**FDA MUSIC FOR THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

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**Composing For Film and TV**

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Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross are important composers in modern film composition, winning a ‘Best Original Score’ Oscar in 2011 for their soundtrack to “The Social Network” and again for “Soul” in 2021 (*Disney and Pixar's 'Soul' wins best original score at 2021 Oscars*, 2021), they have gained a reputation for being ‘two of the most accomplished and in-demand composers in the world’ (Garner, 2021).

For Ross and Reznor to become such outstanding composers, they need a purpose. Why is film music needed and what does it do? According to Film music: A very short introduction (Kalinak, 2010), we think of film composition as, “music which is either directly composed or expressly chosen to accompany motion pictures.” So, a film score can be used to “establish setting, specify time and create mood or atmosphere,” among other things and is paramount to creating a successful and emotive motion picture, adding depth beyond visuals. A score is a piece of original music composed to accompany a film or moving image. The process of composition begins towards the end of production as the director and composer work together to watch the “rough cut” and take notes on cues and the general “feel” needed from the music. On the track a guide to contemporary film scoring by Karlin explains that this process is called “spotting.”

After having composed the film score, the two separate entities of film and music need to be combined, using a process called synchronisation. The standard frame rate of a moving image is 24 frames per second (FPS) (Morrison, 2020), if the film is outside of the 2-4 frame margin for error, our brain will notice this. So, in order to make sure that everything is synchronised, each sound, song and piece of dialogue is typically re-recorded in a studio during post-production. During the “Golden Age of Hollywood,” Alfred Newman (a composer and conductor at the time) created a method of synchronisation called “streamers and punches.” Phaedrus Audio explains that this method was conducted by drawing a line in the film that would slide across the screen and then punching a hole on the ‘hit,’ giving the conductor freedom of tempo and pacing but with awareness of the musical cues.

In fact, Davis’ Complete guide to film scoring the art and business of writing music for movies and TV tells us that music has been used to accompany drama since as early as ‘the Greeks and Romans using choruses and orchestras to accompany their plays.’ November 18th, 1908, was an important day in film history as this was the first time a film had been shown with a musical accompaniment, L’assassinat de duc Guise was a silent film, aside from this composition written by, “Saint-Saëns… was the first major composer to write music specifically intended for the cinema.” (Systems & Bru Zane Media Base, 2020). The first sound film to incorporate a specifically composed score was in 1927, ‘The Jazz Singer’ (Prendergast, 1992). The music within this film is considered to be ‘diegetic,’ meaning that the source of the sound is made aware to the audience. In a 2021 article, MasterClass describe it as, “diegetic sound is any sound that emanates from the story world of the film.” To quote Carlsson, an example of this is a “musical instrument” and is also known as “source music.” On the other hand, MasterClass explains that non-diegetic sound is “any sound that does not originate from within the film’s world.” Cameras in this time-period created too much noise so live sound, songs and even dialogue could not be professionally recorded live on set. This was a problem, that in 1931, was given a solution; the invention of ‘over-dubbing’ technology by Les Paul (Zager, 2012).

Since then, technological advancements in music production have been a vital progression for modern-day film music, such as the public release of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), designed by Dave Smith in 1983 (*30 years of MIDI: A brief history* 2012). This made a whole new way to compose and is now a way of making composition more accessible to not only a modern-day composer but also their audience.

Reznor and Ross took advantage of this, their scores using a mixture of Reznor’s classical training and modern technology create a dystopian sound. For example, in “The Social Network,” they use synths to create a dark drone sound, creating tension to compliment scenes and generate a feeling of anger or anxiety (Church et al., 2020). The creative decision to use mostly electronic instruments feels like a nod to the electronic world that the main antagonist lives in. Reznor explains, “We wanted this film to have an electronic heart… emotional travels that Zuckerberg was taking.” (Hazelton 2010). Unlike many film scores, this one does not particularly use leitmotifs but in the main theme “hand covers bruise,” the use of a piano-based motif sets the mood for the entire film (Chapman, 2011). hellomusictheory.com defines a leitmotif as, “a short, recurring musical [phrase](https://hellomusictheory.com/learn/phrase/) that is thematically associated with a specific character, place, or concept.” This is then subtly adapted in way of recording and performance to altar these moods that it evokes from audience members. Specifically, upon the return of the piano in each scene, it appears that it has gotten further away.

However, in addition to original composition, ‘The Social Network’ uses pre-existing music too to develop a new form of tension. In the scene, the Winklevoss brothers are racing with their rowing team against a British university. Reznor and Ross’ adaptation of Greig’s “In the Hall of the Mountain King” creates connotations of tension, whilst simultaneously driving the scene forward. It is also as if it is foreshadowing the trouble that will later be caused as the brothers decide to sue Zuckerberg.

To conclude, the topics of which I have briefly discussed show that film music is an integral part of cinema. Without it, there would be no effective way to draw the attention of the audience by complimenting visuals with audible stimulation. The evolution of film composition has evolved greatly during the rise of cinema and Reznor and Ross are truly championing these changes, particularly in the technological field, to influence the future of modern-day film composition.

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