

Film Score Blogs [Blog # 24]
Saturday, October 15, 2005 at 9:21 am

Yesterday late afternoon I finished my admittedly hurried descriptive rundown of Tiomkin's The Guns of Navarone. After I was done with The Ghost & Mrs. Muir lengthy paper, I was spontaneously inspired to do a quick rundown of *Navarone* due to the very recent release of the "World Premiere Recording of the Complete Film Score" from Tadlow Music, conducted by Nic Raine. James Fitzpatrick conducted the *Sundowners* suite (and he produced the album). While the Prague orchestra is not quite as professionally good or "right on" as the Hollywood and London musicians (as the original Tiomkin performance), it's pretty darn good. I understand that the budget of having it recorded in Hollywood or London would be very prohibitive, and that's probably why Tadlow (and Marco Polo, etc) record in Prague or Moscow or wherever—but the quality or precision often is not as terrific as Hollywood musicians' performance. In fact, I just heard the Ken Hall interview (music editor) in the Jerry Goldsmith dvd, and he commented that Los Angeles/Hollywood musicians and technical people were the absolute best in the world, especially compared to many foreign orchestras (more on the dvd later).

At any rate, I'm happy with the *Navarone* album! It is a definite "must have" cd, an exciting edition to the important or frequently played part of one's collection. Thanks to its creation, it altered personal probabilities because its existence motivated me to finally do a rundown of *Navarone*. I had hesitated because I only gave it relatively short research attention many years back, and my notes were rather scant (unless I've lost other papers that I forgot about). The dvd as an audio reference is ok (better than the OST-cd) but it would still be inadequate because *so much* music was dialed out in the feature film that was, thankfully, restored in the Tadlow cd. It actually mad me a bit angry when I compared what Tiomkin had originally composed for the film (when listening to the new cd) to what was actually left in the finished film back in 1961. In some cases, more music was left out than left in! I had assumed there was no music meant for certain scenes between music in the "Sea Scene" sequence. Actually Tiomkin composed a steady stream of highly interesting music but the Director &/or music editor decided to dial those bars out, unfortunately. As given in my rundown analysis, I can understand why some sections of music were cut (such as the very noisy storm scene) but other sections were deleted rather arbitrarily, such as when the boat was quietly getting a radio communication from headquarters. So I highly recommend that the reader purchase this cd—unless, of course, you absolutely do not care for Tiomkin's music in general! In particular, however, you may indeed like the *Navarone* score, especially now that it's available in its entirety...

Now: As I write here (10:30 am), I am listening in the background to the Goldsmith dvd bonus section of the *River Wild* extending scoring session footage that was filmed. It's a great bonus, but so also are the other bonus features: the six interviews with various professional involved with Jerry Goldsmith. These interviews alone are worth the price of the dvd, which incidentally I purchased from Screen Archives by phone on September 21 (shipped 9-23 and received some days later). I ordered this Special Edition Film Music Masters dvd: Jerry Goldsmith (produced by Music from the Movies.com) for \$37. I also purchased Steiner's Pursued original tracks (SAER) for \$16.95, Steiner's original tracks (BYU) of *Johnny Belinda* for \$19.95, and of course the

new *Navarone* cd for \$19.95. The subtotal was \$93.85, shipping at \$6.50, and the total at \$100.35. The dvd and the *Navarone* cd are the real treats.

Anyway, this Goldsmith dvd is a terrific historical document. As just mentioned, just having these taped interviews is worth the price of the dvd, and then you still have the 71 minutes of the original 1995 documentary directed by Fred Karlin (and of course the long *River Wild* footage running around an hour, I believe). Of the interviews, I first was curious about Alexander Courage. I never have seen a photo or video footage of him, so it was good to have his interview available. The interview lasted about 14 minutes. He said he first worked with Jerry in the Fox 1965 film *Morituri*, writing an ethnic German piece. Courage stated that he felt that Jerry had the widest talent in the business, very prolific and varietal, that he will always come up with something new that will fit a particular film—a new sound. He then said there was a long-standing joke that if there was somebody making an interesting noise just outside the window or studio, you'd have to grab that person for Jerry's next picture and make that sound! Courage also said that you first needed to be able to read Jerry's hieroglyphics (sketch writing). He mentioned how Jerry tended to work in his later years from 5 am to 5 pm, whereas Courage's 12-hour day tended to be 10 am to 10 pm.

I then watched the Sandy DeCrescent interview because I saw her first in the documentary and wanted to hear more. That interview was one of the shortest at 9 minutes. She met Jerry at age 22 at MCA where she was then a secretary. She offered in the interview all types of glowing superlatives (his "brilliance" etc) so I guess he really liked the gut both personally and professionally! Everybody interviewed did. She talked about her business, what her job was. She's there to make the composer's job a lot easier. Once he called her and said he had to do a trailer for an Australian movie and it had to be recorded in two days! As an orchestra contractor, she did it. She got the instrumentation needed, had to work out a budget with the producer, contacted copyists, etc. She said he had several faithful and loyal people he associated with, including his concertmaster and first chair cello. She mentioned how he was kind to musicians [probably not too many players would've said that about Herrmann!]. He would frown if there was a problem but he never did any finger pointing. He would always professionally find a solution. Well, this is a very glowing report, accentuating the positive in this dvd, but I heard from people that during a STAR TREK scoring session in 1979 with Robert Wise, he stormed out of the room briefly when Wise didn't like his first Enterprise cue. Wise wanted it different, not so "sea-faring" in character. Goldsmith took personal offense to this. So I don't think this dvd is exactly balanced in its approach, in this respect (not pointing out the "darker" side), but that's ok.

Next I watched the very interesting interview with Ken Hall, music editor. This interview was the longest at 32 minutes. One of the first things he said in response to the interviewer was that Jerry normally does not want to see the rough cut of a film with a temp track. He wants his creative mind clear and uninfluenced. Hall's job is to synch up the music, to make sure the "hits" are there corresponding to the specific scenes in the film. He first takes notes in the spotting session, he breaks down music to a tenth of a second, gets sketch copies of new cues while the musicians play the full score of earlier cues, etc. He says it's a lot easier nowadays with the computer, and it helps to have the best players in the world (especially Hollywood/L.A.). He's encountered "disasters" in certain foreign countries' orchestras. He talked, for example, about the problems he had

with Rambo III, how it was a mess to re-edit the score. He talked also about Poltergeist and how originally Spielberg and company had filmed a lengthy sequence of the ghost coming down the stairs that Jerry had composed and recorded lovely music for. Well, Spielberg or whomever wanted the slow scene cut by a minute and a half, and Kenny had the job to salvaging the music, re-cutting or de-sequencing it. The ending to Poltergeist II was changed completely but fortunately Jerry didn't have to completely rewrite the sequence. Kenny was able to redub it. He mentioned later that Jerry never took a possessive position that "It's my score and don't mess with it," in effect.

Next I listened to the JoAnn Kane interview lasting only 7 and a half minutes (the shortest interview). She's the music preparation professional. She commented that her job is to get the full score from the orchestrator (like Arthur Morton) and extract the parts and have them done with India ink, etc. She too commented how she had to get used to Jerry's strange writing in his sketches! She also glowed on how "gorgeous" he is when she first met him (and was later), commenting that he had a great head of hair! She commented that a three-minute chase/action cue would take copyists about 2 and a half hours to convert to Parts. She's had 25 copyists on some jobs, 4 or 5 proofreaders, and a few librarians.

Next I watched the Arthur Morton interview. It lasted about ten minutes. I think he was 86 at the time of the interview. I distinctively remember him stating how Goldsmith usually does the shorter and easier cues first, and save the harder/faster ones for last! He commented that John Williams did the same. That way they get a sense of flow and get the material going, music done and finished with.

Finally I listened to Bruce Botnick. The interview lasted 24 minutes, but I did not give it total attention yet, more peripheral since I was working on something on the computer. He first met Goldsmith in 1979 when he was chosen to do the album for STAR TREK, the first digital recording of a movie. He talked about Total Recall and how it was a disaster attempting to record at Munich initially. It was not the old seasoned players anymore, more the par of a good high school orchestra! And Goldsmith's hair was getting even whiter during four days of agony getting only a minute and a half of presentable music from the players! They couldn't handle Goldsmith's intricate and ever-changing meters. So they had to go to London where they recorded twenty minutes of music in the first session!

All right. Now to the actual documentary. The focus is on The River Wild music since the documentary was filmed during that period of creation/recording. Curtis Hanson, the director, was interviewed several times. I noticed that Goldsmith was right-handed when they showed him writing notes on a sketch sheet. The first words coming out of his mouth during a cue recording or rehearsal was, "I'm changing Bar 19 to _, and Bar 24 change to 7/8....Ralph, play that obbligato..." The scoring session was at Todd-AO scoring stage in Los Angeles on August 31, 1994. I believe that it was take 78 for that cue, incredibly!

He then comments off-stage that he thinks sitting down the first day to a new project is quite intimidating. What am I going to do? What am I going to do that's different? How am I going to get inside the characters? He said that the basic process of creativity here was to sit down with a blank page and try to get notes down until he gets it

right, struggling to find the right theme and short motif. He said fear is a given and that the composer has to move on.

Then he commented how the first Star Trek movie was very difficult for him. The studio wanted the familiar, a STAR WARS type of score, big & heroic, and yet achieve something “different.” He really sweated it out for ten days before he even got the basic theme. Once that theme was set, the rest was far easier to do.

He stated that reading a script doesn’t do much for him, that he needs to see the actual film to generate musical ideas. He needs the visuals and its emotional impact on him. He cannot write a theme based on a script alone. After seeing the rough cut of the film (hopefully without a temp track), he tries to find that one theme that sums up the whole dramatic essence or message of the picture. Then he develops a motif—not a theme but something secondary, something that he can develop any of many different ways in the total score. He would consult with the Director and others, but once the intellectual process and discussion was done, he would clear his mind and then react emotionally, gut level, and convert that artistically.

It was interesting soon to see that clip from the 49th Academy Awards. Herrmann’s *Obsession* and *Taxi Driver* were nominated, and a few other scores, but Goldsmith’s score for OMEN won. I’m glad he won but I personally felt that Herrmann’s *Obsession* was far more touching and memorable. I liked Goldsmith’s OMEN III score far more than the first OMEN score. The latter score was fuller, better played, seasoned, highly exciting. I researched it at the Academy library a few years back (the sketch score). It was also interesting to see Jerry’s lovely wife, Carol. My wife commented how she had lovely, full hair. So they were a couple with gorgeous heads of hair! So birds (or heads) of a feather flock together.

Goldsmith commented how at age 14 or 15 he saw Spellbound, composed by Rozsa. That was a turning point in his life, vowing he would that 1945 year that he would grow up to write music for movies. Rozsa was heard in an audio segment how he felt Jerry was one of his first students at USC, and the most talented, and commented how tremendously he developed.

Goldsmith then discussed Poltergeist and how it was not meant to be a “scary” movie but really a love story, and so he wrote the music accordingly.

Then in Chapter 6 Bruce Botnick, the recording mixer, is interviewed. Then old clips with Franklin Schaffner were shown. He collaborated with Jerry in I think six movies, including Papillon and Patton.

Then there’s a brief history of Goldsmith’s early career at CBS and how he was put under contract in 1955 to do live dramatic shows. They showed old clips from “DR. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde.”

Jerry’s son, Joel, is then interviewed briefly in Chapter 7.

Jerry then commented how he felt Islands In The Stream was one of his favorite scores, that it was a very touching 1977 movie.

More historical background is given next, discussing his teacher, Jakob Gimpel. Morris Goldsmith is seen talking about his son. Cousin Joseph Zirker makes a few comments about Jerry’s past. A clip of Jerry when he was very young was shown in Chapter 8 at 8:34. My wife commented that, “He was cute when he was young.” Fortunately she did not comment how he had a gorgeous head of hair! :)

Arthur Morton is then seen, and a photo of one of Jerry's teachers, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

Goldsmith comments how he likes to average at least two minutes of music a day—which can be a lot of music, especially in a busy action scene.

His agent, Richard Kraft, then makes comments. Then director Verhoeven is discussed, focusing on Basic Instinct.

I especially found interesting in Chapter 9 at 4:32 when Kraft made some comments. Paraphrasing a bit here: What made Basic Instinct so great a thriller score? Well, thrillers tend to have the worst scores because there were basically two choices in the Nineties on how to score thriller: (1) Rip off Herrmann, and specifically one or two only of his works, and (2) do a synth-pad “wow” effects score. Thrillers were considered a junk genre for film composers, but Jerry came up with a fresh voice providing the underlying sexuality and seductive danger.

Goldsmith's wife returns in Chapter 10. Goldsmith comments how he struggled for two weeks finding a fitting love theme for Medicine Man. Then Under Fire was discussed and how Goldsmith listened for weeks to Chilean/Andean music and, by osmosis, came up with a hybrid Latin ethnic score. The dvd showed the End Title Reel 14/Part 3.

Then Russia House was discussed and how it was not an ethnic score but revolved around jazz. Goldsmith used Branford Marsalis for the saxophone. Then Sandy DeCrescent was shown in Chapter 11 and how she worked on that movie as well. Goldsmith wanted a specialty instrument (I forgot the name—a daduk or however it's spelled) and she had to figure out what the heck that was!

Alexander Courage comes on in Chapter 11 at 4:04. Then there was talk about “rub rods” with Emil Richards, the percussionist, talking, used for Poltergeist. Comment was made how Goldsmith would go to Richards' house to check out special-item percussion instruments, and come up with all kinds of great noises in his scores.

Then in Chapter 12 at :59, Craig Huxley, the inventor of the Beam (used for STAR TREK) was interviewed, showing the odd instrument. Very interesting! Then mixing bowls and bass slide whistles were used for Planet of the Apes. Goldsmith then commented how he started using electronics in 1962 in Freud and got hooked ever since. He wanted to manipulate sounds for his scores, to express more than what the conventional orchestra can provide. He wanted a whole new palette or whole new section of the orchestra with these tonalities, percussion instruments, etc.

That's it for now. There's more but you'll need to get the dvd yourself! [12:42 pm]

[9:28 pm]

We went for chores and lunch and enjoyment. It was not entirely enjoyable, especially in the food area! However, the afternoon was more than compensated for by the productive morning, the sunny afternoon (it will change tomorrow as a big low pressure system parks over southern California), and the relaxed evening. I got my photos developed at Rite Aid with plenty of excellent photos of our kitties, especially when they were very young with a skinny mama (she's now far more fuller!). The cd version of the photos from Kodak Picture CD came out excellently, and we sent several to my wife's family. This included the new addition to our family, little Gracie, the black & white

fireball. I call her now “Karate Kitty” because she uses her front paws quite well in attacking (playfully) the other, much bigger cats.

Now: I was thinking more about what Goldsmith had initially said in that dvd. Remember he talked about how the process of creativity included the element of fear. Well, I have to disagree with the master. I think best creativity/art is basically effortless. That is, there is no underlying “fear” involved, like anxiously looking at a blank chasm in front of you, wondering if you are going to be supported by some sort of foundation of inspiration. Creativity in its primal nature is as effortless as a hair growing out of most heads! For the composer, you become open and receptive, expecting something to “come” to you. You do not fully “have” it in this now moment period, but it is already “there” in a larger framework (Seth would call it Framework 2, the inner source of the outer expression). My house wherein I live now and type this blog in this cozy Saturday evening did not exist at this spot six years ago. In that past “now” period, there was no Wrobel household. It was not built yet. However, in the spacious present, it did indeed exist—certainly as a “potential” house or reality. In Framework 2 (our physical manifestation or “reality” would be our present Framework 1), time is simultaneous. Events and situations and actions that would take months or years to “happen” in our level would occur almost automatically in that inner framework. This includes so-called “future” scores to be written (or probable scores).

If you consciously want to believe that there is a fear element in the creative process, then you simply make the process harder by throwing such impediments in the path of creation. Create out of joy (love), not fear. It is the fear or anxiety of this or that which prevents a channel from making for a greater or quicker or easier “supply.” Goldsmith loved his music making on inner levels, and there was no fear there, and this inner belief ultimately overrode the conscious personality’s negative, surface beliefs. He was on a creative roll, so to speak. The momentum was always in high speed during that stage in his long career in 1994 when this video was made. If he felt a fear or impediment, it simply lessened the momentum or speed by a few mph for a very short while! He already knew he was greatly appreciated and in demand, and his work was rarely ever rejected. He knew he was good and that he was loved by associates and fans.

Anyway, the artist needs to be the spontaneous self, not the fearful self. He must let himself go and compose. Relaxation, not fear, is the real element of the creative process. Fear does not refresh! Talent requires spontaneity, not fearful discipline. Talent must expect the good or the best under the limits of “present” understanding and execution. It is almost like a mental imagery exercise where you pretend the fulfilled dream. You visualize the complete score as you want it, displaying faith that it will indeed be executed in its unique way “in time.” Don’t be too overly concerned with stages and bumps in the road of creativity, or be overly concerned with “effort” on the conscious. You do your best and then let go. Your inner self knows better what to do next. Just be alert and open and responsive to inner messages of inspiration.

This blog did not exist yesterday. I did not know exactly what I would write, but I was sure I would “come up” with something! This blog “now” exists. It already existed in Framework 2 because the intent was strongly there (in Framework 1) to create it. It was *expected*. Sometimes you don’t get exactly what you think you expected. You are surprised. I am sure Goldsmith was pleasantly surprised by how some of his scores developed. He certainly came up with surprises of creativity in his experimentation for

scores like Planet of the Apes and Star Trek: TMP. Goldsmith was full of musical surprises, far more so than Herrmann, although I like Herrmann's style "better." Goldsmith had his own characteristics, just as Herrmann had his own unique personal characteristics. Goldsmith tended to really expect the new & the different in his music, expressing fresh and previously unexplored musical directions (especially in the area of percussion and electronics). He strained ("fearfully" ?) on the conscious or outer level for the full use of his creative abilities, so he sought to find various electronic and percussive modalities where he can add to his greater value fulfillment (fuller use of his talents). This included his experimentation with a variety of interesting rhythms and meter complexities.

So I liked his creative approach. In a sense, loosely speaking now in terms of an analogy, Goldsmith was like the Picasso of music, while Beethoven (and perhaps even Herrmann?) were like the Van Gogh and Cézanne of music. Goldsmith was I think a lot freer with his creative, more spontaneous. Beethoven was too much of a perfectionist. But that was the characteristic of that particular music master. Herrmann, like Van Gogh, was unconsciously into self-mutilation, in certain terms. He was constantly involved in volatile turmoil, expressing anger and annoyance with people and the world, alienating friends and acquaintances in the process. His characteristic emotional intensity generated into a particular set of situations personally and in his artistic expression.

Anyway, Goldsmith was certainly a masterful musician in the sense that he daily loved his art (creating music) and had enormous talent in it, and learned his craft quite well. He loved the activity for itself. Being highly gifted artistically certainly helps! And he devoted his life to music, committing himself consciously quite young (at age 14 or 15, although he received training earlier). His focus of identity was clearly that of being an artist. In certain terms, his entity whistled Its personality (Jerry Goldsmith) into three-dimensional physical existence. Probably this personality expression was a focus personality of great strength and intensity, more fully expressing the entity. He was not a ditch digger outwardly (or clerk typist!) all of his life, frustrated that he wasn't an important composer! In analogy, if you consider each of his scores as personalities, then STAR TRAK:TMP, say, would be considered a "focus" or highlighted score, best expressing the potential of the creator. RUNAWAY probably would not be, or THE SWARM! Some movies are not innately inspirational as others! So several times he would grind out scores that were not particularly inspirational or "noteworthy" (Herrmann had less of a problem with this, and so had a tendency to be consistently good).

OK. I think that should do it for this blog. Thank you for your time. [10:45 pm]

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[Sunday at 10:24 am]

Here's a blog from a thoughtful blogger who tape recorded Ray Harryhausen's comments after a screening of Jason & the Argonauts:

<http://corpseaters.blogspot.com/2005/08/ray-harryhausen-q.html>

Harryhausen's comments on Herrmann are short but interesting. So Herrmann did not completely rely on the complete working film of SINBAD to be able to come up with themes/motifs for the various unseen (but imagined) creatures.

Also here is the Monstrous Movie Music site where you can gratifyingly listen to as-yet-unreleased (on cd) newly recorded, state-of-the-art, dry-miking B-monster movie music clips including This Island Earth, Day of the Triffids, and 20 Million Miles To Earth (including, very interestingly, a clip from Max Steiner used in that movie). I'll definitely buy the cd (s) when they come out.

http://www.mmmrecordings.com/Coming_Attractions/coming_attractions.html

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