

Evolution finds new platforms for composers

By [IAIN BLAIR](#)

Talent agency pushes envelope in music biz

While Evolution Music Partners may be headquartered in the old, historic Taft building on the corner of Hollywood and Vine, there's nothing traditional or hidebound about this boutique talent agency.

Visit their airy, fifth-floor offices -- decorated with a mix of funky artwork and objects that aptly mirrors Evolution's eclectic roster of film composers, songwriters and music supervisors -- and it's obvious why the seven-year-old company abandoned its stuffy Beverly Hills digs a year ago. "We needed more space, but most importantly we wanted to be in a more creative environment," explains partner Christine Russell of their proximity to the iconic Capitol Records building and the new W Hotel, just next door. "A lot of our clients are around here, and it's just a cooler vibe and far closer to who we are as an agency.



Evolution partners Seth Kaplan and Christine Russell tout eclectic clientele.

"We're right in the heart of things now." "Christine and I were both attracted to artists with a lot of diversity and interests, and we wanted to be able to service all that," notes co-partner Seth Kaplan. "Our approach was, why limit film composers to just films?

Why not offer them a diversified platform, with everything from TV and games to commercials and new media, and be a full-service agency? So it's been all about creating opportunities for our talent." And, tellingly, Evolution, although it includes its fair share of high-profile names (Gerry Goffin, Billy Corgan, Meshell Ndegeocello), has largely eschewed the usual suspects for a roster that's front-loaded with unique and unusual artists, "whether it's people coming from the record world who want to do scoring, or composers who want to get into games and new media," notes Russell.

The result is that rarity -- an indie outfit with street cred that's also strong when it comes to catapulting their artists into high-profile projects (Heffes is scoring "The Rite" for Warner Bros., and Rob Simonsen's music will accent the CBS drama "Blue Bloods"). The company also has gained a reputation for being highly selective in terms of who it takes on as a client. "We get a lot of people (wanting to join) who have credits a mile long, who'd clearly bring in cash flow," says Russell. "But then we listen to the music, and it's just generic and uninspiring." So what do they look for? "A real unique voice," she says. "The fact is, there are thousands of composers out there, all going after a very small number of film or TV projects. So there has to be that something that grabs you."

Kaplan cites young composer Andrew Hollander ("Waitress") who's currently scoring "The Six Month Rule" and has "An Invisible Sign of My Own," starring Jessica Alba, out later this year. "He's scored very different projects, but there's a through-line there," Kaplan says. "They're the main reason I'm now based here," says Korzeniowski of the two partners, having signed with Evolution four years ago while still living in Poland. "They have about 60 clients, so they're not so big that you feel lost in the mix, and they're not so small that you feel they don't have enough contacts and power." Given Russell's experience at the tony catalog house Rondor Music, part of the Universal Music Group, another key ingredient in the mix is Evolution's licensing operation, managed by Jon Steingold, who joined the company to oversee its catalog and create opportunities for clients in video games, advertising and film and television trailers.

"We've found that licensing and creating original work opportunities for our clients go hand in hand," says Steingold. "For example, we were able to get Dan Licht to score Konami's latest 'Silent Hill' game and Brian Reitzell to score THQ's 'Red Faction: Armageddon,' after I initially approached them about licensing from our catalogue." Likewise, the pair just negotiated a deal with a trailer house to use portions of Korzeniowski's score from "A Single Man" in a trailer for another film, a commonly used practice. "It's great as a composer to have that extra income," says Korzeniowski. Ultimately, what makes Evolution tick is their commitment to developing both new and established talent, and their specificity in the art of the pitch. "We don't just throw out 10 names and hope one sticks," notes Kaplan. "We do a lot of research and ask a lot of questions, to really focus in on what's needed for a particular project, so that when they get a reel, we've already done the hard work for them."

Case in point: Scott Starrett, a young up-and-coming composer who just landed NBC's new fall mystery thriller series "The Event." "It's a big deal, and we're all thrilled to foster talent like that and help make it happen for them," says Russell. "That's what drives us every day."

Those clients include Abel Korzeniowski ("A Single Man"), Brian Reitzell (Catherine Hardwicke's upcoming "Red Riding Hood"), Liz Gallacher (Ricky Gervais' upcoming "Cemetery Junction") and Alex Heffes ("Last King of Scotland") -- maybe not household names, but up-and-comers all.

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