

# JOHN BARRY

## WRITING THE BOND MUSIC

"Consider the scene in *GOLDFINGER* where Bond is captured," said **JOHN BARRY**, "He is taken off to Goldfinger's headquarters and it would appear that he's had it. But the audience is not at all convinced it is the end for Bond. They know there is a button..."

So what do you do when writing the music for this scene? Do you relax the music? No-you keep the edge on it. If you suddenly gave it a negative mood - which would suggest it was the end for Bond - it would be foreign to what the audience was feeling. So you keep the tension in the music all the time.

"Then, when Bond presses the button and all hell breaks loose on the screen, you increase the tension and let every man in a 60-piece orchestra give his everything to produce a vast tumult of sound."

"You will hear musicians talk about 'Mickey Mouse music'. by this they mean music which is aimed to give people exactly what they want. It doesn't try to be off-beat or way-out; it doesn't aim to set a trend."

"Well, Bond music isn't ordinary Mickey Mouse music - it is SUPER - COLOSSAL Mickey Mouse music! A Bond film is geared to give entertainment in terms of colour, thrills, laughs - on a giant scale and I have to write music to match what is happening on the screen."

"To write it you have to steep yourself 100% in the mood of the film. I know people have found it hard to credit reports that I have never read a Bond book. Well, I still haven't! But I do plenty to 'get with' a Bond film."

"First I study the script. Then I go out on locations and make regular visits to the studio to see them shooting interior scenes. I also sit through rushes, concentrating until my head aches. But I seldom start writing till I have seen a complete rough version of the film."

"I have a timing sheet on which I note what is wanted musically," he continued. "I may need long sequences lasting several minutes or I may have to deal with action lasting as little as ten seconds. But, whatever I do, my timing must be right to within a third of a second."

"Above all, I must put myself in the place of the average filmgoer. As far as possible I must anticipate his feeling and reactions."

"I can't emphasise enough how important it is to capture the mood of the film. It is not simply a matter of making the music fast when the action is fast and slow when the pace slackens. But there is no room for half measures. You must go either with the action or against it."

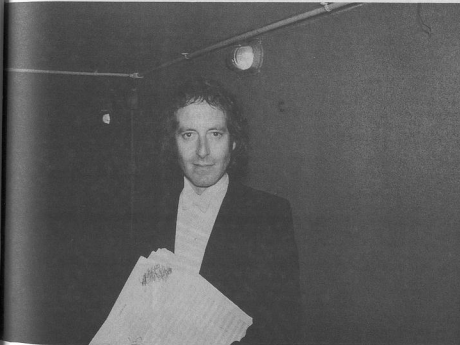
"An example of what I mean will be seen in *THUNDERBALL*. There is a particular scene in the film where the action, though hugely exciting, is extremely slow because it takes place under water. At first I kicked around the idea of making the music slow but, finally, I decided against it. I felt instinctively it wouldn't work. Finally, I turned the idea around completely. When you see that sequence in *THUNDERBALL* you will hear the music going at full speed against the action. I hope you like the effect."

In a sense, Barry came to film music by accident. As leader of the John Barry Seven, he was a musical star of British beat music during the late 1950s. He played an important part in the rise to fame of Adam Faith and it was when he drove Adam to the studios for the screen test which led to the singers' first film, *BEAT GIRL*, that Barry got his break. The producer signed him to write the music for the picture.

"I always had an ambition to write film music, but I didn't expect the chance to come like that," said Barry. "Mind you, coping with my first film wasn't easy. It had to be done quickly and I was booked for a variety tour when the time came to start writing. I wrote the score in two weeks. Most of it was done in the Midland Hotel, Manchester, and at digs in Glasgow!"

"I work hard," said Barry. "But it intrigues me. There's nothing quite so rewarding as seeing a good film with your music in the background. I think it's better than seeing yourself on the screen."

(**JOHN BARRY** was talking to **DICK TATHAM** in *SHOWTIME* magazine 1965. (C) Rank Magazines. If any other copyright has been infringed we apologize and will rectify in the next magazine.)



**JOHN BARRY** photographed backstage at the Royal Albert Hall in the early seventies by contributing editor, Peter D. Kent (C).