

Late last year I found myself entranced by **Mati Diop's** wonderful *Atlantics*, a tale of forbidden passion, the perils of emigration and the fate of those who are left behind. Long, poetic shots of the sea merged perfectly with **Fatima Al Qadiri's** intoxicating soundtrack to produce a stunning collage of meaning and evocations. Leaving the cinema that night I was struck at just how powerful a medium the soundtrack can be. By **JOHN BITTLES**

It led me to consider my favourite films, dissecting their accompanying scores and moods. This week I bring you a selection of some of my favourite movie soundtracks. As always, the list is highly personal. I do not doubt there are some glaring omissions here, but these are the scores I have fallen in love with and listened to repeatedly, both with the accompanying visuals and alone.

So, pop on those headphones, dust down those VHS tapes, and let us begin...

Only Lovers Left Alive

Composed by alt rock mavericks **SQÜRL** and **Jozef Van Wissem**, the woozy rock soundscapes which accompany **Jim Jarmusch's** existential *Only Lovers Left Alive* is, like the film itself, a gloriously fucked-up ride. The movie is a reflective and meditative portrait of a pair of vampires who have become bored and alienated by life. Its accompanying score matches its lethargic feel with guitar rich ambiance and dirge like noise. The drug-induced wonder and crazed lyrics of *Funnel Of Love*, the atmospheric guitar plucking of *Sola Gratia (Part 1)*, and the dirt-strewn menace of *The Taste Of Blood* all artfully reproduce the film's disconsolate yet decadent air.

Key Track: The Taste Of Blood.

Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me

Like **Jim Jarmusch**, **David Lynch** is a director for whom the soundtrack is a vital component of a movie's whole. From the Gothic nightmare of *Lost Highway*, to the gentle acoustic strum of *The Straight Story*, the soundtrack of a **David Lynch** movie always matches the film's mood. The one I immediately fell in love with, and constantly find myself returning to is the strange, jazz stirrings of long-time associate **Angelo Badalamenti's** score for *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. Created as a prequel to the TV series, the movie ups the surrealism and mysticism to create a two hour experience which can make the viewer feel as though they have found themselves stranded within some strange dream. Merging the crazed, (*A Real Indication*, *The Black Dog Runs At Night*) with a selection of quiet jazz, (*The Pine Float*, *Best Friends*, *Moving Through Time*), and forlorn torch songs, (*Questions In A World Of Blue*) the album wins you over by conjuring a world of opulent despair.

Key Track: The Pink Room.

In the Mood For Love

Released back in 2000, *In The Mood For Love* stars *Maggie Cheung* and *Tony Leung* as two people dealing with loneliness in their lives. Directed by **Wong Kar-wai**, the film is a beautifully shot meditation on love, life, friendship and sorrow. With a stunning use of colour it was rightly nominated for a *Palme d'Or* at that year's

Cannes Film Festival. The soundtrack perfectly matches the mood and feel of the film, pairing jazz standards by *Nat King Cole* with traditional songs, and moments of orchestral beauty. *Yumeji's Theme* by **Shigeru Umebayashi** is a haunting and evocative piece of music that is capable of breaking your heart within the first play. Rich, romantic and swoon inducing, even without the lush visuals, *In The Mood For Love* is absolutely divine.

Key Track: Yumeji's Theme (Theme From In The Mood For Love).

Ghost Dog: The Way Of the Samurai

Let's be honest here, any soundtrack to a film by indie auteur **Jim Jarmusch** is going to be worthy of your time (this whole article could easily have been a rundown of his entire oeuvre). From the lonesome, guitar soundscapes of **Neil Young** which enhanced the lush black and white imagery of *Dead Man*, to **Tom Wait's** frenzied night-time jazz which was an almost constant companion to the taxi passengers in *Night On Earth*. One of the standout **Jim Jarmusch** scores though is the ghetto hip hop and old school electro of **Wu Tang Clan** head **RZA's** score for **Ghost Dog: The Way Of the Samurai**. Starring *Forest Whitaker* in one of his finest ever performances, **RZA's** vintage funk, soul and rap selections add an urban grittiness to the tale of a hit man living by the code of the samurai who finds himself increasingly isolated from the modern world.

Key Track: Samurai Showdown.

Lost In Translation

In 2004 **Kevin Shields** stepped out of semi-retirement to curate and compose the soundtrack to **Sofia Coppola's** film *Lost In Translation*. Set in Japan, the movie follows **Bill Murray** and **Scarlett Johansson** as a relationship between the pair begins to form. Thoughtful and meditative, it was the antithesis to the usual Hollywood blockbuster and was all the better for it. What really made the film come alive though was the fabulous music which allowed the long, lingering scenes to breathe. Songs by **Death In Vegas**, **The Jesus and Mary Chain**, **Air**, **Squarepusher** and **Sebastian Tellier** nestle next to Kevin's own tracks to create an album which is like one long, lazy sigh. With most songs sounding like they were recorded while the artists were in a romantic haze, this is a record which makes the perfect companion for spending the entire day in bed.

Key Track: Just Like Honey.

Wind River

Taylor Sheridan's *Wind River* stars **Jeremy Renner** as **Cory Lambert**, a wildlife officer trying to help FBI agent **Jane Banner** (**Elizabeth Olsen**) solve a murder on the *Wind River Indian Reservation* in Wyoming. Featuring long shots of wintery landscapes and battle-hardened faces, the film conjures a harsh, brutal world where death is but a moment away. **Nick Cave** and **Warren Ellis'** stark, haunting soundtrack ably captures the desolation and cruelty of this cold, bitter domain. Yet, within the album's dark brooding there is also a sense of melancholy and fragility with tracks such as *Corey's Story* and *Three Seasons In Wyoming* capable of bringing a tear to the eye.

Key track: Tell Me What That Is.

Drive

Nicolas Winding Refn's breakthrough movie starred heartthrob **Ryan Gosling** as a stuntman with an illustrious side-line driving getaway cars. Monosyllabic, the actor's feelings were displayed by a series of facial expressions, eyebrow movements, and the film's electrifying score. While the vast majority of the soundtrack was composed by *Cliff Martinez*, it was the tracks submitted by the label *Italians Do It Better* which made it stand out. *Night Call* by **Kavinsky & Lovefoxxx**, *Under Your Spell* by **Desire**, *A Real Hero* by **College**, and *Tick Of The Clock* by **Chromatics** featured retro synths and breathy vocals, and added a sense of sadness and romanticism to what could otherwise have been a stilted and brutal film.

Key Track: A Real Hero.

Blade Runner

Having *Blade Runner* in a list of your top movie soundtracks is a bit like saying that **Will Smith** is a tad annoying; so obvious it shouldn't need stating at all. Yet, there is a reason why the score by **Vangelis** is so revered, namely that it is beautiful, otherworldly, and has a seductive and romantic core. **Ridley Scott's** 1982 film is now widely regarded as one of the best, but some people forget that it was a flop upon release. It wasn't until the *Director's Cut* surfaced ten years later, which eliminated **Deckard's** voiceovers and allowed the fabulous visuals and score to dominate, that it achieved the classic status it deserved. Even today, the alien synthscapes of the opening title theme send shivers down the spine.

Key Track: Rachel's Song.

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