exceptional soundtracks, whether through live orchestral arrangements, innovative use of technology like AI, or culturally rooted stylistic choices. This insight also demonstrates how collaboration between composers, directors, and production teams strengthens the cohesion and appeal of the final product, thereby enhancing its market value. Additionally, by examining strategies for optimizing production time and costs without compromising quality, the analysis identifies scalable methods that can improve efficiency across the industry. Ultimately, this process emphasizes how the unique creativity and craftsmanship of European composers, particularly in the documentary genre, contribute to the cultural and economic competitiveness of European audiovisual productions on a global scale.

2.1 Overview of the creative process

To analyze the composition and production process, it is essential to follow the various stages undertaken by the composer during the production and editing phases. The creative process of composing music for visual media can be delineated into several key steps.

The process begins with the **reception of the visual material**, where the composer reviews the provided footage to understand the tone, pacing, and overall aesthetic of the project. This step is crucial for aligning the musical approach with the visual narrative. Following this, **communication with the director** plays a pivotal role. Through detailed discussions, the composer gains insights into the director's vision, emotional objectives, and specific needs for the project. This phase often includes the director proposing existing music as references to convey the desired mood and thematic direction for particular scenes.

Next, the composer embarks on **drafting short excerpts**, typically ranging from 30 seconds to 1 minute. These initial musical sketches, informed by the visual material and director's feedback, serve as a foundation for experimenting with style, instrumentation, and tone. These drafts are then subjected to **feedback from the production team**, a collaborative step where the team evaluates the alignment of the music with the creative direction, offering suggestions for refinements or adjustments.

The process advances to **synchronization with the visuals**, where the music is meticulously adjusted to fit the visual edits. This involves ensuring precise timing, emphasizing key narrative moments, and adapting to any changes made during the editing phase. For projects with higher budgets or specific artistic requirements, this step may lead to the **production of orchestral music**, replacing virtual instruments with live recordings. This involves coordinating with musicians, arrangers, and studio technicians to achieve a polished orchestral sound.

Finally, the composer delivers the **final mix**, a polished version of the score ready for integration. The video editor then synchronizes this mix with the visuals, ensuring seamless cohesion between



the music and the final cut, while making minor adjustments if necessary to fit the project's requirements.

In the case of Julien Vega, all materials and insights from each of these stages have been shared, offering a comprehensive view of the intricate process behind scoring for visual media.

2.2 Presentation of the work

At the outset of the REBOOT project, we initiated a call within our professional network in France, which included organizations such as the Society for French Composers, Cézame Music Agency, and Kaptain Music. From this process, we selected Julien Vega, a French composer who generously agreed to contribute his scores for analysis, participate in interviews, and allow his composition process to be observed and documented.

The project pursued a dual objective: first, to understand and dissect the creative process of composing a film score, including the influence of production constraints; and second, to examine how this process integrates into the broader production environment of the film industry. Film and audiovisual projects require significant investments across all creative and technical domains, and music is no exception. Factors such as the feasibility of recording with live instrumentalists versus relying on virtual instruments introduce constraints that can influence the creative process, as will be explored in our final section. Additionally, economic considerations such as fair remuneration, whether through royalties or other payment structures, remain critical issues for composers.

Julien Vega's extensive experience provided invaluable insights into the various stages of his compositional process. Trained in piano, harmony, orchestration, arrangement, and musical analysis at esteemed national conservatories in Aix-en-Provence, Montpellier, and Nice, he earned first prizes in piano and musical training. As a versatile musician, he is a skilled arranger and orchestrator, performing piano in classical, jazz, and contemporary ensembles, as well as occasionally playing trumpet and participating in innovative performances, such as those with La Rumeur Company in Marseille. Since 2011, Vega has composed numerous soundtracks for television, radio, and advertising, working with prominent clients such as UNICEF, Dior, TF1, France Télévisions, and Canal+. Notably, he created the trailer music for *Le Divan de Staline* featuring Gérard Depardieu and won the Best Animated Film Music Award at CIMFA Annecy in 2013. Since 2019, he has focused on composing original scores for documentaries, including Eve Minault's *Crash: Are We Ready for the Next Crisis?*

Through Kaptain Music, the music editor with whom he is under contract, Vega was commissioned by TF1 to compose the score for the documentary *Notre-Dame*, which was broadcast on the channel in 2024 (<https://www.tf1.fr/tf1/notre-dame-328>). He graciously granted access to his studio and



provided a comprehensive view of his creative process. Of particular importance was the recording session, which offered an invaluable opportunity to observe the transition from composition to live performance. This session can be viewed here: ([Recording Session](#)).

Julien Vega's participation in the REBOOT project not only enriched our analysis of the compositional process but also highlighted the intersection of artistic creativity and industry constraints, offering a unique case study in the evolving dynamics of film music production.

3. METHODOLOGY OF SURVEY

Diverse methodologies exist in the field of the survey of workflow and work process. We have chosen a qualitative approach: to observe work practice directly in the field to analyze interactions. Traditionally music scoring has been studied *after* the work has been done.

Various methodologies exist for studying workflows and work processes. For this study, we adopted a qualitative approach, focusing on direct observation of work practices in situ to analyze interactions. Traditionally, music scoring has been studied retrospectively, after the work is completed.

While some authors have examined music scoring for media a posteriori (e.g., D. Cooper, 2018, and S. Hellégouarch, 2020), few studies have explored the creative process in music composition through ethnographic observation. Notable exceptions include the work of Nicolas Donin (Donin, 2021) and Emmanuelle Olivier (Olivier, 2021). Donin, in particular, has established a robust methodological framework for analyzing the creative process in music composition. His earlier case study with J. Thérèau (Donin & Thérèau, 2008) on composer Philippe Leroux introduced the idea of treating music scores not merely as textual outputs but as "symptoms" of a performance practice. This perspective frames music creation as a social and cognitive act, embedded in constraints, routines, and collective and individual dynamics. Drawing on the concept of situated cognition (Suchman, 1987), Donin argues that creativity in music should be viewed within its specific context. His methodology combines genetic criticism (e.g., the use of *avant-texte*) with ethnographic techniques, incorporating filmed interviews, video elicitation, and recordings as primary sources (Donin, 2018).

Inspired by these approaches, our study sought to follow a similar path, emphasizing the significance of early ideation in analyzing the process of music composition for media. Our objective was to investigate potential discrepancies between the formal and expected workflow (as described by S. Saltzman, 2015) and the actual workflow, with a focus on two key phases: the conception of musical ideas (phase three of the workflow) and the recording of the orchestral session.

For this purpose, we collected multiple forms of data and recorded various moments of the process. Initially, we conducted an in-depth interview with the composer to outline the primary stages of the



workflow, providing a roadmap for further analysis. Subsequently, we asked the composer to document his composition process, capturing crucial moments that contribute to the realization of the score, the results of which are presented in this report. Additionally, we observed and recorded the orchestral recording session, during which the composer actively provided comments and made corrections.

In this study, the workflow is conceptualized as something "performed" by the composer, rather than merely "adding music" to the visual material. This perspective acknowledges that constraints, the complexity of interpersonal dynamics with the director and production team, and the visual content itself all contribute to a situated understanding of the musical act. The ability to improvise, respond effectively to feedback, and coordinate seamlessly with the team reflects specific soft skills that are integral to the compositional workflow. These skills, in turn, contribute to the competitiveness of the music production process, including qualitative elements such as chord progressions, melodic structures, and sound design.

4. THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN MUSIC SCORING

At the outset of the project, the documentary director provided Julien Vega with carefully curated visuals, some of which were sourced from royalty-free libraries, along with silent footage designed to convey the intended tone and atmosphere of the documentary. To further guide the creative process, the director shared pre-existing audio materials or musical pieces that encapsulated the mood he envisioned for the film.

The creative process, along with detailed explanations, can be explored through this link: [Creative Process Overview](#). In the early stages, Julien Vega explains how his music editor, [Kaptain Music], approached him to collaborate on the project. Initially, the documentary aimed to chronicle the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris before the catastrophic fire. However, following the incident, the focus shifted to capturing the restoration efforts undertaken in its aftermath.





Figure 1 Excerpt from the video elicitation by Julien Vega.

The documentary director establishes a clear narrative framework for the film, beginning with the initial restoration process, progressing through the fire and its tragic aftermath, and concluding with the post-fire restoration efforts. This structure forms the foundational canvas for the documentary's storytelling. Building upon the director's initial materials, composer Julien Vega identified two pivotal musical moments: the opening, marked by heightened dramatic tension, and a subsequent phase with a calmer and more reflective tone. This latter phase introduces a central theme that evolves into the "Notre-Dame" theme, acting as a unifying musical thread throughout the documentary (Figure 1).



Score

Notre-Dame

Générique

Julien Vega

♩ = 90

2 3 4

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

p

p *mp* *p*

sim.

p *mp* *p*

5 6 7 8 9

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

sim.

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Figure 2 Score of Notre-Dame, Opening Credits Music, courtesy of Julien Vega, 2024 © Kaptain Music.

4.1 Ideation of the main theme and DAM Setup

In the video (excerpt at position 4'29"), Julien Vega illustrates his use of music production software to sequence four distinct musical moments—each representing a theme that transitions seamlessly while adhering to a logical progression. These themes are intricately interconnected through their melodic contours, harmonic structures, and rhythmic patterns. This method allows for both variation and contrast, while ensuring thematic cohesion across the documentary's score.





Figure 3 excerpt from the video-elicitation by Julien Vega, courtesy of Julien Vega, 2024 © Kaptain Music.

At this stage, the creative process enters an ideation phase centered on the development of the main theme, initially conceived on the piano. Julien Vega explains that he also anticipated the documentary's narrative needs by composing, in advance, a piece of music to accompany the "first smoke" sequence, foreshadowing the catastrophic fire at Notre-Dame de Paris—a decision that ultimately aligned with the director's request. The first step in his process involved crafting an orchestration by experimenting with sounds that captured the documentary's atmosphere and tone. This process began with sound design, during which he adapted and meticulously selected sounds to ensure they conveyed the intended mood and ambiance (Figure 3). His instrumentation included piano, a string orchestra, synthetic tones, and the distinctive addition of bell sounds, which collectively addressed the documentary's emotional and narrative requirements. From this foundation, he proceeded to create the following theme:



2 Notre-Dame

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

p *mf*

Figure 4 Score of Notre-Dame, Opening Credits Music, courtesy of Julien Vega, 2024 © Kaptain Music.

The analysis of the main theme reveals Julien Vega's exceptional ability to translate the production team's vision into a compelling and precise musical metaphor, a skill that is critical for achieving competitiveness in the audiovisual industry. The deliberate construction of the theme, with its interplay of tension and resolution through dissonance (e.g., the tritone C-F#) and symmetry (E-F#/G-A), not only showcases technical sophistication but also embodies the symbolic essence of Notre-Dame Cathedral. The use of a symmetrical structure to evoke the two towers of the cathedral demonstrates a deep understanding of the film's narrative and visual language, aligning the music closely with the production's conceptual and emotional goals.

This alignment between music and narrative reflects the composer's capacity to interpret abstract directives from the production team—such as tone, atmosphere, and emotional resonance—and transform them into a tangible, evocative score. By integrating additional sonic elements like string articulations, dynamics, and even bell sounds, Vega enhances the authenticity and immersive quality of the documentary, further illustrating his responsiveness to the director's request for originality and personality.

Moreover, Vega's focus on creating seamless transitions and ensuring that the music fits precisely with the visual edits highlights his adaptability and collaborative skills. These attributes are critical in maintaining the efficiency of the production workflow, allowing the music to function not only as a narrative and emotional driver but also as a practical tool for the editing team.



By delivering a score that meets the technical, narrative, and emotional needs of the production, Vega demonstrates how a composer's ability to craft a fitting musical metaphor becomes a competitive advantage. This skill differentiates a film's identity, enhancing its appeal to audiences and elevating its value in a crowded audiovisual market. The main theme, therefore, stands as a testament to the integral role of music in bridging artistic intent and production demands, ensuring the documentary achieves both creative excellence and market distinction.

The following examples showcase the musical scores created for the documentary, capturing its diverse moments and atmospheres: the opening credits of *Notre-Dame*, "Lumière Divine," "Premières Fumées," "Rien que des Cendres," and "Tintinabulum." These pieces reflect the rich narrative and emotional structure of the film while demonstrating the depth and versatility of Julien Vega's compositional process.



5. SCORES OF DIFFERENT PARTS

Score

Lumière Divine

Julien Vega

♩ = 60

2 15 16 17 18 19 20

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

13

con sord.

pp

21 22 23 24 25 26 27

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

con sord.

p

con sord.

pp

con sord.

pp

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Figure 5. Julien Vega, Notre-Dame, *Lumière Divine*, courtesy of Julien Vega, 2024 © Kaptain Music.



Score

Notre Grande Dame

Clarinet Version

Julien Vega

♩ = 80

2 3 4 5 6 7

Clarinet in B $\flat$

p

Horn in F

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

8 9 10 11 12 13 14

B $\flat$ Cl.

Hn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

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Figure 6. Julien Vega, Notre-Dame, Notre Grande Dame, courtesy of Julien Vega, 2024 © Kaptain Music.



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Score

Notre Grande Dame

Orchestral Version

Julien Vega

$\text{♩} = 100$ [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

Horn in F

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

[8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14]

Hn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

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Figure 7. Julien Vega, Notre Dame, Notre Grande Dame, Orchestral Version courtesy of Julien Vega, 2024 © Kaptain Music.



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Score

Premières Fumées

Julien Vega

♩ = 150

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

col legno

p

24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

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Figure 8. Julien Vega, Notre-Dame, *Premières Fumées*, courtesy of Julien Vega, 2024 © Kaptain Music.



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6. DISCUSSION

The value of analyzing this process is twofold, encompassing both a detailed understanding of the compositional workflow and an assessment of the recording process. By collecting video recordings of Julien Vega's creative process, we documented and studied the different phases of music composition. Following the completion of the score, we participated in the orchestral recording session with the FAMES Orchestra of Macedonia, enabling a comprehensive analysis of both the composition workflow and the efficiency of the recording process.

The first major conclusion relates to the efficiency of the compositional process. Julien Vega demonstrated remarkable speed and adaptability in translating the production's vision into music. The ability to quickly conceptualize and implement ideas is a critical factor in the competitiveness of composers, particularly within the fast-paced demands of the audiovisual industry.

Several key attributes contribute to this effectiveness, including:

- A strong ability to analyze and understand the narrative structure of the film, identifying its key moments and climaxes.
- The capacity to generate initial musical ideas through ideation, rapidly shaping these into cohesive drafts.
- Technical mastery of musical language, enabling the creation of metaphors that evoke complex emotions and concepts (e.g., tension, relaxation, symmetry, contrast).
- A refined ability to select and design sounds that align with the intended atmosphere.
- A commitment to originality and uniqueness, ensuring the music enhances the film's identity.
- A proactive approach to anticipating editing needs, optimizing the workflow to meet production deadlines efficiently.

The second conclusion focuses on quality. The qualitative dimension of the score is evident in both the orchestral recording and live performance, elements which the production team itself emphasized as integral to the project's success. Competitiveness in a film or documentary often hinges on its singularity, which can only be achieved by mastering the selection of sounds, instruments, and musical structures. This includes avoiding reliance on standard sound libraries or pre-existing databases in favor of crafting original chord progressions, melodic lines, and harmonies. Live or acoustic recordings, such as those performed by an orchestra, provide a "human" touch that enhances the music's authenticity and emotional resonance, further contributing to the uniqueness of the audiovisual work.



Constraints – particularly those of time and budget—play a pivotal role in determining competitiveness. The ability to manage and negotiate these limitations is a cornerstone of success. In this case, every added value, such as the use of personalized music and live recordings, was integrated seamlessly into the film production framework. Constant dialogue with the director, careful preparation of stems for efficient editing, and adherence to production schedules ensured that the music workflow contributed positively without causing delays.

This analysis highlights that scoring music for media reflects broader criteria for competitiveness, extending beyond economic factors to encompass cultural and aesthetic considerations. Singularity and originality, efficient use of time, adaptability to constraints, and the ability to develop a style deeply rooted in European cultural heritage are all essential elements. These factors not only enhance the film's value but also create positive externalities that resonate with broader cultural objectives. By reinforcing the artistic and cultural identity of European audiovisual works, music becomes a central driver of competitiveness, fostering the distinctiveness that is vital in a globalized market.



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