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Over the coming weeks we shall be adding articles from all our back issues which are no longer available. There will also be summarised versions of recent magazine articles together with exclusive web-only content.

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Hidden Treasures: Neal Acree, David Reynolds and Jared DePasquale

We all know that there is a sad truth about the film music business: talent is not always the equivalent of success. In many cases, you have to look beyond Hollywood's A movies to find the most promising and interesting talents among film composers today. That's why we feel that this 'Hidden



Neal Acree



David Reynolds



Jared DePasquale

Treasures' column is important and this is why I have chosen to present to you three up and coming composers who I hope will have a chance to get some major assignments in the future.

Neal Acree, David Reynolds and Jared DePasquale are three composers who have written numerous scores on shoestring budgets with very impressive results. This column is not only about three promising composers, it's also

about the wonders of modern scoring technique. Acree, Reynolds and DePasquale are all classically trained composers who, due to very limited budgets, have been forced to find new ways to make their music come alive. What they are doing with samplers, orchestral sound libraries and sequencers is amazing.

NEAL ACREE (film titles in this text are linked to audio samples on the composer's home page.)

Neal Acree is only 29 years old and have been writing film scores since the age of 24. What Acree achieves with his combination of orchestration skills and technological wizardry is quite amazing. He started out as an assistant for composers such as Joel Goldsmith (himself a pioneer when it comes to the use of virtual orchestras in film scores), Rick Marvin and Marc Shaiman. Since then, Acree has written some twenty scores mostly in the horror and action department, and let's face it: the filmography doesn't impress if you are looking for high quality film making. This is one of those cases where the music is much better than the films as a whole. The first score I heard by Neal Acree was **Ablaze**, an action film starring Ice T, Tom Arnold and B movie veteran Michael Dudikoff. This score might be a bit generic, but I was impressed by the sound - the big sound. It reminded me of some Mediaventures stuff, and as some of you know I usually don't like that style - but the enthusiasm in Acree's electronic orchestrations made an impression. I was equally impressed by the music for the Treat Williams action thriller **Extreme Limits** and began to realise that this is not only a composer who knows how to create a living orchestral sound without an actual orchestra, he also knows how to write a really good theme. Perhaps the best

examples are his themes for the adventure movies **Lost Treasure** and **Curse of the Komodo** (unfortunately, Acree's web site does not feature the themes, the links will take you to other samples from these films). The most recent example of Acree's thematic strength is **Gargoyles**, which is equally impressive when it comes to the samples used. No, that's not a real choir. But it sure sounds like one. Neal Acree is an orchestral composer just waiting to come out of his sampler closet. Although the music he has created so far, without live musicians, sound stunning, you can hear that this is a composer who would create very interesting things with a real orchestra. Anyone looking for a grand, epic score with a really great theme should hire this guy. Visit Neal Acree's homepage for more information and audio samples!

DAVID REYNOLDS (visit David Reynold's homepage for audio samples of the scores discussed below!)

If you're scratching your head, swearing that you've heard this name before, go to your Christopher Young CDs and read the credits. Reynolds worked as an assistant for Young in the nineties on scores such as **Murder at 1600, Hush, Species, Murder in the First** and **Hard Rain**. For the past five years, Reynolds has concentrated on pursuing a composer career and has been writing impressive scores for less impressive films, just like Neal Acree. However, Reynolds have had the chance to work with live orchestras on several occasions, and one of his finest works to date is the score for **The Adventures of Black Feather** (which he wrote together with Bob Jenkins). You are excused if you don't know this film, because it's a completely unknown motion picture - with a grand, orchestral score, a beautiful exercise in

classic Americana not heard in many major films today. There is a promotional CD featuring the score available, if you find it anywhere you shouldn't hesitate. Reynolds other orchestral scores include **Blue Skies Are a Lie**, with a beautiful, almost poetic theme for solo instruments like the clarinet, **George B** and **The Attic Expeditions**, which are two rare examples where Reynolds is clearly inspired by Christopher Young's thematic writing and orchestrations. However, the use of a saw for the melody line in the last-mentioned is as striking as anything Young has ever written! Returning to my earlier discussions about low budget films and high quality film scoring without orchestras, Reynolds is another amazing example of what you can achieve using samples and sequencers in a smart way. The trick is to use only the best sound libraries available - and to avoid using certain sounds in situations where they just don't sound real enough. No matter how good a sample library is, there are always pitfalls to avoid. David Reynolds certainly knows how to avoid those, and this can be heard in a few of the TV movie scores he has written. The **Men in Black** inspired theme for **Earth vs the Spider** is one example - those big band riffs are, believe it or not, created using samplers! The threatening, almost Herrmann-esque brass and percussion heard in the exciting score for **How to Make a Monster** are not real - again (!) believe it or not. And the highly atmospheric strings, harp and choir in **She Creature** ('Mermaid Theme') are also created using samples! Given the amount of talent this composer possesses, it's a mystery that he hasn't been given the chance to score bigger films than the recent video titles such as **Warlock III: The End of Innocence** and **Cruel Intentions 3!** Reynolds is a composer who deserves a

big film to work on. If you listen to the audio samples on his web site, you will also discover what a great sense for melody this composer has. The themes are really good, memorable and strikingly strong. Perhaps that is what I miss most of all in scores for A movies today: good themes. For some reason, in many low budget films there seems to be more room for this kind of writing. David Reynolds is one composer who I hope would be able to continue to write really good thematic scores in a high budget blockbuster film. In fact, I am convinced he would do an absolutely stunning job.

JARED DEPASQUALE

Unfortunately, there are no audio samples on Jared's [homepage](#), but he deserves to be mentioned here and, more importantly, better gigs! As you can see in his biography, DePasquale got his start in the business thanks to Joseph LoDuca and worked as a programmer and composer on the **Hercules** and **Xena: Warrior Princess** shows. However, low budget cult horror is where DePasquale has done most of his own music so far. Titles include **The Dead Hate the Living!**, **Ancient Evil: Scream of the Mummy** (reviewed in full Jared's [here](#)) and **The Frightening**. Again, these are scores where the majority of the music is created using samplers and electronic equipment - and again, this is music that is much better than the films it was created to accompany. Skillfully, DePasquale combines a small string ensemble with sampled sounds in most of his scores, creating a living sound on a shoestring budget. The score for **The Dead Hate the Living** is a creepy horror score where, for instance, interesting prepared piano effects are combined with eerie electronic vox pads. This is not a middle-of-the-road horror score, although it certainly makes effective use

of many genre cliches. Still, I feel that this is a much better score than many of recent horror soundtracks created with much larger budgets. The same goes for DePasquale's score for **The Frightening**. It's a more modern score with brassy outbursts and screaming strings combined with electronica loops. Again, DePasquale manages to defeat the budget constraints and achieves a highly effective score using a percussion ensemble from a local music school! Jared DePasquale is not only an inventive composer, he is also an inventive orchestra contractor! Recently, DePasquale has been able to explore new musical grounds far away from the low budget horror films. He has written two scores for two Focus on the Family Radio Theatre shows, **Little Women** and **At the Back of the North Wind**. The composer has issued promo CDs of both scores and these are two beautiful orchestral works, the first-mentioned focusing on melodic Americana and the other one on a combination of exciting fairy-tale stylistics and lyrical, melodic writing. Listening to this score, which is beautifully orchestrated and has a very cinematic fantasy atmosphere, I can't stop thinking about what Jared DePasquale would achieve with a big budget orchestral score for a nice fantasy adventure! This 33-year old composer definitely has a bright future if he continues to write as impressively as he has done so far with basically no budget at all!

Mikael Carlsson

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