

TALK SUPE:

Overcoming Today's Synch Marketplace Challenges

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Darwin the Economist

Charles Darwin deserves an honorary MBA. Wait. Scratch that and make it a posthumous Nobel Prize in economics. Why? Because every successful business draws upon the principles he rolled out in his theory of evolution. If Darwin was alive today and studying companies instead of watching finches on the Galapagos Islands two centuries ago, he would see a lot of the same stuff happening. No, not CEOs eating bugs (though many of us would delight in the sight), but individuals and companies adapting to stay relevant in the marketplace.

Just as in the animal kingdom, businesses (and even entire industries) don't have an automatic, natural right to exist. They earn their ability to survive by evolving to meet the needs of their environment. If they don't, they get speared by the finch's beak and quickly find their dooms in a gizzard.

Take the record industry, for instance. In the interconnected environment of technology, culture, and economy, a widespread reluctance to change led to its near extinction. Instead of redefining the role of record companies and adapting the business model accordingly, the (old) record industry buried its head in the sand. The idea of record sales ever reaching pre-MP3 levels in the future is implausible at best. The gizzard did its grinding, and if Darwin could have seen what we did, he would have sighed.

Evolution may be controversial in some spiritual, scientific, and philosophical debates, but make no mistake: in business, evolution is an indisputable necessity. Those who don't adapt will suffer the same fate as laser discs, pagers, and leisure suits. We'll soon delve into what this looks like for the Music Supervision community.

It's clear that today's world is more connected, more competitive, and more complex than it ever has been in human history. With a few clicks of the mouse, businesses have access to millions of potential clients around the world. Geographic barriers to competition have largely been leveled. Technology brings economies of scale to near perfection, and it also makes the traditional roles of most businesses easy to replicate. For next to nothing, any entrepreneur can set up a mini factory in-house (enter the bedroom recording studio industry). There's no question that today, especially within niche markets, the Davids of the world are fully capable of beating the Goliaths in a rumble without resorting to their sling-shots.

As our society advances, the skill sets that are required for success change. For example, in the transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, most workers evolved their factory-based skills into knowledge-based ones. New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling author Daniel Pink describes the early 21st century as humanity's entry point into the Conceptual Age. In the Conceptual Age, Pink highlights a sharp rise in the demand for skills that involve creativity.

Creativity is a coveted resource today because of how much our culture values things that are visceral, aesthetic, and meaningful. There's been a progression over the past 100 years from focusing on our basic needs (Industrial Age), to finding the highest quality at the lowest price (Information Age), to longing for meaning and experience (Conceptual Age). This progression is at the heart of every evolution in business, regardless of company or industry.

And it's especially profound for Music Supervision.

Meeting the basic needs of clients with high quality products and services at low costs was once the total equation for success. But today, just doing that and nothing more is a recipe for extinction. Music Supervision needs to evolve in order to stay relevant in the 21st century. It's not

enough to merely perform the traditional functions of the job anymore, such as music selection and clearance. Survival of the fittest for you as a Music Supervisor means satisfying your clients' needs at the highest possible level of quality for the lowest possible price—and creating deep meaning and connection for clients.

But don't fret! There are more opportunities than ever to achieve this.

In the spring of 2011, I created *Synch Report* to provide you and your peers with an interpretation of key information for your industry. At the time, no market data existed in a comprehensive format or context for Music Supervisors. The research I found indicates that now is a great time to be a Music Supe. Audience interactions with synch media are dramatically increasing. Music is revolutionizing the way we engage with media. There is a renaissance of synch content from independent creators. And we have entered a digital golden age that shows every sign of continued, massive growth. All these factors offer you exciting possibilities.

In order to get an inside perspective on the state of Music Supervision today, I interviewed 27 of the most influential Music Supervisors in the film and television industry during the summer of 2011. Over the phone, by email, and via online survey, they shared their perspectives on topics such as the state of the industry, upcoming trends, best practices, professional values, and top challenges in Music Supervision. After analyzing their interview and survey data, I created this report to offer solutions for thriving as a 21st century Music Supervisor.

In her interview, Music Supervisor Andrea von Foerster, whose work has been featured in the Emmy-winning hit show *Modern Family* as well as in the films *It's Kind of a Funny Story* and *(500) Days of Summer*, succinctly stated the sentiment most echoed by the Music Supervisors who participated in this project: "The current appetite for music is incredible and budgets aren't what they used to be. I don't know if we will ever fully recover and go back to the heyday of the 1990's, so we have to adjust the way we do things as Music Supervisors".

Darwin would approve!

The climate of today's industry presents Music Supes with prime opportunities to extend their influence and expand their client base. One caveat, though: they must first adapt to meet the changing needs of the synch marketplace. If this doesn't happen, Supes will become obsolete and something else will replace Music Supervision as we know it.

Throughout the *Talk Supe* interviews, three challenges became undeniably clear:

1. Music Supervisors have to do more with less
2. Music Supervisors must balance the needs of key business relationships
3. Music Supervisors are faced with securing career stability in a rapidly-changing marketplace

The job of Music Supervision is only going to get more difficult if Supes continue working solely within the current structures of the profession. Simply working harder won't increase effectiveness, nor will it address the requirements of Music Supervision's changing landscape. To survive in the 21st century, Music Supes need to be:

- Innovators in their work
- Strategic Partners with their clients
- Advocates for their profession

Supes who embody this shift and redefine themselves will become what renowned marketing expert Seth Godin refers to as "indispensable linchpins". Instead of being used by clients as a plug-and-play resource, they will establish themselves as irreplaceable allies. And in doing so, they will secure their value, job security, and respect for the unique expertise and talents they

bring to the table. They'll also get lots of high-fives!

By adapting to the changes in your environment, you can turn your challenges into opportunities and truly thrive in your professional role. But before we discuss how to do this, let's take a closer look at the major challenges facing Music Supervision today.

Help! I Need a Coldplay Sound-Alike for Under Fifty Bucks in Six Minutes or Less!

In an ideal world:

- Producers and directors would pitch their projects to the lead actor and the Music Supervisor on the same day
- "Temp Love" would be a term used to describe someone's crush on the hottie from the employment agency
- Fans would collect trading cards of their favorite Music Supervision heroes
- Music Supervisors could burn \$100 bills as kindling in their fireplaces
- Cats and dogs would be best friends

We're a long way from this utopia. Falling music budgets, declining Music Supervision fees, the surge of new Music Supervisors entering the profession, the rise of automated music licensing, and vast numbers of uneducated stakeholders are all making it harder for Music Supervisors to survive. So unless you're still sporting a leisure suit and checking your pager, it's time to take a sobering look at these realities.

When asked what the single most important issue facing the Music Supervisor community is, half of *Talk Supe's* interview participants answered, "Budget reductions" (Figure 1). When analyzing the other issues brought forth by your peers, most of them can be traced back to budget decreases. Let's examine how.

- **Balancing Art and Commerce:** less funding for projects makes the Supe's role of balancing creativity and finances even more difficult.
- **Excessive Music Supply:** Economics 101—when supply goes up, value goes down.
- **Evolving Media Formats:** new media such as mobile apps create competition for film and television; less market share means less revenues and lower budgets.
- **Respect for the Profession:** when clients undervalue Music Supervision, music budgets suffer. It's critical to help them understand the value Supes bring to projects. Fortunately, the professional community is in the process of organizing. The need to educate has never been greater.
- **Influx of New Music Supervisors:** again, Econ 101. Since there's a larger supply of Supes, fees are dropping.

The Most Important Issue Facing the Music Supervision Community

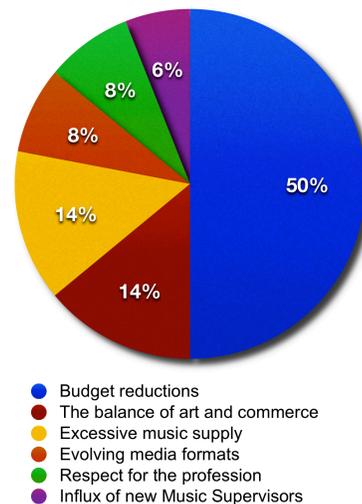


Figure 1

As with any ecosystem, these issues are connected and therefore can't be viewed in isolation. They all contribute to devalued music and lower Supe fees. We need to view these issues as

interdependent relationships, and then look at how they impact the profession.

A few current trends are impacting budgets: we all know about the economic crisis our country has been facing. Times are tough and there's much that's uncertain. When faced with uncertainty, the tendency is to hold on to what you have and avoid risk. Investors aren't putting up as much money, so new projects are on tighter budgets. Meanwhile, technology makes it easier for people without much cash (or access to investors) to produce relatively sophisticated projects, often without the help of Supes because they can't afford them. In addition, when music isn't addressed until post-production, as it often isn't, Supes are left with a budget of scraps to work with. As more productions expect to obtain it cheaply or for free, music gets devalued. And the less value clients place on music, the less they think they need the services of Music Supervisors.

If Supe fees are any indication of how much clients are currently valuing the profession, then the news for Music Supervision is grim. When asked to describe the state of Music Supervision revenues in today's market, only 13% of *Talk Supe's* participants reported seeing fee increases. With less revenue, making a full-time living from Music Supervision may not be realistic (unless you want a side gig at Taco Bell).

Increased job competition isn't helping Supe fees. As noted in *Synch Report*, the independent film and television Music Supervisor population grew by 40% in the last ten years alone. As the supply of Supes goes up, so does the proportion of less-experienced to more-experienced Supes. When clients look for ways to cut corners with their budgets, they may only be able to afford a Supe who charges a minimal fee.

Worse yet, with the advent of music search and license-request technologies, many potential clients are skipping the step of hiring a Music Supe altogether. Technological advances allow music services such as libraries and licensing houses to eat up Music Supervision market share. And while automation may improve our quality of life in certain venues, some things just shouldn't mix with robots. The check-out line at the grocery store is one of those things, and Music Supervision is another!

If we could examine the genetic makeup of a Music Supervisor under a giant microscope, we'd see a unique mix of creative and analytic talents hard-wired into their DNA. This wiring makes it possible to perform the profession's traditional job functions, such as offering clients the right musical choices, negotiating licenses, and preparing cue sheets. However, it's critical to realize that the synch landscape has changed, and job functions like the ones above are no longer enough to ensure your long-term career survival. Of course, you need a mastery of the traditional job responsibilities. And yes, the blend of right- and left-brained abilities is still essential (and always will be). It's just that clients are now bringing much higher expectations with them, while having way fewer resources at their disposal. And their needs can't be met solely within the job's traditional structures.

In this Conceptual Age we're in, everyone's looking for meaningful interactions. These days, lots of people can do the traditional job of Music Supervision, but how many can make their clients feel really special? How many go above and beyond to solve their clients' problems? How many can truly call themselves an expert in the craft? How many provide added value that utilizes their unique skills and talents? What compels a client to make the investment of hiring you is their desire for an innovative ally, someone who will help them realize their vision. Anything less can be obtained through cheaper alternatives.

This is the reason why Music Supervision is due for a 21st century makeover. Supes must harness their creative and analytic talents in an entirely new context to stay relevant today. They need the right-brained, creative inspiration to envision the possibilities for adding value in new

ways. And just as importantly, they need the left-brained, analytical skills to implement the follow-through. The good news is that if Ozzy Osbourne can reinvent himself from the Prince of Darkness to the Suburban Daddy of Reality Shows (and be incredibly successful in the process), then every Music Supe is capable of doing what it takes to succeed today!

Music Supervisor Michael Perlmutter, known for his work on the critically-acclaimed show *Degrassi*, observes, "I don't think there's any time in any business where challenges aren't present. Challenges will turn into opportunities because you can be creative and collaborative in working through them". Supes who transform challenges into opportunities will become invaluable. Supes who don't may very well become extinct.

And so I share with you the heart of this report. (Drumroll, please...)

The 21st Century Makeover

After analyzing the data from *Talk Supe's* interviews, it became clear that Supes can turn their challenges into opportunities by incorporating three key strategies into their professional practices: innovating in their business, partnering strategically with their clients, and advocating for their profession. Innovating will open the doors for new business opportunities as you redefine your role and the scope of your work. Partnering will deepen your relationships with clients, as you strategically align your services to their needs. And advocating will validate the profession and help educate about the value Music Supervisors bring to the table. By embracing this holistic approach, you'll pave the way for a thriving career in the 21st century.

So let's get started by looking at some of the possibilities for innovating within Music Supervision.

Innovating

It's a fact of nature that resources are limited. There's only so much food, water, and land to survive off of. This applies also to the world of film and television, where there's never enough time, money, or energy. Even Music Supervisor Jim Black, whose work helped *The Wrestler* win Golden Globes and *Black Swan* win an Oscar, is still faced with limitations. Black observes, "We wish budgets were infinite, but they're not and that's okay because it forces us to be creative". Doing more with less is a requirement for survival in this market, so it's crucial to be an innovative problem solver. This could be anything from leveraging your relationships to create win-win outcomes, to applying a process in a different way in order to achieve the desired outcome, to creatively stretching a budget so that all needs are met, to drawing upon your own unique experiences for fresh insights into your work for clients.

Using Music in Different Ways

Old school thinking rigidly separates the creative and the business sides of Music Supervision. And while some old school things bring a smile to our faces (like disco and the Harlem Globetrotters), being a successful Supe requires a different approach. Everything about the job should be creative, *especially* the business aspects. True innovation is about bringing forth new ideas, regardless of what Music Supervision hat you're wearing at the time. Innovative Music Supervisor Greg Sill, whose work has been featured in multiple Emmy Award-winning shows including the hit series *Justified*, sums up the need for Music Supervisors to be creative pioneers. Sill advises, "Don't overrate yourself as a Music Supervisor. The job is a pendulum and the cycle is always changing. Be aware of what your peers are doing and stay ahead of the curve."

Doing new things with music is the cornerstone of what makes Music Supervision so cool. There's the excitement of discovering new music and sharing it with the world. The pride in

setting the musical trends of our culture. The thrill of marrying music with story like no one's ever done before. The satisfaction of articulating the musical expression of a character's subtle nuances. These elements are all part of the process that brings a Supe's creative expression to new levels. Think about some of your favorite works of Music Supervision. Chances are they're impactful because of how innovative they were. They pushed the limits of their time.

Innovation doesn't have to be in-your-face. But the innovative use of music to support storytelling brings a special quality to your work as a Music Supervisor. It makes each film or show that you supervise different from anything else you've done before. Since clients want you to recognize how unique their project is, this is a great way to align with them. As a result, you'll bring more value to your projects and increase your demand in the job market. Musical innovation is a gift that Music Supervisors offer their audiences. Forward-thinking Music Supervisor Peymon Maskan, who's worked on films such as *Norman*, *A Good Old Fashioned Orgy*, and *Gardens of the Night*, eloquently describes it: "Music has emotional resonance that words don't exist for. Just as a cinematographer takes the stops of light that the human eye can see and translates them into something that evokes emotion on camera, Music Supervisors can make visceral, emotive art with notes and chords".

If you're pushing your own creative limits and having fun at the same time, then chances are you're in the zone of innovation. Giving yourself permission to be the expert in music use, and bending—or even breaking—the rules will take your work to new heights. And as your passion for the work increases, so will the synergy you create with clients.

Diversifying Your Services

Music Supervision is one of the few professions that requires you to be both a generalist and a specialist. On one hand, there's a universal knowledge base that brings the job's traditional roles into play. And on the other, there's a very targeted set of qualities that fulfill the client's specific needs for their projects. 86% of *Talk Supe's* survey participants rated having a versatile skill set in Music Supervision as "important or extremely important" (incidentally, this response had the highest level of agreement among participants out of all the project's 32 question topics). Being a Music Supervisor is kind of like playing the stock market. The best way to ensure long-term success is to diversify your portfolio.

Many of today's most successful Music Supervisors are extremely versatile in the services they offer clients. In addition to supervising, some compose, some edit, some produce, some manage talent, and some are executives. For example, Brian Reitzell, whose work includes the Academy Award-winning films *Lost in Translation* and *Marie Antoinette*, as well as the television show *Boss*, goes beyond the traditional scope of Music Supervision in most of his projects, whether it be through composing, performing, mixing, editing, and/or producing. And Paul Stewart, whose work on the film *Hustle and Flow* helped it win an Oscar, is also very well diversified. He supervises, in addition to operating a music licensing company, producing, and managing talent. Diversifying your services is a good strategy for success, as you highlight your value to clients in many different ways.

Innovation is the creative form of adaptation. Any successful professional is constantly evolving to adapt to the changes in their industry—it's survival of the fittest. Innovators don't just think outside the box. They imagine what it would be like if there was no box, or if there were infinite boxes, or if the box was a cylinder. They see possibilities where none previously existed. At some point between the days of silent films accompanied by piano-players and now, an innovator became the first Music Supervisor. The profession has been evolving ever since, and must continue to do so. Your ability to overcome obstacles by linking them to creative solutions makes you invaluable to your clients, and therefore, irreplaceable.

Strategic Partnering

The old business adage, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” is no longer good enough. A better fit for today would be something like, “It’s not who you know, it’s how you add value for them”. Hands-down, the best way to add value to your clients is to strategically partner with them.

Strategic partners align themselves with their clients’ needs. They don’t just offer a product or service. They invest deeply in helping their clients achieve their vision for their project. As allies committed to helping clients achieve success, strategic partners adopt their clients’ challenges as their own. And they find innovative ways to solve those challenges, even when it means transcending the typical responsibilities of Music Supervision.

Imagine that film and television projects are cars. In this case, the function of traditional Music Supervision might be that of a car’s shocks. The shocks create such a smooth driving experience that the passenger might not even realize they exist. But everybody in the car would immediately know if they disappeared. No doubt, shocks are important. Serious damage would occur to the car without them.

Here’s the problem: shocks are easy to replace.

If you’re not strategically partnering with your clients, you’re essentially limiting yourself to being part of the production machine. And when you’re part of a machine—no matter how critical your function is—you’re at risk for replacement. After all, even a car’s engine is replaceable.

Expanding Your Role

As strategic partners, Music Supervisors expand their role beyond a functional capacity, and into a conceptual one. Not only do they actually drive the car with their clients, they get to help design it. Being a strategic partner isn’t just about executing your client’s vision. It’s also about helping create it and being involved in the planning. This puts you in the heart of the project and makes you an indispensable team member. A huge advantage for strategic partnering is that it makes it easier for you to help develop the musical vision for your projects. 69% of *Talk Supe*’s survey participants rated having the ability to set the musical vision as “important or extremely important”. When you’re involved in this capacity, you can simplify your job by making the music budget a higher priority and minimizing clients’ temp love. And as the expert, you’re able to build your value and justify appropriate fees in the process.

Partnering with clients at the project’s conceptual stage strengthens your role as the music expert, and it enriches the dynamics of your client relationships. The earlier you get on board your projects, the better. Becoming involved with a project when the script is first released can help you position yourself as a peer working side-by-side with your clients, rather than having them see you as an afterthought whose main purpose is to put out fires.

Early participation in the planning process also helps you influence the music budget. And we all know that the early bird gets the worm. One Music Supervisor who was interviewed for *Talk Supe* observes, “There is often a misunderstanding of the context for music and what determines the value of a song. For example, a producer may have the misconception that a hit song is necessary during a scene where underscore would be more appropriate, and this could lead to wasteful spending in the music budget”. In cases like this, it’s the Music Supervisor’s obligation to be involved early in the budgeting process so that the best interests of the client are met.

Building Long-Term Relationships

When *Talk Supe*’s participants were asked to identify the best practice for Music Supervisors to use in their work, their top response was “building successful business relationships”. Creating

successful strategic partnerships with clients is similar to building a house. You want to start by constructing the best foundation possible and use the same care all the way through the last coat of paint. Music Supervisor Sean Fernald's approach to strategic partnering helped him secure over a dozen projects just in 2011 alone. Fernald suggests, "Be available long-term to support your work. Keep taking the filmmaker's calls after your check clears". Partnering in pre-production and staying involved beyond post-production will help you increase your value, improve music budgets, expand your creative influence, deepen client relationships, and build client loyalty. So when you're thinking about your strategic partnerships, take advantage of the mantra *in early, out late*.

Being relationship-focused means cultivating strong connections with clients. Music Supervisors who make this their number-one priority ultimately have the strongest impact on their projects, and get repeatedly hired by their clients. One of the Music Supervisors interviewed for *Talk Supe* reflects, "When I was younger, I really wanted to be the person who discovered the hip new songs, and now I'm more interested in the relationships I have with the people I work with". As a strategic partner, she develops relationships with her clients that are career-lasting.

Aligning with your clients provides prime opportunities to build strong relationships, as you collaborate, problem-solve together, learn each other's languages, and engage from a place of shared passion. You strengthen rapport and become a master of anticipating their needs. All of these things add value to your services beyond your musical knowledge and administrative expertise.

Collaborating

Strategic partners are highly collaborative. They bring diplomacy and empathy to their work. And in a market where clients are searching for meaning and connection, you have a prime opportunity to offer them something that a price tag doesn't do justice to.

One of the best ways to establish a collaborative work environment is to use a common language. This gets clients engaged in musical elements even if they don't have much experience with music. A common language increases buy-in. For instance, if you're able to translate the music-speak into something your clients connect to, you'll show them that you value their input. In the process, they'll see you as a true collaborator, and you'll achieve more equity and synergy in your partnership.

Collaborating with other stakeholders is important, too. For example, Supes can help artists sculpt their tracks by translating the director's vision into something that's easily understandable. In this case, music-speak might be your best bet for a common language. And just as a record producer contributes to setting the tone of the record and keeping the artist on course throughout the creative process, you can partner with your artists to develop customized music for your clients.

The need to partner with artists has never been greater than it is today. For example, look at the success of David Franco's partnership with Eddie Vedder on *Into the Wild*, in which an innovative approach to Music Supervision helped create a Golden Globe award-winning classic.

It takes a bit of guts, along with some right-brained thinking to envision how to enhance your value as a Music Supervisor. Remember that since your potential clients can now license music with a single click, what they're really seeking from you is an artistic and logistics ally. In order to create the most meaningful work for them, you have to align yourself with their challenges. So the best opportunities to innovate in your business planning come through understanding your clients' needs and positioning yourself accordingly.

Advocating

If there's an Emmy Award for Outstanding Hairstyling, then there certainly should be one for Music Supervision. Music makes storytelling come alive in television and film. It's time for the craft of Music Supervision to get the recognition it deserves. As advocates, Supes increase the value of music and their services by raising clients' awareness, educating music suppliers, and organizing their professional community. Let's see how.

Raising Clients' Awareness

Fact: no one working on a production is going to champion its music to the extent that you will. It's critical to leverage your client relationships and advocate for:

- The value music brings to projects
- Higher budgets to secure quality music
- Music Supervision as a highly-specialized and highly-skilled profession

You wouldn't be a Music Supervisor if you didn't believe with all your heart in the value that a perfectly-placed piece of music brings to a scene. You're the right person—the right voice—to speak on behalf of music's importance and make clients see what it can do for their projects, and why they should go the extra mile in budgeting for it. Clients need to feel your passion for what you do and get infected by it! They need you to show them how your innovation and partnership will add value to their projects.

As a Music Supervisor, you offer projects a special sensibility. Music Supervisor David Hayman, whose credits include the show *Rookie Blue* and the film *The Whistleblower*, observes, "What we do is an art; finding harmony between music and the picture to elevate the film, its themes, and the audience's connection to the characters". That magic is what makes you irreplaceable. It's difficult (if not impossible) to think of how emotionally impacting our favorite films and shows would be without the human touch of a Music Supe. Just imagine *Cold Case* without Jenée DeAngelis.

There's a connection between your clients' perceived value of music and how much they value your services. By being the major advocate for music, you'll naturally take steps to help ensure your own career stability. Show your clients why hiring you will be one of the best investments they will ever make. Help them understand the importance of paying you a fair fee. Some production decision-makers aren't even aware of the reasons to hire a Music Supervisor. This is why many of *Talk Supe's* participants speak at conferences from coast to coast to help educate about the importance of Music Supervision. As an advocate, you can help your clients reap the greatest rewards for their projects when you use education to enlighten, inspire, and partner.

Educating Music Suppliers

You can't advocate for the value of music without factoring the education of music suppliers into the equation. When artists don't recognize the worth of their product, they compromise the integrity of the synch marketplace. First, if the status quo is to give music away, it sends the message that music is cheap. What's cheap is taken for granted and can easily be replaced. From a filmmaker's perspective, why would they pay for the services of a specialist (Music Supervisor) to obtain a product (music) that they don't value much in the first place? Second, artists who mass-produce stock music in hopes of increasing their chances for a placement actually yield an unintended consequence. By adopting a "quantity over quality" strategy, the marketplace becomes saturated and the price of the individual piece of music goes down. Now it becomes a numbers game, sacrificing quality music in favor of raising the odds for a placement. Another consequence of a diluted music supply is the extra work for Supes who must weed through hundreds of tracks to find the needle in the haystack for their scene's specific need.

One idea that will help restore balance is to get back to basics: encourage suppliers to focus on

creating fewer, quality pieces instead of taking the assembly-line approach. The use of unique, high-caliber music will justify fair license fees, raise clients' perceived value of music, and increase Music Supervision fees as a result.

In their interviews, many of *Talk Supe's* participants addressed the proliferation of submission-spam today. They described it as bordering on chaos, clogging up e-mails and creating an excessive amount of unnecessary work for Supes. It's like receiving a mailbox full of ValuePaks and Harriett Carter catalogs every two hours. One *Talk Supe* participant receives over 1,000 e-mails each day, the majority of which are submission-related. Artists need to understand that the best process for getting their music placed is to focus on targeted, specialized, and customized pitches. One-third of *Talk Supe's* participants identified "Knowing your pitch" as the #1 thing music suppliers can do to help make the jobs of Music Supervisors easier. This process could be communicated on each Supe's website or social networking pages. For example, Paul Stewart frequently tweets his scene descriptions and pitching guidelines. In addition, artists should understand the purpose of music in film and television. It's not as much about them getting a placement, as it is about how their music plays a supporting role in the storyline. In this way, artists need to respect the craft of Music Supervision and focus on helping Supes meet the needs of their projects' scenes.

Organizing the Professional Community

While autonomy is desirable, the Music Supervision profession would greatly benefit from standardizing its practices. An organized Supe community helps other professionals in the film and television industry see that Music Supervision brings a value equal to—if not greater than—other elements in film and television productions. It gives Supes a collective voice that's much louder and powerful than each Supe is on their own. The sum is greater than its parts!

With the establishment of the Guild of Music Supervisors, a community now exists for collaboration with other industry organizations beyond the field of Music Supervision. There's great potential to enact changes that will ensure a positive future for the Music Supervision profession. The majority of *Talk Supe's* survey participants rated *belonging to a professional organization of Music Supervisors* as "important or extremely important". Peymon Maskan's suggestion speaks to the benefits of organizing: "Unionizing and having standards would help uphold reasonable fees relative to the experience levels of Music Supervisors. Having a Music Supervisor designation—the equivalent of A.C.E.—will be a necessity as changes in new media and distribution continue".

Promoting quality standards in the work of Music Supervision is another important step. Music Supervisor Alethia Austin, who's worked on films such as *The Great Debaters* and *Grassroots*, observes, "It's really getting crowded in the field of Music Supervision. Years ago, no one had a clue what the job even was. Now, everyone wants to be a Music Supervisor. Cruising Linked In, you'll see somebody's resume with 'Head Manager of Taco Bell and Music Supervisor'". Professional standards would help create a sense of unity among the community, keeping the reputation of the profession high and steering new Supes in the right direction.

An organized Music Supervisor community can educate new Supes as a way to invest in their profession's future. Just as in any other field, beginners need a hands-on education in everything from the basic do's and don'ts, to the complex intricacies of the craft. And there's no one better equipped to teach these things than the expert Music Supervisor. Through education, core values of the profession can be passed on to the next generation of Music Supervisors. Educating novice Music Supes about how to be most effective in their roles will help keep the demand for Music Supervision high.

An organized Music Supervisor community could advocate for higher fees, a professional designation, and best professional practices. It could also provide a forum for colleagues to

inspire each other through professional development. Half of Talk Supe’s survey participants rated *participating in a community forum for Music Supervisors* as “important or extremely important”. Through a community forum, an organized membership of Music Supervisors would be able to influence their professional community in positive ways. Best practices could be explored, ideas exchanged, and solutions generated for common challenges.

Advocacy sheds light on the profession for all of its key stakeholders. The best person to advocate is you! You’re the expert, and you have the most invested in Music Supervision’s future. By advocating, you’ll help clients value music and your services even more. You’ll teach music suppliers how to best meet the needs of the synch marketplace. And you’ll help your profession find strength in numbers. As an advocate, you can get Music Supervision the respect it deserves and secure your own career stability as a result.

Carpe Diem

The challenges in today’s synch marketplace make it necessary for Music Supervisors to innovate, strategically partner, and advocate. Many Music Supervisors already excel as strategic partners, collaborators, or advocates. The mastery of all three will truly make you invaluable.

In closing, let’s take a look at Figure 2, which highlights the top seven professional values rated by *Talk Supe’s* survey respondents. It’s encouraging to note that these seven values are so important to Music Supervisors. Going down the list, we see that each value is rooted in innovative thinking, and requires strategic partnering and advocacy to be effectively realized. The internal motivators are already present. Now all that’s needed is *action!*

During the *Talk Supe* interviews, I asked each participant, “What’s the one thing you would like to ask all of your peers?” Some of the questions were intriguing, some were funny, and all were thought-provoking. Rather than limit the answers to just the participants, I reserved these questions for the *Supe-to-Supe* blog, where all Supes are welcome to contribute their ideas and join the conversation. This is a great opportunity to connect with your peers and take action to advance the Music Supervision profession. Visit www.talk-supe.com to get involved.

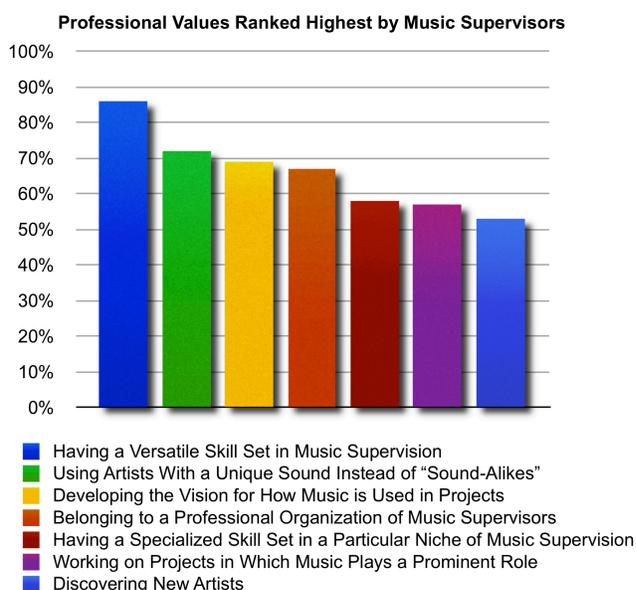


Figure 2

Talk Supe’s Purpose and Background

Talk Supe is a non-profit project designed to promote thinking, discussion, and action related to critical issues that affect today’s film and television Music Supervision community. It provides Supes with ideas and information that they can use for implementing solutions to the challenges they face.

The data in this report comes straight from the experts in the field: Music Supervisors. 27 influential film and television Music Supervisors were interviewed for this project. Collectively, they represent 323 years of experience. As of November 1, 2011, they have worked on 785 films and 224 television series. The average number of years that each participant has worked in Music Supervision is 12. All of the participants are currently independent film and television Music Supervisors, and many have come from studio backgrounds. 4 of the 27 participants wished to be anonymous in this project.

Each participant was interviewed with open-ended and rating-scale questions about key themes in the Music Supervision profession. In addition to the interview, over half of the participants completed a survey that addressed several of the interview question topics in greater depth. The result is a rich compilation of data from first-hand accounts of Music Supervisors that has been summarized, analyzed, and synthesized for this report. Also included are charts and graphs of the most vital data, along with some direct excerpts from the participants' interviews.

Talk Supe Data

What is the single most important issue facing the film and television Music Supervisor community today?

- 50% Budget reductions
- 14% Balancing art and commerce
- 14% Excessive music supply
- 8% Evolving media formats
- 8% Respect for the profession
- 6% Influx of new Music Supervisors

Is this issue universal to all Music Supervisors in film and television, or does it primarily affect a subset?

- 70% Universal
- 30% Subset

If you could say or ask one thing to every director and producer, what would it be?

- 47% Respect music and budget for it early and appropriately
- 29% Trust and value your Music Supervisor
- 12% Bring your Music Supervisor into the project as early as possible
- 12% Beware of temp love

What are the best practices for all Music Supervisors to utilize?

- 35% Build and maintain successful relationships
- 32% Respect music and the craft of Music Supervision
- 20% Understand the legal and practical aspects of the job
- 13% Be knowledgeable about all styles of music and media formats

Are Music Supervision revenues decreasing, staying the same, or growing in the industry?

- 54% Decreasing
- 33% Staying the same
- 13% Growing

Are business costs for Music Supervisors staying the same, decreasing, or increasing in the industry?

- 47% Staying the same
- 43% Decreasing
- 10% Increasing

What will be the top trend in film and television music licensing over the next five years?

- 25% The use of music in different ways
- 22% Continued budget cuts and lower license fees
- 21% Continued shift in the process of music discovery
- 12% Broadening the scope of Music Supervision
- 12% Demand for more music rights
- 8% More reasonable synch fees

What are your greatest challenges as a film and television Music Supervisor?

- 50% Meeting all stakeholders' needs
- 29% Educating the parties involved in a project
- 10% Managing all of the work
- 6% Creating unique and high caliber work
- 5% Competing in today's marketplace

Are your challenges growing, staying the same, or shrinking?

- 57% Growing
- 32% Staying the same
- 11% Shrinking

How many music suppliers do you currently work with?

- 70% Dozens
- 30% Hundreds

Is the number of music suppliers you work with growing, staying the same, or shrinking?

- 67% Growing
- 28% Staying the same
- 5% Shrinking

What is the most important thing you want music suppliers to know that would help make your job easier?

- 37% Be easy to work with
- 34% Know your pitch
- 20% Understand the business side of your craft
- 9% Create great music that is described and labeled appropriately

How important is it for you to belong to a professional organization of Music Supervisors?

- 67% Important or extremely important
- 13% Somewhat important
- 20% Not really important or not important at all

How important is it for you to use standardized practices for the Music Supervision profession?

- 40% Important or extremely important
- 20% Somewhat important
- 27% Not really important or not important at all
- 13% No answer

How important is it for you to have a specialized skill set in a particular niche of film and television Music Supervision?

- 58% Important or extremely important
- 21% Somewhat important
- 14% Not really important or not important at all
- 7% No answer

How important is it for you to have a versatile skill set in a general area of film and television Music Supervision?

86% Important or extremely important
7% Somewhat important
7% Not really important or not important at all

How important is it for you to work on projects in which music plays a prominent role?

57% Important or extremely important
14% Somewhat important
29% Not really important or not important at all

How important is it for you to develop the vision for how music is used in your projects?

69% Important or extremely important
23% Somewhat important
8% Not really important or not important at all

How important is it for you to make the ultimate decision about what music will be used in a project?

43% Important or extremely important
21% Somewhat important
29% Not really important or not important at all
7% No answer

How important is it for you to work on projects that have a consistent sound or style, almost like a sonic brand?

27% Important or extremely important
0% Somewhat important
73% Not really important or not important at all

How important is it for you to discover new artists?

53% Important or extremely important
47% Somewhat important
0% Not really important or not important at all

How important is it for you to use artists with a unique sound instead of “sound alike” artists?

72% Important or extremely important
21% Somewhat important
7% No answer

About the Participants



Alethia Austin is a Music Supervisor and Social Media Marketing Manager. Her credits include *Flash of Genius*, *Linewatch*, *Grassroots*, and *The Great Debaters*. Alethia is an associate producer of The Durango Songwriter’s Expo.



Jim Black is the founder of Clearsongs, Inc., a Music Supervision, consulting, and clearance company. Jim is known for his work on the Academy Award-winning classic *Black Swan* and the Golden Globe-winner *The Wrestler*, as well as the films *50/50*, *Burlesque*, *Law Abiding Citizen*, *The Pursuit Of Happyness*, *Sicko*, *Supersize Me*, *Where In The World Is Osama Bin Laden?*, and the television series *Treme*.



Lisa Brown is a Music Supervisor whose credits include the films *Where the Heart Is*, *Dance Flick*, *Race to Witch Mountain*, *Freaky Friday*, and *College Road Trip*. Her company is Five Mile Radius Entertainment.



Jenée DeAngelis is a Music Supervisor at Swill Merchant Music. Jenée is known for her work on the shows *Cold Case* and *Bones*, as well as the films *Mysterious Skin* and *Monster*.



Natasha Duprey is Director of Music Supervision at S.L. Feldman & Associates. She has worked on projects such as the television series *The L Word*, *Defying Gravity*, *JPOD*, *The Dead Zone*, as well as the films *Frankie & Alice* and *Love Shines*.



Sean Fernald is a Music Supervisor, producer, and consultant. His credits include the films *The Lather Effect*, *Forever Strong*, and *Sushi Girl*. Sean is a voting member of NARAS.



David Franco is a Music Supervisor and producer known for his work on the Golden Globe award-winning classic, *Into the Wild* as well as *Knots Landing*, *Dallas*, *Falcon Crest*, *Gettysburg*, *The Cisco Kid*, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, *The Art of War*, and *The Hills Have Eyes I & II*. His company is David Franco International Productions.



David Hayman is Director of Music Supervision, Licensing, and Branding at Vapor Music. His Music Supervision credits include the television series *Rookie Blue*, *Less Than Kind*, and *The Kids in the Hall - Death Comes To Town*, as well as the film *Textuality*. David has also worked with brands such as Coca-Cola, Nike, Ford, Budweiser, and Dove. He is a co-creator of TheMusicSuperBlog.



Julia Henry is a Music Supervisor, consultant, artist manager, and photographer. She formed her company Ivy Augusta after working as Head of Creative at Fox Sports. Julia's credits include numerous *NFL Superbowls*, *MLB World Series*, as well as *The Best Damn Sports Show Period*, and the films *That Side of a Shadow* and *Die Trying*. Julia speaks on panels at industry events such as MobFest.



Alexandra Hill is a Music Supervisor who has worked on films such as *The Cove*, *A Little Help*, *Stan Helsing*, and *The Real Revolutionaries*.



Gael MacGregor is an artist and Music Supervisor. Gael's credits include the films *Gods and Monsters*, *Beautiful Loser*, and *The Significant Other*. Gael teaches a course on Music Supervision at MBI. Her company is MacMusic Magic.



Jen Mandel is a singer-songwriter and Music Supervisor who has worked on the television series *Men in Trees*, as well as the films *Hopelessly in June* and *Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life*.



Erik Masone is a Music Supervisor and creative director at Deepfreeze Music. Erik has worked on films such as *Max's Kansas City*, *Missing Pieces*, and *Inside Deep Throat*.



Peymon Maskan is a Music Supervisor and owner of the company, Little Mountain. He is known for his work on the films *Norman*, *A Good Old Fashioned Orgy*, and *6 Month Rule*. Peymon speaks on panels at industry events such as The Durango Songwriter's Expo and The Hollywood Reporter/Billboard Film and TV Music Conference.



Kyle Merkley is a Music Supervisor at Arpix Media, Inc. Kyle's credits include *Heartland*, *Flashpoint*, and *The Listener*. Kyle is an avid musician, and he has been a speaker and moderator on panels at events such as the *Northern Ontario Music & Film Awards*, and the *InSight and Sound* seminar series put on by *Music and Film in Motion*.



Michael Perlmutter is a Music Supervisor known for his work on the shows *Degrassi* and *Queer As Folk*, as well as the *CTV 2010 Olympic Games Coverage*. He owns and operates the company Instinct Entertainment. Michael has spoken on panels at conferences such as MIDEM, Winter Music Conference, Billboard Dance Music Summit, NXNE, and ECMA Music Conference.



Dominique Preyer is a Music Supervisor whose credits include the films *Angel Camouflaged*, *Slacker 2011*, and *The Funeral Singer*. Dominique has been a panelist at industry events such as SXSW. He owns the company, Hear It - Clear It Music Supervision.



Brian Reitzell is a musician, composer, producer, music editor, and Music Supervisor. Brian is known for his work on the Academy Award-winning films *Lost In Translation* and *Marie Antoinette*, as well as the films *Friday Night Lights*, *Stranger Than Fiction*, *30 Days of Night*, *Red Riding Hood*, and *The Virgin Suicides*. He is currently working on the television show *Boss*, directed by Gus Van Sant.



Greg Sill is a Music Supervisor and president of the company Music Makes Pictures. He has worked on projects including the Emmy Award-winning shows *Justified*, *ER*, and *Friends*, as well as the hit series *Family Matters*, *Full House*, *Dallas*, *Knots Landing*, and *Perfect Strangers*. Greg speaks on industry panels at events such as The Hollywood Reporter/Billboard Film and TV Music Conference.



Paul Stewart is an Oscar and Grammy winning producer, brand marketer, and Music Supervisor. Paul's Music Supervision credits include the Academy Award-winning hit *Hustle and Flow*, as well as the films *Four Brothers*, *Barbershop*, *Men of Honor*, *High School*, and *In the Hive*. He owns the company Next Thing, and is a co-founder of Atom Factory Music Licensing, Inc.



Andrea von Foerster is a Music Supervisor known for her work on the films *(500) Days of Summer*, *It's Kind Of A Funny Story*, *The White Stripes Under Great White Northern Lights*, as well as the television show *Dollhouse* and the Emmy Award-Winning hit, *Modern Family*. Her company is Firestarter Music.



Brooke Wentz is a Billboard-Award winning producer and Music Supervisor whose credits include *Bill Cunningham New York*, *The Bully Project*, and *The Shane McConkey Documentary*. Brooke is the author of the book *Hey! That's My Music*. Her company The Rights Workshop provides Music Supervision, licensing, rights clearance and talent negotiation services to traditional and new media communities.



Mark Wike's Music Supervision credits include the television shows *Damages*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *Hung*, *Commander In Chief*, as well as the Jonah Hill comedy *The Sitter*, and the film *Sorry, Haters*. His company Wike Music offers Music Supervision in addition to music editing, music production, and original composition.

About the Author



Jason M. Moore is an independent artist and music publisher specializing in rock. His publishing company, Steuco Recordings, offers Music Supervisors distinct music for film and television productions, as well as resources to help skyrocket their success. Jason's music has been featured in television shows and films including *24*, *Cabin Fever*, *Haunted*, *Seventh Amendment*, and *10 Grand in Your Hand*. Jason writes compelling articles for the benefit of Music Supervisors, including *Synch Report: An Interpretation of Key Data from the Last Decade for Music Supervisors*, *What Cool Really Is*, *Generation Z: Meet Your Newest Audience*, and *Be a Long-Tailed Purple Cow in a Blue Ocean With a Smoking Gun*. For more information, visit www.steucorecordings.com.