

EXPLORING FILM MUSIC



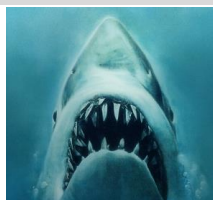
A. The Purpose of Music in Film

Film Music is a type of **DESCRIPTIVE MUSIC** that represents a **MOOD, STORY, SCENE** or **CHARACTER** through music, it is designed to **SUPPORT THE ACTION AND EMOTIONS OF THE FILM ON SCREEN**. Film Music can be used to:

- Create or enhance a mood (though the **ELEMENTS OF MUSIC**) →
- Function as a **LEITMOTIF** (see D)
- To emphasise a gesture (**MICKEY-MOUSING** – when the music fits precisely with a specific part of the action in a film e.g. cartoons)
- Provide unexpected juxtaposition/irony (using music the listener wouldn't expect to hear giving a sense of uneasiness or humour!)
- Link one scene to another providing continuity
- Influence the pacing of a scene making it appear faster/slower
- Give added commercial impetus (released as a **SOUNDTRACK**) – sometimes a song, usually a pop song is used as a **THEME SONG** for a film.
- Illustrate the geographic location (using instruments associated with a particular country) or historical period (using music 'of the time').

D. Leitmotifs

LEITMOTIF – A frequently recurring short melodic or harmonic idea which is associated with a character, event, concept, idea, object or situation. Leitmotifs can be developed throughout the film or may be heard in the background giving a “subtle hint” to the listener e.g. the “Jaws” Leitmotif



B. How the Elements of Music are used in Film Music

PITCH AND MELODY – **RISING MELODIES** are often used for increasing tension, **FALLING MELODIES** for defeat.
DYNAMICS – **FORTE (LOUD)** dynamics to represent power; **PIANO (SOFT)** dynamics to represent weakness/calm/resolve. **CRESCENDOS** used for increasing threat or proximity and **DECRESCENDOS** are used for things going away into the distance. Horror Film soundtracks often use **EXTREME** or **SUDDEN DYNAMIC CHANGES** to ‘shock the listener’.
HARMONY – **MAJOR CHORDS** are used for optimistic or heroic themes; **MINOR CHORDS** for sad or sorrowful scenes.. **DISSONANT** chords create a clash for a sinister effect.
DURATION – **LONG** notes are often used in Westerns to describe vast open spaces and in Sci-Fi soundtracks to depict outer space; **SHORT** notes can depict busy, chaotic or hectic scenes. **PEDAL NOTES** – long held notes in the **BASS LINE** used to create tension and suspense.
TEXTURE – **THIN/SPARSE** textures used for bleak or lonely scenes; **THICK/FULL** textures used for active scenes or battles.
ARTICULATION – **LEGATO** (smooth) for flowing or happy scenes, **STACCATO** (short) for ‘frozen’ or ‘icy’ wintery scenes. **ACCENTS (>)** for violence or shock.
TEMPO – sets the pace for a fast chase, intense battle or a slow moving emotional scene. **IRREGULAR TIME SIGNATURES** or **OSTINATO** (repeated) rhythms can create tension or excitement.



C. Film Music Key Words

SOUNDTRACK – The music and sound recorded on a motion-picture film. Can also mean a commercial recording of a collection of music from a film sold individually.



STORYBOARD – A graphic organiser in the form of illustrations and images displayed in sequence to help the composer plan their soundtrack.



CUESHEET – A detailed listing of **MUSICAL CUES** matching the visual action of a film so that composers can time their music accurately.
DIEGETIC FILM MUSIC – Music within the film for both the characters and audience to hear e.g. a car radio, a band in a nightclub or sound effects.
NON-DIEGETIC FILM MUSIC – also known as **UNDERScore, BACKGROUND** or **INCIDENTAL MUSIC** which only the audience can hear.

E. History of Film Music

Early films had no soundtrack (“**SILENT CINEMA**”) and music was provided live, usually **IMPROVISED** by a pianist or organist.



Today, film music often blends **POPULAR, ELECTRONIC** and **CLASSICAL** music together in a flexible way that suits the needs of a particular film.

F. Film Music Composers and their Soundtracks



Jerry Goldsmith
Planet of the Apes
Star Trek: The Motion Picture
The Omen
Alien



John Williams
Star Wars
Jaws
Harry Potter
Indiana Jones
Superman, E.T.



James Horner
Titanic
Apollo 13
Braveheart
Star Trek II
Aliens



Ennio Morricone
The Good, The Bad and The Ugly
For a Few Dollars More
The Mission



Danny Elfman
Mission Impossible
Batman Returns
Men in Black
Spider Man



Hans Zimmer
The Lion King
Gladiator
Dunkirk
Blade Runner 2049
No Time to Die



Bernard Herrmann
Psycho
Vertigo
Taxi Driver