

VIDEO PRODUCTION 101



Delivering the Message

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Thomas McCluskey

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Form VA

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FIGURE 2.12 An excerpt from Form VA, application for copyright, from the U.S. Copyright Office

COPYRIGHT VS. PLAGIARISM

Most students will already be familiar with the concept of plagiarism, which is presenting someone else's work as if it is your own without citing the original source. Copyright infringement is theft, and it might potentially be considered a crime if the work that was infringed upon was deemed by a judge to have real commercial value.

Other original work like fashion designs can be copyright-protected; however, the original aspects of certain types of work sometimes need to be challenged in a court for some larger determination to be made about what is truly original. Apparently, the government got around to extending copyright protections to the hull design of ships in 1998. So, y’know, if you’ve got a great hull design you’re not doing anything with, feel free to get it out there. It’s protected.

Certain types of creative work, like names of songs, books, and band names, are not protected by copyright law. So, legally, you might be able to call your work *The More Hurt Locker: Even Hurtier* and get away with it, so long as you don’t mind your house getting egged. Every night. Forever.

But don’t try calling it *Star Wars, Episode Four: An Even Newer Hope*, because that’s trademark infringement of a corporate entity. And this particular corporate entity has light sabers.

Soundtrack and Score

“The best soundtrack music bypasses your mind and goes straight to your soul. It sort of trips something in your brain; you know you’re being transported.”

—Cameron Crowe

Music, in and of itself, is a complex medium that libraries’ worth of books have been, and continue to be, written about. Like the motion picture, it is a *temporal medium*, one that requires time to be perceived by an audience member (see **FIGURE 2.13**).

You can’t just start a video and look at it for a few seconds and say, “Yep, watched it.”

You may be able to walk quickly through a museum, glance at every painting and sculpture you’ve passed by, and say you’ve seen it, but you can’t listen to a song or watch a video the way Neo learned kung fu in *The Matrix* (1999).

As mentioned in the introduction to this book, a defining aspect of the motion-picture medium is its inclusion of other media, music being one of them. Unfortunately, instruction on the specific methods of writing and recording a piece of music goes beyond the scope of this book.

Rather, this section will focus on the understanding of how musical soundtrack and score can be used to enhance and strengthen the delivery of your message. You’ll learn how to identify the right kind of music for your video and how to communicate and work with musicians to create the score. We’ll also explain how to ethically and legally use music that was not originally created for your video.

FIGURE 2.13

Student recording a piano track for a video score

**NOTE**

Albums of music from a motion picture are also called *original soundtrack* (OST).

It's Time to Settle the Score

The terms *soundtrack* and *score* are frequently used interchangeably. Originally, the term *sound track* was used to define the entire completed mix of audio that accompanies the motion picture. As record albums of music used in films began to be sold to the public as a separate product from the film in the early 20th century, the entertainment industry began to use the contraction *soundtrack* to describe the music in a film's sound track. Today, the most common use of the term *soundtrack* refers to songs in a motion picture, as opposed to a musical score.

A *score* is music that is intended to play in the background of a motion picture's sound mix, usually recorded by an orchestra specifically for that film (see **FIGURE 2.14**). Its purpose is to support and enhance the mood, tone, and emotional impact of a scene. A score guides an audience's emotional understanding of what is happening onscreen. The music can set a specific mood, like suspense and anticipation in a horror film, excitement and energy in an action scene, or melancholy in a scene where there is loss or death.

Music in motion pictures is not just limited to instrumental compositions; songs also serve an important purpose. For scenes in which there is no dialogue, a song with lyrics that reflect the action or emotion of a particular scene can be effective. Songs bring an element of poetry to the collection of media that is integrated into a motion picture. Filmmakers can use a song in its entirety as the foundation of an entire sequence or montage.



PHOTO "SCORING SESSION" BY JOSH TIDSBURY / CC BY-ND 2.0

FIGURE 2.14

A full orchestra at work in a scoring session

There are some films whose soundtrack is made up entirely of songs or prerecorded music, with little or no original score. The soundtrack for the Mike Nichols film *The Graduate* (1967) is made up entirely of popular songs written and performed by Simon & Garfunkel. Director Martin Scorsese frequently uses this approach to film music, most notably in *Goodfellas* (1990), *Casino* (1995), and *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013). Even in *Shutter Island* (2010), Scorsese used prerecorded music that sounds like original score, mostly because a large chunk of the music was used in other films.

Directors often choose songs that locate the story or segments of it at a specific point in time. Two examples of this are *Forrest Gump* (1994) and *Almost Famous* (2000). Directors don't fill their films' soundtracks with songs just because they like them; Zach Braff's *Garden State* (2004) may be an exception to that rule.

On the other side of this spectrum, you can choose to not use any music at all in your video. Master of suspense Sir Alfred Hitchcock was able to prove that a thrilling suspense film could be made with the complete absence of music. He tested this theory most notably in *The Birds* (1963). Instead, composer and longtime collaborator Bernard Herrmann designed the sound of the film using sound effects of birds instead of music only three years after creating one of the most memorable horror movie scores in *Psycho* (1960).

I'm Detecting a Theme Here

The most popular film scores contain a memorable *theme* or *leitmotif*. A theme is a musical phrase that repeats and is usually attached to a character, a place, or a time in a story. What music comes to mind when you read the name Darth Vader? How about when you think about sharks? Or dinosaurs? See what we mean? The composer of the memorable themes used in the *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, and *Jurassic Park* series is John Williams, who is considered the master of the film score theme. If a musical theme pops in your head, odds are pretty high that Williams wrote it.

The videos you create, especially if you are creating a series, might have an opening theme and a closing or end credit theme. The number of musical themes you have in your video depends on the structure and themes of your story. You might choose to have a single theme that repeats but varies in style to support the mood of each scene. The Jean-Luc Godard film *Contempt* (1963) uses a single two-and-a-half-minute theme, composed by Georges Delerue, repeated throughout the film.

Spotting Cues

TIP

Remember that there is no rule forcing you to put wall-to-wall music throughout your video. Sometimes just the sound of the environment is enough to create the appropriate mood for the scene. If you want your project to play like a Puccini opera, feel free to “through-compose” your music.

The first step in the process of adding music to your video is spotting the cues. A *cue* is the term used to describe both a piece of musical score and the moment in the video at which that piece of music begins. *Spotting* describes the process of identifying where those cues go, listing how many cues are needed, and writing a description and purpose for each cue. The document created to organize the music in a production is called a *cue sheet* (see **FIGURE 2.15**).

A director works with a music editor and composer to create a cue sheet, which is then used by the postproduction team to keep track (no pun intended) of the music in a show. The document evolves when multiple sources of music are used and the management of rights and ownership require additional information to be added to the sheet.

Please Compose Yourself

As a videomaker, you will find yourself collaborating with a variety of people with expertise in different crafts. Some of the folks you'll work with are working primarily at a technical level, such as the camera department or lighting technicians.

Others you may work with, like your actors or talent, work mostly on an emotional level. How you communicate with either type of collaborator requires a bit of code-switching. You don't speak to your friends the same way you do to your parents.

Blank Cue Sheet Template

Series/Film Title: Episode Title/Number: Estimated Airdate: Program Length: Program Type:	Company Name: Address: Phone: Contact: Network Station:
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Cue #	Cue Title	Use*	Timing	Composer(s) Affiliation / %	Publisher(s) Affiliation / %
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
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19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					

*Use Codes: **MT** = Main Title **VI** = Visual Instrumental **BV** = Background Vocal
VV = Visual Vocal **ET** = End Title **BI** = Background Instrumental
T = Theme

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FIGURE 2.15
Blank cue sheet template

When you're working with a composer, you have a unique hybrid of both qualities because music can be very technical but is mainly concerned with what Stanley Kubrick called "a progression of moods and feelings."

When collaborating with a composer who is providing an original score for your motion picture, remember that even though they might be entering the process late in the production, they are an integral part of your team. When beginning work with the composer, share your passion for the project. Enthusiastically express in detail your intentions in making the video. Discuss the meanings, subtext, symbolism, language, rhythms, visual design, challenges, triumphs, what you had for breakfast, and so on.

The more the composer understands what went into the project, what it means, and what it is intended to deliver to an audience, the better equipped they'll be to create music that is, at the least, appropriate. Ideally, they'll create a new element