Musical Features of Film Music

Pitch & Melody	Articulation	Dynamics	Texture	Harmony
LEAPS (DISJUNCT MELODIC MOVEMENT) and **CHROMATICISM** for weirdness and "baddies" – **STEPWISE (CONJUNCT MELODIC MOVEMENT)** and **DIATONIC** melodies for happiness and "goodies". **RISING MELODIES** for increasing tension or increasing triumph – **FALLING MELODIES** for decreasing tension or hopelessness/defeat. Westerns often feature a "**BIG THEME**" played on sweeping Strings. Q&A phrases can represent "Good vs. Evil". The interval of a **FIFTH** is often used in Sci-Fi film soundtracks as its "bare, open and sparse" sound quality matches that of "outer space".	**LEGATO** or flowing for happier situations – **STACCATO** or spiky for more challenging ones or to represent 'frozen' or 'brittle'. **ACCENTS** (>) for violence **SFORZANDOS** (*sfz/sf*) for sudden emphasis and to create a 'shock'. **PIZZICATO** (strings) – plucking the strings to create short, detached notes. **ARCO** (strings) – using the bow to play.	**LOUDER** for bolder or more powerful (whether good or bad) – **SOFTER** for more timid/weak **CRESCENDOS** used for increasing threat, triumph or proximity – **DECRESCENDOS** and **DIMINUENDOS** used for subsiding things and things 'going away into the distance'. Horror Film soundtracks often use **EXTREME DYNAMICS** or **SUDDEN CHANGES IS DYNAMICS** to enhance sudden actions on-screen and to "shock" the listener.	**THIN** or **SPARSE** textures used for bleak or lonely situations. **THICKER** or **FULLER** textures used for warmer, more "normal" situations and **THICK, DENSE** orchestral sounds heard during battles and chases. Complex **POLYPHONIC** textures for confused or very active situations. **HOMOPHONIC MELODY AND ACCOMPANIMENT** texture used for more straightforward or calm situations or for "love themes".	**DIATONIC** harmony for simpler situations and good characters. **CHROMATIC** harmony for more complex situations or bad characters. **CONSONANCE** for normal situations or "good" characters. **DISSONANCE** for scary situations or "evil" characters often using notes which are a semitone apart. **MAJOR** for happier – **MINOR** for sadder. **SEVENTH CHORDS** (including the use of the flattened 7th) often used to create harmonic richness, especially in Westerns. Sudden changes of harmonies create unexpected moods. **ATONAL** and **BITONAL** harmonies used to create ambiguous atmospheres often in Sci-Fi or Supernatural Film soundtracks.

Rhythm	Metre	Duration	Leitmotifs, Themes & Motifs	Timbre & Sonority
FAST for chases and hectic situations. **SLOWER** can mean more hesitant. **IRREGULAR** rhythms for threatening or unusual situations and **REGULAR** rhythms for safety or more "normal" situations. **OSTINATO** rhythms for repeated sounds *e.g. horse's hooves*. **SYNCOPATION** and **CROSS-RHYTHMS** to create tension and unease. "Traditional" dance rhythms *e.g. American Square Dance, Tango and Bolero* often used in soundtracks to Westerns.	2/4 or 4/4 for Marches, 3/4 for Waltzes. Metre isn't as important in Film Music as the importance is on the music directly matching and enhancing the on-screen action which sometimes doesn't fall into the regular divisions of a time signature. "Big Themes" and songs used within films are often in 4/4 metre. **IRREGULAR TIME SIGNATURES** often used to create unease and tension with a lack of clear pulse.	**LONG**, held notes are often used in Westerns to show the vast open spaces of the North-American plains or to help describe the vastness of open space in a Sci-Fi film soundtrack. **SHORT** notes are often used to describe "busy", chaotic or hectic situations *e.g. a bustling crowd, a chase scene or a battle*. **PEDAL** notes are long held notes in the bass line above changing harmonies and melodies and can also create tension and suspense.	A frequently recurring short melodic or harmonic idea which is associated with a character, event, concept, idea, object or situation which be used directly or indirectly to remind us of one not actually present on screen. Leitmotifs are often *fragmented* e.g. in Horror films to show the deteriorating state of the hero or heroine as the film progresses. The SIGH MOTIF is often used – a short rising then falling melody in an arch shape. Animated films and cartoons use a range of MUSICAL CLICHÉS – short motifs *e.g. pedal notes, 'calamity motif', cluster chords etc.* which are used every time a character does a certain action or ends up in a certain situation.	Traditional orchestral instruments often combined with electronic instruments. Orchestral instruments played in different ways *e.g. slashing the bow across the strings of a violin* Sound Effects combines with traditional and electronic instruments. Brass Fanfares often used in Space Film soundtracks and in films when there is a battle or warfare. "Traditional" musical instruments 'of the time' help *place* a film in a specific place or time period. Unusual instruments often used in Sci-Fi, Space or Horror films – *Theremin, Celesta*. Instruments such as a the glockenspiel used in Horror film soundtracks to create tension.