

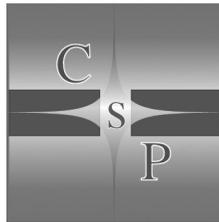
CineMusic?  
Constructing the Film Score



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Edited by

David Cooper, Christopher Fox and Ian Sapiro



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2008 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-84718-593-2, ISBN (13): 9781847185938

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors gratefully acknowledge the support given by the publishers and by Carol Koulikourdi and Amanda Millar in particular. We are also thankful to all of our contributors who delivered their chapters on time and responded to our questions and suggestions with tolerance and good humour. The editors would particularly like to thank Trevor Jones and Michael Nyman for permission to print their interviews and for their generosity and candour as interviewees. The research for Ian Sapiro and David Cooper's chapter was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council which awarded David Cooper one of its Small Grants in the Creative and Performing Arts.



# INTRODUCTION

This book owes its existence to a series of happy coincidences. In 2004 David Cooper was external examiner for the undergraduate music degrees at the University of Huddersfield and one of the modules which he had to review was 'Music and the Moving Image', a second year course which I had developed to introduce students to the study of film music. In the wake of an examination meeting, David mentioned to me that he had been at a reception the previous day where he had met representatives from the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television (now the National Media Museum) in Bradford. They had expressed interest in developing a film music conference to coincide with their flourishing Film Festival and were looking for academic partners. David had immediately suggested his own institution, the University of Leeds, and now generously invited Huddersfield to join too.

A series of meetings at the Museum in Bradford followed, with Bill Lawrence and Tony Earnshaw quickly emerging as the key players for the Museum. Dates were set for March 2005 and a programme was developed. From the beginning it was resolved that the conference should be wide-ranging, with some attempt at thematic organisation, but not to the point of exclusivity. We also wanted to balance theory and practice, to offer a programme which would engage composers, directors and writers as well as film music scholars, and which would also be accessible to film fans from the main Festival audience. The response to the announcement of the first conference and the accompanying call for papers was immediately encouraging. Trevor Jones agreed to be the subject of the opening keynote interview and an impressive array of proposals for conference papers soon gathered. The conference itself was well attended and the enthusiasm of colleagues from both academia and the film industry generated a momentum which continues to sustain us.

The study of music is necessarily a multi-disciplinary affair, the study of the role of music and film even more so, as the contents of this book demonstrate. Many approaches are taken, from the primarily practical to more abstract theorising, and the film works around which these reflections are based are similarly varied, from art-house to mainstream, from classic to postmodern. Film musicology is still a very new enterprise and one of the most exciting features, both of contributions to the Bradford conferences and to this book, is the lack of inhibition with which scholars

and practitioners seem prepared to debate the subject. Perhaps it is a product of the proliferation of contingencies shaping film music and its study, but there is a boldness, an undogmatic candour about the writing here which I hope other readers will find as stimulating as I do.

Our thanks go to all those who have made this book possible. The support offered by the National Media Museum has been crucial to the success of the conferences—the Museum team have been extraordinarily generous in putting their wonderful resources at our disposal. Most of the responsibility for the management of the conference has been borne by David Cooper and Ian Sapiro at The University of Leeds, but I should also acknowledge the support of Huddersfield University and, since April 2006, Brunel University in giving me time to play my part in the conference. Above all, David and I must acknowledge the debt we owe to Ian Sapiro who has been at the heart of this project since the first Bradford conference in 2005, when David persuaded him to take on the administration of the conference.

Whether Ian knew quite what he was letting himself in for is doubtful, but the efficiency with which he has dealt with coordinating the annual call for papers, the liaison with the Museum and the smooth running of the conference days has been an indispensable element in the success of this venture. He has also been the driving force behind the production of this book, managing the editorial process from beginning to end; these heartfelt thanks to Ian for all his hard work are the only thing in the book which he will have neither overseen nor anticipated.

Christopher Fox

## CHAPTER ONE

# 11TH BRADFORD FILM FESTIVAL, FILM & MUSIC CONFERENCE, 2005: KEYNOTE INTERVIEW WITH TREVOR JONES

FOX: So, Trevor, I wondered how you went from being a student at York University and became involved in writing music for film?

JONES: Prior to York, I was at the Royal Academy of Music for four years where I studied classical music. Then I worked for four years at the BBC as a classical music reviewer for radio and television. And then I went to York as a postgraduate student primarily and met Wilfred Mellors. (In fact I met Wilfred Mellors when I was working at the BBC—he came to do a broadcast.) The course at York was designed really to fill in gaps in my musical education which the Academy hadn't dealt with: ethnic music, rock, jazz, pop, avant-garde, 20th century, electronic, all kinds of music—all the things Wilfred is absolutely wonderful at.

I went from York to the National Film School. I knocked on the door actually and said “you do courses for cinematography and direction and art direction, all sorts of aspects of film making, except film scoring”. Colin Young, the head of the School at the time, said, “well there's a few rooms down at the bottom of the theatre there if you'd like to look at them”. They turned out to be the lavatories actually, which had all the cisterns pulled out of them and [it] had a distinct air about it. I managed to suffer these rooms for about two months after which I said, “you know, if you could find somewhere else I'd be grateful”. But in any case that was the start of the Music Department at the National Film School and I've gone on to keep my ties with them since then. So York, and then the Film School, and then the industry.

The great thing about the Film School was that it allowed me to actually not only work with young fledgling directors, but it also gave me a rounded education in film. You know, I can operate a camera, I can light a set, I can get involved with post-production, pre-production. It was a

very good film course because we were left to our own devices for a great deal of the time and only sought out tutors and people when we needed. For instance, when we were in Ireland for six months making a film—you can imagine twelve students living in a house together for six months trying to make a film—the tutors would fly in and work with us. We were incredibly spoilt, I mean, amazing, because we made mistakes and we had tutors to guide us for a great deal of the time. But to have that kind of budget! You know, I could use professional musicians in professional studios on student films, and so that with the twenty student films that I scored at York the transition into the industry was quite easy. I was using the same musicians, using the same studios—Abbey Road, CPS, or wherever—so it was a very smooth transition into the industry. That was really facilitated by the film school.

FOX: At the film school what you were doing was a general film course rather than a specific film music course?

JONES: It wasn't a specific music film course as no-one actually taught film music at that time, and the whole craft of scoring has been a self-taught learning rationalisation, I suppose, of what I do on a daily basis. There were marvellous people around like Richard Rodney Bennett and people, who one could talk to. Liz Lutyens, for instance, was at York. She was composer in residence at York while I was there and we'd spend very good afternoons really chatting over tea and whisky towards the latter part of the day. And you know one would get a formidable insight into the working of film scoring. Liz used to do a lot of Hammer House of Horrors and I'm sure everybody knows her work as a serious composer, but her film scores are quite stunning, quite formidable.

FOX: Often done with very restricted means.

JONES: Absolutely, very small budgets and, you know, against all sorts of incredible pressures: time pressures and schedules and so on. But she was a great influence on me . . . I think she in fact taught Richard Rodney Bennett. York opened the doors to a great many opportunities.

COOPER: Trevor, how has your approach to film scoring changed over the period that you've been working as a professional film composer? A very long and distinguished career.

JONES: I think, on a technical level, things have got a lot easier because of computation, because [of] computers. You know, we're surrounded by samplers that can emulate, or are in fact samples of, real instruments. Then you have all the software like *Notator Logic* and, I forget all the others,—*Performer*—so instead of paper, pencils and piles of waste paper bins you have deleted files now. And you can see in the course of a project, for instance, how many times I've had a shot at writing particular cue and it can be very depressing to see fifty-five goes at a little cue in *Notting Hill*, for instance.<sup>1</sup> I was mortified at the end of the day to realise that I had fifty-five goes at the cue. But it did turn out ok in the end.

It's really been made a lot easier since the advent of computation. I've lived through a very curious period because [when] I started out, one of my first recording sessions was done at Elstree where we shot onto what were called cameras. The reason they were called cameras in recording studios was that they were literally sound recordings made on celluloid and you would do three takes and the image would go off to be processed at the lab and the next day you come back, you listen to the three takes and choose the best one. If you liked the first half of [take] one and the second half of [take] three your music editor had to cut and cement the two things together which he hated because there would always be a bit of a blip, you know. Then moving on through magnetic tape and analogue recording through to digital now. I think I have over 3000 master tapes which are just sitting there in a garage and [really] all our files now can be fitted onto my laptop. All those scores can sit happily on a hard drive, so it has made an enormous difference on that level technically.

Artistically, musically, it doesn't change because film makers tend to have much shorter life-spans if I can use that expression. [I mean] It takes a director two, three, four years to work out a project from the pre-production stage through action, post-production stage. It's a considerable amount of time out of one man's life! Sometimes I can spend about six months on a film, or six weeks on a film, but [usually, you know,] there are only a handful of projects I've done in my career where I started before the screenwriter arrived. But in that regard film making really hasn't changed much because people come in and a director will ask you to score a picture. You do maybe two or three movies with him and he'd go off and not become flavour of the month or find it difficult to set up another picture and new directors would come in. It's a constant turnover in LA of talent. It attracts the world's best film makers to a great extent, and/or they come and go in this continuous turnover. So the attitude to film music and film scoring really hasn't changed because people are, throughout my life I

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<sup>1</sup> *Notting Hill*, dir. Roger Michell. Polygram, 1999.

think, constantly addressing the same problems of how does one communicate with a director, what is the language one can set up?

The problem with music is, that because it has its own esoteric language, a non-musician like a director or producer finds it alienating and you find that you have to make an effort to bridge the gap between what is an idea about music and what it actually should sound like. To a certain extent you're hindered by samples because samples only produce what they are and they don't have the subtleties and nuances of real instruments or a real orchestra and so on and so forth. That is a big hurdle to address when you're dealing with a director. Formulating the language, trying to evolve a language which would enable him to feel comfortable about the way in which you communicate ideas which are very abstract most of the time.

FOX: What sort of language do you use to get across those ideas?

JONES: Initially, I mean most films have a formula to them, if I can use that word very loosely. A film tells a story: there's a narrative line, there's a dramatic narrative line. And the job of the film composer really is to try and glean exactly what that dramatic line is. The film starts out, the exposition of the characters, the plot and so on. You try to glean what the film is purporting to do, what it's setting out to do. And each scene has a particular dramatic intent which I think, when you come to score you try to define and try to ascertain exactly what the intention of that scene is within the context of the film. So the dramatic line can be traced from the beginning of the film right through to the end. The job of the music is to define then what the emotional contribution should be to weight a scene in a particular direction. For instance, you can have one of those bloodthirsty scenes, but you can lighten it, or you can make it more palatable for an audience by putting on something of the order of Samuel Barber, for instance. That type of sound will make it: in *Platoon*, for instance, you have Barber in some awfully violent scenes.<sup>2</sup>

So yes, it's quite a fascinating little craft once you get involved. The most interesting thing for me is when you see a string of images edited together, a sequence, it takes on a meaning. When you put music, any music, to that it's like taking two test tubes, and chemicals, and pouring them together. There's a third resultant thing that comes about when you put music and image together. So you can put any old music to any old image and you get something, you know there's a chemical reaction. What

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<sup>2</sup> *Platoon*, dir. Oliver Stone. Cinema 86, 1987. Jones's reference is to Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*.

a good composer is trying to do is to optimise, to maximise the effect of a score, of music, on a particular scene, to give it the emotional depth and weight that is required to fulfil the director's vision of what this film should be about.

So in effect a composer is trying to put his perspective on a director's vision. And you're dealing in emotion. I mean I sell emotion, that's my job. I'm trained in music but I feel I'm a film maker who works in music as opposed to a composer who imposes a style. There are lots of people you can think of who—usually, the major blockbusters—you can hear a particular composer's style. Whether he's doing an action adventure film or a fantasy film, you know it's that particular composer. I think there's a new generation of composers like myself who tend to score from within out—you don't put a style, your style, on the film, you find out what the film needs. And this was one of Liz's great things, Liz Lutyens. She wanted us to be aware of the fact. 'Write as a film needs', you know, was the thing that resonates in my mind. Write what that particular film needs, don't flaunt your ego. And I suppose to a great extent for me the craft is about trying to put together a series of notes which will have a particular weight, hopefully the right weight for a particular scene, which in a continuum will give the audience a ride from the first frame to the last. The job is, at the end of the day, entertaining people, and when you're doing that then it's very satisfying.

It's even more satisfying when a film sets out to not only entertain but inform, raise people's consciousness. And I've been incredibly lucky to work on a handful of pictures that have done that, that have made a social comment or political point Pictures like *Mississippi Burning*,<sup>3</sup> for instance, I feel very close to; *In the Name of the Father*,<sup>4</sup> particularly; *Brassed Off!*,<sup>5</sup> about the fact that we were shutting down whole communities in the North, and that with that would come the demise of a very important part of British musical heritage, brass band music. We saw the demise of military band music in the '60s when the IRA started bombing the bandstands in London. At that point you could go to Regents Park or Hyde park and listen to a brass band on Sunday afternoon playing military marches and the like, and that stopped. People weren't aware and I'm sure there's a whole generation of people who look at these brass band stands and have no idea what a bandstand is for. It's like a nice little octagonal shape, but I remember some wonderful performances by Kneller Hall and various military brass bands. And then to find that during the Thatcher era

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<sup>3</sup> *Mississippi Burning*, dir. Alan Parker. MGM, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> *In the Name of the Father*, dir. Jim Sheridan. Universal Studios, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> *Brassed Off!*, dir. Mark Herman. FilmFour, 1996

that whole mining communities would be influenced, and with that possibly the demise of brass band tradition in the north was something that I was very conscious of. I was in a pub on the Archway Road with a friend of mine who had been at film school, Mark Herman, and we'd just finished a picture for Disney called *Blame it on the Bellboy* and we were both very depressed because it wasn't one of the greatest efforts.<sup>6</sup> But at the end of the day he said to me "you've done orchestral scores and rock scores and pop scores and all sort of types of music—what would you like to do?" And I said "a type of music that's very close to my heart is brass band", because when I was at York you'd have all these wonderful competitions and see the most phenomenal bands the standard of which were absolutely extraordinarily high, a lot higher than a number of professional musicians that I came to work with later. We just asked the barman for a piece of paper and started jotting down a one page story of some characters who were part of this brass band, and that's how *Brassed Off!* came into being. And I credit it all to a wonderful John Smith's which this pub was very good at. You know, when you go down to London it's very difficult to get a pint of John Smith's!

FOX: So that's how *Brassed Off!* began?

JONES: Yes, it was an idea that Mark Herman and I talked about in a pub, yes. I mean, films come about in a curious way. Sitting in Atlanta airport with Jim Henson after we did *Dark Crystal*<sup>7</sup>—we were on a publicity tour of America, I think we had thirty cities in thirty days or something—and Jim said "you know, we're done this picture, what should we do next?" And I said, "well we should do another picture, and this time, I've done an orchestral score, why don't we do a rock score with someone famous like Bowie or Mick Jagger or someone?" So he said "with animatronics", and I said "well pretty much along the lines of *Dark Crystal* but if we had someone like Mick Jagger or Bowie then it would be a very good excuse to put a rock score to it." So anyway that's how *Labyrinth* came into being.<sup>8</sup> And then Terry Jones was contacted and asked to do the script. So these films come about in curious ways, there's no rhyme or reason for the advent of any film. Like anything they seem like a good idea at the time until the thing hits the box office and dies.

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<sup>6</sup> *Blame it on the Bellboy*, dir. Mark Herman. Hollywood Pictures, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> *Dark Crystal*, dir. Jim Henson & Frank Oz. The Jim Henson Company, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> *Labyrinth*, dir. Jim Henson. Henson Associates, 1986.

COOPER: How does the musical material itself form and when does it form? Do you start at the beginning of the film? Do you start in the middle?

JONES: I used to sort of be very random about it and sort of say “I know what this scene needs emotionally”. But then after a few projects I began to realise that what I needed to do was to actually trace the schematic line chronologically through the film and then find at the end of the day that I would go back and rework again chronologically or I’d re-examine what I’d written and usually I’d be under the table with embarrassment and think, you know, half these ideas should be put in the waste paper basket. You very rarely get the opportunity to be circumspect about your work because usually the time pressure is phenomenal. To do an orchestral score in three or four weeks and you’re doing forty cues, sometimes over two hours of music, is brutal if you have standards that you want to keep up. And I think that accounts for 90% of the crappy scores. You know, you don’t have the time, you don’t have the money and you probably have a raging headache for four weeks and it can be quite brutal to actually be put in a situation where you’re recording with a major orchestra in two weeks time in a studio that’s going to cost a budget which could range anything from half a million to one and a half million and that the studio’s going to be pressureful (*sic.*) about the quality of the work. So at twenty two I’ve lost quite a lot of my hair! [laughs]. It does beat working for a living, I must say. It’s still something that I adore, but it’s not to be taken lightly. It’s a craft that, the more you become involved in it, becomes very exciting because it is very complex, if you want to look at it in that respect. The whole notion of what music to put with a particular image and why, and the rationalisation behind it And actually being analytical when one’s doing it and with hindsight standing back and looking at old scores and saying would I do that again? Would I score that in that fashion if I was offered the opportunity to do it again?

FOX: And to what extent do you do that reflective process of going back and looking at past films?

JONES: Well, I try not to see any of it within a few years of doing it. The trouble with film scoring is that when you have a film that is successful, and the whole nature of the beast is that you don’t know what you’re working on, whether this title called *Notting Hill* is going to be a major success or something that nobody wants to see. When you’re working on a project you have no idea. All you’re trying to do is be as

creative and really try to do your best work on each project—it's like having children, you do your best by them—and ship it out into the world. And if they succeed or fail you've not got the power to influence its success or its demise. And all you can do in order to sleep well at night is to know that you've given it your best. So, it's quite interesting because the whole nature of crafting a film score is something that I've become more and more obsessed by. And probably the reason for doing so many projects is that, one of the reasons is that, I find it intriguing. I find it absolutely fascinating to know that with experience that I've had on those other projects, that stepping into a left-field situation, scoring a picture like *Angel Heart* for instance,<sup>9</sup> or *Mississippi Burning* with just one recurring motif throughout, was I think very insane at the time. To take one rhythm and cover an entire film with it was quite a lunatic thing to do actually, but the fact is I had a suspicion that that's what the film needed.

FOX: Did you tell Alan Parker that that's what you were going to do, or did he just discover that that's what had happened?

JONES: I try as far as possible, in my effort not to alienate, to encourage the director because what one wants to do with a director is to build a relationship because he needs to tell you what his vision is. He needs to impart his vision of the final film. People like Alan and Ridley Scott are visual people, so they can sit and draw. And their interest in music is phenomenal. So you can build up a language. You can have a relationship where you say I want to step out of the convention. This is the way you would score an Indian movie about Mohicans, for instance. When I scored that, to put that type of score in that film was slightly different from the usual convention of scoring an American film. And so one has to sort of talk to directors about the way in which you want to impose your vision, and your perspective rather, on their vision, and what that could mean at the end of the day. And to a certain extent one has samplers and you can do mock-ups and musical sketches of what it could be, but then you hope that the director will make that leap of faith with you and know that the London Symphony Orchestra is going to play it much better than you have on your rinky-tink synthesiser.

COOPER: Has that made a difference to the way that you would interact with a director now as opposed to perhaps twenty years ago or further back, when you didn't perhaps have the advantage of the sequenced track to deal with? I know you were telling us before you do all

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<sup>9</sup> *Angel Heart*, dir. Alan Parker. Momentum Pictures, 1987.

your own orchestration. You're an extremely literate composer. There are composers in Hollywood we know who rely on teams of orchestrators and technology in a way that you don't.

JONES: Well I do have a team. I do have an orchestrator that I've worked with since he was a student and he worked through all my orchestrations because I needed to turn certain film scores into suites for concert performances. So this young chap came along some years back now and I said, "I do this with a flute because . . ." So he learnt so much about the way in which I worked and he's become virtually my right-hand man. What he gets is a *Sibelius* short score of my work and in my haste to do this that and the other I might have left out a flat and a sharp there which he proof-reads and ensures that the orchestra plays the correct note. So there is a team of people. We do hire programmers who work as part of a team because the time pressure's so enormous. I will play and write all the parts for an orchestra, but physically you don't have the time if you didn't have machines printing out parts. There are points in my career where I know we hired virtually every copyist in London working on a score that needed to be played the next day and so on. So all that thankfully has mercifully come to an end with the advent of computation where I can change things on the session and just print out parts and pop it in front of an orchestra and they'll play it. It has changed in that regard. But artistically, as I said before, it hasn't seemed to make much of a difference.

I suppose because every film one does is different and you have to find out how to interact with that particular director. Some people are incredibly musically literate. I had Andrei Konchalovsky on a film called *Runaway Train* who was trained at the Moscow Conservatoire with Vladimir Ashkenazy.<sup>10</sup> You know, these are wonderful musicians. Andrei would sit down and rattle off any concerto you cared to mention. And I was in fear and trepidation you know, and he wouldn't ever talk to me about the crotchets and quavers or the keys and thing[s]. He would talk about 'mamouth'. He'd talk about the emotional content of his pictures. He'd talk about this engine being a mammoth. He'd inspire you visually to come up with a score, never, ever mentioned what he wanted musically. I think that's probably the best way. When a director interacts on an emotional level, when you try to glean the dramatic and emotional content of a film, that's where they come into their own. That's what a composer's looking for. You don't want to be told what the second trombone needs to be playing you know.

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<sup>10</sup> *Runaway Train*, dir. Andrei Konchalovsky. Golan-Globus Productions, 1985.

COOPER: Have you had directors who've had so [such] fixed ideas about what they've wanted that you haven't felt that you've been able to accommodate their desires?

JONES: I'm sure I must have, but one of the great things about . . . I think the reason why I've survived for so many years, is because I have amnesia about a lot of the projects—a bit like childbirth I should imagine. I don't know—ladies, forgive me, I'm sure I don't know anything about childbirth—but there must be a certain degree of amnesia that sets in afterwards or else you wouldn't have another child again from what I witnessed of my four children's births. You know, I find that when I've finished a project I tend to move on rather swiftly. There is a period of reflection when I can come back to the project and look at it, and it's usually some hideous little hotel room where I'm stuck and there happens to be a picture that I've scored and it's at that point where you're just an audience. You're sufficiently removed from the project and its politics and its aggravations and its traumas to be objective about the work. And usually at that point my first reaction is 'why is the music dubbed so low? I can hardly hear this cue'. The music's not working because the volume at which it's playing is not audible. And usually with American films, American's tend to put their music levels higher than we tend to play music in European film. I mean everybody knows anything from *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, the John Williams' scores are intensely audible on the screen.<sup>11</sup> You know that you're hearing the music and the Americans tend to do that as part of the way in which they score films. But we tend to have a totally different sensibility about the levels at which we play music on a film in Europe.

And also scoring. Spotting films—where one places music cues—is different. We tend to wallpaper certain hi-profile American films. When I'm working on a feature film for a major studio you can virtually bet your bottom dollar that there's going to be more music than there is going to be film. Something like *Cliffhanger*,<sup>12</sup> for instance, has fifteen minutes more music than there is footage because of the titles and end credits. There's very little silence because they feel that the music should dictate to an audience what they should be feeling at any given time. And European film making is different. We tend to want to use music as an element of film making. And there's a certain amount of allowing the audience to use what I feel is the most potent ingredients of film making, which is the

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<sup>11</sup> *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, dir. Chris Columbus. Warner Bros., 2001; *Star Wars*, dir. George Lucas. Lucasfilm, 1977.

<sup>12</sup> *Cliffhanger*, dir. Renny Harlin. Momentum Pictures, 1993.

audience's imagination. If you allow an audience to perceive images and music in a particular way I think you're liable to entertain them on a higher level than just dictating what their emotional response to music and image should be at any given time.

FOX: I had one other question about the way in which the craft has perhaps changed which is that, with a film like *Notting Hill*, there's clearly a pressure from the studio to include a certain amount of existing musical material. How do you, as a composer, go about responding in a fairly congested musical setting like that?

JONES: Well that happens on most films. Somebody says "you know my brother-in-law's written a song" and that's it. I mean there's this classic thing on *Arachnophobia*<sup>13</sup> [which] had a song which was about a spider which had blue eyes, and I was presented with the song and I was told "We're going to use it in the film" and I said "Where? Where do we put a song about a blue eyed spider for God's sake?" And they said "Well think about it, Trevor, think about it." Well I noticed that there was a transistor radio in shot in the kitchen and I said "Ah, there's a blue-eyed spider singing on the transistor radio in a particular scene" so now that song could end up on the CD, on the soundtrack. Ninety percent of the time the politics of music on film dictate how the soundtrack is going to turn out. If, for instance, the production hasn't enough money to fund the budget they would go to a record company and say "please could you advance us X amount of money for recording the music for the underscore and you could put on X amount of songs". So this serves as a package. They get to put on songs from their catalogue which they've been dying to dust off and revive and you're stuck there with a bunch of songs which you have to put in the film somewhere in order to pay for the score that needs to be recorded. So, you know, the trouble with film is that it always has to walk this knife edge between art and commerce. The two aren't mutually exclusive—you can create a work that you're not too unhappy about on a very low budget. But a lot of the time there's a great deal of pressure put on composers as to how a soundtrack will turn out, and unless the composer is particularly powerful in his own right and says you know "I'm sorry, this is beyond me, I'm flouncing out," you know, if you want to work you accept the fact that there's a certain degree of compromise that has to be made. But, it's not necessarily formulaic to actually sit down and say "we're doing a particular genre of film; we want it to appeal to a particular demographic; and that demographic has to be primarily ladies

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<sup>13</sup> *Arachnophobia*, dir. Frank Marshall. Amblin Entertainment, 1991.

between the ages of fifteen and ninety-five, who need to sit and swoon over whoever the idol is on screen. What we want to do is create an ambience of romance and so let's find some songs that will go with that and put together something which commercially will make a lot of money." That's one way of approaching the film making. The other is actually saying "what are we trying to do with a particular project and how best to serve the project as opposed to having any other economic pressures put on one?"

Audience Question 1: When you get to the recording session for one of your scores, do you conduct the orchestra or do you sit at the mixing desk in the booth?

JONES: My scores are clicked from beginning, throughout to end, all the cues, and the click—it's a kind of tempo map which is fed to musicians in their headphones—dictates the tempo at which they play. And this tempo map is variable, it can speed up or slow down or whatever. And it's a map that I prescribe, I lay down, and also has my voice count on it "95, 96, 97". It has to be turned up when they're playing very loudly. So it's like flying by remote control basically. It doesn't matter who's standing on the podium saying "Let's go", the thing is self-propelling, which is a very inartistic way of working, but when you realise that when you're working with any one of the major orchestra either here or in the States these are seasoned professionals. They know markings on scores are very detailed, you know what tempo it's at, you know exactly what note you are playing, how loud you know, all the dynamics are marked—everything is prescribed the session, usually on the first sight reading of the London Symphony Orchestra. On the last picture I did we were printing the sight reading—there wasn't enough time so the music was put in front of the players and they played it, and that's what ended up in the film because of time pressures; didn't have enough money. So, in terms of expression and so on, it doesn't help an orchestra who are concentrating on reading notes and trying to imbue the music with some feeling, it doesn't help them to have someone sort of combing their hair, you know. It's best to let the process work on a level which is much more technical. The London Symphony Orchestra has been recording film scores since the 1920s, a phenomenal tradition of working in film music, so there's very little a composer can teach them about dramatic intent. They clock it very quickly what a particular feeling in a cue should be and they're amazing. It's like playing my little Steinway at home, I love it, it's a honed instrument it has a particular quality to it which is fantastic. So yes, I sit in

the booth and what I'm doing there is to actually talk to my engineer about how we're going to rescue the cue from too much brass or too little strings or whatever. But you know the whole technical thing, the way that it's miked up one has the opportunity later on to rebalance the brass and strings, or to bring out the melody because all the instruments are individually miked. You can have total control over sometimes up to 200 tracks on something like *Pro-tools* which is the new system we shoot music on, and you can mix to a very high degree of accuracy really.

Audience Question 2: Who actually selects you for particular films? Is it the director, producer, someone else?

JONES: I wish I knew because I'd keep that. I don't know actually. I think that over the last few films—let me just think about it—I did a film called *From Hell*<sup>14</sup> and I said to the directors, there were two people, they were twins the director and producer, I could never tell which was which. They called and said they were coming to London to meet with me and talk about me scoring their film and I said I was very flattered and so on and met them at this hotel. And they brought along what was a roll or wallpaper on which, when they unravelled this in this rather plush hotel in London, was a lot of knights and blood and gore: it was a medieval battle very much like the Bayeux Tapestry pretty much. I was absolutely dumbstruck by this and I said “This is fantastic” and they said “It's for you”. And I said “Well, you know, what is it” and they said “Well we saw *Excalibur* and we wanted to work with the composer who'd written, who'd worked on *Excalibur*”,<sup>15</sup> because the dance things and the dance cues they liked very much. They knew about the Wagner but they wanted to work with me on one of their first pictures. So, you know, I'm sort of at the age where people who've been watching videos when they were little are hiring me because something affecting them in their childhood. But generally speaking studios know about you. Studios, producers and directors tend to know who is working and what they do, and I suppose this IMDB,<sup>16</sup> which is always grossly inaccurate about most things, but I suppose people look at that.

Audience Question 3: I was just wondering, Trevor, why you remain in this country, or why you have not lived in Los Angeles? Does it matter

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<sup>14</sup> *From Hell*, dir. Albert Hughes & Allen Hughes. Twentieth Century Fox, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> *Excalibur*, dir. John Boorman. Warner Bros., 1981.

<sup>16</sup> The Internet Movie Database <<http://www.imdb.com>>.

where a film composer lives any more, or is there another reason for being based in this country?

JONES: Well I don't think it matters where a film composer is based but the reason for living here is that I have an aversion to the sun bizarrely enough. I'm not a great sun-person. Given the opportunity I'd far sooner be in Yorkshire in drizzly England than in the sun. I like England. Brought up in a Mediterranean climate I do like sort of one week a year handkerchief on the head. Apart from that, I could live in Los Angeles. But I think, you know, when one's an immigrant to a country at a very formative point in life, at the age of 17 when I came here, I was on a scholarship. The money was used up in my first year and so I worked in restaurants and washed dishes and did all sorts of jobs in order to pay my fees and I learned a great deal about London, and working and living in London. And so I worked at the BBC and wanted to become naturalised because although I had been born British, South Africa had become a Republic And so I was forced to work for a reputable institution and you can't get more reputable than the BBC. But what was very pertinent in my life was the fact that I was given a grant to study at York, I was given a grant to study at the National Film School, and I feel a phenomenal, very emotional tie with this country. This country has been responsible for my success, what success I've had, and I feel very strongly that the system of education although it's changed so fundamentally since I was a student is totally wrong. I feel that all students should be financed. I feel education should be, along with health and pensions, because I'm getting to that stage of life where I should be fighting for pensions as well [laughter]. But there are certain issues that I feel very strongly about and I have no problem paying taxes in Britain when I could be paying less or making more money in Los Angeles. It's not a financial issue. But one can write anywhere in the world, and I've got to that point in my career where studios do indulge me. I take on a project at the outset I ask politely, then dictate, that I work in London and record with the London Symphony Orchestra with British musicians at home. And they have been very kind and indulged me—they usually do. If they don't, I don't do it usually!

*Trevor Jones was in conversation with David Cooper and Christopher Fox (Friday 11th March 2005).*

# **SCORING PROCESSES**



## CHAPTER TWO

# SPOTTING, SCORING, SOUNDTRACK: THE EVOLUTION OF TREVOR JONES'S SCORE FOR *SEA OF LOVE*<sup>1</sup>

IAN SAPIRO AND DAVID COOPER

It is unsurprising to find that discrepancies occur between records of cues at various stages of the film score production process. Hitpoints identified in spotting sessions may refer to scenes which have been cut from the final film and, likewise, changes in the film structure may result in the composition of cues not listed in the original spotting notes. *Sea of Love* provides examples of both of these scenarios. Examination of the source materials for *Sea of Love* offers valuable insight into the process of film score production, following which detailed analysis of the evolution of a single cue from the film provides a practical example of its application. This, in turn, leads to a reconsideration of film score composition from a position which does not necessarily take the 'final' soundtrack as the definitive version of the score.

### Source Materials

The current authors are fortunate to have access materials from the production process of this film, including two sets of spotting notes, analogue multi-track session recordings (on reels of two-inch magnetic tape) and a hand-written score. Through these sources a more complete picture of the evolution of the score and soundtrack can be constructed. The spotting notes, score and soundtrack for *Sea of Love* indicate fifty-three potential cues, but only twelve, just over 20%, can be traced accurately through all source materials. Some discrepancies between sources can be explained by the deletion of scenes from the film, or by the

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<sup>1</sup> *Sea of Love*, dir. Harold Becker. Universal Studios, 1989.

use of source noise instead of source music, but a large number of cues are either unused or altered in the final cut.

### Spotting Notes

*Sea of Love* has two sets of loose-leaf spotting notes, sheets detailing start times, lengths and detail of proposed cues. The earlier notes have a front cover which gives the date of the spotting session (Tuesday April 25, 1989), and lists the name of the music editor (Dan Carlin Sr.), the composer, and the film title. In his book, *Music in Film and Video Productions*, published two years after the release of *Sea of Love*, Carlin remarks that “the producer, director, picture editor, and composer, along with a music editor”<sup>2</sup> would all be present at a spotting session. Although the notes provide no firm evidence for this, Trevor Jones recalls that the personnel at the spotting sessions were himself, director Harold Becker, and the picture editor, with Carlin’s involvement limited to the production of the spotting notes after each session.<sup>3</sup>

There are seven numbered pages of typescript notes with additional pencil markings indicating extra cues as necessary and supplementing the typed information. Each cue is shown with its cue reference number and name, duration, start and end times, and a description of how the music’s narrative interactions, including detail of opening and closing visuals. According to Jones’s recollection of the process, the typed notes represent the discussion which took place within the spotting session, and the pencil insertions and alterations indicate places where supplementary conversations between Jones and other members of the production team led to post-session changes.

The second set of spotting notes comprises nine numbered pages and is dated Wednesday June 7, 1989. Like the first set, they are typed with some comments added in pencil, but such markings are limited to the addition of one new cue, 3M3A (before cue 3M3 at the bottom of page 2), and indications to remove cues 3M2 (page 2) and 7M0 (page 5).<sup>4</sup> Pencil

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<sup>2</sup> Dan Carlin Sr., *Music in Film and Video Productions* (London: Focal Press, 1991), 56.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Trevor Jones carried out by Ian Sapiro, 17/10/07.

<sup>4</sup> Musical cues are numbered so that they can be quickly identified in terms of their placement in the film. The initial number signifies the reel of film, ‘M’ indicates that it is a music cue, and the final number gives its order within the film reel. Hence, cue 2M3 would be the third music cue on reel 2 of film. Cues featuring source music sometimes replace the ‘M’ with ‘S’, or, more usually, have ‘S’ after the final number.

markings from the first set of notes now appear as typed text in the second set, and timings, lengths and cue names have been adjusted reflecting the later stage in the production process to which these notes refer. In the case of the second set of notes, it is reasonable to assume that the typed text was prepared prior to the spotting session, and that anything written in pencil was the result of decisions taken within the session. This later set of spotting notes does not have a front cover, and there is no record of who was in attendance.

Apart from places where source music is to be used and one brief pencil comment in the first set, neither set of spotting notes contains any information regarding the musical content of the cues. Musical information can be obtained from the large collection of individual track sheets for the film, which detail the track listings for each take of each cue during the recording process, as well as providing technical details about noise reduction and tape speed, the recording date, and the sound engineer.

### Cue Sheets and Session Recordings

The track sheets can be split into four groups: a set of 41 individual sheets, one for each cue recorded on tapes 1 to 9, and tape 14; a set of 25 sheets relating to 'master mix reels' one and two (tapes 10 and 13); a similar set of 25 sheets for 'slave' one and two (tapes not included in the Trevor Jones Archive); and a set of 26 sheets for 'mix reels' one and two (tapes 12 and 11).<sup>5</sup>

The majority of the sheets indicate twenty-four tracks and have space for tape information, as shown in Figure 1, below; those for the 'mix reels' show only eight tracks. The potential twenty-four-track mix is broken down into a number of stereo pairs of instruments (such as congas on tracks 9 & 10 giving a left/right stereo recording) with some mono tracks (bourdons on track 17 in this cue). Track 24 is usually reserved for video synchronisation information and either gives video and offset timings as above, or details about the frame rate (such as "SMPTE", below). Tracks 22 and 23 are also generally used for assisting with synchronisation: a synchronisation tone (set at 60Hz on several sheets for *Sea of Love*), a click track, and/or a verbal count of bars and beats are common features on these cue sheets. In the case of the sheet shown in Figure 2.1, tracks 1–6 are two left-centre-right sets reflecting the position of this particular recording of the cue in the overall process; this will be discussed further below.

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<sup>5</sup> It seems likely that the reels were numbered after recording was completed, which explains how Mix Reel 1 is tape 12, and Mix Reel 2, tape 11.

CONTEMPORARY MEDIA MUSIC PRODUCTIONS				PROJECT TITLE "SEA OF LOVE"				TAPE No. 8			
24		36		30		15		6'00			
8		4		ABS		NAB		DOLBY SR			
16 AVENUE ROAD HIGHGATE LONDON N6 5QR ☎ 01 341 6040				ENGINEER P. HULME				DATE		TAPE AMPEX 456	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8				
L	ORIGINAL C	R	X L	ORIGINAL C	R	TENSION STRING CHORDS (BARS 1-65)					
FROM 01:01:42.12		TO 01:02:34.00									
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16				
CONGAS		KEENA PEEP PIANO	LOUNGE LEARD PIANO MOTIF	BOTTLE STRINGS	TOMS	SYNTH FLT	TENOR SAX				
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24				
BOULEVARD	B/D	WA BRASS			CLIX + COUNT 150 BPM BAR 1 @ 01:00:24.00	60Hz	SMPTE				

Figure 2.1: Twenty-four-track sheet for cue 3M1 "Iranian Fiasco" on tape 8

The track sheets allow more rigorous investigation of the instrumentation and other sonic elements employed by Jones in the composition of his score. A brief overview of the above track sheet shows a considerable amount of percussion, some indication of strings and brass, and two melody instruments: "synth flute", and tenor saxophone. Examination of other track sheets and the musical score indicate that this orchestration persists through the film score.

When evidence from the session recordings is examined it becomes apparent that many of the musical cuts and replacements must have happened quite late in the film-making process, since many of the cues that are omitted from the final film have been recorded and mixed ready for use. There are records of discussions between the composer and technicians with regard to issues such as balance and level and it is clear that, while the recording was taking place, there was every intention of using the music in the film. In the current chapter, the evolution of the score for *Sea of Love* will be examined through detailed scrutiny of one cue, 3M1 "The Iranian Fiasco".

### 3M1 "The Iranian Fiasco"

This cue was not listed on the original typed notes for Jones and Carlin's first spotting session but was pencilled in at the start of reel 3. The