



Sound in Film

Seeing & Hearing:

The fusion of sound and the visual elements in video creates an end product "greater than the sum" of each individual segment. It is a natural result of how sight and sound are "hardwired" in any human being - using two senses creates a much larger "data pool" of information for processing and results in a much more natural perceptive experience for the viewer. In short, it mimics "real life"... but deceptively if artfully.

Any video experience plays with perception - the whispered conspiracy, clearly audible, with background noise - but the background noise is a roaring rage of sound in the real world. Why does it work - because perception is deceived into placing the whisper [essential information for the story line] in the forefront. We perceive it as "real" because the background is "tuned" out and attention is focused on the dialog - the "reel" world uses these perceptive traits to create a visual experience which focuses on story and plot.

Music, so pervasive in the reel world has a special place and many functions - necessary additions to the data pool of information. Unlike real life, animation and film create a self contained world to which we enter with no prior information. The successful visual experience is one which creates an easy entry into that world - its history, its emotions, its place and time - and music is the framework for this "easy entry". It helps tell the story...

Sound [efx & foley] makes the visual come alive - it completes the perception of reality. In animation, this imparts the environment and characters with a sense of substance and depth not possible with a silent presentation. It provides necessary focus on story and plot - the background noise of human experience. Music helps us navigate that world in time, space, emotion, and experience - it provides a clarification for the viewer, providing and/or augmenting the human experience.

The "How" of Music

Main Title/credits:

Sets the tone and style of the film, giving the viewer a start at perceiving the reel world about to unfold. It helps to set the defining perception of the experience - is it heroic or a light comedy; tragic or bittersweet; a tale of the West or of a galaxy - long ago and far away.

Source Music:

Provides a sense of place and time - the bar scene with a swing band of the 1930s or a heavy metal band of the 1970s; a church with gospel music or gregorian chant; the folk music of 1865 or the folk rock of 1965.

Character/Place Themes:

These help define the emotional associations with people and things - the evil sorcerer and the noble prince; the memories of a long ago place and the battle fought there; the con man and the innocent.

Underscore:

Parallels the "action" and defines the current emotional experience of the characters to the visuals - the car chase; the happy child at play; the bitter memory.

It also helps define the passage of time, effectively smoothing the visual time expansion or contraction as well as scene transitions - the passage of days, months, or years with reel time in minutes; the seconds of horror depicted in slow motion; the hard cut to the next story element.

"Dead Hit":

Brings emphasis and focus to defining elements in the visual - the fatal shot; the fateful decision; the wrong turn.

The Score:

Music and sound in any visual medium - film, video, animation, commercials - is not a separate entity but a necessary part of the presentation. It creates a "reel" world experience providing the clarifying, augmenting, defining, and focusing elements required for a "real" world perception.