

# Chapter 4

## HORROR

This chapter analyses some key musical repertoire of the horror movie genre in order to expose any commonalities, consistencies, structural or harmonic similarities or significant and communicative compositional approaches. Music analysed includes:

*Final Destination* (Shirley Walker) *Predator* (Alan Silvestri) *Silence of the Lambs* (Howard Shore) *The Exorcist* (Tubular Bells - Mike Oldfield) *The Thing* (John Carpenter) *Wrong Turn* (Elia Cmiral) *Drag me to Hell* (Christopher Young) *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Charles Bernstein) *Scream* (Marco Beltrami) *Poltergeist* (Jerry Goldsmith) *The Grudge* (Christopher Young) *Anaconda* (Randy Edelman) *Silence of the Lambs* (Howard Shore) *The Shining* (Wendy Carlos)

### FINAL DESTINATION *Shirley Walker*

Capitalizing on our morbid fear of death, *Final Destination* is a 2000 American supernatural horror movie (now franchise) about a group of teenagers who ‘cheat death’. A student on a plane which is about to take off has a premonition that the plane will crash after takeoff. He panics and leaves the plane with a group of others. Ultimately the plane does eventually crash. By saving himself and a handful of other passengers the main protagonist has altered the future, or ‘death’s design’. The group of teenagers continues to be stalked by ‘death’, which claims back their lives one by one. The idea of an invisible force killing its victims is not a new one, but the idea of ‘death’ having a design and a plan works well in a modern context. One of the main points which so enticed producers into making the film is that there is no physical figure – no monster or killer. There is no Michael Myers or Freddie Kruger. You never see or hear the killer. The late Shirley Walker was one of comparatively few female film score composers working in Hollywood. She wrote her film scores entirely by hand and always orchestrated her own scores, something relatively rare amongst film score composers. *Final Destination* was arguably one of her most effective works; the main theme succeeded in portraying a portentous, threatening and ominous air.

Fig.1 Audio – *Final Destination Soundtrack Score Suite 00.00* Movie – 00.00.00

The image shows a musical score for the 'Final Destination' soundtrack. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is for 'Brass / Woodwind' and the second is for 'Cellos / Horns'. Both systems are in 4/4 time and G minor. The first system shows a sequence of chords: Gm, Gm<sup>add4</sup>, and Cm/G. The second system shows a sequence of chords: Gm, Bm<sup>omits</sup>, E<sup>n.c.</sup>, and Gm. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The 'Cellos / Horns' part features a melodic line with various intervals and chords, including (min3), (6), (maj7), (b5), (min3), (b9), (6), (maj6), (m6), (maj3), (min3), and (b9).

As ever, the point is, how did it manage to portray such specific emotion? The octave bass notes in the first four bars are followed by a series of four chords scored out for brass over two bars. A combination of the ‘lumpy’ harmony (e.g. the low min3<sup>rd</sup>) in the first chord in bar five, followed by the octave added 4<sup>th</sup> (in the second chord) creates an interesting and vivid tension. The tension is added to by the close harmony of the lower added 4<sup>th</sup> next to the low 5<sup>th</sup> (bar five, again) and is further added to by the unmistakable and hard textures of the low-to-mid brass. In terms of character the low and lumpy add4 does not produce anything as distinctive as, for example, the #4 or #5 but instead produces an uncomfortable awkwardness, which, coupled with the film’s narrative context and opening graphics, becomes dark and threatening.

The motif itself arrives on bar seven and features an array of strange and discomfoting intervals. The initial strength and character of the minor 6<sup>th</sup> interval (between Bb, min3<sup>rd</sup>) and D (5<sup>th</sup>) is followed by the G# - a difficult interval over a G minor chord. The G# down to D represents a #4 interval and the bar ends on the E natural (maj6<sup>th</sup> of Gm). An almost identical line appears in bars eight-ten with the melody hitting some difficult intervals (highlighted) which succeed in blurring any feeling of real harmonic integrity. We have the juxtaposition of, on the one hand, a line which has *rhythmic* structural integrity and unity and a unilateral melodic consistency, and on the other hand the same melody producing intervals/harmonies designed to wrong-foot the listener, together creating a very real sense of unease. The entire melodic phrase is bookended by easy-to-listen-to intervals (Bb, the min3<sup>rd</sup> and G, the root) but in the bars in between the beginning Bb of each bar states firstly the maj7 over a minor chord (bar eight) and secondly the b5 over the E *nc* chord (bar nine) – both difficult intervals to rationalise. We tend, perhaps inevitably, to rationalise intervals in a melodic line in context of their relationship with the chord which accompanies the line. We can refer to this as the ‘collective harmony’ in that the notes in a particular bar are all heard in context, usually, of one accompanying chord or chordal suggestion. But sometimes an equally telling harmonic dynamic is to be found in the relationship between each of the notes in the melodic line. Scrutinizing the intervallic relationship between the notes in a melodic line offers us an insight into an often subtly separate flavour of harmony. Inevitably most of the time the ‘horizontal harmony’ (the harmonic flavour created by the intervals which exist between the melody notes) bears a striking resemblance to chordal harmony; this is why they work so well together.

Below (fig.2) the melody line from *Final Destination* is transcribed plus the intervals the notes represent in relation to the chord (underneath). Underneath *these* are written the intervals that exist *between* the melody notes themselves (the horizontal harmony). The point I raise is not purely to prove an abstract theoretical irrelevance; the point is that the subtle differences that sometimes appear between, on the one hand the unilateral horizontal harmony created by the melodic line, and on the other hand, the way the melody relates to the actual supporting chord, can affect how we listen. When we listen to any melodic line which is accompanied by a perceived sense of chordal harmony, we listen to the contour of the melody (the notes going up and down) and their relationship to the accompanying chords. But what we are also aware of and affected by, if only subconsciously, are the intervals between the notes themselves. In the example below (fig.2) we can see the horizontal harmony of the melody possesses some interesting dynamics (m6, #4) irrespective of its separate relationship with the supportive harmony. The intervals between the melody notes contain a whole series of separate, different characteristics and colour, which run parallel to the way the melody interacts intervallically with the chords, represented below purely as symbols. The interesting thing here is that for nearly the whole four bars of the melody the intervals between the notes are consistent and therefore create their own melodic identity.

**Fig.2**

The figure shows a musical notation for a melody line across four bars. Above the staff are chord symbols: Gm, Bm (omit3), E (n.c.), and Gm. Below the staff, two rows of interval labels are provided. The first row, labeled 'Intervals of notes', shows intervals from each note to the chord below it: m3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, b9, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, maj6<sup>th</sup> for Gm; maj7<sup>th</sup>, m3<sup>rd</sup>, maj6<sup>th</sup>, min3<sup>rd</sup>, min6<sup>th</sup> for Bm; #11<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, maj3, 7<sup>th</sup>, min3<sup>rd</sup>, maj6<sup>th</sup> for E; and m3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, b9, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> for Gm. The second row, labeled 'Intervals between notes', shows intervals between adjacent notes: m6<sup>th</sup>, #4<sup>th</sup>, b9<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, m3<sup>rd</sup> for the first bar; m6<sup>th</sup>, #4<sup>th</sup>, b9<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> for the second bar; m6<sup>th</sup>, #4<sup>th</sup>, b9<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, m3<sup>rd</sup> for the third bar; and m6<sup>th</sup>, #4<sup>th</sup>, b9<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> for the fourth bar.

*Another typical sci-fi/horror chord sequence*

We have seen before how certain chord sequences can evoke fairly predictable human emotions and responses. The following two chord trick (bars one-two), which is repeated in different keys for the rest of the example, is typical of the type of chord you might find in sci-fi or horror scenarios. The sequence (whereby we go from any minor chord to a minor chord which is itself a  $\text{min}3^{\text{rd}}$  below and is therefore outside the key centre of the first chord) can create tension, apprehension and anxiety. It does this precisely *because* it is outside the key centre of the first chord and because there has been no attempt to navigate to the new chord in a predictable or rational way. The comparative success of this chord maneuver (which works just as well in reverse) and the fact that we find it mildly unsettling prove once again how subservient we are to standard chord sequences; how obedient and compliant we are as listeners.

Fig.3

Am F#m Em C#m Bm G#m F#m D#m Db Bbm

11 Abm Fm Ebm Cm Cm Am Gm Em Dm Bm

**PREDATOR** (Alan Silvestri)

The type of chord sequence in fig.3 is one of the reasons the main title track to the 1987 movie *Predator* is so successful. Alan Silvestri is one of the most versatile and talented composers working in Hollywood. His films span numerous styles and approaches. In the *Predator* sequence below we can see and hear how effective the jumps are; the out-of-key-centre changes demanding attention and suggesting danger or apprehension.

Fig.4 Audio – *Predator* Main title 00.40

The musical score for the *Predator* main title at 00.40 is presented in three systems. Each system consists of three staves: Strings (top), Brass (middle), and Brass/strings/ww (bottom). The music is in 4/4 time and features several key changes, which are annotated with brackets and labels above the staves.

- System 1:** Starts with a chord of *Em/G*. A bracket labeled *Jump from C#m to Em* spans the second and third measures, where the key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to no sharps or flats.
- System 2:** Starts with a chord of *Em/G*. A bracket labeled *Jump from Em to Gm* spans the first two measures, where the key signature changes from one sharp to one flat. This is followed by a measure with *n.c.* (no change) and a chord of *Gm*. A bracket labeled *Jump from Gm to Bbm* spans the next two measures, where the key signature changes from one flat to two flats. The system ends with a chord of *Bbm* and a triplet of notes.
- System 3:** Starts with a chord of *Em/G*. A bracket labeled *Jump from Em to Gm* spans the first two measures. This is followed by a measure with *n.c.* and a chord of *Gm*. A bracket labeled *Jump from Gm to Bb* spans the next two measures, where the key signature changes from one flat to two flats. The system ends with a chord of *Bbm* and a triplet of notes.

to C#m | C#m to E | E n.c. | Em/G | Gm | Gm to Bb | Bb n.c. | Bbm to C#m | C#m to...

14

18

Em ... Em

Percussion / piano / synth

Looking at the piece purely in terms of harmonic shifts, the success of the entire section is built partly from a combination of the min3<sup>rd</sup> up/down chord sequence and the method of its textural delivery, i.e. plenty of brass supported by strings and woodwind. Silvestri's film music frequently displays a refreshing antithesis towards the standard, heavily polished, luscious Hollywood sound. His use of brass and percussion in particular is prominent in most of his action films, offering a vivid organic ruggedness. Also Silvestri's use of rhythm is effective in most of his action films too, and this is particularly effective in the aggressive piano/synth motif from bar eighteen, which plays in several scenes to heighten tension.

The last quaver triplet in the second group of three in bars eighteen, twenty and twenty-two, is effectively anticipating the second half of the bar, which adds to the feeling of urgency. The first six-quaver phrase appears on beat one of bar eighteen and the second six-figure quaver phrase begins on beat 4 of the same bar, which means that the phrase has an anticipatory feel because it 'crosses the bar'. This also adds to the urgency. What gives it an unmistakable harmonic sense is the Phrygian flavour of the line (E, E, E, G, F, E). The same quaver triplet cue continues underneath the main theme on brass, which hits the flattened 5<sup>th</sup> regularly, adding more harmonic colour to the theme.

Fig.5 Audio – Predator Main title 01.31

The musical score for Fig. 5 consists of two systems. The first system, starting at measure 30, shows a treble clef staff with rests and a bass clef staff with a triplet eighth-note pattern. Chords Em and (b5) are indicated above the staff. The second system, starting at measure 34, continues the triplet pattern in the bass clef staff, with chords Em, (E7), and G indicated above the staff.

### WRONG TURN (*Elia Cmiral*)

The transcription below (fig.6) from the introduction theme to the movie *Wrong Turn*, by Elia Cmiral, is heavily portentous, evoking feelings of danger and apprehension. But first we look at how the composer uses low brass ‘shock chords’ (bars three-six), something which has become almost a staple diet of modern horror music. The chords are so quick, loud and densely voiced that the almost violent, ‘rasp-like’ result is more of an effect than a sound. Another thing the composer does to perfectly evoke real apprehension is to offer enormous dissonance in the mid brass/woodwind, as displayed in bar five; one of the few times when we ever hear a major/minor chord.

(#5)

The Emaj/min is particularly effective. Normally, even in horror music or when we’re trying to create dissonance, the minor/major 3<sup>rd</sup> clash within one chord is harmonically just too much, straying well beyond ‘exciting dissonance’ into the realms of ‘art’. What makes this work is that the composer has built the chord (middle staff, bar five, fig.6 from the bottom up) on a root-5<sup>th</sup>-octave-maj3<sup>rd</sup> (E, B E and G#) which offer a strong, rich bed of consonance onto which the severe tension of the added min 3<sup>rd</sup> (sitting right next to the maj3<sup>rd</sup>) will immerse itself. The direct clash between the G natural and G# (min 3<sup>rd</sup> and maj 3<sup>rd</sup>) cannot be avoided but it can and is slightly mitigated by placing the C natural (#5) and E note over the clash. This works almost a harmonic diversionary tactic, delivering an inverted chord of C (G, C and E) at the top of the chord.



## A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (*Charles Bernstein*)

Much has been written about the social commentary and imagery present in the movie *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Freddy Kruger attacks teenagers; his actions have been interpreted as symbolic of the traumatic experiences of adolescence and the isolation and loneliness it often encompasses. Violence and sexuality are alluded to in the movie too: Tina's death visually evokes a rape and Kruger's glove between Nancy's legs in the bath also represents a powerful and disturbing image. What has perhaps not been subject to the same kind of scrutiny and analysis is the music, in particular Charles Bernstein's powerful motif which runs through the movie. The motif is particularly adept at conjuring up feelings of isolation; of fear and trepidation.

Like *Predator* and countless other movies, *Nightmare on Elm Street* features a motif whose success is down to harmonic devices; firstly the idea of moving from one key centre to another in a rapid, abrupt manner (similar to *Predator*) without the usual polite chordal maneuvers; secondly the use of the #4 in creating an 'out of this world' feeling and thirdly the use of the maj7<sup>th</sup> extension over a minor chord. The actual chord changes in Bernstein's piece are slightly different from *Predator*, which were a min3<sup>rd</sup> apart. This time we have minor chords which are a maj3<sup>rd</sup> apart. But this move still delivers two chords which are outside each other's key centre, which helps deliver a feeling of detachment and apprehension.

*Music by suggestion, not statement:*

The D (nc) chord at the outset has no minor or major3<sup>rd</sup>. We hear it as a minor the first time largely due to the split-second brief minor synth statement but also because of the visual context of the film. A film is part of the music you write for it. In the same way that music offers context to a film, so too the film delivers the context in which the music is heard. If we were to hear D octaves accompanied by rapturous scenes of elation, pomp, ceremony or grandeur, we may hear the D in context of a D major chord. If we hear D octaves in context of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, we are drawn to a minor conclusion. Even if we don't see Freddie Kruger; if we simply see an introductory credit roll, the narrative suggestion of the movie leaks into our perception of the music itself. The #4 (G#) is the longest note of bar three where the theme begins; its communicative powers are thus offered the chance to permeate the piece. The #4 appears again in bar seven as a B natural over the F chord. Finally, the addition of the maj7 (A) over the Bbm chord in bar four is extremely effective in skewing the harmonic flavour of the melody.

Fig.8

The musical score for Fig.8 consists of three staves of Synth in 4/4 time. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with notes G#4, A, Bb, and A. The middle staff (treble clef) contains chords: Dm, Bbm, D, and F. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains bass notes: D, Bb, D, and F. Annotations include '(#4)' pointing to the G#4 note in bar 3 and the B natural note in bar 7. '(maj7 over minor chord)' points to the A note in bar 4. 'n.c.' (no chord) is written above the D notes in bars 1, 4, and 7.

**THE EXORCIST** (*Tubular Bells* - Mike Oldfield)

The music chosen by director William Freidkin for *The Exorcist*, having dismissed the original Lalo Shiffrin score as “fucking Mexican marimba music”, was eclectic and diverse. Leaving aside the director’s absurd and hysterical treatment of Shiffrin, his eventual collection of music including elements of Krzystof Penderecki, Anton Webern and George Crumb and represented a veritable collection of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most vivid, abstract and insightful composers. However, it was Mike Oldfield’s *Tubular Bells* which captured the imagination of much of the audience and became known as by many as ‘the theme from the Exorcist’. The context of how Oldfield’s music is used inevitably forms part of our perception of the music. In *The Exorcist* actress Chris MacNeal notices dramatic changes in the behavior of her 12-year-old daughter Regan, who eventually becomes ‘possessed’ and is exorcised in the climactic end to the film. The film also features the storyline of a young priest who begins to doubt his faith while dealing with the sickness of his dying mother. *Tubular Bells* by Mike Oldfield comes in 00.16.30 into the film as we see an apparently carefree and unworried Chris MacNeal walking back to her house through the leafy autumn streets of Georgetown. Beautifully shot, the music counters the scene by offering a strangely portentous air. The music is not classic horror by any stretch of the imagination and its main benefit to the scene is in being both simultaneously unsettling *and* hypnotic. The music describes multitude of emotions, and this - combined with our knowledge of what the film is about and what is going to happen - creates the perfect context. This is yet another example of how music gels not just with the picture or the narrative, but with *what we know* as viewers. It is this relationship, this bond, which for the most part contextualizes the scene and determines to what degree the music works. In order to examine how and why such a simple tune became so iconic both as music in its own right (before its inclusion in the film) and as film music, we need to look at how it works and why it is regarded by many as hypnotic, absorbing and entrancing.

Fig.9 *Audio – Tubular Bells Movie 00.12.32*

*Piano / synth / tuned percussion*



In many ways to understand what *Tubular Bells* is we have to understand what it *isn't*. By looking at what ‘might have been’ we begin to isolate and understand the specific reasons it communicates so vividly and so quickly. The version below (fig.10) features a repeated pattern of one bar of 4/4 and one of 3/4 bars repeated (rather than the correct version in fig.9 which contains one bar of 4/4, one of 3/4 followed by two 4/4 bars). The incorrect version below in fig.10 is actually musically more coherent because it has a structure which is fairly quickly understandable.

Fig.10



A straightforward 4/4 version is instantly forgettable; too monotonous (below, fig.11).

Fig.11



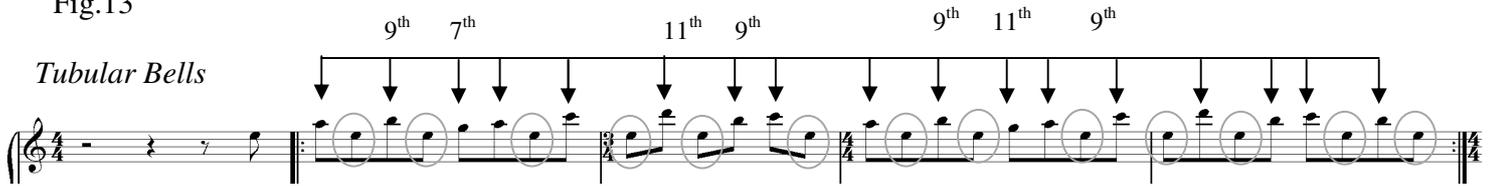
The one below (fig.12, the proper version) presses the right buttons. Why? How? What are the right buttons? One of the secrets of the success of *Tubular Bells* lies in the rhythm of the melody, which, although unsettling and ‘feeling’ repetitive, is *interrupted*, never ‘settling’. A cycle of 4/4, 3/4 and 2x4/4 never seems to resolve or reconcile.

Fig.12



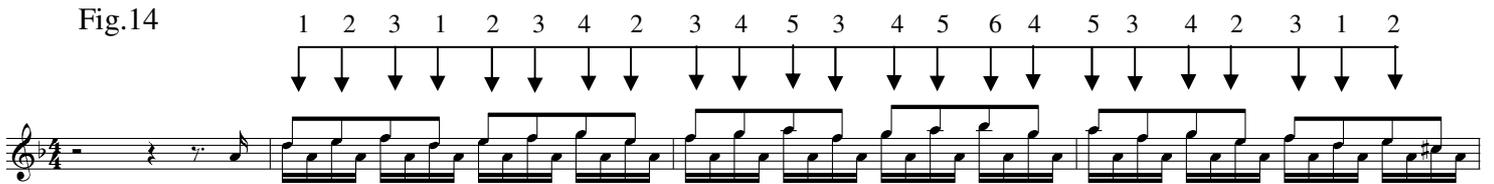
By distilling the salient melodic points (highlighted by arrows, fig.13) and comparing them to ‘the other notes’ (the offbeat quaver E notes) we can see that it possesses the same elements which can make Baroque both simultaneously energizing & dramatic *and* mesmerizing & hypnotic.

Fig.13



*Bach's Toccata & Fugue*

Fig.14



By turning to the harmony of the line we uncover other reasons for its hypnotic entrancing qualities. Although the piece is clearly in Am, any harmonic accompaniment exists in the head of the listener and is suggested, or alluded to, by the horizontal harmony generated by the melody line. Harmonically the piece is completely punctuated by the 5<sup>th</sup> interval (E) which itself doesn't suggest a major or minor accompaniment. Although the phrase has four minor 3<sup>rd</sup> intervals it also has five 9ths, two 7ths and two 11ths, so although we know it's in Am, any tedium is mitigated by the colour created by the 7ths, 9ths, 7ths and 11ths ( ● ).

The 9ths (B) 11ths (D) and 7ths (G) come at strategic points in context of the melodic arc and flow so they are more noticed.

Just like the rhythmic elements of the piece, the harmonies are repetitive but interrupted, never settling.

Fig.15

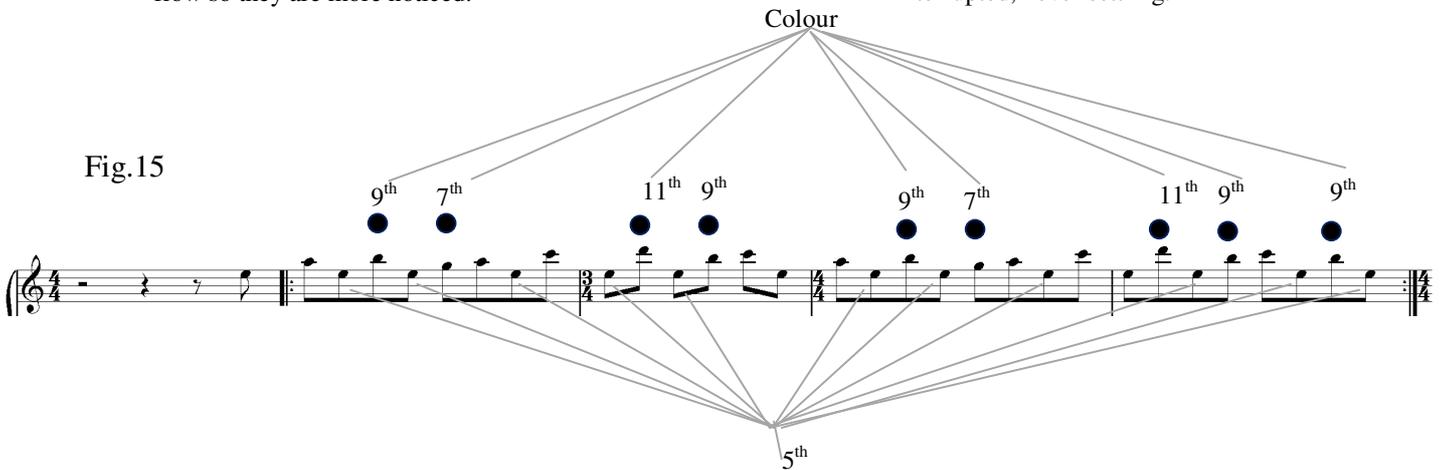
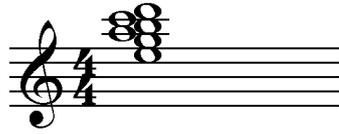


Fig.16



Finally, perhaps the most compelling reason for the piece's perceived sense of hypnotism is its sense of polyharmony. The chord to the left is a composite example featuring all the notes in the melody – kind of a vertical version of the melody.

The way the notation is printed is quite helpful; we can see straight away the Em7 chord (E, G, B, D) running through the notes 'on the right' of the note grouping. If we look at the notes 'on the left' we see, from the top down, C and A. If we include the bottom two notes we have an Am7. The harmony suggested by this piece is therefore heavily and equally suggestive of two subtly different chords.

### THE THING (John Carpenter)

*The Thing* was almost universally lambasted by critics when it appeared in 1982. *The New York Times* called it “a foolish, depressing, overproduced movie that mixes horror with science fiction to make something that is fun as neither”. However, as with many films that critics ‘pan’, *The Thing* has gone on to gain a dedicated and widespread cult following, mostly thanks to home video. *The Thing* is a remake of the 1951 film ‘*The thing from another world*’. It tells the story of a scientific expedition at a remote research station in the Antarctic who are gradually all killed by an alien organism which infiltrates their bodies. Tension builds and paranoia sets in as the different characters begin to distrust each other. Much of the music to the movie *The Thing* is written by Ennio Morricone but the Main Title theme, used several times in the film but notably at the beginning, is the work of director John Carpenter himself. Like much of Carpenter’s music for this film as well as others, his music is electronic, making great use of sonically disconcerting sound textures and unnerving dissonances.

The first section of music starts 20 seconds into the film and runs over the credit roll. Beginning with octaves on an analogue string synth sound, the piece develops harmonically.

Fig.17 Audio - *The Thing* Main Titles 00.20 - Movie - 00.00.20



On-screen: ‘Antarctica, winter 1982’

F n.c.



There are a few important characteristics of this piece which transport emotionally and create an unnerving backdrop for the movie before it has really begun. As with other themes we have analysed, it articulates a portentous, distressing and disquieting feeling.

We hear the first F unaccompanied; although the music has nothing with which to place the note harmonically, rhythmically or contextually, we automatically ‘hear’ it as a root, which is what we tend to presume in the absence of anything to guide us. In bar three, at 00.00.34 into the movie, the line breaks into harmony and the F is revealed to actually constitute a maj<sup>3</sup><sup>rd</sup> of the Db chord. This seemingly innocuous fact is important because it causes mild surprise which makes us take notice and thus raises our emotional awareness.

The main harmonic event in this chord is the sonic tension and ambiguity created by the low and ‘lumpy’ harmony between the bottom F and the Db immediately above. Normally it would never be good to write such close harmonies at this low level in the sonic spectrum, such is the uncomfortable effect it creates. But Horror is a different situation and can sometimes require precisely the kind of uncomfortable listening environment offered by this type of scoring. Carpenter has done this before, notably in the music to *Halloween* (below), where in bar two we can see the same kind of low harmonies, largely to illicit the same effect and emotion in the listener.

Fig.18 Audio – theme from *Halloween* (John Carpenter)



### BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (Wojciech Kilar)

Another score which makes great use of what can often be the exquisite sonic ambiguities created by low harmonies and voicing (but this time using luscious soft orchestral textures rather than the raw synth palates of John Carpenter) is Wojciech Kilar's score to 1992's Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

In many cases horror is a narrative device filmmakers use to explore a range of feelings and emotions. Sometimes horror is simply a filmic platform through which we explore society, humanity, love and many other important areas and aspects of life. Many horror films are essentially love stories played out through the prism and context of horror. Perhaps one of the best examples of this is the movie *Bram Stoker's Dracula* in which Count Dracula (Gary Oldman) is motivated more by romance than by terror, trying to avenge the death of his wife in the 15th century. He deliberately travels to London to meet Mina Harker, who is the living embodiment of his late wife. Large sections of the score are orchestrated in deliberately sonically ambiguous way with deep, rich harmonies, intervals and sound textures. The section which perhaps displays this in its most obvious way comes 4.30 into the track entitled 'end credits'. This reprises two of the main musical ideas which permeate the film's narrative structure.

Fig.19 *Audio – Dracula End Credits 04.30*

4.30

Kilar’s use of low, dark and deep harmonies and orchestral textures create an almost dream-like ethereal ghostliness. Soft, atmospheric but also intense, the score weaves its way into the fabric of the movie. Although no chord accompanies bar one of the transcription in fig.19, the cello line suggests major (by virtue of the passing C#) and minor (by virtue of the C) as well as hitting the #4. The C# penetrates more deeply by virtue of representing the penetrative maj3<sup>rd</sup>. The fact that no full chords accompany the line exposes the melody, italicizes the notes and exaggerates the power of the intervals. Intervals in melodies are more acute and more obvious if they are virtually alone in describing and articulating the colour and character of the chord. Each one of the first four bars begins on the E note, which gives the line a level of consistency and structure.

In bars two and four of the transcription the basses and low cellos on the bottom staff are written deliberately ‘low and lumpy’ causing slight harmonic dissonance and sonic ambiguity. This is offset by the fact that the melodic line on cellos spends a disproportionate amount of time on the emotional, descriptive and penetrative maj3<sup>rd</sup> (compound).

The interval in bar six between the cello (Db) and the low basses on Bb is a compound minor 3<sup>rd</sup>. Because both notes are low, even with the big gap between them, the interval is rich and warm sounding. In bar six the first cello note is the Db (compound minor 3<sup>rd</sup>) and in bar seven the cello melody note begins on C# (the compound *major*3<sup>rd</sup>). The cello note remains the same but the interval – the meaning, the interpretation and the context – changes because the accompanying basses drop from Bb to A. This is a particularly effective and colourful maneuver because, as we have seen on other occasions, it is the *meaning* which changes, not the sound, therefore it is our perception of something so subtle as the changing harmonic context which means everything.

Another particularly engaging and communicative aspect is the how the cello line hits colourful intervals in beginning of bar eight and nine (the 9<sup>th</sup>). Although violas join in from bar eight representing harmony above the low cello, the cello continues to represent the melody, sounding unusually low, subdued and soothing.

**THE NINTH GATE** (*Wojciech Kilar*)

*The Ninth Gate* is a 1999 film directed, produced, and co-written by Roman Polanski, about a rare book dealer, who, seeking the last two copies of a demon text, gets drawn into a supernatural conspiracy.

The human voice is perhaps the most poignant and emotional instrument. The voice is often used in horror films to underscore sad, romantic or tragic elements of a story; often the ‘wordless’ singing voice is employed in films. Freed of any literary meaning, the unique texture of the voice communicates better than most sounds. Freed of words, the voice’s unique qualities function purely as an instrument. Kilar’s main theme (‘Vocalise’, based on a style of ‘wordless song’ which dates back to the mid-18th century) features a deliberately strained vocal and underpins the tragic and romantic undercurrents of the film.

Fig.20 *Vocalise Theme from ‘The Ninth Gate’ 00.00*

The musical score for 'Vocalise Theme from The Ninth Gate' is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 1 through 5, and the second system covers measures 6 through 10. The score includes parts for Voice, Strings, Piano, and Harpsichord. Chord annotations are provided above the staves: Am, A, Am, A, Am for measures 1-5; D/A, F/A, Esus<sup>4</sup>, E for measures 6-10. The piano part features a consistent accompaniment of chords, while the strings and harpsichord parts provide harmonic support. The voice part is characterized by a melodic line that is often held or sustained, reflecting the 'wordless song' style mentioned in the text.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system covers measures 13 to 16. The voice part has lyrics: "Am D/A F/A Esus<sup>4</sup>". The piano part shows chords corresponding to these lyrics. The second system covers measures 20 to 23. The voice part has lyrics: "E A<sup>7</sup> Dm G C". The piano part shows chords corresponding to these lyrics. The strings and bass parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns.

The inverted piano chords in bars seven/eight and nine/ten helps the chords gel together by accenting the common ‘A’ bass note. Also the piece makes great use of a harmonic device we have looked at many times - the sci-fi chord change – which this time is from the Am (bar five) to the D/A (bar seven). The chord change, which involves a slightly out-of-key-centre manoeuvre, has a refreshing and uplifting air and is particularly good at articulating wonderment and surprise.

*Expect the unexpected*

Another extremely effective section is where the piece hits the A<sup>7</sup> chord; the success of this change involves a characteristic we have looked at before – namely the way composers lift a piece and engage the listener by virtue of using a chord we didn’t expect. To a degree all composers do this; the level to which their music engages us is often tied to the way they subtly confound our expectations. What we ‘expect’ in bar twenty-one might be a return to the Am chord, but what we *get* is the A chord plus the added tension of the 7<sup>th</sup> which makes it ‘cry out’ for a resolution to the Dm, which comes on bar twenty-three. Another extra piece of structural tension is achieved in the same way by tweaking what we would expect: from bar twenty-one, having been given two bars of A<sup>7</sup> we would ‘expect’ two bars of Dm to complete the archetypal four bar phrase. But the phrase evolves to the next section (G chord to C chord) what feels like ‘a bar early’. This mild, almost imperceptible factor helps because it ensures the piece does not ponder or resort wholly to type. Because the transition from Dm to the G chord arrives ‘early’ and the tiniest fraction out of context, it is perhaps more vivid and intense.

**SCREAM** (*Marco Beltrami*)

A killer known as ‘ghost face’ kills teenagers in Woodsboro. As the body count begins rising some of the teenage characters begin discussing the ‘rules’ of horror films. Similar to films such as *An American Werewolf in London*, *Scream* is delivered firmly tongue-in-cheek. Originally entitled *Scary Movie*, *Scream*’s release was credited with reigniting the popularity of the horror genre, which had been considered to be in decline with many films released straight to DVD. To many, horror films, spoiled by the glut of sequels and rip-offs, had lost their ability to scare. The strength of *Scream* was that it mocked and embraced the conventions of horror which had become considered cliché,

The *Scream* score was composed by then newcomer Marco Beltrami. This was the first time he’d scored a feature film. Beltrami was recommended when the film makers let it be known they were looking for someone new. Craven wanted the music to intentionally raise tension during scenes where audience expectations were already raised by their experience of previous horror films. When scoring a theme for the character of Dewey, Beltrami approached him as a ‘quirky’ sheriff, using a Wild-West Morricone-style guitar accompaniment. The main character, Sidney Prescott, has her own theme, titled ‘Sidney’s Lament’, featuring a wordless female voice, referencing the heartbreak and sorrow of her situation. Beltrami states that the voice ‘speaks’ for the character, ‘lamenting’ the loss of her mother (who, in the story, died before the film’s events).

Christian Clemmensen of *Filmtracks* called the haunting vocals of the track the ‘voice of the franchise’. The theme itself is reprised in *Scream 2*, where it appears as ‘*It’s Over, Sid*’.

Fig.21 Audio – ‘*It’s over, Sid*’

The wordless vocal once again delivers the message brilliantly well, as does the melody and chords. The effortless transition from Em to Am is aided greatly by the E pedal note which inverts the Am chord and ties the two chords together well. The harmonic sequence is traditional and the last four chords have more than a whiff of Baroque. What causes extra tension is the G melody note over the F#m(b5) chord.

The G note effectively functions as a flat 9. Flat 9's over minor chords can create real tension and drama because the flat 9 clashes with the root note. In the Beltrami piece the tension isn't felt in the kind of obvious way it would normally be because of the soft, ghost-like textures and delivery.

**POLTERGEIST** (*Jerry Goldsmith*)

*Poltergeist* is a film about a young family who are visited by ghosts in their home. Inevitably the ghosts turn nasty and start to terrorize the family before kidnapping the youngest daughter, Carol Anne. The music for *Poltergeist* was written by Jerry Goldsmith. *Carol Anne's Theme* is designed to represent the blissful suburban life and the young female protagonist. The score succeeded in earning Goldsmith an Oscar nomination for Best Original Score, though he lost to fellow composer John Williams for *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*. Once again the enduring musical memory from the film is the soft, wordless voice, this time delivered by a children's choir. The theme was used at the beginning of the film and at the end. Both versions featured a subtly different orchestration to the audio track 'Carole Anne's Theme'. In the following example we'll see how effective orchestration and counterpoint can be in delivering colour and variation.

Fig.22 Audio - 'Carole Anne's Theme'. Movie 00.4.29 and 01.46.00.21

The musical score for 'Carole Anne's Theme' is presented in a multi-staff format. The top system includes High Strings and Mid/Low Strings. The middle system features a Choir and a Harp. The bottom system shows the piano accompaniment. Chord markings are placed above the staffs: F, Bb, C7, F, Bb, C7, F, F7, Bb, C7, F. The score is in 4/4 time and features a mix of melodic lines and harmonic textures.



**THE GRUDGE** (*Christopher Young*)

In *The Grudge* an American Nurse moves to Tokyo and encounters a supernatural spirit which possesses its victims. A series of horrifying and mysterious deaths occur, with the spirit passing its curse onto each subsequent victim. The context of the film is that ‘the grudge’ describes a curse that is born when someone dies in the grip of a powerful rage or extreme sorrow. Christopher Young’s vivid and colourful score makes use of an effective harmonic device used in some horror films – polyharmony.

In particular the intro music which plays over the introductory titles is extremely effective in setting the right tone both texturally and harmonically. Looking beyond the distinctive textures and at the quaver line in bars one-four we can see it makes consistent use of the flat5 and maj7 over the Gm. The low trombones play a root-5<sup>th</sup> chord devoid of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, which is stated only by the top string line, melodically. The flat 5 and maj7 are a consistent characteristic of the entire piece.

Fig.26 Audio - *Ju-On I* - Movie 00.03.00

The musical score for 'THE GRUDGE' (Christopher Young) is presented in four staves. The top staff is for strings, the second for bells, the third for celeste/piano, and the bottom for mid/low strings. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat major / G minor). The first system (bars 1-4) shows a Gm chord in the strings, with an 8va annotation. The bells play a sequence of chords: b5, maj7, b5, b5, maj7, b5, b5, maj7, b5, G<sup>n.c.</sup>, b5, maj7, b5. The celeste/piano part plays a melodic line with notes corresponding to the chords: b5, maj7, b5, b5, maj7, b5, b5, maj7, G<sup>n.c.</sup>, b5, maj7, b5. The mid/low strings play a root-5<sup>th</sup> chord (Gomit3) in the first system. The second system (bars 5-8) shows an F# chord in the strings, with an Fm chord in the bells. The bells play: b5, maj7, b5, 5, b5, b5, 5, F<sup>n.c.</sup>, b5, 5, b5. The celeste/piano part plays: b5, maj7, b5, 5, b5, b5, 5, F<sup>n.c.</sup>, b5, 5, b5. The mid/low strings play an F chord in the second system, with b5, 5, b5 annotations.

2 11

E

b5 5 b5 b5 5 b5 F<sup>n.c.</sup> b5 5 b5 5 E<sup>n.c.</sup> b5 5 b5

F E

16

E<sup>b</sup> m D

b5 5 E<sup>b</sup> n.c. b5 5 b5 5 D<sup>n.c.</sup> b5 5 b5 5

E<sup>b</sup>omit3 D

If we look at this piece through the prism of polytonality we see a slightly different perspective emerging. We see that what the b5 and maj7 intervals *actually* do is reference a different chord – the next one, in fact. The Gm chord lasts from bar one to six, being followed eventually by an F# chord. The b5 (Db) and maj7 (F#) of the Gm chord can also function as the 5<sup>th</sup> (C#) and root (F#) of the eventual F# chord. Thus the strangeness of the harmonies is because two different chords are being implied simultaneously.

Similarly if we look at the ‘bell’ line in bar five we see a Db (b5) and Bb (min 3<sup>rd</sup>); these same sounds become the 5<sup>th</sup> (C#) and maj 3<sup>rd</sup> (A#) of the F# chord in bar seven/eight. This isn’t just polytonality; it’s two sections of the same piece being implied at the same time. The composer alludes to the chord which follows; the notes which appear as flat 5s and maj7s can be viewed and heard as intervals from a subsequent chord, ‘brought forward’. This isn’t just two chords alluded to simultaneously – it’s the chord from bar one-six and the chord from bar seven-eight being stated together to create a disturbing off-key skewed reality.

The following example is an abbreviated transcription showing only the piano line and ‘bells’ of bars six-ten. As we can see, with reference to the b5 and maj7 notes in bars one-four, these ‘map across’ perfectly to the new F# key in bar seven – thus it isn’t the sound the notes in question *make* that changes, only what they represent.

Fig.27

Fig. 27 is a musical score with three staves. The top staff is labeled 'bells' and contains a series of chords in G minor (Gm) and G-flat (Gb). The middle staff is labeled 'celeste piano' and contains a melodic line with various accidentals. The bottom staff is labeled 'piano' and contains a melodic line with various accidentals. Arrows point from specific notes in the piano line to notes in the celeste piano line, indicating a 'map across' relationship. Harmonic annotations include 'F#' above the piano line, 'Fm' above the celeste piano line, and 'F n.c.' below the piano line. The key signature changes from Gm to Gb in the final bars.

Looking again (fig.28) at the same abbreviated transcription (bars six-ten) we can see that the issue of two notes suggesting two different contexts is rife in this piece, which creates a permanently unsettling, disturbing and disconcerting feeling in listeners

Fig.28

Fig. 28 is a musical score with three staves, similar to Fig. 27. The top staff is labeled 'bells' and contains a series of chords in G minor (Gm) and G-flat (Gb). The middle staff is labeled 'celeste piano' and contains a melodic line with various accidentals. The bottom staff is labeled 'piano' and contains a melodic line with various accidentals. Arrows point from specific notes in the piano line to notes in the celeste piano line, indicating a 'map across' relationship. Harmonic annotations include 'C# (5th)' and 'Bb (maj3rd)' below the piano line, 'Fm' above the celeste piano line, and 'F n.c.' below the piano line. The key signature changes from Gm to Gb in the final bars.

Looking finally at the last ten bars of the transcription from bar eleven to twenty, we see other polytonal areas; in bar thirteen the bottom piano line is still in F whereas the top bell line is suggestive of an E chord. Similarly the Gb (min3rd) bell note in bar seventeen and eighteen ‘maps across’ to become the F# (maj3rd) of bar nineteen.

Fig.29

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system starts at measure 11 and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat major/F minor). The upper staff contains chords: F m, E, and E n.c. The lower staff contains a melodic line with annotations F n.c. and E n.c. A large bracket groups the E chord in the upper staff and the F n.c. and E n.c. annotations in the lower staff. The second system starts at measure 16 and features a key signature of three sharps (F# major/D minor). The upper staff contains chords: Eb m, D, and D n.c. The lower staff contains a melodic line with annotations Eb n.c. and D n.c. A large bracket groups the D chord in the upper staff and the D n.c. annotation in the lower staff.

The real success of this kind of polytonality is not just that it skews our reality and challenges our assumptions, but that it italicizes the *context* of the note and elevates it to a higher value than the *sound* of the note. We are not challenged by the ‘note’ because in many cases the notes which affect us remain the same; it is what they represent which skews our reality.

**Anaconda** (Randy Edelman)

Now we come to another brooding theme not entirely dissimilar to the one which opened the chapter (*Final Destination*). The main theme to *Anaconda* doesn’t necessarily sound the same as *Final Destination* but it does feature a similar compositional approach, one in which the main vehicle for the feeling of impending doom is the combination of cellos and horns playing an uncomfortable theme; one which doesn’t sit right and sounds ‘skewed’. The piece begins with a pulsating, captivating 9/8 percussive rhythm against which the raw unadorned palettes of low brass playing bare fifths and octaves are placed.

Fig.30 Audio – *Anaconda* Main Title Theme 00.00

The image shows a musical score for the main title theme of Anaconda. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for Horns/Cellos, with a key signature of one flat and a 9/8 time signature. The middle staff is for Trombones/Tuba, with a key signature of one flat and a 9/8 time signature. The bottom staff is for Percussion, with a 9/8 time signature. The score shows a pulsating 9/8 percussive rhythm in the bottom staff, and a melodic line in the top two staves consisting of bare fifths and octaves.

Bar five of the melody features an assortment of odd intervals, perhaps the most striking of which is the rhythmically unsettling and harmonically strange Gb (m2) and Eb (7) (over the suggestion of Fm), giving the line a Phrygian air. Bar seven, which contains the flat 5 leading to the 4<sup>th</sup>, isn't so much atonal; it simply uses odd intervals we don't expect and which 'stick out'. But even then there is a structure, a plan; the plan is to emphasize the 7<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> (neither of which are descriptive primary intervals) and to push a vaguely ethnic sounding Phrygian mode.

**Silence of the Lambs** (Howard Shore)

The following cue (entitled 'Quid Pro Quo') is from *Silence of the Lambs*, by Howard Shore. Slightly similar to *Final Destination* insofar as it possesses a kind of brooding, ominous and threatening anxiety, it creates this air not through obvious dissonance or the heavy brush strokes of instrumental tension, but by subtle and specific voicing and placement of extensions.

Fig.31 Audio – *Quid Pro Quo* (from *Silence of the Lambs*)

The 4<sup>th</sup> interval of the Em/B chord (bar one) is more acute and obvious because of the relationship and slight tension between *it* and the low inverted B (a 7<sup>th</sup> between the two) stated on strings and Harp. Thus a combination of the interval (4<sup>th</sup>) and the inverted chord is what creates mild tension. Bar two features a similar line, this time with the second note (F#) representing the #4. Another small and almost imperceptible tension is between the C melody note (bar four) and, again, the inverted B at the foot of the string voicing.

### The Shining (Wendy Carlos)

*The Shining* is an iconic 1980 Stanley Kubrick film based on the novel of the same name by Stephen King. Regarded now as a horror classic and has become immersed into popular culture. A writer, Jack Torrance, takes a job as winter caretaker at an isolated hotel. After the family becomes trapped in the hotel by a snowstorm Jack gradually becomes influenced by supernatural forces and descends into madness. As with all Kubrik's films, music in *The Shining* is of fundamental importance.

The opening scene with Jack driving to his interview at the Overlook Hotel is perhaps one of the most memorable openings for a film. The opening shots, devoid of dialogue and resplendent with panoramic sweeping shots of the beautiful and striking mountainous terrain, are visually stunning. If music was purely for accompaniment only and meant to simply reinforce the scenery, then perhaps Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony might have worked. Wendy Carlos' distinctly uncomfortable, ominous and eerie music proves absolutely that music is at its most useful when it is there for its function. The function of the music is to convey to the viewer a sense of impending doom or unpleasantness. The music juxtaposes the scenery brilliantly and in so doing prepares the viewer and frames the film.

Why does Carlos' introduction music sound so entrancing and mesmerizing? Certainly the distinctive synthesizer textures are captivating and the double-octave melody has a repetitious and ominous air. But melodies which are unaccompanied are usually heavily implicit and suggestive of harmony. Harmony, whilst not being present vertically and physically, is nevertheless present horizontally in that it is suggested by the cumulative context of the melody. The melody note which appears the most is the Bb. The suggestive harmony is Bbm.

The first three notes (Db, C, Db) are initially difficult to rationalise but when the melody hits the Bb, everything is heard in context of the implied Bbm key; everything falls into place. The initial Db, C and Db were the min3<sup>rd</sup> and maj2<sup>nd</sup> – we simply didn't realise until we heard the Bb at the end of bar two (see fig.32).

Fig.32

Synthesizer

Chord implied Bbm

Chord implied Ab

Chord implied Bbm

7

14

From a phrasing perspective the piece is a little disorientating and disjointed; the first section from bar one seems to feature four two-bar phrases with a five-bar 'tag' phrase on the end which seems not to 'fit', taking it up to bar thirteen. Perhaps, in the final analysis it is the horizontal distribution of the harmony which is most illuminating and captivating. This is not harmony on a plate; this is harmony which uncovers its colours as it goes. Harmony is, in some situations, perhaps more effective when we have to find it.