



OPERATIONS MANUAL



by Marshall Such

OVERVIEW

I'm convinced there's a natural ebb and flow to video editing. After years of writing music for Industrial/Medical/Educational videos, I've noticed patterns in editing techniques. I'm not saying that every producer and editor cuts exactly in the same fashion, just that there are striking similarities.

Examples? Length of cues, (*rarely* are they exactly :60 or :30), time between "bullet point" text in graphic scenes, length of time "talking heads" are on screen, animated show openings, and length of animated graphic transitions, to name a few.

Like the fact that most cues are rarely :60 or :30, the musical *hit points* are rarely arranged in 4 or 8 bar patterns, as is conventional production music. And breaking it down even further: musical accents almost *never* fall exactly on the downbeat of measures—again, it goes back to the ebb and flow theory and the natural "synchopation" that is inherent in video editing.

How does **V Trax™** fit into this ebb and flow/striking similarities cornucopia of consciousness? Like a glove. And here's why:

- The original sources for **V Trax™** are from nationally produced videos. This means that the music has been written *specifically for video*. Yeah, you can find a couple of cuts that will work in an A/V show, but Creative Support Services has a ton of music that will work much better.
- Each **V Trax™** "show" has its own thematic. So as you edit your masterpiece together, the music will provide an identifiable "glue" that will bring your pictures and narration together.
- Unless otherwise stated, **V Trax™** is **background** music. That means you can mix the music up around the narrator (for a change). The orchestration is simple and fairly sparse to allow for this phenomenon. There are times however, where a "hit" appears or a section of music is more heavily orchestrated. Generally, the more orchestrated sections are for animation, or non-narrated sections. We'll cover "hits" later in this manual.
- While cues are rarely :60 or :30, we know that sometimes you want a mix-out for a TV spot or an in-plant "infomercial", so we've included some miscellaneous :60's & :30's for these purposes.

GETTING STARTED WITH V TRAX™

We recommend listening to the **V Trax™** disc before you go any further. You don't have to listen to every cut all the way through, just spot check the disc to get an idea of what the product is all about.

Make some notes of other show possibilities you hear with the tracks. The titles we've given the "shows" are based on the original productions. You may hear something completely different and you may want to reference it in the future.

Now, here's how we feel you can optimize **V Trax™** to its fullest for your next show.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

What makes a great, or at least, a watchable video presentation? Obviously, interesting shots, good pacing, a strong storyboard and a well written script are all answers. But a show that integrates all of the above, *and* has music that “supports” the story, makes for a **killer** show.

So, instead of “slapping some music” on your next show, why not edit *to the music*? Some of you may already work in this fashion, but for those of you who don’t, here’s how to really put **V Trax™** to work for you.

1. The first thing you’ll want to do is ascertain the type of show you’ll be working on. Is it going to be an Employee Training Video or A New Product Presentation? What’s the total running time? How many talking heads and how much of the production do they make up? Will the show be graphic intensive? How much narration is required? Yeah, yeah, I know *you* know the drill.
2. Once the pre-production is done and you have a story board, you can begin planning out your music. What’s that you say? Music at *this* point in the project? You bet!
3. Let’s say for example that you’re producing a new employee training tape. You’ve got a stock animated logo that you use for every show. You know you will have to get a shuck ‘n jive “warm wish” from the President in his office, a couple of talking head employees, stock shots of the office/plant, and the rest of the show will be Character Generator City.
4. You’ll find an excellent soundtrack on **V Trax™ CD #2, “Insurance Plan/Employee Training” cuts 22-43**. (By the way, you don’t *have* to use all 22 cuts—we just give them to you to cover all the bases.)

Let’s start out with your opening animation. How about putting “Show Open” (Cut 22) under it? You may have to re-edit a little, but since the theme to the show is stated in this first :14 piece of music, it will add tremendous impact to put in a little extra effort in at this stage.

Note/Hint: With nearly all of the tracks on “**Insurance Plan/Employee Training**”, the first few seconds of each track establishes an animated on-screen title.

5. Next in our imaginary storyboard, the animation cross fades to the President of the Company sitting on the corner of his desk (Why do they always do that!?) where he gives his warm “welcome aboard” B.S. We’ll let the Prez speak w/o any BG music.
6. Our next scene is a montage of talking heads—the Office Manager, Human Services Director, the “Happy Mail Boy”, and ol’ Bertha from Accounting who has been with the company since dirt. (She’s the big ol’ fat lady who wears stretch lycra pants to every company function and who still smokes outside on her breaks, come rain or shine.)

If you get enough tape with these people and good generic lines, you can insert edit them into Cut 23 or 24, depending on how much time you need. (Don't be afraid to edit Cut 24 to fit.) You'll notice that the track is basically a drum pattern with brief "posts" (that's radio jargon for "musical accent"). If you can edit short quotes that will fit into the holes, I think you will be suitably impressed with the end result. And I'll just bet your boss will be too.

7. After the talking heads montage, we need to generate some graphics to explain the health care package provided by the company. The number of bullet points you need to address will more or less determine which track of music you'll want to use. A track like #41, "**Locations**" offers a few sparkles, a key change or two and a very simple rhythm track that will support your narrator. Here's where you can earn your Fancy Dan Merit Badge.

First, time out your narrator lines and find a **V Trax**™ that is slightly longer than the narrator's lines. Instead of laying your narrator down first, try editing your graphics to fit the "posts" of the music. *Then* add your narrator by punching him in around the on-screen, locked-to-music images. Again, this will make you into a *trés hip* human being and will win friends and influence people.

8. After this graphic intensiveness, let's do some artzy fartzy shots of the office building or plant or warehouse or whatever. We can let these shots speak for themselves, but we'll beef them up with some music. Try Cut 26 or 27. It's designed to be more foreground and will "pick up" the pacing of your presentation.

There are a couple of cool "hits" that just beg for an on-the-beat edit, by the way.

9. It's back to Graphics Land again, kids. This time we need to cover vacation policy, sick leave and maternity leave. Try repeating steps 7 & 8 with a different track. (Look for ones that say "for graphics".)

If you notice on the CD legend, we've given you some brief descriptions of the type of titling/graphics that were in the original shows. If you've got a decent CG, you can recreate some of the effects that were used. Ie. spins, sparkles, flips, etc.

10. As we head into the home stretch in this fantasy production, our narrator (or do we cut back to the Prez sitting on the corner of his desk?...Hmmm.) does the wrap up. We can then reprise our talking heads with some last minute pearls of wisdom, and then take it on home to Momma with The Big Ending Animation.

And as luck would have it, Cut #34, Show Close, will work perfectly with this. Of course, it worked perfectly the *first* time when it was used in the original video.

SUMMARY

While it would be great to have someone post score your productions, financial reality rears it's ugly head. But if you conceptualize "video—music" as your planning your next show, I think you will be amazed at the power and flexibility of **V Trax™**. And there are other points to consider:

- You will save time by cutting to **V Trax™**. When you think about the layback process and getting music to work properly, you can spend literally hours jacking around in audio hell.
- Odds are that your project will need less revisions when the Powers-That-Be can see the show in a near finished form.
- If you have ever talked to a composer about scoring a show, you know expensive custom scoring can be. My rate for the first minute of a show is \$175. You can see where **V Trax™** is a very cost effective solution to your music needs.

Once you start working with **V Trax™**, we think you'll never go back to regular production music again. This doesn't mean that **V Trax™** will cover every situation, but for *most* Corporate/Industrial shows, we think **V Trax™** is right on the money.

If you're doing a lot of video shows and have specific needs for other types of music, please call 1-800 HOT MUSIC or write me:

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We'll try to create a **V Trax™** show to address your needs, and provide it in a future update.

Marshall Such,
Composer and Producer of **V Trax™**
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