

Liza Richardson

Music Supervisor

by CAROLINE HORN

There's a wise old saying that you should "follow your bliss," and that's how Liza Richardson has built her cool career. Through playing clarinet in her school band and attending the renowned Interlochen summer camp in Michigan, Richardson was exposed to lots of classical, jazz, and theater music and her eclectic music taste was born. After graduating from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, she began working as a DJ for the tiny Dallas station KNON. As she explored different genres, she evolved into a music supervisor for films and TV shows. Richardson has selected the music for such movies as *Curious George*, *Nacho Libre*, and *Failure to Launch*, as well as the popular TV shows *Melrose Place* and *Friday Night Lights*. She's kept up the DJ role, too, and can be heard on the Santa Monica, California-based public radio station 89.9 KCRW every Saturday night from 8 to 10 pm.



MA!: HOW DID YOU GET INTO MUSIC SUPERVISION?

LR: For a long time, I had a show on 89.9 KCRW called "Man in the Moon" that featured a lot of spoken word and poetry, and I would layer the words with instrumental music. At that time I met Mark Pellington, who was producing a show for MTV called "Words in Your Face," and then another for PBS called "The United States of Poetry." Mark needed instrumental music to go with the poetry he was working with. So I sat down with him and we had a great connection. He was the one who told me, "You know, people do this for a living—they advise on music." I had no idea, but that's what got me into it—Mark and his projects.

DO YOU HAVE A CONCEPT FOR THE MUSIC BEFORE YOU START SEEKING OUT SPECIFIC RECORDINGS? Absolutely. I work with the director and producers to come up with that. For example, the music in *Melrose Place* is super-popular, in-the-moment urban and pop music. That's the brand, taking into consideration the network and the demographic of our audience.

WHAT ABOUT FOR FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS? Since that show takes place in Texas, it helped that I brought a lot of

knowledge of Texas music to the table right at the start of the project: I'd gone to college in Texas and started doing radio there and had gotten to know the local music scene. But I also felt from what I saw in the pilot that there were some serious religious and spiritual overtones in the show, so I brought in songs that mentioned salvation and life or death ideas. We wanted the music there to be a combination of some twang for Texas, some indie rock to support the edginess of the show, some hard rock for the football action, and some urban music for the ghetto scenes.

WHAT'S THE MOST FUN ASPECT OF YOUR JOB? Connecting the dots and making the producers happy, as well as hooking up the artists with song placements. Turning people on to the music that you're into and supporting the artists you love. Then everybody's happy.

WHAT'S THE HARDEST PART OF THE JOB? It's something that's called "temp love"—when everyone is so used to a temporary "place holder" track that it's hard to let go of it and switch to different music.

WHEN DO YOU FIND THE TIME TO LISTEN TO NEW MUSIC? In my car, when I'm working out, whenever I can. Also, I sometimes have to cram. We recently had a song drop out from *Melrose Place*, so I had to quickly scan my desk, do some searches, take a bunch of records and listen through them. In those situations, I get a lot of fast listening done.

ANY EXCITING PROJECTS COMING UP? Yes, *Parenthood* is about to start in a couple of weeks on NBC, and people are really excited about this show. We hope it's going to be big. 🎧