

# 'canned' music: but can you tell?

by chris stone

**To the purist, 'canned' music may never measure up. But for many, the modern stock music library means that 'What you hear, is what you get' —and often, that's exactly what you want.**

Most producers, if they have the budget, will have original music especially composed for their production. On many occasions, though, the money is not available and the producer must fall back on pre-recorded ('canned') music, either from commercially-original discs or from stock music libraries. Even when original music is composed for a production, it is often easier to obtain pre-recorded music for scenes which require "source" music, possibly in a restaurant, club, or bar, or even to simulate a TV show. Library music records are not sold to the general public, as are the commercially available discs.

In order to use pre-recorded music in a film, television, radio or A/V production, a synchronization licence must be obtained from both the music publisher and the recording company. This can be both a costly and a time-consuming procedure, but failure to obtain this licence is an infringement of the copyright act.

As an alternative to using commercially available discs or original music, stock music libraries were created by music publishers in the late thirties and early forties to assist a producer with easily accessible, low cost music specifically recorded for background use. Since that time, library music publishers have manufactured their own recordings, initially on 78 rpm. discs, but more recently on both 10" and 12" LP's. The music is licensed on a non-exclusive basis, and synchronization fees are kept low. As

the music publisher and the recording company are one and the same, a producer need only apply to one company for a synchronization licence (ie. the company from whom he obtained the music).

There are approximately one-hundred music libraries available from around the world, offering virtually every musical style imaginable. Most library music publishers have listening facilities on their premises. A minor disadvantage of this is that you are limited to their library only. There are, however, other companies and/or studios that carry a variety of libraries, thus enabling a producer to find a wide cross-section of music in one location. Many of these companies charge a music selection fee and the usage rates are somewhat higher than those of the music publisher. The music supplier will give the producer a list with all details of music taken (disc number, title, composer, etc.). When a producer has made his music selection and incorporated the music into his production, it is then his responsibility to prepare (or have his editor prepare) a music cue sheet. This will list, in the order used, every selection of music, including the duration of use, the title of the production and type of licence required (television, theatrical, etc.).

The cue sheet will then be sent to the music supplier(s) in order that he may supply the producer with a music synchronization licence. A copy of the music cue sheet must also be sent to the relevant performing rights society, either CAPAC or PROCAN, so that these societies can pay the correct performing fees to the composer and the music publisher for any broadcast or theatrical use.

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A producer must ensure, for his own protection, that the music supplier gives him a valid music licence. Failure to have such a licence could lead to a lot of problems and possible legal action.

Many producers have the impression that stock music libraries are full of boring, old-fashioned "backgrounds." Today, nothing could be further from the truth. Most libraries contain a wide range of music in all styles, from the heavy rock and disco sounds to classical, as well as authentic ethnic music possibly unobtainable elsewhere, except by an original score.

Library music titles have been used as theme tunes for well-known television series, and have also gone on to become hits in the commercial market. Some libraries carry a selection of well-known classical works by famous composers and others produce semi-classical selections "in the style of" Bach, Mozart, etc.

Most people are not aware that the majority of composers of library music are well-established figures in the film, television and recording industries. They are knowledgeable about the problems and requirements of film scoring and thus compose library music with the producer/editor in mind.

Here are a few pro's and con's to keep in mind when considering library music:

### PRO'S

- (a) You know what you are getting (you can hear it right away)
- (b) Instantly available (no waiting for composer or studio time)
- (c) Low cost (and you know the price in advance)
- (d) Wide variety (solo guitar to full symphonic comedy to space)
- (e) Easy licencing (usually from one source)

### CON'S

- (a) No exclusive use of the music (others can use it)
- (b) You cannot change the instrumentation (you get what you hear)
- (c) Occasionally pressings are poor and sometimes master tapes are not immediately available
- (d) Limited number of variations of a single theme

Remember, stock music libraries have been produced with the film, radio and television industries in mind. They are a valid alternative and will surprise many producers who are not fully aware of what is available. If you would like further information and addresses of library music publishers and their agents, you can contact the Library Music Committee of the Canadian Music Publishers Association, Suite 702, 111 Avenue Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 3J8. □



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