

Film Music Analysis:

The Use of Different Musical Styles in Films

In this film music analysis, I will provide three film examples for each music style along with the film's genre, and explain what the choice does to enhance and why it works within each specific film.

Motivic Writing: Composing in Short Blocks

In the superhero, action, and crime film "**The Batman**" (2022), **Michael Giacchino** uses recurring motifs to represent different characters and themes, creating a cohesive and memorable score. Motivic writing helps to reinforce the narrative and build strong associations with characters, enhancing the storytelling.

In the superhero, action, and adventure film "**Spider-Man: No Way Home**" (2021), **Michael Giacchino** uses motifs to highlight key characters and moments, weaving familiar themes with new material to connect the multiverse elements. The use of motifs provides continuity and emotional resonance, especially in a film with multiple characters and story arcs.

In both cases, these characters are well-known, beloved, and have been seen in TV and on film before, so context becomes important in evaluating music use.

In the sci-fi and adventure film "**Dune**" (2021), **Hans Zimmer** employs short, distinctive motifs to represent various houses and elements of the Dune universe, enhancing the epic and otherworldly atmosphere. The motifs help to create a distinct identity for different factions and concepts within the expansive world of Dune.

Strong, Longform Thematic

In the action, spy thriller film "**No Time to Die**" (2021), **Hans Zimmer** develops long, sweeping themes that integrate classic Bond motifs with new material, enhancing the emotional depth and continuity. Long-form themes provide a sense of grandeur and continuity, essential for the final chapter of a long-running series.

In the sci-fi and adventure film "**Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker**" (2019), **John Williams** continues the tradition of expansive, long-form thematic writing, developing themes for characters and the saga's conclusion. The long-form thematic approach adds to the epic scope of the Star Wars saga and provides a powerful emotional payoff for long-time fans.

In the sci-fi, adventure, and space western TV series: "**The Mandalorian**" (TV Series, 2019-present), **Ludwig Göransson** uses long-form themes to develop the narrative and

characters across episodes and seasons, creating a cohesive musical identity. Long-form thematic writing helps to build a rich, immersive world and deepens the connection to the characters and story.

Americana Style

In the western drama film **"News of the World" (2020)**, **James Newton Howard** features rich Americana influences, using folk instruments and themes that evoke the American West, enhancing the film's setting and mood. Americana music complements the film's setting and helps to create an authentic atmosphere reflective of the time and place.

In the adventure, drama, and comedy film **"The Peanut Butter Falcon" (2019)**, **Zachary Dawes, Noam Pikelny, Jonathan Sadoff, and Gabe Witcher** combine bluegrass, folk, and Americana elements to reflect the film's Southern setting and the journey of the characters. The Americana sound enhances the film's heartwarming and authentic feel, grounding the story in its regional setting.

In the biographical sports drama film **"Ford v Ferrari" (2019)**, **Marco Beltrami and Buck Sanders** incorporate Americana elements to underscore the American racing spirit and historical context of the 1960s. The Americana style emphasizes the film's historical and cultural setting, enhancing the authenticity of the narrative.

The European Traditional Sound

In the historical drama and romance film **"Little Women" (2019)**, **Alexandre Desplat** features classical European influences with elegant orchestration, enhancing the period drama's emotional depth and historical setting. The European classical style complements the film's 19th-century setting and provides a timeless, emotional resonance.

In the historical action and adventure film **"The King's Man" (2021)**, **Matthew Margeson and Dominic Lewis** integrate traditional European orchestral sounds to match the historical and epic nature of the film, providing grandeur and gravitas. The European orchestral style enhances the film's historical epic feel and adds depth to the narrative.

In the biographical drama and romance film **"The Danish Girl" (2015)**, **Alexandre Desplat** combines European classical music elements with rich orchestration to enhance the period drama's emotional and historical context. The classical European style adds an elegant and poignant layer to the film, reflecting the era and emotional complexity of the story.

Rhythm and Chord Focused

In the sci-fi, action, and thriller film **"Tenet" (2020)**, **Ludwig Göransson** emphasizes rhythmic patterns and chord progressions to create tension and drive the narrative, enhancing the film's

complex, time-bending plot. The rhythmic and chord-focused music complements the film's fast-paced, intricate narrative and adds to the sense of urgency and complexity.

In the biographical drama film "**Mank**" (2020), **Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross** use rhythmic and chordal structures to evoke the sound of 1930s and 1940s Hollywood, enhancing the film's historical setting and narrative. The rhythm and chord-focused style helps to recreate the period's musical atmosphere, providing authenticity and depth to the storytelling.

In the animated adventure and comedy film "**Soul**" (2020) with **Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross, and Jon Batiste** as composers, Jon Batiste's jazz compositions focus on rhythm and chord progressions, blending with Reznor and Ross's atmospheric work to create a unique soundscape. The rhythmic and chord-focused jazz elements enhance the film's themes of passion and creativity, creating a vibrant and engaging auditory experience.

The Epic Sound and Power of the Triad

In the superhero action and adventure film "**Avengers: Endgame**" (2019), **Alan Silvestri** uses powerful triadic harmonies to create epic moments and themes throughout the film, enhancing the grandeur and emotional impact. The use of triadic harmonies provides a strong, heroic feel that is essential for the epic conclusion of the Avengers saga.

In the superhero action and fantasy film "**Wonder Woman 1984**" (2020), **Hans Zimmer** employs strong, heroic triadic themes to underscore the epic nature of Wonder Woman's character and story, enhancing the film's emotional depth. The epic sound of the triads amplifies the heroic and larger-than-life aspects of the character and narrative.

What is interesting here is we are seeing how for superhero films, one does not have to stick with one style. Previously, we saw Motivic Writing being used and in these examples, Power of the Triad.

In the animated adventure and drama film "**The Lion King**" (2019), **Hans Zimmer** revisits and enhances the epic themes of the original with powerful orchestration and triadic harmonies, providing a grand and emotional experience. The triadic harmonies underscore the epic narrative and emotional journey of the characters.

Because The Lion King isn't a new movie but more a remade version of a Disney classic, the original music had to be taken into consideration in the remake.

Dissonant Rich

In the psychological thriller and drama film "**Joker**" (2019), **Hildur Guðnadóttir** makes extensive use of dissonance to reflect the psychological complexity and descent of the protagonist. The dissonant elements create an unsettling atmosphere that mirrors the protagonist's mental state.

In the psychological horror and drama film **"The Lighthouse" (2019)**, **Mark Korven** filled with dissonant chords and unsettling sounds to enhance the film's eerie and claustrophobic atmosphere. The dissonant music heightens the tension and unease, reflecting the characters' descent into madness.

In the horror and thriller film **"Us" (2019)**, **Michael Abels** uses dissonance and unconventional harmonic structures to create a sense of horror and tension. The dissonant music enhances the film's suspense and horror elements, making the audience feel uneasy.

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These sources provide a combination of IMDb links for general information and specific articles and interviews that offer detailed musical analysis and insights.