

Observations and lessons learned from the Hollywood Reporter, Billboard Film and TV Music Conference

**A report for Louisiana Economic Development and the Louisiana Music Commission
By Jay Weigel**

This report outlines the activities and lessons learned from my trip to the Hollywood Reporter/Billboard Conference, hereafter "the conference". It is my hope that the observations shared in this document can serve as a guide to songwriters, composers and recording studio managers who may be interested in pursuing work licensing, composing or recording music for film.

The conference website address is:

www.billboardevents.com/billboardevents/filmtv/index.jsp

Conference Background

The conference was hosted at the Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles. Attending were composers, songwriters, managers, music supervisors, attorneys, and members of the press. Discussions centered on licensing music for film, composing music for film and video games, and preparing materials for soliciting the above work. The information was shared through a series of panel discussions, interviews and roundtables. Participants in these events included music supervisors for film, video game and film composers, music library owners, agents, directors, advertising agency executives and Hollywood Reporter staff.

As is true with most conferences, the greatest opportunities for sharing information regarding the opportunities available in Louisiana took place in the hallways or "after hour" dinners and receptions through informal conversations. Fortunately, I was aided in this effort by my relationship with Joel C. High, formerly V.P. Music at Lions Gate Films, and the current owner of Creative Control Entertainment. His commitment to increasing the utilization of Louisiana talent and creative content in film was expressed by including me in some of these "insider" events and introducing me to his colleagues.

Format Description

Panel Discussions – the typical format for the panels was no surprise. As an example, a panel on the creative process would include a composer, director, music supervisor and studio executive. A member of the Hollywood reporter staff would lead the discussion. The panels lasted approximately 75 minutes and would start with introductions. Each individual would outline their experiences with the creative process and respond to observations by other panelists. These panels were generally aimed at those with limited experience in the process. As a learning experience, it would be invaluable to

the beginner. Some of these panels and the interviews discussed below, as well as other panels held throughout the year, are available to download at:

<http://www.ipressroom.com/pr/apm/info/APM-Film-and-TV-Music-Podcast.asp>

Another example of a panel of interest to Louisiana's entrance into this field featured music supervisors from film companies and advertising agencies. They focused not on original composition, but the licensing of pre-recorded songs in advertising and film. Each panelist described the best way to package products for consideration. Each panel ended with a question and answer session with the attendees.

Interviews – conversations were had with a variety of professionals from the field. Included were directors, composers and music supervisors. The interviewees were often people at the top of their field. For example, composer Danny Elfman was a featured interviewee. He discussed his career, challenges faced and overcome, and the general condition of the field and the profession.

Other interviews included directors and composers, and would feature excerpts from the upcoming film being discussed. The excerpts were used to prompt conversation about the role of music in the film making process. Also discussed were the budget and creative processes around the use or creation of music for film.

Again, every interview included a question and answer session driven by the audience.

Roundtables – were organized in a very casual manner. For instance, the music supervisor roundtable was held in a room with 20 or so eight top tables. Two professionals from the field would be stationed at a table. Topics included: Getting Started in Music Supervision, Music Libraries, Soundtracks, Licensing Music for Film. Attendees were free to move from table to table and engage in a group conversation about the topic of the table. As mentioned, these interactions were informal but valuable. They allowed everyone to have their specific questions addressed in an intimate manner. Each of these sessions lasted approx. 70 minutes.

Specific Interactions

Once again, the most productive interactions that often result at conferences takes place in the hallways and after hour events. Fortunately, many of the conference panelists and interviewees made themselves available after their panel in the hallways. Lines of attendees would informally form in front of a panelists allowing for one on one time with these individuals. However, this was not the occasion to "bombard" these individuals with demos or marketing materials. Making some contact, and exchanging cards for a follow up email or letter, was the proper course of action to take. Most of these individuals had limited time to spend at the conference, as they were "taking time off" of their workday to participate in their respective panels or interviews. Most were

going back to their office and back to work. Therefore it was best to be brief and respectful of their limited time.

After hour events included dinners and cocktail party receptions. These often required an "insider" invitation. As mentioned earlier, I was aided in this regard by my relationship with Joel C. High. I attended a dinner hosted by a Canadian record company as well as the "Honeypot" party primarily attended by the music supervision community of Los Angeles.

There were three specific contacts with Music Supervisors that I made, and follow up has already started. I cannot emphasize enough that the film music business community is similar to every business community in many ways. The most relevant here is that business tends to happen between people that know and trust each other. Therefore, one must take time to get to know each individual that one meets in the industry. This is a time consuming investment, but one that will have the highest return over time. Something as simple as presenting demo materials to a music supervisor can differ with each individual; some are interested in viewing websites, others prefer mp3s and still others prefer cds.

At the conference I had the opportunity to discuss in some detail Louisiana's tax incentives with two Los Angeles based Music Supervisors and one New York Advertising Executive.

1. Season Kent – Music Supervisor [worked with music supervisor John Houlihan]
2. Evyen Klean – Music Supervisor and owner of Neophonic Inc
3. Josh Rabinowitz – New York based Director of **Music** at Grey Worldwide

I have forwarded to Season Kent and Evyen Klean a "one sheet" on the Recording tax Credit. Season Kent has already responded and forwarded the information to other Music Supervisors and composers. I will be following up with these individuals.

Recommendations

There are three observations/recommendations for individuals regarding placing music in a film or television series:

1. The primary recommendation I would make to individuals interested in licensing pre-recorded music has to do with how their information is packaged. Everything needs to be packaged for ease of access. It is essential when sending cds for consideration that every piece, the outside label, the inside label, the back tray card and the cd itself contains complete contact information. One needs to appreciate the tremendous time pressure that the music supervisor is working under. He/she needs to be fully aware that if a particular piece of music has been selected, it can in fact be easily cleared for use. So, many example cds that I saw contained a sticker labeling the cd "onestop". This indicated that the

sender of the cd had control of all of the parameters needed for clearing the music for use. For publishers and record labels interested in sending product, it is better to send a compilation cd with two sample tracks from six artists, than sending six individual cds.

2. Related to the above recommendation would be some traditional business advice, do your homework. It is invaluable to have an idea of what type of project a Supervisor is currently working on. Then, select examples that would be appropriate to their particular project. Again, this increases the chance of success by saving time for the Supervisor.
3. Finally, to reiterate a point mentioned above, personal relationships are invaluable. There needs to be significant time and patience dedicated to this point. Again, because of the time pressure in the film/TV music world, gaining the respect of a decision maker is crucial to the success one will have licensing music. The other point here is that the community of Music Supervisors is a close knit group. Information is freely shared amongst one another. Therefore, every interaction with an individual has repercussions. If one successfully places music, and has made it easy for the Supervisor chances are that he/she will let others know. However, the contrary is true as well. Should the process end poorly, this will be shared as well.

In conclusion, the lessons learned at this conference have been validated repeatedly and consistently. There appears to be tremendous opportunity in this application of the tax credit, but much follow up is needed to maximize its potential.