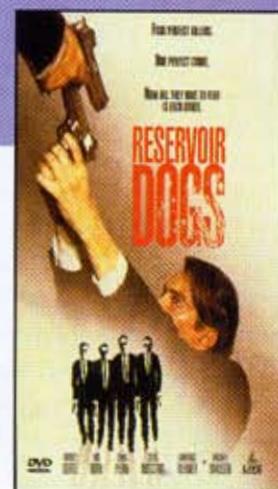
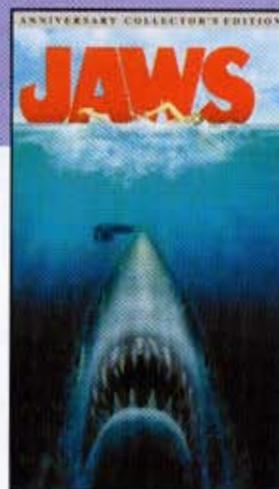
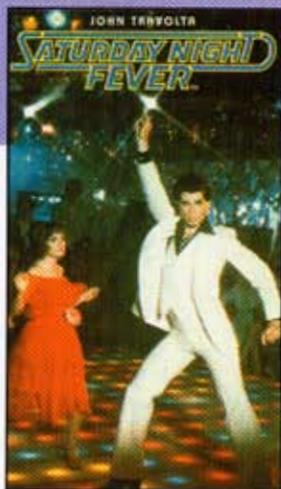


By Jodi Crawford



# notes on Celluloid

The disco beat of the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive" to John Travolta's opening strut in *Saturday Night Fever*. . . the angst-ridden strains of OMD's "If You Leave" as Molly Ringwald and Andrew McCarthy embrace at the end of *Pretty in Pink*. . . the two notes of a cello as the great white approaches in *Jaws*. . . . A film's music can wield very palpable power, heightening anticipation, manipulating emotion, or striking fear into your heart. A good soundtrack can haunt you even after the movie is over.

How do films go from the recording studio to the film track? It's a detailed process involving a number of participants and the vision of more than a few.

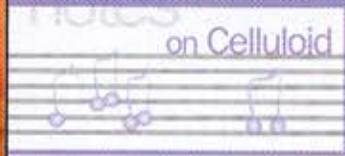
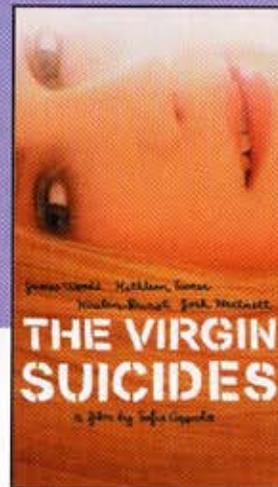
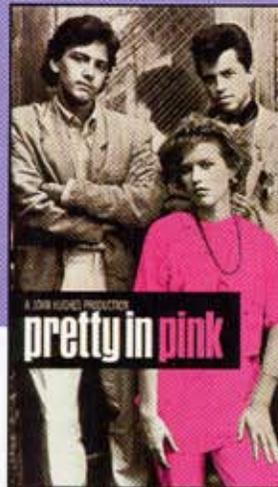
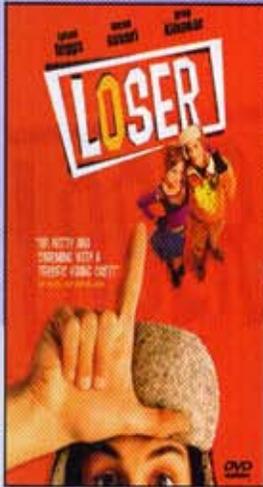
First there's the band itself. In the recent Sofia Coppola film *Virgin Suicides* some of the musicians for the score were the members of Canada's own Sloan. I sat across the kitchen table from Jay Ferguson of Sloan as he explained the easy road to their taking part in this project. "Brian Reitzell, who played drums for [seminal alt-rock band] Redd Kross, is a good friend of ours. He was putting the songs together for

the movie, and they didn't have a big budget. He likes our band and suggested to Sofia that she use our music. There was no hesitation, and it was done through connections, on no business level at all."

Sloan owns the publishing rights to all of their albums but the first two. They know how their music's developing, and can manage it well, avoiding "haggling through the publisher." Although Ferguson admits that the band misses having a publisher aggressively pursuing opportunities to get its music into films, Sloan hasn't done too poorly on its own. Its music also appeared in the Toronto Film Festival-featured *Parsley Days* and in Allan Moyle's *Jailbait* for MTV. Sloan's poster even appeared in *Loser*.

Ferguson asserts that, in the case of soundtracks, they're not in it for the money. For soundtrack songs, the band only gets about 6 cents each play. But, he says, "any type of film is a challenge. We would just love the opportunity to rise to the challenge [to contribute to soundtracks]. Having a song in a film is

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good exposure; and it's nice to be associated with something that I think is pretty cool." Appearing on a successful movie's soundtrack can provide tremendous exposure. Given the recent renaissance of the teen movie, the subsequent popularity of the teen soundtrack album has skyrocketed.

So, without a publisher, what film work lies in the future for Sloan? "I wouldn't mind approaching a director about being in their film," says Ferguson. "The best situation is getting to know people. Then they ask you, so there's no pressure. I'd feel a bit awkward approaching someone. When you're friends with them you don't want them to think you're friends with them to simply be an opportunist." Ferguson is also contemplating the possibility of doing film scores. "Andrew has tons of instrumental bits laying around that are perfect. Scoring is kind of a pipe-dream right now, but the more I think about it, I would like the band to do that. I'm speaking for myself, but I think the guys would all be into it. A score wouldn't win us as many new fans, but it would be satisfying."

For bands that do sign a publishing deal with a music company, the company can license a band's songs and work on its behalf to promote its catalogue of songs for feature films, television, and commercials. Linda Bush is the Creative Manager at Universal Music Publishing. Responsible for looking for new talent and "exploiting the roster," Bush actively pursues film, television, and compilation album deals for her artists. Equipped with a long list of producers and a thorough knowledge of music and movie trends, she knows the Universal Publishing roster inside and out, so she can suggest songs or musicians off the top of her head when production companies or directors approach her. Songs that Bush has licensed include Jann Arden's "Good Mother" for a Sharon Stone film *Beautiful Joe*, and Brian Howse's

"Desperate Measures" for the VH1 movie *Out of Sync*.

Once the songs are selected, a contract must be drawn up and issues such as what financial compensation will be, how long the rights are for, where the song(s) will air, and how the product is distributed must be settled. And there is the issue of the master copy. The band's record company owns the master, so the production company must pay them as well if they use a recorded version. If someone wants to use "Born to be Wild," for example, Bush must approve use of the song and the record company must clear use of the master. The deal can become somewhat complicated if the publishing and record companies disagree on the use of the song; that's the time for Bush to use finesse to repair the situation.

And Canadian music publishing in movies is slowly coming alive. Until recently, Canadian films didn't feature much popular Canadian music, mostly due to monetary restrictions. "A lot of Canadian films have a very limited budget and offer a pretty low payment for use of songs," says Bush. "Because we don't have any major studios in Canada making movies, a lot of the films made here are independent films. They don't even usually bother trying to get songs because the money is outside their budget." She likens Canada's present film scene to the Canadian music scene. "Until it blew up a few years ago with Celine Dion, Shania Twain, and Bryan Adams, bands like the Guess Who had to go out of Canada to sign deals. Now it's the same with film: with big-name Canadian directors like Atom Egoyan, it's starting to wake up."

Along with this growth comes the middle man. Meet the music supervisor, who chooses the songs for a soundtrack, compiles it and, at times, even physically edits it into the production. From creative consultation with the production team as to the styles and genres they want, to a specific song idea, the music supervisor does it all, including attaching a

linda bush



chris robinson

composer to a film or TV production. Being a music supervisor involves doing a lot of research. One has to be into the music scene, be a good manager, go to see lots of bands, read up on music news on the net and in magazines, and keep in touch with publishing companies and record companies.

Chris Robinson is a music supervisor at Ron Proulx International. "For the most part, we carry a lot of weight in terms of our creative suggestive power," he says. Robinson is always on the look-out for new bands and keeps abreast of new musical trends. He also helps open the door for struggling, independent bands. Sometimes Robinson feels a personal investment in getting certain bands noticed and recognized. Recently, he licensed a bunch of songs by indie band Family Ritual.

Ron Proulx International has facilitated many deals for well and lesser-known bands, including 'NSYNC, Christina Aguilera, Public Enemy, Savage Garden, and Barenaked



jay ferguson

Ladies. A new program, "Heartbeat" (for the Disney Channel), features the music of many well-known bands as well as some local Toronto artists, including Toronto's DJ Serious and \*\*\*\*Blia Pascal; MXPX and Gob also have songs featured in a "Heartbeat" episode. The company also has composers with whom they work closely on scoring. Once Robinson even had to find a WWII Klezmer band sound for a CTV movie. So the music runs the gamut, and a music supervisor is expected to know all.

Robinson believes that "film can redefine a song, with the context that it's in." After all, how many of us shudder involuntarily when reminded of Michael Madsen's sadistic torture choreographed to Stealer's Wheels' "Stuck in the Middle With You" in *Reservoir Dogs*? ©