



Top Scores #10: Mica Levi & Under The Skin (2014)

Description



Happy **International Women's Day!**

In honour of today's international celebration, this edition of **TOP SCORES** highlights the work of brilliant British musical polymath **Mica Levi**. In particular, we're taking a look at her haunting, spine-tingling soundtrack for the **2014** sci-fi horror film ***Under the Skin***.

The movie was directed and co-written by **Jonathan Glazer**, and based on **Michel Faber's** 2000 **novel** of the same name. The resulting film is a mind-bending masterpiece of existential crises,

body horror and chilling ambiguity. **Scarlett Johansson** stars as a seductive alien who prowls the streets of Glasgow in a van hunting for unsuspecting men; they fall under her spell, and become her prey. The film was critically lauded for Johansson's performance, Glazer's direction, and Levi's gripping score.

The soundtrack was produced by **Peter Raeburn**, who proposed Levi to Glazer after hearing ***Chopped and Screwed***, a live recording of her 2011 collaboration with the **London Sinfonietta**. For the film project she primarily used a **viola** to write and record, drawing out the instrument's humanistic tones and altering the pitch and tempo to add extra sonic discomfort. The soundtrack was widely acclaimed for pushing the boundaries of film sound design. Levi was awarded **Best Composer** at the **2014 European Film Awards**, and tied with **Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood** for the **Best Music/Score** prize at the **2014 Los Angeles Film Critics Awards**. She was also nominated for the **2015 BAFTA Award for Best Film Music**.

As the daughter of two musicians, the classically-trained Levi began writing and playing music at the age of four. After moving from Surrey to **London** in her teens she performed as a DJ and formed the experimental pop music band **Micachu and the Shapes**. A commission to write an orchestral piece for the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** followed, then she became **Artist-in-Residence** at the **Southbank Centre** in London. *Under the Skin* was Levi's first major film score commission at the age of 26. In 2016, she completed her second, for **Pablo Larraín's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis biopic Jackie**. Levi received an **Academy Award nomination for Best Original Score** that year; she is only fifth female composer to be nominated in that category.

Alongside her film work, Levi is still active in music production. She has worked alongside her childhood friend, the singer **Tirzah**, since 2013, including on her critically celebrated 2018 debut album ***Devotion***.

Listen to Under the Skin OST by Mica Levi below:

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