

"As far as I know, the film has so far had four titles. When I saw it first, it was called 'Buff', then they changed it to something else, and now it's called 'Blind Panic', except that in the United States it will be called 'See No Evil'. It was one of my conditions to do the score with the LSO, and they agreed to that, they decided it was worth the extra expense. Now, I don't see many movies nowadays, not out of distain, but because I don't have the time. But it seems that while my musical frame of mind has hopefully progressed in eight years, the movies musical mind is back to, well....(Previn names the least adventurous of film composers). So what I wrote must have seemed extremely modern to them (I use 'modern' in quotes).

I wrote a fairly relentless score and I used a synthesiser to make some especially eerie electronic sounds, but merely within the orchestra as another instrument.

I wrote the score, and we recorded it, but at the recording sessions neither the producer, Leslie Linder, nor the director, Richard Fleischer, bothered to come: Fleischer was already doing another movie, and Linder was on a ski-ing holiday. Never in my experience of 57 film scores which I have written have I recorded for three days without either the producer or director being there at all, but Mr Fleischer was filming in Spain, and Mr Linder was ski-ing, so there was nothing we could do. His associate producer, Mr Basil Appleby, was there along with the film editor. Mr Appleby absolutely adored every semiquaver, and came running out with the wildest hyperbole after every take. I didn't take much notice of that, but I *was* pleased when members of the orchestra were keen on the score, and also one or two composers present, including John Williams and Oliver Knussen. Myself, I thought it was quite the best score I had ever written for a dramatic movie."

"When I say it was 'modern', it wouldn't raise an eyebrow in the concert hall, but I suppose by movie standards it was fairly relentless. At the end of sessions Mr Appleby said 'Marvellous and RCA and Columbia both wanted to put the score out on records, not to mention the film company's own record firm. One of the themes was pretty, so they said 'Couldn't we please have a song out of that'. It was impossible in the movie itself, but I agreed to do something that could be used as an exploitation song. I wrote to Johnny Mercer, one of our most renowned lyricists, sending him the song. The company said, 'He'll be much too expensive,' but Mercer wrote back saying that he liked the song so much he was enclosing three lyrics which 'you can have, I won't charge for them.'

"The next thing that happened was various people returned from their ski-ing holidays, saw the picture, and decided that the music was too harsh, too astringent, too ugly, too rough. They used every adjective except too 'modern'. I pointed out as gently as I could that someone slitting four throats isn't Mantovani. They said 'Yes, but there isn't anything the kids can whistle.'

They then made suggestions. First to rewrite the score - which I couldn't do, because when I write I have already considered most of the alternatives and rejected them. Secondly they said: 'Let us take out some of the bits we don't like, and get someone to

rewrite the rest on the side, and you can keep the credits.' At that point I got really very angry."

"The film then got into the hands of a man called Van Eissen, who runs Columbia Studios here, and he also thought the music a bit much. A friend looked out some stills from old Hammer films, because Van Eissen used to be a bit-part actor, we found some nice stills of him driving stakes through vampires' hearts. There was no way I could fight it, because at this stage I am not going to sit down and try and persuade music al illiterates that what I wrote isn't too bad. I found a euphemism for 'stuff it', and said 'leave me alone', 'But don't you want your pretty bits in', they asked. I said: 'I shan't have too many hard feelings if you take the whole of the score out and take my name of, but if you as much as alter four measures of my music and have it re-written, then I shall sue you for the studios.'

"They then hired someone called David Whitaker. Now, I don't know how long he was on it, or whether they recorded it, but evidently they didn't like his music either. They then flirted with the idea of a score by a pop group, with the idea that a movie score is in reality an album which you stick into a film. That didn't work either. So then came Elmer Bernstein, a man of great repute. He is at least the composer, so this film, which is a very small movie, will have had a music cost approaching that of 'Fiddler On The Roof'. I don't quite know how the home office of Columbia Pictures in Hollywood is going to regard Mr Linder's very specialised taste in music."

"I'm disillusioned because I like the music. I have scored for 57 films, and for whatever that idiotic yardstick is worth, did win four Academy Awards and I was nominated 13 other times, and till now I have never had a score thrown out. I have never so much as had a sequence questioned by directors such as Billy Wilder, William Wyler, and Richard Brooks."

"Then there was Mr Appleby who had been acting producer at the recordings and had come out and told me that by comparison the Missa Solemnis was a piece of crap. I just got sick k of people saying no one liked it, when in point of fact it was only Mr Linder and Mr Van Eissen."

"I don't know who broke the story of the score being thrown out. It obviously wasn't me, because being active in musical circles, I don't like having a story of being turned down. The company called: 'Can we all agree to say that it was mutually decided the score should be taken out.' No, we cannot' I said, 'because it wasn't mutually decided. I dislike that instant sort of 'let's not have trouble.' It their right to not like the music, but it wasn't their right to intimate that it wasn't any good."

"The albums aren't coming out, and I have asked for a tape of the score just for personal reasons, because I liked the music, but it doesn't exist anymore, and the score doesn't exist anymore, and so 45 minutes of original music has simply vanished into thin air, and that makes me rather sad. I should have liked to have heard it once."

"I have a feeling in these hysterical days of the demise of the film they're too anxious to have not a film score by simply a theme that can be recorded by whatever current pop group. I'm much more interested in scoring as dramatic background music. I must say I'm

in good company, though I wouldn't put myself in this league as a composer. In the last year or so Sir William Walton has had a score thrown out for 'Battle Of Britain' by Harry Saltzman, and it was redone by Ron Goodwin. And Richard Rodney Bennett did the score for 'The Go Between', and that was thrown out and redone. Now right on the heels of that mine's being done by Elmer Bernstein. So the idea of doing an idiomatically symphonic score is no longer feasible at least not very often, unless it's simply the flogging of a theme over and again as in 'Ryan's Daughter'."

"There was an old saying in Hollywood when I was there, that everyone in the film business knows his own job "plus music". That is a dreadful admission, and it's quite true."

Andre Previn was talking to Edward Greenfield

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