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MUSIC: Features

## Keeping score: John Swihart "Napoleon Dynamite" (Fox Searchlight; Release Date: June 11)

"Basically, it's a story about this kid whose life couldn't possibly suck more: He's a senior in high school; he still has to ride the bus to school; his grandmother is raising him; his brother is 32 and chats online with girls all day and collects welfare. At the beginning, his grandmother gets hurt, so his uncle comes to take care of them, even though they are clearly old enough to take care of themselves. The uncle that comes eats all their food and reins in the 32-year-old to go out and scam money by selling herbal breast enhancement to all of Napoleon's classmates. Here's Napoleon with this loser uncle and this loser brother embarrassing him in the worst ways possible at school. Of course, he gets the geeky girl in the end. So it's all good. (Laughs) It was a really fun film to work on. We got into (the Sundance Film Festival) right when I started on the film, so we knew the deadline was going to be tight. I turned out about 48 pieces of music in 28 days and made my last delivery was Christmas Eve -- right about when my wife, who was pregnant with twins at the time, decides to deliver our babies.

I used mostly keyboards. (Director) Jared (Hess) was pretty adamant about not using guitar. The whole nerdiness of the keyboard had to come across. The main two keyboard sounds I used were this (Fender) Rhodes piano and this really cheesy theater organ. The organ is laying down the melody, and the Rhodes piano is filling out everything underneath, which is what the Rhodes does really well. But instead of using an actual Rhodes piano I used Logic Audio's EZ P88 plug-in. What's unique is there's no real character themes. The music is more part of their environment, almost like atmosphere music -- a lot of it is very much like mall music. It's not anything heavy; it's just silly, wacky and fun. I think my favorite scene is at the beginning when Napoleon's coming back from feeding the (pet) llama and his older brother Kip says to him, "If you're really nice, I'll let you pull me into town." In the next scene it's a shot of them going down the street, and Napoleon is riding his old beat-up 10-speed -- it's not even a 12-speed, it's a 10-speed. And Kip, who's on his roller blades, has a rope tied around Napoleon's seat while being pulled down the street. Hilarious."

-- Ada Guerin

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