

Ann Kline

Music Supervisor

It's hard to imagine your favorite TV show or movie without music in it. But have you ever wondered who selects the songs and scores that build suspense, make us laugh, and intensify the emotions of every scene? Turns out those screen sounds are pulled together by music supervisors like Ann Kline at John Wells Productions. Ann oversees all musical aspects of a television or film project, and she is responsible for everything from managing on-camera performances and hiring composers to licensing songs and budgeting. So if you're someone who pays attention to songs on TV shows or if you find yourself running out of the movie theater to buy the soundtrack, then read on to find out what it's like to bring music to the screen.

What are some of the shows you've found music for?

I've been working on *ER*, *Third Watch*, and *The West Wing* for five years now. Prior to that, I did several independent films, and last year I worked on the movie *White Oleander*.

How is working on a TV show different from placing music in a film?

What's nice about film is that you have so much more time to do everything, and you work a lot more closely with the director to realize his or her vision for the music. In TV, because the turnarounds are so quick, you don't have time to be as creative. It's much more about licensing [existing songs] rather than having original songs written. I like the quick aspect of TV, though,



because you get to see the results every week.

How do you usually begin a project?

When we get a script, all the departments will sit together and go through it scene by scene. The first thing we do is to prepare for any music that has to take place on camera. This includes situations where someone is dancing to a song, a band is playing, or a choir is singing. The next step is usually working with the composer and any musicians we have hired to work on a score. Finally, I work with the sound editors to find the balance between the music and the dialogue.

You must need to know about a wide range of musical styles. Did you grow up listening to all sorts of music?

Everyone in my family had completely different taste in music, so I had many influences growing up. And from working as a music supervisor every day, I've gained a great deal of musical knowledge. But there are also musicologists and many other experts that I work with, so there are always

people to help me learn about a particular type of music.

What is a typical work day like?

Especially in television, there's never a typical day. One misconception about music supervising is that it is a purely creative job. In reality, we spend so much time researching and obtaining permission to use music. It's usually pretty hectic, and definitely a lot of hard work. We might look at a show on Monday, then already be mixing the selected music in the recording studio by Tuesday, because the show's airing on Thursday. To clear music that people agree upon in that short a period of time can be very difficult. But I really enjoy doing so many different things each day.

What is the best way to prepare for a career as a music supervisor?

I worked as a music business attorney before, and that has been really useful, because we deal with copyrights and other legal issues all the time. Some music supervisors are musicians who come from a creative background. Others start out working in the film/TV division of a record label or publishing company. There isn't a strict path leading to this job.

What is your favorite part of the job?

It's fun to get a tape of the show with no music in it and then try to put different music to the scenes and see what works. Another amazing part is watching an episode being scored by an orchestra or going to a recording session. It's incredible watching musicians perform. 