

SOME BASIC CONTEXT AROUND FILM SCORING

Practical, Creative, Philosophical and Intellectual

TRICKS, TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

PART 2

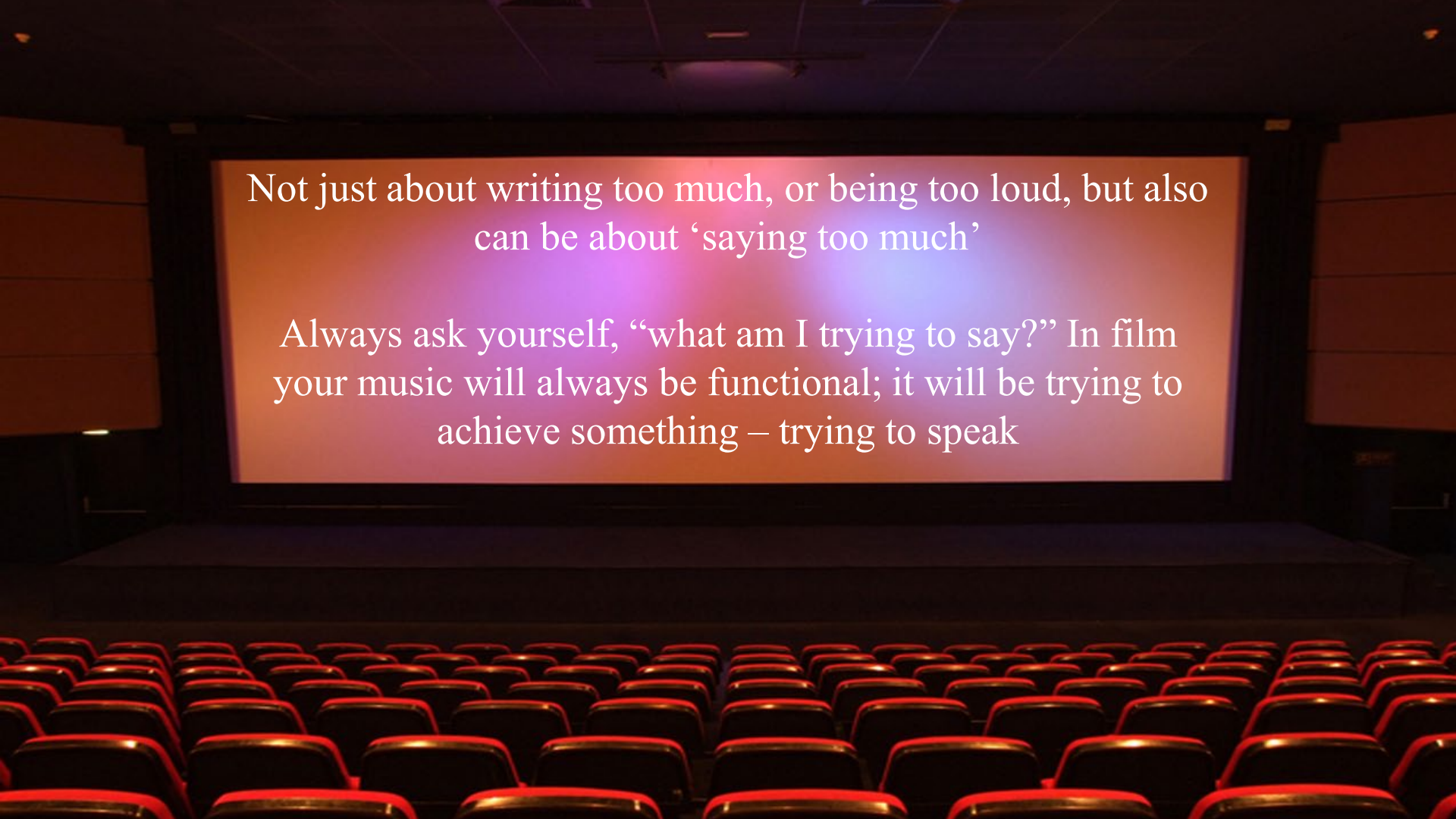
More about how people experience
film music

Practical, Creative, Philosophical and Intellectual

TRICKS, TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

PART 2

2. Overwriting

A photograph of a theater interior. The foreground is filled with rows of red upholstered seats, viewed from behind. The seats are arranged in a semi-circular pattern. In the background, a large, wide screen is illuminated with a warm, orange-red light. The screen displays two paragraphs of text in a white, serif font. The theater walls are dark, and the ceiling has some visible lighting fixtures.

Not just about writing too much, or being too loud, but also
can be about ‘saying too much’

Always ask yourself, “what am I trying to say?” In film
your music will always be functional; it will be trying to
achieve something – trying to speak



00.44

(no chord)

Trumpet

7th maj3rd 13th

1st

High Strings

Basses

root

F[#]7(b⁵)

D⁷

b⁵

7th

7th maj3rd 13th

F¹³

F⁷(b¹³)

F

B^b

5th

9th

Goldsmith creates a haunting melody by repeating the initial trumpet line in different contexts

Why does it work?

00.44

(no chord)

Trumpet

High Strings

Basses

1st

7th maj3rd

7th maj3rd

F#7(b5)

D7

b5

7th

7th maj3rd 13th

F¹³

F7(b13)

F

Bb

5th

9th

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at 00.44 and features a Trumpet, High Strings, and Basses. The Trumpet plays a melody that is repeated in different contexts, indicated by purple lines. The High Strings and Basses provide harmonic support with various chords and intervals. Red arrows and labels indicate specific intervals and chords. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. The second system starts at 7 and continues the melody and harmony. Red arrows and labels indicate specific intervals and chords. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4.

Goldsmith creates a haunting melody by repeating the initial trumpet line in different contexts

it is mildly sci-fi (C chord to F# chord) but it is majestic and sparse, generating awe and mild anxiety



8 minutes

“The original one I wrote took me a day to write it; the alternate one took five minutes to write.”

Jerry Goldsmith's score lets space open up between the notes, and the subtle heartbeats on the soundtrack shadow the camera to suggest a perplexingly withheld point of view

(Luckhurst, 2019: 24)

The famous 'Alien' chord

Goldsmith said he started with polyharmony -

A 'D' chord, an E chord and a Bb chord

He then added extensions.

He then started taking the roots out

2 9

n.c. D *(omit3/5)* E⁷

2 9

n.c. D *(omit3/5)* E⁷

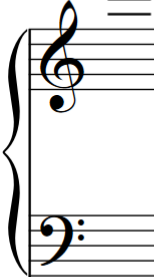
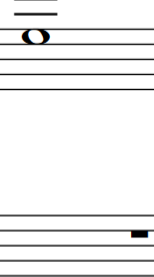
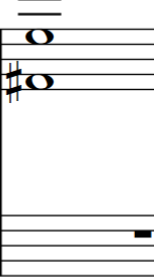
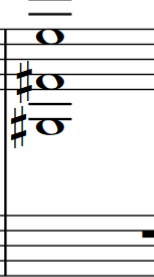
2 9

n.c. D o

(omit3/5) E⁷ o

(omit5) D(add9)/F[#] o o

2 9

<i>n.c.</i>	(omit3/5)	(omit5)	
D	E ⁷	D(add9)/F [♯]	E ⁹ (omit5)/G [♯]
			

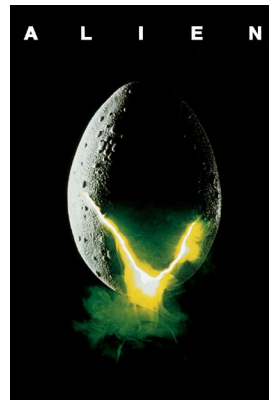
<i>n.c.</i>	(omit3/5)	(omit5)		(#5/#13)
D	E ⁷	D(add9)/F [#]	E ⁹ (omit5)/G [#]	B ^b 7

2 9

The musical score consists of five measures. The treble clef staff contains the following chords: D (n.c.), E⁷ (omit3/5), D(add9)/F[#] (omit5), E⁹(omit5)/G[#] (#5/#13), and B^b7. The bass clef staff contains whole rests for the first four measures and a whole note B^b in the fifth measure.

2 9

<i>n.c.</i>	(omit3/5)	(omit5)		(#5/#13)	(#5/#11)
D	E ⁷	D(add9)/F [#]	E ⁹ (omit5)/G [#]	B ^{b7}	C ⁹



The 'Alien' chord and the musical visualisation of emotion

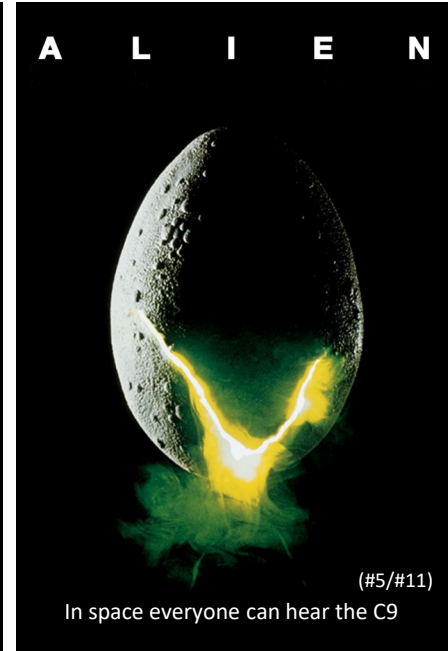


Synonymous with
the film

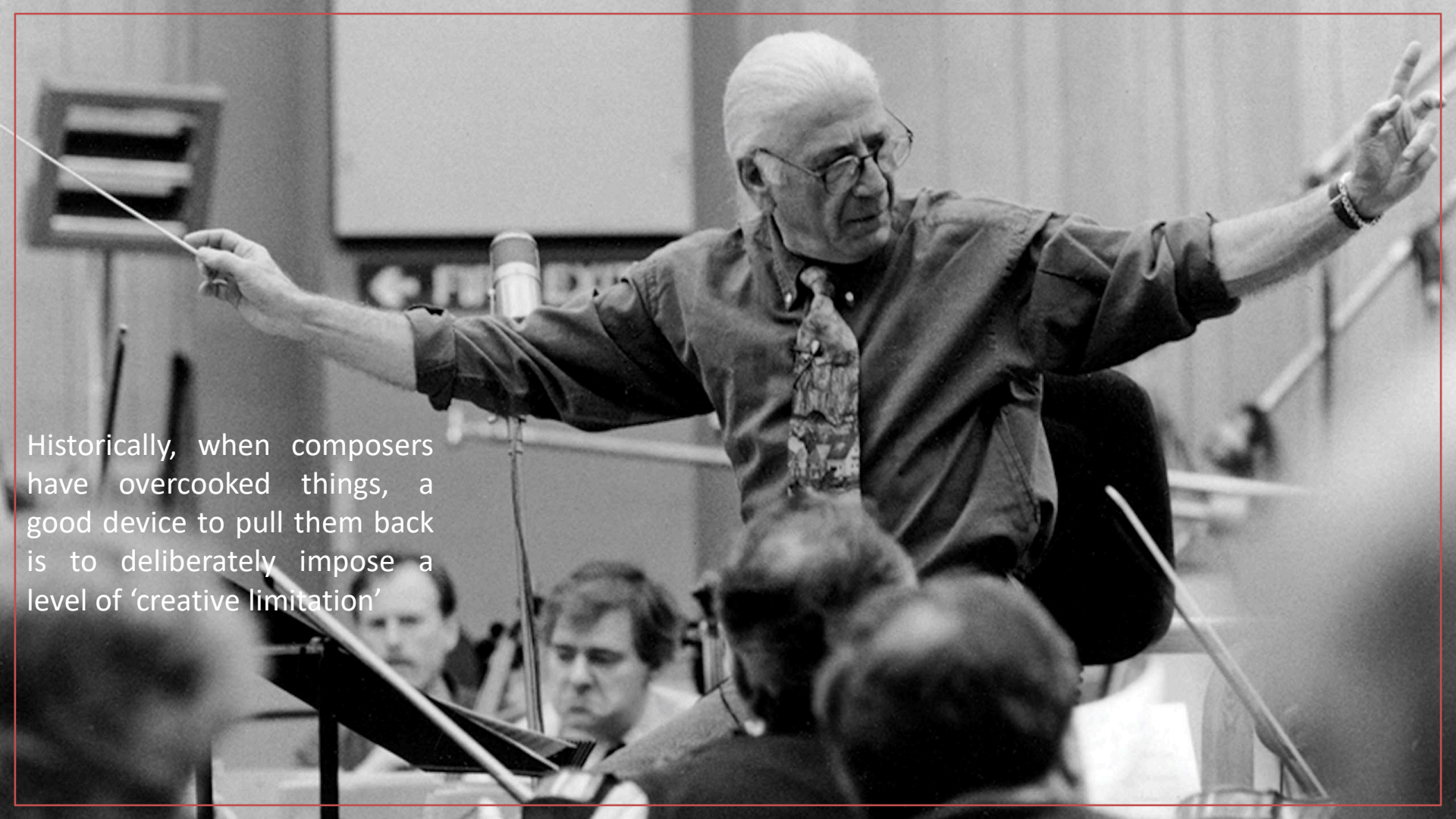
The 'Alien' chord and the musical visualisation of emotion



Synonymous with
the film

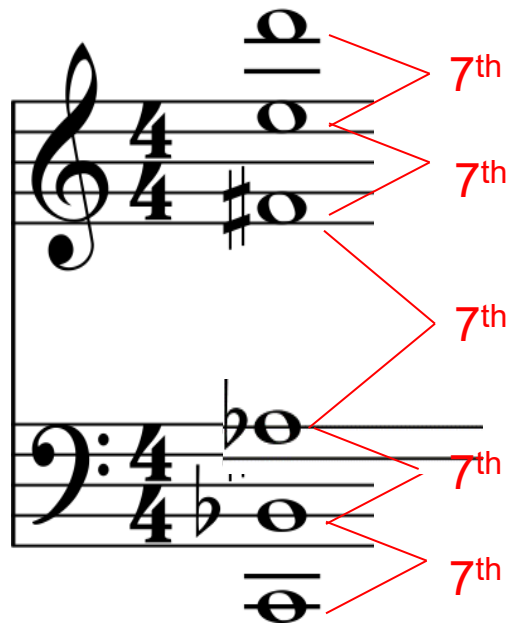


Equally
Synonymous with
the film



Historically, when composers have overcooked things, a good device to pull them back is to deliberately impose a level of 'creative limitation'

The 'Alien' chord; a vertical tree of sevenths



Over and above the ethereal textures
and 'ghostly' sounds, is there a flavour
to the harmony, or a logic which
determines the thinking behind it?

(#5)
C⁹(#11)

The image displays a musical score for a string ensemble in 4/4 time. On the left, a chord diagram for C⁹(#11) is shown, consisting of a treble clef with a whole note C4 (middle C) and a whole note F#4, and a bass clef with a whole note B3 and a whole note C4. Red arrows trace the movement of these notes into the main score: the C4 from the treble clef moves to Violins 1 (first measure), the F#4 from the treble clef moves to Violins 2/3 (first measure), the B3 from the bass clef moves to Cellos (first measure), and the C4 from the bass clef moves to the Bass (first measure). The main score consists of five staves: Violins 1, Violins 2/3, Violas, Cellos, and Bass. Each staff contains four measures of music. Violins 1 and 2/3 play a series of half notes (C4, D4, E4, F#4) with slurs. Violas play a series of half notes (B3, C4, D4, E4) with slurs. Cellos and Bass play a series of half notes (B3, C4, D4, E4) with slurs. The time signature is 4/4.

Violins 1

Violins 2/3

Violas

Cellos

Bass

3. Music and Emotion

The image shows the interior of a theater. In the foreground, there are many rows of red upholstered seats, viewed from behind. The seats are arranged in a semi-circular pattern, facing a large, wide screen at the front of the stage. The screen is illuminated with a warm, orange-red light and displays the text '3. Music and Emotion' in a white, serif font. The stage area is dark, and the walls on either side of the screen are also dark, with some horizontal panels visible. The overall atmosphere is quiet and focused, typical of a lecture or performance space.

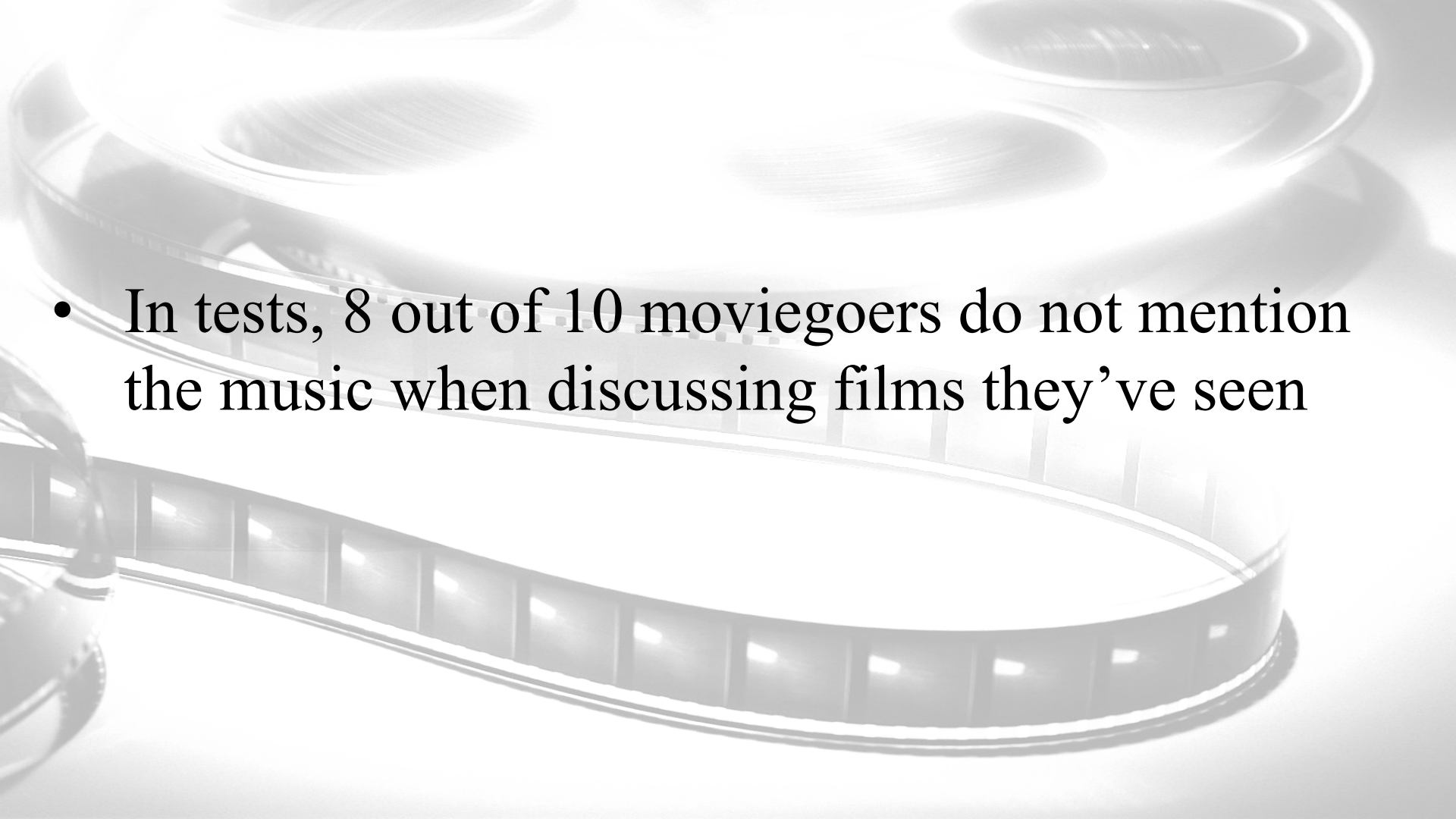


What's the difference between hearing and listening ?



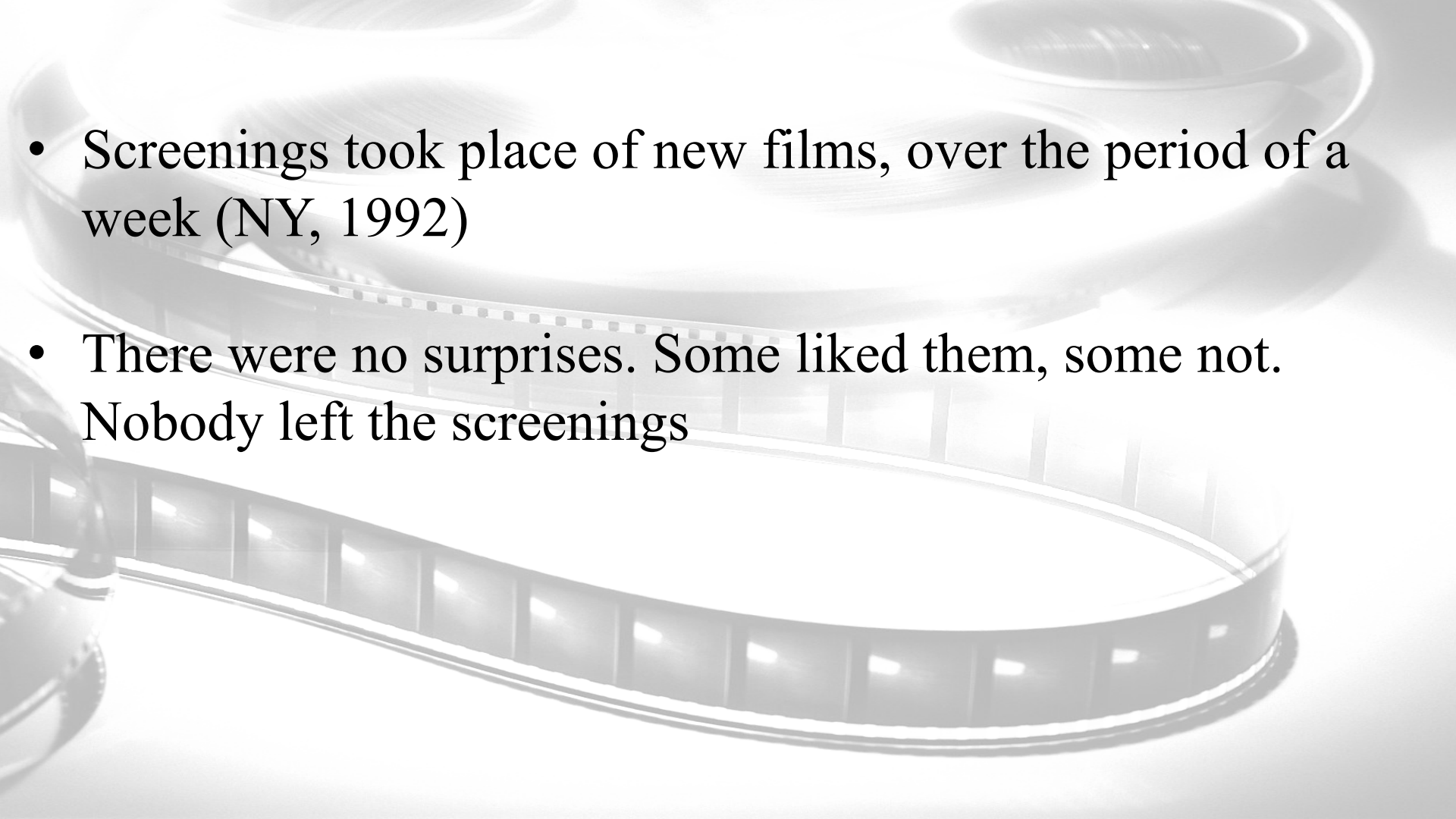
What's the difference between hearing and listening ?

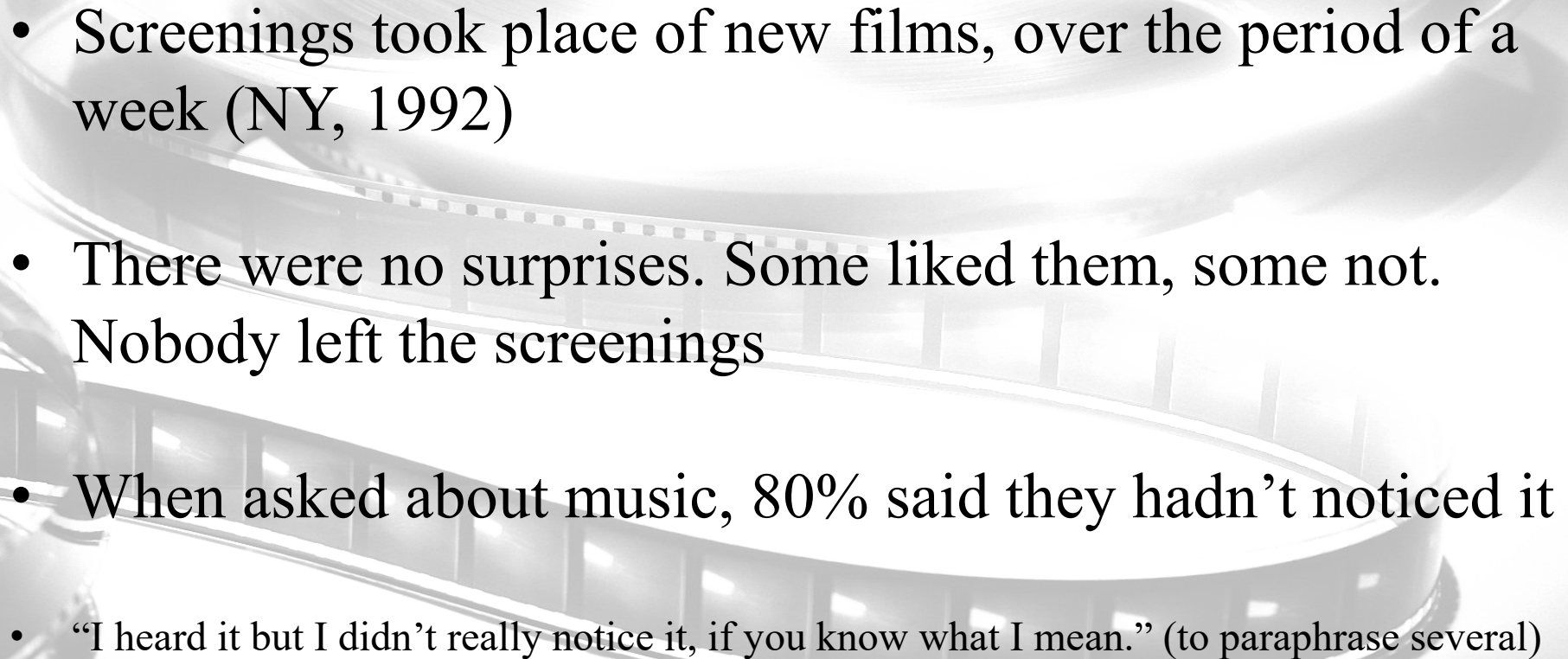
Film Music is something we
hear, and are aware of, but
what we absorb, what we
distil, **is different**

- 
- In tests, 8 out of 10 moviegoers do not mention the music when discussing films they've seen

- Screenings took place of new films, over the period of a week

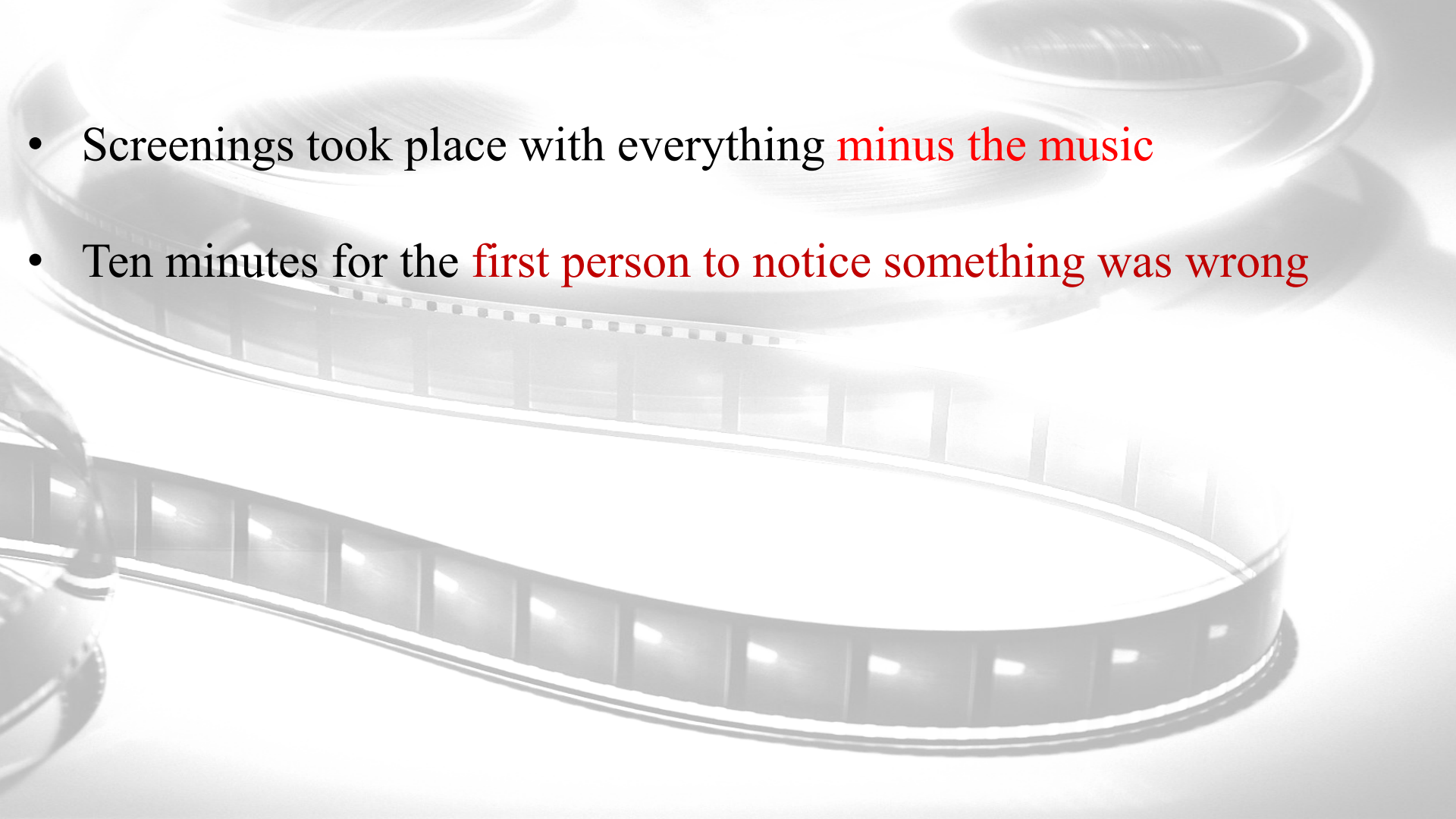


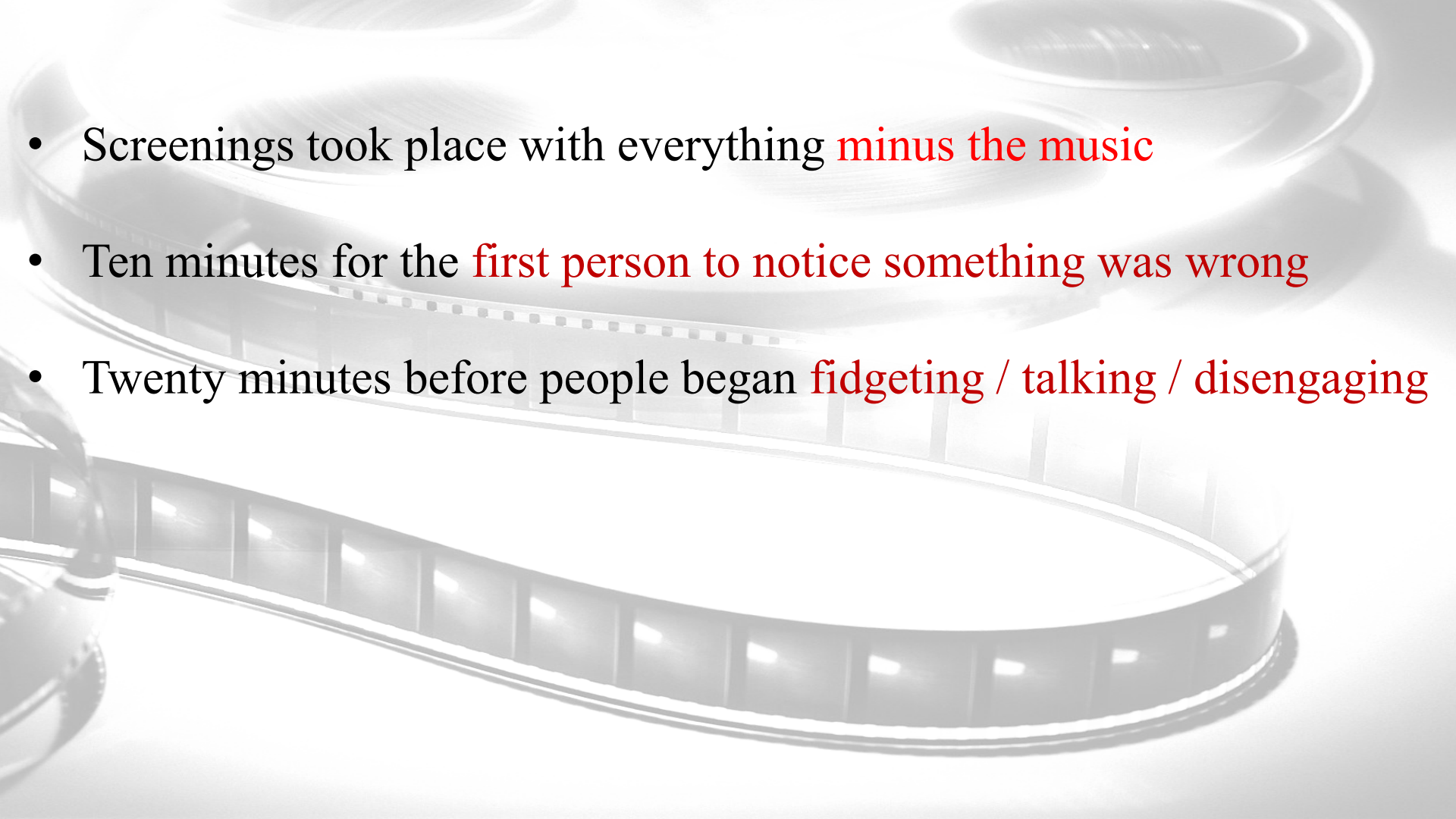
- 
- Screenings took place of new films, over the period of a week (NY, 1992)
 - There were no surprises. Some liked them, some not. Nobody left the screenings

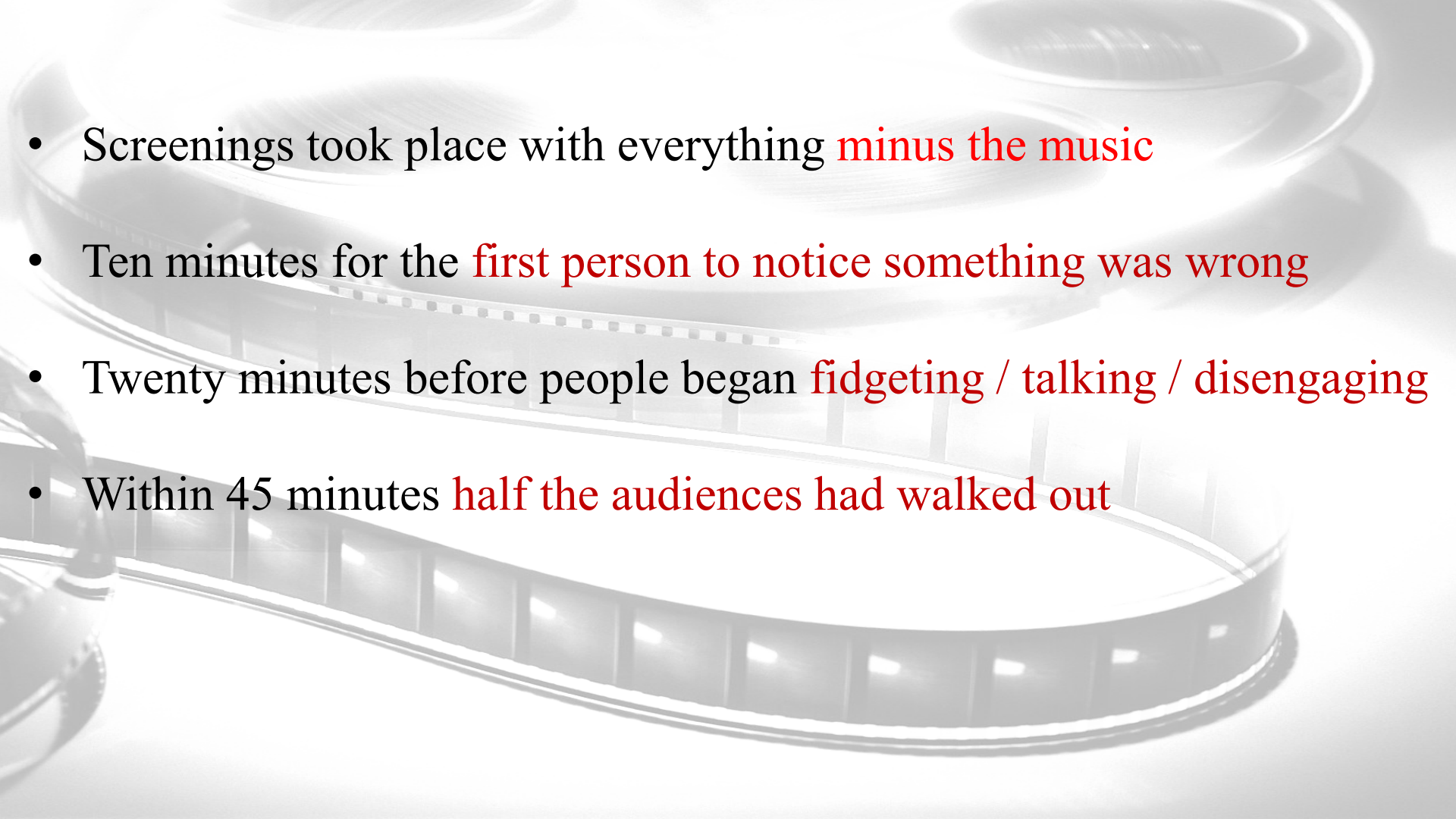
- 
- Screenings took place of new films, over the period of a week (NY, 1992)
 - There were no surprises. Some liked them, some not. Nobody left the screenings
 - When asked about music, 80% said they hadn't noticed it
 - "I heard it but I didn't really notice it, if you know what I mean." (to paraphrase several)

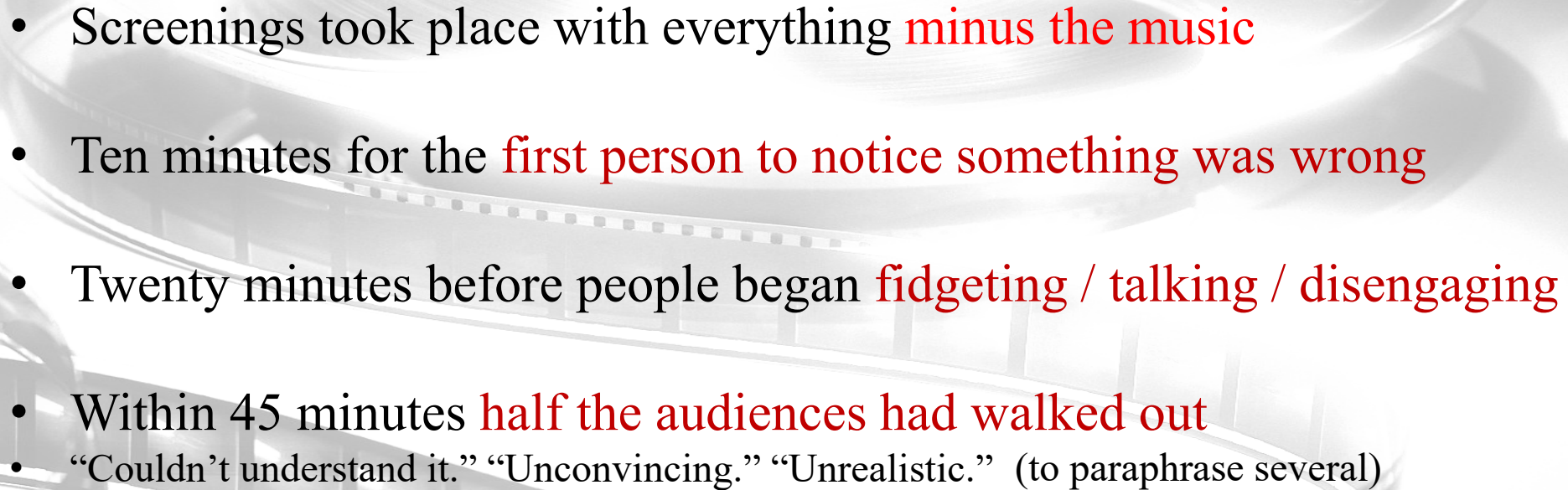
- Screenings took place with everything **minus the music**



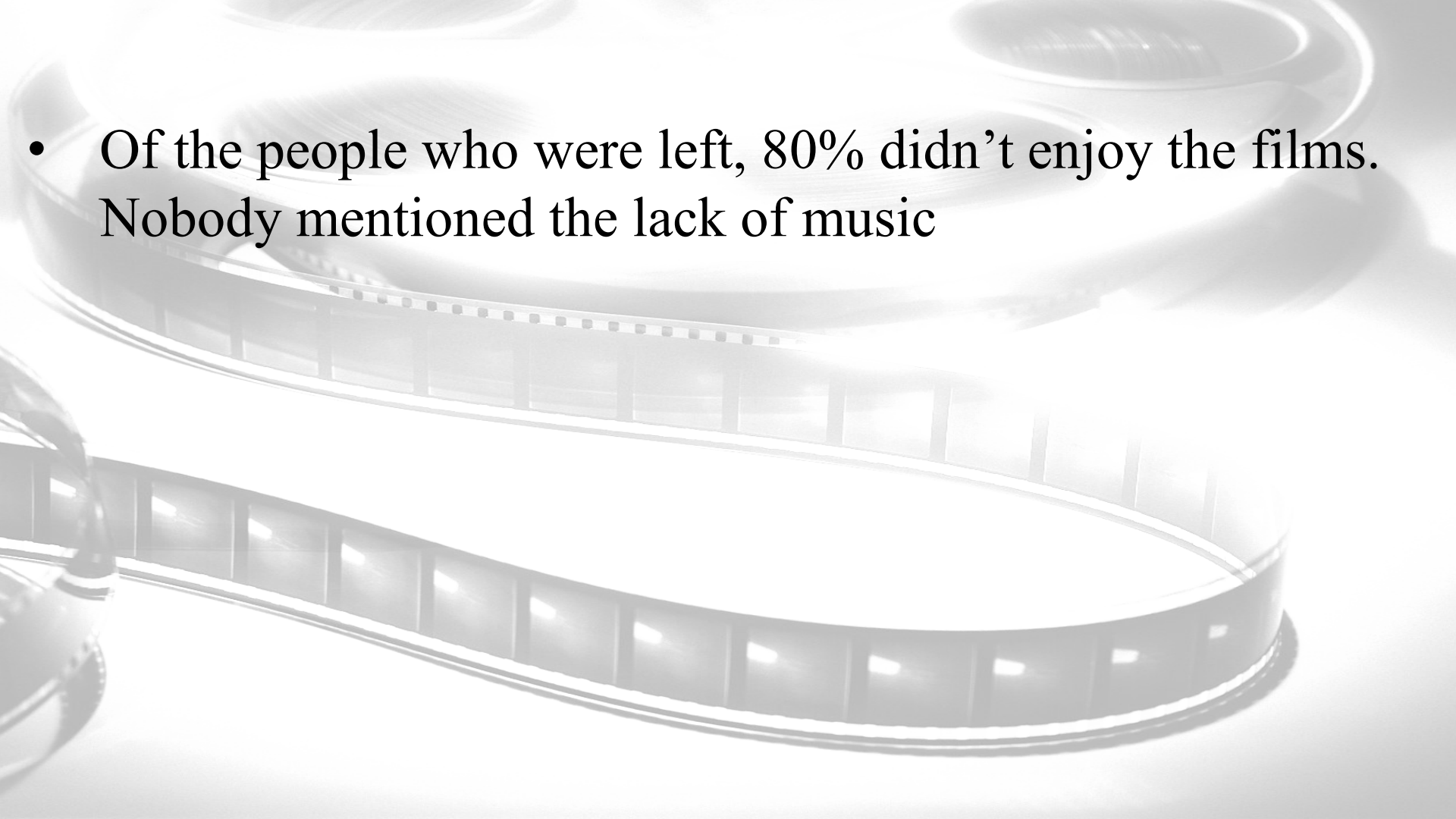
- 
- Screenings took place with everything **minus the music**
 - Ten minutes for the **first person to notice something was wrong**

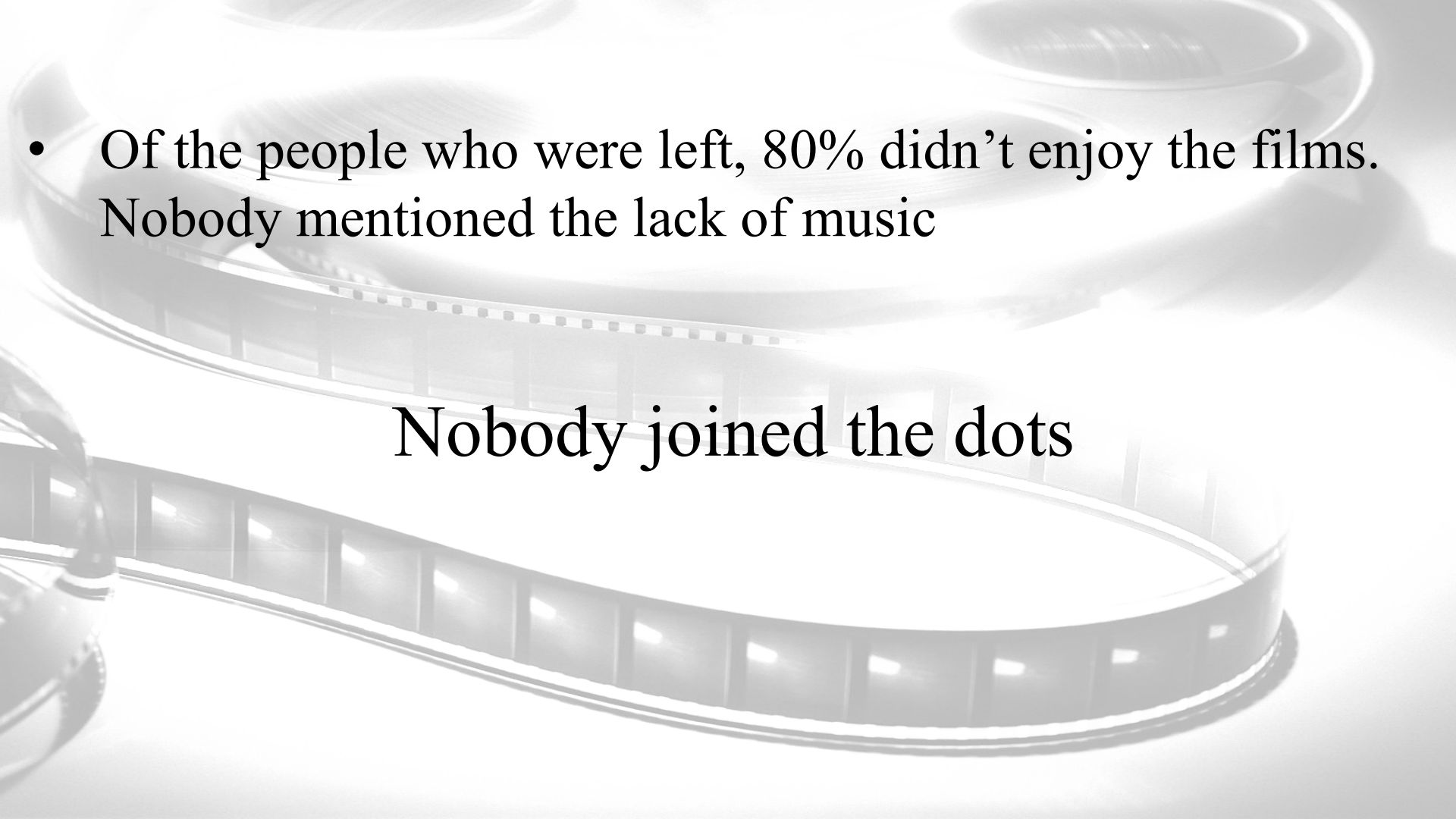
- 
- Screenings took place with everything **minus the music**
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 - Twenty minutes before people began **fidgeting / talking / disengaging**

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 - Within 45 minutes **half the audiences had walked out**

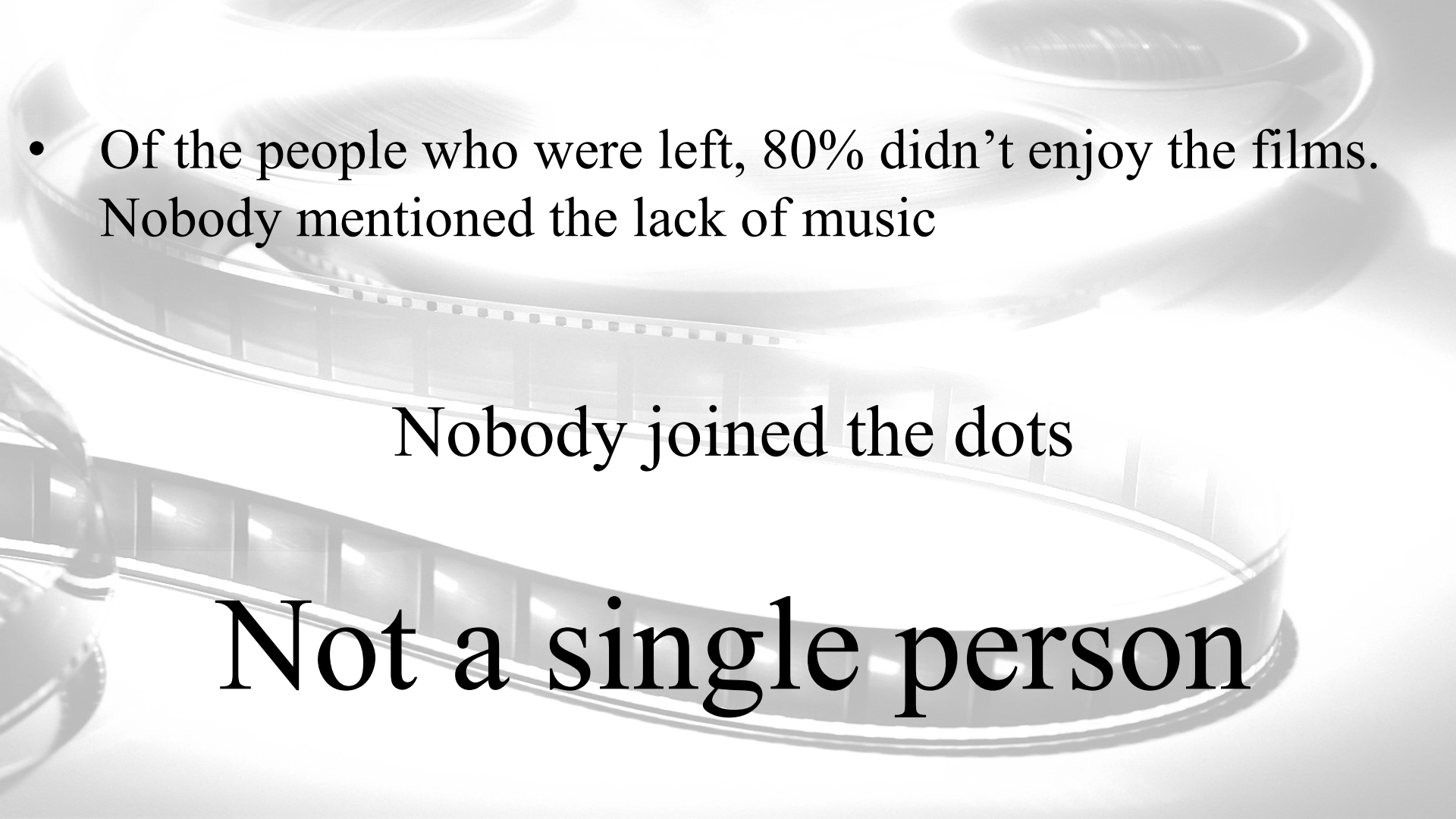
- 
- Screenings took place with everything **minus the music**
 - Ten minutes for the **first person to notice something was wrong**
 - Twenty minutes before people began **fidgeting / talking / disengaging**
 - Within 45 minutes **half the audiences had walked out**
 - “Couldn’t understand it.” “Unconvincing.” “Unrealistic.” (to paraphrase several)

- Of the people who were left, 80% didn't enjoy the films.
Nobody mentioned the lack of music



- 
- Of the people who were left, 80% didn't enjoy the films.
Nobody mentioned the lack of music

Nobody joined the dots

- 
- Of the people who were left, 80% didn't enjoy the films.
Nobody mentioned the lack of music

Nobody joined the dots

Not a single person

This was one of
the films

There Are Some Places In The Universe You Don't Go Alone.

A L E N S

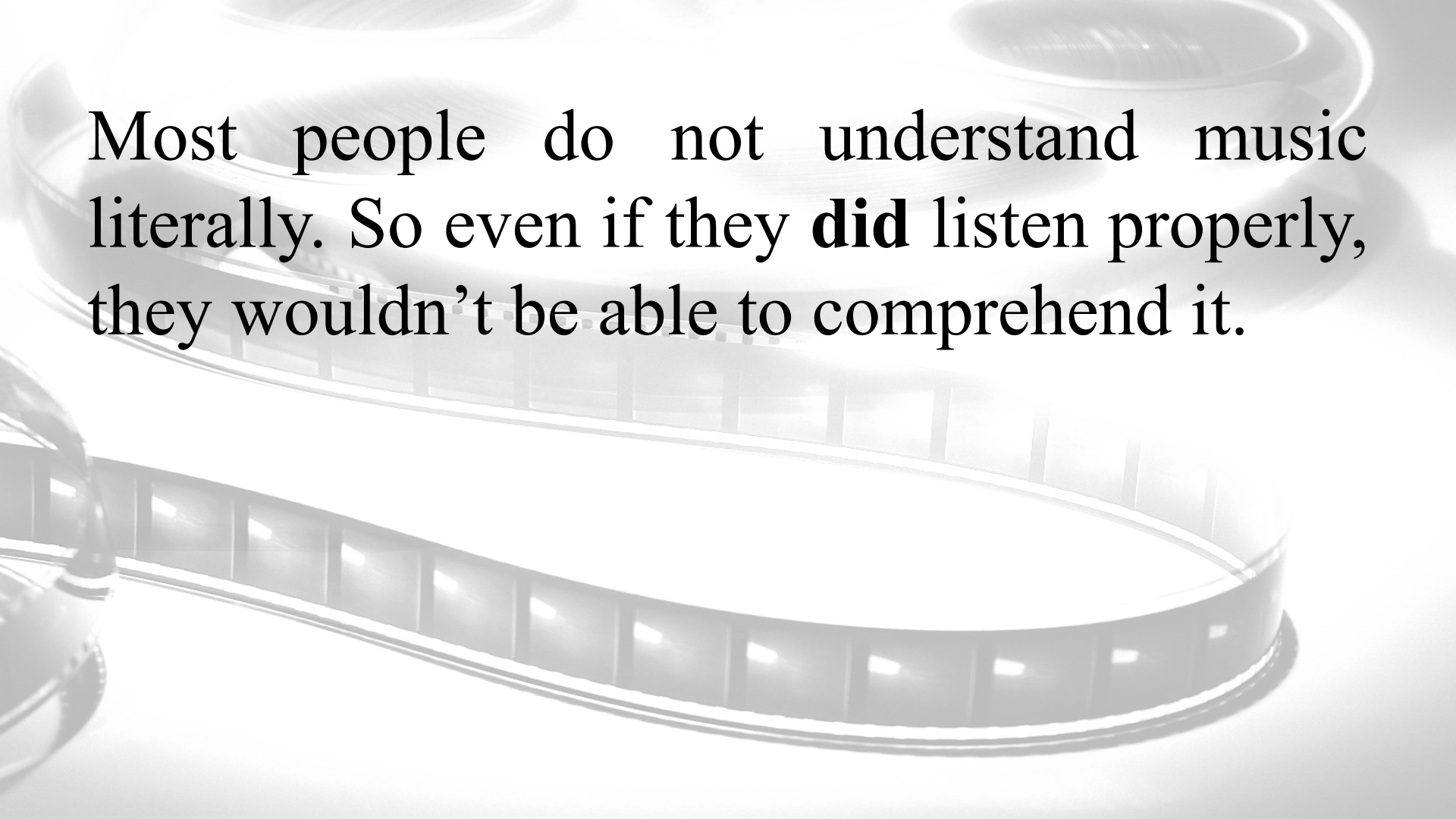
This Time It's War

If audiences don't listen to music critically and most of the time say they don't remember it, what exactly are they missing when we pull the music?

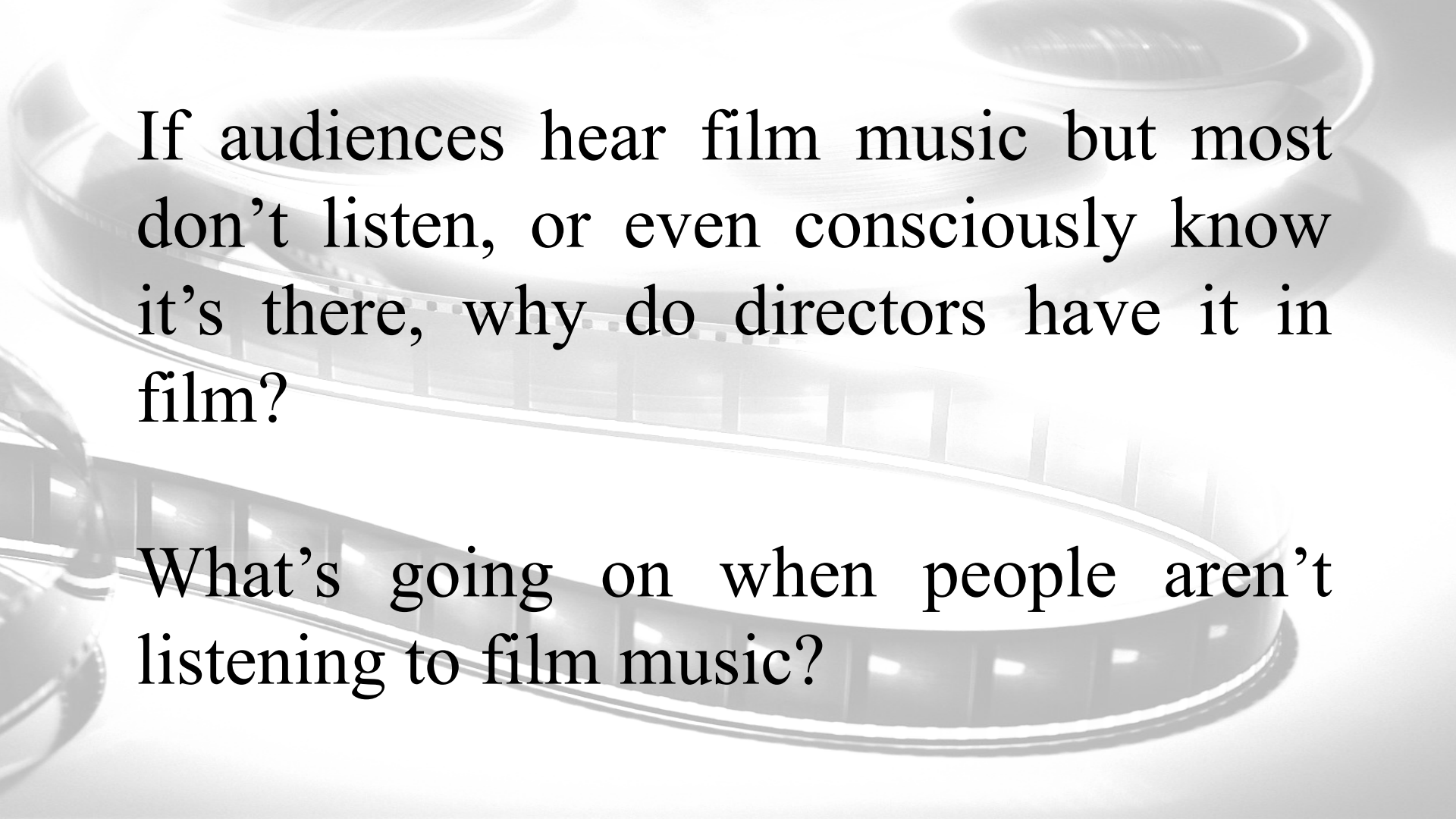


People generally have a **strange relationship** with film music. On the one hand they can't do without it; on the other hand they don't notice when it's not there

Why is this ?

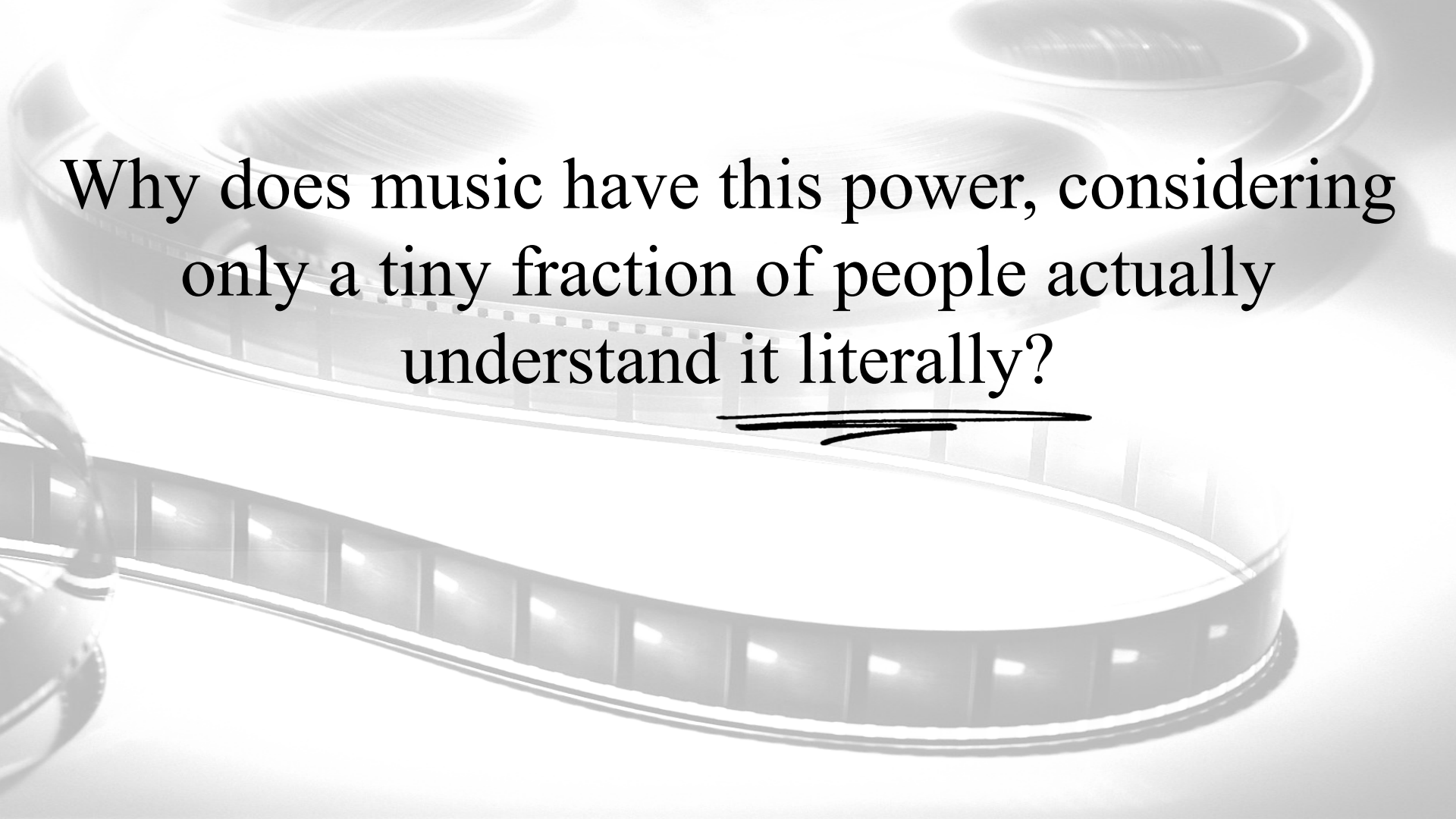


Most people do not understand music literally. So even if they **did** listen properly, they wouldn't be able to comprehend it.

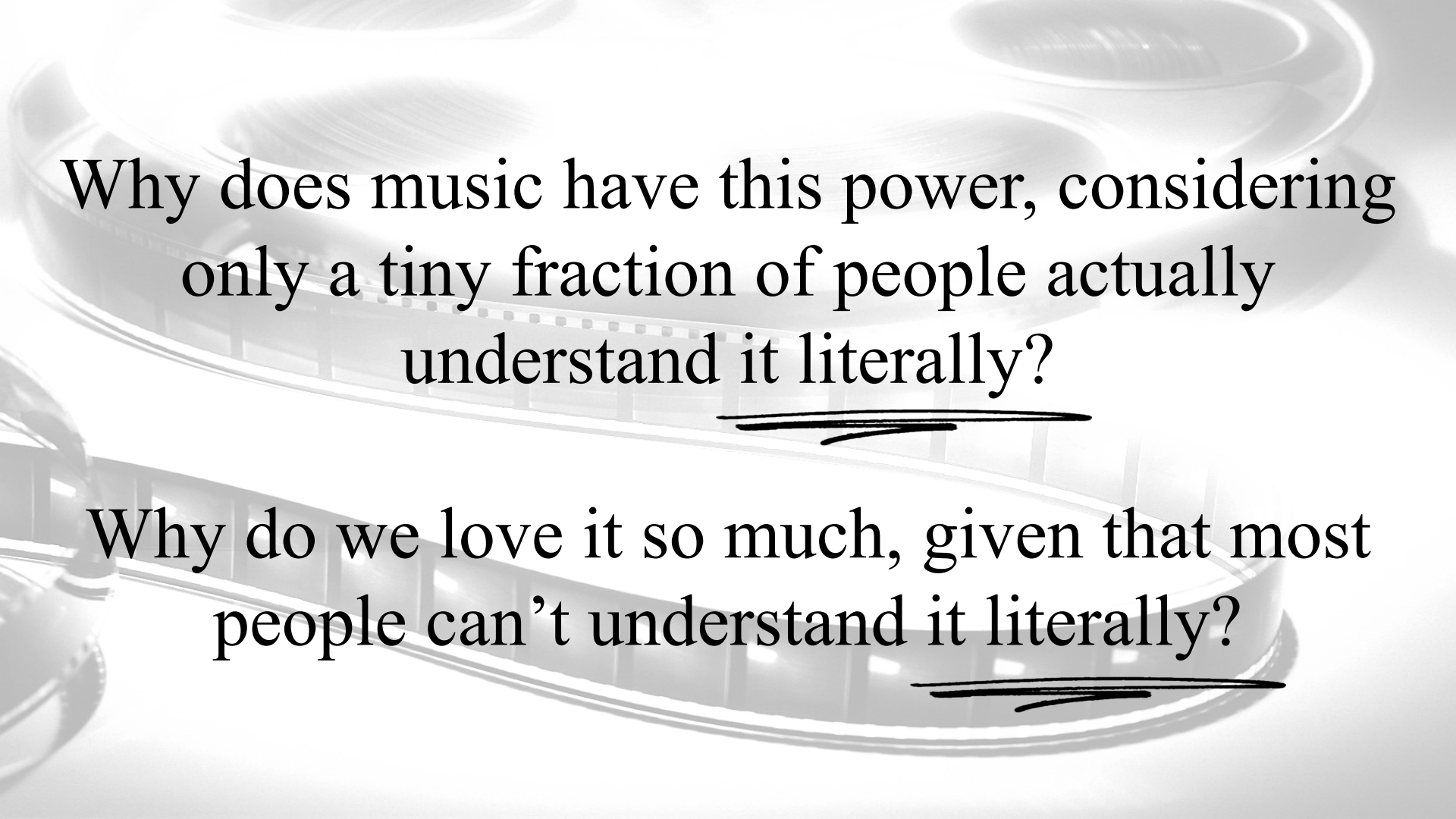


If audiences hear film music but most don't listen, or even consciously know it's there, why do directors have it in film?

What's going on when people aren't listening to film music?

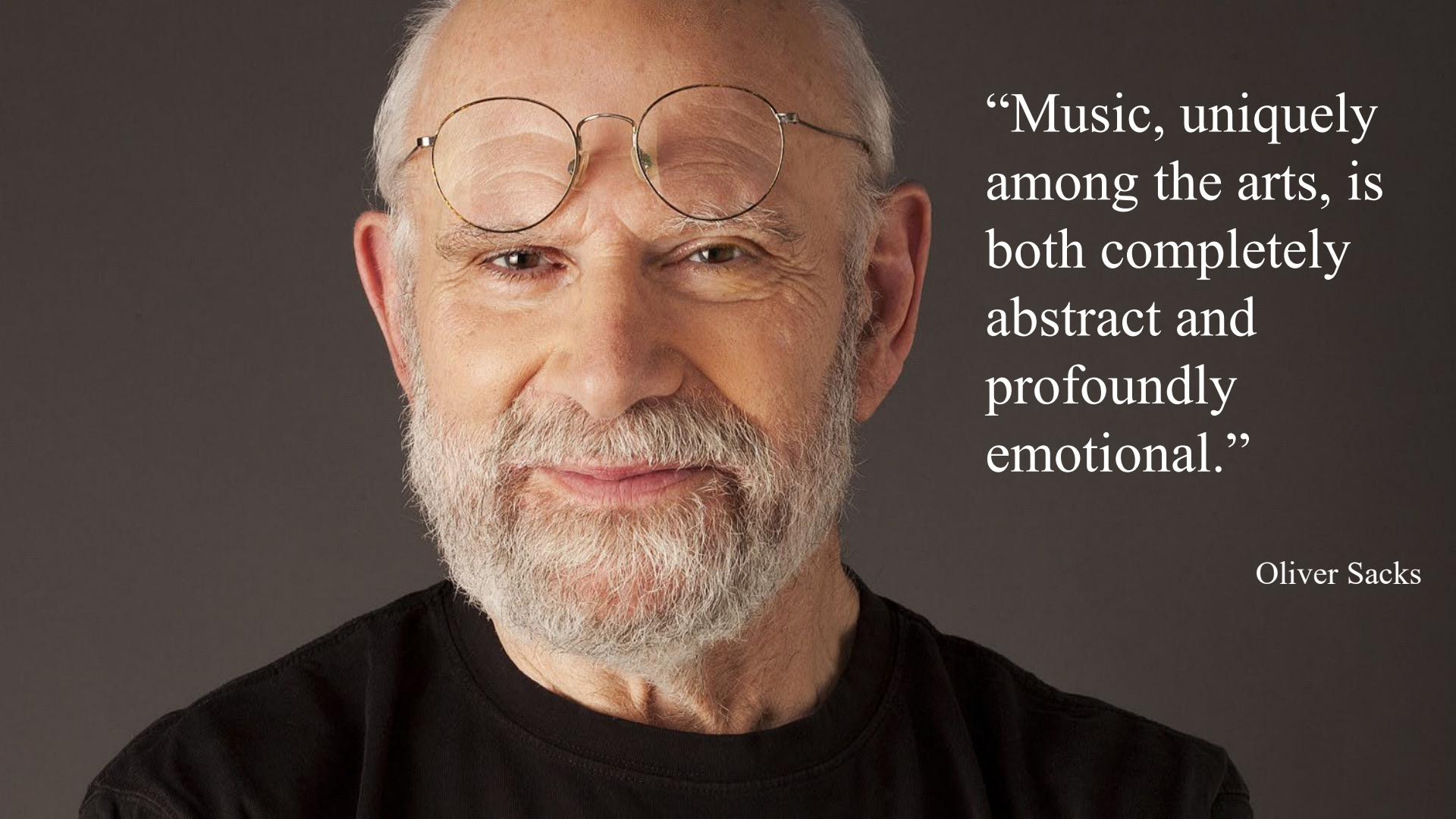


Why does music have this power, considering
only a tiny fraction of people actually
understand it literally?



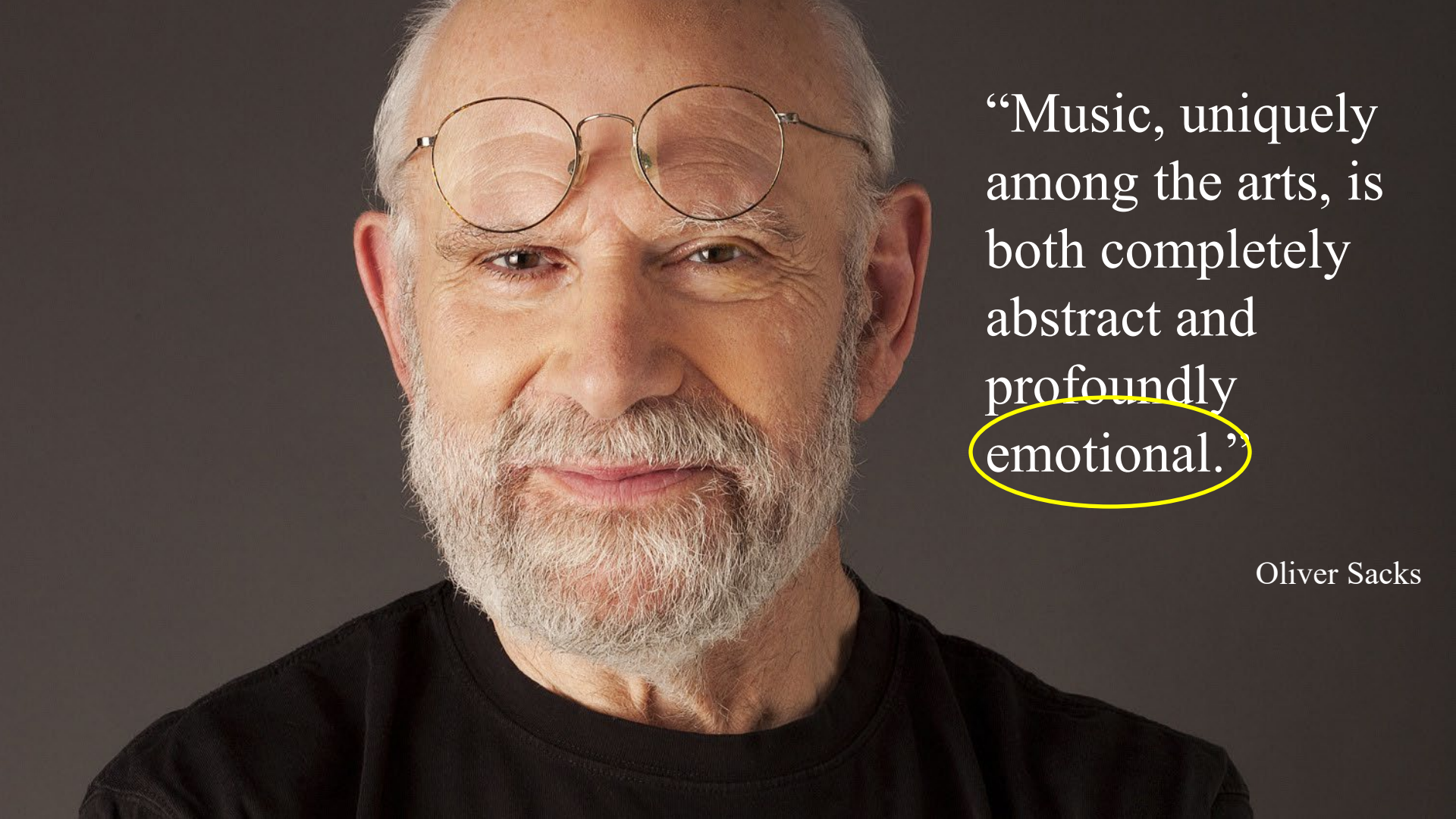
Why does music have this power, considering
only a tiny fraction of people actually
understand it literally?

Why do we love it so much, given that most
people can't understand it literally?



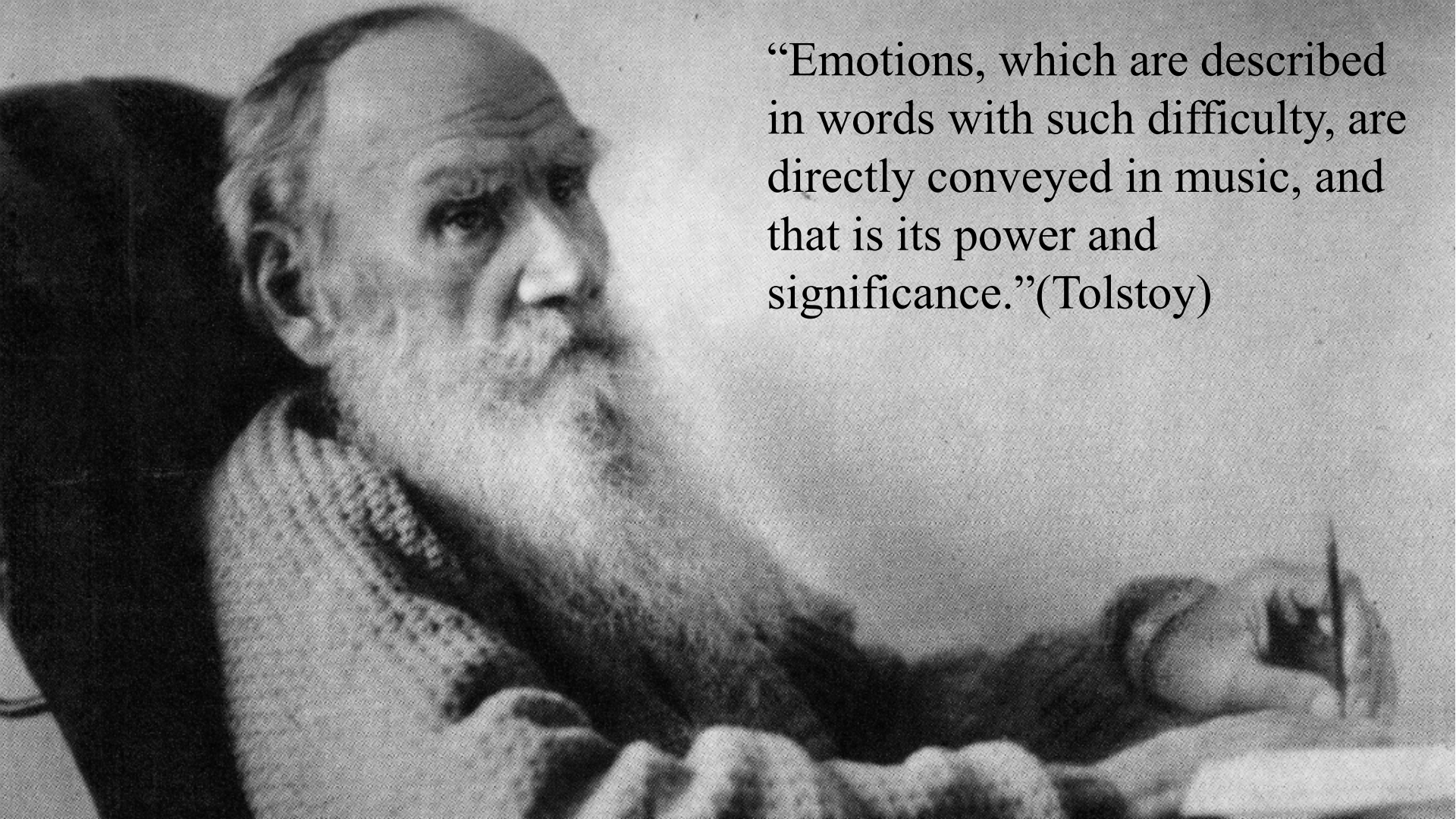
“Music, uniquely
among the arts, is
both completely
abstract and
profoundly
emotional.”

Oliver Sacks

A close-up portrait of Oliver Sacks, an older man with a full white beard and mustache, wearing round glasses and a black t-shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a dark, solid color.

“Music, uniquely
among the arts, is
both completely
abstract and
profoundly
emotional.”

Oliver Sacks

A black and white photograph of Leo Tolstoy. He is an elderly man with a long, full white beard and mustache. He is wearing a dark, textured sweater or jacket. He is seated in a dark chair, looking slightly to his right with a thoughtful expression. His hands are resting on a surface in front of him, and he appears to be holding a pen or quill. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“Emotions, which are described
in words with such difficulty, are
directly conveyed in music, and
that is its power and
significance.”(Tolstoy)




Music is what emotion sounds like



We hear music but we **listen** to emotion



- ✗ We hear music and we listen to music
- ✓ They hear music and they listen to emotion



They were never really **listening** to the
music. They just thought they were

A grayscale background image featuring a film strip that curves across the frame. In the upper left, a portion of a film reel is visible. The film strip has several frames, some of which contain bright, out-of-focus light spots.

They were never really **listening** to the music. They just thought they were

What would happen if people had evolved with a **literal understanding** of music, as they did with language, and sight?



They were never really **listening** to the music. They just thought they were

What would happen if people had evolved with a **literal understanding** of music, as they did with language, and sight?

If people knew every note and every chord and how they related to each other...