

An aerial photograph of a parking lot filled with yellow taxis. The taxis are arranged in rows, and the image is used as a background for the title text. The text is white with a slight shadow effect.

Demystifying the Cue

Taxi Rally Workshop 2016

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CUES



1. What is a Cue?

Composition, Track, Song
Instrumental, Needle drop

2. What is a Composition?

Movie Composer vs. "Cue" dude/dudette
John Williams, Bill Conti vs. Dean K.

3. A Song as a Cue (*"One Life To Live" story*)

Vocals, instrumentals
foreground, background

4. Common Cue Characteristics

Length – about 2:00 min. (less is often used)

Stinger - what is it and why have it?

(Start in "C" - stings on "C")

Emotion - usually builds over 4/8 measures)

Underscore: What is it? Why? How to make?

It's not the gear It's the ear!



1. Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell

Story/Illustration/Recording Magazine Ed.

Talent, plus a cassette, plus one hour = coolness

Gear is cool – but YOU are cooler

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing

Prepare *everything* BEFORE you put it to tape.

“Fix it in the mix” = NO!

“Fix it before you mix it” = YES 😊

THEE most important part of recording is everything that happens *BEFORE* it goes to tape.

Moods/Feel/Vibe

PA Feedback example.... Screech!!!!

Romance, Guitars and Couches – “Sustaining the mood” (story)

New composers often shift moods.

A. Don't do that!

Why? The film/TV director is creating the mood.

Support his or her mood.

Keep the genre consistent.

A. Not - Sexy and comedy/fast chase

B. Not - Tension and slow, mellow blues

C. Not - Redneck Rock and Lounge-Chill

(You get the picture)

Great Cues are often not noticed. They simply enhance the scene's mood.

Listen to Cue Examples/Samples

It can help to go to the library web sites and listen to great cues.

A. Megatrax, 5 Alarm, APM,
615/Warner, etc...

MOODS



RECORDING TIPS AND TRICKS



Space vs. Clutter

1. Spoons – everyone needs time to talk (story)
2. This applies to ALL ASPECTS
 - A. Lyrics, Melody, Musicians, Arrangement, Production, FX, etc....
3. Less is usually MORE
 - A. Too many notes mess up actors dialog
 - B. (Example) Simple Jazz piece, busy jazz against actor's dialog
 - C. (Example) Everyone talk at once = noise.... can't understand anything

Tricks.....

1. Virtual Instruments/Real Instruments
 - A. One REAL instrument (at the beginning) can trick the ear
 - B. I add real guitar **A LOT** – even “one” guitar note helps
 - C. One REAL tpt player or viola player can help with “realness”



LEARN YOUR GEAR

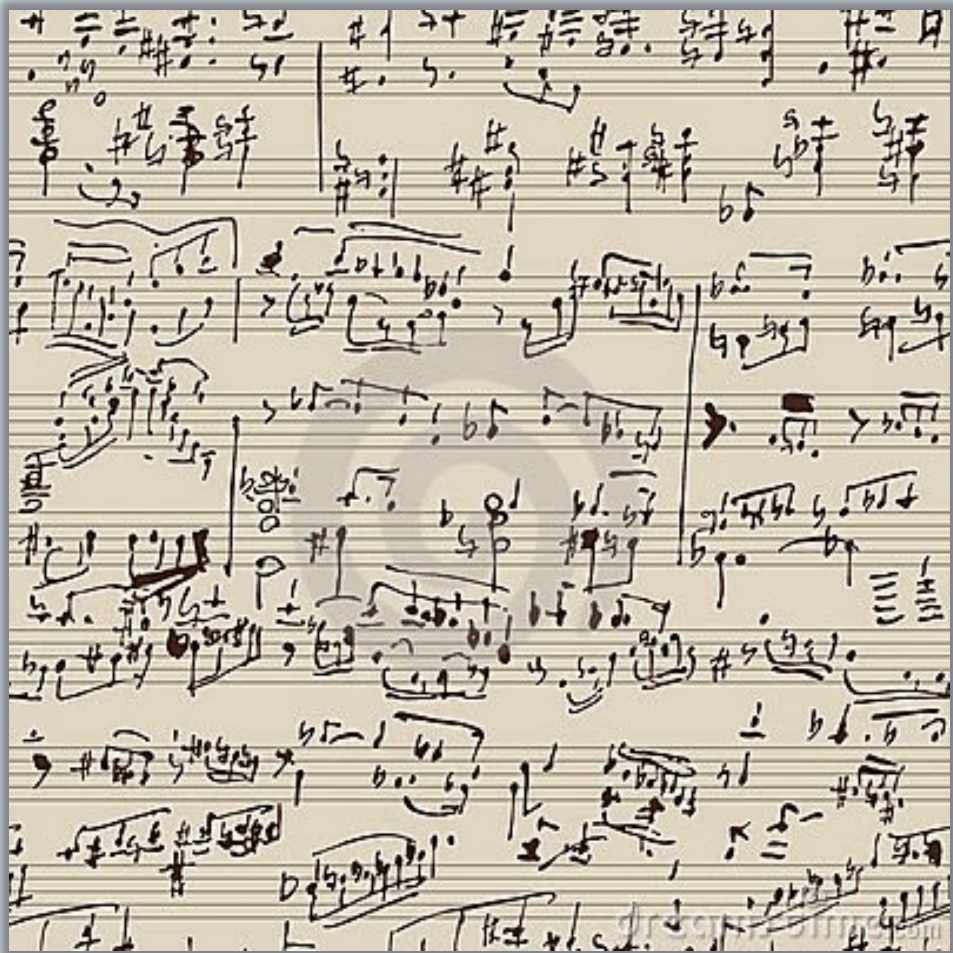
Old VIs *learned well* will sound more real and better than the newest VIs not learned well.

PUSH AIR

Push Air = route your VI out through a speaker, mic the speaker, and record it as an audio track.



WRITE AND PERFORM GREAT "PARTS"



Parts, Parts, Parts!!! Nothing will make your cue sound more like a master than great *parts* played on all instruments....

1. Nothing will make you cue sound worse than having mediocre parts.
2. Great players playing mediocre parts = Crap
3. Go back and re-write...
4. Get your sounds sounding cool "before" they go to tape... (Drums, Guitars, bass, etc...)

COPY THE CONTEMPORARY MASTERS

1. BEST TIP I EVER GOT – Copy the PROS!!!
 - A. 1. Pink, One Republic, Kelly Clarkson, Maroon 5, John Legend
2. Use Reference tracks for recording and mixing.
 - A. Recording Megadeath - A/B your stuff with theirs (check/match guitars, bass, kick, snare - EVERYTHING
 - B. Recording Sinatra – A/B your stuff with his... swing, horns, mix, placement, etc...

THE VOCALIST

Vocals

1. Comp tracking – what is it?
2. The psychology of a vocalist
 - A. Don't break their instrument with negativity
3. THE PERFECT VOCALIST
 - A. Will turn a demo into a master
 - B. Great local singer vs studio pro
 - C. Great Live Bar singer vs. studio Pro
 - D. The right singer for the right genre
 1. Find singers on line
 2. Send tracks / cost



THE MIX



Everything effects everything

1. Watch for one little change's effect on the whole
2. Listen to mix on multiple speakers
(*Matt Hirt/Best Buy*)
 - A. Studio
 - B. Office
 - C. Home Stereo
 - D. Jeep
3. Perfectionism – let it go
 - A. Spend time on great stuff
 - B. let the mediocre stuff go
 - C. Lipstick on a pig = Still a pig!!!
4. Panning (Outline/describe my “go-to” panning)
5. For safety convert all midi/VI tracks to audio
(Wav files) (***CCM song Story***)

LYRICS - STAY WITH ONE THEME

...a sunset on a beach



...a small cafe



...an old romantic movie



...on a rainy day



The above lyric paints four separate scenes

DO NOT DO THIS!!!

Keep your song's lyrics in the same scene (for film/TV)



SPEED....

Quality and quantity

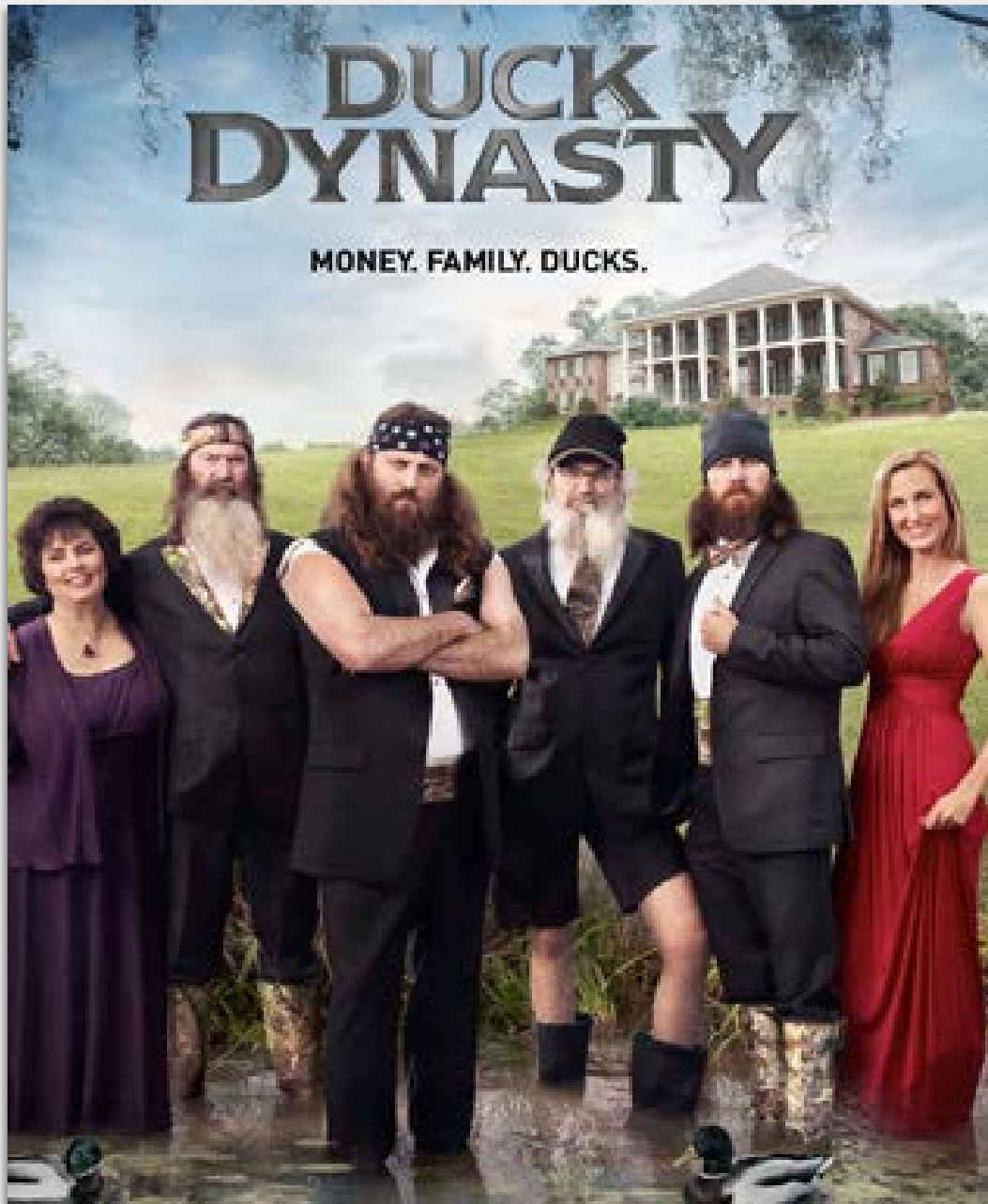
1. For a 6-figure income you will want to produce a lot of cues
2. Many cues make a little (\$), a few make a lot (\$\$\$)
3. To become quick and efficient, *learn your gear*

CATALOG

Catalog your cool sounds (for quick find)

1. I've wasted hours looking for that cool sound
2. Build document files – label the sounds (IE cool club, great pad)
3. QUALITY FIRST – the speed will come
 - A. Having great tracks in a library will benefit you
 - B. Having crappy tracks can hurt your reputation with Music Sups.
4. Build Templates
 - A. (Example) quick Duck Dynasty track





The four-hour Duck Cue...

- Learn Sounds
- Go-to Bass, Drums, Guitars, keys, etc...
- Build templates (per genre/style)
- Know your genre's production vibe (ie: chord progressions, common tempos, common instrumentation, melodies, etc..)
- Have a GO-TO quick mix (pan, verbs, mastering, etc...)
- Four Hour cue now on multiple shows \$\$\$

DEAN'S TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE MUSIC BIZ



1. *Have a good relationship with yourself.*

Take care of yourself. Exercise and eat right. Take care of your psychological and emotional well-being. Don't over indulge in stuff. Get help for your addictions and surround yourself with positive people who can help you grow. Energy comes from a healthy lifestyle. You will need energy to run in this marathon business and you will also be with *yourself* more than any other being on this planet. Take good care of YOU.

2. *Be professional, positive and polite.*

First of all, just be professional in all of your dealings with others. Cross your T's and dot your I's. Do what you say you are going to do and show up on time. Also, be positive and smile. People are attracted to positive people and repelled by negativity. You can't build a good relationship if you repel people. Lastly, be polite. Two of the most useful and powerful words in the music biz and in life are the words "thank you." If you don't have any manners, grow some.

3. *Ask the Universe for help.*

I don't want to get all hocus-pocus on you but it will behoove you (and me) to engage in a relationship with *all that is*. Whatever you want call it: The Creator, The Force... This universe we live in is massive and over 99.99% of it remains a complete and utter mystery to all of us. Embrace the mystery and the possibility that there is something out there that can help us down here. Why not - it can't hurt.

DEAN'S TEN CONTINUED...

4. *Ask other people for help.*

Whether it is songwriting, producing, learning new software, finding a publisher or totally unrelated to the music business, ask other people for help. Most of the time they will want to share what they know with you. Your *relationships* will grow.

5. *Be nice to those people who help you (and also to those who do not help you).*

Thank those who help and offer your help in return. And even those who don't help you. Offer your help to them. Build respectful *relationships*.

6. *Get to know your audience.*

Hang out with the people whom you want to reach with your art. Learn what they like, how they talk, what makes them laugh and what makes them cry. Spend time with them in *relationship* and you will learn how to better communicate your music to them. You might even make a new friend or two.

7. *Hang out with the biz folks - buy them a drink (sheesh, buy me a drink).*

It's called networking. Get yourself to the conferences, seminars, workshops or clubs where the people in your business hang out. Strike up a conversation. Buy them a drink, or coffee, or dinner. A lot of people will accept. Trust me. I've done this a lot. Hang with them and listen to them. People like to be listened to. And if they like the "hang" they will like you. Again, it's called *relationship* building.

8. *Be kind to those who are not as far along on the path as you are.*

A friend of mine tells a wonderful story about a time back in the 90s when he had a couple hit songs and was sitting on a song-screening panel at a music conference. After his panel was done one of the conference attendees walked up to him, shook his hand, and thanked him for giving a fair and respectful critique of his song.

DEAN'S TEN CONTINUED - EVEN MORE...

(8. Cont.) They struck up a friendly conversation, hung out for awhile and then said their goodbyes. By the mid 2000s this conference attendee had become one of the biggest producers on the planet. My friend called him up one day to say hello not knowing if the producer would even remember him. Not only did the producer remember my friend, he invited him over to his mansion to hang out and a new business relationship was formed. --- Do you think it was a good thing my friend treated this big-time producer with respect and kindness back in the day? You bet! Be kind to everyone. *Relationships.*

9. *Get a dog or a cat or a squirrel and take care of them.*

Pets are cool. Having to feed, clean up and care for any living thing will help build your *relationship* muscle. The main growth opportunity here is when it is our responsibility to take care of some living, thing we must often meet their needs *first* before we our own needs are met. This strengthens our ability to be more “others-centered” and less self-centered.

10. *Share your expertise with others.*

You have something to offer other people. Maybe your expertise is not yet in music production or songwriting. It doesn't matter. You have something, probably many things to offer. Maybe you have a lot of experience at being married, or raising kids, or taking care of kittens, or unicorns, or in becoming a better skier or skydiver.

I don't know what it is but you have a lot to offer. Maybe Mr. Big Shot Record A&R Executive does not know how to teach his dog how to sit and roll over but you are an expert in dog training. You can give him your knowledge and start a new *relationship*. Always remember *you* have a lot to offer.

11. Yes, number ELEVEN. This is the hidden commandment. Part of the Music Biz's Dead Sea Scrolls. Are you ready? Here goes...

“Give back to the world.”

EXTRAS

Collaboration

- A. "L" shaped couch (EXAMPLE story)
- B. Collaboration is easier than ever before
- C. "Step away from the song"
 - 1. My "country" process
 - 2. My "muzak" process
- D. Rewrite – raise your bar – don't settle

Rejection

- A. Journalizing
- B. Making molehills out of mountains

Exclusive vs. Non-Exclusive

- A. Digital Fingerprinting

Diversification

- A. Why?
- B. What (write, record, perform, teach, etc...)
- C. How long does it take to make any greenbacks, dough, moolah?
- D. Are royalties consistent?

What are music libraries looking for?

- A. New stuff/retro stuff
- B. Look for "holes" in theirs library
- C. Specific needs for specific shows

Make a freaking Schedule

- A. I would sit on the couch all day...
- B. You can be even more spontaneous within parameters
- C. Running in the Seattle rain – I hate it, at first...
- D. Just start working – even when you don't "feel" it