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Hollywood composers head to Louisiana

Hollywood film composers say word is spreading that New Orleans is an ideal place to score music for film, television and even video games.

After film composer **George Clinton's** trip to the Big Easy this summer to score the comedy "Extract," other leading Hollywood composers including John Swihart ("How I Met Your Mother"), Christophe Beck ("Under the Tuscan Sun") and Marcelo Zarvos ("The Good Shepard") are following suit.

Christopher Lennertz, who composes for the CW's TV series "Supernatural" and recently scored Fox Searchlight's romantic-drama "Adam," is among the composers and scoring engineers coming from Los Angeles to record in New Orleans on Monday. Lennertz said he recorded the score for this summer's comedy "The Open Road," starring Justin Timberlake and Jeff Bridges, in New Orleans last year. He said that project, which only required a small rock and roll ensemble, worked out well. "I had a wonderful experience, but everyone kept saying, 'How do we get to a big orchestra for a big movie score in Louisiana?'" Lennertz said, noting that many big-budget movies require big orchestras to score music.

On Monday, Lennertz and the other composers are slated to work with a roughly 80-piece orchestra that will include members of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. LPO musicians worked with Clinton on "Extract" in June.

"Monday is about seeing and proving that besides a good guitar solo, you can get an 80 piece orchestra that's as good as anywhere in the States," Lennertz said.

Lennertz said he and the other composers will each be allotted one hour with the orchestra to conduct and record their work. The musicians will face a variety of styles, as the composers have been selected to represent a diverse vocabulary of film music.

Lennertz said Louisiana is appealing as a recording destination not only because of its talented and versatile musicians but for its generous entertainment tax breaks, which includes a 25 percent sound recording tax credit.

Chris Stelly, head of the state film office, said the incentives are a major attraction, "but at the end of the day, you have to be able to deliver."

Stelly said Louisiana offers the best of both worlds with generous tax breaks and some of the most talented and diverse musicians in the world in such genres as Cajun, zydeco, jazz, blues and southern rock. "It's a natural fit for us," **Stelly** said. "It's something we're very excited to be doing."

Stelly said Louisiana has only recorded a handful of movie scores since the state began offering tax incentives in 2002, but since Clinton's visit this year, activity is picking up. **Stelly** said there's discussion for Jonah Hex the action flick starring Megan Fox and Josh Brolin that was filmed in Louisiana to be scored in Louisiana as well.

Lennertz said he's got Louisiana in mind for a video game he's slated to score in coming months. He said Los Angeles and London have some of the best recording facilities in the world, but because there is so much demand from movies, independent films, television and video games composers need more options.

"Not everyone can afford to record in Los Angeles," he said.

Stelly said Monday's recordings with the orchestra will be used for promotional purposes and as a learning tool for future composers, musicians and student musicians to witness how a film scoring session is run and what the expectations are from professional composers.

"It's about raising awareness and showcasing what we have to the rest of the world," **Stelly** said.

In June, Clinton worked with about a dozen LPO musicians to create an original score to accompany the film "Extract," a comedy released in theaters last month. Clinton led the small orchestra in a New Orleans recording studio where artists Herbie Hancock, Terence Blanchard, Robert Plant, Alison Krauss and others have recorded.

"It worked out really well," Clinton said.

Other films that have used Louisiana's sound recording incentives include the 2006 Tyler Perry-written and directed romantic comedy "Madea's Family Reunion" and the 2008 romantic drama "Rachel Getting Married" starring Anne Hathaway.



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