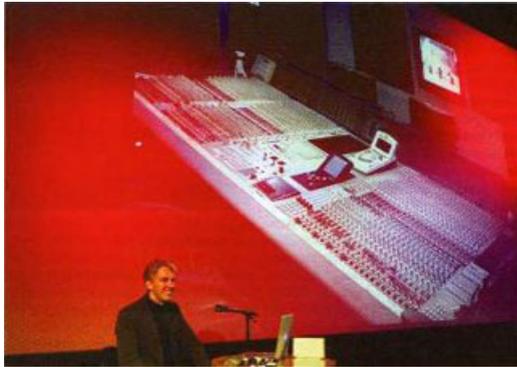


About the creative hurdles involved in composing film music

Braunschweig. Here in Germany, there are still those who are unaware of the integral role which music plays in cinema storytelling and that it merits just as much attention as the script, casting and editing.



„Filmmusic in Hollywood“:
Christian Halten at the
International Filmfest Braunschweig
Photo: Dirk Alper

In the US, they're already some way ahead of us. Blockbusters and medium-sized productions alike get seven-figure budgets for the film music alone. One person who has been amazingly successful in this area, both as an artist and an entrepreneur, is the composer Hans Zimmer. Reading the portfolio of his studio Media Ventures / Remote Control is like taking a trip through the past 20 years of mainstream Hollywood film: Rain Man, Backdraft, Gladiator, The Thin Red Line, Black Hawk Down, The Da Vinci Code, The Simpsons Movie, ...

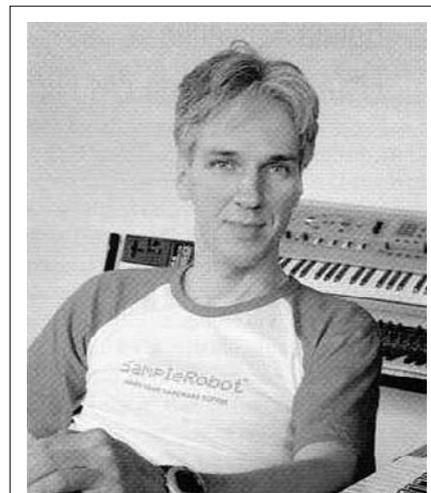
Hans Zimmer has given a number of aspiring German composers the opportunity to gain experience by working on his Hollywood productions, among them Klaus Badelt (Time Machine, Pirates of the Caribbean), Henning Lohner (Der große Bagarozzy) and, in particular, Christian Halten.

Having already obtained a degree in music, Halten went on to study film music at the Baden-Württemberg Film Academy and the Filmmaking Masterclass at the University of California, Los Angeles. His talent and tireless networking helped him get a job with Remote Control Productions. He is currently working on film and computer-game music projects in his Skylife studio in Ludwigsburg as well as developing software instruments.

In November 2007, Halten gave a well attended lecture as part of the International Film Festival in the Cinemaxx Braunschweig on the subject film scoring in Hollywood.

Using his laptop, Halten presented some complete pieces of music, taken from the scores of the 2004 American films „The Ring 2“ and „Catwoman“, to give the participants some specific examples of his composing work. He explained how the instruments worked together, outlined the overall musical concept and pointed out where there was a special connection between the music and the sound design.

He went on to show the cues, now without music, leading to a brainstorming session, in which the participants were invited to think up possible music and sounds for the scenes. This gave the audience an idea of the aesthetic approach and the creative hurdles involved in composing film music.



Christian Halten
at Skylife studio

At the end of the workshop, Halten presented some photographs of the Remote Control studio complex, showing fellow composers working with a keyboard and computer monitor, birthday drinks complete with paper hats and pizza and a makeshift studio set-up amidst boxes and the coffee machine.

Finally, even some insights into the sanctum, Hans Zimmer's studio. With its subtle extravagance and superb equipment, the studio caused a grin and a „wow“ or two among the workshop participants.

This part of the presentation made it particularly clear that „Hollywood“ is primarily driven by talented people with clear creative ideas, rather than by financial brokers and cultural imperialists. This realisation and Halten, an amiable professional who unpretentiously conveyed his love for his work in every single moment of his presentation, made the workshop a truly worthwhile experience for all of the participants.

Special thanks go to Volker Kufahl, member of the festival committee, and Gunnar Schwant who made this event possible.

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