



MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY

Advancements in technology have undervalued the craft of screen composition. **Art Phillips** outlines some of the challenges facing today's music composers.

WHILST technology has aided the work of music composers in many positive ways over the past 20-something years, it has also created a contorted impression about the process of our craft and a misconception of the costs associated with producing a music soundtrack.

Music is now expected to be delivered much cheaper than it would have been prior to the early 80s and as the decades move forward this appears to be getting more difficult.

Music composers are finding that we have to re-explain the reality that the equipment we utilise does not have a built-in discount just because we happen to own the gear ourselves. Composers have to invest and re-invest constantly to keep up with the times and we have to purpose-build acoustic rooms for our own use, or alternatively rent commercial recording studio spaces to achieve the end result.

Then of course, there is the continual maintenance of the equipment. Oddly, there is an assumption that with the current trends one can get more for less.

Whether one writes music from an acoustic piano or acoustic guitar, direct to score paper, or on the most advanced technology platforms, it still takes the same amount of time and creative craft to come up with the goods. In fact, when using the technology it more often than not takes longer.

Technological advancement has reinvented the definition of a composer as one that wears many creative hats; more often than not a composer is also a session musician, music arranger, orchestrator, conductor, studio owner, recording engineer, music copyist, music editor and music supervisor.

As president of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers (AGSC) I would like to see a more stable foundation and guide set in motion to assist film and

television producers, as well as music composers. The AGSC is working on a document that points to a guide to rates for film and television music. The guide would define all the roles associated with the composition and production of music and would outline suggested rates for particular genres of screen production projects.

The process of film and film music is collaborative. The Guild is keen to create more overall awareness about the development of music and highly promotes that producers would be much better off setting a composer in place earlier than later. This allows for substantial development of musical emotions and also aids the director and editor by providing the opportunity to utilise the composer's music as temps.

**Art Phillips is a composer and president of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers.*