

Soundtrack

A **soundtrack**, also written **sound track**^[1] can be recorded music accompanying and synchronized to the images of a motion picture, book, television program, or video game; a commercially released soundtrack album of music as featured in the soundtrack of a film, video, or television presentation; or the physical area of a film that contains the synchronized recorded sound



16 mm film showing a "variable area" sound track at right

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Origin of the term

In movie industry terminology usage, a sound track is an audio recording created or used in film production or post-production. Initially the dialogue, sound effects, and music in a film each has its own separate track (*dialogue track*, *sound effects track*, and *music track*), and these are mixed together to make what is called the *composite track*, which is heard in the film. A *dubbing track* is often later created when films are dubbed into another language. This is also known as a M & E track (music and effects) containing all sound elements minus dialogue which is then supplied by the foreign distributor in the native language of its territory.

The contraction **soundtrack** came into public consciousness with the advent of so-called "soundtrack albums" in the late 1940s. First conceived by movie companies as a promotional gimmick for new films, these commercially available recordings were labeled and advertised as "music from the original motion picture *soundtrack*", or "music from and inspired by the motion picture." These phrases were soon shortened to just "original motion picture *soundtrack*." More accurately, such recordings are made from a film's *music track*, because they usually consist of the isolated music from a film, not the composite (sound) track with dialogue and sound effects.

The abbreviation **OST** is often used to describe the musical soundtrack on a recorded medium, such as CD, and it stands for **O**riginal **S**oundtrack; however, it is sometimes also used to differentiate the original music heard and recorded versus a rerecording or cover of the music.

Types of recordings

Types of soundtrack recordings include:

- Musical film soundtracks are for the film versions of musical theatre; they concentrate primarily on the songs (Examples: *Grease*, *Singin' in the Rain*)

2. Film scores showcase the primarily instrumental musical themes and background music from movies (Examples: *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*)
3. For movies that contain both orchestral film scores and pop songs, both types of music
4. Albums of popular songs heard in whole or part in the background of non-musical movies (Examples: *Sleepless in Seattle*, *When Harry Met Sally..*)
5. Video game soundtracks are often released ~~at~~ after a game's release, usually consisting of the theme and background music from the game's levels, menus, title screens, promo material (such as entire songs of which only segments were used in the game), cut-screens and occasionally sound-effects used in the game (Examples: *Sonic Heroes*, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*)
6. Albums which contain both music and dialogue from the film, such as the 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* or the first authentic soundtrack album of *The Wizard of Oz*.

The soundtrack to the 1937 Walt Disney animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was the first commercially issued film soundtrack.^[2] It was released by RCA Victor Records on multiple 78 RPM discs in January 1938 as *Songs from Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (with the Same Characters and Sound Effects as in the Film of That Title)* and has since seen numerous expansions and reissues.

The first live-action musical film to have a commercially issued soundtrack album was MGM's 1946 film biography of *Show Boat* composer Jerome Kern, *Till the Clouds Roll By*. The album was originally issued as a set of four 10-inch 78-rpm records. Only eight selections from the film were included in this first edition of the album. In order to fit the songs onto the record sides the musical material needed editing and manipulation. This was before tape existed, so the record producer needed to copy segments from the playback discs used on set, then copy and re-copy them from one disc to another adding transitions and cross-fades until the final master was created. Needless to say, it was several generations removed from the original and the sound quality suffered for it. The playback recordings were purposely recorded very "dry" (without reverberation); otherwise it would come across as too hollow sounding in large movie theatres. This made these albums sound flat and boxy

Terminology

MGM Records called these "original cast albums" in the style of Decca Broadway show cast albums mostly because the material on the disc(s) would not lock to picture, thereby creating the largest distinction between 'Original Motion Picture Soundtrack' which, in its strictest sense would contain music that would lock to picture if the home user would play one alongside the other and 'Original Cast Soundtrack' which in its strictest sense would refer to studio recordings of film music by the original film cast, but which had been edited and/or rearranged for time and content and would not lock to picture.

In reality, however, soundtrack producers remain ambiguous about this distinction, and titles in which the music on the album *does* lock to picture may be labeled as OCS and music from an album that *does not* lock to picture may be referred to as OMPS.

The phrase "recorded directly from the soundtrack" was used for a while in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s to differentiate material that would lock to picture from that which would not (excluding alternate masters and alternate vocals or solos), but again, in part because many 'film takes' actually consisted of several different attempts at the song and edited together to form the master, that term as well became nebulous and vague over time when, in cases where the master take used in the film could not be found in its isolated form, (without the M&E) the aforementioned alternate masters and alternate vocal and solo performances which could be located were included in their place.

As a result of all this nebulosity, over the years the term "soundtrack" began to be commonly applied to any recording from a film, whether taken from the actual film soundtrack or re-recorded in the studio at an earlier or later time. The phrase is also sometimes incorrectly used for Broadway cast recordings. While it is correct in some instances to call a "soundtrack" a "cast recording" (since in most cases it contains performances recorded by the original film cast) it is never correct to call a "cast recording" a "soundtrack."

Contributing to the vagueness of the term are projects such as *The Sound of Music Live!* which was filmed live on the set for an NBC holiday season special first broadcast in 2013. The *album* released three days before the broadcast contained studio pre-recordings of all the songs used in the special, performed by the original cast therefrom, but because only the orchestral portion of the material from the album is the same as that used in the special, (i.e. the vocals were sung live over a prerecorded track), this creates a similar

technicality because although the *instrumental music* bed from the CD will lock to picture, the vocal performances will not, although it IS possible to create a complete soundtrack recording by lifting the vocal performances from the DVD, erasing the alternate vocal masters from the CD and combining the two.

Among MGM's most notable soundtrack albums were those of the films *Good News*, *Easter Parade*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Show Boat*, *The Band Wagon*, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, and *Gigi*.

Film score albums

Film score albums did not really become popular until the LP era, although a few were issued in 78-rpm albums. Alex North's score for the 1951 film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* was released on a 10-inch LP by Capitol Records and sold so well that the label later re-released it on one side of a 12-inch LP with some Max Steiner's film music on the reverse.

Steiner's score for *Gone with the Wind* has been recorded many times, but when the film was reissued in 1967, MGM Records finally released an album of the famous score recorded directly from the soundtrack. Like the 1967 re-release of the film, this version of the score was artificially "enhanced for stereo". In recent years, Rhino Records has released a 2-CD set of the complete *Gone With the Wind* score, restored to its original mono sound.

One of the biggest-selling film scores of all time was John Williams' music from the movie *Star Wars*. Many film score albums go out-of-print after the films finish their theatrical runs and some have become extremely rare collectors' items.

Composite film tracks included on record

In a few rare instances an entire film dialogue track was issued on records. The 1968 Franco Zeffirelli film of *Romeo and Juliet* was issued as a 4-LP set, as a single LP with musical and dialogue excerpts, and as an album containing only the film's musical score. The ground-breaking film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was issued by Warner Bros Records as a 2-LP set containing virtually all the dialogue from the film. RCA Victor also issued a double-album set what was virtually all the dialogue from the film soundtrack of *A Man for All Seasons*, Decca Records issued a double-album for *Man of La Mancha* and Disney Music Group (formerly Buena Vista Records) issued a similar double-album for its soundtrack for *The Hobbit*.

Movie and television soundtracks

In the 2010s, the term "soundtrack" most commonly refers to the music used in a movie (or television show), or to an album sold containing that music. Sometimes, the music has been recorded just for the film or album (e.g. *Saturday Night Fever*). Often, but not always, and depending on the type of movie, the soundtrack album will contain portions of the score, music composed for dramatic effect as the movie's plot occurs.

In 1908, Camille Saint-Saëns composed the first music specifically for use in a motion picture (L'assassinat du duc de Guise), and releasing recordings of songs used in films became prevalent in the 1930s. Henry Mancini, who won an Emmy Award and two Grammys for his soundtrack to *Peter Gunn*, was the first composer to have a widespread hit with a song from a soundtrack.

By convention, a *soundtrack* record can contain all kinds of music including music "inspired by" but not actually appearing in the movie; the *score* contains only music by the original film's composer(s)^[3]

Video game soundtracks

Soundtrack may also refer to music used in video games. While sound effects were nearly universally used for action happening in the game, music to accompany the gameplay was a later development. Rob Hubbard and Martin Galway were early composers of music specifically for video games for the 1980s Commodore 64 computer. Koji Kondo was an early and important composer for Nintendo games. As the technology improved, polyphonic and often orchestral soundtracks replaced simple monophonic melodies starting in the late 1980s and the soundtracks to popular games such as the *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy* series began to be released separately. In addition to compositions written specifically for video games, the advent of CD technology allowed

developers to incorporate licensed songs into their soundtrack (the *Grand Theft Auto* series is a good example of this). Furthermore, when Microsoft released the Xbox in 2001, it featured an option allowing users to customize the soundtrack for certain games by ripping a CD to the hard-drive.

Theme park, cruise ship and event soundtracks

As in *Sound of Music Live!* the music or dialogue in question was prepared specifically for use in or at an event such as that described above.

In the case of theme parks, actors may be ensconced in large costumes where their faces may be obscured. They mime along to a prerecorded music, effects and narration track that may sound as if it was lifted from a movie, or may sound as if it had been overly dramatized for effect.

In the case of cruise ships, the small stage spaces do not allow for full orchestration, so that possibly the larger instruments may be pre-recorded onto a backing track and the remaining instruments may play live, or the reverse may occur in such instances as *Elvis: The Concert* or *Sinatra: His Voice. His World. His Way* both of which use isolated vocal and video performances accompanied by a live band.

In the case of event soundtracks, large public gatherings such as *Hands Across America*, The *Live Aid* Concert, the 200th Anniversary Celebration of the U.S. Constitution in Philadelphia, *The MUSE Concerts* or the various *Greenpeace* events (i.e. *The First International Greenpeace Record Project*, *Rainbow Warriors* and *Alternative NRG*) all had special music, effects and dialogue written especially for the event which later went on sale to the record and later video-buying public.

Book soundtracks

Only a few cases exist of an entire soundtrack being written specifically for a book.

‘Kaladin’, a book soundtrack to popular fantasy novelist Brandon Sanderson’s book, ‘The Way of Kings’, was written by The Black Piper. The Black Piper, hailing from Provo, Utah, is a combined group of composers who share a love for fantasy literature. ‘Kaladin’ was funded through Kickstarter and raised over \$12,000. It was released December 2017.

A soundtrack for J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* was composed by Craig Russell for the San Luis Obispo Youth Symphony. Commissioned in 1995, it was finally put on disk in 2000 by the San Luis Obispo Symphony.

For the 1996 *Star Wars* novel *Shadows of the Empire* (written by author Steve Perry), Lucasfilm chose Joel McNeely to write a score. This was an eccentric, experimental project, in contrast to all other soundtracks, as the composer was allowed to convey general moods and themes, rather than having to write music to flow for specific scenes. A project called "Sine Fiction"^[4] has made some soundtracks to novels by science fiction writers like Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke, and has thus far released 19 soundtracks to science-fiction novels or short stories. All of them are available for free download.

Author L. Ron Hubbard composed and recorded a soundtrack album to his novel *Battlefield Earth* entitled *Space Jazz*. He marketed the concept album as "the only original sound track ever produced for a book before it becomes a movie". There are two other soundtracks to Hubbard novels, being *Mission Earth* by Edgar Winter and *To the Stars* by Chick Corea.

The 1985 novel *Always Coming Home* by Ursula K. Le Guin, originally came in a box set with an audiocassette entitled *Music and Poetry of the Kesh*, featuring three performances of poetry and ten musical compositions by Todd Barton.

In comics, Daniel Clowes' graphic novel *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron* had an official soundtrack album. The original black-and-white *Nexus #3* from Capitol comics included the "Flexi-Nexi" which was a soundtrack flexi-disc for the issue. *Trooper* by Jim Woodring included a soundtrack album composed and performed by Bill Frisell,^[5] and the Absolute Edition of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Black Dossier* is planned to include an original vinyl record. *The Crow* released a soundtrack album called *Fear and Bullets* to coincide with the limited edition hardcover copy of the graphic novel. The comic book *Hellblazer* released an annual with a song called *Venus of the Hardsell*, which was then recorded and a music video to accompany with.

The Brazilian graphic novel *Achados e Perdidos* ("Lost and Found"), by Eduardo Damasceno and Luís Felipe Garrocho, had an original soundtrack composed by musician Bruno Ito. The book was self-published in 2011 after a crowdfunding campaign and was accompanied by a CD with the eight songs (one for each chapter of the story). In 2012, this graphic novel won the Troféu HQ Mix (Brazilian most important comic book award) in the category "Special Homage"^{[6][7]}

As Internet access became more widespread, a similar practice developed of accompanying a printed work with a downloadable theme song, rather than a complete and physically published album. The theme songs for Nextwave,^[8] Runaways,^[9] Achewood, Dinosaur Comics and Killroy and Tina are examples of this.

In Japan, such examples of music inspired by a work and not intended to soundtrack a radio play or motion picture adaptation of it are known as an "image album" or "image song," though this definition also includes such things as film score demos inspired by concept art and songs inspired by a TV series which do not feature in it. Many audiobooks have some form of musical accompaniment, but these are generally not extensive enough to be released as a separate soundtrack.

See also

- Audio restoration
- Cast recording – for musical theater
- Film score
- Filmi – term used for Indian film soundtracks
- Image album
- Image song
- Jingle
- List of soundtrack composers
- Music of Bollywood
- Musivisual Language
- Soundtrack album
- SoundtrackNet

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External links

- [SoundtrackTracklist Database](#)
 - [the Soundtrack INFO project](#)
 - [Internet Movie Soundtracks Database](#)
 - [FilmMusicSite.com Soundtracks Database](#)
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