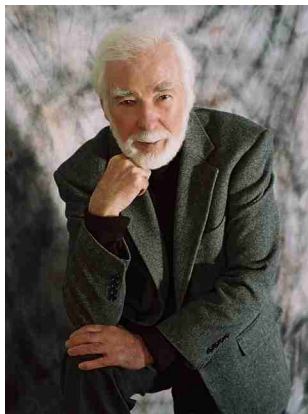




“Interview with Mr. John Scott”

Interview performed by Joaquim Ramentol



Patrick John Michael O’Hara Scott, his full name, or simply John Scott as we know him, was born in Bristol, U.K. He received early music lessons from his father, a member of the Bristol Police Band. He joined the Army at 14 as “boy musician” and studied clarinet and harp. His growing passion for Jazz lead him also to take up the saxophone. After leaving the Army, he joined and toured with Jazz bands. He worked for EMI as arranger and conductor for artists like Tom Jones or Cilla Black. During this time, he also led a Jazz quintet and played on film soundtracks for composers like John Barry and Henry Mancini (he was principal sax in *Goldfinger*). In the 60s, he was playing flute and saxophone as top performing musician for, among others, the Woody Herman Band, The Royal PO, The Philharmonia, the Nelson Riddle Orchestra and the flute sound on The Beatles recordings. Later on, he founded the John Scott Orchestra, arranging and playing all kinds of soundtrack hits...in short, a most versatile composer in the broadest sense. From this to start scoring movies, it was only a matter of time.

The rest is an impressive, brilliant career spanned over 38 years, but let’s have this living legend tell us a bit about it.

How did your decision to become a film composer happen?

My interest in film music was born out of performing on film scoring sessions. For us studio musicians it was always exciting to record music which had never ever been performed before and, in those days, would never be played again. For as long as I can remember I have been passionate about classical music, and have had the good fortune to have participated in music making. It seemed a

natural progression to accept the challenge of writing for films. However, my music playing days came to an end when I had to undergo an operation on my jaw. This truly confirmed the direction I would take in the future.

Your first film score was “A Study in Terror” (1968). Do you keep any special memories of this movie scoring?

I have a stack of memories concerning *Study in Terror* which I tried to recall in the CD booklet for the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra recording of the score. The most important fact was that I made contact with Herman Cohen who gave me the chance to compose my first feature film score. The most terrifying experience was running out of time, because of inexperience, and watching the musicians disappear, one at a time, as we went further into overtime.

The original score for *A Study in Terror* is quite different from the one appearing on your subsequent recording conducting the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra. Any explanation on this?

I can assure you that the score which we recorded with the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra is exactly the same score as we recorded for the film back in 1968.

I discovered the original score rotting away in a cupboard and decided to copy it into the computer before it was lost forever. I was fascinated when I examined the score to find out how my musical thinking had changed since those early days. I have just reconstructed another early score of *The People that Time Forgot* and it interests me to discover that there is nothing I would change even today. But, having said that, I have always agonized about every note in every chord. That is why I think of orchestration as part of composition.

The original version issued in conjunction with the film release was sequenced in America; it disappointed me for various reasons. The main reason was that it concentrated on badly played pianos in London beer parlours and sacrificed the dramatic score to the movie. There is another reason for the score sounding different and that is the superb technology for recording which exists today. The original was mono, recorded at Shepperton Film Studios; it is a valid document of how things were. I prefer the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra's version.

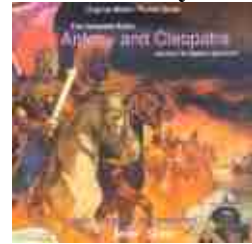
We note that, besides *A Study in Terror* and *Inseminoid* (1980)—a score we believe you are not at all particularly fond of—there are practically no terror movies in your filmography. Is this due to the fact that you are not particularly interested in this movie genre, or you were not offered further projects which were interesting enough?

All my early films were horror films. This was Herman Cohen's genre. I wrote scores for his *A Study in Terror*, *Trog*, *Berserk* and *Craze* with Jack Palance. Then with Norman J. Warren I composed *Her Private Hell*, *Inseminoid* and

Satan's Slave. Then, with a Spanish director, José Larraz, I composed *Symptoms*, also known as *The Blood Virgin*. I used to think that I was known as a horror movie composer.

You are wrong about *Inseminoid* being a score I am not particularly fond of. It had a place in my development; it was also composed for Norman J. Warren, for whom I have the utmost respect. He helped me enormously in the early days when we were both struggling. Norman was invited to Madrid to collect a music award for *Inseminoid*. He tells an amusing story about all the people who received rolled-up award scrolls. When they opened them, there was nothing on them, just blank pieces of paper. The committee explained that the printed scrolls would be sent later. We are still waiting!

A score that has not passed unnoticed for the many lovers of your soundtracks is the one for *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972), a milestone in your movie scoring career. The main theme is sweeping majestic, enhancing this ill-fated epic story and conveying a lush sense of passion and dramatism alike. Since the movie was shot in Spain, did you come to our country and attended the shooting? Also, do you have special memories from this movie, and how was your relationship with the main star and director Charlton Heston?



Unfortunately, I did not go to Spain. The film had been shot and was in postproduction when I was brought in as composer. *Antony and Cleopatra* brought me together with not only Charlton Heston, but particularly Peter Snell. This film must remain one of the highlights in my career, and has some poignant memories. It is the only time I composed two films simultaneously. I am confessing this for the first time, but neither of my employers would have been sympathetic. I had been contracted to compose the score for a Peter Sasdy film, *Doomwatch*, another horror movie. When I received the offer to compose the music for *Antony and Cleopatra*, I knew that I had to accept. Peter Snell had already had a score composed which was not satisfactory. I had to compose the music in three weeks, and complete and record the *Doomwatch* score. Needless to say, it was a tremendous strain with very little sleep, but I really got lucky.

”Death of Enobarbus” was a cue which nearly killed me. The idea would not come. The night before the final recording I still had three cues to compose. The next morning, they were recorded. This was the first time I had composed for a full symphony orchestra plus choir, and the first time I had conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Heston was at his prime, I do not remember if he had already filmed *Planet of the Apes*. His briefing was excellent, and he articulated his motivation which was not always apparent. He was a gentleman, no airs, no big time attitude. We stayed in contact, and he was directly responsible for getting me a green

card to work in the USA. At this moment in time, I am in the middle of recomposing *Antony and Cleopatra*, which will feature the symphony orchestra plus large choir and three narrators—like a spoken opera. This is to be performed in Los Angeles on 18 May with the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra. Peter Snell will be in attendance, but we doubt if Heston will be in good enough health to attend. It will be a poignant time for me, and I might well burst into tears during the performance which I will be conducting.

Can you please tell us what happened with *S.P.Y.S. (1974)*, a movie which you scored but, surprisingly, it was shown in the USA as a telefilm with music by Jerry Goldsmith?

Director Irvin Kirshner briefed me on this film. He was very exacting in communicating what he wanted the music to do; however he was getting mixed messages from his producers. The film was fun. I thought there were hilarious moments. However, the outcome was that the Americans wanted one film and the Europeans wanted another. I have never heard Jerry Goldsmith's score but he, without doubt, was my hero. Of course I was devastated when I heard that my score had been replaced for the US version. But the common saying amongst film composers is that, "You haven't arrived until you have had a score rejected."

***Hennessy (1975)* is another of your great scores—there are so many, in fact, rich in atmosphere and emotion which captures admirably well the essence of the story. What can you tell us about scoring this movie? Are there plans for a new recording which, in our opinion, is badly needed?**

Hennessy brings us back to Peter Snell and Steve Previn. Steve was the American co-producer and was very anxious for me to use his brother's orchestra! This was a wonderful idea because his brother was Andre Previn, and the orchestra was the London Symphony Orchestra. This was a gripping assignment, and I decided that I wanted another musical ingredient which would give a certain quality of suspense. The solution was a group of 17th Century instruments—a consort of viols, but written for in a contemporary way. Steve introduced me to his brother Andre, who gave me a lecture about how the orchestra would not tolerate fools. "The orchestra will test you, and if you don't pass their test, you can only expect trouble." I thanked him for his kind advice. The day of the session with the London Symphony Orchestra arrived, and I mounted the podium at CTS studios. We started the session, and the orchestra was sublime.

According to Peter Snell, the film had a big problem. It was politically motivated and involved a plot to blow up the British Houses of Parliament; this was to take place during the Queen's speech. The royal authorities gave permission to use authentic footage of the opening of Parliament and the Queen's speech. However, they were horrified when they saw that the Queen and Parliament had become integral actors in the film. All support was withdrawn, and I believe that distributors were requested not to handle the film.

In the USA, the film was renamed *To Kill a Queen*. We hope to issue the soundtrack score of this film; it will come out as “A Classic John Scott Score.”

How did you become involved with the Henry Mancini and John Barry orchestras? Do you still maintain any relationship with John?



I first started as an additional featured player with the “John Barry Seven” before he ever composed a film score. We used to do regular TV and radio broadcasts. Then, when John Barry started to compose film scores, he would invite me to take part in the recordings. The first film I performed on was *Beat Girl* then *Ipcress File*. As a saxophone and flute player, I was always his first choice. I have not seen John for a long time; the last time was at a preview of *Chaplin*. I am sure our friendship remains the same as it always was.

Because of my reputation as a versatile studio musician Henry Mancini asked for me when he came to London to score *Charade*. From then on we did a string of films. This was a high point in my playing career and, as I was now thinking of composing, I was able to take note of how Mancini fitted music to film, how he rehearsed his cues, how he utilized the studio and the engineers. I learned a great deal from Mancini, and we remained friends until his death. He displayed such warmth and generosity. One lovely memory will always remain with me. I received a phone call from Hank saying, “John, I’ve just seen *Greystoke!* You have written a wonderful score”.

Can you please tell us about the process of your restoring Erich W. Korngold’s *Anthony Adverse* score? After that experience, which we understand was quite rewarding, did you ever think of rescuing some other classic scores, as Elmer Bernstein did for the FMS recording series?

I had built up a relationship with Chris Kuchler of Varese Sarabande Records. They used to issue my soundtrack albums. I had also engaged George Korngold, son of Erich, to supervise the recording of the film score for *King Kong Lives*, which was recorded in Munich. George devoted himself to the survival of his father’s works, and it is George we have to thank for the rebirth of Korngold’s concert works—his fine operas, his violin concerto and his brilliant film scores. George became my fan and a good friend following the recording of *King Kong Lives*. Sadly, George died prematurely, but not before the recordings of *Captain Blood* and *Elizabeth and Essex* had been issued. However, *Anthony Adverse* had been discussed, and George and I had spent time looking at the film and discussing the approach. George was a Viennese at heart. He used to recount stories of how they had to leave Vienna in a hurry because of the Hitler regime. He wanted the score to be recorded in Berlin with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. This is a great orchestra, and George had initiated an interest between the orchestra and his father’s music. When I

arrived in Berlin, the orchestra manager was quick to point out that they did not record film music, but Korngold was the exception. I wondered if there was a hidden message in that statement.

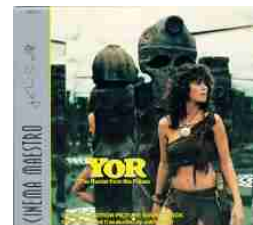
I did not have to reconstruct the score. It existed and was provided by the film studio. Nevertheless the musician's parts and the main conductor's score were very bad. Tempi, as indicated on the score, did not match the tempi in the film. George was right in his assertion that the expressive quality of the score is something which German and Austrian musicians seem to have in their natural musical makeup.

You put music to a silent movie entitled *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Do you have in mind to do the same with other silent films like, for example, Carl Davis and Carmine Coppola have done?

I am proud of the score for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The idea struck me after I had been tempted to compose for a German silent film, *Die Weisse Hole von Pitz Pulau*. I was so excited about this film and commenced work only to be informed by the producers that it had to be completed in three weeks. These producers have no idea how long things take to do.

The story of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* had always fascinated me, but when I viewed a copy, I found it disappointing. It was quaint and lacked drama. One day I looked at the film without the music, and straight away, it held my attention. I started to think how a truly emotional score would make it really powerful, so I started to compose. The score took six months to complete, and I experienced the problem of continuous music. This score is as long as two symphonies, but at least in a symphony there are breaks. Not so in a silent movie. In a feature film, the music gives way to sound effects, even if it is silent, there is room atmosphere. In a silent film there is nothing. I enjoy the experience of seeing silent films with live orchestra, it is very fulfilling and the music can manipulate the audience in such a way that dialogue becomes quite unnecessary. Having composed one silent film score, I am not tempted to do another. There is so much else to do.

In the score for *Yor, the Hunter from the Future* (1982) appears both your name and the Italian names Guido and Maurizio de Angelis. Why? Did the director or producers think your music was not appropriate, and they wanted to give a different approach, or were there other reasons?



This is a difficult question to answer. The producer and the director attended the sessions which were recorded in Rome. They were happy with the music. However, I did hear that the de Angelis brothers had replaced a lot of cues with songs. Every composer knows that once he has finished, the producers can do anything they like. After all, it is their film. I was not happy with the Italian musicians; in fact it is the only time I walked off the recording stage and had

them do some practice. I would love to record that score again with a decent orchestra. Maybe one day I will.

For Jean-Claude van Damme's *Lionheart* (1990), you developed an extraordinary symphonic and versatile score, including Brazilian rhythms and much action music. We wonder how you were involved in a martial arts action movie, a kind of genre we frankly do not see you in. What can you tell us about it?

Before composing film music I had been a successful Jazz musician, and had enjoyed performing a wide variety of music. I saw *Lionheart* as a chance to get back to my Jazz roots. We recorded the score in Munich, and I had got to know some very fine Jazz musicians whom I brought into the recording sessions. The urban setting and the drug dealers is ugly and distasteful, but I was able to utilize a very fine jazz alto saxophone player into the score. I was able to compose all the ethnic music because it had all been part of my previous experience. The main theme takes a long time to emerge, and that was also part of the challenge I set for myself, I wanted the theme to grow and finally assert itself as the main character developed. The other main function of the score was to create an emotional element which I was not able to detect when I first saw the film.

You could be right when you say you do not see me composing music for this genre, and I'm sure I will not be doing anything similar again. However, to be perfectly honest, I did enjoy working on this movie, and I am not ashamed with what I did.

There is a strange martial arts Japanese movie dating from the early 80s entitled *The Legend of the Ninja*, of which a single LP was released in Japan. The composer was, as the cover states, John Scott. This title, to the best of our knowledge, does not appear in your filmography, so we wonder whether, officially, you are the composer of this movie. Can you please clarify?

I would be very interested to see this movie. I know nothing about it, but I have had some strange experiences in Japan. For instance, someone informed me that my music for *Final Countdown* was being used in a television drama series. A Japanese composer had taken my music and utilized it. I went to Japan and met with the producers. They said that their leading Japanese singer was about to record the main theme "Tiedemann's Theme," and I should let it go ahead and share the royalties. I agreed, but did not get a good deal. The song, "Madonna's Lullaby," became a number one hit and won all kinds of awards, but I was excluded because the awards were restricted to Japanese only.

With regard to *The Legend of the Ninja*, awhile ago someone gave me a CD with my music which had been pirated for a film score. It might have been this film. In this case, it was a strange mixture of music I had composed for a background music library and other tracks from different films. It happens a

lot.

In the movie *Die Hard*, there is a sequence in which your music for *Man on Fire* is briefly heard. Were you aware that part of your main theme was used on a specific scene of that film?

Yes, I was aware that *Man on Fire* had been used in the film *Die Hard*. Apparently the film had been temp tracked with some of my music. Michael Kamen was the composer who was finally engaged to write the score, but the producer wanted to keep that sequence with my music. I understand they went to Arnon Milchan, producer of *Man on Fire*, and he gave them permission to use it.

For *Married 2 Malcolm* (1998), it was announced several times that a CD would be released but, finally, it was not. What really happened?

I do not know what happened to the film *Married to Malcolm*. This was another Jazz score which I enjoyed doing, not violent like *Lionheart*. I heard rumours that the film could not get distribution, and then I heard that it had been recut. I have the rights to issue a CD, but there are others I would prefer to put out before that one.

We would appreciate some comments on your long and fruitful collaboration with Jacques Cousteau. Your scores for many of the



Cousteau's documentaries conjure up a rich orchestral palette of dramatism, dangers, beauty and mysteries of the deep seas. Did you have the opportunity to participate in any expedition aboard the "Calypso"? Also, any anecdotes—surely there must be a lot worth commenting on?

I was recommended to Jacques Cousteau because of the wild life documentaries of Hugo van Lawick and Jane Goodall, for which I had provided music scores. These were produced for Metromedia and edited in Hollywood. There I met John Soh, who edited the Cousteau movies at that time. He asked if I would be interested in composing for Cousteau if they needed a composer. It was a few years later when they finally asked if I would compose a score for a Cousteau film.

I have said it many times and I will keep on saying it. Jacques Cousteau was responsible for a major development in my music and in my musical confidence.

We became good friends and listened to a lot of music together. He kept an apartment above his cutting rooms in the centre of Paris, and he was always inviting me to hear some new music which he had discovered. He had an open mind when it came to music. Most producers make up their minds about the

music they want based on what they have heard in other films. Most composers want to write original music, but have to satisfy the producers. Cousteau insisted that I should be true to myself and encouraged fresh approaches. We did a lot of talking about what he was trying to say in his films, and I would go away with a clear idea of what he wanted. The other way we worked was, if we could not get together, he would discuss his film and record his discussion on tape, which he would then send to me. Every film I composed for Cousteau was done in the greatest hurry, they used to spend forever editing the film and then realize that they would need music in a week's time.

Cousteau loved an audience. The more people there were around, the more ideas he seemed to have. He was also a poet and loved recording his commentaries, which he would constantly change as he fitted his voice to the film. I learned that you should not argue with him because you would never win an argument.

Here is a true story about an evening in the cutting room with Jacques Cousteau. I think we were working on the *Amazon Expedition* and everybody was tired. Coffee was brought in and someone accidentally spilt hot coffee on Cousteau's knees. He jumped up and let out a tremendous scream and pulled his trousers down. He was wearing swimming shorts underneath. Someone was heard to ask, "Jacques, are you always prepared to dive?"

The Calypso was a small ship, it barely had room for the crew, and the scientists, and the cameramen, and the divers. I never sailed on any of the expeditions, but I met the team many times, and Albert Falko, their chief diver, and I became very close friends. I have seen the Calypso a few times recently. It is so sad to see what has happened to that extraordinary vessel. It is now totally rusted away. The last time I was on it was three years ago, and the engine was rusted into a solid block. It is now caked with rust and all the emblems of identification have been removed. Last year there were signs put up warning of the danger of going aboard. How could they let such an important legend die?

Undoubtedly, you are a master of harmony and a real first class orchestrator. Throughout your career you have created beautiful melodies, truly inspirational music. One of the most memorable and moving main themes we can remember is the one for *The Scarlet Tunic* (1998), a score dark and tragic at times, but full of emotion and drama. Any particular memories when scoring this film?



We recorded the music in Ljubljana. Why Ljubljana? The company that made the film had no money. In fact, it is a miracle how the film got made. This was a young film company based in London, and they sold shares to raise the money. I was invited to see the film and wanted to work on it. I suppose I became a shareholder because I became the publisher of the music. I think it was Paul Talkington,

my agent at the time, who decided we could not afford to record in Munich, even though it was also his job to bring work to the Munich Symphony Orchestra.

I do not think Ljubljana is a serious place to record film music. One morning, our concertmaster did not arrive. The concertmaster is the leader of the string section and is vitally important. In this case the concertmaster was a concertmistress, although we do not use that term. The orchestra members said they did not need her and we should carry on. Her husband was the lead cello player, and he said there was nobody at home to look after their children and they often worked like that. I said that we would not start until she arrived. This was such a casual approach to music, but when it came to the coffee break or the end of the session, they were very exact. It was hard work with that orchestra, and I feel lucky that we got a good performance in the end.

Most of your professional career has been developed in Europe. Why did you not work more frequently in the USA? Perhaps a lack of interesting projects, appropriate contacts...or are you that kind of freelance composer?

I started my film composing career in London, but it was always necessary to be known in Hollywood. All the decisions were always made there even if the work was carried out in London. The Hugo van Lawick / Jane Goodall films finally brought me to Hollywood, and I started working in documentaries for Marshal Flaum and Metromedia. Here I met writer director William Kronick, for whom I composed the score for *To the Ends of the Earth*. Later in London, he introduced me to Robert Lambert, who engaged me to work on *Final Countdown*. This film brought me back to Hollywood, and I started to compose for Hollywood-based films like *North Dallas Forty*. I was becoming successful in Hollywood when I had to return to England to look after my mother, she had developed Alzheimer's Disease. I spent the next five years looking after her. This was totally necessary, but it was not good for my career. Now I live more in Hollywood, but the conditions for composing have changed so much. I refuse to be told by an executive, who knows nothing about music, how I should compose, but that's the way it is now.

You have scored quite a substantial number of TV movies where you have produced superb inspiring music—*William the Conqueror, Mountbatten - the last Viceroy, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, Shogun Mayeda*, to name just a few. Do you feel more at ease scoring for TV, or is the fact that a TV series running for several chapters allow you to develop music more extensively and freely, without the constraints or limitations a movie has?



It is far more difficult composing for TV movies. There are a different set of circumstances, and the first is the worst. TV films are shot quicker, they have an air date and they have a short postproduction schedule.



Music comes in the postproduction, but the most important consideration becomes meeting the air date and not how good the music is. Nowadays the music budgets have become so bad that most TV films end up with a synthesized score.

I have been lucky with the TV films that I have composed for. *William the Conqueror* was shot as a pilot for a proposed series which never got made. It had a very good cast, including Michael Gambon, who was relatively unknown at the time. Peter Snell was the producer, and he tells me that he had acquired all the rights, so we are planning to present it in concert next year with the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra live on stage.

20,000 Leagues was a joy working with Michael Anderson. He is a real professional director who knows how to inspire actors, composers, set designers and everything to do with the film. It was shot very quickly. We were also lucky with having the Philharmonia Orchestra to record the score. *Mountbatten* was another good experience. We had the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for that score. The titles and major cues were recorded to film but after that I recorded a library which they could select music from. I have never recorded episodic TV.

Nowadays, many composers are backed by a team of orchestrators, arrangers, copyists, etc. Instead, we believe you have always liked to be fully responsible throughout the soundtrack process, including score conducting. Isn't all this amount of work quite overwhelming for one person, or do you have other specific reasons for working alone?

My specific reason for working alone is only that I love music; it has never been a business. I want to do the best I can, and I firmly believe that orchestration is part of composing. Films have given me the chance to develop as a composer even though my aim has always been to serve the film without losing sight of the integrity of the music. This follows in the conducting, and here I have discovered that musicians respond to different conductors in different ways. I now realize that I get the sound I want out of the orchestra.

There are a lot of composers who are what we call 'hummers.' They can hum a melody, or play single notes on an instrument and somebody else will transcribe it onto paper. Nowadays, a computer will write music as it is played, but that music has to be straightened out and orchestrated by somebody who knows how to do it. The great composers, like Jerry Goldsmith and John Williams, always write what we call a short score which contains instructions, so the orchestrator's job is to transcribe it to a full score. If you are a success in Hollywood, you become very busy because it is dangerous to refuse work, you could lose a connection. So a successful composer needs a team to help. To me this is business, and I prefer music, and the time to devote to doing the best I can. You mention copying; I have always employed a copyist. This is not creative work.

When you write your scores and orchestrate them, are pencil and music sheets your main working tools, or have technology, computer programming, synthesizers, sampled sounds, etc., also entered in your composing world?

For the last twelve years I have used a computer program to write my music. I do not play music into the computer, I write it with a mouse. It is the same as writing with a pencil on paper, but I do not have to sharpen pencils. I produce full symphonic scores in this way. If I require a sound that comes from a synthesizer, I would not hesitate to use it. My copyist benefits from this process because all the parts exist in the computer. Nevertheless, there is a lot of work in getting the parts respectable for the musicians, including transposing certain instruments, arranging breaks for turning the pages and then taping the pages together in a respectable way. The copyist has a big responsibility to compile the parts and check that everything is right for the recording session.

Most of your scores have been recorded by prestigious symphony orchestras—The Philharmonia, Munich SO, Berlin RSO, The Royal PO, etc. Do you have any special affinity or predilection for an orchestra? Having been a player yourself, the rapport between an orchestra and you as conductor must, we believe, help a lot to attain and transmit the subtleties and the ‘soul’ of your scores. Can you please elaborate on these two questions?



The one advantage in working with a regular orchestra, rather than a pick-up orchestra, is that the musicians know each other. They work constantly together and the telepathy is good. Having been a playing musician is also an advantage, because I know how the orchestra thinks, how it responds to the conductor, the things that might upset the musicians. However, I will not use an orchestra if

I think a different group of instruments would be better. On *Winter People*, I used a group of eight musicians, which included two synthesizer keyboards. That is what I wanted. The producers panicked after some unfavourable reviews, and decided that I should use a larger orchestra for some of the cues. They sent me to Munich, but it was not the music that was the problem. I love chamber music and would not hesitate to use a string quartet or a wind quintet or a Jazz ensemble if I thought it would be better for the film.

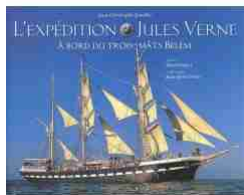
Some of the movies you have scored—please correct us if we are wrong—*The North Star, Walking Thunder, Shogun Mayeda, King of the Wind*, etc.—were not successful in the box-office. However, their scores have been recorded by great symphony orchestras. For *Walking Thunder*, for instance, an almost unknown movie, you wrote a rousing score of epic-symphonic proportions highlighted furthermore by a sumptuous recording with The Munich SO. How can such a luxury for what is supposed to be a low budget movie be done without losing money?

In a low budget film one is presented with a package deal. That means that the composer can save or spend money. As I stated in the previous question I decide what is right for the film. It has never been business. I am not a business person and have no ambition to be one. The music is, and always will be, my main concern.

After your experience with Cousteau, you participated in another nautical adventure by joining the Jules Verne expedition, a five month sailing odyssey on the three-masted ship “Belem”. How did you become involved in this project, and how can you describe your experience?

Since starting the annual concerts with Jules Verne Aventure in Paris, I built up a cordial relationship with producer Jean-Christophe Jauffré. One day Jean-Christophe asked if I would consider composing music for a film which he would be shooting on board the Belem, a historic sailing ship which used to supply the French convict colonies in South America 100 years ago. It sounded like a project I would enjoy and so I accepted the commission. It was to be shot in three or four episodes and would deal with, 1. Crossing the Atlantic; 2. Archeological sites in the Amazon forest; 3. Martinique, where the Belem should have been destroyed in the great disaster when Mount Pelé erupted; and, 4. Whales of Atlantis. I requested that in order to compose a good score, I should be allowed to take part in the voyage. This proved to be invaluable in the composition of the music. Of course, I could have written it without having taken the voyage, but it would not have been the same.

We believe you wrote a diary reflecting your impressions, emotions, feelings and sensations throughout the sailing. This resulted in “L’Expédition Jules Verne” CD. The overall effect of your music is utterly uplifting, invigorating, thematically varied and atmospherically rich.



Please tell us how you drew your musical inspiration amidst endless seas, infinite skies and unlimited horizons?

Strictly speaking, I should have kept a diary. I was not in the habit of keeping a diary and I now regret it. I took my music note book and wrote musical impressions as they occurred to me. I notated feelings about the sunrises, the market places, the extraordinary atmosphere in the Amazon forest, the children in their boats. This is how I generally work on a film. I keep on making notes as thoughts occur. One day the film crew decided to film me composing. It did not work too well—“John can you look more intense?”; “John, could you get up and pace about and then write something in your book?”; “Could you lean over the ships rail and start to sing something?” When I got back to London and started composing, I had a wealth of ideas which had been inspired by what I had experienced. All these impressions are present in the *Odyssey of the Belem*, which is how I conceived the music. Then I broke the composition down into film sections which you hear on “L’Expédition Jules Verne” CD. We have issued the whole of the music as a four movement symphony on the JOS label.

You are a regular participant in the successful yearly Jules Verne Film Festival Concerts. We have the impression that there is an outstanding symbiosis between the Festival Orchestra, yourself as charismatic conductor and the public attending the concerts. What can you tell us in this respect?

I was expecting to conduct the next concert in Paris in March. Unfortunately, this will not happen, at least not with me conducting. Jean-Christophe Jeaufré has engaged a French conductor. He wanted me to work with this conductor, but I told him that I do not share conducting responsibilities.

Why did you set up your own record label company, JOS Records? Do you feel that your vast musical output has been, generally speaking, quite ignored or unjustly neglected by the recording industry? Or is the aim of creating your own label to have full control of your own music, distribution and sales?

I started the JOS label when Varese Sarabande, who had issued my music up to that point, decided not to issue *Winter People* because they did not want to pay the musicians reuse fees—eight musicians. Crescendo Records said that they would issue it if I would pay the reuse fees. I realized that for all that time, I had been giving soundtrack scores to Varese and receiving no royalties, and it made me angry. I thought, if I pay the reuse fees, then I should issue the records as well. We hardly cover our costs, but I have had such a wonderful response, and that alone has made it worth the effort. I receive letters from all over the world which tell me that what I do is appreciated. The other aspect is that this music would be lost if I did not do something with it.

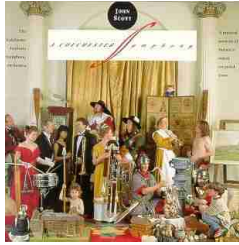
Some of your scores have not been released officially, but have been bootlegged. This may result in a lot of bitterness and frustration for the composer and more so by the fact that he does not get any fees on these recordings. What is your feeling about this and what, in your opinion, should be done to prevent this unfair situation for a composer?

I do not know how to comment on this question of bootlegging. For a lot of the people who do this kind of thing, it is not only greedy but criminal. Then, on the other hand, there is the real soundtrack enthusiast who desperately wants a score that is not available. Nowadays, it is so easy to copy things, DVDs CDs, software, images, someone has created them and someone else is stealing. Is it not today's culture? I feel far worse about the big global giants who have no conscience. Everything is money and greed. Give me music and a little love and care, and you can keep the rest.

What has been your greater satisfaction in the world of film music? And also, of all of your scores, which ones are you specially most proud of?

I can remember the immense thrill when I saw and heard Henry Mancini's

Hatari, that made me listen to music in films. The scores of Bernard Herrmann also had a similar effect. I always felt that Jerry Goldsmith was going to be the ultimate composer of our time—films like *Planet of the Apes*. I suppose John Williams has my vote together with Thomas Newman. Of my own scores, I might be most proud of *Odyssey of the Belem*, but that is in a symphonic form. *Greystoke* might be one of my favourite scores because the music is operatic and is the dialogue for the first half of the film. How many am I allowed to choose? I cannot leave out *Antony and Cleopatra*.



We would like you to comment to us about your classical facet. You have composed two symphonies—The Colchester Symphony and the Belem Symphony, a guitar concerto, chamber works, strings and saxophone quartets, a ballet and recently, “The Death of the Nations”, a symphonic suite for orchestra and percussions on the extermination of the Indian Nation. Would you please explain how this work was conceived and also if you are working on new classical compositions?

Now you are asking me about my passion. I have to compose and I am never content. Film music gave me the chance to compose but classical music gives me the chance to develop. My film scores were never fully developed music. Films do not call for that kind of musical development. I did not know I was capable of musical development until I had composed my two string quartets. For me this is one of the higher forms of music where you can't hide behind lush orchestration. Everything has to be complete within the voices of four instruments. When this is mastered, you can call yourself a composer.

Before I became a film composer I had composed for my own Jazz quintet and had been commissioned to compose a saxophone concerto and an extended piece for a large Jazz ensemble. “Death of the Nations” was originally conceived as a companion piece to be performed with *Hatari* (also for percussion). We should have performed both these pieces at the last concert in Paris, but *Hatari* got dropped, and there was a percussion problem, not sufficient room on the stage, and a strike, which meant that we performed the piece with percussion missing. It is my wish to record “Colchester” with a properly professional orchestra. It was performed and recorded by a school orchestra, and they did very well, but it has been rewritten for a professional symphony orchestra. For the last three years, I have been working on an opera. With luck it will be finished this year. I have been commissioned to compose a chamber work for string quintet and wind quintet for a very fine youth orchestra in Great Britain, and I am compelled to write my third string quartet for the Delme String Quartet.

Finally, the question we all want to know, but composers are not always eager to answer: What do you have coming up for the future? New projects, any immediate recording plans? Or are you that kind of superstitious man who thinks it would be bad luck to talk about future

assignments? Let's hope not!

In today's climate it is hard to talk about the future. I feel for the young composers who have been reduced to copying temp scores or the latest blockbuster, and then have to be approved by music supervisors. There is some wonderful talent around, but they are not getting a chance to compose, only copy. I went to an Oscar nomination party for all the nominated songwriters and composers the other day. I listened to all the rhetoric and had a wonderful time. We were all surprised when the winning score was announced. They do say that everything is cyclic. I hope that the corner will soon be turned when film music is seen as a creative art and will enter the concert hall repertoire and stand the test of time.

My new post as conductor of the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra will require a lot of my time. Up to this point, it has been a recording orchestra which Elmer Bernstein used for some of his film scores. We now plan to present "Symphony in Film Music", an annual season of live concerts of symphonic music related to film. The first concert will take place on May 18th, at Royce Hall which has the finest acoustics and is possibly the finest venue in Los Angeles. On the first concert I will conduct *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Greystoke*. I will also conduct music by Vaughan Williams, Mahler, John Williams, Maurice Jarre and Max Steiner. Subsequent programs will be extremely varied and will feature film music by such composers as Shostakovitch, Walton, Korngold, North and Takemitsu, as well as the latest deserving scores from our younger composers. The one necessary qualification is that the music is properly adapted into a truly symphonic form as to be counted as concert music to be enjoyed by concert goers. We especially hope to attract the film music fans who might be encouraged to learn more about film music's relationship to music as a whole. I do hope it will be a success, and a real alternative to classical concerts. The Hollywood Symphony Orchestra is a great orchestra.



Readers of your website who wish to be timely informed about news and concert performances by The Hollywood Symphony Orchestra are cordially invited to visit: www.hollywoodsymphonyorchestra.org

Many, many thanks, Mr. Scott for having given us the opportunity to interview you. The Scoremagazine team truly appreciate your courtesy, and we wish you continuous success in your future projects which, as in the past, we are convinced will continue giving us many hours of happiness and listening pleasure.

Hollywood, March 2006