

THE ART OF CHOICE: PHENOMENON OF MUSIC SUPERVISING

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Film music has been written for over a hundred years. Almost the same amount of research is being done into the technology of its creation and functioning in films of completely different genres, ranging from documentary short films of the “silent” era, when musical accompaniment was used as the background of a movie show, to “super-musical” feature films—operas and animated musicals, as well as “supersonic” blockbusters with their complex computer music–noise audio scores. Today, as the history of cinema has passed the centenary mark, and the history of radio and television is approaching this mark, it is obvious that music and sound are an essential part of the screen and microphone synthetic arts.

What does a music supervisor do? Should he be a musician? How is he different from a composer and a sound engineer? Why does his role become more and more responsible over the years? Let’s figure it out.

A music supervisor works at the intersection of two media – music and visuals. His task is to select music that will correspond to the vision of the entire project and help the director solve his artistic problems. And it is he who needs to be thanked when the soundtrack from a film or TV series “settles” in the playlist for a long time.

Between creativity and rationality. Music supervisors are primarily found in the television, film, and gaming industries. Some of the problems they solve are quite creative. Others are purely organizational and production.

1. Search for music. This is the main function of a supervisor. He looks for musical compositions that fit the mood, theme and essence of the project. The creativity of a task depends on the type of project. Looking for music for a game show or reality show is one thing, but for a TV series it’s quite another.

How does this happen? There’s actually quite a bit of romance here. The supervisor receives input from the director, then listens to a huge amount of different

music and chooses one that suits the mood and his (and the director's) vision of a particular scene.

Much depends on the relationship between the director and the supervisor – they can work in a creative “bundle” or have a more formal relationship. In the second case, the director will ultimately be responsible for the vision (even the musical one).

The next task is to understand whether it is possible to obtain rights to use musical compositions.

2. “Cleaning” rights. The supervisor's responsibilities include preparing turnkey music – he must check whether the selected songs can be used, agree with the authors on obtaining the rights to this, and organize the payment of all royalties and royalties.

3. Budgeting. The task is both administrative and creative. Music supervisors have a budget that the project is willing to allocate to purchase music rights. Some songs may well solve the creative problem of the project, but cost too much – after purchasing them, the project will have no money left for other music. Therefore, the supervisor often has to make a choice between “cheaper and more” and “more expensive and less”.

Space for creativity. Even great music can't make a bad movie or TV show good, but it can hide flaws or enhance strong scenes and artistic choices.

For a good (or even brilliant) music supervisor, music is not just a background or accompaniment to a visual picture. This is a valuable means of expressing the emotions of characters and scenes, conveying important moods and plot (a play on words based on the consonance of the name with the word *sensate*) – an American science fiction drama television series created by Lana and Lilly Wachowski together with J. Michael Straczynski for the streaming service Netflix – an American entertainment company, a streaming service (streaming) of films and TV series. “The Eighth Sense” tells the story of eight strangers (Smith, Middleton, Amin, Pae, Sylvester, Desai, Riemelt, Clayton) from different cultures, from different parts of the world, who suddenly discover a psychic and emotional connection with each other – an evolutionary leap of technological origin. Jonas (Andrews), a mysterious and powerful man, tries to bring them all together. At the same time, a certain Mister Whispers (Mann) and his organization are trying to track down and destroy the main characters. Each episode is dedicated to one character and his story). An important scene from the *Sense8* series (without this song it would not have such a big and integral meaning for the entire series).

Let them teach me. In fact, to become a music supervisor, you do not need to have any special education. However, the supervisor must have an excellent understanding of music of different genres and styles, and be able to search for it, and understand the business cycles of the production of television projects, and have a strong knowledge of the laws in order to clear the rights to compositions.

Supervisors are musicians, producers, agents or managers who have experience in the music industry. Although it is not necessary to have a background in music, a supervisor does not need to be able to write or perform music to be excellent at their job.

Over the years, the profession has become increasingly in demand – the pace of video content production is constantly growing, especially after video streaming services and social networks entered the industry.

Supervisors can be on the staff of a TV channel or company and participate in a number of projects there at once – Netflix, for example, has its own staff of music supervisors who select music for several series of the streamer at once. Or they can work as contractors that teams hire for all or part of a project. A new award has appeared in the music category – in addition to the award for the best work of a composer, original music and musical theme, music supervisors are now also awarded. The first award went to Susan Jacobs, music supervisor for “Big Little Lies”, starring Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman.

Many people know the singers or composers behind the film’s music. In the coming years, we’ll probably learn the names of the industry’s top music supervisors, too. For example: “Time for Miracles” is the second single by Adam Lambert. It was released on October 16, 2009 through Amazon.com. Although his first song was from American Idol, it was not released as his official debut single. Instead, a track of the same name from his album For Your Entertainment was released. The song appears as the ending theme song in the disaster film “2012”. Before “Time for Miracles” was released to the public, it had already received positive reviews. Queen’s Brian May listened to the entire track and praised the song as “truly brilliant” and complimented Lambert’s vocals, stating: “Adam’s voice achieves precision, depth, maturity and stunning range, and a power that will make jaws drop across the world” [1].

Thus, research into film music technologies continues to evolve. For example, as you know, no detailed works have yet been written about the musical and noise aspects of the modern blockbuster. This also applies to the “user-generated” music of interactive films, about which we still know little, because interactivity, which clearly manifested itself in the digital era (when spectators–users had the opportunity to watch films “non-linearly”, using the technical capabilities of instant video rewind in a virtual player), began to be consciously introduced into cinema only in the 2000s. However, the main use of interactivity today can be experienced on the Internet. Often, interactive online films interact with social networking accounts and are built similarly to a video game or multimedia web page, allowing users to switch videos, photographs, graphics, slide shows, interactive maps, audio, texts, etc., as well as add their own text and/or illustrative comments.

References

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