Instructions for Recording Your Score

Finding a Composer and Recording Your Score   Rev. 1/11

It is never too early to enlist the creative services of a composer. The School of Cinematic Arts and Thornton School of Music Film Scoring Program usually set up a couple of meetings between the film students and the students in the film scoring program. It will be announced in your sound class at some point during the semester.

USC has two scoring stages. If you want to record original music for your film, the Spielberg Scoring Stage and the Sound Production Suite have ample tracks of Pro Tools for you to record your score and outboard effects, top quality microphones, software plug-ins and accessories.

The main difference between the two studios is that the Spielberg Scoring Stage is larger and can accommodate up to roughly 30 musicians. Sound Production Suite can accommodate up to 24 musicians and it also has an isolation booth and a drum booth. You are allowed to use either room depending upon which room best suites your instrumentation. This should be determined by having a discussion with your engineer and your composer.

There is a set policy for the use of these recording studios for 310/508/541 students. Namely, each project is allotted 4 HOURS EACH to record and mix your score because of the number of projects that access to the studios. There are many other films being worked on besides yours. However wonderful you may think your film is, other projects have just as much access if not more. Thesis projects are one example.

SETTINGS:
Please be aware that the Pro Tools session for your score should be set to the following: 48k sample rate, 16 bits and **23.976** frame rate for projects that are shot on Hi Def.

Especially if you have a composer who is recording in their home studio, these are the settings. If you record your music at any other sample or frame rate it is possible that your music MAY NOT SYNC to your picture when you cut it in.

Any deviation from these settings is not supported by the Sound Department. That means if you have problems because you didn't follow instructions, you'll have to fix it yourself.

HOW TO RESERVE A RECORDING SESSION IN THE SPIELBERG SCORING STAGE OR SOUND PRODUCTION SUITE

The studios are available for booking by 310, 508, 480, 486, 541, 546, 547, 487, 581/587s, 592 and 594 students, but first you must find a *qualified engineer* from the list of approved recording engineers which is on the sound department bulletin board next to B102 and at the front desk in the post production department in the SCA building.

It doesn't matter if your composer has a friend who is a Grammy Award winning engineer, you **MUST** use an engineer from the list. We do not EVER, EVER let professional engineers use this facility. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS**-so don't even ask-the answer is no.

Follow this procedure to reserve time for your session:

1. Pick up a Spielberg Reservation Request form (green) or Sound Production Suite form (light blue) at the post-production department Front Desk in the SCA building (in the basement).

2. Please refer to the Sound Department Schedule on the bulletin board next to office B102, which lists what dates and times are available.

3. Contact an Engineer to run your session. There is a list of qualified engineers available on the sound department bulletin board next to B102 and at the front desk in the post-production department.

4. Get the engineer who agrees to record your session to email confirmation to the Sound Department Manager (rhyland@cinema.usc.edu) asap. Your session will not get approved until this email is received.

5. Fill out the Studio Request **COMPLETELY, checking all the boxes that apply to your session.** If you don't understand something technical on the form, ask your engineer for an

explanation. Leave the completed form in the sound department manager's "in box" at office B101 in the SCA building. If it is approved, it will be noted on the Sound Department Schedule. Write your e-mail address (legibly) on the form and you will be notified of the status of your session electronically within 24 hours. If the form is incomplete your session request will be denied.

The Sound Department does not accept reservations from composers. Only the director or producer may submit a reservation for the studios.

If you have to cancel your session, please notify the sound department manager asap at rhyland@cinema.usc.edu. **Students who do not inform the manager of a cancellation at least 24 hours prior to the session will have $75.00 cancellation fee charged to their fee bill.**

No food or drinks (INCLUDING WATER) are allowed in the studio so finish your food and drink or throw them out before you enter the facility.

Also, we **DO NOT** allow any projects to shoot in the studio, ever. Please do not ask.

The following is an example of a 310/508/541 four hour session schedule:
1st hour – unlock stage, set up chairs, stands, mics, cables, test and trouble shoot all connections. Set up Pro Tools session and check click tracks. Musicians arrive.

Next 50-60 min. – live recording
Next 30-45 min – restore room; return mics, stands, cables, etc.
The number of musicians increases set-up and tear down time.
All remaining time – (about 1 ½-2 hours) – mix what was recorded

Please note: 12 musicians max per engineer. If you would like more than 12 musicians, you will need to hire a second engineer to assist. Otherwise, you will not be able to finish mixing your score within the allotted 4 hour block of time.

SuperSessions

The SuperSession is an all day scoring session for six 310/508 or 541 projects. These are scheduled the weekend before each round of 310/508/541mixes.

The Sound Department in conjunction with the Thornton School of Music will organize the session, record and mix them all. The recording will happen on Saturdays and the mixing will be done on Sundays (precise dates will be posted on the Sound Department Bulletin Board). Each project will get to record with an orchestra made up of students from the music school.

There are usually 5 open slots for the SuperSession so it's first come first served.

Advantages to being part of the SuperSession:

1. You will not have to find an engineer as an experience engineer is provided.

2. You will not have to find an open time slot to request since the session is pre-reserved, the musicians are scheduled for your session and the tracking and mixing schedules are done for you.

3. The engineer is doing several projects back to back so the flow of the session is more focused and organized.

4. Set up and tear down time is scheduled before the first session and after the last one so more time can be allocated towards recording and mixing.

If you are interested in being a part of the SuperSession, obtain and fill out a green Spielberg Scoring Stage Reservation form from the post front desk and fill it out COMPLETELY AS POSSIBLE. Leave it in the inbox of the Sound Department Manager, at office B101. **Make sure you check the SuperSession box on the form.**

If the director does not complete the form and submit it to the Sound Department Manager, you will NOT be included in the SuperSession. Submitting the appropriate form should be the first thing you do. We do not accept session requests from composers.

Secondly have your composer contact Brent Anderson who is the contractor for the music school, and give him the precise instrumentation for your score. (banderson@usc.edu)

If you have a composer that is not currently enrolled in the Thornton School of Music you will be required to pay an additional fee to the contractor for his services.

The SuperSession can provide anywhere from 12 musicians (max) down to a quartet. If your project is deemed to be suitable to be included in the SuperSession, you will be notified via email and given a schedule for tracking and mix times. It's vitally important to find out from your composer the instrumentation they intend to use as this will determine if can be included.

Generally, the instrumentation for projects included in the SuperSession start with some variation of a quartet.
Many student film projects request either a string quartet (2 violins, 1 viola, 1 cello) or a string quartet plus a few woodwinds, brass, or additional strings. These are the types of sessions that are ideal for Super Sessions. **If you're intention is to have a rock/jazz band or a hip hop group perform your score then you would have to schedule your own separate 4 hour session because this instrumentation does not fit the SuperSession format.**

FEES:
Musicians should be paid cash or check at the conclusion of the tracking session. Cash is preferred. Musician wages are $20 for 50 minutes. If you need more than 50 minutes, you can pay overtime to the musicians, which is $5 for 10 minutes, or part of 10 minutes. It is recommended to bring enough cash for 50 minutes PLUS 2 units of overtime (ONE $20 bill and TWO $5 for each musician)

Please be aware that the engineers fee is $100.00 per project. Be prepared to pay in cash at the end of your session. No music will go out the door of the studio until everyone is paid in full.

PREPARATION: Composers should contact the engineer **prior** to the session to confirm the technical requirements for the session. Directors should be sure to bring a Quicktime movie with window burn or make sure the composer brings it to the session otherwise you not be able to score to picture.

The following is an example of a 310/508/541 SuperSession schedule:

Saturday
9:30am – 10:20am   Record project #1
10:30am – 11:20am   Record project #2
11:30am – 12:30pm   Record project #3
12:30pm – 2:00pm   Lunch break
2pm – 2:50pm   Record project #4
3pm – 3:50pm   Record project #5

Sunday
8am – 10am   Mix project #1
10am – 12pm   Mix project #2
12pm – 1:00pm   Lunch break
1pm – 3pm   Mix project #3
3pm – 5pm   Mix project #4
6pm – 8pm   Mix project #5