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June - July 07

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You shoot. He scores

As additive works of art, original scores can offer depth and color to a film, but many remain leery about the process. *Realscreen* asks composer Joel Goodman for advice, and uncovers how he works with filmmakers

The best time to contact a composer, notes LA-based Joel Goodman, is half-way through the rough cut, after the film has begun to take shape. Goodman recalls once being asked to work on a five-hour rough cut of what would become a 90-minute film, offering lots of wiggle room for everyone involved. Ultimately, he notes, "that wiggle room gets wiggled."

For Goodman, the process starts with the filmmaker talking to him about what the film is about. Not the storyline, per se, but the emotional goal. For example, the composer recently worked on Irene Taylor Brodsky's *Hear and Now* for HBO, a film about an older couple becoming hearing enabled. "One could say that it is about cochlear implants," notes Goodman. "It's about deafness, it's about how these people will adjust; but the story is really a love story." Those sorts of observations can significantly help the composer envision a score.

The process continues with Goodman viewing the film, followed by a spotting session with the filmmaker (which usually lasts twice the length of the film) in which the music cues are decided upon, and then a conversation about themes. Goodman advises that filmmakers "know the direction they want to go in; know emotionally where they want to

take it, and what they want the music to achieve... It is also valuable to know that your producer took accordion lessons as a child and hates the accordion, [because] ultimately a producer will not put music that he or she doesn't like into a film... So, they also need to communicate what kind of music they like. And then the other really important thing is to come with an open mind, because you're collaborating."

And don't worry about brushing up on your musical lexicon. "It's so much better if we don't speak in specific musical terms," notes Goodman, "if we don't speak in oboes and octaves."

Keeping an open mind about the music tracks is key as budgets get pinched even further. Many composers can suggest alternative solutions. For example, Goodman can offer filmmakers a package that combines original composing, licenses for original music culled from his catalog, and music editing. Some composers have large catalogs that can be used to round out original music.

Up next for Goodman: the Oren Jacoby film *Constantine's Sword* (debuting in June at the LA Film Festival), more *Dog the Bounty Hunter* for A&E, and original scoring for a series called *Haunting Evidence* on Court TV, among others. **BC**

