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### **Ludic Melodies: Towards a functional taxonomy of music in video games**

Although communication between the film director, who perhaps lacks the vocabulary to articulate musical ideas, and composer has always been problematic, they have at least had the common languages of emotion and storytelling to fall back on. The evolving medium of video games not only encapsulates many of the functions of music familiar to us from film, but also presents fresh communication challenges with regard to the new roles and functions of music within the sometimes highly abstract world of gameplay mechanics.

Some of the addictive nature of video games, and a root cause of their popularity, stems from their ability to meet our intrinsic psychological needs, such as the need to achieve competence or mastery, with immediacy and consistency. Balancing the players skill with the challenge presented to enable the powerfully immersive state of 'flow' requires that music function in new ways, providing the player with vital information to support success, and with reward to motivate them when success is achieved. Music can be called upon to provide information about gameplay states, to add feedback or commentary to player's actions, to provide instruction or even orientation to the player, or form part of the mechanics of play itself.

In a contemporary echo of Gallez's 1970's attempt to synthesize the literature around film music to form 'A functional taxonomy of film music',<sup>1</sup> this paper presents a critical review of the field in order to help develop a common language for understanding the functions of music in this new medium.

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<sup>1</sup> D.W. Gallez, 'Theories of film music', *Cinema Journal* 9/2 (1970): 40–47.