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Thoughts on Music

Though you may have never thought of it as such, music is a powerful force. It's an integral part of every culture and people group on this planet, being used to comfort, entertain, inspire, relax, unnerve and even intimidate.

Adding music to your videos practically puts your finger right on your viewer's mood buttons. Your video's music can punch up tension, excitement, tranquility, fear and many other emotions.

Though people will respond to a given piece of music in slightly different ways, there are some near-absolutes you can bank on when adding music to your video. Here are some specific emotions that music can enhance:

Tension Music itself has a degree of tension (or dissonance) depending on the notes that are used. More tension or dissonance usually translates to a feeling of unrest in the listener. Music that moves from melodious and pure to clashing and dissonant will carry the viewer along from peace to tension (or even anger). The sounds and rhythms themselves can also create tension, especially when harsh or abrasive sounds appear in short, staccato bursts.

Peace Music that has little or no dissonance can be described as pure and restful. Combine such simple harmonic content with a slow tempo and lazy, sustained notes and you have a sure-fire recipe to soothe the savage beast. Smooth strings and ethereal synthesizer sounds will wash over the viewer like waves of comfort. Follow tense, unnerving sounds with peaceful music for the maximum "aaaaahhhh" (sigh of relief) factor.

Excitement In the same way your heart gets pounding as excitement builds, music with a fast, steady beat will evoke feelings of energy and excitement. Action sequences, chase scenes and sports imagery all benefit from fast-paced, energetic music. Add a rocking tune to your video and you'll turn up your viewers' excitement several notches.

Anticipation Music that seems to spell out an unanswered question will build anticipation in your viewers. Much like tension, anticipation is often felt when music seems to be moving towards an unknown destination. As notes climb in pitch, so does the anticipation felt by your viewers.

Danger or fear The menacing low notes that served as a prelude to the shark in Jaws are the ultimate example of music triggering a powerful emotion. This musical motif was simple, visceral and terrifying. Low pitches aren't the only ones to convey danger or fear, however--high notes that seem to hang like mist in the air can also convey a feeling of unrest.

Best Regards and Happy Shooting!

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