

## Danny Elfman

### Composer

“You’ll never make it as a musician.”

“Sure, you have talent, but it takes a lot of luck to become a rock star.”

These are words that you will probably hear if you tell someone that you want a career in music. But have you ever thought about using your passion for music to write soundtracks for film? That’s what Danny Elfman did. He took his passion for music and turned it into a career as one of the most successful **composers** for television and film in Hollywood.

We sat down with Danny Elfman and asked him a few questions about his life and career as a **film-score** composer:

**Express Yourself: Did you always want to write music for film?**

Danny Elfman: Well, I’ve always loved film. I do remember the first time I realized how important music was in film. I was watching an old movie, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), and I was just amazed at how beautiful and powerful the music was.

**EY: So then you decided to write music for film after seeing this movie?**

DE: Not really. I didn’t decide that until later. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a rock star.

**EY: Did you ever play in a rock-and-roll band?**

DE: Yes, my group “Oingo Boingo” was well-known. We played together for seventeen years.

## Smart

## Words

**composer** =  
someone who  
writes music

**film score** =  
the music for a  
film

**best-known** =  
what people  
know the most,  
will recognize  
the most easily

**theme song** =  
the music that  
is always played  
for a particular  
movie or televi-  
sion show

**dark** =  
somber,  
mysterious

**EY: What are some of your best-known movie soundtracks?**

DE: Other than Pee-Wee's Big Adventure, there was Beetlejuice (1988), Batman (1989), Edward Scissorhands (1990), The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993), Men in Black (1997), Sleepy Hollow (1999), Spiderman (2002) and Spiderman 2 (2004), Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) and Meet the Robinsons (2007).

**EY: That's quite a list! What are some of your best-known songs for television?**

DE: I think the **theme song** that people know me best for is The Simpsons, but I also did the theme song for Desperate Housewives and some others.

**EY: Did you ever sing for a soundtrack of a movie?**

DE: Yes, actually, I sang the "Oompa Loompa Song" in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and sang as Jack Skellington and Barrel in The Nightmare Before Christmas.

**EY: How do people describe your music?**

DE: Most people would say that my film scores are **dark**. It depends on the movie and the mood though. Sometimes it is wild, sometimes it is romantic, sometimes it is fun and silly.

**EY: Did you ever win any awards?**

DE: I was nominated for an Academy Award three times: for Good Will Hunting and Men in Black in 1997, and for Big Fish in 2003, but I never won an Oscar! I did win an Emmy award for Desperate Housewives in 2004 and a Grammy award for the theme from Batman in 1989.

**EY: It sounds like you have had a lot of success so far! We wish you a lot of luck on your future projects.**

DE: Thank you.