Music for Film and Television
An RCTV Producers Workshop presented by John Andrew Centrone,
in association with Rochester Movie Makers

On Thursday, November 21, composer John Centrone offered an RCTV Producers Workshop, in association with Rochester Movie Makers, that explored the topic of Music for Film and Television. Rochester Community TV and Rochester Movie Makers wish to thank John for his generosity in presenting this workshop.

Below are notes from John’s presentation.

- Music underscores the motion in a film and enhances or even cues the emotion the director/producer wants to elicit.
- Music and visual media are the only art forms that move the audience through time at the exact, deliberate pace the creator determines.
- Music is the most artificial component of film or television, since it is not normally there in real life.
- While familiar situations can be depicted through lighting, sound and action, it is the music that evokes a physiological response (quickened pulse, increased respiration, heart rate, etc.) that triggers emotion.
- Certain musical conventions and codes trigger specific responses. For example, use of the major scale generally triggers a happy or pleasant emotion. Use of the minor scale triggers a sad, anxious, scared or unpleasant emotion. These conventions were developed throughout film history and have been used repeatedly, reinforcing the nature of these responses.
- Music is used to trigger a change in action or emotion. You will rarely have a fade to black without music.
- Music takes advantage of the fact that we cannot multi-task when watching a film. So we cannot watch and pay attention to the film and dialogue, and listen to the music simultaneously, so the music enters through the subconscious.
- *The Lost Weekend* with Ray Milland is an example of powerful use of music. When originally shown, the audience laughed at inappropriate places. When music was added, it alleviated this problem. The film went on to capture 4 Oscars.
- Music has three functions
  1. Physical function – It sets location, time of day, time period, culture or nationality, underlines action.
  2. Physiological function – It creates mood, rounds off the film, suggests unspoken thoughts, reveals unseen implications, gives insight into makeup of character, underlines expected audience response, deceives reaction, makes a philosophical response, sets up a surprise, telegraphs the director’s intent.
  3. Technical function - Builds continuity from scene to scene, builds overall continuity, bridges from one scene to the next by starting cue in one scene then moving the audience to the next. The composer often uses music to create thematic continuity.
- There are three principle sources for music
  1. Song – A recognized song or artist can bring the experience and emotion of the song to the film. An unknown song lacks that power, but often lends its own qualities and can be an excellent way
1. To add emotion to a film. For a well-known song, a synchronization license (sync license) is required and can run from $5K - $300K for limited use. For an unknown song or artist, a sync license is required, but it is less costly or possibly free.

2. Library Music – Music from a library can be used for film and television, but if content is original, why use music that is not original? For both Purchased and Royalty Free Music, a Right of Use License is required.

3. Composed Music – Music is designed by a composer to complement each element of the film. There are two scenarios for working with a composer, as outlined below.
   - Composed to Picture (Scenario 1) – This is where the producer works with a composer, and orchestra, a copyist, a conductor, musicians and a stage, a sound engineer, a mixer and a dubbing engineer. In this scenario, 3%-5% of the film’s budget should be dedicated to the musical scoring. For example, on a $45,000,000 film, the music budget might be from $1,350,000 to $2,250,000. In arriving at this figure, estimate a 60 piece orchestra at $253 per musician for 3 hours = $15,800 (for 15 minutes of music, maximum).
   - Composed to Picture (Scenario 2, in which John Centrone works) – In this scenario, the producer works with a composer who writes, orchestrates, programs and produces the music (and who may, optionally, dub it).
   - A copyright currently extends to 90 years past the life of the last living individual who was involved.

**Notes about Working with John Centrone**

- John prefers to work with a film once it is at the Picture Lock or Time Lock phase.
- All of his composing starts with a piano sketch.
- To score a feature film, it generally takes John approximately 5 weeks to compose the music. He takes one week to experience the film, then he writes the time codes and the emotion he feels in each segment before starting to compose. During the time he is composing, he sleeps in his studio to capture inspiration that can come in the middle of the night.
- If the music must be lowered to almost none-existent in a scene, it should be eliminated.
- Action films are generally more intensive in time and the amount of music needed.

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