Handy hints for aspiring Audio Network composers

We get literally hundreds of demo tracks sent to us every week and we try hard to listen to everything that comes in, but sadly, and obviously, we can only accept a tiny fraction of what's sent. Even then we almost always need the tracks re-worked in some way.

So what is the X factor that we look for in a composer?

1. **BE ORIGINAL**
   This is the first and most important thing to us. We have already recorded thousands of tracks in pretty much every style imaginable, and we don't need to replicate what we have already done. We need to bring our customers fresh, new, interesting and clever music that sounds sufficiently different to what we've done before.

2. **Why you?**
   With so many composers on our books already, our first responsibility is to keep them gainfully employed. You need to be doing something that none of them are doing. Perhaps an edge on the production, perhaps a new approach to a style

3. **Don't copy**
   We need to be 100% certain that no copyrights have been infringed with any tracks in our catalogue. We NEVER ask composers to do 'sound-alikes' and we only release original, unpublished works. If there is any illegally used sample or tune or any uncleared copyright material, we can't release it. The composer always warrants to us that everything is unique and original.

Quite often we get demos that contain some good ideas, but are lacking on the production side. This doesn't necessarily matter because we often take on the role of producer and use real orchestras, players and ludicrously expensive kit to make sure everything we do sounds fantastic. Remember though, the more you can do yourself, the more useful you become to people who want to work with you! Here are some handy hints to help you along:

- *Create your own sounds.* Although there are loads of sample libraries around, it is always exciting to hear new sounds which aren't generally available or over-used.

- *Have a clear view of what you are trying to write and achieve.* If you are writing for Audio Network you need to think about who is going to use your track and why. Some composers leave a film running in the background to make sure they keep to a plan and the most successful ones plan what they will write before they write it. Audio Network producers work closely with the composers to help them do this.

- *Try to think about how an editor will use the track.* Leave editors places where they can cut tracks and make their work as easy as possible so they want to work with your music.

- *Leave space in your tracks.* It is tempting to over-write and fill in every possible hole. To others, the tracks will sound cluttered.

- *Real instruments.* If your music needs a real instrument, try not to use samples unless they are completely convincing. Try whenever you can, to find someone who can play the real thing. For some styles of music you can get away with some samples (drums and bass on dance tracks for instance), but sampled violins, saxes, horns etc are a complete no-no! This is good for the musician community and good for you because you will need to learn how to record the instruments effectively.

- *Mixing*
  - When you've mixed a track, try to find something commercial and compare the sound of the commercially produced track with what you've created. It will show up the problems with your mix and make you work much harder to get the sound right.

  - Never record and mix on the same day. Make sure you have a break from the track and have another go when you're fresh. We always set up a rough mix on one day and listen to it again on another day. It is always amazing how much you need to change it!

  - When mixing think of what is going on in each frequency of the track and make sure bass middle and high frequencies are clean and balanced

  - Leave plenty of 'headroom' on your mixes and don't try to do your own mastering. Headroom is the difference between the loudest part of your track and the legal limit where your track would start to distort. In the old days with tape, we were always struggling to make everything as loud as possible (sound to noise ratio) because tape was hissy. With digital recording this is not such a problem, so keep the volume a bit lower to allow the mastering engineer to work on the sound. It will be plenty loud enough when he/she has finished with it!

Sending us your masterpieces

Please send *aandr@audionetwork.com* a link to a streaming site (MySpace, YouTube or similar) where we can listen without needing to download files. Because of the risks of viruses and capacity problems, we must also ask you not to send us large email files – sorry, but we don't want to catch any nasties!

Please keep in mind that we get hundreds of demos sent to us every week and whilst we try hard to listen to everything quickly it can take some time. Please be patient with us!