



31 TIPS FOR FASTER & SMARTER COMPOSING

31 ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
ASKED BY YOU!

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1. DESERT ISLAND SAMPLE LIBRARIES

- Starting out: EW Hollywood Orchestra
- All-in-one's: Berlin Inspire, Albion ONE, Cinesymphony Lite
- Dedicated: Cinematic Studios

2. SKETCHING

- Aim for speed
- Bare bones first
- Lay down melody, harmony, rhythm

3. STUDIO SETUP

- Hardware: computer, MIDI controller, headphones/speakers, external hard drive
- Software: DAW, samples, notation software

4. ORGANIZING SAMPLES

- Use dedicated external drive
- Create pathways that makes sense to you (instrument, company)

5. 3 WAYS TO WRITE MUSIC FROM NOTHING

- Start with melody first - add harmony/rhythm after
- Start with harmony or chord progression first
- Start with rhythmic pattern first

6. MIDI CC'S

- Enhance MIDI performances for realism
- Best to perform CC information in live (modulation, pedal)
- Don't be afraid to get down and dirty with it!

7. VOICE LEADING

- Smoothest path from one note to the next
- Look for common chord tones, aim for steps or skips at the most

8. OSTINATOS

- A repeating musical pattern (short, med, long)
- Scale fragments, arpeggios, repeated notes
- If it causes dissonance, that can work!

9. CREATE INTERESTING CHORD PROGRESSIONS

- Extend your chord progressions beyond 4 chords
- Extend past diatonic chords - secondary dominants, modal mixture, chromaticism, etc.

10. HOW TO WRITE BASS LINE UNDER MELODY

- Know your key
- Experiment with which chords fit your melody notes
- Dissonance is not necessarily bad!

11. TEMPLATES

- Prebuilt loaded tracks for instant sound and quicker workflow
- I don't use them, I prefer starting from scratch each project

12. INSTRUMENT RANGES

- Especially important for orchestral instruments
- Restrictions are good, write within human/instrumental limits

13. LAYERING INSTRUMENTS

- Adds thickness and texture
- Either add similar (like) instruments, or different ones for more contrast and bite

14. QUANTIZING

- Pulls MIDI data to the beat
- For orchestral music, stick with 80% at the most
- Maintaining realism is the most important aspect

15. IDIOMATIC WRITING

- Write to the advantage of the instruments
- Woodwinds/brass need to breathe, strings need life through modulation, vibrato for expression

16. INSTRUMENT RUNS

- Especially prevalent in strings/woodwinds
- Lead into next bar, top note most important in ascending run
- Type of scale determines mood of run

17. MIX AS YOU GO

- Adjust volumes of all instruments as you work
- Maintain a realistic balance of the instruments so you can arrange accurately

18. RHYTHMIC INTEREST IN PERCUSSION

- For regular simple and compound time, use syncopation to accent offbeats for interest
- Experiment with more uncommon time signatures

19. WRITING COMPLEX MELODIES

- Use less resolutions to the 1, 3, 5 of the scale
- Introduce rhythmic and intervallic variety

20. WRITING FOR STRINGS

- If it sounds good on piano, it will sound good on strings
- Use octaves and 5ths lower down, smaller intervals higher up
- Counterpoint is very effective

21. OVERVIEW OF HARMONY

- 1, 3, and 6 chords serve tonic function (resolution)
- 2, 4, and 5 chords serve dominant function (tension)
- Add 7ths to your chords for extra colour

22. MODULATION

- Go straight to new key
- Pivot chord (common chord between both keys)
- Chromaticism

23. MIXING LIBRARIES

- Reverb makes the biggest impact here
- Make sure that the amount of room is similar between both libraries for realism

24. PREPPING MIX WITH EQ

- Apply EQ on each track to get rid of low room frequencies
- Use boost and cut method to eliminate unwanted sound

25. STATIC MIX

- Pull all your faders down to the bottom
- Introduce lead instrument up first in loudest section
- Balance all other instruments around it

26. TOP DOWN MIXING

- Mix from the master bus first
- Achieve a solid sound that gets you 80% of the way
- Tweak groups next, then individual tracks for polish

27. SURGICAL EQ

- Which instruments need extra air and life?
- Which instruments need taming in the mids?
- This phase will balance the frequency spectrum.

28. REVERB AND SENDS

- Apply reverb plugin to its own aux channel
- Send individual instruments to that channel if they need more reverb
- Saves CPU power and lots of time

29. HOW TO KNOW YOU'RE DONE MIXING

- Does anything stand out?
- Is everything smooth and balanced?
- If you can sit back and enjoy, you're done!

30. HOW TO GET WORK AS A COMPOSER/ARRANGER

- You need a portfolio!
- Take examples of your best work and put them together as a short demo reel.
- Network in local areas and/or online.

31. HOW TO KEEP THEM COMING BACK

- Be a decent human being. Treat them how you want to be treated.
- Be easy to work with, willing to revise until they're happy.
- Don't undercharge! They must respect your rate.

THAT'S IT!

Thank you so much for downloading this guide. If you followed along with my channel during March (or anytime afterwards :D), I hope I was able to help you in a small way.

It means a lot to me that you stick around and watch me talk about music in the first place! Not many people have the opportunity to do that, so thank you!

I wish you all the best in your composing and arranging career!

Best wishes,

Chris