



SOME BASIC CONTEXT AROUND FILM SCORING

*Practical, Creative, Philosophical and Intellectual*

TRICKS, TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

PART 1

Film Music is about Craft, not Art

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Why do we even need Film Music?

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Film Music must serve the Picture

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The lifecycle of Film Music

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Music and Emotion

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Film Music as a technical process

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Film Music is the culmination of a process

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The pitfalls of 'immediate' composing

---

Compartmentalising the process

---

Pressures

---

Music to Picture or Picture to Music

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Why does Film Music often sound so strange?

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Why doesn't underscore music have more melody?

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Analogies between Music and Image

---

Composing and Journalism

---

Tricks we don't hear

---

With and without music

---

Music and Emotion (again)

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We'll be talking a lot about **craft** and the **technical side** of  
film scoring

But don't get taken over by technique, or whether  
people will think the music is great, or who the  
music might impress.

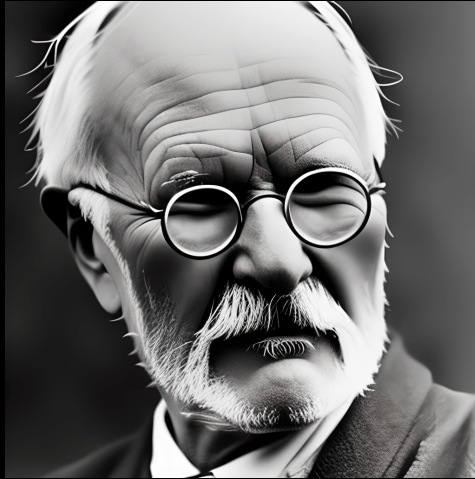
But don't get taken over by technique, or whether people will think the music is great, or who the music might impress.

“It's not ‘is the music good’, it's ‘who is the music good for?’”

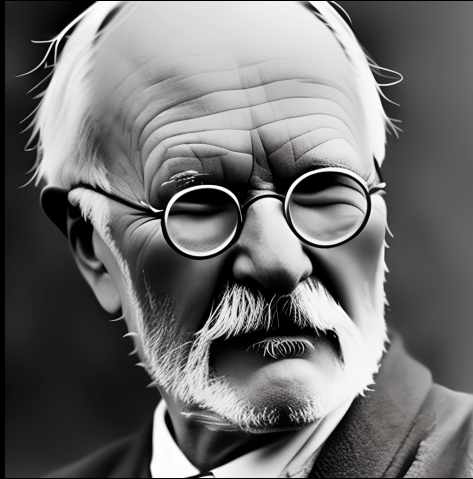
Simon May (1944 -



Don't get taken over by techniques



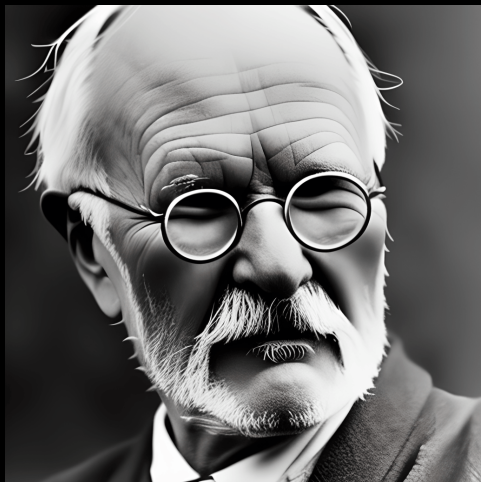
# Don't get taken over by techniques



“Know all the theories.  
Master all the techniques.  
But as you touch a human soul  
be just another human soul.”



# Don't get taken over by techniques

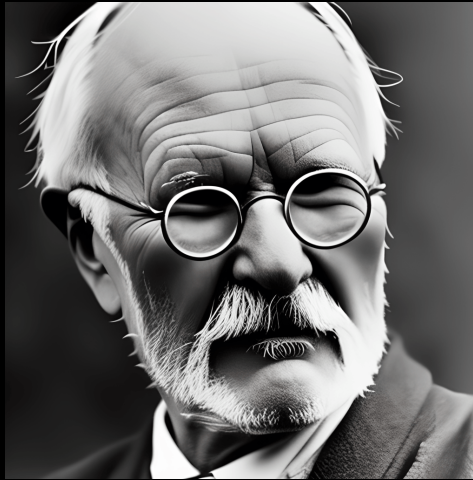


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Technique is simply a means to an end. Don't lose sight of the fact that ultimately, part of a composer's job is to bring emotion to a film and to bring humanity

# Don't get taken over by techniques

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate.”



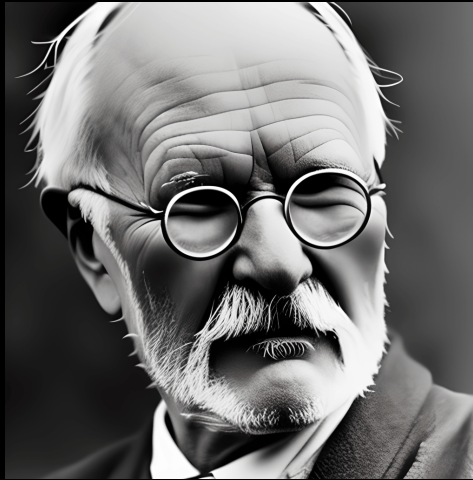
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# Don't get taken over by techniques

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate.”

In film music you don't have time to wonder how you did something, or for something to be a 'happy accident'. You can't wait for the great inspiration. You have to have it done by Wednesday



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A photograph of a movie theater interior. The foreground is filled with rows of red seats, viewed from behind. The theater is dimly lit, with the primary light source being a large screen at the front. The screen has a warm, orange-red glow and displays two lines of white text. The walls on either side of the screen are dark, and the ceiling is also dark with some visible lighting fixtures.

FILM MUSIC is about **Craft**, not Art

FILM MUSIC is as **Technical** as it is Creative

Everything can be explained. Everything can be understood.



A photograph of a theater interior. In the foreground, rows of red upholstered seats are visible, receding towards a stage. The stage is dark, and a large, bright screen dominates the background. The screen displays two lines of white text. The first line has the word 'understood' underlined. The second line is indented. The theater walls are dark, and the ceiling has some visible lighting fixtures.

Everything can be explained. Everything can be understood.

It's about understanding emotion, placement, architecture, structure,  
harmony and texture.

A wide-angle shot of a movie theater from the back of the audience. The foreground is filled with rows of red seats. The theater walls are dark, and the ceiling has some recessed lighting. A large white screen at the front displays three lines of text. The text is white and centered. The word 'understood' in the first line is underlined.

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It's not indulgent. You write what the film needs.



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Don't try and impress with the music.



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What's the thing that unifies all these factors ?

A well-crafted score is functional

A well-crafted score communicates emotionally

A well-crafted score supports the picture

A well-crafted score supports the story


A well-crafted score can sometimes tell a different story

Sometimes a well-crafted score tells the real story

Craft



# 1. Why do we need film music?

A photograph of a movie theater interior. The foreground is filled with rows of red seats, viewed from behind. The theater is dimly lit, with the primary light source being a large screen at the front. The screen displays a quote in white serif font. The walls on either side of the screen are dark with horizontal wooden paneling. The ceiling has some recessed lighting fixtures.

Nearly every aspect of film making is  
designed to fool the audience into  
believing they are experiencing  
something **real**

A photograph of a movie theater interior. The foreground is filled with rows of red seats, viewed from behind. The theater is dimly lit, with the primary light source being a large projection screen at the front. The screen has a warm, reddish-orange glow and displays two lines of white text. The walls on either side of the screen are dark, and the ceiling is also dark with some visible lighting fixtures.

Why would music make it more real ?

Why do we need music in films ?

A wide-angle shot of a movie theater interior. The foreground is filled with rows of red upholstered seats, viewed from behind. The theater is dimly lit, with the primary light source being a large, bright screen at the far end. The screen displays two lines of white text. The walls on either side of the screen are dark, and the ceiling has some visible lighting fixtures.

Things added to make the experience more real

Lighting, sound, ADR



A wide-angle shot of a movie theater from the audience's perspective. The foreground is filled with rows of red upholstered seats. The theater is dark, with the primary light source being the large white screen at the front. The screen displays the text "Music is at odds with reality." in a white, serif font. The screen is flanked by dark side walls with horizontal panels. The ceiling is dark with some visible lighting fixtures.

Music is at odds with reality.

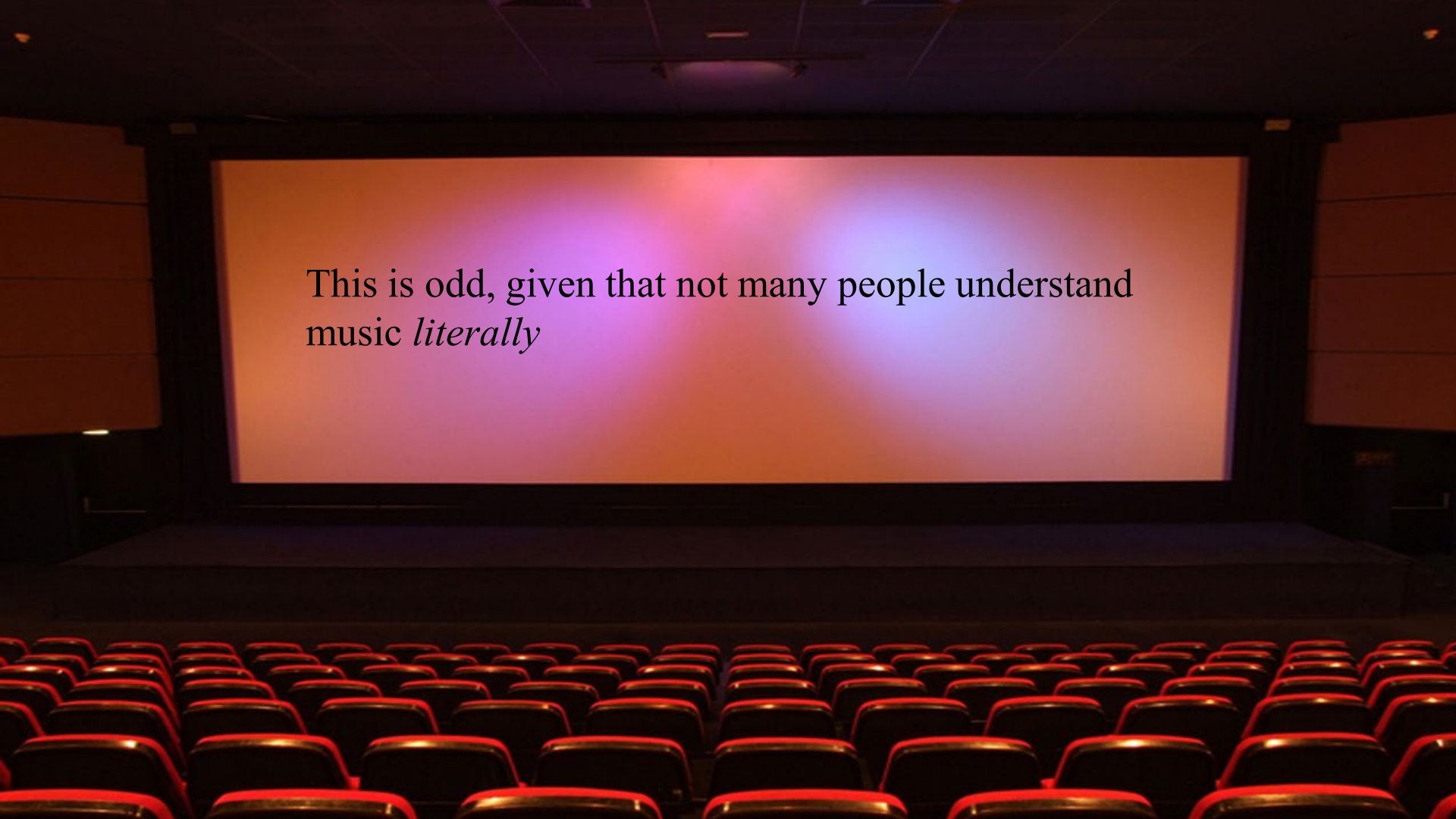
A wide-angle shot of a movie theater from the audience's perspective. The foreground is filled with rows of red upholstered seats, receding into the distance. At the far end of the theater is a large, bright white projection screen. The screen is illuminated with a soft, multi-colored glow, transitioning from a warm orange-red on the left to a cool blue-purple on the right. Centered on the screen is the text "Editing is at odds with reality." in a white, serif typeface. The theater's walls are dark, and the ceiling features recessed lighting fixtures. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

Editing is at odds with reality.

Musicologist Laurence Kramer:




*“To make anything more itself, or more anything,  
just add music.”* (Kramer, 2002: 3)

A wide-angle shot of a movie theater from the audience's perspective. The foreground is filled with rows of red upholstered seats. In the background, a large white projection screen is illuminated with a soft pink and purple light. The text "This is odd, given that not many people understand music *literally*" is centered on the screen. The theater's walls are dark, and the ceiling has some visible lighting fixtures.

This is odd, given that not many people understand  
music *literally*




A large, empty movie theater with rows of red seats facing a large screen displaying text. The theater is dimly lit, with the screen being the primary light source. The seats are arranged in a grid pattern, and the screen is at the far end of the room. The text on the screen is in a serif font, with the second line having some words in a lighter color.

People love music because ultimately, it provides a  
function; it fulfils a purpose in our lives.

It's not just what it is, it's what it does to us

Half the battle in understanding film music is understanding why it's there in the first place

Why do we need it?  
What does it do?  
What does it offer?  
What is its function?

A photograph of a movie theater interior. The foreground is filled with rows of red upholstered seats, viewed from behind. The theater is dimly lit, with the primary light source being a large, bright screen at the far end. The screen has a warm, orange-to-purple gradient background and displays the text '2. Music must serve the picture' in a white, serif font. The screen is flanked by dark, paneled walls. The ceiling is dark with some visible lighting fixtures.

2. Music must serve  
the picture

*Film Music is a Functional Art Form. In order for film music to work, there has to be a reason for it; it might be lacking in emotion, which music would generate*



What's lacking?

Or, what is too emphasized without the emotion of music to soak it up?

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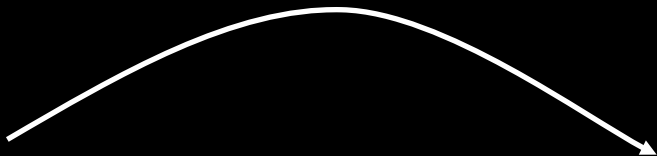
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- Too many static shots
- Too 'ordinary'
- The gravity and importance of the scene does not come through
- Sound design added in 'post' sounds contrived and overcooked (door slams, boot shutting, footsteps), "where too, sir?"



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What's lacking?

Or, what is too emphasized  
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Play  
video





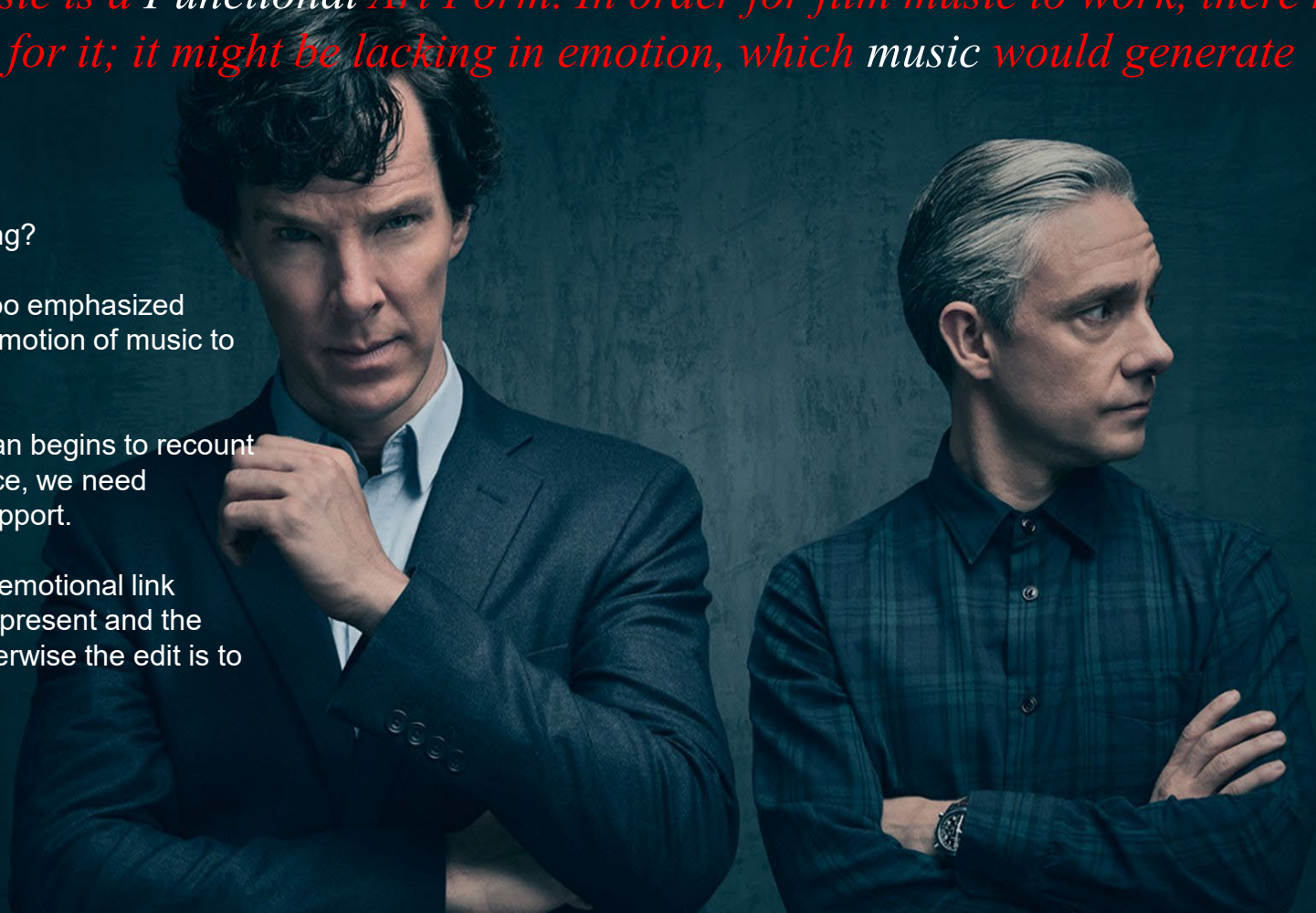
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When the man begins to recount his experience, we need emotional support.

We need an emotional link between the present and the memory, otherwise the edit is to harsh





Music has to mediate between the story and the audience

The danger of overwriting

The pitfalls of writing over the dialogue

The problem of writing music for the sake of music