

spotting **notes**

GUILD OF CANADIAN FILM COMPOSERS

VOL. 11, NO. 2 AUTUMN 2009

PUBLISHING DECOMPOSED

BY DARREN FUNG

As film and media composers, a large part of our livelihood is dependent on the income generated from what we affectionately call the “back-end.” We often hear about the “publishing” share of our SOCAN cheques and as composers, we tend to complain a fair bit about people trying to have us sign it away with little to no compensation for it. But what is publishing and what does it entail?

“A music publisher is a company or a person who helps exploit or promote music,” explains SOCAN Member Relations Manager Jason Belo. “I use the word exploit in a good way. One aspect of publishing is working with music writers so they can help pitch songs to other mediums, whether it is audio-visual, performers or artists. Other publishers are strictly administrative-type publishers who don’t necessarily do that type of catalogue exploitation or promotion.”

A music publisher for a conventional songwriter seems to make sense. But in the film and television realm the job is significantly different.

“In the traditional model, the publisher acted more like a business partner to create licensing or recording opportunities, links with artists, and that sort of thing,” explains Marcando Music’s Janal Bechthold, a composer who also specializes in royalty management for composers. “The role of a music publisher in film and television is different. Especially in a relationship where the composer has signed an exclusive agreement, the

publisher doesn’t have the same kind of rights to exploit the music. In that case, the music publisher’s role is to work with the composer to recoup as much of those royalties as possible.” Belo elaborates, “Since audio-visual composers’ works are already attached to a final product (an AV production), a publisher’s main job would be to do the administration. To make sure that everything’s filed with the appropriate organizations, like PROs and mechanical rights organizations.”

A big complaint from many film, television, and media composers is that there are many people or organizations that masquerade as publishers, but offer no real value for the money they take in. Whether they decide to do it themselves or assign it to an outside organization, composers need to ensure that publishers are indeed working for that share of revenue they receive.

“In a film and television context, a good publisher is going to work to find broadcast details and proactively work to collect all the royalties that are there,” says Bechthold. “There are a

lot of different rights out there these days and a good publisher is really going to work to collect and maximize those. A bad publisher would just take your publishing and not really baby-sit it. They don’t actively work to find out where it’s being played, what the translated titles are, the broadcasters, all the information that’s necessary to collect.”

In order for a composer to gauge how effective a publisher will be able to work for them and their catalogue,

there are a number of things they should be look out for.

“It’s very important for us to have a direct relationship with a number of people in those collective organizations like SOCAN, SODRAC, etc...” explains Third Side Music’s Mary-Catherine Harris. “We’re in touch on a daily basis with all of these organizations and we have different levels of relationships. You want to have a point person for the company’s catalogue, but you also want to have contacts with the technical staff to ensure your data is entered properly. Our legal and accounting departments are also in touch as well. These organizations have huge infrastructures.

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GCFC

GUILD OF CANADIAN
FILM COMPOSERS



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ADRESSE DE RETOUR : Guilde des compositeurs canadiens de musique de film, C.P. 22059, 45, boulevard Overlea, Toronto (Ontario) M4H 1N9



GCFC

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FILM COMPOSERS

Spotting Notes is the official newsletter of the Guild of Canadian Film Composers, a national association of professional music composers and producers for film, television, and new media.

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The GCFC gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the SOCAN Foundation.

Publication Mail Agreement # 40755546



VIEW FROM THE PODIUM

BY MARVIN DOLGAY, PRESIDENT

As we went around the table of thirty plus composers in Vancouver, asking them what the GCFC means to them, someone said, "I came for a seminar and stayed for the community."

This was the second last event on my cross-Canada tour last March. I had been participating in a series of industry panels and town hall discussions, and I was on a mission to "take the temperature" of our members and the industry at large. That candid comment crystallized what I had experienced across the country.

I experienced a genuine desire to upgrade our musical skills, learn about changing business practices and to stay current with evolving technology; all this to feed our creative needs and make us better able to serve our clients. At the same time, I also witnessed a desire to create a professional standard that would give our members a decent living in a globally competitive world.

That covers "I came for the seminars..." But there was much more: the exchange of ideas, tricks of the trade, general shoptalk and the understanding that we are kindred spirits. I experienced a community full of joy and passion and I witnessed it every time we got together as a group.

Other trade groups would undoubtedly consider sharing such proprietary information as diluting their competitive edge. It seems we composers, at the core level, understand that all of our individual success raises the bar for everyone.

I was inspired to be a part of these Town Hall meetings. It's no wonder that one would "stay for the community."

I write to you now as the new President of the GCFC with my first "View From The Podium." I would like to thank all members of the GCFC who put their names forward in our most recent election for our Board of Directors. We had an extremely extensive and diverse slate of candidates, representing not only the national scope of our organization but also a broad range of our members' musical disciplines and experience. Our community is engaged. This credits everybody who got us this far.

I came for a seminar and stayed for the community.

We have a great new team taking shape. Our Board of Directors is an incredibly

impressive group with some welcome new faces. I am delighted that Graeme Coleman from Vancouver and Darren Fung from Montreal have both agreed to serve as First and Second Vice Presidents. I look forward to working with the board to build on the Guild's successes and undertake the challenges ahead.

With the untimely passing of our Executive Director, Susan Alberghini, we have been committed to fill the void she has left with an executive and management team that will represent the Guild with the same dignity, professionalism and grace that Susan did. I am pleased to say that we have achieved this task. Maria Topalovich has agreed to join us as our Executive Director. As some of you may already know, Maria is a founding member of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television and was their President and CEO for over 15 years. She (needless to say) comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and experience. Tonya Dedrick, who, during this transition, has become an integral and

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6-PACK OF QUESTIONS

CHRIS DEDRICK

WITH DARREN FUNG

1 How do you think the organization has grown while you've been president?

We've slowly but steadily expanded our view of ourselves and honed our activities as a professional association that must meet the demands of our federal certification. This includes the responsibilities of collective representation and bargaining. We are not a labour union and the many months of meetings of the Negotiating Committee brought to discussion the concerns some had that we would somehow start to behave like one. I think there are members, ex-members and non-members who are still concerned about this and watch to see what our negotiations will actually yield. It's safe to say, with economic challenges always in the headlines, that we have increasingly differing opinions within our ranks on basic issues such as, for example, minimum fees for various kinds of scores.

Where I've seen growth and maturing is that we have already defined ourselves at the negotiating table as a business-driven, business-savvy, co-operative and flexible force. One that will enhance the industry through win-win strategies, one that participates strongly in keeping ourselves and those who hire us informed and educated in all crucial areas of commissioning and publishing music for media. As agreements are reached, which will involve membership ratification, I believe that we will see our position in the industry and our strength in dealing with producers on a job-per-job basis greatly enhanced. We will see far fewer unfair situations cropping up, and the GCFC office will become a highly respected influence when areas of contention arise. Our membership should increase as more composers realize the steps we've taken and the advantages of within our community.

2 What do you think were the biggest challenges you faced?

I've always believed in (and been fairly good at achieving) consensus. The first challenge I faced was in orchestrating the structure of the Guild to reflect a consensus that had already been reached, which was that the Board of Directors wanted to run the organization more directly, along with having more say about local/regional issues. There was a certain amount of that re-structuring

that simply had to do with harmonizing or balancing some personal viewpoints and biases. It's like fixing a cue that a director doesn't like: sometimes the fix is just to play it softer. Sometimes you have to start again from scratch. I knew what brought me into the GCFC was the feeling of friendship and camaraderie with other composers, as well as the desire to know the profession and the industry better. Remembering that has helped guide us in determining the right course of action.

In this case, we organized a major professionally-facilitated Board "retreat," got to know each other better, penetrated more deeply into what our issues, weaknesses and strengths really were, and set ourselves in position to spring forward. The momentum was amazing.

Another challenge was that the very force that had built the Guild, kept it viable, and enabled me to succeed as a new president, was its long-term officers and founding members who were the composite face of the organization for so many years. Yet these very people, along with most of us, truly wanted to see a new visage, a new tone introduced (more often than a note changes in John Cage's piece that has the tempo marking "As Slowly As Possible"). I'm very pleased that we still have the best of these cornerstone people with us while also having the new blood that continues its crescendo in power and responsibility.

3 What was the most enjoyable part of the job?

When I first worked in the music business (New York in the late 1960's), composers and arrangers had opportunities to meet and hang out thanks largely to two very important places: the recording studios and the copyists' offices. That's where I met everyone. Things have changed a lot, and the most enjoyable part of the GCFC work has been being around composers.

4 What do you think the biggest challenges will be for our next president?

It's not going to be "business as usual," as the wave set in motion by negotiations will soon change from "slow-mo" to "get up and go." It's the perfect time for a new prez, and I really feel Marvin is the right person at the right time. The biggest challenge will be that everything he and the rest of the exec do or don't do will receive more attention from more people.

5 If you could give your successor one piece of advice, what would it be?

Keep your day gig. We've already talked a lot about consensus building, teamwork, delegating. He's much smarter than I am about these things. Maybe grow a moustache.

6 What are you going to do with all the extra time you have now that you're no longer president?

Reminds me of Ed Sullivan asking comedian Jose Jimenez what he planned to do as an astronaut on his way to the moon, "I plan to cry a lot." Really, this is such uncharted territory, I'm not yet sure, but I think it will have to do with transcending it (time, that is). ■



MIXING TIPS FOR HOME-BASED COMPOSERS

BY MIKE FREEMAN

What are some of the general techniques you use to achieve a great mix?

Jim Zolis: Have lots of movement such as panning effects (maybe back and forth), echoes front to back, good deep bottom end on the kick drum and/or bass instrument, shimmering highs on vocals and maybe some percussion for groove.

Steph Carrier: Panning of instruments is great. It helps spread out the sounds and alleviates the sonic clutter. However, the panning should not be so harsh as to become a distraction.

Elliot Sairan: Ask yourself what you are intending to create. What do you need to do in order to get the mood of the composition across? Aggressive, mellow, light or heavy? You can interpret the same recording a few ways by altering the mood through effecting the instrumentation with compression, EQ and levels.

How do you use effects in the mixing process?

JZ: Compression is your friend but care must be taken or you can squeeze the life out of a good performance. Fast attack with a high threshold on a vocal can make it “pop” out of the mix. You may need to ride the vocal fader to infuse some energy back into the louder section of the song.

ES: The most effective way to describe EQ in the shortest amount of space is that it is used to emphasize a frequency range of an instrument and to help cut away what you don't need. Each instrument needs its own space in the mix.

JZ: Lots of contrast is good for keeping interest and depth in a mix. For example, a long dark reverb on the backing vocals and a short bright reverb on the lead vocals places each in its own space.

Are there any techniques you use to make samples sound more realistic?

SC: There are many who feel that the score will come across better if more “real” instruments are used. This is not always a reality and samples are far superior than those of ten years ago. Many use a combination of samples and real instruments to help achieve a “big score” sound without the full cost.

Do you have any tips for creating a good live recording from a home studio?

JZ: The AKG 414 (condenser microphone) is a great utility mic on anything from percussion to acoustic instruments to vocals. Renting a great quality mic or mic pre-amp for a few days is better than buying a cheaper one! A Neumann M149 and a Manley Voxbox into any Apogee converter is a world-class chain that is hard to beat.

How do you go about building a good mix? Is there a particular order you do things in?

JZ: I'll build from the most important instrument up. If the piano is key, then I'll make it bright and add a bit of reverb. Then I add the lead vocal and make that work. Sometimes there is no order per say, I'll just begin with what sounds fun or inspiring.

Are there any other valuable points you would like to add?

JZ: If power and/or size are really important, then go TDM instead of LE or “native.” There is a noticeable difference.

ES: The discrepancies can be found in not understanding the process of mixing. The only thing to do is to learn about the process. Get a book on mixing, apprentice with a mixing engineer or go to school for audio production.

SC: The most important thing is that we (composer and sound mixer) are working together to help the client achieve their vision of the project. No one element is more important than another. These are all tools to help tell a story. The more communication there is between all parties involved the fewer collisions will happen. ■



STEPH CARRIER

Steph Carrier began his mixing career with the television series *PSI Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal*. From there he migrated to more project-based shows such as *The Judy Garland Story*, *Owning Mahowny* and *Beowulf & Grendel*. A proponent of Canadian cinema, he spends his off-time with his wife and two children, playing music and watching hockey.



ELLIOT SAIRAN

<http://www.vyneroad.com/>

Elliott is a producer/engineer with his own studio, Vyner Road Recording. There, he works on both music projects and sound for television and film. Elliott also is an instructor of acoustics and other recording engineering skills at Metalworks Institute in Mississauga.



JIM ZOLIS

<http://www.zolisaudio.com/>

Since 1980, Jim Zolis has provided industry professionals and independent recording artists with his finesse and ability as a producer and engineer. He is the driving force behind Zolis Audio Productions Inc., providing his expertise and talent to this dynamic enterprise.



STATE OF THE UNION

LUNCH WITH BILL SKOLNIK, PT 2

VICE PRESIDENT FROM CANADA, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

A continuation of our frank, lunch-time question and answer session with Bill.

Darren Fung: *There is a trend amongst young musicians that unions aren't relevant to them. They are saying, "I need to put food on the table, I need to pay my rent. And if I take a dark date, I take a dark date." If you can talk a little bit about that reality, what challenges it presents to the union and what you can do about it.*

Bill Skolnik: When I joined this union we made some major mistakes. They ruled by getting their members to fear them. That affected everyone including me. On the other hand, they had control of the industry. And I mean every single aspect of the industry. So these young guys go into CBC and they get paid. And then they will work at Rogers and they don't get paid or they have to fight about getting paid. It's there you see the difference. A lot of things young musicians take for granted we fought for, and are continuing to fight for. I appreciate that our agreements are not totally relevant so I do understand why people are doing dark dates

On the other hand, it is the same thing with the GCFC. I am a member. I was a charter member.

And I see it in the postings. If you undercut your fellow colleague, you are going to kill yourself, and that is what is going on in this profession as well. On the other hand, the union has to be more relevant to what the industry requires. If the contractor calls you, you don't even ask if it is dark or not, you

know what your fee is. People are suspicious of unions and I am not sure why. Unions have a history of creating great social change in Canada and the United States. Without unions there would be no maternity or company benefits, no vacation pay and no 8-hour day. None of those things would have happened. There would be no 3-hour sessions or no 10 minutes breaks for the brass and the strings who need them. We did all that. And they take those things for granted.

On the other hand, many people think if they get their music out there and somebody hears them, they're going to make it big. I often see kids playing a gig on Queen Street West or Gastown or St. Denis. They haven't even played a note and will do it for nothing because they think the Sony record people are sitting there, waiting. They have the Grammy speech ready to go in their head before they have even learned more than I, IV or V. The global economy and the global village has changed all that. Now, musicians don't get an opportunity to practice in public like they used to. Bands used to play for a week. Now you're lucky to get a full night. Sometimes it's just one set.

But it goes back to the question about how the union is relevant to them. Yes, they are taking their luck for granted. But that being said, these are the future breadwinners of the union. Some of us think (not me necessarily) that there is a natural divide within our members and GCFC members too. A natural "sheep-and-goats" thing happens around the age of 27 or 28. By that age, you've had your fun, done a lot of things and now you want to be able purchase things, get married and think about the future. Maybe you've had some success and people are using your music all over the place. And maybe you're starting to get pissed off because you realize it isn't exposure anymore, it's exploitation. Then you start looking to the GCFC, AFM, and ACTRA and other organizations that are out there to help you.

I would like to see us become more like the CAA (the auto club, not the agency) of music for young musicians. They don't need representation. They are small businesses. They need help with renting a truck, help with a cell phone plan or extra health insurance. They need help (which we are giving already) working in the States. They need the legal help to get incorporated and to have venture agreements at a decent rate (not at \$350 an hour because they aren't at that level).

Many people think if they get their music out there and somebody hears them, they're going to make it big.

SEE UNION ON PAGE 6

We have a new agreement coming out called the joint venture agreement, and it allows self-contained bands to have a recording agreement. This means they can get our protection without having to worry about any of the special payments or getting a recording company to look after them. It's for indie bands, it's brand new and it's because we needed to create a product for the existing recording industry.

DF: *Many composers and production companies are finding themselves going overseas to places like Prague, Moscow and Bratislava to record their scores. Obviously the union isn't happy about this, but what can the union do to counteract this trend?*

BS: Well, we can't race to the bottom. We can't compete at even \$100 US for a 3-hour session and it's lower than that. No way. I believe there is a prestige, certainly in North America, for a composer to say an AFM orchestra did their score. And that prestige is there for producers too because when it comes to recording scores, AFM stands for the very best in the world. The London Symphony and the British Musicians' Union may question that, and they are great too, but if you were a British producer, would you rather say you had the London Symphony or the Prague Philharmonic? Nothing against them, but what is it that we offer? We offer that quality and that perception of quality. And you can stay home; you can deal with your friends with a culture that you understand.

DF: *One of the battles that you are spearheading is a quest to have more video game music recorded in Canada. What are some of the initiatives that you are doing to accomplish that?*

BS: The artistic initiative is to have more video game music recorded by conventional acoustic instruments and that has been an enormous success. Tommy Callarico (an American video game music composer) and his symphony orchestras tour around the world with these scores. So the first initiative is to get it out of the synths and into the concert halls. The second one is to have video game producers use AFM musicians for the recording, and the third is to get Canadian composers to vigorously go after this market.

Two of the biggest companies in the world, Ubisoft and Electronic Arts, both have huge offices centered in Canada and they are using American composers. I think we should go after that. It is not my business but I would like the GCFC to be entrepreneurial and get some of that work. If you get some of that work here, you will probably want to record it here!

DF: *You talk about changing your way of thinking. I want to go back to Prague and Moscow for a little bit. Part of the reason why CCPR is so successful in Canada is that you sign the cheque and you're done. A lot of people have issues with residuals and that's why so many big films are going to London. Now, the whole "back end" of these residual payments – the cornerstone of their livelihood is at risk. And that's why the RMA in LA are so protective about these things. Do you think the union needs to adapt to new ways of making money for their members that doesn't include the back end?*

BS: We are, and it is a great debate. I wrote a column about it a while ago where I tried to describe the different sides, and I took enormous flak from the LA people. Which is good – I was noticed, but it surprised me. I thought I was being even-handed. I thought I was just describing the situation. But it was a reaction to the realities of CCPR and there are many, many

musicians particularly in New York and San Francisco who are in similar situations. We have created video game agreements that are similar to the CCPR. We are using those as we speak. So again, the objection has focused less on back end and more on new use. In many ways people are not trying to put out new products, so nobody gets back end. The composers don't even get mechanicals on the sale of the games, which blows me away. It is all up front money; essentially it is work for hire.

The issue is "new use," where they take the music written for a game or TV series and the company gets to do whatever they want with it and don't compensate for it. In some cases they want full performance rights (100%) for it too, and they are now allowed to do that with the change in government policy. It doesn't affect me as a musician, but it certainly affects

people who write music. We would like to have exclusive licensing of new music to one product and not permit its use from one film to another. There is a lot of pressure. There is an underground music scene in LA that is bigger than the legitimate one, and the same companies who sign signatory agreements with us go off with shell companies or numbered companies. In some cases their names

are quite blatant. They go off to Seattle, they go off to Europe and they go dark. We have an agreement for video games we have been using with no back end and if you insist on it, they will say goodbye.

DF: *Last question, unless you want to say anything else.*



BS: Plenty!

DF: *Where do you see the future challenges of the AFM and Canadian music in the next few years?*

BS: The stuff I just mentioned. The video game industry is bigger than film. And there is going to be integration. They are going to be the entertainment companies. They are going to be the ones who control everything.

How do we adapt? I have been a proponent for many years of the licensing of ISP. I think that is the only way musicians and composers are going to get royalties again. It's heading down the road where we are all going to have to let go of the back end. First of all, they are almost impossible to collect and the only system available is going to be the old collective system. I don't know if I will be around for that, and there is great resistance, as you know. The natural place is the licensing of ISPs. That would solve a lot of problems, but it needs legislative backing and I don't think they give a damn.

Some of my colleagues have said if all the performers, creators and organizations from all across Canada got together and decided there will be no art for one day, what a change it would make. People would wake up. It would be a pretty dull place. For art to progress and the life of artists to improve, we must band together and stand up for what we need to stand up for: our rights. ■

 **The composers don't even get mechanicals on the sale of the games, which blows me away.** 





MAXIMIZING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCAN, PT 2

BY GREG FISHER AND DEREK TREFFRY

In the last issue of *Spotting Notes*, the first part of this two-part article covered the basics of “getting to know SOCAN.” This second part will discuss some of the specific tools SOCAN makes available to help you ensure you are receiving all of the royalties you have earned, as well as generate some approximate revenue projections.

The member services representatives at SOCAN are very resourceful and helpful at solving many of the problems you may run into with your catalogue. But you’ll find that you get the best results when you come to them with specific queries, and are armed with as much information as you can gather. Knowing the tools that are out there and how to use them will often allow you to find the cause of a problem yourself.

The key tools that will be covered here are the **Unidentified Performances** list (SOCAN calls them “Unis,” pronounced *you-knees*), **Performance Data** and the **Performance Calculator**. These tools can be found once you have logged in to your account on the SOCAN website under “SOCAN Performances & Repertoire>Performance Data>Audio Visual.” Then select the various tabs and the “Audio Visual” options for each.

Unidentified Performances: We alluded to these in Part 1 of this article, and this is the second place to check when trying to find royalties you think are missing (the first place being your A/V catalogue to make sure there has actually been a cue sheet filed correctly). The Unis contains many pages of A/V titles reported as having been performed domestically that cannot be automatically matched with a cue sheet on file in the SOCAN database.

This can happen for a number of reasons: there may be no cue sheet on file, or the performances that SOCAN received may have

been reported with an incorrect title or no title at all. An example we found in the Unis was an episode from our catalogue reported as “Vintage Retro Chic,” which was not paid out because the cue sheet on file was actually titled, “Vintage Chic.” Close, but not close enough for a match. Another example: when there is no “title” information available at the time of broadcast, episodes can get reported with the *specific airdate* as the title, rather than the correct episode name. Again, there won’t be a match to any cue sheet.

Check the Unis every quarter for *every* production/series you have in your A/V catalogue, whether it appears on your Royalty Statement or not (remember just because a title was paid out on your Royalty Statement does not mean that ALL of the performances of that title were paid). Not a quarter goes by where we don’t find something of ours in there, just waiting to be found. Once you have gone through your entire catalogue and have your comprehensive list of unidentified performances, contact member services at SOCAN and share it with them. Your efforts will go a long way in helping them pay out for those titles.

Now on to earnings projections. With SOCAN paying out approximately nine months in arrears on A/V performances, how can you project what the revenue stream from domestic performances might be like? Answer: **Performance Data and Performance Calculator**.

You can view reported performances in the Audio Visual section of “Performance Data” for dates ranging from the current day to nine months previous. Search the data by title and *voilà*, you will see a list of performances that should be getting paid out during their respective quarters (assuming, of course, they match cue sheets on file). Now, let’s move on to the **Performance Calculator**.

The calculator is a handy tool that allows you to plug in the number of minutes, the different kinds of music uses (Background, Feature, Theme, Logo), and the station or network where the title is being broadcast. It works out



Our investments of time and talent do yield financial dividends.

an approximation of what royalties will be paid out. To generate projections, you can take your Performance Data results, cross reference with the cue sheets in your A/V catalogue to find how many minutes of your music were broadcast per airing and plug those figures into the calculator to get the approximation. Bear in mind, the calculator will give the FULL amount of royalties to be paid; your proportion will depend on how much of the composers/publishers share is allocated to you.

As much as we all compose for the love of the craft, our investments of time and talent do yield financial dividends. And while the workings of SOCAN can sometimes seem to be a modern form of alchemy, using the tools that the website offers can not only provide some transparency and insight into the process, but also allows us to project and identify oversights that might not otherwise be discovered. When errors and omissions are clearly aggregated and presented to the resourceful staff at SOCAN, the process of getting those titles identified, corrected and paid out can go much smoother. They are our organization, and it’s really just another way that SOCAN helps us help them...to help us. ■

PUBLISHING | FROM PAGE 1

There are different facets that you get to know and you make sure they're paying attention."

On a personal level, composers need to make sure they get a level of service and attention that they are comfortable with, but also have the ability to articulate their needs to their publisher.

"I think the creator should be on the lookout for the publisher's reputation; they should definitely court each other," says Harris. "I think it's a relationship that is almost a marriage. You should be able to trust each other. You should be able to articulate what your needs are in that relationship."

"The older model used to be that you signed away your rights and then you never talked to your publisher again," recalls Belo. "I think part of the evolution of the publisher is that they really should be focusing on great customer service with their clients."

He adds, "I would expect regular accounting periods and that the publisher registers my songs with any organization it needs to go to. I would expect that they're familiar with my catalogues and with everything I've done both past and present while even keeping an eye towards the future. And then I would expect that they work diligently, analyze statements, find out if everything is correct and everything is being paid for."

Harris agrees and adds that the realm of publishing has become much more proactive than making queries about missing royalties. "A lot of traditional publishers sat back and did their particular part of the business. I think that's no longer the case. I think you have to be seeking partnerships, looking for new ways to generate revenues and also lobbying to protect revenues, not just through government and legislation, but

interfacing with networks, production companies or video game companies."

When signing any agreement, a composer needs to do their due diligence. The world of publishing is no different and is one that is incredibly complex where subtleties of language can translate into very different things. As always, composers should be very clear about the body of work it covers, the territory, and the term.

One particular aspect is the ownership of copyright. Harris explains, "A lot of publishing contracts transfer rights so you're handing over your copyright. There's a big difference between that versus you just giving administrative controls to a publisher." She adds that composers need to ask many questions. "Are you signing contracts so your publisher represents you and your work? If the publisher is asking for representation, do you have other people representing you? Agents? How do you handle them in the contract?"

"Obviously one of the key things in a publishing agreement is for you to understand the implications in every phrase of that contract. If you don't understand every clause, you need someone to interpret it for you and have a trustworthy representative or lawyer consulting with you to make sure that it's worded properly. You should have someone negotiating on your behalf or at least ensuring that the deal is equitable.

SOCAN and GCFC Board Member Glenn Morley says that a performance clause is paramount in any agreement. "A performance clause distills the relationship between a performer and a publisher. If you don't generate any revenue, the value isn't there for either party, then it's time to sever the relationship and find someone who can do something with it," he says. "The more difficult part is finding a threshold of performance – what should a copyrighter earn? What is a rea-

sonable expectation, and that's where the market is going to help determine things. It's a pretty hard market to assess because people don't talk to each other (about publishing). If a publisher is prepared to do what they say they can do, there's only one way to measure that and it needs to be laid down in a contract. If you don't do this, nothing will happen."

So, when is it the right time to find a publisher? It's usually a question of time and ability. "I would think they would need a publisher or would be interested in a publishing or sub-publisher, particularly when projects are going international, paired with either a lack of knowledge in terms of what needs to be done or a lack of time," says Bechthold.

Harris adds as a caveat, "At the very beginning I think the composer, even though it may be the least thing they're interested in, should be learning about the business. If you're going to make a living out of composing then the business aspect is absolutely critical to understand. A new composer has to be extremely careful not to enter into a really inequitable relationship with a publisher who might have them sign a long-term contract that they would be bound to for many years. We personally know people who've been in those situations and can't get out of them. Even if you sue, if you sign with a publisher who does absolutely nothing for you except collect money that should have gone to you, you may not win."

"Composers should join every association that could help him or her connect with more experienced composers and learn as much as they can through seminars, the internet, reading and word-of-mouth before they even think of signing anything at all. Even a one-page deal." ■

Next issue, Spotting Notes will look at tips for the self-publishing composer.

VIEW | FROM PAGE 2

vital member of our Guild family, will continue her role as Managing Director.

As I embark on this new venture, I am continuing my crash course in the "alphabet soup" of organizations representing every sector of the media landscape. Although some interests may differ and mandates may vary, there is a common goal: the creation of an environment and culture in which we can grow our skills on the global stage, and all make a living as professionals.

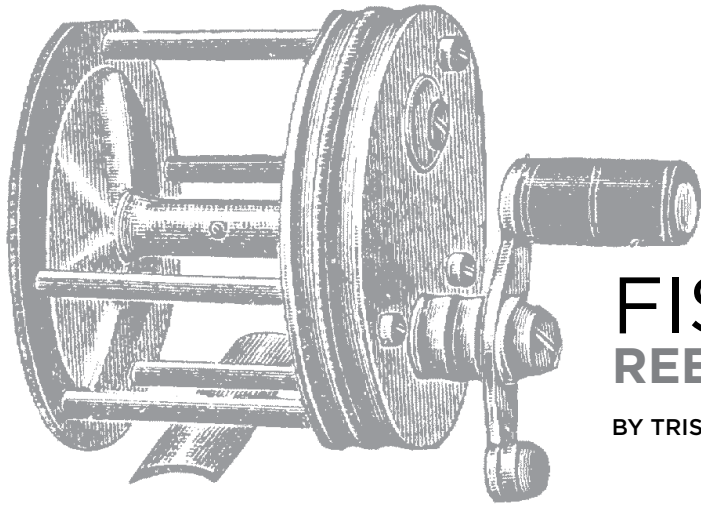
As composers, independent contractors and creators of copyright, it is our obligation to assure

our voices are heard. We must ensure we're part of the process. It is my objective that the Guild of Canadian Film Composers takes a more proactive role within our own community as well as the media community at large. This will ensure and maintain that the integrity and professional standards of our trade are maintained.

As media composers, our role is one of collaboration. From the conception of a story to the written text to the finished production, we bring the emotional language of music to a common vision shared by a myriad of creatives. Composers understand this. But

the landscape of our industry is changing. Composers understand this as well. The realities facing our broadcasting and producer partners and the new models of business they are wrestling with has our attention and has sparked much heated discussion.

It is in our best interest to ensure that the producers get what they need from us to clearly and cleanly exploit their properties to the fullest. It is also vital that our community grows and prospers, ensuring that professional composers can make a respectable living. ■



FISHING FOR GIGS

REELING IN ON DEMO REELS

BY TRISTAN CAPACCHIONE

One of the most important things for hooking a new director to your music is a great demo reel. What constitutes a great demo reel? In an age where computers have made everything from desktop publishing to online publishing simpler, creating a demo reel is an easier and more affordable task than ever. However, certain pitfalls lie in wait and one should be cautious when embarking on this most important promotional tool.

The first thing to consider is whether you need a general demo or something for a specific project. With that in mind, content is the next item to address. What is the most important rule? Only your best stuff. Ari Wise of The Canadian Composers Agency Ltd. suggests that you have a friend or colleague who knows your work well to be the judge.

How many tracks should you put on your reel? Composer Richard Bellis says reels should only have about six tracks and that your reel should “leave ‘em wanting more.” A specific demo should contain only a few tracks of your best work for that style (roughly 6-8 minutes).

Lastly, you want to capture their hearts and minds within the first few seconds of a piece.

I want to hear what I'm looking for in the first five seconds of the first track.

Director Rob Kent (Sock Puppet Pictures) says, “I would only continue listening if the first three [tracks] interested me.”

Wise goes even further saying, “I want to hear what I’m looking for in the first five seconds of the first track.”

How should one package a demo reel? For physical demos, the design elements must be considered carefully. Every item of your kit should contain your company name, logo and most importantly, contact information. Also include the duration of the CD and the duration of each track. “It would be a

mistake to think of this person sitting at home with a glass of wine and nothing to do but relax and enjoy your music. If I know that the demo is 16 minutes long, I can set aside that time,” says Richard Bellis. Keep information clean and simple.

“Producers and directors are very visual people,” Wise says, “So the cleaner and more visually pleasing you can make your demo, the better.” If you don’t have a company name or logo then keep it simple and professional with your name and contact information.

Bellis also advises having the right equipment. “If [the composer] doesn’t appear to have a printer or label design software, it begs the question ‘What else don’t they have in the way of music making equipment?’”

Online demo reels and websites should be clean, simple, current and easy to navigate. For your online version, keep the quality high and the load times quick (i.e. if it’s a small clip, consider a higher encoding quality). And keep your files accessible since the last thing a director or producer wants to do is download a plug-in.

Since our music is set to picture, sometimes very precisely, should video be included in any of your demos? No. “The last thing you want is for them to be criticizing the film and not paying attention to your music,” say Wise. He advises that unless all the elements of the film are top-notch, don’t show the video clip, otherwise they spend more time criticizing and not listening.

Director Shelagh Carter (Darkling Pictures) says, “I don’t need film clips to relate to a good composer,” and, “I either connect with the composer or not, when hearing his music or interviewing him for a project.”

Finally, do your best to avoid wasting the producer or director’s time. Respect the time they are taking to listen to your music. Whether you are redoing your own, helping someone else, or putting out your first, don’t forget to respect the listener and present a quality product. ■

COUNTERPOINT

stock music libraries...

Q: Does an increased presence of music libraries decrease opportunities for film and media composers?



◆ The answer to the question is "yes." Music libraries are an attractive, inexpensive alternative to composers' work. There are no regulations protecting jobs for film music professionals. The downturn in the film and media industry signals a new era where a rapid shift of power (thanks to Internet music resources) has created significant stress on what used to be a healthy film music market. Unfortunately, current reforms and a "more-administrative-than-musical" approach have caused further deterioration for our industry.

● I agree that there is definitely an increase in library music and even that market is super-saturated and competitive. Some libraries are offering music at little or no charge just to get the broadcast royalties. On the other hand, with or without libraries, there is also much more competition for original music, since young composers are able to produce great music in their home studios and are willing to write for little or no money to gain experience. With that said, there are so many more cable and satellite stations in the past five years. This means a huge increase in productions that need music. So I think the balance of supply and demand is staying somewhat consistent. The real problem lies in our poor economy; the networks aren't paying a lot for productions so they have much smaller budgets for everything, including music.

◆ It does all come down to economics, and is due to independent factors. Economic destabilization in conjunction with easy access to online music libraries and hobbyists has weakened the position of film music industry professionals, resulting in lower standards and revenues. With less money, producers conveniently use what is available for their budget. As you say, advances in sampling and computer technology allow hobbyists to engage without any restrictions in the professional film music market.

They flood music libraries placed outside Canada with formulaic themes based on popular film and media music soundtracks. Hobbyists often do not seek financial compensation for their work, and if compensated, never exceed more than half of what statutory minimum wage would pay per hour.

● In my experience, while there are certainly some productions using more stock music to save money, for the most part, if they want original music, they just find a less-expensive composer. It's not that easy to score a production with stock music and it's often not cost-effective (even if the music is free!). What most people don't realize is that it is often a huge job to find bits and pieces of stock music to fit a whole program and to edit those tracks to sound like they were written to fit the picture. The cost for an editor to do this can often be more than just hiring someone to write an original soundtrack.

◆ That may be, but I've come to a sad realization that we are losing our professional identity to "fast food" mass production oversaturated with similarly sounding product. Music libraries are against everything a composer stands for; by that I mean the character and style of work we tailor to a movie. Music libraries contradict our professional ethic. Unlike music libraries, we are connected with the picture and we evoke an intimate and unique connection with a film. The threat to our profession is real and thanks to the globalization of music resources, jobs for Canadian film composers will soon disappear.

● I think that may only apply to a part of the professional population. Regardless of how readily stock music is available, I think A-list composers will continue to thrive since big-budget Hollywood films will still hire the established names. However because of the economy, B-list composers may be getting bumped for less experienced composers or production music.