

# Film Scoring

Composer Aaron Copland observed new ways that music and film interacted, listing them in his book *What to Listen for in Music* as:

- Creating a more convincing atmosphere of space and time,
- Underlining psychological refinements -- the unspoken thoughts of a character, or the unseen implications of a situation,
- Serving as a kind of neutral background filler,
- Building a sense of continuity, and
- Underpinning the theatrical build-up of a scene, and rounding it off with a sense of finality (256-58).

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—*Forum*

# WHAT TO LISTEN FOR IN MUSIC

MORE  
THAN 1.5  
MILLION  
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PRINT!

AARON  
COPLAND

WITH A NEW APPRECIATION BY LEONARD SLATKIN

WITH A NEW APPRECIATION BY LEONARD SLATKIN

COPLAND  
AARON

Fred Karlin and Rayburn Wright in *On The Track* give a working model of this process as follows:

- Meeting filmmakers, reading script, screening the film
- Spotting the film
- Planning budgets and recording schedules
- **Conceptualizing**
- Working out timings/synchronization
- Composing
- Orchestrating
- Recording
- Dubbing (11).



*Revised Second Edition by Fred Karlin*

# on the track

A GUIDE TO CONTEMPORARY FILM SCORING



*Fred Karlin and Rayburn Wright*  
*Foreword by John Williams*

**Also available as a printed book**  
**see title verso for ISBN details**

In many cases, before the composer formulates the score concept, the director already has an idea of the style of music for the film. In such cases the director may have filmed certain scenes with a particular music in mind. When communicating with the composer about the appropriate style of music for these scenes, the director will refer to existing music and that music is known as **a role model**. A role model could be one or several types of music including:

- a specific film score or cue,
- a specific style of film score,
- a specific classical piece, or
- a specific song (Karlin and Wright 33-34).

In some cases, the director, editor, or other influential party has gone so far as to pair the role model with a scene in order to experience the effectiveness of the music with the scene. When the pairing of film and role model has occurred, the music is then considered **a temp track**. According to Karlin and Wright:

- **There are basically four reasons why filmmakers use temp tracks:**
- to help them finish editing the film;
- to help them screen their film or the producer(s), studio, and/or network executives and preview audiences during various stages of postproduction;
- to establish a concept for the score; and
- to demonstrate that concept to the composer (39).

**DIEGETIC MUSIC /  
SOURCE MUSIC**

Diegetic music is understood to emanate from a source in the fictional narrative or “**diegesis**”. Hence it is also known as “**source music**”. These sources may include a radio, stereo, speakers, live musicians, and so on. Whether or not we see the source is unimportant. So long as we understand the music to be coming from something in the film itself, it qualifies as **diegetic music**.

- **The music that seems to be coming from the screen can originate from**
  - a known visual source such as a Mariachi Band, car radio or a jukebox,
  - a non visual (off-screen) source like a marching band or stereo,
  - an imaginary source (something that probably would be believable in a scene, such as a car radio or cassette player).



Diegetic music is usually used to clarify time and place, social circle, or nationality.

# The Godfather



# **NON-DIEGETIC MUSIC / UNDERScore**

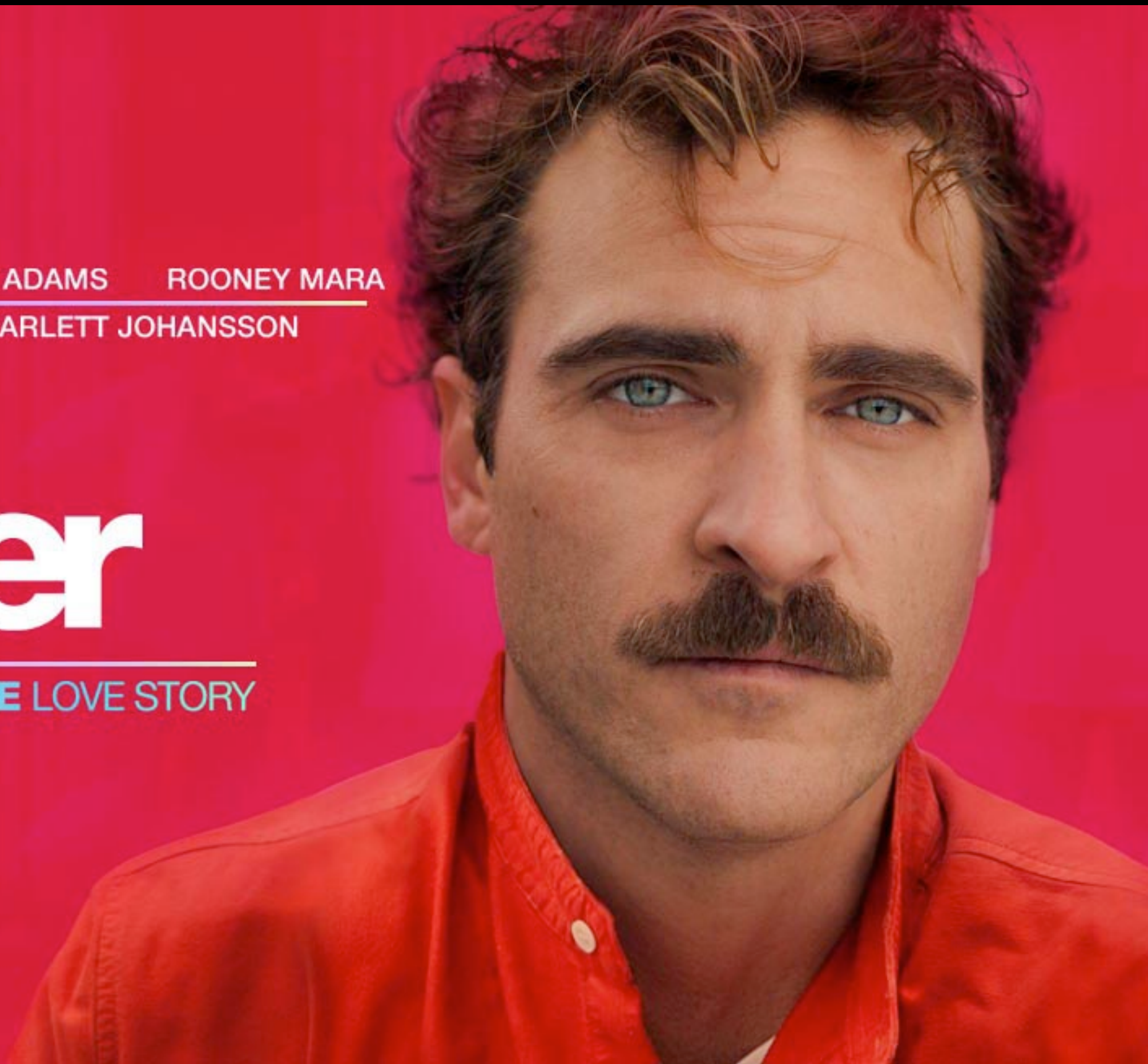
non-diegetic music is understood not to emanate from the film itself, so the characters do not hear it. Other names for this type of music include “underscore”, “accompanimental music”, “commentary music”, “interpolated music”, and perhaps most commonly, “background music”.

Non-diegetic music reflects the psychological state of the characters onscreen, or suggests how we ought to emotionally interpret the images we see.

JOAQUIN PHOENIX    AMY ADAMS    ROONEY MARA  
OLIVIA WILDE    AND SCARLETT JOHANSSON

# her

A SPIKE JONZE LOVE STORY



# SOURCE SCORING

While the difference between diegetic and non-diegetic music is clear, some film music cannot be described as entirely one or the other. In his book, ***Scoring for Films***, Earle Hagen argues for a third category of film music he calls source scoring, a combination of source music and dramatic scoring (or non-diegetic music)



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# Scoring for Films

U P D A T E D   E D I T I O N

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“This kind of music is like source in its content, but tailored to meet scoring requirements. ... This kind of cue can start as pure source music and change over to source scoring. ... The main difference between Source and Source Scoring is that source scoring takes on a much closer relationship to the film. It follows the framework of the scene more critically and matches the nuances of the scene musically.”



**JAMES  
STEWART**

**DORIS  
DAY**



**ALFRED  
HITCHCOCK'S**

**THE MAN WHO  
KNEW TOO MUCH**

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# FILM SCORE ANALYSIS

The "Evaluation" section of each analysis is comprised of the answers of each film to the analysis tool, which follows:

- What compositional elements distinguish this score?
- What compositional elements are similar to other scores in this film genre? How frequently do these elements occur in the other selected films, scenes and scores?
- To what extent does the score serve the film?
- How is the level of emotional involvement between music and drama appropriate for the film?
- How does the score form make use of the film form? To what extent is that appropriate for the film?
- How is the level of score originality appropriate for the film?

# Source

- <http://www.filmscoremonthly.com/features/skelton.asp>
- <http://www.filmmusicnotes.com/diegetic-music-non-diegetic-music-and-source-scoring/>