



Composing in MIDI

MIDI in Film and Television

Leonardo

Would the tail make the crucial difference? It was now all or bust Robbie's raised the stakes. He's going to fly off a much steeper hill.

Dennis

When you're asked to compose some music for some footage like that, what do you have to do with to start with how do you receive the material before you can actually start composing?

Simon

I will normally receive a VHS cassette that will have the picture obviously with no music but with what we call the sync sound and also the important part is that it will have burnt in time-code i.e. those numbers changing at the bottom of the screen

The first thing I have to do is somehow get that into the computer and I use a video capture card for that. I'll play the video from start to finish and digitise the picture into my computer so it's available in one long file and then I can work with it with my programme. In the old days I would use the VHS itself, the longitudinal time-code stripped as they say on to one channel.

That meant that when I played the video, when I started the video running, the programme would sync up to it. These days I use the Quick Time movie that I've made and when I start the programme the picture syncs up to that. So if you like the video used to drive the system but now the system drives the video. And it means it's a lot quicker because every time I pull up a new piece of work out of an hour-long programme I don't have to wind forward or back. It's instantaneous.

This is from a series of programmes about the artist Leonardo De Vinci who was also a scientist and there were two parts to the programme. Primarily the drama documentary side, and then there was the modern day scientific side where people were building various of his inventions to see if they would actually work.

Dennis

So where do you begin with the composing process?

Simon

When I get a clip I'll have to decide what I think the scene is doing for a start. So, obviously, this is about flight and I'll think about what has come before. Sometimes I'll play existing music against the pictures to see what it does.

Other times I'll play previous pieces of music that I have written maybe similar travelling music might work.

But in the end it's a compromise between what the picture needs, what the director or producer have in their minds as to what music will go, and what you want to write yourself.

Dennis

So really the music is very important in setting a mood for?

Simon

I think music is the primary emotional backbone of film but then I would do 'cause I'm a film composer.