

VIEW FROM THE PODIUM by GCFC Chair Paul Hoffert CONTINUING THE COMMITMENT

In March 2005, The Canadian Heritage *Creators' Assistance Program* (CAP) was to have ended. During the past four years, this program (under the umbrella of *Tomorrow Starts Today*)

greatly assisted the training and professional development of composers. The GCFC, through the SOCAN Foundation, has received CAP grants that have anchored our apprentice mentoring, seminars, and training projects. In late 2004, the GCFC joined with other music industry stakeholders in lobbying the federal government to extend this extremely successful and vital pro-

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gram. On November 24th, Martin Deller, GCFC Treasurer, traveled to Ottawa, and along with other industry representatives, met with the Minister of Heritage, Lisa Frulla, to ask that this program be extended. We're pleased to report that as a result of these activities, the CAP program has been extended for an additional year and will be considered for a longer-term renewal. This success is an example of how members obtain tangible returns from the GCFC's involvement in government and industry initiatives.

The GCFC's educational DVD project is one that has benefited from CAP. Most members have the GCFC's first DVD, *And Now... the Music Score!* an interactive documentary-style unfolding of three composers creating and producing music scores. *And Now... the Music Score!* received rave reviews from composers, lawyers, producers, and other industry stakeholders. So, over the past

year, we produced a second DVD. The new DVD is entitled, *And Now...*

The Soundtrack

Business! This DVD explains the hows and whys of the music soundtrack business for film, television, and new media. The DVD is unique, entertaining, educational, and chock full of information gleaned from video interviews with 33 experts from business affairs, law firms, music supervisors, copyright collectives, music libraries, composers, film and TV execs., and new media companies.

The DVD answers 46 common questions about the business of music soundtracks. It follows the chain of copyright creation, copyright licensing, and copyright transfers while tracking the flow of royalty revenues. Users learn the inter-connections between employing original scores, library music, and pre-existing songs in soundtracks and soundtrack albums.

One of the exciting new features is a fully searchable index of hundreds of topics and keywords. The index is linked automatically to the associated video clips. For example, if you're seeking information on synchronization rights, just click on that term and you will view clips about sync rights from the many hours of expert interviews.

The DVD is organized into 7 chapters: The Basics, Negotiations, Original

Music, Pre-Recorded Songs, Music Libraries, Royalties and New Technologies.



PAUL HOFFERT

The DVD was funded with sponsorships from many industry stakeholders including Canadian Heritage, SOCAN, The SOCAN Foundation, Canadian Music Publishers Association, SPACQ, SODRAC, Telefilm Canada, RightsMarket, Chris Stone Audio, and the law firms of

Bergman, Boughton, Gowlings, and Heenan, Blaikie.

And Now... The Soundtrack Business will be available in the first quarter of 2005. **sn**





MEIRO STAMM

THE POST-PRODUCTION TEAM

Friends you didn't know you have

by Meiro Stamm

The score. As composers, it's our contribution to a film or TV show but, as we all know, we are not the only ones that shape it and its role in a project. It's generally the producer and/or director who have the greatest influence on how we approach a score, but others on the post-production team also have subtle (or not so subtle) influences on our music. The picture editor, music editor, music supervisor and re-recording mixer can have a huge impact on what happens musically and what the role of the composer is. I've had the great privilege of working with three extremely talented individuals: Saul Pincus, Stephen Hudecki, and Daniel Pellerin, who have all done duty in one or more of the above roles (sometimes simultaneously), and learned a great deal from all of them. Recently, the four of us got together to discuss their perspective on scores and how composers can work with the entire production team. But first, introductions are in order:



Saul Pincus has edited such feature films as *Hide and Seek* (1999), *My 5 Wives* (2000), *Going Back* (2001), *Rub & Tug* (2002), *Detention* (2003), and *Show Me* (2004). More often than not, he has also supervised the creation of the films' musical scores and final mixes (two of which have earned MPSE nominations for Best

Sound). Recently, he served as associate producer on *Show Me* and directed a documentary showcasing the musical collaboration between South African musician Johnny Clegg and Toronto composer Amin Bhatia on the IMAX film *Jane Goodall's Wild Chimpanzees*. His resume also includes numerous award-winning shorts, documentaries, promos and television work.

MS: From your perspective, what is the role of music in TV and film?

SH: The roles of music are many. It supplies emotional information; it helps to connect storylines without having to verbalize them, and it immediately tells you what kind of a picture you're watching. It can emote, energize, punctuate, satirize, help with pacing, editorialize dialogue-heavy sequences, and orient the audience as to location. It can

disorient as well — if you recall *Magnolia* and the cop losing his gun in the bushes sequence.

DP: Music must support the story, the script, and the way it is presented to the audience. It can even define the character of a film or television project, and can transform individual characters and situations within the telling of the story. Film and TV music differ in subtle ways. Television music tends to be broader and



Stephen Hudecki finished his BFA at York University in 1981. He interned with Jack Lenz and Tony Kosinec and was the arranger for the late Trish Cullen. He went on to become an editor and then Producer/Supervisor at Nelvana for 18 years. Currently, he is a freelance editor/supervisor. Says Stephen, "I loved

being an editor. It's the most fun you can have with music next to playing. It allows you to really participate in the musical process and witness just how good composers really are and aren't. Supervising is mostly about helping directors and producers figure out what they want. I enjoy that process but without a doubt, the best is working with the composers and the musicians who play their stuff."



Daniel Pellerin has been active in the post-production industry for the past 25 years as a Sound Design Supervisor, Re-recording Mixer and Music Supervisor. He has worked for a large variety of clients in many different sound facilities around the world. He keeps his work as diverse as possible and manages to maintain a steady stream of projects at

every level. For the past eight years, he has worked exclusively in the 5.1 format and continues to seek projects that push sonic boundaries. He has been honoured with three Genies (*Sweet Hereafter*, *Sunshine*, and *Love Come Down*), two Geminis (*Musicians in Exile* and *Under the Piano*), two HotDocs Sound Awards (*Ebola: Inside an Outbreak* and *A Place Called Chiapas*) and an Emmy (*Edison: The Wizard of Light*).

more demonstrative while film music is subtler and more intricate. In exceptional cases, the reverse is sometimes possible. To nurture a film score, the edit and mix must support the intent of the composer in relation to the director's vision of storytelling.

SP: We have moved away from classical storytelling based on values alone. Things are now produced much more for style. In television, it's a matter of defining the

show's style and sticking with it. In features, nothing has been defined until the moment you walk into the theater and watch that film. A film may or may not have a consistent style throughout — it can bounce around a little bit.

DP: Generally in film, sound is much more effective since you tend to 'hear' more clearly in a dark theatre when completely surrounded by the 5.1 environment and have a large image projected in front of you. In TV, the sound and music tend to be compressed and the image is somewhat less detailed.

MS: What influence do you have about the nature of the score and who is hired as composer on a project?

SP: The cutting room is where music is first married with the picture in the form of a temp score, and that's where a lot of experimentation with music happens. As a result, the picture editor tends to be quite influential as to the nature of the score.

SH: As a supervisor, I've had a lot of influence simply by who I showed to the producers and who I didn't. As an editor, I have less influence. Though, I am a sounding board for some producers.

DP: If the producer and director have a strong idea of who they want to collaborate with on a musical level, the musical direction takes its own course and everyone works together to bring the vision to fruition. As a re-recording mixer with a very broad range of experience in music and sound, I can confidently and quickly assess compatibility issues that can include the composer's range of experience. Also, musical and personal qualities are strong factors in determining the right fit for a project. One must always consider the possibilities of growth when a composer is handed a challenging project. The strong support of a music supervisor/editor can help the development of a composer's abilities.

MS: What do you do when the composer is someone you've never worked with before?

SH: I have to talk with them a lot. I need to know what kind of person they

are and what kind of equipment they use. I need to get a sense of their level of humour, seriousness, organization, emotional range, experience and so on. I love to talk about the series with them because after all, as an editor, I am working with their intention in mind.

DP: Get to know their intentions with the score in conjunction with the director's vision. Make them all feel comfortable throughout the mixing process and be flexible to maintain a harmonious environment.

MS: The temp score can easily be a blessing or a curse to the composer. How do you approach it?

SP: It's very important not to be glued to a scene's value by looking at it through the eyeglass of the music, so I never, ever cut to temp score. Even when the temp is working, I'll turn it off when making changes, and then re-adjust it after I'm satisfied with the new version of the scene.

SH: I hate them. I beg picture cutters to stop putting them in, but then most of them think I'm doing their job anyway — as was historically the case. I beg the transfer people to take them out before I edit. I beg and I beg and I get zilch in response! It really shows just how subjective the response to music is. It also tells you a lot about the 'savvy' most directors, and especially producers, are lacking when it comes to music.

SP: It's dangerous to get attached to a piece of music, but temp does help people understand that there's a movie there. An awful lot of people involved in a project are capable of getting copies of the film on tape and watching it. They don't necessarily have to be crafts people, or know anything about the craft to be making comments on it.

DP: 'Temp love' is unavoidable. In the interest of advancing a project, the composer must work closely with the director, producer, picture editor, and music supervisor to achieve a soundtrack that surpasses the temp in every respect.

Easier said than done, but not insurmountable by any stretch.

SP: One of the first things I make sure to tell the composer is that there may be several temp selections we've made that are incorrect musically or stylistically, but nevertheless, were made for a reason. You may have found the perfect piece of temp to establish a certain emotion, but it's miles outside the intended musical palette of the film. Right from the get-go, I let the composer know what was in both the director's head and mine on a cue-by-cue basis. It could just be a small musical structure or pacing thing — and this usually succeeds in bridging the temp score psychoanalysis gap early on.

MS: How do you avoid fights with a composer who says, "That's not how I want it to sound!" when the music is placed a certain way in the final mix or music stems are balanced differently than the composer desires?

SH: You can't always avoid the fight. Composers aren't invited to be part of the mixing sessions. The music is in the hands of the supervising editor, mixers and finally, must run the gauntlet of the producer, director, investor, client's relatives and wannabes at the screenings. Composers need to understand that during a television series, once the music is in the post-production stage, it's out of their control.

DP: One must be very careful to avoid needless confrontation. Music should be applied to a mix in a way the composer intended. If there is a way of improving the overall effect of the music within the context of the story, the director, producer or picture editor should be respectful to the composer when suggesting changes to the approach. Of course, things don't always go smoothly. The composer may not be at the mix and the director may enjoy experimenting with the unsuspecting composer's music. Their ideas may even be 180 degrees out of phase with the composer's intentions — that can cause blood pressures to rise. Remember, the music is there to serve the project, and that change is inevitable — even in the most perfect score.

SP: It's all about the composer's musical tastes and it's not about the composer's musical taste — all at the same time. You've been chosen to fulfill a role on a show, and your role depends on the show's needs. The person most familiar with those needs is the director, producer or whoever the head creative person is.

MS: What can a composer do when the producer and director have conflicting views on how to treat a music cue?

DP: Go straight down the middle between the differing fields of vision. Get as close as you can to what is common in both their ideas, without compromising your own vision. Always do what is best for the project.

SP: That's right. Do what's right for the movie, and keep an improvisational frame of mind. Even with mixed stems, there may be combinations of approaches they've never considered that will save the day.

Do what's right for the movie, and keep an improvisational frame of mind.

DP: With a bit of judicious editing and careful presentation at the mix, you can sometimes achieve the impossible. And always consult with them separately so they can approve what they think is their version of the music. Won't they be surprised when they discover their vision was not that dissimilar from the beginning!

SH: Please the one who wields the power and make sure you know which one it is. However, the problem really isn't yours, is it? If they aren't communicating, then that's the issue I'd be raising. Let them duke it out first.

DP: From beginning to end get advice from all the main post-production players to help sort out the issues. They may have a deeper understanding of the differences between the parties and can suggest creative solutions to avoid unnecessary conflict.

MS: What do you do when a producer or director tries to micro-manage your work?

DP: Some people are just like that and in order to keep them happy one has to indulge them. Micro-managing can also be a sign of caring or wanting to compensate for doing extra work at later stages of post-production when it can be too late to make alterations. Patience on the part of the composer (and the whole post-production crew) is of the essence, as long as the demands made by this individual are not unreasonable and do not impede deadlines.

SH: It is crucial to set limits up front. If it's a series, allow a trial period of several shows or if it's a film, a certain length of time. Then, reassess how the process is working. Limits include how many revisions, how many screenings and who is and isn't allowed into the sessions at your studio. Talk to these people and demand their attention. Otherwise, develop thick, thick skin and be ready to please! please! please! the client.

SP: Filmmaking is the combination of many disciplines, and that's what makes it great. How is one artist going to give another artist the room to do their work? Only if that artist trusts the other. Is standing there, looking over their shoulder, going to get better results? If the person is inexperienced, or not in perfect sync with you, then perhaps yes. But, if it were that way for every note, I'd say you've got a problem. A lot of directors will say that 99% of making a movie is casting. If they cast the right person they really don't have to struggle to achieve a performance. You don't have to tell them how to feel, what emotions to put on or how to react because you've picked the right person.

MS: What is the number one recurring problem or lack of knowledge composers have about the post process and how music fits into it?

SP: With beginning composers, you want them to hit certain things, however, they're used to applying music *to* a picture rather than writing music *for* the picture. I think it's sometimes difficult for a beginning composer to remove themselves from their music. At a certain point, you want the music to change in a scene and I've had it happen on a number of occasions where a composer will look at me and say, 'What?' I'm saying, 'Listen, it's got to change here, and we've also got to change the tempo.' And they look at me like, 'I have to modify my music to fit the picture?' Well yes, you do. That's the job.

Sometimes, directors or producers can't envision a music cue if it's only a crude mock-up. Unlike the composer, they may have trouble projecting what those sketches will sound like in their final form. It may be that for compositional purposes you're working on software where you can't necessarily afford the best samples to replicate an orchestra, nor do you have the time to sit there and try to. Some people have those skills and some don't. So, if you can't really replicate the sound of what it's going to be like, some people may become worried. You must find ways to earn their trust.

DP: The greatest impediment to any process in film and TV is ego and the limitations it imposes on the collective creative process. Every individual on the credit list is there to serve the story being presented on screen. When this doesn't happen, something is taken away from the end result; when it is allowed to occur, something is added to the end result. The composer is an integral part of this equation.

On a purely technical level, composers who understand post-production always deliver their tracks as separate stems to allow maximum flexibility at the music editing stage and optimum separation at the mix in order to blend with all the sound elements with greater clarity.

SH: Music is simply a part of the whole. It is very important and I don't want to minimize its effect, but it is not the whole thing. It is a craft much more than an art form. The writing of themes remains an art. The live recording, to some extent, still maintains the artistry; but the use of loops, conventions, sampling and so on has made the process of composing something far different than what composers were doing even in the 80's. It's becoming a whole lot more like editing. But, never minimize music's importance to the overall scope of the project.

When they finally get to see it, music re-energizes an exhausted crew. That's when it works.

What composers do is certainly beyond what producers, directors and broadcasters may say they do. When it comes to music, there are a few producers who really do know what they are talking about. I love stumbling into those people. It makes it all so much more fun.

MS: What makes a composer easy or difficult to work with?

DP: Composers who understand the purpose of their music within a project and are easy to work with. They understand the mission: to serve the project and the story being told.

SP: You will find a lot of film editors and directors, who are also huge film music fans and serious collectors. They pride themselves on the depth of their collections, not for tempting into their cuts, but for pure pleasure. More and more, many composers have reference points coming from outside the realm of their craft. Creatively, it's a big plus, but not as helpful when it comes to speaking the same language. Sure, everyone knows what John Williams sounds like. But for me, it's helpful when I can reference a cue by Fiedel, Fielding, or Fried and not face a blank stare in response.

SH: Their attitude. Not having a private agenda to fulfill. I know of some guys who would purposely send cues for shows without mix-outs so they could control the content. It's not necessary and certainly childish to do stuff like that. Easy composers are the ones who understand their craft and don't come to meetings with a chip on their shoulder. They come with a wide range of artistic references in their pockets that may include novels, styles, paintings and what's going on in the mainstream. Make sure you take care of yourself and are nourishing your musical soul with something other than television and film projects. And my best wishes to you all. Some of us really appreciate what it is you do and how well some of you do it! **sn**

SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER **MIDI**

by Amin Bhatia



AMIN BHATIA

For those who still use the time-honored **method** of pencil and score paper, this will not drastically change your life. But, here are some tips for making the first move into a simple electronic setup. For the rest of you studio geeks, this is the definitive 12-step program to get your heads out of your plug-ins and back into making music.

For the first time, digital convergence has made it possible for a small personal computer to be the entire studio. A simple USB keyboard can tap into a sketchpad/synthesizer/sampler/video player/multi-track recorder/editor/mixer/effects rack and archive that is all synched to its own internal video playback complete with documentation, and communication for every member in the team. The sequence *is* the score, and the promise of simplicity and flexibility all from one box can result in some very imaginative music.

But we're not there yet. Anyone who believed the brochure is now wrestling with the reality that the digital horsepower required to run a few or more tracks, virtual instruments or effects plug-ins in a digital audio workstation (DAW) is massive and sluggish, at best. To say nothing of the added requirements for a film composer which demand rock-solid video synchronization, varying tempos and time signatures, and options for our client to make changes right up to the very last moment.

The competing monopoly of software manufacturers has come full circle, each one wanting you to use their brand of code only. And if you don't, or (God forbid!) try to mix and match software, you are punished with incompatible driver conflicts, limited functionality, incoherent error messages and the blameless tech support team who insist that your problem is the result of that "other" product. And when the host computer performs upgrades (sometimes without your permission or knowledge), you are expected to do this compatibility dance all over again — and pay for it both with time and money.

Suffice to say, all of this can really impede a productive film music environment. As far as my studio is concerned, DAW upgrades and plug-in wars have now taken first place in the category of destroying creativity (second place being the

client who brings a guitar).

This isn't going to disappear anytime soon. So, before launching into the next studio overhaul, or tear-stained call to an indifferent lackey (who only works ten to four Pacific time), stop for a moment and consider incorporating something tried and true. Take a trip back in time with me. Long before Quicktime, OSX, TDM or VST, before WAV or AIFF or even the Internet. Back to a simple little standard called MIDI.

MIDI is note on, note off, controller, patch and timing data for 127 notes across 16 channels. It works with all makes and platforms. (Manufacturers actually got together and decided on a common standard — something that has never been done since!) MIDI is not a recording, but the instructions to recreate a recording anytime. As a result, it can transpose without any artifacts, stretch and compress time with no audible glitches and alter voices indefinitely with no audible signal degradation. It requires very little bandwidth or storage space. It needs no optimizing, normalizing or file management strategies to stay coherent. Think of digital audio as large chunky graphics pigging out on your computer, while MIDI is like the text in your e-mail. Simple yet powerful. Like words, a little goes a long way.

MIDI has not changed in almost 15 years. The spec has been added to, but the core language has never been altered. Old files can still play new gear. This alone, puts MIDI into the default status of knighthood for its reliability. I can load my '86 Roland MC-500 sequencer and send notes to my '03 Nord Lead module. I can't even turn on the unmentionable '95 audio interface because Nubus cards and the software/hardware for them disappeared one year later!

Now I know that MIDI has its limitations as well. When it comes to adding acoustic parts and mixing things down, that's when digital audio rightfully takes over. But MIDI has been overlooked for some basic studio functions and we're imposing on the computer far too much.

The following are some of the more common complaints I've heard among my colleagues and on the Internet. Since I'm old enough to remember when the word gigabyte was a



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VOLUME	PAN	EXPRESSION	RELEASE	ATTACK	CUTOFF FREQUENCY

laughable fantasy, I'm suggesting MIDI solutions to some common audio problems. Granted, it will involve some rethinking of the systems you gave up on a long time ago. But I promise you, it will add life to your current computer setup, imposing only on the CPU for special lead instruments and mixdowns. It may even save your studio from at least one or two of the "upgrade" overhauls that are now happening on a monthly basis.

AUTOMATION

We've all become control freaks about our track levels and the fine-tuning of every single element of our mix. Some have even started the habit of printing MIDI tracks to hard disk, just so we can control levels and simple EQ. No! No! No!

Stop and remember the myriad of controllers in the MIDI spec that can do all kinds of things while the sound is still "live" off your synth rig. Volume and Pan (CC7 and CC10) are only the start. Years ago, I befriended controller 11 — Expression. Expression is a subset of Volume. It means that I can set an overall volume with CC7 and then use the Expression controller for all fades/crescendos/decrescendos. Fades can now be the full length of the controller. Always from 0 to 127 regardless of how loud or soft the actual channel volume is. Never having to remember where to set the fader after the move. The volume controller ensures the balance never changes between instruments, while Expression allows for complete fade-ins and fade-outs on every MIDI channel...in one pass, depending on the sequencer.

Other controller magic can be had with Cutoff Frequency (CC74). Some synths even use separate controllers for high and low pass. This allows you to tailor your sound to be brighter or more muffled than its preset state. Perfect for simple EQ without eating up audio tracks or plug-ins. You can do this in real time too, and record the controller data in your sequencer for all kinds of sweeping filter or rhythm effects.

DELAY AND REVERB

Delay effects are so easy in MIDI that it's insulting. Copy the original MIDI data to another track and re-assign it to the same patch on another MIDI channel. Do that one more time to a third track and another channel. Apply a velocity change to both your copies, reducing them 75% or -10 velocity. Repeat that again only to the last track. Now by offsetting tracks, you have complete control over every "tap" of your delay. Since

most sequencers can display note length, there is no need to calculate milliseconds to beats per minute in order to figure out how much to offset. Move tracks by one beat, one eighth, or dotted eighths and quarters for those cool 3 against 2 rhythmic effects. You can even have your delays in a different key or, wait for it... a different sound! If you want, use cutoffs to muffle the delays. If you want more delays, copy more tracks. If at any place you want all delays to stop, delete or truncate all notes at that bar. No trailing echoes to worry about muting. And if you change the tempo on the sequencer, the delays will adjust accordingly!

Granted, you need a multi-channel module to do this. (Single channel modules sometimes choke when seeing the same note overlapping with itself over and over again.) Multi-channel modules are lying around used gear bins everywhere. And they still work.

As for reverb, most MIDI modules have some form of reverb built in. They're not always of the highest calibre, but then some reverb plug-ins have a lot to be desired too. Mixing engineers will tell you that it's good to have different reverbs for different parts. It's a better simulation of the multi-acoustics of a real room, as opposed to everything being sent to your one expensive reverb box or plug-in. The built-in reverbs on your synth module can, at the very least, serve as a good "room" sound for the parts you're playing from that module.

ATTACK AND DECAY

How a sound starts and stops is an integral part of its function in an ensemble. By adjusting attack parameters (CC73), staccato can turn into legato and vice versa. By slowing the attack, you can finally soften that overly done scrape in that stupid marcatto string patch!

Adjusting release (CC72) will help you tailor all kinds of keyboard/percussion sounds to your liking. An overly choppy piano or harp can be loosened up. String pads can be tightened so that they make less mud in the mix, or conversely opened up for deeper "analog-like" pad sounds. Combinations of both attack and decay can also create really tight gating effects too.

INSTANT INDUSTRIAL PERCUSSION

Forget all that pitch processing stuff in your computer. If you put your electronic percussion back into your MIDI module, you can use your pitch bend wheel to shift your percussion kits

down 2 octaves. Instantly. Some synths even have an assignable controller to change your pitch bend range. Any patch can be used with the usual half or whole tone bending for regular lines, and then whenever you need it, fire a PB range change to send it down into the caverns.

Another advantage to all the methods described so far is that they happen within the keyboard and sequencer. The actual patch or sample memory never needs to be altered. This is great for all those ROM preset MIDI modules that have little or no ability to modify patches to save as your own sounds. This way nothing needs to be resaved. You can breathe new life into so many of your already existing synth patches.

Now, to cover my butt from all the software manufacturers I've insulted, I must agree that MIDI on its own is pretty artificial sounding. I am not advocating a return to those MIDI-file arrangements

that can be played through your PC speakers with 8-bit reverb! I realize that MIDI has voice limitations, always needs to be running, and eats up more physical studio space. But after thousands of dollars of plug-in research and management, plus the monthly labyrinth of updates, we need to re-assert ourselves as composers, not beta-testers.

The future holds the promise of multiple computers sharing processor tasks in parallel. The main sequencer will hold all the data in one file, while certain functions will be processed live to other slave computers via FireWire or gigabit Ethernet. Yes, the latest G5 already has this built in but I ain't buying it just yet...figuratively and literally.

Until these rosy multiple PC scenarios actually work, we must reconsider the imposition on our digital audio processing. In my opinion, the best way to salvage our studio is to revert our bed-

tracks and pads back to MIDI, and save the computer for acoustic overdubs, special leads and effects, and multi-track mixes. With faster and higher standards of audio and video on the horizon, it's time to reconsider MIDI's controlling tool power. Let's restore its status to that of an actual music-making tool.

Hopefully, with the above suggestions you'll write more music a little more often. You may also see more of your loved ones instead of fighting with another plug-in! **sn**

*Composer Amin Bhatia has maintained a love/hate relationship with his studio for more than twenty years. His analog synth classic *Interstellar Suite* has recently been re-released by special arrangement with Capitol Records through www.interstellarsuite.com.*

LOS ANGELES OR BUST: THE ASCAP FILM SCORING WORKSHOP

By Darren Fung

In July of 2004, fifteen emerging film composers from around the world were selected to participate in the 16th Annual ASCAP Film Scoring Workshop. Chosen from a pool of several hundred composers, we had the opportunity to work and learn under the auspices of GCFC Honorary Member Richard Bellis, and ASCAP's Mike Todd and Kevin Coogan.

Since its inception in 1988, this month-long program has focused on both the business and creative challenges that film composers face in today's competitive market. This year's workshop featured a series of thirteen candid lectures and presentations from lawyers, agents, copyists, musicians, business executives, and of course, composers.

PROTECTING YOUR INTERESTS

Right from the get-go, one point that was driven home to us was how to protect both our own interests and the interests of our industry. One of the underlying problems presented was that as young composers, we are often desperate to do any kind of work and are willing to undercut the value of what we do for the simple sake of getting a "credit." If we as composers do not recognize the value of our work, it creates more of an uphill battle in obtaining financial recognition from the production team.

Not to say that emerging composers shouldn't do free or lower paying gigs. However, there are mechanisms out there that allow us to place a "suggested retail value" on our work, so as not to devalue it. Hard costs are not negotiable, but part of our "sell-a-bility" relies on the credits we have. Taking that into consideration, one (if not more) of the following four things should be apparent when taking a gig: i) great money, ii) the opportunity to develop a relationship with a particular team, iii) the project is amazing and iv) the opportunity to write some really awesome music.

EVERYTHING YOU DO THAT'S NOT COMPOSING

Many of the ASCAP Workshops presented dealt with the sad reality that much of what we do as film composers does not actually involve composing music. What brings most composers into the business is the music – what drives them away are the business elements.

Lawyer Scott Edel, and composer agent Christine Russell, discussed what they could do to help us navigate through the legal complexities of the film music world. Whereas

both a lawyer and agent can be brought in to help negotiate certain details, an agent is more interested in developing a long-term relationship with his/her client.



THE AUTHOR ON THE PODIUM

Many emerging composers experience problems when dealing with small independent features. These issues are usually the result of budgetary restraints. Often, the lawyer dealing with the production winds up as the general "film" lawyer and has no experience in music. These lawyers are often paid to say "no," even if they don't really understand why. In most cases where the front-end payment is low, the composer needs to be compensated by negotiating back end payments – specifically, publishing.

BEFORE YOU GET TO THE STUDIO, AND IN THE STUDIO

The highlight of the workshop was the opportunity to work with a 40-piece, A-list Hollywood Studio Orchestra on the Alfred Newman Scoring Stage at Fox Studios. Each of us was assigned to compose a three-minute cue from either a major motion picture or prime-time TV show and then record that cue with the orchestra. We were able to conduct the orchestra during the recording of our cues, and all of us came away with great sounding work and enough adrenaline to last a week!

A myriad of session team members were introduced to us and helped guide us along our journey. Russ Bartmus from JoAnn Kane Music, gave us a hands-on demonstrations on proper music preparation techniques. He gave us a good rule of thumb: music on the page should be large enough to see and read three feet away in a dark room without squinting. For this reason copyists print out parts on 9 x 12 paper as opposed to traditional letter-sized (8½ by 11). Parts longer than one page should be taped accordion style to facilitate flexible page turns and/or where some sort of break or rest should be noted. For example, suppose you have seven pages to a particular part. You don't tape them all on the front, or all on the back, but rather you tape the first two pages on the front, so that pages 1

and 2 are taped in the front. Then, pages 2 and 3 are taped on the back. So, on the left side of page 2, you have page 1, and on the right side you have page 3. This will allow the musicians to turn the pages in a way they see fit (two or three pages on the stand at a time).

John Rodd, an orchestral recordist with Fox, explained the actual studio process and reminded us of key points that are often overlooked. When it comes parts preparation, John stressed to make



everything “stupid-proof.” In other words, ensure that there are no possible problems, and be prepared for them when or if they happen. A common occurrence in studio is a lack of continuity in sync or timecode between all software, hardware and video. Colour video plays at 29.97 frames per second, and not at 30 frames per second. He also reminded us not to pass “midnight” (0:00:00.00), and to ask for the timecode burn-in to start at one o’clock (1:00:00.00). This makes a difference when you have a lead-in on your click track. Machines synched to each other via timecode trying to find 23:59:55.34 usually end up fast-forwarding for a long time instead of doing a little bit of rewinding, which can burn valuable studio time. Other tips include: i) ensuring that you or your orchestrator does not renumber or re-meter bars right before the session. This may cause a discrepancy between the score and how the click is setup. ii) Videotaping free-time conductors for later choir overdubs and then synching them up to timecode. John also spent quite a bit of time talking about the ways to prevent or prepare yourself in the event something smelly

should hit the fan. It would feel pretty horrible if something didn’t work and there was a whole room of musicians waiting for you!

Michael Ryan from Mad4Music, detailed the position of a music editor. Essentially, the music editor is the knight in shining armour who takes care of everything from spotting notes, making click tracks and putting in punches and streamers for free-time conducting. In other words, he/she takes care of many of the technical, but non-musical aspects of the job. For those of us who work with click tracks, Michael stressed that accents on the strong beat didn’t go over very well with musicians, and that when doing clicks with crazy compound time signatures (7/8, 5/8, etc...), eighth notes should be clicked only on the fat beat. For example, in a 7/8 bar beamed as a dotted quarter note followed by two quarters, the click track should have three clicks for the dotted quarter beat, and then have a click for each of the quarter note beats (click-click-click, click, click).

The main thing for us was learning enough about these tasks so that we are able to do a decent job of them ourselves — for the time being. Unfortunately, that \$500 budget for a short film won’t really cover these costs, but that’s still no excuse not to have a professional session. Richard Bellis summed up session preparation the best, “Our goal is to be able to have no questions and no problems on the stand – quite frankly, questions and problems will cost us money.”

Throughout the entire workshop, they repeatedly highlighted that it is a team who helps make a session run well. It doesn’t just happen with the composer. It’s a group of people who each contribute their part in order to achieve the composer’s vision: a great sounding score. Keeping that in mind, treating members of the team with the respect they deserve is paramount to having any sort of career in the business. As the saying goes, what goes around, comes around.

LEARNING FROM THE GREATS

This year’s workshop was also fortunate enough to host lectures by some of the world’s leading film composers, allowing us to gain valuable insight from their creative viewpoints. One of the most memorable evenings was an off-the-cuff talk with Randy Newman (*Toy Story*, *Seabiscuit*). (Boy, can he play some mean piano!) We received orchestration tips from Steve Bramson (*JAG*), tech tips from Jeff Rona (*White Squall*, *Traffic* mini-series), and more candid lectures from Sean Callery (*24*) and Marco Belltrami (*I, Robot*, *Terminator 3*). These lectures were held in an informal setting, and were great because it gave us the opportunity to hear about who the composers were, what they did and how they got there.

The commonality between all of the composers was the importance they placed on the mentoring they received from veteran composers, as well as the importance of networking – getting to know people.

What made the ASCAP Film Scoring Workshop so fantastic were the fifteen enthusiastic and energetic young composers who were all in roughly the same part of their careers. We each shared our unique experiences and expertise to create a truly unique and fruitful learning environment. Most of all, we made great friends and colleagues who have become wonderful resources to refer to when we need them. **sn**

Darren Fung is an emerging film composer based out of Montreal, and was one of the fifteen participants in the ASCAP Film Scoring Workshop. He has also participated in the GCFC’s Apprentice/Mentorship program in 2003.

The ASCAP Film Scoring Workshop is held annually in July at ASCAP’s Los Angeles Office. Submissions for next year’s workshop are due on April 1st, 2005. For more information, please visit: www.ascap.com/about/workshops.html#film.

For information about the GCFC’s Apprentice/Mentor program please visit: www.gcfc.ca.



VICTOR DAVIES PRESENTS JOHN WEINZWEIG WITH A GCFC HAT AND HONORARY MEMBER CERTIFICATE

In November 2004 composer John Weinzweig was inducted into the GCFC as an Honorary Member. As well as his distinguished career as a concert composer and teacher, John composed music for films during the formative years of the NFB in Ottawa in the '40s. He has been a tireless worker on behalf of composers' rights through his work at CAPAC, SOCAN, Canadian League of Composers and many other organizations, and has never been afraid to call to account some of the largest bureaucracies including the CBC, CRTC, and the Canadian Government itself. He was delighted to be recognized by the GCFC for his music

and his life-long efforts on behalf of all Canadian composers in their continuing efforts to be heard and to be properly compensated for the use of their music. All of us are indebted to him for his efforts. Welcome to the GCFC, John. **SN**

GCFC HONORARY MEMBERS

Tommy Banks
Richard Bellis

Alf Clausen
Robert Farnon

Scott Goodfellow
Stan Meissner

Howard Shore
John Weinzweig

GCFC Gold Members

Chris Ainscough
Leon Aronson
Paul Baillargeon
Elizabeth Baird
Hal Foxton Beckett
Amin Bhatia
Rob Bryanton
Patric Caird

Chris Dedrick
Martin Deller
Micky Erbe
Terry Frewer
Gia Ionesco
Scott Macmillan
Robert Marchand
Neil McConachie

Peter Measroch
Glenn Morley
Phil Nimmons
Ari Posner
Donald Quan
Pierre-Daniel Rheault
Graig Robertson
Karel Roessingh

John Samijlo
John Sereda
Mike Shields
Lawrence Shragge
Marty Simon
Maribeth Solomon
Meiro Stamm
Doug Wilde