

## Another Character In The Film, The Music by Elisa D. Bowman

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THE SIX-DISK CD CHANGER in my car houses film soundtracks on “random.” Its fantastic to be surprised by an array of music with the power to transport me to a cinematic moment in some of my favorite film like; *One Fine Day*, *Meet Joe Black*, *Dream Girls*, *City of Angels*, *Don Juan De Marco*, and my all-time favorite soundtrack – *The Bridges of Madison County*. Cinefiles can tell you this particular score was hand selected by the bonafide jazz aficionado and director, Clint Eastwood.

Acquiring the music license to use the perfect song can be a dicey proposition as I quickly learned when charged with securing the rights to the song “I Got You Babe” originally done by Sonny & Cher for the independent film – *Fashionably L.A.*

The director was dead set on the actors actually singing this particular song for a campy scene, yet the path to retaining the right to do so was a slow, bureaucratic process of locating the rights holder, submitting a detailed request, and waiting, a lot of waiting. As the shooting day approached, news of Sonny Bono’s sudden death was announced – and we felt sure any hope of securing our approval would be dashed. Surprisingly, the approval came in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, but many nerves were frayed in the process.

In sharp contrast to that route, in producing *Dear Willie*, jazz artist, Takana Miyamoto, painstakingly customized the entire score. Her dual degree from the Berklee College of Music in Film Scoring and Jazz Composition certainly came in handy as she thoughtfully captured the essence of the project from a rough cut the director burned and in accepting the assignment, set about to drop the lyrical movements as she interpreted the scenes. The end result of this approach is magical, as her compositions not only enhance pivotal scenes; the music virtually stands alone as another character in the film. Since Takana has already incorporated *Dear Willie*’s theme into her live concerts in the States and Japan, she’s simultaneously created a little buzz for the film prior to its release, a filmmaker’s dream.

The sweeping changes in the music industry may even impact a higher volume of original material in film scores as musicians are looking for vehicles that offer more control; stymied by diminishing royalties as a result of music being pirated on the Internet. This reality may offer a win-win for film collaborators as artists explore this platform for their creative expression.

The contribution that musicians make to film is not just a song with poignant lyrics that accentuates the dynamics in the scene, but think of one of the most memorable motifs that drive emotion: the theme music from *Jaws*. A simple use of two notes {E&F} in an alternating pattern rose the tension level and heartbeats in audiences and still manages to raise hairs on the back of tourist’s neck at the Universal Theme Park’s signature attraction. While composed by a Hollywood legend, John Williams, the piece was actually performed by tuba player, Tommy Johnson (rumor has it the number wasn’t

even liked by Spielberg).

A complex sound *element* can also drive a story forward. One example that stands out for me is from *The Godfather* - the pivotal moment when Michael Corleone is on the brink of surrendering his civilian life when asked to kill the family’s rival. In a private moment prior to his life-altering act, the chaotic sound of a subway train with escalating volume seems to capture the racing thoughts vacillating in his mind between conscience and duty.

Here in Atlanta, Tunewelder Music Group, LLC is providing invaluable solutions for creative projects by spearheading custom music production from a varied stable of artists, along with music supervision and licensing to help streamline the process for its clients...ideal for busy productions. A song inspires some writers to write a film scene, while another hit makes the scene great.

Today on Facebook, you can give the thumbs up to, along with 2,384,228 other fans, “I Wish Music Played During Epic Moments of My Life and Not Just in Movies.” For now, we probably have to settle for filmed moments that truly resonate epic moments in our lives.



**ELISA DIMITRIA BOWMAN** is a filmmaker. She is the producer of *Dear Willie*. Ms. Bowman served as production resource executive in the production of major motion pictures and television shows such as *Will & Grace*; *Runaway Bride*; *Beverly Hills 90210*; *Striptease*; *Multiplicity*; *Nixon*; *The Getaway*; and more. She also served as production coordinator and director’s assistant in projects such as *Fashionably L.A.* and *Ringer*.

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