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## ASCAP Workshop, Day 3

### The envelopes, please

By [D.R. STEWART](#)

Tonight, the 12 received their scene-scoring assignments. And, like a good reality show, the nascent composers had to wait until the end of the evening for the big reveal.

Workshop director Richard Bellis stressed the emotional makeup of a spotting session. You could have a director and executive producer bringing their battles, with you as the tripwire to more explosions. A line producer could try to make his mark.

A director could be certain that after getting so many elements right, you'll screw it up with bad music. Or, you could have what Bellis calls the kiss of death, when the director says: "You know, the movie's a little slow – and I'm really counting on the music giving it some life." Bellis stressed that "music is the most artificial aspect of a movie;" the odds are greater that music could kill a movie rather than save it.

The dub session has its own set of dangers. If it becomes apparent that a bad movie is about to be birthed, Bellis said, the dub session can become a "a very dark, quiet room."

Bellis defines a score as music that elicits emotional response while dodging sound effects and dialogue. A composer has to anticipate music that competes with tire squeals, thundering hooves and clanking ice cubes. Speech tends to come in a mid-range, so find music that will sit higher in the sonic spectrum.

Workshop music editor Michael Ryan, founder and CEO of [Mad 4 Music](#), came in to explain the music editor's job. He's a "score designer," an on-site contractor who works with the architect (the film composer) to create a temp score that creates a guide for the composer. Said Ryan: "You're

dressing someone else's baby – you better put the right clothes on it.”

On a small film, a music editor can serve as music supervisor (although as Bellis bluntly puts it, “The Music Supervisor is less skilled and gets a bigger credit.”) A music editor can also help on the set if a club scene needs a “thump” for actors to stay in rhythm with the dialogue or playback for a rock band to lip-sync.

Ryan then screened a scene from a movie he handled, “Fool’s Gold.” He showed it three times: First we saw Matthew McConaughey clinging to the wing of an airplane without music. Then the temp score, patched together from other sources, including “Lilo and Stitch.” Finally, we saw the final version, with George Fenton’s score.

It was eye-opening to see how closely Fenton followed the feel of Ryan’s score while it was musically very different. Ryan said one of his prouder moments was when one of his temp pieces was re-recorded as the final product for “101 Dalmatians.”

Finally, the workshop composers got to see their clips.

First up was “Bruce Almighty.” The participants laughed at the scene in which a monkey comes out of the bad guy’s butt, but it was nervous laughter – as in, with all my highbrow hopes, will I be scoring this broad comedy?

Second was “Hidalgo” in which Viggo Mortensen says goodbye to his horse and Hidalgo goes off to become one with horsekind. Effectively, slow-galloping horsies. This seemed like the scene I would beg for with its big ol’ Western theme and vast cowboy landscape.

Next were more horses, the fast-running ponies in “Dreamer.” This was the big race scene that featured lots of interwoven dialogue, effects and slow-motion sequences. Finally was “The Incredibles,” a bing-bong ballet of animated superheroes, sound effects and rapid-fire dialogue.

Here’s who got what:

### **BRUCE ALMIGHTY**

Gerrit Wunder, Anna Rice, Luke Richards

### **HIDALGO**

Patrick Murray, Jeff Kryka, Adam Langston

### **DREAMER**

Marc Baril, Erik Hachikian, Austin Wintory

### **THE INCREDIBLES**

Jaebon Hwang, Sascha Peres, Tilman Ritter

Three Europeans were assigned the very American comedy. However, sounding like a good psychiatrist, Ryan advised that composers pay attention not to specific elements but to their emotional undercurrents.

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