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The Sacred and the Sinister: A Musicological Inquiry into Ave Satani in *The Omen*

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Abstract : No horror film song has won the Academy Award for Best Original Song, yet Jerry Goldsmith's Ave Satani from *The Omen* (1976) remains the only nominee. Its fusion of Latin liturgical elements, ritualistic rhythms, and dissonant harmonies enhances the film's dark symbolism. This study analyzes Ave Satani through a musicological approach, exploring its composition, thematic role, and cultural impact. Findings reveal its significance in reinforcing *The Omen*'s conflict between good and evil, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary perspectives in film music analysis and the potential of thematic scoring to deepen cinematic storytelling.

Keywords: horror film; musicology; theme song; film music



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1. Introduction

Horror film music has long played a crucial role in shaping cinematic experiences, yet it remains an anomaly in the Academy Awards' Best Original Song category. Despite the genre including some of the most memorable and evocative musical scores, no horror film song has ever won this prestigious award. The only exception is *Ave Satani* from *The Omen* (1976), the sole horror music ever nominated in the history of the category. This raises an intriguing question: why has horror music, despite its undeniable impact, been largely overlooked in this specific award category? A deeper musicological examination of Jerry Goldsmith's *Ave Satani* reveals its innovative qualities as a chilling hymn but also as a key narrative device that amplifies the film's underlying theme of the battle between good and evil. Understanding how *Ave Satani* achieves its haunting effectiveness sheds light on the broader role of music in horror cinema and its continued struggle for recognition within mainstream film awards. This lack of recognition suggests a need for further examination of how horror film music functions within both cinematic and cultural contexts, a gap this study seeks to address through a musicological analysis of *Ave Satani*.

Film music studies have explored various contextual themes, including socioeconomics, nationalism, and identity, emphasizing film music's role beyond mere accompaniment. Research highlights how film scores shape cultural narratives, as seen in studies on transnational identity in Kungfu films and Malay nationalism (Johan, 2017; McGuire, 2018). Despite the growing interest, detailed musical analysis in film music remains scarce, though motif and intertextual analyses have been applied to specific works like *The Lord of the Rings* (Chełkowska-Zacharewicz & Paliga, 2020; Jorgensen, 2010). Horror film music, in particular, draws from avant-garde influences, with Arnold Schoenberg's atonality inspiring unsettling cinematic scores (Black & Dunsby, 1993; Boon, 2023; Hilewicz, 2021; Jewell, 2007; Каянова, 2022). However, horror films also face religious scrutiny, as seen in Malaysia, where religious authorities monitor content to align with Islamic principles (Opir et al., 2020). Despite these developments, there is a noticeable lack of detailed musicological analysis of horror film music, particularly of religious-themed compositions such as *Ave Satani*. We argue that given its religious themes, *The Omen* exemplifies how horror film music navigates artistic, cultural, and ideological boundaries.

This study aims to provide a focused analysis of *Ave Satani* from *The Omen*. Despite its iconic status, *Ave Satani* has not received substantial academic scrutiny, especially in relation to its role as both a sacred and sinister construct. This research examines its compositional elements, including its rhythmic and melodic framework, harmonic language, and textual integration, in efforts to reveal how it evokes an

unsettling atmosphere while reinforcing the film's religious themes. Ultimately, this study seeks to position *Ave Satani* as a significant yet underexplored work within horror film music scholarship, offering deeper insights into the intersection of music, horror, and religious symbolism.

While previous studies have analyzed the role of film scores in shaping narrative and thematic elements, a detailed examination of how *Ave Satani* constructs its ominous and ritualistic atmosphere through its musical components is still lacking. This raises critical questions: What specific compositional techniques contribute to the unsettling nature of *Ave Satani*? How do its musical elements reinforce the film's portrayal of supernatural and religious conflict? And in what ways does *Ave Satani* exemplify the intersection of horror, music, and ideology within cinematic storytelling? Addressing these questions not only enhances our understanding of *Ave Satani* as a musical work but also sheds light on broader patterns in horror film scoring that continue to shape audience perceptions and critical reception

2. Literature Review

The academic study of film music in Indonesia has received limited scholarly attention, particularly from a musicological perspective. Most existing research focuses on technical and production aspects, such as scoring techniques (Ariani & Neta, 2021), the arrangement of film music illustrations (Rosiana Dewi, 2022), and the role of music in shaping cinematic atmosphere (Syukma, 2023). Other studies examine the use of classical music compositions in films (Panggabean et al., 2023), sampling strategies in film scoring (Purwacandra & Nainggolan, 2019), and the interplay between visuals and music in film choreography (Utami, 2023). However, these studies are largely descriptive and do not explore in depth how film music conveys symbolic meanings, particularly in shaping narrative and aesthetic elements tied to specific themes. For instance, research on *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* Pratama & Rozak (2021) discusses its musical characteristics but does not examine how these contribute to the film's narrative dimension. Likewise, studies on music in *Amadeus*, Panggabean & Simangunsong (2023) focus primarily on historical aspects rather than the dramatic role of music in film storytelling.

Moreover, research on horror films in the Indonesian academic context remains scarce, particularly in investigating how music contributes to building tension, atmosphere, and symbolism within the genre. Some studies have explored audio elements in film, such as the role of sound effects and musical illustrations in creating mood and ambiance (Manesah & Damanik, 2021; Supiarza, 2022), as well as post-production approaches in background music composition (Suryanto & Deli, 2023).

Another study focused on film scores (Rosiana Dewi, 2022) while the other demonstrates how music contributes to narrative development (Rukmana et al., 2019). However, no research has specifically examined how horror film music can symbolize the tension between sacred and profane elements. This gap is particularly striking given that many horror films utilize religious musical elements to heighten fear and antagonism, as exemplified by *Ave Satani* from *The Omen* (1976).

Furthermore, the study of the relationship between film music and cultural identity in Indonesia remains underexplored. Some research has addressed the process of music curation in films, the economic impact of the film industry on the music industry (Sokowati, 2022), and the role of film scores in establishing mood and narrative tone (Wibowo et al., 2015). However, most of these studies focus on industrial and technical perspectives rather than the symbolic and narrative functions of music. A study by (Hidayat & Sejati, 2023) highlights musical construction in animated films, but no research has specifically examined how musical elements create deeper symbolic meanings in horror films. This gap underscores the need for further exploration into how film music constructs symbolic narratives that juxtapose the sacred and the sinister. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how *Ave Satani* in *The Omen* employs musical symbolism within the horror genre.

Building on the limited scholarly attention to music in horror films—particularly those with religious themes—this study aims to provide a focused analysis of *Ave Satani* from *The Omen*. From a musicological perspective, this research examines its compositional elements, including its rhythmic and melodic framework, harmonic language, and textual integration, to efforts to reveal how it evokes an unsettling atmosphere while reinforcing the film's religious themes. Ultimately, this study seeks to position *Ave Satani* as a significant yet underexplored work within horror film music scholarship, offering deeper insights into the intersection of music, horror, and religious symbolism.

3. Method

The material object of this study is Jerry Goldsmith's composition, *Ave Satani*, the iconic choral piece from *The Omen* (1976). This song was selected for analysis due to its distinctive melodic theme, which is built using only notes within a single pitch, creating a stark, unsettling effect. Unlike conventional film scores that employ melodic variation to enhance narrative flow, *Ave Satani* relies on a rigid, chant-like structure that reinforces the film's ominous and sinister atmosphere. The central motif of the theme sounds intentionally non-melodic, almost mechanical, and seems disconnected from other soundtracks within the film, further emphasizing its role as

an antagonist's theme rather than a conventional leitmotif. This study examines the musical structure of *Ave Satani*, its development of motives, and its functional role in *The Omen*, particularly how its composition and orchestration contribute to the film's overall horror aesthetic and psychological impact.

Musicological analysis is a crucial tool in film music studies, as it provides insights into how musical elements contribute to narrative structure and emotional expression. Film scores are more than just background music; they serve as active components in shaping audience perception and cinematic storytelling (Provenzano, 2008). In the case of *Ave Satani* from *The Omen*, a musicological approach helps uncover how its use of Gregorian chant influences, dissonant harmonies, and dramatic orchestration create an atmosphere of supernatural dread. By analyzing its compositional techniques and stylistic choices, this study demonstrates how *Ave Satani* functions as more than a theme song—it is a musical embodiment of the film's antagonist, reinforcing the horror genre's conventions and psychological impact on viewers.

Musicology, as an interdisciplinary field, provides a diverse set of methods for understanding the role of music in cultural and cinematic contexts. It encompasses perspectives from bio-musicology (Fitch, 2015), religious and liturgical (Gustova-Runtso, 2023; Horst, 2024), and even geographical and gender-based analyses (Kirby, 2021; McClary, 1993). These varied approaches highlight the necessity of integrating musicological analysis into film studies to uncover deeper meanings behind musical choices. Previous research has emphasized that film music is not merely an auditory element but a complex signifier within a film's visual and narrative framework (Ghirardini, 2021). By applying these musicological perspectives to *Ave Satani*, this study reinforces the importance of film music as a subject of rigorous academic inquiry, demonstrating that its function extends beyond aesthetics to shaping cinematic experience and meaning.

This study processes data with musical form and motifs analysis to understand the musical work construction, including its elements and the central motif development. There are two models of music film analysis. The first relates musical works within a film and links it to its audience (see Chetkowska-Zacharewicz & Paliga, 2020). The second model contextualizes film music with world music elements in different films and media (Stock, 2021). This study is closer to the first but focuses on a film theme song. An effort was made with the support of theories through literature studies and qualitative data through free interviews to obtain evidence of the musical role within the film (Björk et al., 2021; Kvalsvik & Øgaard, 2021; Ravn, 2022).

This study was conducted in several structured stages to thoroughly analyze *Ave Satani* and its role in *The Omen*. The first stage involved reducing the transcribed orchestral full score of *Ave Satani* into a simplified piano score, arranged in treble and bass staves, to facilitate detailed analysis. Next, the primary melodic line was isolated from its accompaniment, allowing for a clearer examination of its structural characteristics and thematic development. After identifying the fundamental motifs within the composition, we compared these motifs to the sections of the film where *Ave Satani* is prominently featured, particularly in the opening and ending credits. To further understand the song's contribution to the film's overall atmosphere, we also traced modified versions of *Ave Satani*'s motifs within the illustrated musical passages that accompany specific scenes. This step helped determine how variations of the theme were adapted to enhance tension, foreshadow events, and establish the film's dark, supernatural tone.

4. Results

Richard Donner's *The Omen* (1976) stands as a seminal horror film, weaving a chilling narrative around the rise of the Antichrist and the eternal struggle between demonic and holy forces. At the heart of its unsettling atmosphere is Jerry Goldsmith's score, a composition that defied convention and solidified his reputation as an innovator in film music. Goldsmith, already an established composer, crafted an unconventional soundtrack for *The Omen*, with *Ave Satani* as its centrepiece. More than just an accompaniment, his music functions as an essential narrative force, shaping the film's tension and amplifying its ominous themes. Examining the unique qualities of *Ave Satani* reveals why it remains one of the most distinctive and influential horror scores in cinematic history.

4.1. Rhythmical motives

Jerry Goldsmith employs a slow, steady, ritualistic tempo in *Ave Satani*, deliberately mirroring the measured pace of religious chanting. This choice reinforces the sense of solemnity and ritual, making the piece feel as though it belongs to a sacred ceremony rather than a conventional film score. Traditional liturgical music, such as Gregorian chants, follows a similar rhythmic structure, using sustained, evenly paced phrasing to encourage meditation and spiritual contemplation. By adopting this method, Goldsmith transforms *Ave Satani* into an eerie, almost hypnotic invocation, subverting expectations associated with sacred music. The deliberate pacing amplifies the song's unsettling atmosphere and could be said to blur the boundary between sacred and profane, evoking a dark inversion of religious reverence. As a result, the piece becomes

an essential element of *The Omen*'s horror aesthetic, reinforcing themes of demonic influence and unholy ritual through musical structure alone.

The central motif, coded as 'a,' serves as the foundation of *Ave Satani*'s thematic structure, first introduced in the prologue (measures 1–2) as a two-measure phrase. This motif is constructed by combining a two-note figure with a three-note figure (measures 1 and 3), forming a complete five-note pattern within a single pitch. Its distinct repetition reinforces the thematic identity of the composition. Embedded within this motif is the Latin phrase “Sanguis bibimus, corpus edimus”, which strengthens its ritualistic and ominous character. The entire composition contains fourteen motifs derived from motif 'a,' with four primary derivatives—a1, a2, a3, and a4 (see Figure 1). These derivatives further develop into sub-derivations, expanding the motif's structural complexity. Throughout Part One and the antecedent phrase of Part Three, the central motif is transposed up by a perfect fourth, becoming motif a1. However, in Part Three, the motif reappears as a.1.1, a further derivation of a1. Through systematic transformation and repetition, motif 'a' not only defines the thematic core of *Ave Satani* but also evolves across different sections of the composition, enhancing its ritualistic and unsettling quality.

Figure 1: The simple rhythmical motif in slow tempo mirroring religious chanting (Source: Authors' transcription)

The figure displays a musical score for 'Ave Satani' with the following sections and motifs:

- Prologue:** Features the central motif 'a' (measures 1-2) and an interlude 'b' (measures 5-6) marked '(piano)'. The lyrics are 'sa - nguīs bi - bi - mus, cor - pus e - di - mus.'.
- (Repetition of thematic phrase statement):** Shows the motif 'a' repeated (measures 10-11) with the lyrics 'Sa - nguīs bi - bi - mus, cor - pus e - di - mus.'.
- Part One (antecedent):** Labeled 'A', it features motif 'a1' (measures 15-16) with the lyrics 'Sanguis bi-bimus, - cor-pus e-dimus.' for Tenor & bass.
- (consequent):** Labeled 'a2' (measures 17-18) and 'a3' (measures 19-20), it features the lyrics 'To - le cor - pus Sa - ta - ni A - ve vln & vla' for soprano.
- (antecedent):** Labeled 'A1', it features motif 'a1' (measures 25-26) with the lyrics 'Sa - nguīs bi - bi - mus, cor - pus e - di - mus.'.
- (consequent):** Labeled 'a1' (measures 27-28) and 'c1' (measures 29-30), it features the lyrics 'To - lle cor - pus Sa - ta - ni A - ve' with an '(acc. pattern)'.

The consequent phrases of Period A and A1 introduce a rhythmically shortened version of the central motif, which fills only one measure, as seen in m. 16 and m. 25 (see Figure 1). This rhythmic compression is a key reason for naming this modified motif 'a2,'

highlighting a diminutive transformation of motif 'a.' The rhythmic alteration specifically articulates the last note, contributing to its distinct identity. Within this rhythmic diminution, the melodic line undergoes a shift from monotonic to melodious, demonstrating an essential transformation in musical expression. In Part Three, motif a2 evolves into its derivative, a.2.1. This transformation involves a change in melodic direction, though not in contrary motion. Specifically, the first figure, corresponding to the word Tolle, moves in an opposite vertical direction, while the second figure, associated with Corpus, retains the same movement pattern as motif a1 (m. 41). This interplay between altered and retained motion contributes to the motif's evolving character. Additionally, the two subsequent measures (mm. 18–19; see also mm. 26–27) following motif a2 should be motif a3, marking another stage in the motif's development. This transformation reflects Goldsmith's nuanced approach to thematic variation, reinforcing structural coherence while allowing for expressive fluidity. Through these modifications, *Ave Satani* achieves a dynamic evolution of its central motif, balancing thematic repetition and inventive variation. By altering rhythmic structure and melodic contour, Goldsmith crafts a motif that retains its core identity while adapting to different sections of the composition, contributing to the piece's eerie and ritualistic atmosphere.

4.2. Harmonic characteristic

The harmony in *Ave Satani* plays a crucial role in intensifying the tension and unease that permeate the piece. Goldsmith deliberately employs minor chords, which are naturally associated with sadness, foreboding, and melancholy. This choice reinforces the dark and ominous tone of the composition. The unsettling quality of the harmony is further heightened through deliberate dissonances, such as the clash of sharp intervals that disrupt harmonic stability. For example, the use of sharp second intervals prevent harmonic resolution, leaving the listener in a constant state of discomfort. Additionally, tritones and minor second intervals—often referred to as the “devil's interval” in Western music theory—are strategically placed within the composition to enhance its ominous and menacing quality. These harsh dissonances not only create an eerie soundscape but also evoke a sense of chaos and instability, mirroring the film's supernatural themes. By avoiding traditional harmonic cadences and continuously building tension without release, Goldsmith ensures that the audience remains unsettled, reinforcing the music's role as an auditory representation of evil. As a result, the harmony in *Ave Satani* creates a deeply haunting effect, making the composition feel increasingly dissonant and spiritually discordant—an approach that perfectly aligns with the film's portrayal of dark, ritualistic evil.

Figure 2: Minor harmony atmosphere in simple polyphony passage (Source: Authors' transcription)

The consequent phrases of Period A1 and A2 introduce a rhythmically shortened version of the central motif, occupying only one measure, as seen in m. 16 and m. 25 (see Figure 2). This rhythmic compression justifies naming the modified motif 'a2,' marking a diminutive transformation of motif 'a.' The alteration emphasizes the last note, distinguishing it from the original. This rhythmic diminution also shifts the melodic line from monotonic to melodious. In Part Three, motif a2 develops into motif a2.1, with its melodic direction changing in an imprecise contrary motion. The first figure (Tolle) moves in an opposite vertical direction, while the second (Corpus) retains the same movement as motif a1 (m. 41). Additionally, the following two measures (mm. 18–19; see also mm. 26–27) should be identified as motif a3, marking another stage in its development. These modifications demonstrate Goldsmith's balance between repetition and variation. By altering rhythmic structure and melodic contour, the motif retains its identity while evolving, reinforcing the composition's eerie and ritualistic atmosphere.

4.3. Controversial Lyric

The distinctiveness of *Ave Satani* lies in its use of Latin lyrics, which contribute to its unsettling effect. Unlike many film scores that rely on traditional instruments and harmonies to establish atmosphere, *Ave Satani* applies language to evoke uneasiness. Latin is inherent to Catholic rituals, conveying a sense of solemnity and reverence. However, in *Ave Satani*, its use within a dark and ominous context subverts these expectations, transforming what is usually sacred into something deeply unsettling. This contrast amplifies the film's eerie atmosphere and heightens the audience's psychological tension. By repurposing a language traditionally linked to religious sanctity, *Ave Satani* manipulates audience expectations, reinforcing its role as an iconic and chilling horror film score.

Table 1: Ave Satani lyric in Latin and its translation (table created by the authors)

Lines	Latin	English
1	<i>Sanguis bibimus</i>	We drink the blood
2	<i>Corpus edimus</i>	We eat the flesh
3	<i>Tolle corpus Satani</i>	Raise the body of Satan
4	<i>Ave!</i>	Hail!
5	<i>Ave, ave versus Christus!</i>	Hail, hail the Anti-Christ!
6	<i>Ave Satani</i>	Hail Satan!

The structure of the lyrics in *Ave Satani* is characterized by a concise arrangement of repeating verses. This deliberate repetition enhances the composition's chant-like quality, reinforcing its ritualistic and ominous atmosphere. As shown in the table above, the lyrics feature short yet impactful phrases, such as "Sanguis bibimus, corpus edimus. Tolle corpus Satani, ave." The creation of these lyrics resulted from a consultation between the composer and a London orchestral choirmaster, an expert in Latin, ensuring linguistic accuracy and authenticity (Lysy, 2018). The strategic use of repetition and the expertise behind the lyrics contribute to the composition's haunting and ceremonial effect, aligning with the film's dark themes.

5. Discussion

The Jerry Goldsmith's *Ave Satani* stands out as a singular anomaly in the history of Academy Award nominations for Best Original Song, diverging sharply from traditional film compositions. Unlike previous nominees, Goldsmith crafted a chilling “black mass” chant that subverts sacred Latin hymns by reversing their meaning and praising Satan instead of God. This deliberate manipulation of religious themes creates immediate discomfort, reinforcing the song's sinister tone. Musically, *Ave Satani* draws from Gregorian traditions but distorts them through deep, ominous male voices that evoke unsettling ritualistic imagery. The harmony, laden with sharp dissonant intervals and monotonous melodic motifs, generates anxiety, while the minor scales deepen the sense of darkness and dread. Additionally, the use of organs and choirs—typically associated with sacred music—ironically amplifies the song's tension rather than providing solace. These elements collectively make *Ave Satani* an unnerving and unique contribution to horror film music, cementing its status as one of the most distinctive and daring compositions ever recognized by the Academy.

Ave Satani serves a crucial function in *The Omen*, extending beyond its role as background music. By positioning this chant as both the opening and closing theme, the film establishes an atmosphere of darkness and malevolence while reinforcing the

underlying thematic conflict. The use of *Ave Satani* at the film's opening primes the audience for a narrative centred on sinister forces, immediately setting the tone for the unfolding horror. The composition intensifies the tension between the divine and the demonic, not merely evoking general dread but directly aligning with the film's central theme of a cosmic struggle between God and Satan. This conflict defines the story's tone, with *Ave Satani* reinforcing the pervasive sense of evil surrounding the protagonist. Additionally, by incorporating this chant, Goldsmith creates a subconscious cue for viewers, foreshadowing the horrors that will soon unfold. Through its strategic placement and thematic significance, *Ave Satani* solidifies the film's ominous atmosphere, ensuring that its sense of dread lingers from beginning to end.

Despite its innovation and distinctiveness, horror film music has historically received limited recognition. This lack of recognition perhaps is due to the genre's tendency to push musical boundaries, often resulting in unsettling or unconventional compositions that may not align with mainstream tastes. *Ave Satani* exemplifies this phenomenon through its use of a Latin chant that intentionally subverts traditional religious music, creating an unsettling atmosphere. Such compositions challenge conventional musical norms, making them less accessible and harder to categorize within award systems that typically favour more familiar and harmonious soundtracks. The experimental nature of horror film music often positions it outside the realm of what is traditionally celebrated, despite its artistic merit. Ultimately, while *Ave Satani* stands as a testament to horror's innovation in film music, the genre's divergence from uplifting or romantic compositions has contributed to its under-representation in major award categories.

The motifs in *Ave Satani* shape *The Omen*'s musical identity, enhancing both joyful and tragic moments. Motif a and motif b evolve strategically to contrast emotions. Motif b, introduced as a triadic broken chord in the prologue, transforms into a lyrical love theme (00:06:48 – 00:07:32) during Robert (main actor, protagonist) and Katherine's (main cast support) happiness, continuing through scenes like Damien's (passive antagonist) fifth birthday (00:10:27 – 00:10:51). However, the same motif darkens in tragic moments, such as Katherine's distress over her pregnancy (00:45:51 – 00:47:16) and Robert's grief after her death. Its melancholic variation recurs during Robert's return home (01:26:32 – 01:27:15), intensifying his realization about Damien's identity (see Donner, 1976). The dynamic development of *Ave Satani*'s motifs highlights their versatility, seamlessly shifting between emotions. This nuanced musical storytelling deepens the film's emotional weight, reinforcing its horror and dramatic elements.

Ave Satani merges traditional song structures, dissonant harmony, and church music elements, crafting a unique horror film composition. Its atonality, motif development, and orchestration heighten the film's supernatural atmosphere. Following a three-part song form, the piece relies on two main motifs which generate variations. Dissonant intervals, a key feature of atonal music, sustain unease throughout, aligning with post-1950 Gothic and supernatural horror scores. Low-register instruments like cello, contrabass, and bassoon further deepen its dark tonal palette. An Indonesian composer interviewed for this study emphasized the importance of these elements in crafting an ominous soundscape. Through sophisticated motif development, harmonic tension, and orchestration, *Ave Satani* exemplifies the musical demands of horror cinema, solidifying *The Omen's* Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song.

Integrating traditional song structures, dissonant harmony, and church music elements, *Ave Satani* achieves a distinctive horror film composition. Its atonality, motif development, and orchestration enhance the supernatural atmosphere. The piece follows a three-part song form and utilizes two main motifs, with variations throughout. Dissonant intervals, characteristic of atonal music, create unease, aligning with post-1950 Gothic and supernatural horror scores. Low-register instruments like cello, contrabass, and bassoon add to the dark tonal palette. The importance of these elements in creating an ominous soundscape is evidenced through its intricate motifs, harmonic tension, and orchestration. The importance of these elements in creating an ominous soundscape is evidenced through its intricate motifs, harmonic tension, and orchestration. *Ave Satani* deploys these elements to meet the unique demands of horror film scoring, contributing to *The Omen's* Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song.

6. Conclusion

Jerry Goldsmith's *Ave Satani* in *The Omen* marks a significant innovation in horror film music. By integrating Latin liturgical elements, ritualistic rhythms, and dissonant harmonies, Goldsmith crafted a theme that is both haunting and narratively essential. Its fusion of post-1950s horror harmonic language with sacred music conventions reinforces the film's themes of good versus evil. Functioning as both an opening and closing motif, *Ave Satani* heightens tension, amplifies emotional depth, and underpins the film's dark symbolism. As the only horror film theme ever nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Song, its recognition underscores its lasting impact on horror cinema.

This study addresses the space between traditional musicological analysis and

emerging interdisciplinary approaches, particularly through psychological and cultural perspectives. By examining horror film music within a broader analytical framework, it underscores the aesthetic and narrative power of theme songs in shaping cinematic experiences. This research not only contributes to contemporary film music studies but hopefully also offers insights for composers and scholars seeking to refine and innovate horror film scoring. We believe this encourages a deeper exploration of how film music can evolve while maintaining its emotional and symbolic effectiveness.

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