

What are Film and TV Music Supervisors Looking For? (Appendix 1)

By David Hooper (email via <http://www.indiebiz.com/>)

Brought to you by:



Visit <http://www.indiebiz.com/> today for more free eBooks on the music business, promotion/marketing help for bands and musicians, and the resources you need to make a living making music.

LEGAL STUFF: Copyright 2000 Kathode Ray Music. All Rights Reserved. Distribution of this file is encouraged providing it is not sold or altered. Go ahead, email it to a couple of friends now.

DEMO SUBMISSION POLICY: We're always looking for good bands and musicians to work with. To submit your demo, please fill out the form at the end of this document and mail your package to the address below.

Kathode Ray Music
PO Box 121135
Nashville, TN 37212-1135

[See the end of this document for our demo submission form.](#)

What are Film and TV Music Supervisors Looking For? (Appendix 1)

By David Hooper (email via <http://www.indiebiz.com/>)

I recently sat down with my database and contacted several people in the film and TV music industry for an article I was writing. I only had one main question, "What is it that gets your attention?"

The responses were so good that I decided to publish every one of them in their entirety. What you see here is exactly what I got back either via email or heard via phone.

Please note that literally hundreds of interviews took place and this appendix is one of many available. Visit <http://www.indiebiz.com/> for the latest downloads from this series as well as other series on what publishers, A&R staff, and music attorneys are looking for.

I think you'll find many of the results from my interviews surprising...and in a good way!

Our company does music for films and trailers -- but primarily provides it to them in the form of production music. Our library is currently being used by NBC, ABC -- literally every channel on the major cable stations -- with the exception of the Food Channel. Not to mention having scored tons of ABC News shows (20/20, Turning Point, etc) and have had our music used in-shows from 'ER' all the way to 'VH1's Music Awards 2000.'

We have three staff composers -- but we have a small but intense contingent of freelance writers who've made it through the painful experience of learning how we write our 'special' brand of music. 'Special' is more like the 'Special' in the 'Special Olympics.'

In a composer demo, most important is the first cut -- especially the first :10. If our attention isn't caught by the first :10 we figure the person doesn't know how film/television trailer/promo music works -- or more likely, they're under the impression that they're showing us their 'art.' Sure, we're artists, too -- but in a demo, you're SELLING yourself in a package. Music in our business is only effective if it conveys an emotion IMMEDIATELY. I can't remember the last time I saw a commercial longer than :30. As a matter of fact, because of the sudden onset of about a billion programming channels (Internet included), media buyers are starting to 'shotgun' their buys buy dividing their budgets into a bunch of :10s, :15s and :20s. If we can't get

the emotion you're trying to convey within the first :10, you're doing something seriously wrong.

*More importantly, in your demo you're selling yourself to not only people who are busy -- but more importantly, you're trying to sell yourself to people who have the attention span of gnats with ADD -- and convince them that you're worth the time/pain to train and deal with over the phone. You might think it's brutal for us to say this -- but it's more brutal to spend several hours each month listening to hundreds of mediocre (at best) demos. Some of these people might be phenomenal musicians. We don't care. We don't care if you've got no arms and play a Casio keyboard with your tongue. Show us you can think as a composer (and engineer) -- and you're 90% of the way there. In short, knock us out of our seats so we say 'shit -- why didn't WE think of doing that?' If you can do that, you've got an interview. - **Stewart Winter, CEO, VideoHelper***

We get calls from music supervisors regarding a particular type of song for a film. A song from the 60's or a love ballad that fits a particular theme or montage or a recorded song they're familiar with to work in the film as source music, etc.

*As far as songs, I look for originality ... something I haven't heard before from top to bottom. I want to hear a 3 minute vignette that takes me somewhere I've never been before - regardless of band image / popularity; recording quality, etc. - **Mark A. Weiss, Harlan Howard Songs***

Our company is interested in the quality of the music. It is important that the artist prepare a professional good quality demo. Demos should be done in a professional matter and mixed down to distinguish all of the sounds and voices. A professional prepared tape is very impressive. - **Bonnie D. Braxton, Executive Producer, Yo Momma's Records**

CLARITY AND PERSISTENCE. I like when packages arrive that have information that is easy to digest and are esthetically pleasing. When packages arrive with prolonged bios (more than one page) and tons of press clippings in a not very attractive package it can become quite cumbersome and delays my curiosity about the release. I feel companies should put their best foot forward. If it's a sampler give me 4-5 songs, brief paragraph or 1 page bio on the artist and some Important press quotes or additional info (music been used in other films or commercials; someone's I know's favorite band or singer) on another page. Don't really need photographs if images are included in the CD artwork. Also specifying what TYPE or variation of music

it is can be very helpful: Rock, Rap, Country, Alternative, etc... Knowing whether a song or songs master AND publishing can be cleared easily is most important. The difference between One stop or ten stop shopping is huge when considering your music budget and expenses. After that, follow ups with a phone call or better yet an - e-mail reminds me to pull that package out of the stack (if one exists) if I haven't already reviewed it. - Bill Coleman, Music Supervisor, Pease Bisquit Productions

The appearance of the package is not of any importance, especially since the submissions do not go directly to me, unless someone I know has personally referred the composer to me.

I am also not concerned with the popularity of the group or composer. I'm most concerned with the quality and content of the compositions and recordings and their marketability. Since we mainly publish production music, which is background and theme music, mostly for television and film, I try to evaluate the material with regard to its usefulness to the potential producers. - Michael Nurko, President, TRF / Alpha Music

There are various elements that make up a strong demo, but most importantly for a publisher such as Palan Music is the quality and crafting of writing. Production, instrumentation, vocals etc. can all be changed to fit the moment but the basic structure of the song, the hook, the chorus, the melody these elements make up the back bone of a song and must be very strong. Of course if we were a Record Label or Management Company we may have different priorities. - Scott Farrant, International Creative & Licensing Manager, Palan Music (UK)

Get your material out and about all the time. My needs change every time I work on a new film or TV project. Production quality is always important - UNLESS you are working on a project that needs a certain sound, say like a garage band, bad brass band, neophyte clarinet player, etc. It's all about timing and staying in touch with people. Then you can meet the right opportunity with your "right" product. The relationship gives you the edge which is a product of the time invested in staying in contact. - Christine Luethje, Music Editor, Sync It Up! Music Editing

Originality is what counts. There are lots of craftsmen in our field by a unique voice is the hardest thing to cultivate. - Charles Yassky, Music Contractor, Music from the Other Coast

I'm looking for one word: Talent. As far as sound quality of the demo goes, you can cut it on an old wire recorder, I don't care, Hiss never killed a hit record. If there's Talent there, believe me, I'll hear it. You don't need a Mega Studio and Mega Buck production to impress me. Chances are if you do, I'll listen to it with a "raised eyebrow". Thinking 'what do they really sound like'.

- Patrick Appleson, President, Pat Appleson Studios

The quality of the production should be as professional as possible without spending a fortune on your demo. A CD is preferred, but a quality chrome cassette tape is OK with no more than 3-tracks with lyrics. Do to the volume of music that we receive, we do not have time to look at photos or read a family history. If we ask for additional music, we expect to receive the follow-up music within a week. - **Victor Kaply, President, Westwood Music Group**

I'm looking for one word: Talent. As far as sound quality of the demo goes, you can cut it on an old wire recorder, I don't care, Hiss never killed a hit record. If there's Talent there, believe me, I'll hear it. You don't need a Mega Studio and Mega Buck production to impress me. Chances are if you do, I'll listen to it with a "raised eyebrow". Thinking 'what do they really sound like'.

- Patrick Appleson, President, Pat Appleson Studios

We consider many factors when we receive a package. First and foremost is the music. We are not only looking at the quality of the music, but whether it fits well into Prime CD's catalog as it is important that we take on projects that we can market effectively. Another important factor for us is whether the artist is touring, where they are touring and the size of audiences that are coming to their shows. We need to know a "buzz" is happening before we can work to amplify that "buzz". In addition, we do consider production quality, sound quality etc. - **David Seitz, President, Prime CD**

Our music is used in trailers, promos, IDs, commercials, documentaries, TV shows, a/v productions, etc.

We look for several things, all of which are important: the quality of the artists, the nature of the repertoire they wish to record, and if the master already exists, the sound quality. - **Victor Sachse, President, Centaur**

We look for a good and interesting track record as well as professional presentation. Personal recommendation always helps too. - **Olav Wyper, President, Soundtrack Music Associates**

Basically, we look for high quality, unusual music when we go outside our staff for composers, or existing material. In Nashville, it's hard to find cutting edge programmers, the likes of what's going on today in the chart records. In Nashville, I believe we have the best songwriters in the world, so in that arena, we have plenty to choose from. Again, it's the composer/programmers who really can get the very best film music scores going, and the cutting edge sounds. - **Randy Wachtler, President, 615 Music Companies**

My company places songs in films and television shows. When I get a package sent to me here is what I look for. First off don't send a cassette tape. They probably won't get listened to. Send a CD. That is the format that people in the business listen to. When I listen to a song on a CD the most important things that I listen for are 1. the production quality of the recording. If is not at a certain level I won't send it out to the shows or films. I like stuff that comes to me and it is ready to go out as is. No hassles. 2. the vocals need to be good as well as the musicians playing on the recording. 3. The song needs to be good and catch my attention. It might be the hook, the melody or the lyrics. - **Doug Stebleton, President, Kid Gloves Music**

First, some brief in on the company and then a few thoughts on what you asked.....

COMPANY INFO

- *founded in April 1994*
- *our main two activities as a music publishing company are: administration and film & TV placement.*
- *on the administrative side, we administer the music publishing rights of our client and, on a worldwide basis, collect royalties, negotiate agreements, issue licenses, police royalties, etc.*
- *on the creative side, our main focus is film & TV placements. We are averaging between 15-20 placements a month. Mainly this is in TV, but there is more and more film stuff. If you wish, I can send you the list of recent placements, but it's in shows ranging from POPULAR (WB), RESURRECTION BLVD. (Showtime), SEX AND THE CITY (HBO), DAWSON'S CREEK (WB), PROVIDENCE (NBC), YOUNG & THE RESTLESS (CBS) and many many more.*
- *we are beginning to focus more energy on getting other artist to record our songs as we're getting a higher profile in the A&R community with songs on the current Macy Gray record and upcoming records by debut Atlantic*

artist Lina, debut MCA artist Noa, the current Jared Douglas record and many more.

COMMENTS

- we do listen to absolutely everything that comes in. It may take us a while since we are so overwhelmed with submissions these days due to our success, but we do get through it all. The priority listens are those referred by existing clients or associates. The unsolicited submissions are then next.

- these days, if someone sends us a cassette, we pretty much don't get too excited about checking it out. Overall, CD has really become the preferred method of submissions - not only for us but I believe industry wide.

- great looking artwork is always a plus - it helps give a visual feel for the artist and many times puts a 'face' on the music. That being said, it is not a requirement but if we had a CD with no artwork and a CD with great looking artwork, the one with artwork would admittedly get listened to first. But, in the end, it's about the music. We've had many a great looking CD with lousy music. It's all in the presentation - concentrate on the music first and then concentrate on the marketing. If you need to bring someone else in to help with this area, go for it. We all can't be great at everything and need to know when to ask for help from those whose talents we respect and whose opinions we trust. - **Michael Eames, President, Pen Music Group, Inc.**

Aside from my liking the music, what gets my attention is a good promo package. An absolute must is a cover letter that is concise and states exactly what the artist is looking for. (I can't tell you how many promos I get without cover letters... I simply throw them in the trash. If an artist can't introduce himself properly, I don't want to work with him.). A return reply envelope, (postage not necessary) is always a pleasure; press reviews, tour info, discography and career goals are important too. - **Bob Haddad, President, Own's Head Music**

David Hooper is the founder of the music business resource, IndieBiz.com (<http://www.indiebiz.com/>), and Kathode Ray Music (<http://www.kathoderaymusic.com/>), an artist development organization specializing in promotion and marketing of independent musicians and bands. He is known for combining traditional music business knowledge with the guerrilla marketing necessary for independent bands to compete. He has worked in the past with Lords of Acid, Marcy Playground, and bush. Current clients include Confederate Fagg and Dresscode.

VISIT <http://www.indiebiz.com/> TODAY FOR:

- * MORE MUSIC BUSINESS EBOOKS
- * FREE PROMOTION TIPS NEWSLETTER
- * 34,000 INDUSTRY CONTACT DATABASE
- * ONE ON ONE, MARKETING STRATEGY HELP

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DEMO SUBMISSION INFORMATION!

KATHODE RAY MUSIC
DEMO SUBMISSION FORM

NAME OF ARTIST/BAND:

ARTIST/BAND CONTACT:

DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER:

EVENING PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

WEB URL:

NUMBER OF UNITS SOLD:

SHORT TERM MUSICAL GOALS:

LONG TERM MUSICAL GOALS:

TYPE OF ASSISTANCE NEEDED:

MAIL THIS FORM WITH CD/CASSETTE TO:

KATHODE RAY MUSIC
PO BOX 121135
NASHVILLE, TN 37212-1135