

TV & MUSIC

And the Emmy Goes to... Music Supervisors

For the first time, the people who choose the cool songs that play in TV shows will be competing for an award this September

BY JOHN JURGENSEN

WHEN EMMY nominations are announced next month, music supervisors will be competing for the first time ever, after being granted an award category of their own. But long before the Sept. 17 awards ceremony, supervisors are wondering how Emmy voters will evaluate excellence for a job that is more subtle and complicated than it sounds: selecting the soundtrack for scenes in TV shows.

One of the episodes that music supervisor Maggie Phillips submitted for Emmy contention is from "Fargo." It includes a montage scene in which two characters strut their way into a bridge tournament. The contestants' slow-motion entrance is accompanied by a tune with a propulsive beat, tight horn riffs and lyrics that are total glibberish. "Prisencolinensinainciusol" was recorded in 1972 by an Italian singer, Adriano Celentano, replicating the sound of American English.

The song is catchy, cool and obscure, but Ms. Phillips says it was chosen more for the way it underscores the relationship between the two characters, an ex-con and her parole officer, in a romance that soon involves murder. The tune's swagger symbolizes the confidence they give one another, but its nonsense lyrics telegraph that the bravado is hollow.

When music clicks in a scene on multiple levels, it's hard to imagine substituting any other song, Ms. Phillips says. "Tempo, instruments, vocals. It all sums up to something that transforms the picture you're seeing in front of you. That's when I feel like I created

something, by putting two separate things together to make something new."

TV has been on a tear in the last decade, opening the door for unconventional creativity in everything from cinematography to soundtracks. At the same time, the in-depth online analysis of certain shows helped raise the profile of behind-the-scenes pros such as music supervisors. As links between the worlds of TV and music, they have also emerged as influential allies of musicians looking for exposure. To help viewers connect with TV music, some supervisors verify the songs they use with websites and apps that identify them, such as [Tunefind](#) and Shazam.

An official embrace by the television industry was slower to come. After forming the Guild of Music Supervisors in 2010 (which includes members working in film, advertising, games and other mediums) ambassadors for the craft made inroads with the organization that runs the Emmys, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Starting in 2015, music supervisors were allowed to join the Academy as members of the music branch, which oversees awards for music direction (typically performance shows) and composition.

Unlike composers, however, supervisors more often come from the DJ world than the conservatory. Initially, there was some reluctance "as to why they'd allow us into their group," says Thomas Golubić, a co-founder of the music supervisors guild. "A lot of composers really don't know what supervisors do. Or maybe they had

bad experiences. That created a little bit of confusion."

This year, the Academy voted to add the music-supervision category. Music supervisors have submitted about 90 entries, the Academy says. Voting on nominees ends Monday. All Emmy nominees will be announced July 13, ahead of the September awards show.

Neither the Academy Awards nor the Golden Globes honor music supervisors.

Supervisors had to supplement their Emmy submissions with written answers to 10 questions, such as: "What was your creative contribution to advancing the story

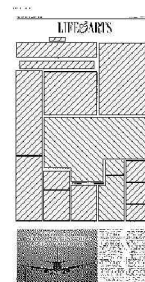
line in the episode submitted?"

Jen Ross, music supervisor for the hip-hop drama "Empire," submitted a song-packed episode that bounces among Eminem, Thelonie Monk and an original tune that addressed gun violence. In one scene record-label bosses meet with mogul Lucious Lyon, played by Terrence Howard. A decadent song by French Montana and Drake ("No Shopping") transitions to a triumphant one from Frank Sinatra and Count Basie's orchestra ("The Best Is Yet to Come").

The contrast could seem abrupt "but is absolutely believable in the world of Lucious Lyon," Ms. Ross says. "Just like real human beings,

the characters are shaped by the music that surrounds them."

"Clearing" a song for use in television often requires supervisors to be both detective and haggler. For each song,



they need to secure two distinct licenses—one for the sound recording and one for the written composition. The supervisor must find owners and get their permission to use the song in the scene, and then settle on a fee.

“Atlanta” music supervisor Jen Malone found herself dealing with court-appointed lawyers to negotiate with the estate of a rapper who was shot to death in 2013. Only 10 seconds of “Let Me Find Out” by Montgomery, Ala., native Doe B can be heard in the first episode of the FX series as it plays on the car stereo of an underground rapper and his sidekick. Despite the hassle, the song was a more authentic choice for those characters than “something you would hear on the radio in L.A.,” says Ms. Malone, who often tracks down emerging southern rappers

and producers with direct messages on Instagram and Twitter.

For the AMC series “Better Call Saul,” Mr. Golubić and his team consider hundreds of pre-existing songs for each musical moment. After winnowing them down to about 20, they play them against the scene and debate how the songs interact with the scene through their mood, lyrics and tempo.

Before selecting a handful of the

songs to edit into the scene and present to the show’s creators for a final decision. Mr. Golubić gets pre-approval to license the songs from their rights holders; he learned not to suggest songs without knowing that he can deliver them.

Mr. Golubić, submitted an episode of the series that showcased acts from Little Richard to Norwegian producer Todd Terje.

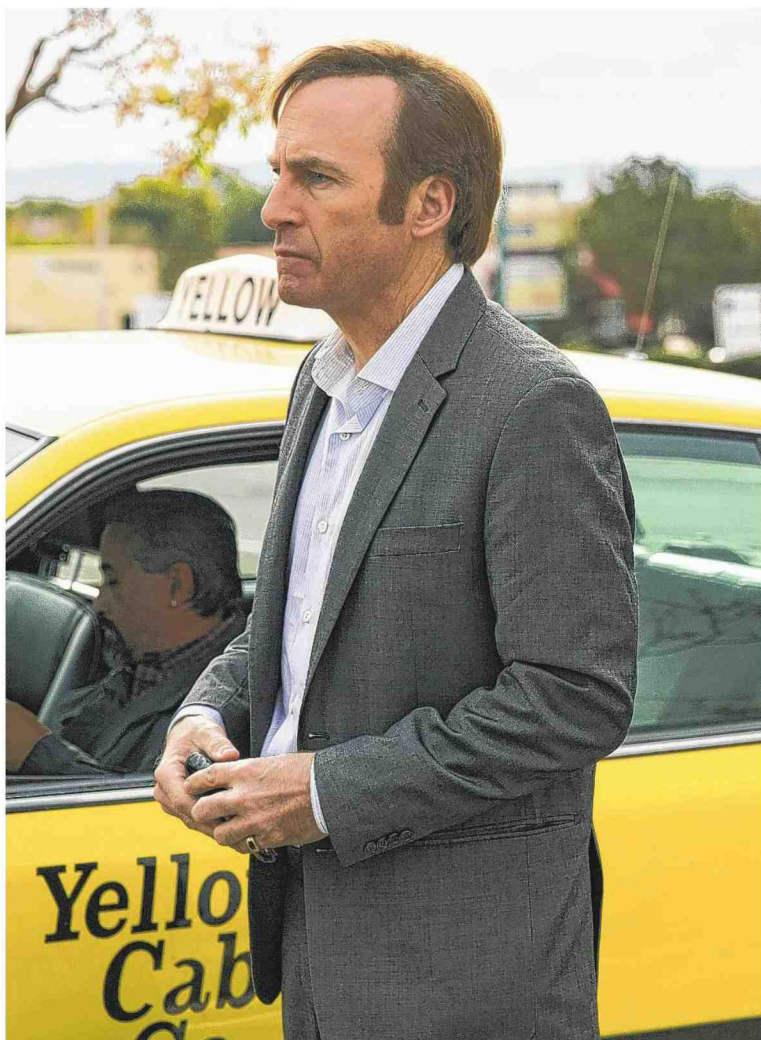
It took Ms. Phillips a lot of deal

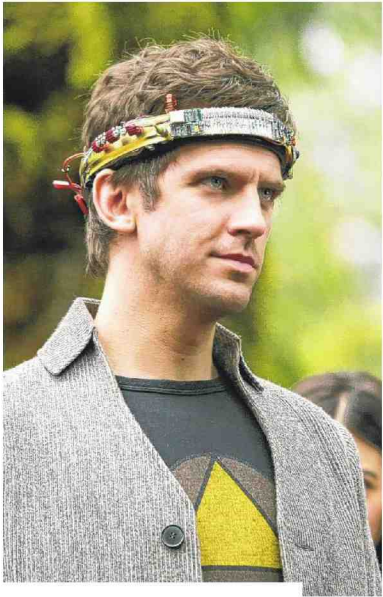
making to land two Pink Floyd songs—“Breathe (In the Air)” and “On the Run”—from “The Dark Side of the Moon” in the finale of “Legion,” an FX series that explores an overlap between mental illness and superpowers.

“The big feat was getting Pink Floyd for an affordable price,” Ms. Phillips says.



Terrence Howard in ‘Empire,’ above. Right, a scene from ‘Better Call Saul,’ starring Bob Odenkirk. Below Dan Stevens as David Haller in ‘Legion.’





FX (2); FOX, AMC; LATOUR/REX SHUTTERSTOCK/ZUMA PRESS (GOLUBIC)



Above, Elizabeth Winstead and Ewan McGregor in ' Fargo . ' ' Better Call Saul ' music supervisor, Thomas Golubić at the Guild of Supervisors' music awards, left.