What is a Music Supervisor?

June Benoit

*University of the Pacific, j_benoit1@u.pacific.edu*

June Benoit (2022) is pursuing a degree in Music Industry Studies.

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What is a Music Supervisor?

by June Benoit
"Music Supervisors find and license music in order to set the mood and convey emotion in a film, commercial, video game, or TV show."

*Note:* A good music supervisor must have good communication and networking skills, natural instincts about musical and visual trends, and vast knowledge of all kinds of music!

"Music Supervisors are paid per project. Like many jobs in the film music industry, the amount paid can vary widely. Fees for a TV episode can range from $2,000 to $5,000; for a low-budget indie film the range can be from $0 to $15,000; for a studio feature the range can be anywhere from $10,000 (low-budget) to $500,000 (blockbuster level)."
Nora Felder
Music Supervisor, President of Picture Music Company Inc.
picturemusiccompany.com

While Music Supervising is a field dominated by men, Nora Felder has risen up in the ranks and made her place as a noteworthy Music Supervisor. She has 22 credits to her name, most notably the TV Shows *Californication*, *Better Things*, and the hit Netflix show, *Stranger Things*. In 2017, Felder made Emmy history as being one of the first supervisors to be nominated for the newly instituted award, "Emmy Award for Outstanding Music Supervision".

**Awards:** Grammy Award nominee for "Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media", Emmy Award nominee for Outstanding Music Supervision, **Guild of Music Supervisors Award winner for "Best Music Supervision for a TV Drama"**, GMA Award nominee for "Best Music Supervision in a TV Musical or Comedy" (x2), GMA nominee for "Best Music Supervision in Television", **Hollywood Music in Media Award winner for "Outstanding Music Supervision-Television"**, HMMA nominee for "Outstanding Music Supervision-TV".
In 2014, Nora Felder gave an interview to Jonathan McHugh at the 4th Annual Guild of Music Supervisor Awards, where she was nominated for her work on *Californication*.

1. **Tell us about working on the show for six years:**
   "For those of you who watch the show, I think that Hank, played by David Duchovny, is a very eclectic character, and it's really interesting trying to continually look for a musical palette to put behind him. It's just interesting to watch his character arch and finding tunes that accent that arch."

2. **You normally do a lot of covers on the show. How do you fit them in the show creatively?**
   "I think that the demographic for *Californication* is kind of a multi-demographic, in that we have viewers in their 20s, 40s, 50s, 60s. Because of that, I thought it was really interesting to try to find current versions of classic covers, so that way you kind of tie in all of the demographics and there is something for everybody. In between seasons, I'm always on the hunt for covers that no one knows about and always searching the blogs and the internet for fun versions- and not obvious versions, as well!"

3. **What's your favorite thing about being a Music Supervisor?**
   "The best part about being a music supervisor is that for me, it is almost like I am a character actor. When you get a new project to work on, my process is you kind of have to dive into those character. It kind of can haunt you a little bit. It goes with you everywhere. I'm always in the car listening to different stations and the characters are always in my head. It's kind of being an actor without being in front of the camera. It's your voice in a different way."
Having been a music supervisor and consultant for over 20 years, Dave Jordan has many credits to his name (105 on IMBD- to be exact!) He is most known for his work on 19 Marvel movies-most recently, Black Panther.

Dave Jordan is also the founder and CEO for Format Entertainment, which is a “collaborative workplace for like-minded music supervisors to share ideas, experiences and pool resources.” His company has also had a lot of success, namely with the movies, Pitch Perfect, A Star is Born, and Alvin & the Chipmunks.

Landing his first job with Marvel on the movie Iron Man in 2008 was a huge turning point in his career, and his talents led him to get continuously hired by the company for their huge blockbusters. His career path shows the importance of working hard and building connections with people in the industry. He is now considered one of the most highly sought-after music supervisors in Hollywood.
Part of my job as a Supervisor is to create a space for [artists and composers] to operate into and go down different paths and different ideas.

Industry
Music Supervisors have a leg in the Music Industry, and the Entertainment Industry!

Services
Music Supervisors have to work quickly to clear/license the songs they are using in projects.

Clients
Music Supervisors work with all kinds of people from media, as well as musicians, music reps, etc.

“As a music supervisor, you learn to embrace the best of every genre, and I really have to say there's nothing that I'm embarrassed of."
03.

SELECTING MUSIC

Generally, Music supervisors pick well-known songs that people can recognize. They take in consideration the kind of project they are working for and what the director or producer wants.

For example, if music is needed for a scene in a movie where there is a huge fighting sequence, the music supervisor would pick a song that would not only reflect that scene, but also engage the audience.

Basically, they pick songs that are appropriate.

LICENSING MUSIC

Sometimes, for projects which have composer, the Music Supervisor's job is to work with the composer and the project's director and producer to make sure that they are all on the same page.

However, most likely they are hired to find and license preexisting music that would fit with the project best. It's really crucial to make sure the music used is properly licensed, or else big legal troubles could occur later on.

COLLABORATING

Music supervisors work with a lot of people. Depending on the job, they can work with Licensing Representatives, Music Publishers, Music Editors, composers, Music Directors, Movie Producers and Directors, game creators, etc.

BEING FLEXIBLE IS A GOOD TRAIT TO HAVE FOR THIS JOB

https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/vol2/iss1/16
Ads with music perform better than non-music ads

*The study was comparing how effective TV ads with and without music were. Over 600 ads were categorized in the 4 categories listed above, and were tested to see if the ads with music had a greater impact on viewers. They found that ads with music had a bigger impact, especially the empathetic ads, which scored 27.2%. That is 2.3% higher than the second highest-scoring music ad!*
Music plays a vital role in TV Shows, movies, and games. The music is something that audiences can easily connect with and remember.

Movies that exemplifies this are Jaws, Jurassic Park, and Mean Girls.
MOVIE

White Chicks (2004): This fan-favorite comedy had two music supervisors: Lisa Brown and Darian Pollard. The movie features 27 songs - none of which are originals! One of the most well-known and iconic scenes in the movie is when Terry Crew’s character starts singing "A Thousand Miles" by Vanessa Carlton. Without the music supervisors clearing the rights to the song, we may have never had that scene!

TV SHOW

The US version of The Office is an amazing show that despite ending a couple of years ago, is still important and relevant to today's pop culture. Many of the show’s most famous scenes feature music. For example, the scene where Michael Scott pulls up in his car by the camera and says "It's Britney, B****!", while playing a Lady Gaga song has over 3 million hits on Youtube! We can say "thanks" to Kerri Drootin for those famous scenes. (She also worked on the shows Psych and Parks and Recreation! She’s the best!)

VIDEO GAME

Legends of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D (2001)

Dubbed the "Japanese 'John Williams'", Koji Kondo is a frequent collaborator with Nintendo. He has composed many songs for the Mario franchise, as well as supervising many of their projects. The game franchise "Legends of Zelda", is very popular and its music is well known amongst Nintendo fans. Kondo’s musical visions for the brand has really pushed Nintendo to the top in Japan.
Traditionally, when music supervisors look for work in the industry, they look for movie, tv show, and commercial gigs. However, many overlook the video game industry as a possible opportunity for work.

As the video game industry continues to grow, so does the need for new games. With new games, comes new music!

The study below is from Newzoo’s quarterly update to its Global Games Market Revenues. The statistic shows the revenues generated from games from the year 2016 to 2018, as well as the projected growth for 2019 and 2020.

**FORECAST PER SEGMENT TOWARD 2020**

**GLOBAL GAMES MARKET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Revenue (Bn)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>104.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>116.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>125.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>134.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>143.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Year by Year growth:**

Trending towards 7% growth/year

**Average growth from 2016-2018:**

$115.4 Billion /year

**Projected growth from 2019 to 2020:**

$9 Billion /year

**TOTAL MARKET:**

+8.2%

*INFO FROM NEWZOO

It's a very lucrative industry- and it's projected to keep going up!

*Statistic includes: Boxed/Downloaded PC games, Browser PC games, Console games, Tablet games, and Smartphone games.

*Tech Crunch

the popular video game Fortnite- which features a lot of music and dancing- made $15 Billion in 2018!
Interested in becoming a Music Supervisor? Things to keep in mind:

**CREDENTIALS**

You need to have an extensive knowledge about music! Listening to all kinds of genres and expanding your playlists is important for the job! It helps to have a Bachelor's Degree in Music Business or Industry, as licensing music is an integral part of the job.

**INTERNSHIP: "FLY ON THE WALL"**

It’s a good idea to intern or apprentice under an established music supervisor, or to observe a scoring session with them. (A scoring session is when they dub the music into the movie, show, etc.) They may have insightful tips or good connections to get a job.

You can also attend a spotting session- which is when a producer, director, and the music supervisor (and sometimes composer if they have one) get together to decide where the music goes in a project and how much of the music to put in. People also do a lot of freelance work, to build up their portfolios!

**KNOW YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC**

Once you get a job, it's important to study and find out the demographic your project is targeting, so you can better pick the music.

Knowing your demographic and the kinds of music they would be most affected by could be the crucial factor into making your project a success!
ADVICE FROM PROS

Gabe Hilfer

“When submitting music by an unknown act, I find it helpful when people put some bands that they may be compared to. Even though every artist is unique, I am more likely to check something out if I am a big fan of one of the bands they are similar to. Always put as much contact information into the metadata of the songs as possible. Often times we download music, but won’t get a chance to listen to it for weeks or sometimes months. If we love it and it works for a spot we are trying to fill, we need to know how to get in touch with you!”

Madonna Wade Reed

“Make sure your music is appropriate for the project. Speak to friends who do have representation with reputable third party agencies. It’s smart for the artist, it’s smart for the supervisor. Songwriters are entering into legally binding agreements with strangers, so they need to protect themselves. It protects both parties.”

Jason Kramer

“I look at it a little bit differently. I want music that is familiar to the masses. If you want to get your music into a commercial, you should really consider pushing yourself out there as an artist. You need to have an audience when you pitch to a brand. We have to find stuff that already has a ‘like’ for other people.”
IN CONCLUSION

As we all know, the music industry is always evolving. With that comes positive changes in the field-in terms of diversity. Despite the majority of the Music Supervisors being male, more and more women have established themselves as strong leaders in the field. People of color like Morgan Rhodes, Deb Oh, and Stephanie Diaz-Matos are also emerging and becoming more prominent with famous works-Selma, The Vow, etc.- under their belts. The interest in the film industry and the recent acknowledgment from the Emmys are contributing to the growth and interest of this job, and hopefully that will lead to more opportunities in the future.

March 28, 2019
SOURCES- JUNE BENOIT

BASIC RESEARCH FOR MUSIC SUPERVISORS
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NORA FELDER
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MORE SUPERVISORS
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EMMYS

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GAMING STATISTIC

POWER OF MUSIC STATISTIC