

Dunkirk (Christopher Nolan, 2017) an Action/Historical Drama about the British troops escaping to England from Dunkirk, while fleeing the Germans in World War 2.



The film's composer, Hans Zimmer, is known to be an excellent composer in every genre, working on films like 'The Lion King', all the way to 'Interstellar'. But his latest masterpiece was Dunkirk, in this film he makes it almost like the narrative is focused on the music. Even if you just listened to the sound for this film, you would be able to understand the plot and feel how intense it is. The music is one of the main narrative devices in this film, thanks to Hans Zimmer.

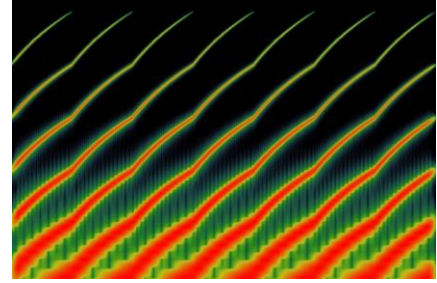


Zimmer has a few unique traits in his music which are special to his films. The main one, being ticking noises. This may sound stupid, but what he does is, he adds the sound of a ticking clock in his music in order to remind the audience that time is important. The whole plot of this film is about time, the tag line being "1 week, 1 day, 1 hour". The constant ticking in the soundtrack leaves the audience on edge, leaving them the feeling as if the characters in the film don't have enough time. The ticking sound effect was recorded on Zimmer's watch, giving him a direct input into the soundtrack. The ticking is meant to be a message to the audience, telling us that the troops don't have much time.

The most prominent example of this is the airplane plotline. All the events here take place over just one hour, but because the pilot's fuel gauge is broken, neither the character nor the audience knows how much time they have left. But at the end, we're shown how important time is, as the pilot only just barely saves hundreds of soldiers with his last bit of fuel. He had the opportunity to turn around earlier in the film, but he continued going, sacrificing himself and showing us the importance of time. Another example of this is the scene when the sailor is saving the soldiers covered in oil, they only just pull away at the final second before everyone gets set on fire. Even if they had to leave some people behind.

Zimmer also used another effect, called a shepherd's tone. This tone is a sound that constantly feels like it's rising, this works by making an instrument constantly rise in note, while

doing the same for 2 more of the same instruments, one an octave below and another an octave above. Once the instruments have gone up 12 semitones, the higher instrument loops round and takes place of the lowest instrument. This effect gives the feeling that something is always around the corner, like the music is always rising to a climax. A Shepard's Tone can also be reversed, giving the feeling of constantly falling.



As well as that, the music's dynamics in this film can be clearly distinguished as unique, especially considering the film got an award for sound mixing. The change in volume in intense moments, is meant to scare the audience. A good example is the scene in which the infantry is hiding inside of a boat, waiting for the water to rise. The sudden appearance of a bullet through the boat is meant to come as a massive surprise, which is helped by the massive spike in volume, which is then suddenly silenced by the

solders, as some scream while others worry about being caught. It keeps the audience in edge. Another example of good dynamics is when a torpedo is about to hit the boat the main characters are on, instead of suddenly getting loud, it builds up over a few seconds while we discover the slow torpedo in the water that's about to destroy the ship. The audience are forced to watch the horror unfold for a few seconds before anything happens. This makes the audience feel uncomfortable, the slow buildup of music over this scene is a warning to the audience that something bad is about to happen.