



Danny Elfman's Batman: A Film Score Guide

(Scarecrow Film Score Guides)

Janet K. Halfyard

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Danny Elfman is recognized as one of the most successful, interesting, and innovative figures in recent film music composition. He came to the fore in the late 1980s in connection with his collaboration with Tim Burton on his films including *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* (1985), *Beetlejuice* (1988), *Batman* (1989), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), *The Nightmare before Christmas* (1993), and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999). In addition to this, Elfman has composed music for more than 40 other films, including *Somersby* (1993), *Dolores Claibourne* (1995), *Good Will Hunting* (1997), *Men in Black* (1997), and *Spiderman* (2002).

Beetlejuice was the first mainstream commercial success of the collaboration, but *Batman* was the film which marked Tim Burton's arrival as a major figure in Hollywood film direction, and equally established Danny Elfman as a film score composer, particularly in relation to action and fantasy genres. The score for *Batman* won a Grammy in 1989 and is an outstanding example of his collaboration with Burton as well as admirably demonstrating his particular talents and distinctive compositional voice. In particular, it displays the characteristic "darkness" of his orchestration in this genre and the means he uses to create a full length film score from what is often a relatively small amount of musical material, in this case the famous *Batman* theme.

This book examines Elfman's scoring technique and provides a detailed analysis and commentary on the *Batman* score. The film is discussed in the context of its comic-book origins and the fantasy-action genre, setting it and its score against the late 1970s and early 1980s equivalents such as *Star Wars* and *Superman*, and revealing how Burton and Elfman between them changed the cinematic idea of what a superhero is. The book also explores Elfman's musical background, his place within the film music industry and the controversy that sprang up following the release of *B*



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