

Janet K. Halfyard: The Sound of Whedon: The Influence of Joss Whedon's Early Television Series on TV Scoring

The innovations Joss Whedon promoted in the musical strategies of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Firefly* have had a lasting influence on subsequent scoring strategies, especially in cult TV. Key ideas here are the use of thematic scoring, introduced as a key element of *Buffy's* music from season 2 onward; and the use of contrasting idiomatic scoring, heard in *Firefly's* use of American folk, Eastern modes and 'supercultural' orchestral scoring (Slobin, 2008) for *Mal/Serenity*, *Inara* and the *Alliance* respectively as a means of defining and delineating areas of narrative space. This, in itself, is an extension of *Buffy's* own strategy where the narrative slippage between genres (horror, romantic drama, teen drama) is signalled musically, classic horror tropes contrasting with thematic scoring focusing on the emotional lives of characters, and popular music in the *Bronze* creating a third musical space. My main example is *Supernatural*, which closely parallels *Buffy's* overall strategy in the use of subtly thematic writing focused on love and loss, particularly associated with Dean's emotional vulnerability, contrasting with gestural horror scoring and the third space of the *Impala* and its associated rock music. Furthermore, like *Buffy*, *Supernatural* regularly plays genre games involving music, in episodes that never merely imitate Whedon's playful approach to genre (e.g. 'Hush,' 'Once More, with Feeling'), but extend, develop and reinvent ideas of musical playfulness in scores that build on the legacy of Whedon and contribute significantly to furthering the work that Whedon's composers began in establishing a genuinely televisual rather than filmic approach to music.