

# Star Wars: The Musical Experience, Part 1

## Producing a Soundtrack for Your Games

Patrick Stutzman

Take a moment and play your copy of *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace*. Fast-forward to the lightsaber battle between Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Maul near the end and watch it. Now that you have your fill of excitement, rewind the battle and watch it again, but this time, mute your television or speakers.

Does it seem different? Is the scene not quite as exciting? Perhaps it's because you're missing the sounds of the lightsabers clashing or the combatants' footsteps. That's definitely part of it, but what really makes this particular scene stand out is the music. Musical soundtracks play a key role in the way that we perceive movies, and music can enhance the atmosphere and add to the enjoyment of our games as well.

To best determine what music to use throughout the game, you need a basic idea of how music works with film to create a spectacular cinematic experience. You do not need to be a musicologist or any kind of musical expert to put together a soundtrack. As long as you have watched any of the Star Wars movies, you have a good starting knowledge.



If you listen to any movie soundtrack, whether it's from *Star Wars*, *The Godfather*, or even *Braveheart*, basic themes can be heard throughout the entire score. These themes connect with a particular character, location, or event in the story and may appear multiple times throughout the movie. These themes often spring to mind when we think about that character or place long after the film is done. For example, think of the "Imperial March," first introduced in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Odds are that as you listen to the music in your mind, a scene involving Darth Vader is also playing in your mind. The film score effectively ties the theme to the character and lets us know what is happening in the movie while we watch it.

In addition to themes, the style of music plays an integral part in the scene. The lightsaber battle we watched earlier has "Duel of the Fates" playing in the background. As we watch Obi-Wan fight for his life against Darth Maul, the fast-paced strings and brass combined with the haunting lines from the chorus pull us to the edge of our seats. The scene would be totally different, not to mention unacceptable, if a slow and melodic theme like "Anakin's Dream" from *Revenge of the Sith* was playing instead.

## Fast Tracks

When you piece together your soundtrack, it's important to know when to use certain tracks. As mentioned above, using the wrong music can destroy the mood and imagery that you intend to create. Unlike movies, having appropriate music playing all the way through our game sessions may not be feasible, so we have to know what potential scenes require specific music.



Fast-paced scenes can be broken down into two basic types: chases and combat. Although this sounds pretty simple, they can be further defined by subtypes. For our purposes, let's break combat down into ground battles, lightsaber duels, and starship battles.

Chases, by definition, are simply one force pursuing another. Whether the chase takes place on foot through the alleys of Mos Eisley, in airspeeders through the skylanes of Coruscant, or in ships through the vastness of space, chase music can be characterized by quick passages and menacing themes that intensify the threat of pursuit.

Examples of good chase music from the *Star Wars* soundtracks include:

- "Escape from Naboo" (*The Phantom Menace* Ultimate Edition, CD1, track 15)
- "Zam the Assassin/The Chase Through Coruscant" (*Attack of the Clones*, track 3, start at 1:03)
- "General Grievous" (*Revenge of the Sith*, track 5)
- "The *Millennium Falcon*/Imperial Cruiser Pursuit" (*A New Hope*, CD2, track 2, start at 1:51)
- "Rescue from Cloud City/Hyperspace" (*The Empire Strikes Back*, CD2, track 11, start at 3:51)
- "The Battle of Endor III" (*Return of the Jedi*, CD2, track 3, end at 1:58)



It's easy to find music for combat scenes. The name of the saga itself implies lots of battles, and the movies deliver, with fights from orbit around various planets, on planet surfaces, and in some cases, in the ocean's depths. Combat music includes rapid passages that replicate exciting attacks and intimidating themes to accentuate the enemies' actions, in addition to the ever-present heroic *Star Wars* music for climactic moments.

Examples of good ground combat music from the *Star Wars* soundtracks include:

- "Fighting the Destroyer Droids" (*The Phantom Menace* Ultimate Edition, CD1, track 5, start at 0:24)
- "Love Pledge/The Arena" (*Attack of the Clones*, track 12, start at 1:53)
- "Grievous and the Droids" (*Revenge of the Sith*, track 7, start at 1:12)
- "Shootout in the Cell Bay/Dianoga" (*A New Hope*, CD2, track 6, end at 2:12)
- "The Battle of Hoth" (*The Empire Strikes Back*, CD1, track 5, start at 2:05)
- "The Battle of Endor I" (*Return of the Jedi*, CD2, track 5)

Examples of good Jedi/lightsaber duel music from the *Star Wars* soundtracks include:

- "Duel of the Fates" (*The Phantom Menace*, track 2)
- "Battle of the Heroes" (*Revenge of the Sith*, track 3)
- "The Training of a Jedi Knight/The Magic Tree" (*The Empire Strikes Back*, CD1, track 11, start at 2:14)
- "The Battle of Endor II" (*Return of the Jedi*, CD2, track 7, start at 4:52)



Examples of good starship combat music from the *Star Wars* soundtracks include:

- "Panaka and the Queen's Protectors" (*The Phantom Menace*, track 12)
- "Bounty Hunter's Pursuit" (*Attack of the Clones*, track 9, end at 1:16)
- "Star Wars/The Revenge of the Sith" (*Revenge of the Sith*, track 1, start at 1:24)
- "Ben Kenobi's Death/TIE Fighter Attack" (*A New Hope*, CD2, track 9, start at 1:32)
- "The Battle of Yavin" (*A New Hope*, CD2, track 10)
- "The Asteroid Field" (*The Empire Strikes Back*, CD1, track 6)
- "The Battle of Endor III" (*Return of the Jedi*, CD2, track 8, end at 1:57)



## Finding Your Music

This article (and subsequent articles in the series) refers to various passages of music and provides information to help you find and use them in your game. These notes include the name of the movie and/or soundtrack title, the disc within the album, the track number, and any indicators of time within the track.

The soundtracks used for these articles include the Special Edition releases for the original trilogy (first released in 1997), the Ultimate Edition of the Episode I soundtrack (released in 2000), and the standard soundtracks for Episodes II and III. All of these soundtracks are available through Amazon.com, though the Special Edition releases for the original trilogy are now available bundled in one set instead of separated by movie. If you have different versions of the soundtracks, use the track titles and any CD liner notes to help you locate the music you seek.

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Feel free to post your thoughts or questions about this article in [this message board thread](#).

## About the Author

Patrick Stutzman is a freelance game designer whose credits include *Threats of the Galaxy* and the upcoming *The Clone Wars Campaign Guide* for the **Star Wars Roleplaying Game** Saga Edition. He also maintains his Web site, [Star Wars: The Forgotten Tales](#), and works on [SWRPGNetwork](#) under the name of Jan Tolbara. Currently, he lives in Kansas City with his wife, two children, and an annoying Force spirit that follows him wherever he goes. If you have any tips on how to get rid of this spirit, let him know.

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