

The Relationship of PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE Upon Music and Film's Emotional Impact

By

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As media composers, we know that both music and film (visuals) exist in three time frames at the same time; Past, Present, and Future. While the Present idea or action is being expressed in every measure of music and every frame of film, the consequences, development, and resonance or remembrance, if you will, of the Past is also being reflected. At the same time, motifs or energies, which propel the exposition or development forward into the Future, are dynamically present as well. All these forces impact upon our overall dramatic and emotional perception of the work.

A relationship that has been considered less are the fifteen permutations and interactions possible between the audio and the visual time zones and their resulting emotional affect. Let us consider these fifteen permutations:

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<u>FILM</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>USAGE</u>	<u>EMOTIONAL AFFECT</u>
None	Future	Overture	Expectations of style, drama, and intensity created.
None	Present	Neutral Reality	Focus taken away from any audio/visual relationship.
None	Past	Exit Music	Experience confirmed while moving into new Future.
Past	None	Documentary Flashback.	Past reality void of dramatic comment.
Present	None	Documentary Reality.	As real as the news without any theatrics.
Future	None	Documentary Flash forward.	Dramatic quasi-documentary (causal-effect).
Past	Past	Establishes Time & Place.	(TV) Less dramatic intensity while adding color.
Present	Present	Establishes theatrical reality	(TV) Reality easing into dramatic situation.
Future	Future	Establishes Possible reality.	(TV) Less dramatic, establishes plausibility.
Past	Present	Moderate foreshadowing	Dramatic "pushing" of reality ahead.
Present	Future	"Speeding up" slow footage	Elmer Bernstein: Get the tribe out of Egypt sooner.
Future	Past	Intense Denouement.	Recalling a dramatic piece of the puzzle for closure.
Past	Future	Intense foreshadowing	Frenzied feeling of "cutting to the chase".
Present	Past	"Slows down" hurried footage	Establishes slower audio memory as a brake.
Future	Present	Moderate denouement.	Recall of dramatic detail for clarity of exposition.

The next time you analyze a scene to be musically scored, first ask yourself these vital questions?

1. What dramatic element is dominant in the scene; theme, plot, sub-plot, character, time, or place?
2. How real is it? Does it need music at all?
3. Is the scene paced well or does its slowness or hurriedness need your music's help?
4. Is the main energy in the Past (recall) Present (exposition) or Future (creative reality)?
5. Can music's sense of time and tense help the exposition, development, or denouement – the untangling of the plot?

Juxtaposing the right audio sense of time with the visual time can help you access all of these solutions. I welcome your comments and suggestions.

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