

Gene
Roddenberry
Life Without 'Trek'

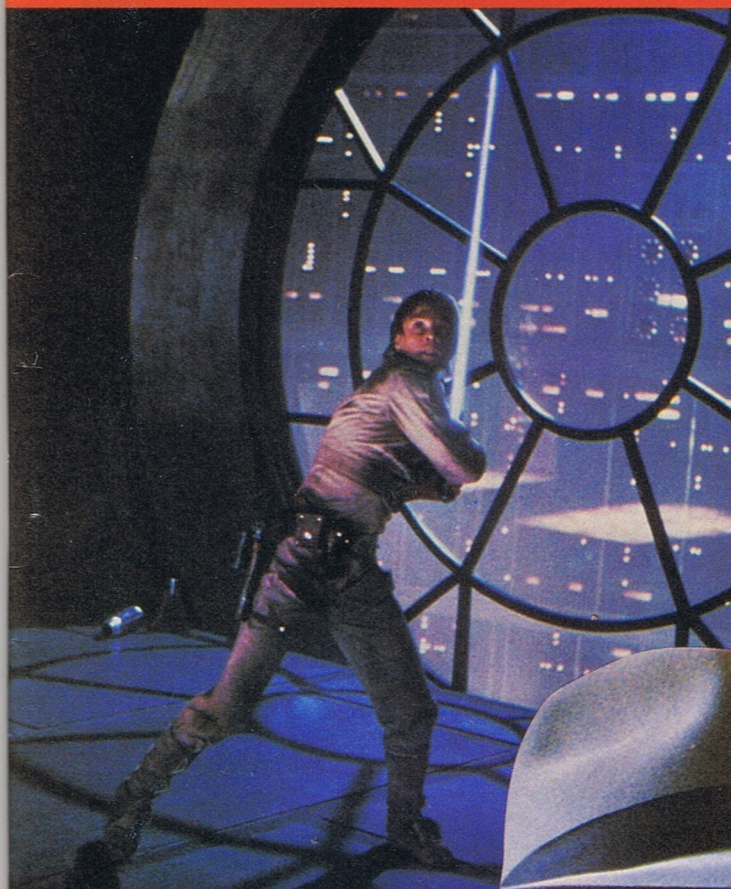
William Shatner on the New TREK Project

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Jerry Goldsmith
on Scoring
the Fantastic



Jerry Goldsmith

Science Fiction's Hottest Film Scorer Prefers to Let His Music Do the Talking

By SAM MARONIE

Few, if any, film music composers ever achieve the status of becoming a household word—that is, a name immediately recognizable to the public at large.

Composer Jerry Goldsmith is a notable member of that elite pantheon. Like such contemporaries as John (Star Wars) Williams and John (007) Barry, Jerry Goldsmith is familiar even to the most casual moviegoer. But, for fantasy film enthusiasts, the arranger commands his own devoted legion of fans.

But just tell Goldsmith he's the focus of such adoration and you'll most likely be greeted with incredulous silence and a

modestly embarrassed thanks.

"Well, I certainly don't regard myself as a 'household word,'" the 51-year-old musician protests. "But I do appreciate the fact that people seem to enjoy my work. That makes me very happy."

Interviewing Jerry Goldsmith is a challenging task all by itself. He is the picture of graciousness, cooperation and friendliness . . . but at the same time seems to dislike talking about himself. One almost expects him to stop abruptly and ask if *maybe* there isn't something more interesting to discuss.

Putting together even a partial sampling of

Goldsmith's credits turns out to be a formidable task. Among the most famous are: *Patton*, *The Sand Pebbles*, *A Patch of Blue*. . . SF/fantasy movie buffs may choose from a smorgasbord of titles that include *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Logan's Run*, *ALIEN*—and his most recent outer space opus, *Outland*. Goldsmith may not enjoy self-praise, but his music certainly speaks well of his incredible talents.

And you also have to add to this total numerous television episodes, made-for-TV-features, symphonies, ballets, classical works, Emmies, Oscars and other highlights, to get a grasp of the musician's prodigious output.

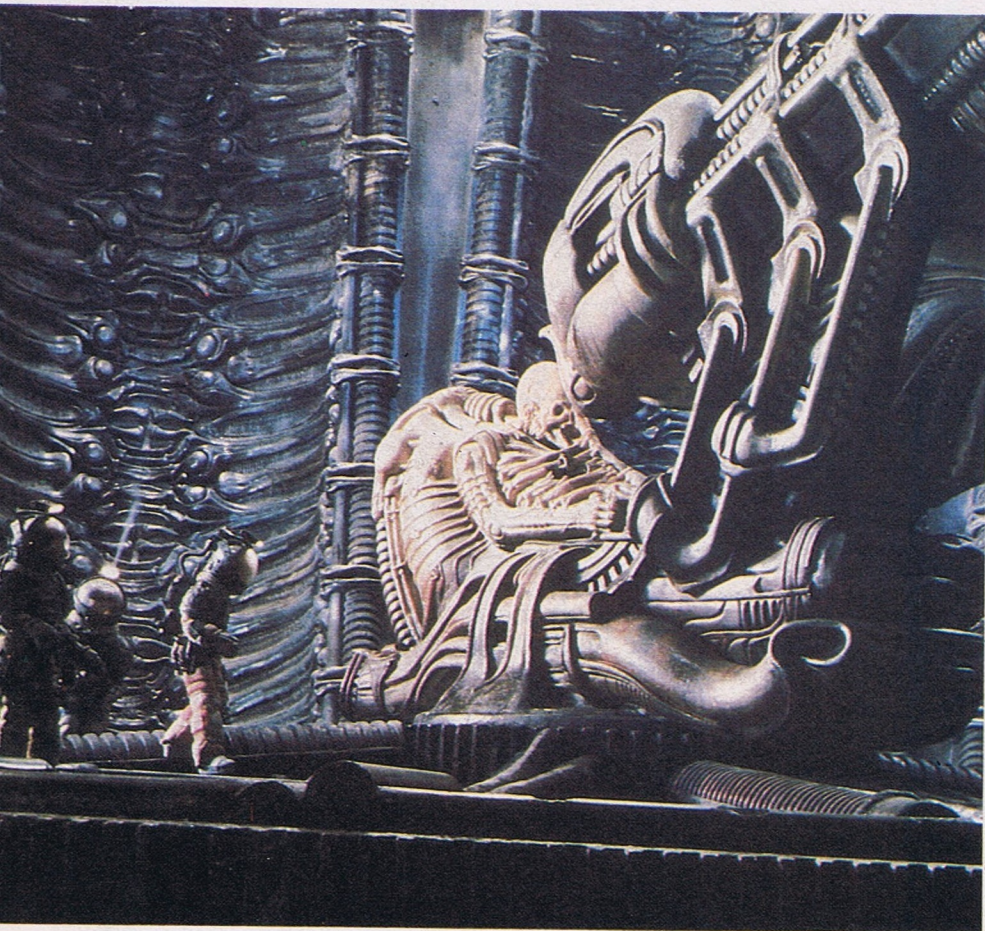
"Did I really score all those science-fiction pictures?" Goldsmith asks in mock-astonishment, after listening to all the titles. "Gee, I've really done quite a few."

"While I basically like SF and find it interesting, I'm getting a little bit tired of it; I'd like to do something different for a while. Everyone always points out my science-fiction movies . . . or my adventure scores . . . or my horror films; they always seem to forget I can do dramas—which I love—or comedies like *The Great Train Robbery*. Yeah, that's what I'd like to do next—another comedy!"

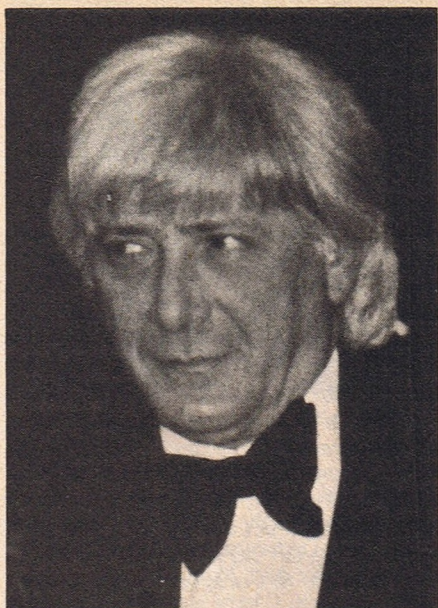
Perhaps the secret to the composer's success lies in his ability to function well within almost any subject or creative environment. Such a facility for composition did not come easily but rather as a result of years spent in practice and plain hard work.

Goldsmith took up piano at the ripe age of six, and as a seasoned veteran of 12 decided that the world of theatrical music was definitely for him. He followed this dream throughout high school and in later years at Los Angeles City College. After graduation in 1951 he taught music classes, while at the same time furthering his own education through a variety of special courses and tutors such as the acclaimed pianist Jacob Gimpel.

Goldsmith ultimately wrangled a staff position with CBS Radio, where he handled miscellaneous chores. He worked his way up the ladder to a show of his own, *Romance*, and on to a number of the fading medium's



ALIEN, a well-received space thriller, has an eerie Goldsmith score.



Goldsmith arrives at *Superman* premiere.

major headliners. It was only inevitable that he cross over to the up-and-coming video world.

As a staff composer for CBS Goldsmith continued in the challenges of hurry-up, grind-it-out weekly programming. While toiling at the Big Eye he orchestrated numerous episodes of such network stalwarts as *Gunsmoke* (including the famous theme that would become the show's signature), *Studio One* and *The Twilight Zone*.

The "Twilight" Years

"I loved working with Rod Serling," he says reminiscing about the host/producer and sometimes-writer of the acclaimed fantasy program. "He was brilliant; a wonderfully creative, innovative man. We didn't really have a lot of close contact during the course of the show, but I did enjoy being able to do something professionally with him."

While Goldsmith attests to scoring several of the long-running series' episodes, his memory remains sketchy about specific details. He does, however, hold vivid recollections concerning what many regard as the classic of all *TZ* segments.

Titled "The Invaders," this playlet featured only one character (portrayed by actress Agnes Moorehead) who is tormented by diminutive aliens—who ultimately turn out to be Earthlings marooned on a world of giants. The show was distinguished by the bravura performance of Moorehead, who essayed the role without benefit of dialogue.

"The fact that there was no spoken word made the impact of the music so much more important," Goldsmith recalls. "The sounds had to convey all the feelings and emotions in the story. I'm very pleased with the results and feel that was one of my better efforts."

It was during the late 1950s that Goldsmith's career really began to pick up steam. *Black Patch*, in 1957, marked his movie debut; this undistinguished Western provided a good training ground for the novice and lead to other features. Meanwhile there were

always television programs in need of his services like *Dr. Kildare* (his song, "Three Stars Will Shine Tonight," was a big hit), *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and the horrific *Thriller* (for which he was Emmy-nominated).

But as the composer's stature in the theatrical market grew, his video work became less frequent. Goldsmith's early films provided him the opportunity to become associated with several important directors whose stars were ascending. Among these budding talents were Franklin Schaffner (*The Stripper*) and John Frankenheimer (*Seven Days in May*). There were even stints with industry legends like John Huston (*Freud*) and Robert Wise (*The Sand Pebbles*). During the mid-1960s he was placed under contract with 20th Century-Fox, where he helmed much of the studio's product.

As Goldsmith's reputation shined within the industry, the awards began rolling in. He has been nominated for the coveted Academy Award on no less than 11 occasions; he won this honor for a terror film, *The Omen*. His last picture in the Oscar sweepstakes was 1980's *Star Trek—TMP*. His TV features have received equal homage; the scores for *Babe*, *QB VII* and *The Red Pony* all merited the small screen's Emmy. Goldsmith's credit on a movie or TV show is now familiar to the average viewer, promising a sumptuous musical feast.

emphasize a point—not merely to fill in empty space. He maintains that the correct use of movie music is as important as the actual composition.

Rumor & Humor

Goldsmith displays a good sense of humor about his work. In this era when entertainers are prone to have their efforts analyzed for hidden meanings and underlying causes, the musician is not spared from this scrutiny.

Theories and false supposition concerning his work run rampant among serious film music buffs. Was he a disciple of famed fantasy composer Miklos Rosza? ("I took just one six-month music writing class with him at USC!") Did Goldsmith choose protegee Tom Scott for the score of *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*? ("Of course not; I only met the man once or twice!") Was *The Omen*'s music inspired by an actual Black Mass? ("No! Incredible! How do these people come up with things like that?")

● For his score to the phenomenally successful *Planet of The Apes*, the musician employed a variety of woodwinds, percussion instruments and other unusual devices. One of Goldsmith's most popular recordings, the sound track disk is a much sought-after collector's item at fearful prices.

"The picture was a huge experiment in itself, so I thought I would try a few different



The original *Planet of the Apes*, one of Goldsmith's most popular scores.

"Of course I was very happy...very pleased to win the Academy Award and the Emmys; I suppose any composer would desire them. But it wasn't something I consciously went out and sought. As with any score, I try to do the best job I possibly can without looking for any awards or statues down the line."

The musician believes he holds a straightforward approach to scoring a film; taking the script, evaluating a rough cut in the screening room—sometimes walking in for the first time with or without a preconceived idea of what he would like to do. If there is a philosophy that runs through Goldsmith's output, it might be his feelings that music should only be inserted when it's needed to

things on my own. I like using different types of instruments in my music—whatever will work and give me the desired sound I'm striving for.

"I also liked working with Franklin Schaffner again," Goldsmith says, referring to *Apes*' director. "Of all the directors I think he understands music best of all—what it's all about and how it fits in within the context of a picture. He's also willing to listen to your ideas and discuss his own feelings about what should be done and how to do it."

Goldsmith admitted that such an open dialogue between composer and director is very rare in Hollywood—and at the same time feels that special relationship helped to make the scores of such Schaffner-helmed

features as *Papillon*, *Apes* and *Patton* (which contains some eerie moments) among his personal favorites.

Some 10 years ago Goldsmith embarked on another interesting project—this one with fantasist Ray Bradbury. (the composer had previously scored the screen version of Bradbury's *Illustrated Man*). Their meld of words and music resulted in "Apollo Christo," an oratorio performed live for a very limited run in Los Angeles. This musicale brought a chorus, recitations and soloist together without benefit of scenery or costumes in a unique mixture that only these creative geniuses could provide. It is unfortunate the work is not performed on a more popular scale.

While his array of SF/horror soundtracks are indeed impressive, Goldsmith's *Outland* effort is one of only a very few hardware-SF pictures that he's working on (*Star Trek—TMP* being the other). How does he feel about this?

"(Director) Peter Hyams wanted me for this film because we worked together on his *Capricorn One*. He likes my work and thought I'd be right."

And the results?

"I'm happy with it—though I'm never totally satisfied with any score I do. Peter is another director who appreciates music's proper use and gave me plenty of artistic freedom."

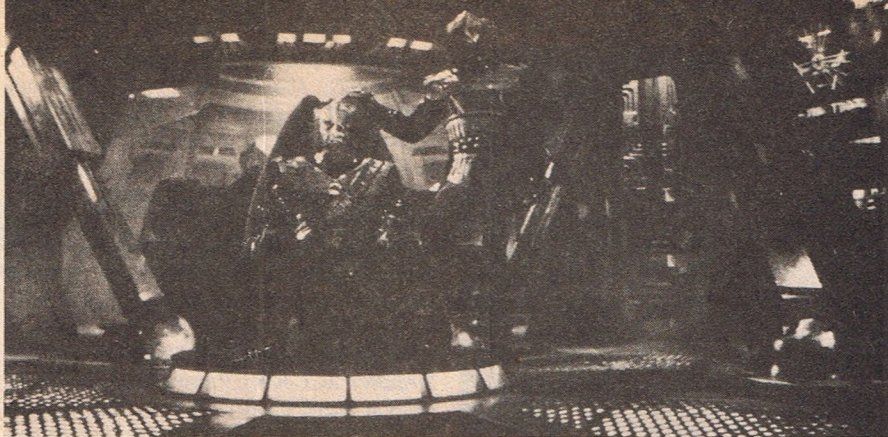
Goldsmith explained that the mechanics of film composition are as varied as the films themselves. Often the events follow in an orderly fashion—conferences with producers before shooting begins, studying the characters and the story, the actual composing sessions. He rarely has cause to visit the set or fraternize with the production crew. But then again, there are exceptions.

"Trek"—A Challenge

During the production of *Star Trek*, the various slowdowns in special-effects work lead many to believe that the picture would never make its early-December premiere dates. The movie arrived in time for the opening just under the wire—and so did the stirring Goldsmith score.



Agnes Moorhead in *Twilight Zone's* "The Invaders," scored by Goldsmith.



The *Trek* film's opening Klingon sequence was the last to be scored.

"They were bringing the film to me for orchestrating in bits and pieces—a sequence or two at a time. I think the very last thing that I did was to score the [opening] Klingon scenes. As I recall, I delivered the music three days before the film opened." Talk about close calls.

"It was a challenge. It was fun," Goldsmith admits, unruffled by the nail-biting schedule. "I was able to use a lot of different instruments and get a variety of effects—especially during the 'space-cloud' sequences—so overall I was very pleased. Career-wise, the soundtrack album is shaping up as one of my better-selling film scores."

Goldsmith's epic musical contribution was cited as one of the film's brightest attributes—even by the picture's severest critics. In scenes regarded as slow and stodgy, the composer's rousing tones are credited for sustaining the colossal production's emotion and momentum single-handedly.

"I take it you didn't like the picture very much," Goldsmith laughs in response to the statement. When discussing the more adventure-oriented nature of the *ST—TMP* score, he was asked if any pressure was exerted by the producers that he stick to the *Trek* television theme.

"No, no one forced me to put anything in from the original series. I was, however, asked if I might be able to weave something along with the new score, and I felt I was successful in doing so."

In the *ST—TMP* programme, Goldsmith utilized a variety of electronic tonalities. To achieve these unusual audio effects he employed a strange musical instrument (among others) called simply a "beam." On the surface this device resembles an ordinary piece of wood, yet emits a very low frequency vibration when struck. Operation of this beam has been likened by many musicians to performing with a solidified laser beam whose sound can be bent and shaped at will—with eerie results. When asked if his interest in electronic music was sparked at all by the pioneering *Forbidden Planet* score, Goldsmith replies that he is unfamiliar with the 1956 creation.

Extreme modesty to the point of near-shyness makes Goldsmith downplay his career high spots. ("Are you *really* interested in all of this?"). So perhaps it's best to turn to one of the composer's friends for another

view of the man and his work. Leonard Slatkin conducts the world-famous St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; he has known Jerry Goldsmith for over 20 years.

Slatkin says, "Jerry is very much a 'normal' person. He's not flaky, not Hollywood at all. Like any musician Jerry is extremely organized—he has to be because a composer's life is totally dictated by time and numbers." Slatkin pauses momentarily for a chuckle, "Although he can be awfully disorganized at home sometimes."

The symphony conductor, who has attended several Goldsmith scoring sessions in Hollywood (*Star Trek*, *Capricorn One*), offers these observations of his friend, once he raises the maestro's baton.

"At the podium he is very, very intense—not as loose as he is otherwise. Jerry hears everything—not one sound escapes his attention. Once he steps up and faces the orchestra, there's very little time wasted on corrections or restructuring; his timing is always right on the mark. Jerry's arrangements are so thought out and complete it transfers from the paper almost perfectly."

"Sometimes his intensity builds to a point where he almost forgets the players are only human and there is only a limited amount of time allowed to achieve a certain sound."

Several years ago Slatkin "... turned him loose..." and gave Goldsmith free reign to create a work for the St. Louis Symphony to perform. The orchestra hopes to have the composer guest-conduct in the future.

Currently Goldsmith plans to continue scoring theatrical films and special television events. For the small screen he recently helmed the mammoth *Masada*. Theatrical work is represented by *Omen III: The Final Conflict* and *Outland*. He is presently negotiating on a special project, which he declines to talk about at this time. Maybe it is the proposed *Man From U.N.C.L.E.* feature film that's in the pre-production stages... or some other mysterious undertaking.

"Music is a very difficult subject to verbalize about," says the musician, describing his reaction to articles and interviews about his work.

It is tempting for a writer to fall back on a corny cliché and respond that Jerry Goldsmith's music says it all. But in the composer's case, that statement could not be more fitting. ★