

When stores or online shopping sites offer something at a “sale” price they always show the “regular” price for comparison. If there is no comparative regular price then the shopper perceives the value or worth of the item to be the price shown.

If the current composing community was comprised solely of a limited number of veteran composers, adjustments in the price of a film score—either due to the economy or because the composer just wanted to do a particular low-budget project—would be made based on a reduction of their regular price. However, with so many of the available composers being of emerging status or those just starting to build their career, and without a regular or established price or the representation to engage in negotiations, the price too often becomes whatever is perceived as a “competitive edge” (currently zero dollars with IMDB credit). This, then, becomes an industry norm and is perceived to be the value or worth of music for that particular category of media.

Deane Ogden makes a good point in his recent SCOREcast article [*Community Counts*](#). Advanced technology has merely enabled us to be efficient, but composing music for film is much more than efficiency. It is the composer’s ability to diagnose how much music and of what kind the music should be. Then to create, not from whatever samples are available but from one’s musical background and intellect, the perfect score for that production—and that particular film maker. And, in addition, to offer input to that filmmaker even when he/she may not agree. This last duty, if not coming from a place of experience, must then rely upon an extensive backlog of viewing

and analysis of film scores coupled with the tact and charm of presentation.

Let's "re-sophisticate" our profession.

Two of the four words above deserve some reflection—*Sophisticate* and *Profession*.

Defining the Role of Composing

- **Artist** = An unrestricted creative
- **Artisan** = Creativity with functionality
- **Professional** = (used as a noun) Highly educated, mostly salaried workers, who enjoy considerable work autonomy, a comfortable salary, and are commonly engaged in creative and intellectually challenging work. Less technically, it may also refer to a person having impressive competence in a particular activity.
- **Profession** = A calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation.
- **Craftsperson** = A person who practices a craft with great skill. Creates to specification.
- **Worker** = A person who is employed to do physical or mental work for wages.

I would like to think of composing for media as neither the first nor the last of the definitions above. I'm afraid that we might be slipping toward the "worker" category due to a perception stemming from technology and supply-and-demand ratios.

- **Sophistication** (Synonyms)
 - refinement
 - elegance
 - finesse
 - poise
 - tact
- **Sophistication** (Definition)
 - sophisticated character, ideas, tastes, or ways as the result of education, worldly experience, etc.

Yes, the hardware and software with which we work is sophisticated but it is also readily available to everyone – including the film maker (think Garage Band and Apple Loops).

The *sophistication of our profession* comes from our experience as players and listeners; our musical education; our musical taste and our ability to write only what is needed and no more (a.k.a. discrimination). Hardware, software and the people to operate them are in plentiful supply but the musical and mental skill-sets of a true media composer are what is rarer and of greatest value.

What we, as composers, need to focus on are the skills and talents which cannot be purchased online or in a music equipment store. As “machine operators” we are worth slightly more than minimum wage, but as professionals we are worth what I consider to be far more appropriate compensation.