

Scoring Music For Movies and The Elements of Music

Music is used in movies for a number of purposes:

- **Emphasizing the excitement and action of a scene:**
 - It usually is synced with specific visual cues.
 - Explosions, discovery, etc.

- **To help move the plot line forward:**
 - The music can hint that a scene is ending, a new scene is starting, a “discovery” has been made, or danger is upcoming.
 - It can help establish the time and location through its style.

- **To help establish the personalities and motives of the characters.**
 - At it’s most obvious it can tell us who is the bad guy and who is the good guy.
 - It can help establish the mindset of the character
 - Whether they are happy, sad, brooding, resigned to death, gallant, etc.

- **Establish a mood for a scene or for the whole movie.**
 - Music helps establish and reinforce the physical setting as well as the emotional and psychological setting.
 - The identical shot of sun setting over the horizon can be given totally different meanings by the music.
 - A sense of satisfying conclusion.
 - A sense of looking forward to the coming day.
 - A sense of impending danger and disaster.
 - Etc., etc.

The Elements of Music

Composers when scoring music for films use the elements of music consciously and unconsciously. While **melody, harmony, rhythm and form** are certainly important in establishing mood, **timbre and texture** are probably the two most important elements for mood setting.

- **Timbre:**
 - Specific sounds and instruments used.
 - Trumpet, guitar, etc., etc.
- **Texture:**
 - The “feel” of the sounds (timbres) when combined together.
 - Hard, soft, smooth, etc. etc.
- **Melody:**
 - The horizontal relationship of the notes used.
 - F, then G, then B, etc.
- **Harmony:**
 - The vertical relationship of notes sounded at the same time.
 - How F, G and B sound when played together.
- **Rhythm:**
 - When the notes are played.
 - Duration, length, tempo,
- **Form:**
 - How the music is organized into larger groups.
 - Intro, then verse, then chorus, then verse again, etc. etc.
 - There are some formalized forms
 - Pop songs, sonatas, minuets, etc.
- **Dynamics:**
 - How the notes are played.
 - Loud soft, soft attack, strong attack. Etc.

- **Style:**
 - Created by consistent combination of the other elements.
 - i.e. Rock style has certain timbres, textures, melody elements, rhythms and forms, which are used consistently to establish the style.
 - Certain styles also emphasize certain elements as more important than others.
 - ie. Rhythm can be the most important element of certain styles whereas certain harmonies are the most dominant element of another style.
 - The “attitude” which the performers bring to the music can also help define a style.
 - The attitude, which a rapper brings to his/ her performance, is very different from the attitude, which a classical musician brings to his/ her performance.