

THE FILMMAKING PROCESS

Fitting your Music to Picture



Similar themes are difficult to differentiate for one another. If you write contrasting themes and use different textures it will be easier for the viewer to identify which music belongs to each character.

“Does your tempo map fit the picture?”

Writing film music is as much about choosing an appropriate tempo that fits the picture as it is about the notes you write. If you struggle to get your music to fit the picture chances are the tempo is creating the problem. Re-examine your tempo to see if faster or slower will take some of the awkwardness out of the process.

Remember that you do not need to be locked into one tempo for an entire cue. Let the pace of the film and the frequency of cuts help you determine what an appropriate tempo is.

“Do your themes match your characters?”

Themes have to fit characters like a hand in glove and be appropriate to the scene. No matter how this dog is dressed - it's still a dog. Better to have the dog be a dog and not try to make it something it is not! Forcing musical ideas to fit a scene rarely if ever works out well.



Why do I feel so uncomfortable about what I am writing?

Film music is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without having a picture to look at. A common mistake made by new film composers is to approach each cue thinking they have to be locked into a single tempo. Or, becoming emotionally attached to a melody or phrase.

It's perfectly acceptable to change tempo within a cue or take out or add beats to your motif in order to help make it fit.

To write compelling dramatic music requires us to think like filmmakers. In fact, film composers are just that: filmmakers. We are hired to add our experience and musical talent to help tell the story. The more you understand how stories and films are put together the easier it will be for you to adapt your instincts to fit the challenge at hand.

