
CRACK THE CODE!

WRITING MUSIC FOR COMMERCIALS AND PROMOS INSTRUCTION COURSE

MANUAL #2

EXPERIENCE

**Developing the Craft of Writing
Music for Commercials and Promos**

by JOHN MIYAGI AUTHOR

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MANUAL #2: EXPERIENCE - Developing the Craft of Writing Music for Commercials and Promos

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

John Miyagi Author (yes, that's his real name) is a music producer, composer, and sound designer who has over 15 years in the business of music production. He has produced and/or composed music and sound design for clients such as: Apple Computer, Inc., JCPenney, KBKids, Ford Motors, Mitsubishi, cooking.com, IBM, Wonder Bread, Mattel, Earthlink, Blue Cross, Cadillac, Bandai, Clorox, Philip Morris, Dodge Cars and Trucks, Visa, Sony Playstation, and many, many others.

In a previous life, he was also involved on the production side as an advertising agency producer for BBDO, as well as a freelance agency producer for a number of West Coast advertising agencies.

He has held staff positions at various well-known and established commercial music companies such as Ear to Ear, tomandandy, Decibel Architects, and Face the Music. He continues to work today making his living as a freelance composer and music producer for a number of music companies as well as working directly with advertising agencies.

John is originally from Okinawa, Japan, and grew up a military brat. He has lived in Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Spain. He now resides in Santa Monica, CA, and is an avid beach volleyball player. He graduated from Pepperdine University in Malibu with a Bachelor of Arts in Music with emphasis on saxophone, piano and voice.

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HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

In this manual, we will go through the lesson plans that will involve actually writing and producing music for sample commercials and promos. Doing so, you will start to develop the unique skills that are needed when writing music for these formats. You'll experience the real challenges and pleasures of writing music.

We will first cover some initial information on how to set things up in your studio, and then we will proceed to the ten writing lessons. Nine of the lessons are to picture and there is one which you will write to storyboard. Included with this course is a CD-ROM which contain the digital videos in Quicktime/ AVI format.

If you are using the Quicktime/AVI movies you should copy the movies from the CD-ROM to your hard drive rather than work from the CD-ROM. Most CD-ROM drives cannot read the movies fast enough, and this will slow down the performance of your computer. The VHS tape also has all the videos if you are not able to use Quicktime/AVI movies.

Included in your course is a personalized critique of each of your lessons. After you conclude each lesson, you will make and send an MP3 to your assigned tutor for a personalized critique of each of your compositions.

LABELING YOUR MP3s

When you do send your MP3s for review, please name each MP3 with the course, lesson number, and your initials, as follows:

Use **FTV** for the Film, Television, and Video Course

Use **CP** for Commercials and Promos Course

Example: **CP1ABC.mp3** (Commercials/ Promos Course Lesson 1, ABC should be your initials).

If you have multiple versions, label them as a,b,c, etc. For Example: **CP1a ABC.mp3**, **CP1b ABC.mp3**.

Be sure to include your name in the email, phone number, and attach the MP3 to the email.

Send your cues to your tutor's email address.

YOUR TUTOR

You should have already received an email from us as to who has been assigned to you as your tutor, with his or her email address. If you did not receive this or do not have this information, send an email to:

john@crackthecodemusic.com

Please put “need tutor assignment” in the heading, and tell us who you are, your contact info (email and

phone number), and which course you are working on - the Film/TV/Video course or the Commercials/Promos course, or both. If you are taking both courses, we may assign you a different tutor for each. We will then contact you and provide you with your tutor information.

LESSON CRITIQUES

Within a week of receiving your MP3 we will email you a critique outlining your cue's effectiveness, and giving you suggestions for improvements. A good cue works both creatively, musically, and sonically. Our comments will focus on the actual creative content, the audio sonic quality, the quality of samples and sounds used, and any other factors that affect the cue's effectiveness. You do not need to send video, or try to create a Quicktime movie of the video and audio. We will sync up the MP3 with the video in our studios. Please send MP3s only.

WHERE DO I GET AN MP3 ENCODER?

There are many programs that let you make a MP3 from an audio track. **Bias Peak** is a very popular program. **Soundjam** is another, and you can get a free encoder/ player at www.soundjam.com. Apple also offers the **iTunes** software on their Operating System 10. You can also go to Google or Yahoo and enter "free mp3 encoder" to find several encoders.

Also check out this website, mp3-converter.com, at: <http://www.mp3-converter.com/encoders/> for lots of useful information on how MP3s work and links to download encoders. Each software has its own method

for making MP3s, so please consult the manual or instructions that come with the program.

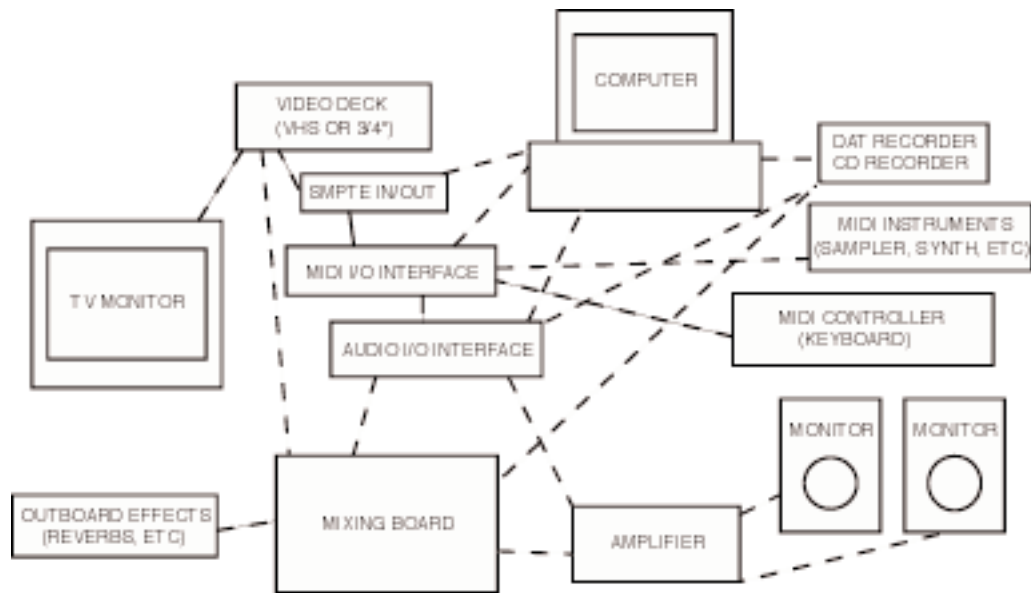
If you do not have internet access and/or cannot make MP3s to send via email, you can receive critiques by mailing a CD to your tutor. This will slow down the process of getting critiques, but it is available. Just contact us and we will give you mailing formation as to where to send your lesson tracks.

The Writing/Recording Studio

In Chapter 4 of Manual #1 we talked about developing your personal writing studio. If you don't already have a setup, you'll have to create some type of writing/recording environment before you can start working with the lessons plans in this manual.

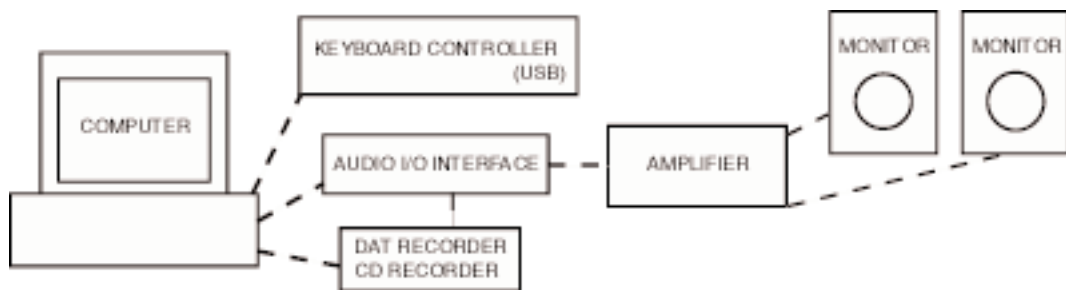
The preferred way to create your writing environment/ studio setup is a computer-based sequencing and digital audio software system. Programs such as **Digital Performer (DP)**, **Logic** and **Cubase** are very popular with composers who write music for multimedia because of their capabilities to line up video (Quicktime and AVI movies) to the sequence. This makes it very easy to score to picture, as well as having great MIDI/ audio recording/editing/mixing capabilities. **ProTools**, although a standard format at most high-end recording studios, is still not very well suited for composers who use lots of MIDI gear and MIDI programming. Yet this may change with further upgrades down the road. Since the lesson plans are based on writing music against picture, it is highly recommended that you develop an environment that is computer-hosted with a sequencing/digital audio format. I personally use and fully recommend DP. You can visit www.motu.com for more information on Digital Performer.

On the following page is a rough diagram on what a system may look like complete with a mixing board, outboard gear, computer host, and all the connections necessary to make it work. The dotted lines represent connections - they may be audio, digital, video, or MIDI connections.



COMPUTER-BASED SYSTEM, USING MIXING BOARD, OUTBOARD EFFECTS, VARIOUS MIDI DEVICES, VIDEO DECK, TV MONITOR

Another way of setting up a system is configured below, doing everything inside the computer - no outboard gear or mixing board. Since there is no video deck, only Quicktime or AVI movies can be used for sync.



COMPUTER-BASED SYSTEM MIXING IN COMPUTER AND USING QUICKTIME MOVIES FOR SYNC AND COMPUTER-BASED PLUG-IN SAMPLER/SYNTHS

The first diagram is pretty much what I have in my personal project studio. I mix using both the mixing board and outboard gear. Although I have both 3/4" and VHS video decks, I rarely use them except to convert videotapes into Quicktime (QT) movies in Adobe Premiere. I usually just get QTs from editors. Then the Quicktime movies can be locked up in Digital Performer as part of the sequence so it's frame accurate; there's no rewinding or cueing up of videotape involved. I also have a video card in my computer so I can view the QT on my TV monitor, full-size, instead of a little thumbprint on my computer monitor. This is a tremendous help when working with a QT with a tiny timecode window.

If you're just beginning, you may only have a VHS deck, a TV, and a keyboard workstation. You can work this way, too. When I first started out, I did it "ghetto" style. I would get a VHS tape of the spot (that had visible timecode on it) and I worked on a keyboard workstation that had an on-board sequencer. (I believe it was the Korg M1, or it could have been my Ensoniq SQ80). I would watch the videotape as it ran, and when it counted down to about a half-second before the start of picture, I would hit "start" on my keyboard controller's internal sequencer to roughly approximate a "sync start". Although this is a very rough way to do it, it is possible. (You might get a little crazy trying to line it up "just right" each time, though!)

The most important thing is to have a workable environment that you can WRITE in. You can only start learning by doing, just like anything else in life. One step at a time. Refer back to Chapter 4 in Manual #1 for more in-depth discussions on how to set up a writing/recording studio.

Lining Up the Quicktime Movies to Sync

To line up a Quicktime movie to your sequence, you must work with a software application like Digital Performer that can support Quicktime. It's quite easy in DP. I'll go through the process of creating a new template and calling up a QT to line up with the sequence. In other programs, setting up QTs or AVIs to line up is quite similar to the actions done in DP.

In DP, I have a "new" template that I have created with all my MIDI devices and several audio channels assigned. You can create a number of separate templates in any sequencer program - you can have a separate one for "orchestral track", one for "rock track", or even one for "disco". These are very helpful so you don't have to create a new template from scratch every time you boot up the program. Composers who do a lot of work writing orchestral cues may have a template with dozens, even hundreds of MIDI tracks assigned to their samplers or synth units, with a different instrument assigned to each MIDI track. After you've developed some templates, you can always begin with one of these starting templates and as you make changes and start programming, just do a "save as" and re-name it as your current project, whatever it may be. I prefer to do the "save-as" first before I start writing so I don't forget later.

I always start my sequences at bar (measure) 4. This way, I have some "pre-roll" Although you can set it up with a sequence starting at bar 1 and have negative bar measures, I just find it easier to just start my sequences at bar 4. This is just a personal choice.

After calling up a new session in DP, I go to the menu bar under Basics>Frame Rate and select 29.97

NDF so I know that my sequence is working at this frame rate. When working with spots, you will on almost all occasions be working with the **SMPTE timecode** rate of **29.97 non-drop frame**, or **29.97 NDF**. Back in Chapter 4 of Manual #1 we talked extensively about timecode. Here's a quick review:

SMPTE Time Code is the industry standard that's used to line up audio to video. There are six different kinds of timecode, all related to the different types of video/film elements that are involved. Frame rates are based on how many frames go by every second. On a standard U-matic 3/4" videotape - there are three stripes of audio information on the tape besides the video information. There are the left and right audio channels, and a timecode channel. Sometimes the timecode is burned onto one side or the other of an audio channel. On a VHS tape, there are only two audio channels, a left and right. So timecode will be striped on one of those channels.

To make it easier for you to line things up, there is also a **matching window burn** that is representative of what the SMPTE timecode is relaying. This is a little black box with numbers whizzing by that you can actually see on the video as it plays. If you ever get a tape without the matching window burn, you need to ask the dub house or editor to make you one with it; it will make lining up sync points much, much easier and faster.

Timecode looks like this: **01:00:00:00**

That represents **hours, minutes, seconds** and **frames**.

So if time code looks like this on the screen:

01:02:23:29

That means 1 hour, 2 minutes, 23 seconds, and 29 frames. After frame 29, the next number on the frame number will be zero (in 29.97 NDF), and the seconds number will increase by one. So,

01:02:23:29

is followed by

01:02:24:00

In another example,

01:02:59:29

is followed by

01:03:00:00

This is because there are 60 seconds in a minute. Remember, the last two numbers represent FRAMES. There are 29.97, or 30 frames in a second.

When working on spots, editors usually tend to start the spot right at hour 1. You may get a videotape or a Quicktime movie with some pre-roll - like 00:59:30:00 - that gives 30 seconds of pre-roll before the commercial actually starts. This gives you enough time to roll back your video and also space to put in a two-pop sync tone at 00:59:58:00, so the audio can easily be lined up when it

needs to be laid back to video tape.

So back in DP, I've set the the tempo at 120BPM (beats per minute). On the menu bar, I select Window>Chunks so I can see the chunks window. I select the chunk called Seq-1, and in the mini-menu, I select "set chunk start". The "Set chunk Start" dialog box appears. I assign these times into the Set Chunk Start dialog box: Measure: 1. Real Time: 0:00:00. Frames: 0:59.54.01.

Set Chunk Start allows you to tell the computer where the timecode should line up in your sequence. It is also based on the tempo that you assign your sequence. At this point, if you go to bar 4, your timecode should read as 1:00:00:00. It's quite easy when you set the tempo to 120BPM because that equates to exactly 2 beats per second. If you go to bar 3, you will see that it is exactly at 00:59:58:00. So that's where you put your two-pop.

If you change tempo, the start time will naturally change as well. You will have to make adjustments in the Set Chunk Start window again. You can insert a tempo change in your conductor track right at Bar 4 if you don't want to move the "Set Chunk Start" start time.

I always take any QT movies I receive on CD-ROM and copy them to my external hard drive. Don't use the QT directly from the CD-ROM; copy it on to your internal or external hard drive. Otherwise, the next time you call up this sequence the computer will ask you to find the QT if it's not on your internal hard drive or your external drive. Next, in the menu bar I go to Windows>Movie, and an "Open" dialog box appears. I find the QT movie on my drive (I'll use the first lesson, called "3rd Faze") and select it. Now the 3rd Faze

Quicktime appears on my computer monitor. You can grab it and drag it anywhere on the desktop, so it's out of the way of your sequencer windows.

On the QT window there is a mini-menu, and I select "Set Movie Start Time". A window appears called "Set Movie Start". In this dialog box, I enter the following timecode: 0:59:40:00. We've made it really easy with these particular QTs in the commercials/promos lessons since ALL the spots you'll be working with all start with a 20-second pre-roll. So each spot will start at 0:59:40:00 and in one-minute increments on up. Lesson Two's QT, the Suzuki spot, will start at 1:00:40:00, and so on. It may not be as easy when you get QTs when working on other jobs; some QTs may start at some weird odd number, or have no timecode window-burn at all.

Now that you've set the Movie Start Time in the 3rd Faze QT, if you go to any place in the sequence, your timecode in your sequence should match what you see on the QT window burn timecode, down to the frame. There's also a really wonderful feature in DP - if there is audio on the Quicktime movie, you can copy it directly to an audio track in your sequence. On the mini-menu bar in the Quicktime Window, there is a selection called "Copy Movie Audio to Sequence". This will automatically copy any audio in the Quicktime movie and place it, in sync, on an audio track it creates in your sequence. In the 3rd Faze spot there is no audio so this option cannot be selected, but you can do it in some of the other lesson assignments.

The Two-Pop

The two-pop, or sync pop, is an audio signal that helps in establishing sync to picture. If you need to download a two-pop sound, there is one on the student page on our website, www.crackthcodemusic.com. Or you can use any type of percussive sound, like a cowbell or side stick from a drum module. If the picture starts at 1:00:00:00, you would place the two pop at EXACTLY 00:59:58:00, since that is two seconds before the start of picture. If the picture starts at 1:01:00:00, the two-pop would be placed at 1:00:58:00. The two-pop is always in relative position to the start of the PICTURE, not the start of the MUSIC. What I mean by this -- let's say you're working on a commercial where your music doesn't start until 3 seconds into the picture. That means that the two pop will happen 5 seconds before the music, or 2 seconds before picture.

Why do you need a two-pop, anyway? Well, when you deliver a music track to the final mix, the engineer needs to have a reference as to where your music is supposed to start in relation to the picture. If your music is supposed to come in at exactly 4 seconds and 17 frames from the start of the picture, how will the engineer know that? He might think the music is supposed to start at the beginning of the picture, so your music will be completely out of sync. If you put in a two-pop on your music track, the engineer knows to line up your two-pop exactly at 2 seconds before the start of picture. That way, there is no disputing where exactly the music should be placed.

Spot Writing: A Unique Skill

Writing music for spots can be a very challenging affair. First of all, you are working within restraints – both in time frame (:10, :15, :20, :30, :45, :60) and usually within creative restraints. What I mean by creative restraints is that you will eventually have to answer to the whims and desires of your clients. You may just LOVE what you wrote for a particular commercial, but the creative director that you are working for may either ask for changes, or hate it completely! I think one of the first things a young, aspiring composer should learn is that you will be critiqued. And that critique is sometimes a not-so-pleasant experience. In creative environments, there is bound to be some conflict – I’m sure if any of you have played in bands, there’s been some arguments on how a song should be played or arranged.

Now, for a commercial, the composer is part of a larger collaborative process. As we learned in the Knowledge Manual, you have to deal with the agency creatives who came up with the idea of the commercial, the agency producer who is producing the commercial, the director who shot the commercial, and the editor who is cutting the commercial. You may have to answer to ALL these people, depending on the job. And they may all have different ideas! What I’m trying to convey is that you have to develop a thick skin. You have to be able to take critique in a way that’s not a personal affront to you. Yes, your music is a creation by you; therefore, you may feel that if someone doesn’t like what you wrote they don’t like you. But you won’t last 5 minutes in this business if you are this sensitive. In one sense, you have to approach composing for commercials as commerce, not art. You have to listen to all these various opinions

from various people, digest them, weed out the important points, and apply that critique to your music to discover what is a good compromise or resolution to make it work for everyone.

Listen to what people are saying

You also have to remember as you are just starting out that other people may have more experience than you may. It's good to listen to what other people think and get their feedback and learn from those experiences. You will develop your particular style and voice as you write your own original music, but you can always learn from listening to critiques – even if sometimes you are so close to your track that it's hard to see what might be wrong with it. Having said all that, you also have to stand up to what you feel is working creatively.

However, not all critique is valued critique. You may be dealing with someone who's completely unmusical and can't express his or her feelings about your track, or dealing with some guy who is completely tone deaf and can't tell the difference between a guitar and an oboe! Use your common sense and judgment, and listen to what people are saying and figure out what they really mean. This comes with experience and time.

The Lesson Structure

To give you a real-world education on writing music for spots and promos, each lesson plan will involve these three steps:

1. The creative brief. This brief will describe the intent of the project, what it is trying to convey. The brief will describe the musical direction your "client" is specifically asking for, and what the important points are. There may or may not be a description of stylistic elements of the music that the client wants. Sometimes there is a "temp track" - something that the client likes and provides a specific direction or style element for you to follow.

2. Your composition. Based upon this creative brief, you will write a piece of music. You need to accomplish all the important points and incorporate any specific items that are asked for in the creative brief. Nine of the ten lessons have video to write to. One of the lessons involves writing a jingle to storyboard.

3. The critique. After you write your music, you will send your track via Internet to your assigned tutor and we will email you a critique outlining its strengths and weaknesses, as well as suggestions for changes. Depending on the critique, additional writing or revisions may be requested on your part.

This three-step process falls right in line with an actual job for a commercial or promo. It helps you develop your skills and techniques in becoming a successful composer, music producer and/or sound

designer for commercials and promos.

Some notes on the creative process and musical diversity

The creative process, in any medium, is hard to define. Everyone works in different ways and people have different strengths and weaknesses. When speaking in terms of writing music, it also depends upon one's strengths and weaknesses in musical ability and music exposure, as well as an understanding of musical styles, current trends, and musical history. You can't know it all – you may be a real jazz aficionado and know all the recordings of Paul Desmond (my favorite alto sax player of all time) by heart, but may never have heard of Faster Pussycat (a heavy metal/hair band during the 80s).

I really believe one thing that can fuel the creative process when writing music is to keep expanding your horizons. You have to open your mind to the possibilities that are out there and become a real student of music. Most great composers and musicians have varied tastes in music – they really dig that latest Missy Elliot CD but also listen to bluegrass music. Explore different styles, different ethnic music, and different music movements in history. It can only expand your musical horizons and feed the creative fire. One thing I try to do is listen to the radio, especially locally here in Los Angeles. I listen to stations like NPR with their eclectic music shows that play world music, new musical trends, and stuff you would never be exposed to just listening to top 40 or classic rock stations.

Now, with the expanse of music you can hear via the Internet, you can find something very new and

exciting every day of the week. Don't just live in your world, visit all the other musical worlds right next door.

Everyone who composes music writes in different ways. I come from a very piano-based background – I was force-fed piano lessons as a nine year-old kid for two years, then I quit. When I got a little older (junior high) I discovered I really liked music and started playing music out of pop song music books. When I first started writing songs during college, I sat at the piano with a pencil and paper. To me, words and melody were where things started, and then I added chords and accompaniment. I bought a Roland Juno-60 (pre-MIDI) with the money I had saved from a summer job during my freshman year in college, and that was the start of my synthesizer addiction. The world of sounds that a synthesizer gave me also affected the way I started writing music.

Nowadays, since I mostly write on the sequencer, my writing can start as a bass line, or a beat, or a chord progression, or a melody. It can even start with just a cool sound that I build around. Or it could be based on a funky drum loop. It's a different and dynamic process every time I sit in front of the computer depending on the type of music or type of commercial I'm working on. I think the important thing is that you can start the writing process from many different approaches. You have to try different things at different times, and don't be afraid of the process. There have been many times when I've started writing something and then a few hours later, I discover I don't like it. That's fine, too! Start over. The first thing that flows out of your creative fountain may not be the answer to the creative question at hand.

Some quick creative suggestions:

Hitting a roadblock. Sometimes you may hit a block, or a wall -- you don't know where to go next on a particular track. You might not even like what you're doing. I find that if I walk away from it, clear my head of the problem, maybe even listen to some other music -- when I come back to it I listen to the track with a different head space and can resolve the problem. Take a step back. Give yourself a break, take a little walk away from it. That may help you get past that creative block.

Don't be afraid to experiment. I find that people with less formal music training can actually be a lot more creative since they are not bound by restrictions, because they don't know what those so-called restrictions are! You find the most inventive things from musicians who have no formal training, because they are free to experiment. Why not go ahead and put a Native American chant over a hip-hop beat? It works!

Don't be afraid to write something outside of your element. You might not have any training in orchestral music. So what? Danny Elfman, who is a very popular film composer today, started off as the front man for the band Oingo Boingo. I don't remember Oingo Boingo doing big orchestral scores in their music. Just give it a shot. Listen to some film scores from movies. Figure out what's going on. Try it, you might like it. It will help you become a better musician and composer if you reach further than what you already grasp.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. You probably know other musicians who might be better at doing something stylistically than you. Why not ask for help? Or try collaborating. Lots of composers have support from other composers who might specialize more in one area, and get some help from them. You might learn something new and interesting.

Write, Write, Write. Go for it! Just write music! Write 5 pieces of music for that one assignment! Why not? The more you do, the more you learn. Besides, you'll need lots of tracks when you start to develop your demo reel – you need materials to show that you are a composer. Just write, and keep on writing. It can only get better with the more you do. After all, this part of the training series is called "experience", so keep on experiencing!

Keep it interesting. Writing for spots is unique because of the short time format - usually 30 seconds. If you listen to film music or even to songs, in 30 seconds, there may not be a lot of things changing. However, in spots and promos, things change on a dime. Different angles may be presented visually. Your music has to be dynamic, have new elements and changes, and must flow with the cuts and still make sense musically. You may have modulations/chord changes every two bars instead of four or eight. It's a skill you will develop the more you write in the short format.

A note on originality and sound-alikes

There's an old saying, "There's nothing new under the sun". We all borrow things from what we know; we

emulate things, or borrow from things sometimes without even knowing that we're doing this.

From a legal standpoint, you need to be acutely aware that you need to be writing an original piece of music. You need to know you're not borrowing a melody from a song you heard on the radio last week. What you don't want to do is get into an area where any type of copyright infringement may even be suspected. There will be many situations where an editor or the ad agency will use a piece of music from a pre-existing music track, or even from a popular CD, and they may want you to write something similar to it. This unfortunate practice happens more often than not, because it's easy for them when they are in the off-line editorial process to just pop in a piece of music.

At one point or another, you will have to deal with a job where there's going to be "demo love". This is a situation where the agency people have been using some "temp track" or "place-holder" music, and they've been listening to it so long it is imbedded in their minds as the piece of music that's right for the spot. Then it turns out to be something that is unavailable or too expensive for them to license, and they'll ask you to write "something like it". Then you'll write "something like it", but they'll say, "Can't you make it sound more like the original track?" or, "I really like that guitar sound and that riff, can you make it sound more like the temp track?" or, "Can you get a singer that sounds exactly like (whoever)?"

You need to make judgment calls on this type of work and also solicit advice from a musicologist. Don't put yourself into a situation where the ad agency people keep pushing you closer and closer to the temp, because the legal ramifications can be disastrous. You need to ask

questions like, "What is it about this particular track that works for you?" to the agency people, and find a way to convey the same kind of mood and feeling without getting too close to the track.

If you are still pressed by the agency and they ask you to make a track that sounds really close to the temp, here is some advice from my experience:

1. Don't do it. Just say no. This is the most solid advice I can give you to keep you and the agency out of any type of copyright infringement. It's as simple as that.
2. If you must pursue a sound-alike, write in a different key from the original, and also follow the steps below:
3. Make sure the chord progression and/or progression frequency is different.
4. Make sure that the melodic line is different, both in direction (pitch going up or down) and rhythm pattern.
5. Change the instrumentation. If it's a power trio/guitar rock track, you can't really change the instrumentation, but at least change the timbre of the guitar sounds.
6. Get a musicologist to examine the possibility of copyright infringement by comparing the original track and your track. A musicologist report is not a guarantee that a lawsuit won't be filed; it just expresses the opinion of a musicologist on the likelihood that a lawsuit could be filed. Musicologists can be found through major universities, music unions, and on composer forums.

Now that I've put a good scare into you, let's get back on track and get to composing music. Listen, there's no problem putting up a temp track to see if a certain style or genre works with a particular spot. It just gets to be a problem if you completely rip off a track. You need to make your music your own, and develop your own style. With that said, let's get on to the first writing assignment!

Lesson #1: Get your Groove on

Client: 3rd Faze Clothing Stores

Commercial: "Caught" :30 TV

In this lesson, you will be asked to write a contemporary track. There's not a lot of "scoring" involved, but there are a few key points you need to hit during the commercial. This commercial is a good example of how a contemporary track will work for a fashion industry related commercial, and will allow you to experiment with different styles of music. Read through the creative brief – it is very much like any creative brief you will receive from an advertising agency, or could come out from a creative meeting that you attend with the agency people.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Caught" :30 TV**Description of Commercial**

This spot for 3rd Faze shows a series of four short vignettes of a young woman who seems to be a celebrity. The POV (point of view) of the commercial is that of a paparazzi (photographer) who keeps "catching" her out with different men. Throughout the spot she is wearing clothes from 3rd Faze, naturally. The young woman is fun, spontaneous, energetic, highly spirited, and does what she wants to do, not apologizing for anything. The cuts have flash/freeze black and white frames representing the photographer's action of taking pictures. During the last vignette, the young woman has had enough of the paparazzi, so she knocks the camera out of his hand and the camera keeps automatically taking pictures as it hits the ground. The commercial then breaks to a title cards that reads "3rd Faze, "Don't get caught wearing anything else", followed by another title card with sale info, then another card with the location and phone number.

Musical Direction Notes

We want something that is a cohesive piece of music – one feel and tempo all the way through with a melodic hook that captures the essence of the girl in the spot. She's young, contemporary, hip, cool, and definitely has some attitude. We don't want her to come off as being "bad", but more like "fun". We're open to hearing various styles, but we're leaning toward something that's high energy -- so it could be dance, club music (four-on-the-floor house), or perhaps upbeat contemporary pop jazz. Nothing too far from center; it's got to be palatable for young women (13 – 25 age group) and still appeal to the clients.

There is NO VOICEOVER in this spot whatsoever so the music needs to say it all. It would be nice to have a little different "flavor" in each of the 4 vignettes, - maybe a different instrument or something – but it shouldn't take away from the essence of the girl; that's what the spot is all about. The music needs to kick in hard right away, no ramp – hi energy throughout. When it gets to the first art card that says "3rd Faze" (at timecode 1:00:21:00), we'd like a musical break there – maybe some hits or some kind of crescendo before the art card, then a drum or percussion break during the two color cards, then when it goes to the black art card that says "30- 60%" off (1:00:26:03), the track should kick back in to the end. You don't need to do a hard end, you can have the track play long and fade out at the end, to keep the energy going.

Sound Design Notes

The only element of sound design/sound effects we want in this spot is a "camera click" sound every time the images stop and turn black and white. This should be a separate element, not mixed into the music. For the demo, you can just do a rough mix, however, for the final mix, we will need the SFX and the music as splits.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. If you don't know how to start, listen to some different kinds of music. Play the music up against the picture and see what you think may work for it. Work out a tempo that cuts well with the cuts of the video.
2. Go ahead and try to write a couple of different tracks. The agency would expect to hear at least two or three demos anyway. Experiment with different styles of music.
3. Make sure the music is "going" somewhere – there should be a nice melodic element or melodic line in each of the sections, and the energy should be up – ramp up to the color art cards, maybe with some horns or hits or record scratches, whatever, and do a rhythm break. It's important that you make sure that there is energy throughout the track. The track really needs to drive the spot since there is no voiceover.
4. You may try finding a "sound" or "voice" for the character of the girl. Maybe she's a saxophone, a keyboard sound, a flute. Since there is no VO you really

need to give the commercial a sound and voice to it to reflect the attitude of the spot.

5. As far as the sound design notes, it would be a good learning experience to insert the “camera clicks” to match with each of the frames that requires it. You can easily find a camera click sound on the Internet. You may forego this if you are not working in a DAW (digital audio workstation) studio environment.

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Lesson #2: Dramatic Action

Client: Bandai/Power Rangers

Commercial: "Jungle Beast" :30 TV

In this lesson, you will be asked to write a contemporary dramatic action sequence for a toy spot. There is a suspenseful section at the top, and then it kicks into high gear as the action figures go through the motions of getting rid of the bad guys. There is also a temp music track on the clip, so it gives you a flavor and general direction of what the client is thinking of in terms of music. Listen to the temp track to get the mood and feel of it, and develop your own style of what you think works best for the spot.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Jungle Beast" :30 TV**Description of Commercial**

This spot for Bandai's Power Rangers (PRs) is for their new action figures called "Wild Force". At the very opening, we see a short animation of a jaguar in the jungle leaping towards you, then morphing into the Wild Force logo. We then go to live footage where the POV (point of view) is of the camera searching through the dense undergrowth of the jungle. We then we pan hard to a hero shot of the three main Wild Force PRs action figures. Then there is a series of fast cuts showing the Power Rangers and their morphing abilities as they get ready to battle their enemies. One of the new items we feature in this commercial is the Mighty Savage Cycle - a super motorcycle for the PRs. One of the PRs gets on the cycle and chases down the bad guys. The boys who are playing with the action figures are then shown celebrating their victory over the bad guys with the PRs action figures.

Musical Direction Notes

The temp track on the spot is the general direction we like for the body of the commercial. Heroic, fast paced, action-oriented. At the very beginning, however, we would like something a little more subdued, with maybe some African percussion during the jaguar animation, then building up until we get to the hero shot of the three PRs around 1:01:05:00 or so. At this point the main theme should kick in. Then it should be all about the action, the morphing, fighting the bad guys, and a big finish when the boys yell "Yeah!". When we go to the 4 second product island, the music should carry on until the end of the spot.

Sound Design Notes:

There are a number of elements that we'd like to hear:

1. Sounds of the jaguar crashing through the jungle.
2. Sounds of wandering in the underbrush at 1:01:02:00 until the reveal of the action figures at 1:01:05:00, with some type of swoosh or panning sound timed to the panning shot.
3. When the action figures are being taken apart and put together in the morph sequences, metallic clicks and clacks that coincide with the action.
4. Motorcycle revs, skids, and laser shooting sounds.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. Listen very carefully to the temp track. Determine what it is that is appealing to the spot. Is it the pace? The instrumentation? The rhythmic elements? Perhaps it is all of these elements. (The music is orchestral in nature with strings, brass, and has tom tom percussion with cymbal swells.)
2. If you don't have access to sound elements or you do not work in a DAW environment, you may forego the sound design. But to develop sound design skills can only help you with jobs that have composition/sound design needs such as this lesson.
3. Try some different tempos. You may be able to find a tempo that cuts better with the commercial than the existing tempo on the placeholder track.
4. During the pan shot (when the camera is moving left to right starting at 1:01:03:00 to 1:01:05:00), try scoring this camera move with an instrument. Maybe a string run or a woodwind run with a hit on the downbeat as it goes to 1:01:05:00. Or a brass swell, or a cymbal swell.
5. Don't be too tied in to the temp track. Why not introduce something different, like a cool drum beat, a synth pattern, or something a little more contemporary?
6. Don't be overly repetitive. Don't just come up with a single motif and repeat it all the way to the end of the spot. Make sure the music is developing and going

somewhere throughout the commercial. You need to have a sense that there is a lot going on and the music is evolving all the way to the end. Try different instruments for the theme, try modulating (going to different keys or using chord progressions), and change the rhythmic patterns.

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Lesson #3: Holiday Season

Client: AT&T Broadband

Commercial: "Shopping" :30 TV

In this lesson, we'll explore what's known as the seasonal spot – this particular commercial was for the Winter/Christmas holiday season, and the client wanted a sense of the season reflected in the music of the spot, since visually there was no real tie-in. We also have a situation where two completely different types of music are asked for in the spot; there is music underneath the live action sequences, and a separate piece of music underneath the "offer" section. Commercials are unique in this sense where you can make a huge leap from one style to another because of the nature of the medium; however, there are ways to make this transition work without it being too intrusive. This spot is an excellent example of having to use a couple of different kinds of music to coincide with what's happening visually in the commercial.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Shopping" :30 TV**Description of Commercial**

The spot starts off with a harried mother, rushing to get her kids into the car – putting her girl toddler into the baby seat, putting the sweater on her young son, and loading up all the items she needs to get going. Her kids then ask, "Mom, where are we going?", and she replies, "Shopping", much to the dismay to her kids, and really, to herself. We're trying to convey the hassles of the shopping season. Then we go to the offer section, where the sell is, "Why go out shopping when you can shop from home?"- if you have broadband cable access. We go back to the live action as their car is pulling out, with the baby's bag still on top of the car, and we hear from one of the kids, "Mom, I gotta go." So the car comes to a sudden stop even before they get out of the driveway. We then go to the AT&T broadband logo card with the toll free number and website info.

Musical Direction Notes

There are two distinct sections when it comes to music. During the body of the live action from the top of the spot until we go to the offer section, we want a track that conveys the harried actions and the almost comic movement of the mom as she loads her kids into the car. We want a little humor in the music, but it shouldn't be too cartoonish; more of a light comic sense – maybe a small chamber orchestra kind of thing with woodwinds, plucky strings, or mallet instruments. We'd also like to explore the holiday sound to tie in with the shopping season, maybe with some "Christmasy" kinds of instruments or sounds.

The second music track is during the middle section of the offer, which starts at 01:02:11:24. This section should definitely have a very positive attitude – one of the tracks we've been listening to is the piano theme for the "Peanuts" theme song called "Linus and Lucy" (the cartoon series by Charles Schultz, with Snoopy and Charlie Brown) -- and we like that general direction, but we're not married to it. It's got a light, upbeat feel, and for some reason, feels a little "Christmasy".

At 01:02:22:21, we should go back to the first piece of music since we're back in the live action sequence. The car is pulling out, and then the music should stop as the car comes to a stop. At 01:02:26:02, we go to the AT&T Broadband logo, and we should have a reprise of the "Christmasy" piece of music.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. If you're not sure how to start, listen to some different kinds of music. It may help to listen to some film score CDs of light comedies and see what other composers do for this light, comedic approach. In the creative brief, it was mentioned that a small ensemble may be the way to go. Also note in the brief that they talk about "Christmasy" kinds of sounds – what is that? Listen to holiday music and their arrangements. Explore sleigh bells, chimes, orchestral bells, glockenspiel, instruments of that nature.

2. In the live action, the music should stop once the little boy says, "Mom, where are we going?". The music could even stop as early as the car door slam at 01:02:07:04. This gives the spot a natural music break, the "joke" can play out, and it will be an easy transition to the offer section music. This is just a suggestion. You may want the music to go all the way through the scene in the interior of the car. You'll have to decide what works best for you.

3. In the offer section, it was mentioned in the creative brief about "Peanuts" music. Be very careful not to get too close to that music, as it is a copyrighted piece of music. (Remember when we talked about sound-alikes at the top of this manual?) See if you can track down the "Linus and Lucy" track, it's by the Vince Guaraldi Trio, from "A Charlie Brown Christmas". Listen to the instrumentation – it's a jazz piano trio. What's unique about it? How can you make it sound even more "Christmas-y"? Also, try doing a drum fill into the offer

section; this will make the transition work better. The fill could be as simple as a couple of tom hits and a crash on the downbeat.

4. At 01:02:22:21, we go back to the live action and so the original comedic music should reprise. Try timing the track so it comes to a comic stop along with the tires screeching to a stop. Then it's easy to go to the Christmasy/jazz trio track with the AT&T Broadband logo card at 01:02:26:00.

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Lesson #4: Rockin' & Rollin'

Client: Suzuki Dealers

Commercial: "Suzukifest" :30 TV

In this lesson, we will be faced with a dilemma that you are sure to come across: demo love. This is the case when during the editorial process they used a piece of music to cut to, so all the visual cuts match the music very well. Now everyone has been listening to this track over and over, and they love it. For one reason or another, the agency is unable to use the piece of music they've been cutting to – most likely a cost issue (too expensive to license), or it's unavailable. So, they hire you. It is your job as a composer to write a piece of music that is similar, yet not too close to the temp music that they have been using. You don't want to go to copyright jail. (Just kidding, they won't throw you in jail, but you and the agency could be sued for copyright infringement!) This is an uphill battle for you because the agency people are so accustomed to the track it's going to be hard for them

to listen to anything new, but it has to be different enough so it's not an infringement on copyright.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Suzukifest" :30 TV

Description of Commercial

The commercial is a basic dealer-type commercial with lots of action footage of the different Suzuki Motorcycles that are for sale. The rough cut you'll be working with does not have any of the final **supers** (supers are overlays of such things as legal copy, sale prices, interest rates, store locations, etc.) but the cuts are locked. The supers will be finalized before the final mix session but should not make an effect on the cuts.

Musical Direction Notes

The piece of music that we have been using is a rock/punk cover of an old Johnny Cash song, "Ring of Fire" as recorded by Social Distortion. As you can see, we cut the spot to the track so you will have to match tempos as close as you can; we're not going to change the

cuts. We love the feel of the track because it's got a lot of positive energy with a bit of a punk feel, but not overly so. It's not "stadium long hair" rock, it's definitely more punk. We like the way the guitar slides and the drum fills work with the cuts. We would like a change at the end. We want the track to have a big finish - the temp track just kind of fades out. You can do a "rock end" with tom hits and a guitar riff. We basically really love the temp track and want you to do something like it.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. Be, very, very careful. Be very aware of the copyright infringement issue. In the music direction notes, the last sentence, "We basically really love the temp track and want you do something like it" should set off all kinds of bells and whistles in your head. Demo love! You'll have to keep it in the rock vein with guitars, bass, and drums, but make sure that your track sounds different from the temp track. Write it in a different key, and don't copy the rhythm or the melody. Make the chord changes different, and have a different approach.
2. Hint: When trying to match tempos, you may find that the temp track gets faster! Real PUNK!
3. Try to customize the track a bit more, adding some drum fills or guitar licks in other places besides what the temp track does. This also makes it more "scored" and will help drive the cuts.
4. Make sure you do a "hard end" or a "rock end". You can do a big drum fill or something like that. Make the last note of the track hit at around 29 seconds or

thereabouts, so that you have a bit of a ring out.

5. If you're not a guitar player, this is the perfect opportunity for you to work with a guitar player to do this track. You need to develop your skills on giving musicians direction on what you are looking for. You can also co-write with a guitar player, if you don't have much experience working with guitar players.

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Lesson #5:

The Multi-Spot Package

Client: Old Country Buffet Restaurants

**Commercials: "Drive Through", "Individual Meals",
and "Thirty Eight" – 3 spot campaign**

In this lesson, you will be working on a 3-spot package – which is a great thing. More money! Campaigns are produced when the advertiser wants to do a series of spots to make it more interesting, and reach a wider audience. Different spots within the campaign may appeal to different people, or it's just more entertaining to see different executions of an idea. Musically, campaigns can either be tied in together with a single thematic idea, or the tracks could be completely different; it all depends on the direction. In the Old Country Buffet spots, they are a series of vignettes with different families going to the restaurants. The client wants music that is basically the same for all, but slightly scored to the individual spots.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Old Country Buffet" :30 TV (3 spot package)**Description of Commercials:****"Drive Through" :30 TV**

We open with Dad in the car; he and his son are coming back from soccer practice and dad is obviously ordering food at a drive-through fast food place, talking into a speaker box. He and his son figure out what they want, and then they order. After the attend says, "Please pull forward", Dad says, "Thanks, honey". We pull back and see the car is actually in their driveway – Mom is inside taking the "fast food order" because they have their own speaker box installed in their driveway. The announcer says "This will never happen at home". The sell of the spot is that Old Country is not fast food, but it's good food fast. We go to interior restaurant footage/food footage of the same family enjoying home-style food at fast-food pace.

"Individual Meals" :30

The son walks in to a very busy kitchen – Mom, Dad and sister are all cooking. When the son asks what's for dinner, Mom tells him four separate things for each of the individuals. The announcer says "You don't have time for this". The sell of this spot is that Old Country Buffet has many, many choices to appeal to every taste. Individual meals are available for each individual, without having to spend all the time cooking on your part. We go to interior restaurant/food footage with the same family enjoying their individual meals.

"Thirty-Eight" :30

We open with Mom putting out plates for her husband and her young daughter. Dad complains because he gets a "grown up meal", while his daughter has some mac & cheese, so Dad says, "This looks good, but I want what she's having". Mom says, "Well, that's only for kids under twelve". Announcer comes in and says "This would never happen at home". The sell of the spot is that adults can eat like kids, and kids can eat like adults – there's a kid's price but no kid's menu, so everyone can enjoy everything. We go to interior restaurant/ food footage as the same family is enjoying all the variety that the restaurant has to offer. By the way, we call this spot "38" because initially the mom says, "That's only for kids under twelve, and you're 38". But we had to cut out the "38" for timing reasons.

Musical Direction Notes

We want an underlying theme that works for all three spots. The theme should kick in when we go to the shot of the stack of plates that say Old Country Buffet on them. We also want a signature music button when we go to the final super in each spot – as the Old Country Buffet logo comes into focus at the end of each spot.

We want the music to be organic in nature – perhaps something with guitars, drums, piano -- nothing synthetic. It's got to be light hearted and appealing to young families. The track should be upbeat, happy, fun, and should have a "feel good" thing about it. There is a temp track on the spot called "Individual Meals" but we're not crazy about it. The general instrumentation is nice, but we don't like the theme; it's just not happy enough.

Another element we'd like to explore is perhaps "scoring" the comedic elements in the opening vignettes – there are a number of little pauses in each of the spots that may have room for some little musical statements to highlight the action and to give it a little more life. It can also carry into the supers that come in before the shots of the stack of plates – when the announcer says "This would never happen at home". There is the motion of the supers that comes in right there – maybe a percussion hit or a bass note, just something to accent that a little bit. No big whooshes or anything too big.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. Listen to the spot called “Individual Meals” - there is a temp track that comes in at 1:05:12:09, the creative notes seems to imply that they are okay with the instrumentation, so it’s a good place to start.
2. Pick one of the spots and work with that until you like what you’ve come up with. Then you can customize that track to work with the other spots. The assignment is to come up with ONE theme that will work in all three spots, but you can adjust it to fit. As it says in the creative notes, the track should “kick in” on the shots of the stack of plates. All three of the spots are timed a little differently as to when this shot comes in.
3. The track doesn’t need to be too busy. There is a lot going on with dialogue and announcer dialogue, so watch that the track isn’t too full. Don’t try to fill up every little space.
4. Look over the creative notes time and time again and make sure you are doing the assignment. Ask yourself if you are fulfilling the needs that the creative brief is asking for.
5. At the very end of each spot, when the Old Country Buffet logo comes up, you need a signature “button” as explained in the musical direction notes - a theme that wraps up each of the spots in the same manner to give the campaign a feeling of continuity.

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Lesson #6: Very Contemporary

Client: Subaru

Commercial: "Subaru Baja" :30 TV

In this lesson, we will explore writing a contemporary cross-genre track, and you will also see the rough cut and the final cut and make determinations on how to respond to the changes. There is a temp track with the general direction that it desired, and the commercial is cut to the track so you will have to match tempo. You also need to be very aware of any copyright infringement. You need to listen closely to the temp track as a base for your composition on the stylistic elements, as well as pay attention to the sync points and natural breaks in the music.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Subaru Baja" :30 TV

Description of Commercial

The commercial is a computer-animated piece featuring the new Subaru Baja. The sell of the spot is that the Subaru Baja is a "Multiple Choice" Vehicle – it is part truck, and part car, and you can make the choice according to what your needs are. The look and feel is young, fresh, cool, contemporary. The spot features a lot of motion – the truck is constantly moving, spinning, morphing, evolving – and there are different contents that are being loaded and unloaded in the back of the truck. We'll be using different kinds of motion effects to really give a sense that the vehicle is quick and adaptable.

Musical Direction Notes

We like the general direction of the temp track. It's quite interesting with lots of layers and unique instrumentation, and is also quite contemporary. We like the vocal samples throughout the track; the little record scratches, the cool "secret agent" guitar sound, the sax lick, and how the break works near the end of the spot.

We also like the way it kicks in with a drum fill at the top. We are open to hearing different interpretations but in a similar style and genre. The only negative comment is that the temp track may be just a little dark, but we like the attitude from a general standpoint.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. As before in cases where you are writing something similar to a temp track, just be aware of any possible copyright infringement. You need to give your track the same kind of feel and vibe, but be careful not to emulate the temp track too much. Alternate the instrumentation with other ideas besides what's in the temp track.
2. Listen carefully to the temp track to determine what's giving it that contemporary sound. The drum loop is very dominant in this track. There are a number of little synthesizer parts, and lots of little record scratches, vocal sample, etc.
3. If it helps you, record the announcer voiceover part yourself and pop it into the track and see how the timing works. There is a natural break in the temp music that opens up for the voiceover to do his thing.
4. Note that there are some natural breaks in the temp music used for the spot. It's pretty obvious that they cut the spot to the music track, just like a music video. You'll have to match tempos and try to work in similar breaks as in the temp track. In this particular case, the track is in 4/4. At the very top, the drum fill is a two-beat fill, so the picture starts at the 3rd beat, with a big hit on the

downbeat of the next measure, where we see the first shot of the car in full view. Just to reiterate, be very careful not too get too close to the existing temp music in the spot.

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Lesson #7:

The Jingle from Storyboard

Client: Glemma Jammaz

Commercial: "Concert" :30 TV

In this lesson, you will be writing from a storyboard – no actual Quicktime movie. You will be working directly from the storyboard with some lyric ideas, and will have to compose a song/jingle based upon them. You will have to work with a singer or multiple singers to make this track happen. It's a good exercise in writing a "toy jingle", which is a very popular medium in commercials - just check out commercials during Saturday morning cartoons. There are thousands of commercials involving toys, games, clothes, brand image, stores, services - you name it - that involve jingles. Writing a track for a toy doll will be a great exercise. On the following page is the storyboard.



TOY SND: Loxie

SONG: GLAMMA JAMMA



SONG: CHANGE THE LOOK

SONG: YOU CREATE THE MIX... CHANGE THE BEAT



SONG: HOOK UP WITH YOUR FRIENDS... AND THE WHOLE BAND PLAYS...

VO: Glamma Jammaz. Each sold separately. Batteries not included. From Bandai.

CREATIVE BRIEF for "Concert" :30 TV**Description of Commercial**

This is a jingle-based commercial where we will shoot the film in a music video style format. We have a band of pre-teenage girls putting on a rock concert - shots of the girls lip-syncing to the track playing different instruments. In frame #2, we have a close-up of one of the girls, then a cut to the doll version of her in frame #3. We do a line up of the dolls in frame #4 and a match with the real live girls in frame #5. We do a number of doll shots and have intercuts with the real girls putting on their rock show. We also show that you can connect the different dolls up to each other and they have pre-recorded music that all syncs up with each individual doll.

Musical Direction Notes

We want the jingle to have a girl-power attitude, in the pop-rock vein, with a little edge. It should not be a typical doll jingle that is cutesy and sung like little girls. It should be more like Britney Spears or Pink or Christina Aguilera. (But not sexy, more fun). The lead vocal should be young-sounding but not girlish. We want a guitar rock kind of sound, since the girls in the band will be playing guitar. Here are some lyric ideas to start from:

Glamma Jammaz
The Hottest Mix, The coolest band
We sing songs together
We can change our look
We can change the beat
Hook up together to make the band

*Hook up with your friends to make the band
We're the Glamma Jammaz*

These ideas are launch points, you can create the jingle with some of these ideas and come up with different combinations or lyric ideas.

We are trying to convey in the lyrics that you can change the look of the dolls with their different accessories. We are also trying to convey that the dolls have pre-recorded music that comes out of their amplifiers (look at frames #15 - #17) , and you can hook up the different dolls together and each doll will play a different part in sync, just like a real band.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. Listen to some pop-rock songs of the artists that were named in the music direction notes. Find some general direction from these songs. Note that the music direction asks specifically for guitar-driven tracks. If you don't play guitar, this is an opportune time to find some different players to work with. You will obviously also have to work with a female singer(s) to sing the parts.
2. Watch Saturday morning cartoons, Nickelodeon, or Cartoon Network and try to catch some doll jingles. Listen to their approach and see if you can discover some things that can apply to this assignment
3. This assignment is more like songwriting than scoring, since the commercial is really in the realm of a music video, with the mock-up girl band lip-syncing with the track. Think in terms of songwriting, doing a pop song, rather than doing a commercial. If you're not well-

versed in writing lyrics, perhaps working with other lyricists/songwriters would be a way to work on this assignment.

4. You might try some different versions of lyrics. Try to match what is going on in the storyboard with the flow of the lyrics.

5. You may want to explore the more hip-hop/dance oriented songs as well. Adding guitar on top of this style of music may be interesting and unexpected. Remember who you are trying to appeal to - the pre-teen girl who loves music but still is at the age of playing with dolls.

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Lesson #8:

The Promo Package

**Client: MGM Premiere Gold
Logo Promo Package (Multiple Versions)**

In this lesson, you'll need to develop a music logo for a series of MGM promos. You will need to do three versions of the promo, all in different lengths, for this package. Some of the promos need some scoring against the live action. This is a prime example on how one thematic element can be used in different types of ways - as a stand along music logo, or combined in a scoring situation and developed so that the music theme/logo is the focus of the track. The original package included 10 different versions of these promos. For this lesson, we've included three out of the ten versions. It is a challenging assignment.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "MGM Gold Promos"

Description of Promos

This is a project for a series of promos for our new line of features, MGM Premiere/Gold. These are films that are viewed as the "new classics", many of which are award-winning films that have been re-issued and re-mastered. There are different length bumpers, intros, and insert pieces. They will be used in DVD re-releases for the most part.

Musical Direction Notes

We want one thematic statement that crescendos into the MGM Lion Roar which happens at the end of each promo. We want a classic sound, something big and orchestral in nature with a very strong and uplifting theme. We will be having multiple demos being submitted for us to listen to, however, whoever gets the theme will do all of the separate promos as a package. For the demo, please use the piece called "MGM Premiere Bumper" :05.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. As suggested in the music direction notes, work on the :05 piece FIRST to develop your music logo. Although the music direction says just do the :05, for the assignment, you will do all three different promos.
2. If you don't know where to start, listen to some other logos for film companies such as MGM. Rent some movies on VHS or DVD. On the beginning of most movies you'll hear different music logos for different film companies. The classic music logo is the big brass fanfare for 20th Century Fox. You've heard it a million times.
3. Make your logo short. For the :05, it should have a statement that's only around 4 seconds long, so you have some "ring out" at the end.
4. On the longer versions, the action needs to be scored. In the MGM Lion Jump Promo, the MGM Lion starts outside of the theater. He then goes into the theater, walking slowly and majestically inside the screening room. He then starts to run toward the movie screen, climaxing into him jumping onto the screen. When the MGM Premiere logo comes up, your music logo should coincide with it. You'll have to work out a way to develop your music logo into the score. Use some of the elements that you've used in the 5 second version to ramp it up with the action. Speed up the pace of the music as the lion starts running up into the screen.
5. In the MGM Premier promo, the beginning is a bit more subdued, especially with the images of the beautiful

girl walking toward the camera. The approach needs to be a little more subtle, and then you need to ramp it up into the theme element when it goes to the MGM Lion Logo at the end.

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Lesson #9: The Marriage of Music and Sound Design

Client: Sony Playstation/Digimon World 3
Commercial: "Hacker" :30 TV

In this lesson, the lines between music and sound design blur. At this point, you have to explore using sound design to work on this commercial. It's a very interesting spot which has quite a few dramatic effects and angles that need to be conveyed, and yet the spot needs to feel cohesive. It is quite a challenge to combine elements of sound and music to make it all work. This assignment will make you think a bit more “cinematic-ly” because of its unique look and feel.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Hacker" :30 TV

Description of Commercial

In "Hacker", a commercial for Sony Playstation's Digimon World 3, we open on shots of people walking in the city, very similar to the sequence in "The Matrix" when the main character is introduced to the training program when he is put in a city crowd. It's monochromatic, very dark, with vari-speed motion. It's foreboding, and feels a bit on the nightmarish side.

We focus in on three individuals, one at a time, and supers come up – are these people "Friend", or "Hacker"? We then go to the game footage, with various scenes from gameplay and the game animation sequences. We then go back to live action, where we see a pre-teenage boy hanging out with friends in the same city environment, and we discover that he is a hacker. We close on a shot of the game cover superimposed over the city images.

Musical Direction Notes

The overall feel at the top should be dark, mysterious, and foreboding -- it could be a combination of city noises that are nightmarish and tonal things, but we need articulation between the three opening shots of the man with glasses, the woman, and the man with the knit cap. Each one of those scenes should have a different texture and feel. When the supers "Friend" and "Hacker" come up, we need a cool little digital sound effect, something electronic or computer-like.

We need a transitional sound that goes into the game footage – the transition visual is that of a tunnel-like fly-in, like we're going through a wormhole, so it needs to be dramatic. Then when we go to the shot of the monster, we need a monster growl. In the game footage section, we need music that is hard driving, with a fast tempo – maybe something in the "drum 'n bass" world. There are a number of sound effects that can be brought in – there are a few explosions and flashes that can be highlighted.

We then transition back into live action with the group of teenagers, and we need something similar to what was happening at the top of the spot, because we're back in that world again. The music from the game footage section should not be playing in this section. This time we find out that the young kid is a "hacker" – we need a sound underneath the "hacker" super, like a siren or something, to show that we found one of the enemy. In the final transition, we need the music to come back in over the shot of the game. There should be no music or sound over the Playstation game console shots; we use the Playstation game console sound logo over those shots,

which is included in the audio track with the voiceover.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. The live action is definitely inspired by "The Matrix", and that movie may be a good resource for you to listen to for some ideas. . You may be able to get the mood at the top with synth pads of different textures, but it will most likely work better with special sound effects. There are various resources on the Internet to download sound effects – you can even purchase them one sound effect at a time. Do a search for "downloadable sound effects" and you will find several websites, like **www.sounddogs.com**.

2. Be careful about putting in too many textures of sounds. The sounds should articulate well – you don't want a mish-mash of sounds that are too dense that you don't hear them. This is especially the case in the game footage, because you may have a drum loop, a heavy bass line, and then you need to add explosions and things like that. Really listen to make sure that each sound is mixed well.

3. Experiment with different sounds – don't be too literal. When the monster roars, maybe it's not necessarily an animal roar like a lion. After all, this is sound "design", not foley. Use your imagination in using different and unusual sounds to match what's going on visually.

4. During the game footage, the music doesn't need to be too complicated – remember, there is voiceover,

various explosions, and music all happening within the same section. It's more of a groove that's needed there than anything too complicated. Try some different loops or sampled types of sounds, and make it contemporary and energetic.

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Lesson #10:

The Director's Cut: Bringing in your own ideas

Client: Wrigley's Extra Gum– Director's Cut
Commercial: "Bus" :31 TV

In this lesson, you will bring your own ideas to the table. This is a "Director's Cut" version of a Wrigley's Extra gum spot – the director used all the various footage he shot and created his own version -- outside of the actual on-air agency version -- to showcase his talent. Now he has brought you the commercial so you can bring your unique spin on what you think will work musically in the spot. Of course, he has some ideas, but it's up to your creative vision to come up with something to make the spot unique.

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CREATIVE BRIEF for "Bus" :60 TV**Description of Commercial**

Shot in black and white, this spot is about a journey of a young woman who is travelling cross country on a bus. There are various scenes of the things that she has to put up with and the hassles of travelling in this manner. Most of the scenes take place in the interior of the bus, with a few exterior shots of the bus travelling. It is definitely a comedic spot, but not over the top. At the end of the spot, the woman pulls out a stick of Extra gum, her only refuge from putting up with all the hassles of her long trip.

Musical Direction Notes

There aren't any real preconceived notions of what the music is - it could just be some "travelling music" as a support underneath the whole thing. Or it could be something that lends a little support to what's happening, scored to each one of the various circumstances. The music should be light hearted in nature, and shouldn't be

dark.

Lesson Comments/Suggestions

1. There's really not a whole lot to go on, so you need to use your creativity and do a little research with some different styles of music. In situations like this, I find it helpful just to listen to tons of music by going through my CDs and listening to tracks against the picture to find some directions to explore. When I find something that I feel is working, I try to determine why it works and make sure that the mood is right. A job like this is open to you creatively, and this sometimes makes it an even more difficult job when you don't have some parameters to work within.

2. Notice that the commercials is a :31, which is out of the ordinary - but since it is a "director's cut", it is not meant as a broadcast piece, but as a show piece for the director's reel, and yours!

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Wrap Up

This concludes the EXPERIENCE portion of the course. However, feel free to use these lessons to write more music and continue to develop a wide variety of tracks for your CD demo reel, which we'll talk about in the next manual, Contacts and Marketing. You can also practice writing against picture with other materials - there's no reason why you can't pull spots right from TV and further develop your writing chops. Many composers start this way. The only way to get experience is to create the experience. Write, write, write!