



## Composer Forum II

May 25, 2011

POP Sound, Santa Monica - CA

### ***Composer Forum II: A Follow up to 'The Dangers of Spec Work and How it is Devaluing our Craft' – Forum in 2010***

Due to an overwhelming response to our first Composer Forum held in June of 2010, we rounded up 'the masses' yet again to address the changes since then and the ongoing climate of the business.

In attendance were a variety of interested industry professionals of which they offered their opinions in regards to the climate of the industry and how things have changed or have been affected.

The forum was accessible via live stream, a first in more to come! Thank you to Andy Snavelly (Bendy Music) for making this a reality. In the meantime, in the event you missed out, here are the highlights:

**"Shift Happens"** – In an article PJ Hanke (Sovereign Music) found from 'Music Think Tank' ([musicthinktank.com](http://musicthinktank.com)) via Hypebot's site ([hypebot.com](http://hypebot.com)) entitled 'Shift Happens', PJ compares the history of sheet music and how advances by way of the radio and distribution of records affected this form of music distribution at the time to the present situation with the accessibility of technology by way of the internet and computer, making things easier and essentially changing the way we do business in this new age of creating and distributing music.

**'A Union for Composers'** – PJ gave us an update regarding the AMCL and Teamsters' efforts to start a Composers Union (<http://theamcl-399.org>). The original goals for the formation of such a union (setting a limit in regards to spec work, demos, etc.) have been put on the shelf for now. The emphasis remains to secure pension, health and

welfare benefits for composers, who have been neglected by the AFM. The reason why a union for composers was never established, as related by Chris Horvath, was because by definition, a composer is essentially an employer and thus – cannot unionize. Unions are created for labor, not management. As a composer writes music and would in turn have to hire session players, vocalists, etc. they are seen as someone who hires. More information is to follow in regards to this ongoing effort.

**'Industry Changes – from a Mixer's Point of View'**: Veteran mixer, Tim West (POP Sound) commented on how little the business has changed and also how much it has changed: composers are actually standing by during mixes to provide updated stems immediately if needed! However, in the last 10 years he's actually seeing the same amount of original music being used for commercials (9 out of 10 commercials he mixes have original music) vs. using needle drop tracks or 'recorded' work(s). Original music makes mixing easier for him. The composer providing stems makes the music easily editable and accessible. The more stems, the better. Tim has also noticed a marked improvement in the production value of music libraries. In the age of licensing and 'bands for brands', Tim relayed that it's harder to edit and mix what he called 'stereo versions' of the tracks and that it can be very limiting due to legal restrictions.

**'CALM Act'** - Steve Strasberg (TC Electronics) shared the news of how the sonic guidelines created by the Commercial Advertisement Mitigation Act, approved by Congress, has actually brought about a higher quality in commercial transmissions. More information can be found here:

<http://www.broadcastengineeringworld-digital.com/beworld/201102?folio=14#pg14>

<http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2010/12/calm-act-passed-will-quiet-loud-tv-commercials-within-a-year.ars>

**'Business Solutions'** – with shrinking budgets and fewer resources helping composers and musicians to get ahead in the game, Jason Cropper (Guitar Center) presented a series of business solutions that supports professionals at a moment's notice.

Configuring hard drives in advance was one service he offers.

**'Network Minds'** - Chris Horvath (Jamnation Music), not afraid to ask for live strings for his latest TV show, had immediate success with the producers, and high quality end product. However, the same network just released a competition of sorts for the new music of an upcoming pilot. It just all depends on what the production budget is at the end of the day. A show with higher ratings and more established will most likely have a larger production budget vs. a pilot. But, it never hurts to ask!

**'Educate Yourself!'** In response to PJ's quote AMP Website article by Tina Marie Reyes (Elias Arts) in which it was stressed that 'it is important to create a sense of value for our work' in response to those who are new to the business, Don Sundstrom relayed his experience at the ASCAP Expo in which publishers were speaking about the wave of the industry and that it's no longer how it used to be. The ASCAP Expo is an event worth going to as times are changing and as business minds, we should move with the times and find better ways of doing business versus simply complaining and relishing the 'old days'. **ASCAP Expo 2011 Seminars** are now available on-line and (in Tina's opinion) worth paying the \$75 to view.

**'A' Level Composers** Anyone can go in and price their works for as cheaply as they can so as to get their foot in the door, but there is a point where your client will associate this number with the value of your work. If you price yourself too low, you may not set yourself up as an 'A' list composer. It's a disservice not only to your fellow composers, writers, musicians – but a disservice to yourself. It was stated that in a time of economic downturn, some companies use the strategy of raising their prices. This gives them a sense of value. In an age where people want more for less, at some point we'll be overwhelmed with so many choices that we start looking for high quality caliber type products that would be worth spending more money on so as to guarantee satisfaction. It's the nature of the game. Liz Myers (Trivers Myers Music) stated that 'we all need to think and position ourselves as "A Level" composers (adding value to our work)'.

***The 'Democratization' of Our Industry*** – In response to the discussion of 'Shift Happens' and 'A Level Composers', Elad Marish (Swell Music) commented on what he calls the 'democratization of our industry' – *"The shift we're seeing now is the accessibility of top-end technology to any aspiring composer, thus leveling the playing field among composers; one no longer needs five machines linked via midi over LAN (or what have you) to achieve stunning "in-the-box" results; or a multi-thousand dollar avid suite to achieve professional level video editing; this has led to the democratization of the media arts. Meaning if you produce quality work, you can rise to the top regardless of income level, and set yourself up as an A Level composer (and ask for top dollar for your work!)"*

**AMP West News:**

**PRO's are CHANGING!** Stay tuned to the latest news on ASCAP, SESAC and BMI...notable news includes retention of publishing unless a music rights agreement is in place (vs. having to prove it wasn't a work for hire). ASCAP has changed their filing rules to make it easier to claim airplay for commercials! Visit the AMP Website for info. [www.ampnw.com](http://www.ampnw.com)

**AMP Hollywood Bowl Event** – August 27, 2011 John Williams in concert. Tickets are \$35/ticket for AMP Members of which 30 have already been secured and readily available. Please contact Elizabeth Meyers at [liz@triversmyersmusic.com](mailto:liz@triversmyersmusic.com) for ticket purchase. Event details can be found at <http://www.hollywoodbowl.com/tickets/performance-detail.cfm?id=4574>

**San Francisco/Bay Events** – Elad Marish of Swell Music is making great traction in regards to membership in the Bay Area. Events tbd in regards to boosting membership, participation and events. Two options include a mixer sponsored by AMP in which all local music houses/composers will be invited to or inviting such attendees to Elad's studios for a live stream of the next AMP LA Forum or General Meeting. More info to follow...

**Next AMP West Board/General meeting, time and place is TBD.**