Composing in MIDI
Delivering Results

Dennis
When you've finished the composition how do you supply the music to the production company?

Simon
There are various ways that I can do that I can use DAT or digital audio tape, and send that with all of the music in various cues, not laid up to the picture just separately as music and the set of time-codes as to where those start. I find that can be problematic. I tend to these days to use audio files that I save to a CD and I will maybe lay up fifteen minutes of the programme with maybe will have five or six music cues in it but make a very clear pip on a very obvious time code point, for example, one minute exactly and then they only have to line up that particular bit of sound and the rest will follow. There are ways now that, that people can send audio with what's called a time stamp in it, i.e. that will have a reference to the time line of the picture, one of those is the OMF file which is becoming more used and the advantage of that of course is with broadband internet connection one could send that directly to the production company over then internet.

Dennis
So you always send sound files rather than any midi codes?

Simon
Generally speaking I will send, yes, sound rather than midi, because you can't be a hundred percent sure with a general midi file that it will sound the way that you want it to. You can get quite close but also general midi sounds aren't the best sounds that can be produced on these synthesisers so although they are a very good short cut and for example if you wanted to demonstrate music to someone who might be in a foreign country at a certain time you could send them the midi file they could hear the music and they'd understand the content of the music with the proviso that when it's played either by better synth sounds or by a real orchestra it's going to sound better. In this particular situation we knew we would be able to record some of the tracks not all of the tracks with real musicians. But there was the issue of the international versions i.e. the versions that go out with just picture and sync sound and no voice over so that other countries can produce the same programme but in their own native languages. And we could only afford to record for UK rights we couldn't afford world rights for the orchestra. Therefore all of the pieces that I wrote had to work well enough in midi only. The ones that were chosen to be live music were usually the ones, which would most benefit. But I did try to make it sound good enough without having to use live instruments in case and of course then in the international version I was able to use that quite happily. It sounded almost as good.