Are horror film scores un (der) appreciated?

A review of their function, perception and professional recognition

G Neil Martin

Abstract

Horror, as a genre, has traditionally suffered from being regarded as less serious or prestigious than are other film genres. There is some evidence that the under-appreciation may also extend to horror film scores.This paper reviews the nature and purpose of horror film scores in the context of the function of film scores generally, and evaluates whether one specific metric of professional recognition -the AMPAS award for best original score (Oscar)- reflects the anecdotal lack of recognition for horror. In terms of Oscar recognition, 664 films not categorised as musicals have been nominated for an Oscar for best score since 1935 and 1.65% of these have been horror films. Scores from two horror films have won an Oscar. The genre most likely to win an award is drama with 54 wins. Apart from documentary and biopic, which have received no award, the genres least likely to win are thriller, family, crime and horror. The article discusses these findings in the context of composers' views of horror film, how music is used as a device to support or amplify cinematic objectives, and whether there are features of horror film and horror film scores which distinguish them from other genres. Three possible explanations for the attitudes towards horror scores are discussed: that they are (i) more functional/pedestrian, (ii) more experimental and/or (iii) not considered to be conventional musical compositions.

"By itself, the screen is a pretty cold proposition. Music is like a small flame put under the screen to warm it."

Aaron Copeland (1940/1970; cited in Hofmann, 1970).

"Background music is an insult to the intelligence of audiences. The mood should be conveyed by action and not have to be underlined."

Boris Karloff (Jarman, 1969)

"Horror films are a bit like the unwanted bastard stepchildren of Hollywood"

Christopher Young (Fichera, 2016; *Scored to Death*, p315)

The film score: an introduction

When Alfred Hitchcock was in the process of completing his film *Lifeboat* for Fox in 1944, Daniel Raskin was brought on board as the film's composer. Hitchcock, however, had other ideas. The director argued that since the action of the film centred on a boat and the ocean, where would the music come from? The music would be incongruous and puzzling to an audience. Raskin's response to Hitchcock was deft and ingenious. "Ask Mr Hitchcock where the cameras come from," he suggested, "and I'll tell him where the music comes from" (Thomas, 1997).

The debate between director and composer illustrates the unusual history of the use of music in film, dating back to the industry's early years when similar misapprehensions occurred about the viewer's perception of what was on screen. Popular films in the industry's inchoate speech period were bookended by music -at the beginning and at the end- as a means of auditory punctuation to signal the commencement or conclusion of a film (Rosar, 1983). The horror genre, perhaps more

than any other film genre is one that is characterised by the importance of sound- whether it is the creak of a window or door, the oragious theatre of a storm and thunder, the distinctive scream, the thud of an axe, or the deft inclusion of a jump scare created by loud noise. Some have argued that horror is itself dominated by the auditory. Kawin (2012), for example, has argued that "horror is primarily a sound-based medium", a conclusion probably drawn as a result of the effective use and application of silence, screaming and jump-scare noises in the genres (Martin, 2019).

Horror is also a genre that seems to be characterised, more than others, by its distinctive use of score, but this distinctiveness may represent something of a double-edged sword because it is coupled with function and predictability: music in horror, as many composers have argued, is designed to achieve very specific aims and if the music does not meet these aims, the effectiveness of horror is undermined (Fichera, 2016; 2020).

Many texts have provided analyses of the creation and use of musical scores in film (e.g., Karlin & Wright, 2013; Cooper, Fox, & Sapiro 2020; Barlow & Altman, 2001; Neumeyer, 2013: Scheurer, 2007; Wierzbicki, 2009). There are also excellent texts of interviews with film score composers presenting their views of their work in the context of music generally and the film composition specifically (e.g., Schelle, 1999). Some have addressed the nature of music in horror films specifically (Hayward, 2009; Larson, 1996; Lerner, 2009) or have interviewed composers of horror film scores specifically (Fichera, 2016; 2020). This article reviews the nature of a specific genre of film score, the horror film, in the context of the use, function and purpose of film scores more broadly, the perception of film scores and their appreciation generally, and whether horror film scores are less likely to receive professional recognition than are scores from other genres. The article will examine the attitude of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) to horror film scoring, as indexed by the genres it nominates for best score and its variant categories. A small body of empirical research has examined the effect of music on the perception of film, and the auditory features which might distinguish the horror film score from other genres' scores, and this research is reviewed. To place the nature and appreciation or otherwise of horror film scoring in con-

text, the attitudes towards film scoring, film scores and the function of film scores in general are described and evaluated.

Attitudes towards film scoring and film scores

A number of accounts suggests that composers do not regard film scores as their most prestigious work, and that traditional compositions such as opera, concertos and symphonies ("concert music") attract greater recognition and are perceived as demonstrating greater sophistication (Thomas, 1997). Part of this reason for the dismissiveness is that scores are considered accompaniments to the principal creation, the film itself, rather than a separate, unique and original work. They are thus perceived as part of the factory-line work of film production. For example, Harry Manfredini (*Friday The 13th, 2, 3, Final Chapter, New Beginning, Jason Lives, 7, Jason Goes To Hell, Jason X, Swamp Thing*) has argued that "there is a difference between being a composer and being a film composer." Why? "The film is the most important thing. As a film composer, half of your job is being a dramatist. Your job is to tell a story. Your job is to find the emotions to create what the director is trying to say, to create what the writer was trying to say, to manipulate the audience in the way filmmakers want them to react" (Fichera, 2016, p272). Alan Howarth (*Halloween II, III, IV, V, The Dentist, The Dentist 2, Christine, They Live*) similarly views music in film as "musical storytelling. There is a theme for every character. You weave your themes based on what the character is doing in the most basic way.", Fichera, 2016; p234-5). Jay Chattaway (*Maniac, Maniac Cop*) has highlighted the tension between being a composer and being a film composer, specifically: "the music is supposed to be relatively utilitarian," he says, "yet, at the same time, for the composer it has to be artistic. Right away you get to a complicated issue as to what is your role. Are you a composer or are you a facilitator of something that is happening on screen?" (Fichera, 2016; p121). George Bernard Shaw was once asked whether it was a disgrace that serious composers should have to lower themselves to making motion pictures (Bazelon, 1975) and "proper music," wrote Larsen (2005) reflecting but not endorsing the snobbery, has been regarded as " 'pure' music, that of the concert hall, piano, sonatas, string quartets and symphonies." Composer John Williams, interviewed in 1975 considered that you did not need to be a composer to write a film

score: "I think one could take a primitive with pie tins and bows and arrows and good recording equipment," he said, "and make a wonderfully effective sound compilation of a melange of noises." (Bazelon, 1975). Lalo Schifrin offered a similar view of *The Third Man,* arguing that it was "one of the most effective scores…[it] has a theme that is crude and banal but it worked and you can't honestly say he [Karas] was a composer." (Bazelon,1975). John Corigliano, composer of the Oscar-winning *Altered States* (1980), lamented that, professionally, "if you do a lot of films, you start to lose your artistic credibility, unfortunately. Anytime you do something theatrical in a piece -something that any other concert composer would do- you're damned for it because you're a film composer…I've heard some extremely exotic pieces by John Williams, for example. His Flute Concerto is an attractive non-Western piece, but it will be accused of sounding just like another John Williams movie score if it gets applied anyplace." (Schelle, 1999 "p165).

The self-styled Bela Lugosi of horror film scores, Christopher Young (*The Dorm That Dripped Blood, A Nightmare on Elm Street 2, The Fly II, The Vagrant, Tales From The Hood, Hellraiser* 1 and 2, *Species, Urban Legend*), continues the theme: "Film music is a strange creature, it's in limbo. It's neither embraced by the people who purchase concert music and go to concerts of orchestral music, nor are the pop buyers really interested. I bring this up because if you take someone like Max Steiner, a guy who worked on something like 300 pictures, out of all those hundreds of hours of music, what is he remembered for? He is remembered for about four minutes of music-the theme from *Gone With The Wind*." (Schelle, 1999; p, 384). John Williams himself has reflected that "a lot of the finest musical minds in the country [US] have concluded, 'well, Hollywood film music-that's simply kitsch- I'm not going to lower my standards and get involved in that' rather than take the positive attitude and say, 'This is a great challenge; this is the real art medium in the twentieth century." (Bazelon, 1975).

The stigma - at least, the historical stigma- associated with film score composition certainly extends further to the scores for horror films. Composer Christopher Young has remarked that: "I got the Saturn award for the score to *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* (1988). The Saturn is an award given to

the people working in genre films by an organisation called the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films. It is for all these film that the Oscars wouldn't dream of giving awards to, let alone a nomination" (Fichera, 2016; p315). He continues, "in the history of horror, they [horror films] have saved companies from going out of business numerous times. They pay the bills, but come awards season it is the first genre that Hollywood seems to want to pretend like they had nothing to do with, because it doesn't make them look like an artistic community or like people that are interested in art, just commerce." (p334). Young also feels stigmatised by the industry, commenting that he is known as "the guy that did *Hellraiser*…and then maybe the guy that did *The Shipping News*." (p335).

The earlier invocation of Hitchcock and his grumbling rejection of music is a reminder that probably the most famous musical sting in horror film history might also have been stymied as a result of Hitchcock's decision-making. The shower scene in *Psycho* is well-known for four reasons: the sound, the colour (black and white), the blood, and Janet Leigh's performance. *Psycho*'s score, right from the start of the film with its featured leitmotif of the "Hitchcock chord" together with its shower scene, is a brilliant if discordant example of using music in horror to create suspense and dread. In the film, Janet Leigh plays Marion Crane who has embezzled $40,000 from her employer and is driving across the States for her liaison with her boyfriend. She stops at a motel run by Norman Bates but we discover that Bates is no ordinary motel owner but a voyeuristic murderer who keeps his mother's skeleton in the attic and dresses up in her clothes. Hitchcock's direction for Janet Leigh's murder in the shower scene, described in Philip Hayward's book, *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema*, was that "throughout the killing, there should be the shower noise and the blows of the knife. We should hear the water gurgling down the drain of the bathtub. During the murder, the sound of the shower should be continuous and monotonous, only broken by the screams of Marion." No stabbing and, it seems, no music.

The scene was played to Hitchcock in two forms: one with no musical cues and once, at composer Bernard Herrmann's request, with the cues added. Hitchcock's response was, according to the

composer, "Of course that's the one we'll use." When Herrmann queried the director's original decision not to include any music cue, Hitchcock conceded that it was an "Improper suggestion, improper suggestion." So important did Herrmann eventually become to *Psycho* that Hitchcock doubled his fee (to $34000). According to the screenwriter, Joseph Stefano, Herrmann took the picture "and turned it into an opera". The importance of Herrmann's contribution to film scoring is widely acknowledged. Christopher Young has argued that Herrmann showed composers "how to use instruments to create unique colours" and that "his music is so loaded with this magnificent sense of mystery and it seems to capture so well this place that I believed existed just around the corner, those places we never could quite get to…no-one before him in the world of film music, nor really concert music for that matter, had set out to try to combine instruments that normally wouldn't have made good bed partners" (Fichera, 2016;p 319).

Herrmann's score was not nominated for an Academy Award. The winner in *Psycho*'s eligible year was Henry Mancini's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The soap opera of Herrmann's relationship with Hitchcock ended in 1965 following a disagreement over the score for *Torn Curtain* (Larsen, 2005). The film's financier, Universal, wanted a score that was popular, catchy and not experimental. Herrmann responded with a score involving atonal tunes in different pitches which was the very opposite of the catchy tune required and approved by the studio. Hitchcock intervened and replaced Herrmann with John Addison.

The film score: its purpose and function

Before considering the nature of horror film scores specifically, it is useful to consider the purpose of the film score more generally: its contribution to the cinema experience, its effect on this experience and its function (or its many functions). Some have argued that if a score does its job properly, it should be invisible or, at best, not draw too much attention to itself lest it detracts and distracts from the action on screen. For example, Shore commented "Sidney Lumet…said that he considered it [*The Silence of the Lambs*] a great score because he felt it, he didn't hear it. There's probably an hour of music in the movie, but I doubt anybody would actually realise that." (Schelle, 1999;

p 348). "Maybe the purest form of film music," he continues, "is music that supports the film, but also works on all the subjects- not just commenting on what you're seeing on screen, but operating on another level that you or they are feeling emotionally. That, again, is opera." (p. 348-9). In the director Christopher Nolan's words, a good score is not like "sauce on a piece of meat but is baked in". Corporeally, it is the blood, not the skin of the final creature. Copeland, again, lamented that "I wish more audiences could have experience of watching a movie without any music and then seeing it a second time with music added. I think that would give them a full sense of what music does for making the cold movie screen more humane, more civilised" (p5). Copeland's observation highlights a tension between composer and director or, more pertinently, composer and audience in that the former may be casually dismissive of the importance of the later despite a body of research indicating how music scores influence our perception of film (see below). Technically, there is a case that music provides a film with its final structure. Herrmann, for example, observed that although a film might be edited in several different ways, "once you put music to it, that becomes the final way", providing "an inevitable beginning and end."

"On a higher level,", writes Thomas (1997) "film music accomplishes two important things- it creates atmosphere and colours the tone of the picture…a competent composer is able to shade emotions, to darken moods, to heighten sensitivities, to imply, to suggest, to define character and refine personality, to help generate momentum or create tension, to warm a picture or cool it and, most subtle of all, to alleviate thoughts that are unspoken and situations remain unseen" (p 4-5). In short, it accomplishes a lot and much of it may not be directly accessible to our consciousness because we are either not directly aware of the music or we are not directly aware of the effects it is having. At the broader level, it has been argued that film music undertakes three general functions (Larsen, 2005). The first is its formal function where it may mark the passage of time or a transition between one scene or another or signify the end of a scene; the second is its narrative function which allows the film-makers and composer to establish context; its third function is emotional- invoking a mood in the viewer and manipulating his or her response to what they see and hear, whether that response is one of joy, tension, horror, thrill, suspense, or sadness. Providing a spe-

cific example of this, Thomas (1997) cites the use of John Williams's score in *E.T.* "What the audience may not realise," he writes, "is that they are not just responding to what they are seeing but also to what Williams is doing to their emotions with this music." (p6).

There is even a direct link between the sound of music and horror although it is not one that is normally recognised. Maxim Gorky remarked after watching an early, silent Lumiere presentation that what he had seen was not real life but a bloodless, diaphanous version of real-life: "Not life, but shadows of life," he wrote, "this is not movement but the silent shadows of movement" (1896). And these silent shadows required music. Balazs (1924; cited in Larsen, 2005) asked: "Why is music always played during film performances? Why does a film without a musical accompaniment seem embarrassing?" The answer is that movement without sound is perceived as eerie (Larsen, 2005). Life enacted "in a world of almost ghostly silence", to quote London; music gave film "its life- its blood, its soul and its meaning". In fact, Balazs answered his own question by arguing that the function of music in film was to conceal the presence of silence. Taking this a step further, Kracauer (1960) argued that music prevented "the apparitions from dissolving, it lights up the pale silent images on screen so they stay with us." Music, therefore, at one time concealed the silence of film and de-abnormalised an abnormal situation. This is not a function it now serves but, at the gestation of the industry, it was one demonstrable function. As London noted, film was about movement and music articulated movement and lent it structure and form, the very modern function of the musical score (Larsen, 2005). Sometimes, people might notice the music because what was on screen was discordant or incongruous and, therefore, the audience were taken out of the film. Good film music, he noted, remained unnoticed. However, there was no consensus on this position at the time. Max Steiner, for example, vigorously asked "what good is it if you don't notice it?" (Thomas, 1997).

While speech in film post-dates music, the earliest silent films were not entirely "silent", although the very earliest such as the Lumiere presentations might have been because there is no account of music being present -or not present (Larsen, 2005). Later, there was normally some musical ac-

companiment, played live as the film was being presented. And this was needed. As Kurt Weill re-marked of the silent film *Marnie*, "[it] needed music as dry cereal needs cream" (Weill, 1946/1970; cited in Hofman 1970). There exists a common but persuasive myth that the earliest "scores" or musical accompaniment to silent film were introduced in order to camouflage the noise of the film projector which the audiences would find distracting. Larsen has noted that by 1899 projectors were in booths and so audience were relatively well-insulated from intrusive mechanical distractions thus rendering this theory a part of cinema's myth-making.

One view of film scores outlined above is that they help create the overall coherence of a film "in the same way that we process words in a novel but would not be able to recall precise sentences, paragraphs or pages after we have read them" (Larsen, 2005). Gorbman's (1987) "suture theory", for example, argues that music is one of the elements or techniques which provides this coherence. If it is working correctly, argues Gorbman, "it makes us a little less critical and a little more prone to dream" which may be on overly-fanciful interpretation in the context of an action film. Gorbman viewed film music almost like supermarket music- the barely audible, anodyne, quotidian soundtrack that would make spectators less troublesome, less critical and less on their guard. In some senses, this is a valid observation- we are more likely to make critical judgements of what we see principally and, most likely, because our attention is focused on the specific constellation of stimuli to which we are exposed. The presence of music results in our sharing the critical focus of attention by either, in some way, distracting us from specific visual and vocal elements, or by an elevation or depression in mood. The process utilises resources of working memory (Martin & Carlson, 2023). Music stops us from seeing the film as a construction, the artificial representation of reality and fantasy, the "hypnotic voice bidding the spectator to believe, focus, identity and consume." (Larsen, 2005). Of course, whether music achieves these outcomes very much depends on the film and the question, therefore, becomes not *whether* people can hear the music but *how* they hear the music. And how people hear the music in horror film is instrumental to their response to what they see on screen.

Horror as genre: perception and stigma

Horror is, perhaps more than any other genre, formulaic. It is a genre characterised by violence, blood, viscera, torture, harm, death, dread and other negative features not generally found in other genres. There is also certainly a degree of snobbery or rejection that has traditionally been associated with horror film. As noted elsewhere, horror has been regarded as the runt of the cinema family (Stone, 2016; Martin, 2019). Etchison (2011) concluded that "the horror film occupies in popular culture roughly comparable to that of horror literature. That is to say, it is generally ignored, sometimes acknowledged with bemused tolerance, and viewed with alarm when it irritates authority - rather like a child too spirited to follow the rules that rendition has deemed acceptable" (p. ix). Tudor (1997), similarly noted that "a taste of horror is a taste for something seemingly abnormal and is therefore deemed to require special attention" (p. 446).

At the general level, the commercial success of horror in the past decade indicates that this perception of horror as the minor, insignificant or dismissable genre may require revision. The commercial success of film companies and organisations such as Shudder and Blumhouse, and the success of the film of Stephen King novel *IT* in 2017 which generated $700.4 m in global ticket sales in 2017 making it the most successful horror film based on recorded box office sales, are evidence that the appeal of horror is growing and becoming more mainstream. *IT*'s sequel (*IT: Chapter 2*) achieved global ticket sales of $185 m in its first week of release. *Parasite,* a film which is to all intents and purposes a horror film, won the Best Picture Oscar in 2019. Fourteen R rated horror films have achieved an accumulated US box office of over $100m, a list that is topped by *IT,* followed by *The Exorcist* (1973; $233,005,644) and tailed by *Scream 2* (1997; $101,363, 301) (www.boxofficemojo.com). Fifteen of the top 200 most financially successful R rated films in the US are horror films, and the span begins with *The Silence of the Lambs* ($130,742, 922) in 1991 and ends with *Nope* ($123,277,080) in 2022. *Halloween Kills* earned $92,002, 155 in 2021. At the global level, 27 of the most financially successful R-rated films based on international box office have been horror films, and twelve of those were released between 2016 and 2021. This might be

interpreted as reflecting a golden age of horror in terms of popular success. *IT* and its sequel ($701, 845, 551 and $473, 122, 525) are the most financially successful, placed at number 5 and 19 in the list. At the lowest end of the top 200 is *The Final Destination* ($186, 167, 139), with low-budget successes *Paranormal Activity* and *Blair Witch Project* achieving $193, 355, 800 and $248, 639, 099, respectively. It might be argued that horror in 2022 is undergoing another of its shifts and revivifications with the mainstream success of films such as *Censor, The Black Phone, Nope, Werewolf By Night, X, Deadstream, Speak No Evil, Terrifier 2, Scream 6, Halloween Ends* and others.

Horror is more likely than any other genre to receive a (previously) X, R or 18 certificate indicating that the material is suitable only for adults. Countries differ in their allocation of age-appropriate certificates with the English-language-dominant territories, the US and the UK, utilising different, although similar, rating systems. In 1968, the US adopted a voluntary rating system applying G (suitable for a general audience), M (later, PG), R or X to denote the film's content, and this was determined by the Classification and Ratings Administration. The PG-13 rating was introduced in 1984 (*The Flamingo Kid* was the first to receive this rating) and X was replaced by NC-17 in 1990. The first X-certificate film to win a Best Picture Oscar was *The Midnight Cowboy* in 1970; *A Clockwork Orange* was nominated in 1971. The US system introduced the R rating to indicate that the content was suitable for adults only as it contained either swearing, nudity, sex scenes, graphic violence or a combination of these. The NC-17 rating was reserved for those films which had seriously transgressed this already high bar by including depictions of acts of language considered extreme and offensive- *The Last Tango in Paris*, for example, was rated NC-17 and unlike some other films which had also received this rating was reduced to an R (*Blue Valentine*, remains an NC-17 as of January 2023). The UK's film certification history is slightly different to that of the US but the system is similar. The UK's original classification comprised two categories ("Passed for universal exhibition" and "Approved for public exhibition for adult audiences", 1912-1932) with the current British Board of Film Classification system applying seven (U, PG, 12, 12A, 15, 18, R18). The famed X certificate was re-badged as 18 in 1982; the X had previously denied viewing of films

to those under 16 (up until 1970) and those under 18 (from 1970 onwards). All cinema certification in the UK is advisory.

Since 1968, 21% of Best Picture Oscar winners have been PG13 rated films, 2% rated G and 19% rated PG. The largest category of winners were R rated - 58% (31 films). An analysis of the ratings of the best score winners from 1968 to 2022 shows that 33% (18) of winners were rated R, 31%(17) were rated PG, 24% (13) a PG13, and 11% (6) a G. Although there were more R-rated winners in this category the difference in success between the R and PG/PG-13 categories was less obvious.

Professional recognition: The Academy Awards and film scores

The Oscars, for their faults and foibles and fractured genesis, are regarded as the exemplar of what represents the pinnacle of professional recognition for cinematic achievement (Davis, 2022). They were first awarded by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) in 1929 but the first music category - Best Scoring- was introduced in 1935. As a result of a faux pas in 1938 in which Charles Previn won the Award for *One Hundred Men and A Girl* which featured already existing classical music and named no principal composer, the Academy added a "Best Original Score" category in 1939. In 1942, another change followed when the categories were re-titled "Best Music Score of a Dramatic Picture" and "Best Scoring of a Musical Picture". Between 1942 and 1985, at least 19 different Award categories for film music were created, including Scoring (1939), Musical Score of a Drama/Comedy Picture (1941), Scoring of a Musical Picture (1943), Scoring: Original Song Score and Adaptation or Scoring: Adaptation (1974), and Original Score (1975, 1976, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1994). As a result of some films featuring music in a different way to others - *The Lion King*'s use of music is different to *The English Patient*'s, for example- the categories were changed still further in 1996 to "Best Original Dramatic Score" and "Best Original Musical or Comedy Score". It changed yet again in 2000 when the latter was dropped and the split disappeared (and the category "Best Original Musical" was introduced, an award that has

never been offered nor received as there have been insufficient nominations to justify the award).

To qualify for a Best Original Score Award, the Academy stipulated in 2020 that 60% of the music contained in the film should be original and 80% of sequels should contain original content. This was reduced from 60% to 35% in 2021, a criterion still in place in 2023.

Horror film scores and the Academy: the data

To determine whether one of the most influential professional organisations in film recognised horror film scores more than it did scores from other genres, a review of the nominees for best original score award and its historical variants was undertaken. Since 1935, 664 films not categorised as musicals have been nominated for an Oscar for best score. Of this total, 1.65% have been scores for horror films. Table 1 shows the horror film scores nominated and the winners of the nominated category from 1935-2023.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Examining historical or temporal trends, the 1970s and 80s were particularly favourable for horror scores: in addition to *Jaws* and *The Omen,* there were nominations for Paul Williams and George Tipton's *Phantom Of the Paradise* (1974), Lalo Schifrin's *The Amityville Horror* (1979), John Corigliano's sci-fi/body horror *Altered States* (1980), Jerry Goldsmith's *Poltergeist* (1982) and James Horner's *Aliens* (1986). The period compares favourably with the 1935-1970s era when four films were nominated and the 1950s or 1960s when no films at all were nominated. It compares even more favourably with the 1995-2022 period when no horror film score had been nominated in those 27 years.

To determine whether Awards were won by one or more genre of film more or less frequently than others, the British Film Institute's genre classification was used to identify films from the main film genres awarded best score or its variant from 1935 to 2022 (BFI, 2017). This system recognises the following genres: comedy, action, animation, fantasy, science fiction, biopic, thriller, drama,

family, adventure, horror, war, romance, music/dance, crime, documentary and western. Some of these genres can clearly show overlap- and animated film might also be classed as a family film although these categories can be mutually exclusive (thus, *The Goonies* would be classified as a family film but not, obviously, animated, and *Sausage Party* and *Sin City* are animated films which are not family films). The classification of a film according to its genre, therefore, is not precise but approximate and informed judgements are made regarding films that fall broadly into two categories but are more credibly exemplars of one- *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* is a family film but is best classified as an action film because its themes and content are more consistently allied to those of that genre.

The genre that received the greatest number of Awards was drama (N=54), followed by romance (N=18), Music/Dance (N=13) and Fantasy (N=13), Adventure (N=11), Animated (N=7), Comedy and Action (N=6), Western and War (N=4), Science Fiction (N=3), and Thriller, Family, Horror and Crime (two each), as seen in Figure 1.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Genre was a significant predictor of winning the best original score Oscar ($R2 = .53$, $F(1,13) = 14.6$, $p = .002$; $\beta = -2.16$, $p = .002$, $\alpha = 26.95$, $p < .001$). The winners in the horror category were *Jaws* (1975) and *The Omen* (1976). The genres of documentary and biopic have never won an Oscar for best score. There may be some debate over one film, *Schindler's List* which might be interpreted as a biopic. However, it is perhaps most appropriately classified as drama as the film tells the story of the Holocaust and the attempt to save Jewish lives during the second world war. Even if we remove *Schindler's List* from the drama category, this genre continues to be the most successful musical genre in terms of Oscar wins.

While the data clearly show that horror has not been especially successful in receiving an Award, that failure is nonetheless shared by at least five other genres, and it certainly does better than

documentary. What is also noticeable from these data is the disparity between the genre receiving the greatest number of awards and the next highest - drama (54), and Romance (18) and Dance/Music/Fantasy (13). The Academy, when it comes to best score awards, appears to prefer its scores dramatic, romantic or fantastical. It could be argued that these are the genres that are much more general, and less content-specific, than the others (e.g., war, crime, science fiction).

'You're not asked to be neutral.' Are horror scores different?

The professional recognition and reward by the industry's premier professional organisation, therefore, is meagre at best. Setting aside the assumed, though evidenceless, general snobbery towards horror as an explanation for the lack of reward, there may be something identifiably different about horror scores. At a compositional and aesthetic level, for example, horror film scores -and scenes in non-horror films designed to invoke fear- tend to utilise the discordant, minor scale more than do the scores of comedies and westerns and other genres. They also avoid harmonic phrases, and are more likely to use unconventional musical phrasing, effects and atonality (Bellano, 2011; Rosar, 1983; Scheurer, 2008). Bellano notes that Beethoven's piano sonata Op 53 was nicknamed 'Horror' because of the affect-induction achieved by the modulation at the beginning of the piece. One study has observed that the pitch and tone of human screaming is similar to the pitch, tone and timbre of horror film scores (Trevor, Amal & Fruhholz, 2020). There are exceptions- *Hannibal, Theatre of Blood*, even *The Fly* utilise a variety of major, and operatic, harmonies to create the effects in those films- but horror is more closely identified with notes and combination of notes at the misophonic end of the pleasure scale.

Another explanation is that horror scores are deemed too utilitarian, broad, coarse, artless or lumpen. Harry Manfredini facetiously described horror movies as "just a cartoon with knives; a cartoon with axes, machetes and more blood, but it is still a cartoon…" (Fichera, 2016). But music in horror, unlike other genres, has at least one very specific aim: to heighten fear, tension and dread in the audience. It performs a specific function and role. Christopher Young has acknowledged this instrumental nature of the horror score: "In horror films, the music may be great or it may not but…

it has to be on solid ground when it comes to dramatic intent. [It] needs to induce a very large and immediate emotional response from its listener…much of our task is to ensure that the audience is perplexed and overwhelmed at the right moment, on the edge of their seats at the right moments, that they are screaming at the right moments and literally jumping…because they are affected by what is happening on the screen…you can't pussyfoot around…the music needs to deliver the scares in places that, without it, that scare won't happen." (Fichera, 2016; p330). Take, for example, Rosar's (1983) description of Hugo Kaun's opening phrases of *Frankenstein*: "The music begins with a glowering modal figure, harmonised with a minor key, which imparts a stark, heavy, teutonic feeling. This figure is repeated and then varied over a chromatic bass line, which churns and rolls under it, punctuated at one point with bass trills (no doubt to connote fright)" which summarises some of the more obvious musical tropes used in (at least) early horror scores- the use of a minor key, the emphasis on dread and the use of music to generate fear.

Similarly, *Manic* composer, Jay Chattaway, has argued that "horror has many more individual identifying factors than, say, action genre music. People go and see a horror movie and they are generally moved by the movie- and they are moved by the music because you are asked to make the audience move. You're not asked to be neutral. We want the audience to jump out of their seats at this moment- and it is up to you to help this happen." (Fichera, 2016; p126). A part of this use of music in horror reflects the transgressive nature of the genre itself. "Usually," writes Chattaway, "a horror score is truly unique because the film is generally pretty unique in its concept."

Composer Nathan Barr (*Cabin Fever, 2001 Maniacs, Hostel, Hostel II, True Blood, The Last Exorcism*) highlights a clear differences between horror and other genres. "A drama can take you to many different places and it can still be called a drama," he argues, "[But] A horror film has to terrify you or it can't be called a horror film. I think the bandwidth you're going for in a horror film can be a bit narrower. It has got to scare the shit out of the audience. That's the goal." (p12). Charles Bernstein (*Cujo, A Nightmare On Elm St, April Fool's Day, Rumpelstiltskin*) holds a similar view. "There are things that happen in horror that don't happen in other movies," he argues, "You need to jolt the

audience in a horror movie in ways that you don't in other kinds of movies. You need to prepare

them for the jolt in a way that the other movies don't do. You need to create an undercurrent of ap-

prehension and tension. Horror movies have their own set of demands that are different from a

romance or historical epic" (p44). Horror music is, thus, very directional and very utilitarian and, by

extension, open to the criticism that it is not particularly creative or original: it has a specific job to

do, unlike other scores, and it must do this in order for the film to achieve its effect.

"Horror music," says Alan Howarth (*Halloween II, III, IV, V, The Dentist, The Dentist 2, Christine,*

Price of Darkness, They Live) "has a lot of music that is kind of hanging around all by itself. You've

got a score where somebody is walking around in an empty room or in a dark street not much is

going on and the music is what says this is a horrible thing or something scary is

happening" (Fichera, 2016; p236). It is a view shared by John Carpenter who argues that music

operates effectively in horror because "the audience is waiting for something to change and it

doesn't. It puts them in a little bit of discomfort emotionally because they expect it to evolve and

change, but it just keeps repeating." (Fichera, 2016; p101).

The overly directional nature of music is occasionally dismissed as glib and comedic because it is

so transparently manipulative and obvious. Max Steiner described this use of a score as Mickey

Mousing and a common example cited is his use of the score to signify *King Kong*'s footsteps in

the 1933 film. Says John Carpenter of this technique, "Every emotion is scored, everything is

scored. It's wasteful and grandiose, but it tells you exactly what to feel all of the time. It's right on

the nose." (p96). The alternative is to underscore, to "set a general mood but doesn't get in the

way. It is just providing the foundation" and Carpenter cites Bernard Hermann, and especially the

composer's use of music in *Vertigo* (1958), to illustrate the point.

In addition to the functional use of music in horror, the genre also makes use of another musical

device more frequently than do other genres. The leitmotif, idee fixe or ostinato -the repetition of

the same few notes or musical phrases- is commonly used in horror although it is not the exclusive

preserve of that domain. Action films and Westerns have exploited the device in very memorable

and effective ways. Perhaps the most famous non-horror example is Monty Norman's Bond theme;

John Williams's Imperial March from *Star Wars*, is another. Initially popularised by Wagner in *Das*

Ring des Niebelungen, the aim of the leitmotif was to associate moods, emotions and characters

with specific themes and musical phrases, an aim that has been subsequently adopted in most

long-form musical compositions which accompany some form of story-telling. It is a cognitively in-

teresting concept because it relies on memory, recognition and removing yourself from the fiction

via the conscious awareness that you are recalling stimuli experienced sometime earlier. It is a

form of musical signalling, a mnemonic or an auditory semaphore learned over 90 minutes or so.

Debussy likened Wagner's use of this technique to a musical "visiting card". In psychological

terms, it reflects classical conditioning, the learning that two previously unrelated stimuli have be-

come associated so that the presence of one evokes the experience of the other. Max Steiner not-

ed the power of the association in reference to his film *The Informer* when he concluded that "a

blind man could be sat in a theatre and known when [a leading character] was on screen" such

was the effectiveness of the device. "You need to have recurrent material the audience can latch

on to," says composer Jeff Grace (*The House Of The Devil, The Inkeepers, Stakeland*), "it could be

a great theme or it could be like the Ligeti piece in *Eyes Wide Shut.* It's only two notes but it is the

way that it is used that's very effective" (Fichera, 2016; p161).

The first horror film to win an Oscar for musical score is a case in point. Of the many memorable

features of *Jaws*, one of the most recognisable and eternally parodiable, is John William's two-note

ostinato that signifies the approaching menace of the eponymous chondrychthian. Similarly, the

most famous scene in Psycho is accompanied by the harsh hailstones of Herrmann's strings and

Friday the 13th is identifiable by its use of the "ki ki, ma ma" refrain which resulted from Harry Man-

fredini observing the actress Betty Palmer mouth the words "kill her mommy" in the film and articu-

lating the words into a microphone and manipulating the sounds via orchestration. John Carpen-

ter's *Halloween* is similarly identifiable for its 5/4 keyboard/piano leitmotif as is, to some extent, the

use of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells in *The Exorcist* which Carpenter drew on as musical inspiration for *Halloween*. Carpenter wrote the score to *Halloween* (1978) in three days and acknowledged the influence of another horror classic, Argento's *Suspiria*, in its gestation (Fichera, 2016). "What struck me," says Carpenter, "with all these scores by all these musicians is that they are so memorable. they fall into your head and you cannot forget them. *Suspiria*'s score starts to play and it is just relentless." (p100). The use of leitmotifs are not exclusive to modern horror. They can be seen in early examples of the genre such as the ostinato "The Pool and Whemple" heard in James Dietrich's score for *The Mummy* whenever Imhotep concatenates (Rosar, 1983). In *The Bride of Frankenstein*, composer Franz Waxman included a leitmotif for the monster, comprising five notes, and a softer one for Elsa Lanchester (the Bride).

Composers' views of their work suggest that they perceive a distinct difference in the creation of horror compared with other genres' scores (Fichera, 2016; 2020). Several highlight the importance of experimentation and that the horror film score has allowed them greater creative freedom than do other genres. Nathan Barr acknowledges that "horror is a great place to cut one's teeth as a composer because there is so much experimentation that can go on with all the requirements of a horror film to make things scary" (p11). Composer Joseph Bishara (*Autopsy, Night Of The Demons, Insidious, Insidious 2, Insidious 3, The Conjuring, Annabelle*) agrees: "It has always seemed to explore things that have not necessarily been heard before," as does Jay Chattaway: "If you want to get into film, the most fun, of course, is to do horror. There the music…seems to be able to have its own unique personality…in some of the space dramas I've worked on, the music is more of a utilitarian background thing. With horror you really have control. The composer can manipulate as much as he or she wants to. If you want." The director of *Maniac* instructed him to "go write what you want to write" (p122). Harry Manfredini highlights the freedom afforded by the writing of a horror score: "All bets are off. You can do whatever you want. On a horror film, everything - your choices of instruments, your choice of colour- literally, the cupboard is open. Pick anything you like. That's what is fun about horror films. They are where you really are allowed to get more creative in many ways." The flexibility of the genre is what clearly draws some composers more to

this type of film than alternative genres. Charles Bernstein noted that "there is a lot of opportunity to be original and to deal with emotion. I think horror is preferable, in that sense, to romantic comedy which is often less open to experimentation. However, horror can get pretty generic, too, because people start imitating each other." Horror thus suffers -or, in other ways, benefits- from the dual disadvantage of being utilitarian and, pardoxically, experimental.

The effect of music in films: empirical data

The wealth of anecdotal evidence that horror film music is used to create specific effects in horror is in contrast with the empirical literature on the experimental effect of horror music in that there is very little of the latter. A small body of research suggests that the presence of music can influence our perception and attitude towards film. The debate between director and composer in the opening paragraph exemplifies the distinction between diagetic and non-diagetic music (Gorbman, 1976; 1987) where the former refers to the music heard in the film (an actor singing or a radio playing, for example) and the later referring to the background scoring where the source is not the film but external to the film and not generated by characters or events in it but which the audience only can hear. The latter might influence how we interpret and remember what we see and hear on-screen. A review of German and English language films found that music provided context, signified a change of attitude in the film, provided "psychological refinements" (the music reflects the inner life of characters), altered or confirmed assumptions about storyline, and influenced our perception of characters (Herget, 2021). In one small study of 36 adults, the application of thriller or melodramatic scores to film clips in which characters behaved neutrally influenced viewers' perception of these characters (Hoeckner, Wyatt, Decety & Nusbaum, 2011). Characters with thriller music present were judged less likeable and more unpredictable.When participants were asked to make judgements about characters after the study, participants who had been exposed to the thriller music were more likely to attribute more angry and fewer sad traits to characters, and more positive traits (less fear) to characters if participants had been exposed to melodramatic music. A similar finding was reported in a more experimental study in which composers were asked to write a thriller or melodrama excerpt of music to accompany a specially created 10 minute film (Buller-

jahn & Guldenring, 1994). The genres of music influenced participants' perception of the film and understanding of the plot.

In a novel experiment but with a small sample (N=48), participants were exposed to the same film sequence (Billy Wilder's *The Lost Weekend*) but with the original or a "fake" score as accompaniment (Vitouch, 2001). Once the sequences were complete, participants were asked to predict how the plot would progress. The presence of different musical soundtracks influenced how participants expected the plot to develop. A study with a larger sample (N=177) presented music before or after the appearance of a single character in five films (Tan, Spackman & Bezdek, 2007). Characters expressed neutral emotion and the music was considered to be evocative of happiness, fear, sadness or anger. After watching the clips, participants were asked to indicate the type of emotion expressed by the character. Music appearing both before and after the scene influenced participants' perception of the character consistent with the type of score presented. A similar effect was found in one of the earlier studies of the effect of manipulating exposure to music on perception of film (Boltz, Schulkind & Kantra, 1991). Boltz et al also observed a curious phenomenon whereby recall for clips in which music that was incongruous with the mood of the clip and was presented before the clip was better than in the congruent condition when the music was played contiguously with the clip. The finding from Tan et al is similar to the visual Kuleshov Effect in which a neutral facial expression is interpreted in a way that is determined by context (Barratt, Rédei, Innes-Ker, & Van de Weijer, 2016) -a neutral face paired with a sad scene, for example, would be interpreted as sadder than if it had been paired with an image associated with fear or joy.

Although there is little direct research examining the effect of horror film score music on the perception of horror film, there is some research which has sought to explore whether horror scores can be distinguished from scores in other genres of film and whether manipulating musical background can influence individuals' reaction to film. For example, Austin et al (2010) sought to determine whether horror and other scores could be objectively differentiated on the basis of timbre rhythm and pitch. These three components of musical composition have been found to enable

classification of different genres of music with around 61% accuracy (Tzanetakis & Cook, 2002). Allen et al examined the musical features of action, horror, romance and drama in a corpus of 98 films (25 romance, 25 drama, 23 horror, 25 action). When they examined timbre and rhythm, they found that the latter poorly distinguished between the genres but that the former was better. They also found that some genres were more differentiable than others. For example, timbre could be used to identify action, romance and drama reasonably well but not horror. Horror scores were often confused with drama on the timbre variable and romance on the rhythm variable. When genres were compared directly, horror was most clearly distinguishable from romance (77.6% accuracy), as was action from drama (77.6%). The most distinct difference was between action and romance (81.13%).

The research on the human response to horror film music is limited and the research that exists is characterised by poor methodology, small sample sizes and over-generalisation from questionable data and procedure. An early study explored the effect of adding horror music, documentary music of no music to an industrial safety film in which amputations were featured (Thayer & Levenson, 1983). Sixty men took part and autonomic nervous system measures (heart rate, GSR) taken during viewing. The horror music was associated with increased autonomic response and the documentary music was associated with decreases, compared to the control condition. A more recent study, with a very small sample (N=39), compared psychophysiological responses to clips from the found-footage horror film *REC* when the music presented was either synchronous or not synchronous with the action, sound and speech on screen, or was absent (control; Meinel & Bullerjahn, 2022). It found negligible effects on heart rate but that the asynchronous condition was associated with higher skin conductance response. The conclusions of the study are, however, limited by its sample.

Conclusion

This article sought to examine whether there were specific features of horror film scores which distinguished them from musical scores from other genres. It also aimed to determine whether the

industry's most famous professional body, AMPAS, regarded horror scores differently to those from other genres. The number of horror nominees for best original score accounts for 1.65% of the total and two horror scores have won the award for Best Original Score. The reasons for this are manifold and include the predictable nature of the genre, the putative disregard for the genre more generally, and the functional nature of the horror film score which has specific objectives to meet in order for the film to be successful. There is view commonly shared view among horror film composers that the genre is more formulaic and pedestrian than is music from other genres because its aims are specific and proscribed: to generate fear, anxiety and dread.

Paradoxically, this pedestrianism is coupled with experimentation, with a number of horror score composers acknowledging that they were drawn to this genre because they were afforded the freedom to experiment. It may be that the avant garde or experimental may not be regarded by Academy voters as being especially worthy of nomination as it falls not in the mainstream but in some riparian drain near a river bank. Horror scores rely more on the atonal, dissonant style of composition which may not lend itself, for this reason too, to universal approval.

The Academy is not squeamish or prudish about the adult nature of film - best feature winners themselves have been primarily R rated and more R-rated than PG-rated films have won the Best Original Score award (although NC-17 rated material still appears verboten). What the data do show, however, is that horror scores are an acquired Academy taste.

Acknowledgements

References

Austin, A., Moore, E., Gupta, U., & Chordia, P. (2010). Characterization of movie genre based on music score. *IEEE International Conference on Acoustics, Speech and Signal Processing* (pp. 421-424). IEEE.

Barlow, P., & Altman, R. (2001). *Soundtrack available: essays on film and popular music*. Duke University Press.

Barratt, D., Rédei, A. C., Innes-Ker, Å., & Van de Weijer, J. (2016). Does the Kuleshov effect really exist? Revisiting a classic film experiment on facial expressions and emotional contexts. *Perception, 45(8)*, 847-874.

Bazelon, I. (1975). *Knowing the score: Notes on film music*. New York: Arco Publishing.

Bellano, M. (2011). I fear what I hear: The expression of horror in film music. In *Fear Within Melting Boundaries* (pp. 67-78). Brill.

Boltz, M., Schulkind, M., & Kantra, S. (1991). Effects of background music on the remembering of filmed events. *Memory & Cognition*, 19(6), 593-606.

Box Office mojo.com Top lifetime grosses by MPAA R rating- Domestic https://www.boxofficemojo.com/chart/mpaa_title_lifetime_gross/?by_mpaa=R

Box Office mojo.com. Top lifetime grosses by MPAA R rating- International https://www.boxofficemojo.com/chart/mpaa_title_lifetime_gross/?area=XWW&by_mpaa=R

British Film Institute (2017). Genre and classification: Research and Statistics. https://www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-genre-and-classification-2017-06-16.pdf

Bullerjahn, C., & Güldenring, M. (1994). An empirical investigation of effects of film music using qualitative content analysis. *Psychomusicology: A Journal of Research in Music Cognition*, 13(1-2), 99.

Cooper, D., Fox, C., & Sapiro, I. (Eds.). (2020). *CineMusic? Constructing the film score*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Davis, B. (2022). *The academy and the award*. Brandeis University Press.

Etchison, D. (2011). Foreword. In Newman, K. (2011). *Nightmare movies: Horror on screen since the 1960s*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Fichera, J.B. (2016). *Scored to death*. Silman-James Press.

Fichera, J.B. (2020). *Scored to death 2*. Silman-James Press.

Gorbman, C. (1987). *Unheard melodies: narrative film music*. Indiana University Press.

Gorbman, C. (1976). Teaching the soundtrack. *Quarterly Review of Film & Video*, 1(4), 446-452.

Hayward, P. (2009). *Terror tracks: music, sound and horror cinema*. Equinox.

Herget, A. K. (2021). On music's potential to convey meaning in film: A systematic review of empirical evidence. *Psychology of Music*, 49(1), 21-49.

Hoeckner, B., Wyatt, E. W., Decety, J., & Nusbaum, H. (2011). Film music influences how viewers relate to movie characters. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 5(2)*, 146.

Hofmann, C. (1970). *Sounds for silents*. New York.

Jarman, P. J. (1969). The house at the end of the world. In FJ Ackerman (Eds),*The Franken-science Monster*. Ace Books.

Karlin, F., & Wright, R. (2013). *On the track: A guide to contemporary film scoring*. Routledge.

Kracauer, S. (1960). *Theory of film, the redemption of reality*. New York.

Larsen, P. (2005). *Film music*. Reaktion Books Ltd.

Larson, R. D. (1996). *Music from the house of Hammer: music in the Hammer horror films, 1950-1980* (Vol. 47). Scarecrow Press.

Lerner, N. (Ed.). (2009). *Music in the horror film: Listening to fear*. Routledge.

Martin, G. N. (2019). (Why) do you like scary movies? A review of the empirical research on psychological responses to horror films. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2298.

Martin, G. N., & Carlson, N. R. (2023). *Psychology*. Seventh edition. Pearson Education.

Meinel, L. S., & Bullerjahn, C. (2022). More horror due to specific music placement? Effects of film music on psychophysiological responses to a horror film. *Psychology of Music*, 1-16.

Neumeyer, D. (2013). *The Oxford handbook of film music studies*. Oxford University Press.

Rosar, W. H. (1983, October). Music for the monsters: Universal Pictures' horror film scores of the thirties. *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, 40 (4), 390-421.

Schelle, M. (1999). *The score: Interviews with film composers*. Silman-James Press.

Scheurer, T. E. (2007). *Music and mythmaking in Film: Genre and the role of the composer*. McFarland.

Stone, B. (2016). The sanctification of fear: Images of the religious in horror films. *Journal of Religion & Film*, *5*(2), 7.

Tan, S. L., Spackman, M. P., & Bezdek, M. A. (2007). Viewers' interpretations of film characters' emotions: Effects of presenting film music before or after a character is shown. *Music Perception, 25(2)*, 135-152.

Thayer, J. F., & Levenson, R. W. (1983). Effects of music on psychophysiological responses to a stressful film. *Psychomusicology: A Journal of Research in Music Cognition*, 3(1), 44.

Thomas, T. (1997). *Music for the movies*. 2nd edition. Sillman-James Press.

Trevor, C., Arnal, L. H., & Frühholz, S. (2020). Terrifying film music mimics alarming acoustic feature of human screams. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 147(6)*, EL540-EL545.

Tudor, A. (1997). Why horror? The peculiar pleasures of a popular genre. *Cultural Studies*, *11*(3), 443-463.

Tzanetakis, G., & Cook, P. (2002). Musical genre classification of audio signals. *IEEE Transactions on speech and audio processing, 10*(5), 293-302.

Vitouch, O. (2001). When your ear sets the stage: Musical context effects in film perception. *Psychology of Music*, 29(1), 70-83.

Wierzbicki, J. (2009). *Film music: A history*. Routledge.

Figure 1. The number of Oscars awarded for Best Original Score or its variants, by genre
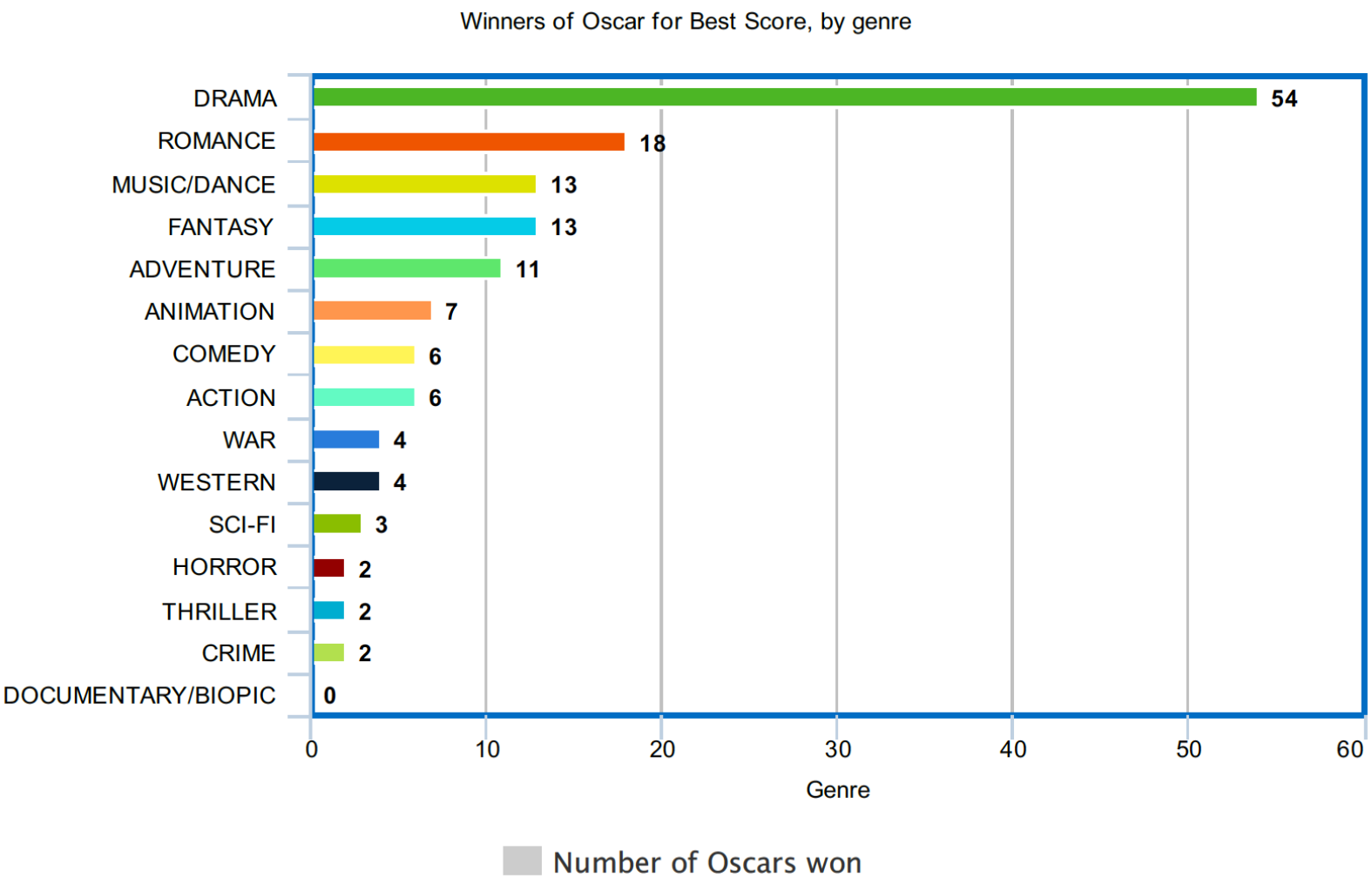
Winners of Oscar for Best Score, by genre

Genre	Number of Oscars won
DRAMA	54
ROMANCE	18
MUSIC/DANCE	13
FANTASY	13
ADVENTURE	11
ANIMATION	7
COMEDY	6
ACTION	6
WAR	4
WESTERN	4
SCI-FI	3
HORROR	2
THRILLER	2
CRIME	2
DOCUMENTARY/BIOPIC	0

Genre

Number of Oscars won

Table 1. Horror film scores nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Score or its variants, together with winners in those years

Production Year	Category	Horror score nominee	Oscar winner
1939	Scoring	*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*	*Stagecoach*
1941	Music Score of a Dramatic/Comedy Picture	*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*	*The Devil and Daniel Webster*
1943	Scoring of Musical Picture	*Phantom Of The Opera*	*This Is The Army*
1975	Original Score	*Jaws*	*Jaws*
1976	Original Score	*The Omen*	*The Omen*
1979	Original Score	*The Amityville Horror*	*A Little Romance*
1980	Original Score	*Altered States*	*Fame*
1982	Original Score	*Poltergeist*	*E.T.*
1986	Original Score	*Aliens*	*Round Midnight*
1994	Original Score	*Interview With A Vampire*	*The Lion King*
2023	Original Score	*Nope*	*All Quiet On The Western Front*