

# Quick on the score

Andrew Diey finds it easy to get to grips with Sony's automated scoring package Cinescore, and sets it the challenge of creating a score in only a few hours.

If you ever wanted a dedicated audio package that allowed you to create a music bed to fit your production, you may be in luck. Perhaps you're thinking along the lines of a Walter Murch-style sound edit, but can't quite get the sound of the chopper blades to fit to the fan blades as they rotate. Or perhaps it's an indie short you were drafted in to film, edit and composite, which now requires a score to fit with your overskilled subtle editing before you commit it to DVD. If these are regular situations you find yourself in,

then Cinescore from Sony Media Software is aimed at you.

Cinescore is design to generate musical scores in a simple manner. It's geared towards production music, movies, slideshows, commercials and radio productions. It is not really about scored music in the way that Sibelius or Logic Pro are. There is no musical input, record mode or MIDI to be found in the package. Instead, it delivers generative musical output. Cinescore 1.0 comes shipped with 20 'Themes' in a wide range of categories, musical styles and tempos, and these can be easily adjusted to fit with a video project.

A Theme comprises a self-contained universe of music clips that have been engineered specifically for Cinescore. Each Theme contains multiple 'variation' presets that can be fine-tuned by adjusting settings such as mood, intensity, tempo and so on. The result is an unlimited number of unique, royalty-free compositions that can be adjusted to fit perfectly to the length of your video clip.

Theme titles such as *Blizzard of Sparks*, *High Adrenaline* and *The End of High Tech* give you an insight into what audience they are aiming at, but I think where Cinescore be most popular is in with its genre-specific music Themes. They do have different styles bundled too, such as their flagship hip-hop style Theme *The Monaco Diamond*, as well as *Rock'n'Roll Reception*, *Really Fine Day*, *Spring Break Rock* and my favorite *Polka Time*.

The quality of the 20 Themes vary from workable to great. Sony has additional music libraries that can be bought as Themes direct from its website, where you can audition the

Theme packs *Incredible Vistas: Visual and Emotional Panoramas* and *Pass the Ring: The Wedding Soundtrack Library*. Naturally, these are better suited to the specific task of travelogue and wedding.

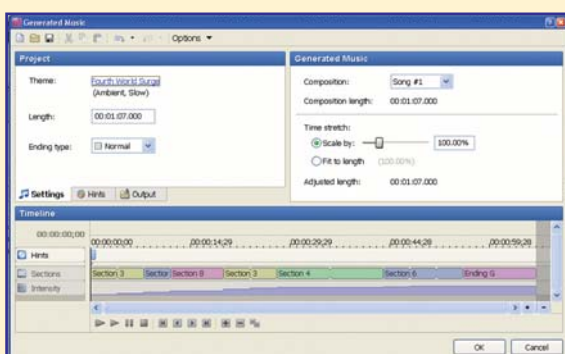
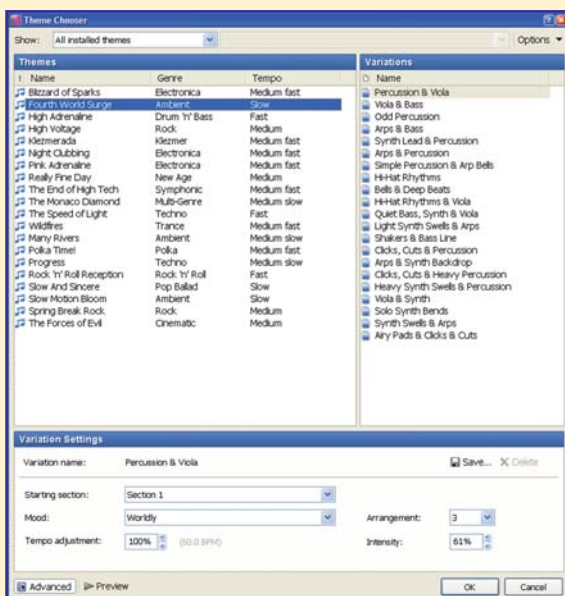
## In operation

I set myself a quick project that I would normally be able to score within a day or so using Apple Logic Pro 7. I decided to create a score that would fit some visuals I had, with the music underscoring a few key events, such as intro, middle and a climactic ending, with a fade to silence. Having decided to use the software straight out of the box without looking too much to the manual for initial support, on first use it seemed to be quite a simple timeline-based tracklaying software. It supported many of the essential file formats, both in its import and export options. However, after trying out a few of the basic functions I quickly came to realize that Cinescore is quite a brilliant piece of software for anyone who doesn't have the budget for commissioned music or just wants to generate music for their visuals very quickly.

I started by choosing a motion graphic video clip of a pre-rendered sci-fi cityscape. As the video clip didn't contain any audio information embedded within the file, it didn't create an additional audio playback channel. The video clip simply aligned itself at the start of the timeline. After familiarizing myself with the location of the pre-set music Themes, I auditioned the sound files simply by pressing the audition button in the media browser.

Viewing the files in Cinescore for

Below: the Theme window. Bottom: the Generated Music screen.



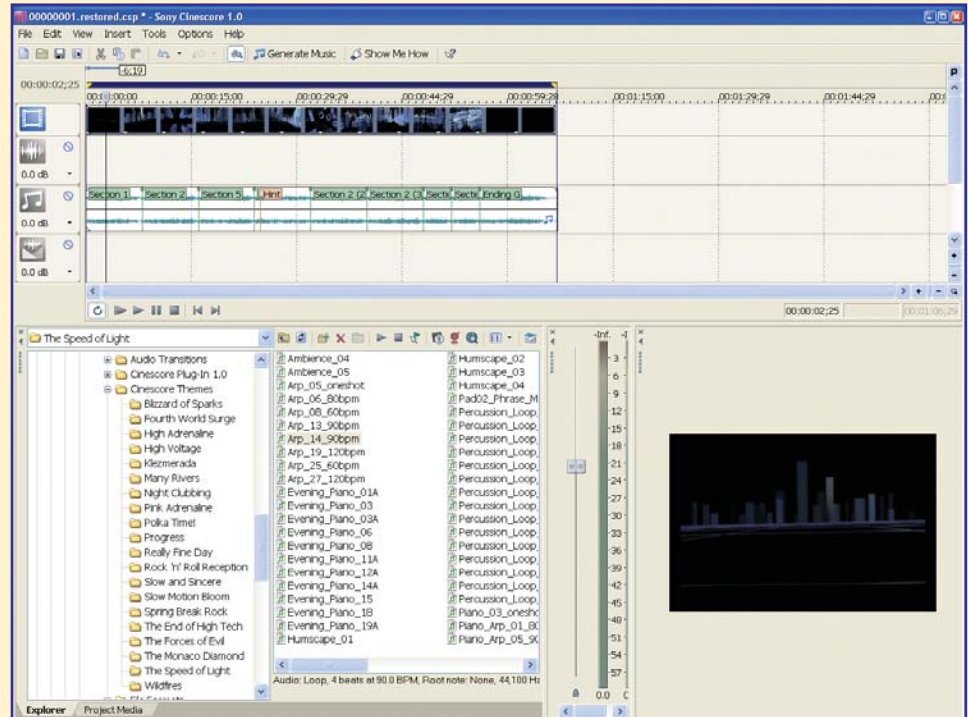
both audio and movie is very simple, as Cinescore uses a traditional Windows browser to navigate the files and folders. Once you have chosen your video source and music, they are located easily in the Project Media folder, which is conveniently tabbed next to the main navigation window. This stores all used media within the project.

## Supported file formats

I had to choose video clips, so I used an original DV clip converted to a Sorenson 3 compressed .mov within Avid. I copied the .mov into the Cinescore project folder and then dragged and dropped the file into the timeline. Cinescore imports a wide range of file formats for easy project creation, including AVI, AIF, BMP, JPG, MP3, MPEG-1 and MPEG-2 video, PCA, PSD, QT, SWF, WAV and WMV. You simply arrange your media on the timeline, then create dynamic and effective musical tracks with a single click. You can export to formats such as MPEG-2 for DVD and MPEG-4 for portable media players.

Professional projects that have been scored to picture have synchronized music with changes at important points in the scene. Cinescore works in a similar way by allowing you to define sections within your video clip that require a synchronized music score, mood bed or atmosphere, as well as transitions in the music's tempo, mood and intensity.

At this point I turned to the manual to work out how Cinescore integrates the Themes to fit perfectly with the video. It does it by allowing you to add what Sony has termed Hint Markers. These Hint Markers can be placed on the Cinescore timeline to designate a particular time when a musical change should happen. Typical changes include tempo, mood and intensity. Hint Markers allow you a virtually unlimited number of variations on each Cinescore Theme. You can add Hint Markers on the timeline in the main window accompanied by notes such as "soft intro here" or "climactic section here". You can also add the Hint Markers using Theme chooser, as this is where the magic happens.



Choosing a musical score is really simple. The Generate Music function located in the main window opens up the Theme Chooser, a preview box that houses all the installed Themes. For the main theme I chose *Fourth World Surge* as a starting point. I was then invited to choose variations on the theme. *Fourth World Surge* had no less than 21 variations, ranging from percussion and viola, rhythm variations, airy pads and solo synth variations.

## Additional choices

There are some well thought-out additional choices available, which give you a greater level of input into your over all underscore variation. These include Mood (Worldly, Full and Arpeggios), Tempo, Intensity, and a choice of four arrangement variations.

From the three choices of Mood, I went with Worldly, set the Tempo to adjust to 100 per cent (so that it fitted the entire length of my video clip), and set the Intensity at 39 per cent, so that it wasn't too in-your-face, nor yet too laid back. Finally I chose arrangement 3, then hit OK. This then opened a box entitled Generated Music, which had further options – this time focusing more on the timeline and Hint Markers.

I identified sections in my video where I could place the Hint Markers,

and right-clicked to place them; additional options of Section Change, Mood Change, Tempo Change and Intensity Change were offered, and I made my changes to fit my intro, middle and a climactic ending

Choosing the Ending type option, I went with a fade to silence. I then hit OK and watched as Cinescore rendered a score that sounded... quite good! In fact, I did this a few times, with variations, and each time it returned some nice variations and good sounding music to fit my picture.

I only used the pre-set Themes and basic functions that shipped with this review copy. However, I just before press time I received additional theme disks. I know that I could have spent much more time with Cinescore, playing with the multiple ending types, layering in additional material that I may have wanted to score in, or adding complicated transitions, fades and generally customizing the score with punctuation points. Cinescore comes packed with additional sound effects and audio transitions, so adding hits and detail isn't too taxing.

Nevertheless, I wanted to keep it simple and keep it within a day's review. I happily managed to do that and I am impressed with what Sony has achieved when it comes to productivity, quality and simplicity.

## The Cinescore Top Palette.



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