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# Examining Musical Elements in Toy Story Soundtrack "You've Got a Friend in Me"

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#### **ABSTRACT**

# Animated comedy and adventure films are highly enjoyable to watch. In addition to being an enjoyable film, it is also suitable for viewers of all ages, ranging from children to adults. Furthermore, films of this genre are often sought after by families seeking weekend entertainment. In addition to being captivating to watch, films in this genre typically aim to impart a moral message. The "Toy Story" is a well-known animated comedy about friendship and adventure. It effectively conveys a message of friendship, a familiar theme to viewers. The film's soundtrack, "You've Got a Friend in Me", is highly memorable and strongly associated with the movie. This essay will examine the audio of this renowned film. In this study, we employed qualitative methodologies. Qualitative methods refer to research approaches that aim to comprehend phenomena in a research object by describing them using language. This study aims to analyze the musical composition of the film "Toy Story" theme song to understand its characteristics and elements comprehensively. Data collection was conducted through discography investigations, book reviews, and observations. Discographic study involves analyzing, describing, and explaining the results of auditory experiences. We examined the "Toy Story" theme song in audio format, accessible on platforms like Spotify and YouTube, and the musical score. The purpose was to facilitate the evaluation of the song's form, structure, and musical elements. "You've Got a Friend in Me" exhibits a higher level of complexity in terms of chords and melody than a usual song. It surpasses the average in chord complexity, melodic complexity, chord melodic tension, chord progression novelty, and chord-bass melodies.

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Toy Story is a 1995 American computer-animated comedy film created by Pixar Animation Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Pictures (Wise, 2014; Gay, 2018). John Lasseter directed it, marking his debut as a movie director. It is noteworthy for being the first computer-animated feature picture and Pixar's first venture into animated filmmaking (Sawicki & Moody, 2020). This video narrates the tale of a little lad named Andy and his family, who are on the verge of relocating to a new residence. Andy is ecstatic since his birthday aligns perfectly with the day he will be moving. Due to her extremely hectic schedule, Andy's mother rescheduled Andy's birthday one week earlier. Andy received numerous presents from his family. It elevates Andy's other toys to the status of his favourite toys, specifically a cowboy doll named Woody, prompting the other toys to get inquisitive about the possibility of being replaced by other toys. Woody delegates toy soldiers to enter the living room and gather intelligence on the unwrapping of Andy's presents. He communicates with the baby monitor. Adjacent to Woody, there are several toys like Mr. Potato Head, Slinky Dog, and a toy dinosaur named Rex, all experiencing anxiety. In addition to the four individuals mentioned, two other characters are involved: a piggy bank named Hamm and a porcelain doll named Bo Peep. Hamm and Bo Peep were also informed of the soldiers' espionage findings. The individuals feel relieved since no playthings are available to substitute their current ones until Mrs Andy presents them with an unexpected present - a pristine action figure.

Music has emerged as a crucial component in the evolution of the cinema business (Connell, 2012; Anyanwu & Sylvanus, 2022). In a film, we are invariably linked with listening to music (Rosar, 2002; Inglis, 2012). A study examines the role of music in films, specifically how it can be employed and understood to convey a narrative and tale, as well as influence the audience's evaluation and perception of the film. This research examines the soundtrack "You've Got a Friend in Me" from the Toy Story film. Since this soundtrack corresponds to the Theme Song of the Toy Story movie, we will refer to it as the Main Theme for the rest of our conversation. Randy Newman composed the tune (Goldmark, 2021). Randy Newman, known for his exceptional songwriting and film composing skills, was an unexpected choice to compose the score for Pixar's highly praised 1995 animated picture, Toy Story. Since the late 1960s, Newman has established a reputation as a songwriter known for using irony and satire (Schafer, 1970; Negus, 2011). While he occasionally showcases moments of compassion and melodic beauty, he may not be the most conventional option for composing music for a children's picture.

Nevertheless, Toy Story's theme song, "You've Got A Friend in Me," is undeniably and convincingly a flawless match. It quickly became one of Newman's most successful works and demonstrated his exceptional skill to a younger audience of movie enthusiasts. Newman received an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song for the song, and the Toy Story soundtrack also received a contender for Best Original Score.

Newman's songwriting takes on a distinct aspect when he writes on demand. Although he is typically inclined to approach the subject with cynicism, he takes a straightforward approach to the song "You've Got A Friend in Me." When discussing these contrasting techniques, he told BBC Radio 4's Master tapes that they are highly unlike. "Did you expect me to compose the song "You've Got A Friend in Me"? I resemble a salesperson specializing in pre-owned vehicles. However, the picture required that specific modification, and I possessed the capability to execute it successfully, which is a source of pride for me". This

song holds even greater significance as it consistently features in all three films of the Toy Story trilogy. In Toy Story 2, Woody sings the song when he suddenly realizes his life. Later, the song is sung by Wheezy the Penguin (voiced by Robert Goulet) when he pledges his friendship to the other toys. At the start of the movie Toy Story 3, there is an ironic punch when it is played during the opening credits. The words, "As time elapses, our camaraderie will endure indefinitely", diminish as it is shown that adolescent Andy has completely disregarded his former toy companion, who is now stored in a container. This theme song became one of Newman's most successful tracks, highlighting his exceptional skill to a fresh cohort of film enthusiasts.

#### 2. METHODS

For this study, the researchers employed qualitative methodologies. Qualitative methods refer to research approaches that aim to comprehend a phenomenon inside a research subject by articulating it through verbal descriptions (Fossey, et al., 2002; Alase, 2017). This research aims to comprehensively understand the theme song in the Toy Story film by analyzing its musical composition in "You've Got a Friend in Me". Data collection was conducted through discography investigations, book reviews, and observations. Discography studies involve analyzing, describing, and interpreting recorded sounds (Zagorski-Thomas, 2007). We listen to the audio version of "You've Got a Friend in Me", which can be found on platforms like Spotify and YouTube, as well as music scores. The purpose is to facilitate the study of its form, structure, and musical elements. We gathered multiple theories about musical creation and the musical characteristics of "You've Got a Friend in Me". Analyzing the audio soundtrack aims to ascertain the musical instruments employed in "You've Got a Friend in Me". This essay comprehensively analyzes literature from academic publications, reputable websites, and scholarly articles. These sources serve as references to address the issues presented in this research.

#### 3. RESULT

Film "You've Got a Friend in Me" was released on April 12, 1996, and quickly became one of Newman's most successful songs, demonstrating his exceptional skill to a younger audience of movie enthusiasts. Newman's song also garnered him an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song, while the Toy Story soundtrack received a nomination for Best Original Score. The theme song, which won the Academy Award for Best Original Song and Best Original Score, exhibits excellent musical form, structure, and parameters. First, we will analyze the musical instruments in the composition "You've Got a Friend in Me".

### 3.1 Musical Instruments

The musical instrument utilized in this song is remarkably intriguing despite its simplicity. Randy Newman skillfully infuses a highly influential element into this Toy Story theme song, particularly evident in the first section. In Figure 1, the instruments include a Bb Clarinet, Drum set, Piano, Acoustic Guitar, and Violin. In this first movement, the Bb Clarinet assumes the role of the major melody, while the piano and violin serve as the counter melodies to the Bb Clarinet. The piano functions as a bass instrument using a low range with parallel quint intervals, then enhanced and intensified with a staccato technique. The violin plays on the second beat following the initial beat and then pauses for one beat.

# You've Got a Friend in Me



Figure 1. Intro part of "You've Got a Friend in Me"

At bar 14, the Bb Clarinet and Violin assume the role of a counter-melody to the main vocal melody. They do so by utilizing distinct registers and textures, which contribute to a rich and layered quality in the vocal melody. Subsequently, the addition of drum percussion adheres to a consistent rhythmic pattern, resulting in a more compact and enriched beat throughout all the instruments. A counter-melody is a series of notes that form a melody and are intended to be played at the same time as a more prominent main melody. Put simply, it refers to a supplementary melody that is played in contrast to the primary melody.



Figure 2. Bars 10-17 of "You've Got a Friend in Me"

In bar 30, a recurring pattern emerges when the Bb Clarinet and Violin instruments exhibit a homophonic texture. This texture is characterized by the same rhythm and movement across one or more parts. Homophonic texture is a musical genre characterized by many sounds being performed concurrently, resulting in an intriguing composition.



Figure 3. Homophonic texture of Bb Clarinet and Violin instruments in bar 30

An intriguing aspect of the chord progression in this Theme Song is that "You've Got a Friend in Me" is composed in the key of Eb Major. It is due to the prevalence of major chords, as well as minor chords, in popular music. The three primary chords, constructed from the first, fourth, and fifth scale degrees, are all major chords (Eb Major, Ab Major, and Bb Major). The theme song is composed in the Key of Eb Major. The intro section features a series of chords, as depicted in the image below.

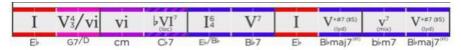


Figure 4. The intro section features a series of chords

Here, we can observe that the evolution utilized is more intricate than straightforward, as we often perceive. Now, let us examine the development in the Verse part. There is a diminished seventh chord derived from the fourth chord of the Eb Major scale.



Figure 5. the development in the Verse part

"You've Got a Friend in Me" exhibits a higher level of complexity in terms of chords and melody compared to typical songs. It surpasses average scores in chord complexity, melodic complexity, chord melody tension, chord progression originality, and bass chord melody.

# 3.2 Chords and Melody Metrics

Theme Song Toy Story has complex music; it is real, as discussed at this point, namely chords and melody metrics. There are two metrics to consider when assessing chord complexity relative to the above mentioned ones. The first is whether the chord contains additional notes beyond the 3 that comprise the main chord described above. Adding notes to a chord increases complexity because it increases the number and nature of intervals or note interactions that our ears must process. The Cmaj7 chord, for example, is similar to a regular C chord, except that it has an additional note: B. In addition to the intervals C—E, E — G, and C—G, we now have twice as many when we add C—B, E—B, and G—B. The nature of the interval also changes; C — B is called 7 (because 7 notes are counting from C to B along the scale), and this interval did not exist before. The 7th is more dissonant than the 3rds and 5ths of a regular C chord, so our ears perceive it as more complex.

The Sus2/Sus4 chord and the summed ninth chord are other chords with additional notes. Songs with chords will be judged to have more chord complexity than those without. The second factor we pay attention to is whether a chord contains notes outside the song's key scale. Our ears naturally expect to hear notes on a scale, so chords with non-scale notes tend to sound more exotic and complex. Chords that do this are often called borrowed chords because they use notes they "borrow" from a different scale. For example, the fourth chord is usually an F major in the key of C major. If, instead, we assume the key is C Minor, the fourth chord is an F minor chord. Using an F minor chord in a chord progression that is in the key of C Major will sound more complex because our ears do not expect it (the same goes for using an F Major chord in a song that is in the key of C Minor). Other examples of chords that contain non-saccadic tones are secondary chords and chords with certain non-diatonic changes. When a melody is played over a chord progression, their interaction is one of the most important aspects of a song. When the notes in a melody are contained within a chord (for example, a C melody note over a C Major chord, which contains C, E, and G), this creates a sense of stability. If this note is not present in a chord (for example, a D note above a C Major chord), it creates a sense of instability and tension.



Figure 6. Progression chord in C Major

Film soundtracks are critical in shaping the audience's emotional and psychological experience. They provide aural cues that enhance the narrative, establish mood, and convey themes. In Toy Story, "You've Got a Friend in Me" serves as both a leitmotif and an emotional anchor, encapsulating the themes of friendship and loyalty central to the film.

"You've Got a Friend in Me" is composed in Eb Major, a key known for its warm and uplifting qualities. This choice aligns with the film's themes of camaraderie and support, creating a comforting and nostalgic atmosphere that resonates with audiences of all ages. The song's harmonic structure is both simple and sophisticated. The primary chords in Eb Major (Eb Major, Ab Major, and Bb Major) provide a stable foundation. In contrast, introducing secondary dominants and borrowed chords adds harmonic interest and depth. For instance, using an A7 chord as a secondary dominant leading to Adim7 and then resolving to C minor introduces complexity that enriches the musical texture.

The chord progression in "You've Got a Friend in Me" follows a conventional yet emotionally potent path. The introduction typically sets the key with a straightforward I-V-I-IV progression, establishing a sense of home and stability. This progression is vital in film music, as it grounds the listener and prepares them for the narrative journey.

In the verse, the progression becomes more varied:

Eb - Bb7 - Eb - Ab- Adim7 - Eb- Ab- Eb- G7 - Cm - Ab- Eb- G7 - Cm - Ab- Eb- Cm - Ab- G - Cm - F7 - Bb- Eb- C7 - F7 - Bb7 - Eb

The shift to minor chords (C minor) introduces a subtle melancholy that reflects the complexities of the characters' relationships. Using F7 as a predominant chord leading to Bb Major creates a sense of forward motion and anticipation, mirroring the characters' evolving dynamics.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Leitmotif and motif development are crucial techniques in film music that composers use to establish thematic unity and evoke emotional responses. A *leitmotif* is a repetitive musical motif linked to a specific movie character, place, or concept (Vilaró & Orero, 2013; Albrecht & Wöllner, 2015). Its purpose is to consolidate the storyline and offer the listener auditory signals that strengthen the story's ideas and emotions (Green, 2010). The song "You've Got a Friend in Me" in Toy Story serves as a leitmotif, emphasizing the core topic of friendship, particularly the strong connection between Woody and Buzz.

Upon its initial introduction, the song establishes the overall atmosphere for the entire film. The joyful and lively melody and warm harmonies promptly create a feeling of companionship and support. The thematic content reoccurs in various forms throughout the movie, constantly reminding the audience of the underlying message of friendship and devotion. By linking this melody to the important moments of bonding and resolution between Woody and Buzz, the song strengthens the emotional significance and maintains the coherence of their relationship.

Motivic development pertains to manipulating a concise musical idea or motif and introducing variations across a composition (Dobbins, 1980; Lamont & Dibben, 2001). This method enables a composer to establish harmony and coherence while offering sufficient diversity to sustain the listener's engagement.

Randy Newman skillfully utilizes motivic progression in his composition "You've Got a Friend in Me." The song's main theme, a straightforward yet memorable melody, is initially presented in the beginning measures and elaborated upon in different ways. This motif is distinguished by its melodic contour that rises and falls and its rhythmic simplicity, contributing to its memorability and easy recognition. Newman alters this recurring theme by employing different instruments, harmonies, and rhythms. For example, the motif could initially be introduced directly through performance, including voice and piano. Subsequently,

it may be repeated by the clarinet and violin, albeit with minor modifications, to mirror the evolving emotional atmosphere of the film. This variant maintains the motif's novelty and captivation, but its repetition stabilizes the listener's emotional encounter.

In addition, Newman employs motivic development to emphasize significant periods in the narrative. When Woody and Buzz encounter instances of disagreement or harmony, the recurring theme may be modified to mirror the strain or resolution. During a conflict, the motif can be performed in a lower key or with discordant harmonies to express inner upheaval. On the other hand, in a moment of reconciliation, the motif may return to its initial shape, creating a feeling of finality and conclusion. The interplay between leitmotif and motivic development in "You've Got a Friend in Me" showcases Newman's adeptness in employing musical approaches to bolster and enrich the film's storytelling. The leitmotif is a central theme that connects the plot, while motivic development provides the required variance to depict the evolving nature of the characters' interactions.

Consonance and dissonance are core principles in music theory that pertain to the harmonic characteristics of intervals and chords (Cazden, 1980; Kirnberger, et al., 1979). Consonance is connected to harmony (Cazden, 1945; Alves, 2012), stability (Trost, et al., 2014), and resolution (Bass, 2007), whereas dissonance is associated with tension, instability, and the requirement for resolution (Cooper, 2012; Makowski & Epstein, 2012). In the song "You've Got a Friend in Me," Newman skillfully combines harmonious and discordant sounds to mirror the characters' emotional progression. The song primarily showcases consonant intervals and chords, such as major thirds and perfect fifths, which generate a feeling of warmth and solidity. Maintaining harmonic stability is essential to effectively communicating the song's fundamental topic of friendship and support.

As an illustration, the Eb Major chord (Eb - G - Bb) functions as a stable and reassuring element in the song, creating a sense of confidence and comfort. When the melody corresponds to the chord tones, for example, when a melody note G is played over an Eb Major chord, it strengthens the feeling of stability and harmony. Nevertheless, Newman incorporates instances of dissonance to mirror the characters' internal struggles and intricate emotional states. Dissonant intervals, such as minor seconds and tritones, generate a feeling of tension that necessitates resolution. For example, a melody note F played above an Eb The major chord incorporates a discordant minor seventh interval (Eb - F), generating tension that is ultimately resolved as the melody transitions to a consonant note. These instances of discordance are strategically positioned to reflect the story's emotional high points and low points. The music may incorporate discordant harmonies during situations depicting disagreement or uncertainty between Woody and Buzz. As their relationship grows stronger and they reach a conclusion, the music returns to consonance, mirroring their emotional reconciliation.

Voice leading is the method of seamlessly transitioning between chords by shifting individual notes (or voices) in a way that reduces dissonance and preserves a consistent harmonic progression. Efficient voice leading is essential in cinema music to guarantee that the harmonic progression aligns with the visual and emotional coherence of the scene. Newman's implementation of voice leading in "You've Got a Friend in Me" is understated yet impactful. He guarantees the smoothness of chord transitions, resulting in a harmonious flow that accentuates the lyrical and narrative elements of the song. When transitioning from an Eb Major chord to a Bb Major chord, Newman frequently keeps shared tones (like Bb) and makes little adjustments to the other notes. This strategy fosters a feeling of unity and seamless advancement.

Illustration of seamless voice leading:

The key change is from Eb Major (Eb - G - Bb) to Bb Major (Bb - D - F).

Tonic note: Bb

Minimal note displacement: Eb is transposed down to D, while G is transposed down to F.

The smooth vocal leading in this song ensures the stability of its harmony, even when using intricate chords or modulations. Additionally, it guarantees that the harmonic alterations complement the melodic line of the song, enabling the melody to traverse the chord progressions smoothly.

Voice leading also contributes to the accentuation of significant narrative events. During a key change or modulation, Newman employs voice, leading to a smooth transition between keys and guaranteeing a seamless shift that amplifies the dramatic effect of the action.

The incorporation of consonance, dissonance, and voice leading in "You've Got a Friend in Me" showcases Newman's proficiency in employing harmonic approaches to enhance the film's storytelling. Newman's use of consonant and discordant harmonies effectively captures the emotional nuances of the characters' relationship. Efficient voice leading guarantees that the transitions between harmonies are smooth, preserving the unity of the song and intensifying its emotional resonance.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

This essay examines the crucial significance of Randy Newman's theme song "You've Got a Friend in Me" in the 1995 animated film "Toy Story," illustrating how its musical components and compositional methods enrich the film's storyline. This song, essential to the Toy Story trilogy, functions as a leitmotif that captures the fundamental ideas of friendship and loyalty. The work is written in the key of Eb Major, which gives it a warm and uplifting quality. It complements the piece's themes and creates a soothing and nostalgic ambience for the audience. The harmonic structure of "You've Got a Friend in Me" by Newman achieves a harmonious blend of simplicity and complexity. It establishes a solid base using basic chords while incorporating secondary dominants and borrowed chords to enhance depth. In the beginning, the I-V-I-IV sequence generates a feeling of familiarity and steadiness, which is crucial in film music for anchoring the listener and priming them for the narrative experience. The verse progression, characterized by its diverse chord selection that encompasses minor chords, mirrors the intricate dynamics of the characters' interactions, enhancing the song with heightened emotional depth. Newman utilizes motivic development as a crucial approach, which involves manipulating a succinct melodic theme throughout the song. The song's primary motif, characterized by an ascending and descending melodic shape and rhythmic simplicity, is diversified through various instruments, harmonies, and rhythms, ensuring the motif remains captivating and novel while offering emotional stability. This technique enables the song to accurately reflect the changing emotional ambience of the film, with alterations that correspond to the characters' emotional progressions and pivotal events in the storyline. An essential component of the song is the interaction between consonance and discord. Consonant intervals and chords, such as major thirds and perfect fifths, produce a sense of warmth and stability, which is crucial for effectively communicating the concept of friendship. Dissonant intervals, like minor seconds and tritones, mirror the characters' internal conflicts and intricate emotions, generating a sense of suspense that needs resolution. Newman strategically incorporates dissonance in key narrative moments, intensifying the emotional peaks and valleys and enriching the characters' journeys. Another

highlighted approach is voice leading, which involves changing individual notes to minimize dissonance and preserve a continuous harmonic progression, resulting in seamless transitions between chords. Effective voice leading is essential in film music to synchronize harmonic progression with the visual and emotional coherence of the scene. Newman's utilization of vocal leading in "You've Got a Friend in Me" guarantees seamless transitions between chords, leading to a melodious progression that amplifies the song's poetic and storytelling aspects. "You've Got a Friend in Me" is not just a theme song but rather a complex musical composition that elevates the plot of Toy Story. The song enhances the film's themes and intensifies the audience's emotional connection through its intricate harmonies, development of musical motifs, and deliberate incorporation of both consonant and dissonant elements. Newman's adept composition demonstrates his outstanding capacity to bolster and enhance the story of the film, so establishing the song as a lasting component of the Toy Story trilogy. Newman has solidified "You've Got a Friend in Me" as a legendary composition in film music by crafting a theme song that strongly connects with the film's themes and the viewers. This piece is still revered for its profound emotional and melodic qualities.

#### 6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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