

HOW DOES JOHN WILLIAMS MAKE E.T. SUCH AN EMOTIONALLY COMPELLING FILM?

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1. INTRODUCTION:

E.T. is one of the most well known and critically acclaimed films in the history of cinema. It was released on June 11th, 1982, and it still holds the record of the longest running film in theatres, with more a year of non stop screenings. The movie was nominated for 9 Oscars, and won 4 of them, including Best Original Score, by John Williams. The soundtrack also won the Golden Globe, BAFTA awards, as well as 3 Grammys (Best Album of Original Score Written for a Motion Picture or Television Special, Best Instrumental Composition and Best Instrumental Arrangement.)¹

John Williams is one of the greatest composers of all time, having an extraordinary sense of musicality and an innate talent of bringing films to life and turning them into timeless classics. He has been nominated 50 times to the Oscars, and has won 5 of them.² He and Steven Spielberg hold one of the longest artistic collaborations in history, spanning for more than 40 years, having worked on more than 25 films together.³ Their collaboration started in 1974 with Spielberg's second feature film, The Sugarland Express.⁴ Spielberg had listened to one of Williams' scores, and decided to find out who he was and hire him. John has scored all of his movies except one ever since, and he is

¹ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083866/awards>

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/oscars-2016-john-williams-receives-50th-nomination-a6813756.html>

³ <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jan/08/entertainment/la-ca-john-williams-20120108/2>

⁴ Nigel Morris- A companion to Steven Spielberg

currently working on the new installment of the Star Wars Saga, and is also scheduled to write the fifth movie from the Indiana Jones series.⁵

1.1. SYNOPSIS:

E.T. is a film which tells the story of Elliot, a young boy who finds an alien that has mistakenly been left behind on Earth. They instantly bond, and enjoy a loving and friendly relationship. E.T. however wants to go back home, and it is on Elliot to avoid the government to capture him and experiment with his body.

The movie is filmed mostly from the eye-level of a child, so the audience further connects with both characters. The adults' faces are hardly seen during most of the movie, we actually almost only get to see Elliot's mother. For this reason, the movie is considered a masterpiece, and that it is an ode to childhood and imagination, and also to the joy of discovering the unknown and accepting people (and creatures) who are different than you.

1.2. WHY DID I CHOOSE THIS FILM?

Much has been written about this movie and about its marvelous score. There are several reasons why I decided to choose this film for my thesis. First of all, this score is one of the best examples of how Williams uses music to manipulate the audience and guide them emotionally throughout

⁵ <https://www.espinof.com/en-rodaje/john-williams-compondra-la-musica-de-indiana-jones-5-y-star-wars-8>

the film. Without a score like this it is very likely that the movie would have been a failure. We probably wouldn't fall in love with E.T., we would actually think that he is ugly, scary or unappealing. We would most definitely not cry at the end of the film, and we wouldn't believe many of the narrative events of the plot. John Williams used his music to transform the images into an extraordinarily deep emotional journey, and I want to analyse it and try to see how he achieved this. He added magic to the movie, and constructed a memorable emotional landscape throughout the film. It is widely accepted that Steven Spielberg is one of the greatest directors of all time; however, in this particular film I think that he needed John Williams more than in any other. At many points in the movie the story is told almost exclusively by the music. I am very interested in seeing how he manipulates us, how he prepares us in the first moments of the film, to create such an emotionally intense ending. Everything in the movie is a buildup for the last scenes, and I want to analyse how Williams structures the themes and which moments he decides to play them in order to create such an emotionally compelling experience.

Second, it is impressive the relatively little material that John Williams uses in the whole movie to tell the story and convey all of the emotions. The themes are repeated over and over again, and yet it doesn't get to be boring or predictable, actually the opposite is true. I wanted to investigate how that

is achieved, and how he placed the themes in the movie to tell the story.

Finally, it has one of my favourite soundtracks of all time, and I wanted to get to study it in depth. the last scenes, and I want to analyse how Williams structures the themes and which moments he decides to play them in order to create such an emotionally compelling experience.

2. THE THEMES:

To start analysing the soundtrack for the movie, first of all I have identified its main themes. There are some sub-themes, motives and some other materials which appear two or three times at specific places in the movie, but for now I have focused on the main ones. I have counted the number of times that each theme appears, and there are clearly 5 principal ones, which appear constantly throughout the movie. They are the following:

E.T.'s Theme

E.T. + Elliot Theme

Bad Guys Theme

Save E.T. Theme

Love Theme

Once these themes were identified, I watched the entire movie a couple more times, taking notes on where they appear, the number of times that we hear them, and what is going on narratively when we listen to them. I have compiled a Cue List, which is shown in the next page. This Cue Sheet has served me as the central asset of this thesis, to create a clear roadmap of all of the thematic materials in the film. From now on, I will come back constantly to it when talking about how the music is structured along the movie. We will see that there are some clear patterns that are obvious at first sight, and some of them that take more than one or two viewings of the movie to be able to catch.

	TIME	CUE	LENGTH	SCENE
SEQUENCE 1 E.T. arrives	00:00:22	Main Titles theme	01:00	Main Titles
	00:01:27	E.T.'s Theme	00:30	Starry Night
	00:01:57	Spaceship Theme	02:20	Spaceship
	00:04:07	E.T. is Lost	00:45	E.T. First appears
	00:04:52	Bad Guys Intro	00:29	Bad Guys Cars are arriving
	00:05:21	Bad Guys Theme	00:34	Bad Guys first appear
	00:05:55	Bad Guys Theme + Chase	01:19	Bad Guys chase E.T.
	00:07:14	E.T.'s theme	00:24	E.T. sees spaceship leaving
	00:07:38	Bad Guys Theme	00:30	Bad Guys keep looking for E.T.
SEQUENCE 2	04:36 without music			
Elliot discovers E.T.	00:12:44	Main Titles theme	01:13	Elliot sees what's going on
	00:15:06	Save E.T. Theme	00:54	Elliot looks for E.T.
	00:16:00	Bad Guys Theme	00:20	Elliot sees one of the bad guys
	00:16:20	Save E.T. Theme	00:22	Elliot gets back in the bike
SEQUENCE 3	02:34 without music			
Elliot and E.T. become friends	00:19:08	E.T.'s Theme	00:13	Elliot looks outside the window
	00:19:25	Mysterious music	01:50	E.T. and Elliot's first real interaction
	00:21:16	E.T.'s Theme	00:50	E.T. goes in Elliot's room
	00:22:07	Mysterious music 2	00:31	E.T. messes around in his room
	00:23:02	Love Theme	00:50	E.T. mimics Elliot's movements
00:24:52	Bad Guys Theme	00:42	Bad guys are on the hunt for E.T.	
SEQUENCE 4	02:09 without music			
E.T. and Elliot interact	00:27:43	Love Theme (with intro)	01:46	E.T. starts learning about humans
	00:29:29	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:44	E.T. eats car, starts bonding with Elliot
SEQUENCE 5	03:35 without music			
The kids meet E.T.	00:34:04	Love Theme	02:20	Kids in wardrobe with E.T.
	00:36:04	Bad Guys Theme	00:56	Bad guys getting closer
SEQUENCE 6	01:44 without music			
E.T. interacts with kids	00:38:45	E.T.'s theme + mystery mx	00:58	E.T. trying to show where he's from
	00:39:43	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:15	E.T. makes plastiline balls levitate
	00:39:58	Bad guys theme	01:00	Elliot feels bad guys and looks for them
	00:40:58	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:10	E.T. reads book and makes
	00:40:08	E.T. Theme	00:09	dead flower blossom
SEQUENCE 7	02:22 without music			
Elliot and E.T. are connected	00:42:39	Mom suspicious	00:53	Mom hears something strange
	00:42:38	E.T. goes out alone	00:30	E.T. gets out of the wardrobe
	00:43:08	Drunk Theme part 1	03:28	E.T. goes to the fridge and gets drunk

	00:47:14	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:24	Elliot interacts with the frog
	00:47:38	Drunk Theme part 2	00:58	E.T. watches T.V. and reads cartoon
	00:48:35	E.T. Theme	00:28	E.T. discovers a way of going home
	00:48:55	Drunk Theme part 3	00:27	Elliot releases frog
	00:50:08	Kiss theme + E.T. + Elliot theme	00:30	Elliot kisses girl, everyone releases frog
SEQUENCE 8	04:24 without music			
E.T. Phone Home	00:55:02	E.T. Theme	00:16	E.T. Phone Home, while pointing to the sky
	00:55:18	E.T. is Lost theme	00:20	E.T. repeats E.T. Phone Home
	00:55:38	E.T. Theme	00:35	E.T. repeats E.T. Phone Home
	00:56:03	Bad Guys Theme	01:50	Bad guys in the van
	00:57:53	Love Theme	01:47	Elliot and E.T. together in the wardrobe
	00:59:40	Bad Guys Theme	00:10	We see the van
	00:59:50	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:32	E.T. building the phone
	01:00:22	E.T. Theme	00:10	Phone is starting to work
SEQUENCE 9	02:40 without music			
Going Out	01:03:02	Halloween Theme	01:10	The kids and E.T. walking around town
	01:04:12	Save E.T. Theme	00:48	E.T. and Elliot in the forest
	01:04:50	Elliot + E.T. Theme	01:00	Bicycle Scene
SEQUENCE 10	1:46 without music			
The Phone	01:07:36	Bad Guys Theme	00:30	Bad guys in truck
	01:08:06	E.T. + Elliot Theme	01:04	E.T. and Elliot make the phone work
	01:09:10	Bad guys in the house	00:34	Bad Guys in the House
	01:09:44	Intro + E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:50	We could grow up together, E.T.
	01:10:36	E.T. Theme	00:18	Home
	01:10:54	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:25	Elliot is sad because E.T. wants to leave
	01:11:19	E.T. Theme	00:11	E.T. says "home" and looks to the sky
SEQUENCE 11	02:02 without music			
Find him	01:13:32	Save E.T. Theme + emotional coda	01:17	Greg looks for E.T. with the bike
	01:14:49	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:04	He sees his costume abandoned
	01:14:53	Save E.T. Theme	00:11	He keeps on looking for him
	01:15:04	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:20	He finds E.T. lying on the riverbed
	01:15:24	Bad Guys Theme	00:16	Shadow of a bad guy next to the house
	01:15:40	Intriguing Music	00:28	Mom discovers E.T.
	01:16:08	Spaceship Theme (Comprob)	00:58	E.T. is sick, mom is scared
	01:17:06	E.T.'s theme	00:08	Greg opens door
	01:17:14	Bad Guys Theme	00:29	NASA guys come in
	01:17:49	Bad Guys Theme	00:14	More bad guys approaching
	01:18:03	Uncomfortable music	00:35	NASA guy finds E.T.
	01:18:38	Timpani	00:12	We see many more bad guys
	01:18:50	E.T. is lost	00:30	Bad guys installed outside of the house

	01:19:20	Bad Guys Theme	01:10	Bad guys interviewing family
SEQUENCE 12	03:34 without music			
E.T. is dead	01:25:04	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:34	E.T. and Elliot in the beds, E.T. is dying
	01:25:38	Love Theme	00:18	Greg is in the house
	01:25:56	E.T.'s Theme	00:10	Next morning
	01:26:06	Intense music	00:13	Flowers dying
	01:26:54	E.T. is dying	01:58	Medics trying to rehabilitate E.T.
SEQUENCE 13	02:49 without music			
Saving E.T.	01:31:45	Love Theme	01:13	E.T. is alone with Elliot
	01:33:58	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:29	E.T. is not dead
	01:34:27	They're coming	00:55	Elliot pretends like he's crying
	01:35:22	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:20	He tells Greg he's alive
	01:35:42	Elliot Escapes	00:20	Elliot steals E.T.
	01:36:22	Save E.T.	01:43	They steal the van
	01:38:05	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:05	Gertie says they are going to spaceship
	01:38:10	Chase continues	00:31	Elliot detaching tube from van
	01:38:41	Save E.T.	00:05	Bad guys fall from van
	01:38:46	Tense music	00:27	Van arrives to park
	01:39:13	E.T. Theme	00:13	Friends see E.T.
	01:39:26	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:13	We see E.T.
	01:39:39	Tense music	00:21	Bad guys arrive to van
	01:40:00	Bike Theme	01:02	Bike chase
	01:41:02	Bad guys theme	00:09	Bad guys in police car
	01:41:10	Bike Theme	00:15	The kids pass on top of them
	01:41:25	E.T. + Elliot Theme	00:39	We see E.T. in the bike
	01:42:04	Bike Theme	00:26	Bad guys with guns
	01:42:30	E.T. + Elliot Theme	01:00	Bikes flying
	01:43:30	E.T. Theme	00:18	Elliot finds phone
	01:43:48	Spaceship arrives	00:42	Spaceship arrives
	01:43:30	E.T. Theme	01:13	Spaceship lands
	01:43:43	E.T. Leaves	02:31	E.T. says goodbye to Gertie
	01:46:12	Love Theme	01:54	E.T. says goodbye to Elliot
	01:48:06	E.T. Theme	00:08	E.T. Says "ill be right here"
	01:48:14	Bike Theme	00:28	E.T. getting on ship
	01:48:52	E.T + Elliot Theme	00:39	E.T. is on ship
	01:48:31	E.T. Theme	00:15	Door closing
	01:48:16	E.T + Elliot Theme	01:48	Spaceship takes off
	01:50:04	Winning fanfare	00:08	Spaceship leaves
	01:50:12	E.T. Theme	00:21	E.T. is gone
	01:50:33	Save E.T. Theme	00:49	Credits
	01:51:22	Bike Theme	00:38	Credits
	01:52:00	Save E.T. Theme	01:41	Credits
	01:53:41	E.T. Theme	00:46	Credits

3. THEME ANALYSIS

3.1. E.T. + Elliot's Theme

Example 1. E.T. + Elliot's Theme mm 1-8

The musical score for Example 1, E.T. + Elliot's Theme mm 1-8, is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 8. The music is written for piano in 3/4 time. The melody is primarily in the right hand, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The key signature is C major, and the piece begins with a C major scale in the first two bars, which then transitions into a Lydian sound with the D over C chord.

The first and most memorable theme from the movie is the theme the one I have called E.T. + Elliot's theme. It explains the relationship between E.T. and Elliot, and how their friendship made both of them grow together. Is also the longest of all of the themes, and it is no coincidence. It goes through many modes, suggesting different harmonic tastes, and it also gives us the feeling of flying, not only physically, but emotionally as well. I will analyse this journey and try to explain how it works dramatically.

Melodically, the theme starts with a C major scale in the first two bars, but quickly develops into a Lydian sound with the D over C chord. Williams here wanted to transition from the more natural major sound to the more magical and fantastic Lydian scale. This in my opinion portrays the fact of something normal becoming extraordinary, which explains Elliot's life until he

met E.T., when it became full of fantasy and emotion. In my opinion, just these first four bars convey that message in a very effective way, as the melody has the same shape on bars 1-2 and 3-4 , but harmonically it is very different, it is a transformation of the first idea.

Williams keeps us going through this wonderful emotional journey, by keeping the harmonic changes interesting and unexpected. After the lydian sound, on bar 5 we transition to D minor, which would be a return to the major scale world. However, on the next bar the harmony changes to Ab major. This modal interchange to the minor scale from the major scale adds some unexpectancy and some tension. On the 7th bar the tension is further increased, with a diminished chord. Finally, on the 8th bar we resolve to the C major chord, back to normality. However, this the 7th added on the melody, which adds a little more colour, as well as fantasy, to portray that this emotional journey has returned to the same place as it started, but with some magic added. I am not sure to what extent John Williams was purposely conciously applying these theoretical musical concepts when writing this theme. Maybe he composed it all using his heart or his ears, but the reality is that the effect that he achieved is a masterfully harmonic colour journey with different modes and harmonies to add tension and emotion.

Dramatically, this works very well, as we instantly get the feeling that

Elliot is very comfortable with E.T., although there is some unexpected and tense moments. Elliot is very surprised but happy in most of his interactions with E.T. It is very hard to explain the relationship between an alien and a boy, however, the myriad of feelings that Elliot experiences are wonderfully portrayed in just these 8 bars.

Melodically speaking, the theme keeps on going upwards, leaping in big intervals, every time getting higher and higher. This, according to Williams himself, was purposely done to create the sensation of flying.⁶ I however would like to add that not only he wanted to create the sensation of visual elevation, but also emotional elevation in the audience. I would also even like to add that this theme tells the story of how something fantastic can only be achieved through uncertainty and some tension. The C major start of the theme goes through many changes, and when it comes back again it is more magical and powerful than before. It is like a musical story with a moral at the end of it.

Steven Spielberg is not a musician himself, but he often gives Williams very helpful musical inputs. He enjoyed this theme so much that he asked John to make it a little longer, as he felt that it was a shame to have such an excellent theme be so short.⁶ Williams then wrote the second part which

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_8RTDbDVTU

works in a very similar way as this first one, combining major stable harmony with modal interchange and unexpected changes to add tension, only to resolve to the main theme again.

3.2. E.T.'s Theme:

Example 2. E.T.'s Theme mm. 1-4



The second main theme of the movie is more about E.T. himself, and portrays his wishes of going back to his home. It helps us understand that he is an harmless creature, full of magic, that is delicate and has no intentions other than going back to the magical place he came from. It also helps us understand that he and Elliot are connected. John Williams is capable of achieving all of this in just four bars.

The theme is very short, musically it is actually made of 2 bars that repeat with a slightly different ending on the second time. Melodically, it is a theme that uses the C Lydian scale, which tends to evoke fantasy and magic. From an orchestration point of view, the theme is almost always played by a solo flute or a piccolo. This portrays that E.T. is lonely as well as fragile. The melody is very beautiful and delicate, so the audience can instantly perceive

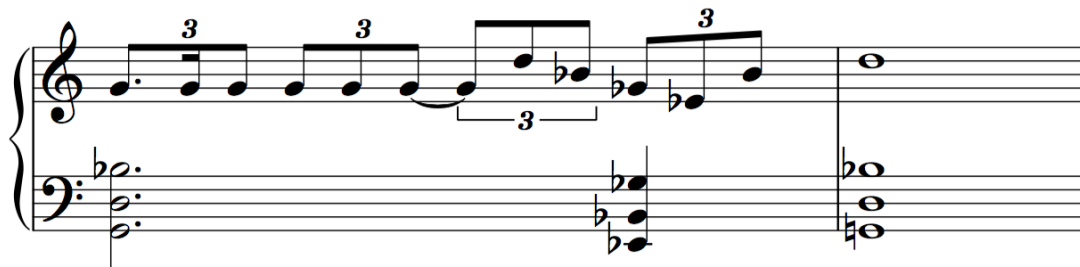
that even though E.T. is an ugly looking creature, he is sweet and loving on the inside.

As mentioned previously, this theme also helps to explain that E.T. and Elliot are connected in some kind of way. Melodically they are very similar, they both start with the C followed by the G. These two notes makes us instantly associate both characters, and make a special connection between them. Harmonically, the first two chords are C and D over C in both themes. It is a great way of blending them together, and making the audience feel that they are not different from each other even if visually they look completely different.

John Williams also wanted to evoke a feeling of mystery in E.T., to create a slight feeling of unsettledness or unresolving, from the fact that he is away from his home and wants to go back. He achieved this by playing the theme very rubato, sustaining the last note for 3 or more beats. That last D leaves us with the unresolved feeling, and by sustaining it we are constantly in slight suspense, as the melody is beautiful, but unresolved.

3.3. BAD GUYS THEME:

Example 3. Bad Guy's Theme mm. 1-2



This theme is one of the most important ones of the movie, as it works in the opposite direction than the other themes. It is also the shortest one, which again, is no coincidence. It is the theme used whenever the adults that are chasing E.T. appear. They are clearly the bad guys in the movie. We don't get to see them much, only parts of them. We see their keys hanging from their trousers, or their searchlights, but we don't really know who they are until the very end of the movie. The music needs to help to explain what is going on, and it need to make us understand that these people are up to no good, and that they are very dangerous. It keeps the balance between the good and the evil. This theme is shown every time that the bad guys of the story appear. This theme makes it really clear that there is something bad about to happen, and that we should be aware that the relationship between E.T. and Elliot is constantly endangered. Without this theme the movie would lose most of its emotional component. John Williams managed to do all of in a very clever and subconscious way.

First of all, the theme is only two bars long. All of the other themes are much longer and beautiful, but this one is short and dry, to try and convey the lack of humanity of the adults. Melodically it doesn't have much shape, it is very stable and kind of robotic. The first 6 notes are all the same, and then it doesn't move much from there. Harmonically, it is the only theme that is in a minor key. The chord progression is G minor to Eb minor, which is actually the same as first two chords from the Darth Vader Theme from Star Wars. This change from the 1st degree to the minor flat 6th degree is a very obscure and ominous harmonic change, and it creates a sense of evil and danger. It worked marvelously in Star Wars, and it also works really effectively this film.

When the bad guys finally take control of the house and of E.T., we are in some sense taken by surprise, because we had hardly seen them during the movie. However, on a subconscious level, we knew that they were going to be able to capture E.T. and experiment with him. The inevitability of this is portrayed by the music, and I think that when they finally capture him it is much more emotional and tragic, because we have been programmed to see that these people were bad. The music told us that the bad guys were dangerous, and from the very first scene we knew they were menacing. Without this strong association between music and image, the scene where E.T. is captured might seem strange or too obvious. With the music however it feels inevitable.

3.4. LOVE THEME:

Example 4. Love Theme mm. 1-3

This is the most intimate theme of all the movie. It is usually played by either harp or strings, and it is extremely simple. The main part of the theme is the one I transcribed, and it is just a B minor chord with the melody. The melody is kind of a variation of E.T.'s theme, but in the dorian mode, which in this case brings the feeling of intimacy and love between E.T. and Elliot. What makes it characteristic is the trill at the end of the second measure. It sustains for two beats, and it is a fast trill, which gives it a strong personality. The theme further develops, in a very romantic way, but always relies on these three starting measures as its central idea. This theme is very slow and usually played rubato, to further dive into this feeling of an intimate atmosphere that is created between both characters throughout the movie.

3.5. SAVE E.T. THEME:

Example 5. Save E.T. Theme mm. 1-8

This is the last of the five main themes from the movie. It is a bittersweet piece of music. It is happy yet nostalgic and slightly tragic. The theme is shown in moments when Elliot is looking for E.T., trying to save him. It is slightly desperate but yet hopeful. The melody goes downwards most of the time except when it leaps upwards and then back downwards. If you look at the melodic shape, it is a little bit like a rollercoaster, which is precisely what Elliot feels when he is looking for E.T.. He loves him yet he is deeply scared that they might take him away from him and hurt him. The harmonic progression goes from C to B to Bb and then to Db. It goes down and then it goes slightly up. It is like a feather falling down, and it is carried by the wind upwards every now and then. I think that this theme has a strong impact in the audience, as they can feel this emotional up and downs, and it helps us understand better what Elliot is going through during the movie when he is looking for E.T.

4. DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN THE THEMES:

Each of the themes has a clear purpose, and though they share many things in common, they each have at least one thing that makes them different.

As we have seen, all of the themes except the Bad Guys Theme start with the perfect fifth leap in the melody. This interval is very frequently used by John Williams, as it is a very neutral, but at the same time strong and solid. It connects them really well, and it makes them relate to one another. It helps connect all of the themes together. This film is about connection, about E.T. connecting with Elliot and about us connecting emotionally with them. This interval blends everything together and further helps with this connection.

The Bad Guys's theme is the only one which starts with a different interval. It actually just repeats the tonic at the beginning. This sets this theme apart from the rest, and we can tell it is completely disconnected from all of the beauty and magic brought by all of the other themes. It is one more way that John Williams is disconnecting the adults from the children and from E.T.. It is very likely that at a subconscious level we are feeling this when we are listening to the themes, and it all adds up to make the end of the film much more emotionally compelling.

5. THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE MOVIE:

The first thing that shocked me when I started analysing the movie was the amount of times that the same themes are heard. John Williams reuses them over and over again, to the point where it could seem like it is too much. From the Cue Sheet I extracted the number of times that the main themes appear in the movie:

E.T.'s Theme – 21 times

E.T. + Elliot – 18 times

Bad Guys Theme – 17 times

Save E.T. Theme – 9 times

Love Theme – 7 times

The first thing that comes to mind is: how did John Williams manage to repeat the themes so many times without sounding repetitive? I think this is a key point in determining why the music is so effective, and why the movie is so emotionally compelling.

The first reason why these themes don't seem as repetitive as they look on paper is because of the way they are structured throughout the movie. John Williams decided to have music appear in the film in blocks or segments, with all or almost all of his themes come in during these blocks. If we have a look the Cue List, we can see that there is always a long period with

non-stop music, where he includes his main themes. After each block there is a pause of around 2 to 3 minutes until the music comes again. Then all of the same themes are played back, in different order. These blocks could also be called musical sequences, as they coincide with the development of the story. There are 13 musical sequences in total, and the music always comes in when something important is happening. Music subtly gets reintroduced when something that furthers the narrative of the film has just happened. The music usually goes on until the scene changes, and the movie has evolved to the next narrative step. Once the action is over or the narrative development is halted, there is usually a break from music, to allow the film to breathe and to introduce the new story materials.

We soon get used to this structure, as it fits with the action and the story. This makes the themes easier to accept, as we expect them to come, and they are structured inside these musical blocks. It gives us a sense of balance and of stability.

As discussed previously, the whole film is a build up to the final scenes. We get attached to the themes and their involvement with the characters and the story. The final sequence has more than 20 minutes of non-stop music. We clearly get a sense that the film is almost over, because the music is just playing without a pause, unlike the rest of the film. We have been given this

constant input of a short period of music plus a shorter pause. When this structure is broken, we are much more involved in the movie, as we have lost this sense of stableness that this structure gave to us. We are very intrigued to see what is going to happen next. The ending of the film wouldn't have been half as effective if at some point the music just stopped. It constantly moves the action forward, and the last sequence just seems to fly by. By then we are extremely familiar with the themes, so much that we even might ignore them, and they appeal more to our subconscious level, allowing us to focus on the action. If new material was introduced at the very end of the film, we would have been more distracted, and it wouldn't have been as effective. The fact that the same themes have been played from the very start of the film allows us to immerse ourselves on the action while allowing the music to feel the scene for us.

There are of course many other elements that make E.T. an emotionally compelling experience, but I think that the simple fact of the way that the music is structure is of utmost importance. I think that John Williams very cleverly determined this from the very start of the movie, before starting to write a single note. He first gave an emotional shape to the movie, and he then decided what themes to write and where to place them specifically, scoring more to emotions rather than characters.

6. HOW THE THEMES ARE USED:

I am now going to analyse in more depth how the themes are presented in the movie, their specific function, as well as some key points in which they appear. One of the most important things to have in mind is when these themes are first introduced. This will determine what they are first attached to, and will have a great impact of what we think of what we are seeing on the movie versus the music.

6.1 E.T.'s Theme:

E.T.'s theme is the first one to appear. The movie starts with some eerie synth music, to make us feel slightly uncomfortable. If we are watching the movie for the first time, we might not know yet what we are going to see. We only know the name of the film; E.T. The Extraterrestrial. If we haven't read anything about the film, we are only watching the credits with some very dark music been played, and we might think this is going to be a scary movie or an uncomfortable one. Right after the credits we see the stars, and we hear E.T.'s theme once, played by a flute in its high range. After such an intense introduction, we hear this call, a short message of hope. It's a signal that something good is about to come. We instantly associate this theme with hope, and with longing something that is really far away.

6.2 Bad Guy's Theme:

The second main theme that we hear is the Bad Guys theme. We have already seen the aliens, and we haven't been able yet to determine if they are good or bad. We have just heard the Spaceship Theme, that is mysterious but neutral in a way, it doesn't make us take a side with the aliens or think that they are dangerous. However, when the Bad Guys's theme is presented for the first time, we know that there is some greater evil menacing these aliens. We see part of the adult's bodies, and the searchlights, and we instantly know that they are up to no good.

I think that this is very cleverly done, as the first emotion we feel is fear, even though we haven't had a chance to fall in love with E.T. yet. John Williams wanted to engrain this feeling in the audience from a very early point, so that the feeling of loss at the end of the movie could be as great as possible. We don't know E.T. at all yet, but we already don't want him to die. This theme tells us that he is vulnerable and that his life on Earth is very endangered. We feel very protective of him, and this theme makes us immediately we go on his side instead of on the bad guy's side who are trying to chase him.

Once the chase scene is over and E.T. is safe, we hear E.T.'s theme again. This is the first time the theme appears with him on screen. What was

first a longing call to space is now something concrete. We now know that E.T. is lost and he belongs to somewhere else. This also tells us that E.T. is good, and he just wants to return home. It establishes our emotional relationship with him.

The first scene ends with the bad guys theme, as we see them looking for E.T.. Now that we know that he is good, we really start getting on his side, and start to fear and even loathe the bad guys. As we have seen, the first scene just uses two main thematic materials, but it does so in such an effective way that John Williams doesn't need anything else to tell us what the scene needs to narrate. The first sequence is very obscure and dark, and it could have been very confusing to understand without the music. It plays an essential role in leading our emotions and starting the story's journey for us.

6.3 Save E.T. Theme:

The third theme that is presented is the Save E.T. theme, which happens in the second sequence. Elliot is on his bike in the forest, trying to look for the strange creature that he encountered the previous night on the backyard of his house. He is unsure of where he comes from, what his intentions are, and whether he is good or bad. He however knows that his life is in danger, and that he is vulnerable. He also knows that if he doesn't save him, probably nobody will. We hear the Save E.T. Theme when he is going

inside the forest, which establishes the relationship between Elliot trying to save E.T. with the music. From that point on, every time that he wants to save him, the music will play. John Williams wanted to give a lot of importance to this emotion, thereby writing a theme for it.

In this scene, Williams uses the same “sandwich” technique as in the first sequence, where he surrounds his theme with another one before and after. In this case, he first presents the Save E.T. theme, then he plays the Bad Guys Theme, and then he plays back the first theme again. This gives a greater sense of urgency to the Save E.T. theme. The second time we hear it we know that Elliot must act faster if he is to save E.T.. All of this happens at a very subconscious level, as the images are very subtle, and we just see an adult from afar. Without the music, this whole scene would have been very confusing, and we probably would miss much of what is emotionally and narratively going on.

6.4. LOVE THEME

I have decided to call this theme the Love Theme, but it could also be called the connection theme. This theme plays in the most intimate moments of the movie, when E.T. and Elliot are connecting deeply with each other. The first time that it appears in the movie is when E.T. is in Elliot’s room, and he is

mimicking all of his movements. We see that a special connection between them is being formed.

As always, this theme is followed by the Bad Guys theme. Almost every time that something special or intimate happens in the movie, the Bad Guy's theme is introduced right after. Throughout the movie we are subconsciously getting all of these musical hints that something really bad is about to happen. In the screen we are seeing very little, and we don't really know anything about the adults yet, or what exactly they want from E.T.. I think that the music is a constant warning sign for the moment when E.T. is captured. When that finally happens, we are in a greater shock than one might expect, because we have been all throughout the movie constantly warned about this. We have fallen in love with E.T., with Elliot and his family, and now they are taking him from us. I think that the loss feels greater because in a subconscious way we were expecting it. This has a huge emotional impact on us, and makes us feel extremely sad.

6.5. E.T. + ELLIOT THEME:

The final theme that is presented in the movie is the E.T. + Elliot Theme. The first time that this theme appears is in the fourth sequence, when Elliot gives E.T. the toy car, and he starts eating it. This theme is shown every time something funny or something magical or interesting happens between

them. I think that the difference between this theme and the Love Theme is that this theme is more a friendship theme, and the Love Theme is reserved for the more intimate moments. They are very similar, and they both serve a similar purpose, but in different ways.

7. PLACES IN THE MOVIE WITHOUT THE THEMES:

7.1 FIRST SCENE:

As discussed previously, during the opening credits of the movie we have some synth music that is very eerie and makes us feel uncomfortable. John Williams wanted to create this feeling at the start of the movie, so that we feel a little bit disconnected from the aliens.

When the spaceship first appears, however, Williams decided to compose some music that is slightly ominous and otherworldly. We see the aliens coming down from the spaceship, with their red lights in their bodies, while this music plays. As a viewer, we feel disconnected from them. We don't know what their intentions are. I think that John Williams decided to do this so whenever we finally become close to E.T. we feel more connected to him, as we were not sure at first of his intentions. If from the very beginning the music had been cheerful and loving, I think that the effect would not have been the same. The fact that we hear the themes after hearing the creepy

music makes us go through an emotional journey that helps makes us fall in love with E.T. and with the story.

7.2. DRUNK SCENE AND KISS:

In this scene Elliot leaves E.T. alone for the first time, and goes to school. E.T. opens the fridge and gets drunk. We see that Elliot reacts exactly like E.T., so he is drunk in class too. John Williams decided to go for a comical scoring ad-hoc for this scene, to make it as funny as possible. This is one of the only scenes where the themes wouldn't have worked. He scores the music to the rhythm of E.T.'s clumsy footsteps as he binge drinks beer. At the end of the scene however, when Elliot kisses his classmate, we hear ET + Elliot's Theme, which wraps up the whole sequence.

7.3. HALLOWEEN SCENE:

At the start of the Halloween scene John Williams wanted to give us a break from the themes, and he introduced new material specific to that scene. It is also a preparation for the big bicycle moment with the moon in the background, so he wanted to create a little tension before that magical lyrical moment. Williams tends through the movie and as well as of his career to use the music surrounding the big moments to make those moments even bigger. So instead of starting right away with the theme, he plays around with some elements to add tension and unexpectedness, so that when we finally hear

the big theme it is even more effective, as all that tension is resolved into something very familiar, big and magical. In this small passage, called “The Magic of Halloween”, he plays around with woodwinds, trumpets and string pizzicati. He adds some dissonances, and some triangle hits to create the feeling of uncertainty. He even quotes Yoda’s theme from Star Wars, when we see someone dressed up like him, in a clear tribute to George Lucas’s iconic film, which third and final installment was released just the year before that, in 1983.

These are the main moments of the movie without the constant presence of the themes. In other parts of the movie, we might hear additional material, but it is usually non thematical, just to add tension or connect two themes together so that there is not a silence in the music.

8. IN DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE LAST SEQUENCE:

The longest and most important sequence of the movie is the very last one, where all of the themes appear at least once or twice, and the orchestration is the biggest of all the movie. It is the most emotional part of the film, where E.T. is rescued by the kids from the bad guys. It is also the scene where E.T. finally gets his spaceship to work and leaves, so it is the most intense moment, and the music plays a crucial role in this. Throughout the film, John Williams has been preparing us and conditioning us with the music. By

now, we know that the bad guys are evil, and even if we don't see them on screen, we can identify them just by hearing their melody. We have lived so many great moments between E.T. and Elliot with his theme, that even if they are just looking at each other, by listening to the theme we go back to all of their great emotional connection.

The sequence starts with the Love Theme, when Elliot is alone with E.T. and he thinks that he is dead. It is a very intimate moment, and a moment of deep sadness and longing. The music supports this really well, and it is really clever to start with such a sad point, as from that moment on it just gets more exciting and emotional. It is the start of a great buildup. When Elliot realizes that E.T. is not dead, their theme comes in, bringing joy and excitement. In this moment of the film we hear very little music that is not thematically based. In many cases it is just used to connect the themes. There is no need for anything else to tell the story. That is part of the reason why the end of the film is so emotional, because we are already so familiar with the themes that they have become a part of us. When Elliot tells Greg that E.T. is alive, the E.T. + Elliot theme plays. Even though we had just heard it less than 2 minutes before, it works perfectly. We hear a short connecting material when Elliot steals E.T., only to come back to the Save E.T. theme when he steals the van from the bad guys. From that point onwards, there are some tense scenes where we want E.T. to be saved. John Williams could have scored just to

match those scenes, to add tension. Instead, he decided to use the main themes, to subconsciously anticipate the inevitable: that E.T. is going to be saved and he is going to leave. We don't know it consciously, but subconsciously he is preparing us for the big goodbye moment. It is like an injection of emotions that build up through the tense moments. When Gertie tells the bad guys that they are going to the spaceship, we hear again E.T. + Elliot's theme. It is yet another sign of hope. There is a short moment of tense music when the bad guys are trying to get to the van, that works as a buildup to yet again the Save E.T. theme when they fall. When Elliot's friends see E.T. get out of the van, we hear E.T.'s theme for the first time in the sequence. This is like a subconscious alert that he wants to get back home. When we see E.T. on the screen, we hear again E.T. + Elliot's theme. The moment of the bad guys with the guns is the most tense of the whole sequence, we see that they are really serious about stopping the kids. For a moment we think that they might use them, while we listen to the Bike Theme, which is part of the Save E.T. theme. When the bikes fly we hear the E.T. + Elliot theme again. This is one of the key moments of the sequence, as we know that now they are safe and nobody is going to stop them. It is also very closely related with the other flying moment, but instead of the moon in the background we see the Sun. The two have the same music, and it is the signature of the film, the most iconic moment. Once they are safe, Elliot finds the phone, and he sees that it is working. At that moment we hear E.T.'s theme, as well as when the spaceship

lands. So far, the sequence was all about Elliot trying to save E.T., but from now onwards it is all about E.T. leaving and saying goodbye. This is the only moment in the sequence where we hear a long piece of music that is not related to the thematic material. It is a bittersweet piece, when E.T. is saying goodbye to everyone. John Williams cleverly wanted to leave some space for the themes to breathe, only to bring them back again with more emotion and effectiveness. When E.T. says goodbye to Elliot, we hear the Love Theme, which is how the sequence started. It is the most intimate of all themes, and it is the only other moment in the sequence where we hear it. This is a very special theme, because it is like the E.T. + Elliot theme, but reserved for the very intimate and loving moments. The rest of the farewell scene is comprised mainly of the E.T. + Elliot Theme, the Save E.T. theme and E.T.'s theme. This is the climax of the entire movie, and the orchestration here is at its fullest. Once the spaceship disappears from the sky, we hear a small fanfare, to celebrate E.T.'s victory. For Elliot however, it is a bittersweet moment, and the very last cue of the movie is E.T.'s theme with big timpani hits at the end, focusing on Elliot's face in tears. It is like the grand finale of an opera, the end of a huge climax from almost 20 minutes of non-stop music.

9. CONCLUSION:

John Williams contributed in a very significant way to make E.T. a timeless masterpiece. His score is very innovative narratively, as he decided to create leitmotifs and themes for the different emotions of the movie. He had previously imitated Wagner's technique of creating leitmotifs for characters, most notably in Star Wars. However, he had never created leitmotifs for fear, love, friendship or homesickness like he did in E.T.

This technique that he developed in this movie allowed him to manipulate the audience as he had never done before, and make us fall in love with a very ugly looking creature. He pinpointed the key emotional moments of the film, and he traced back to similar emotional parts of the movie, to create a roadmap of themes and emotions, in order to prepare us for the big finale. The very last sequence of the movie is very overwhelming emotionally, and it might seem unexpected or unprepared at first, but he has been conditioning and preparing us for that since the very first note of the film.

The way the themes are connected with each other further adds to this emotional firework show at the end of the film. The way he intertwined the themes so that they didn't sound repetitive allowed him to introduce many more instances of the themes than what would be normal in a film.

Personally, I would say that out of all of Steven Spielberg and John Williams collaborations, this is the most successful one, as the story blended with the music and viceversa, creating a really powerful world of magic and an extremely well crafted and unforgettable story.

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