

DANSE MACABRE

25 YEARS OF DANNY ELFMAN AND TIM BURTON



DANIEL ROBERT
ELFMAN



TIMOTHY WALTER
BURTON

WRITTEN BY JEFF BOND

© 2010 Warner Bros. Records Inc. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher. Certain elements of this book are copyrights of particular persons or entities as indicated on pages 262 and 263, which constitutes a continuation of the copyright page.



Frog Servant

Burton's painting of one of the Red Queen's liveried frogs from *Alice In Wonderland*.

A NOTE FROM
THE AUTHOR

I'd like to thank Richard Kraft for his friendship and for trusting me with this incredible project; Lukas Kendall for getting me started—and keeping me employed—as a professional writer; Jon Burlingame for providing an impossibly high standard of journalistic professionalism to aspire to; Ben Small for being a great sounding board and arbiter of musical taste since both of us were 15 years old; my parents, Kenneth and Penny Bond, for raising me in a household where Tom Jones, Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass, and Barbra Streisand stood right alongside John Barry, Ennio Morricone, and *Russian Composer Masterpieces* (my first LP of classical music); and finally, my amazing wife Brooke and my equally amazing son Logan, who put up with my willful ignorance of their needs during the months it took to write and edit this book. And finally, I'd like to thank Danny Elfman for having a story that is every bit as compelling as his music, and Tim Burton for making films that make all of us feel a little less like outsiders.

—Jeff Bond

THANKS

SPECIAL THANKS FROM DANNY ELFMAN

There are so many people to thank on this project that it’s not really possible. Of course, I want to thank Richard Kraft, without whose obsessive and persistent energy this project would not exist; Melisa McGregor who was right in lock step with Richard the whole way. I’d like to give a special shout-out to Laura Engel who was working hard behind the scenes to put it all together...and way, way beyond that, as Laura has been with me wearing many different hats for over 30 years now—before composing, before the band, almost from day one. Laura tirelessly helped guide my different careers for all that time. And a huge thanks to Melissa Karaban who runs the entire “Elf-world” mini-planet and keeps it from imploding on a daily basis, as well as keeping me from losing my own brain. I’d also like to thank Matt Taylor and his crew who worked incredibly hard to design and create this entire package, and Jeff Bond who had the insane task of doing endless interviews and putting this whole story together. Thank you to Eileen Lucero, Kristen Blandford, and Melissa Karaban who did their best editing and proofreading a million pages of text with virtually no time. Great appreciation to Shie Rozow, Ellen Segal, Greg Maloney, and Melisa McGregor who did the digital editing and assembly for all the CDs; Pat Sullivan for doing all the mastering; and Jon Mann-Kreiger who jumped in at the last minute to help whip some zoetrope strips together. I’d like to thank Disney’s Monica Zierhut who would not give up trying to locate the lost *The Nightmare Before Christmas* instrumental tracks and through dogged persistence finally prevailed. Thank you to Allison Abbate and Adam Shell on the DVD. Thanks always to my support team of Steve Savitsky and Doug Mark. A huge note of appreciation to Derek Frey who handled a million details and virtually everything from Tim’s side of the pond. Also, thanks to Xavier Ramos, Wendy Griffiths, Diarmuid Quinn, Andrew Rossiter, and all the great folks at Warner Bros. Records who made this all possible and were completely supportive of every crazy idea that we had.

On the bigger scale of all the talented musicians, contractors, copyists, studio music heads, and others who I’ve worked with, there’s no way to get that all in and to mention any names, meaning upsetting others who have done great work, as there’s no good way to do this in this limited space, but I’ll just say, over the course of this body of work, I would like to thank the engineers Shawn Murphy and Dennis Sands who have recorded and mixed most of it. To the music editors Bob Badami, Ellen Segal, Bob and Bill Abbott who cut and supervised most of it. To Mark Mann who midi-wrangled much of it. And to the orchestrators Edgardo Simone and Dave Slonniker who have orchestrated much of it, and especially Steve Bartek who has been on board for about 99 percent of this, from *Pee-wee* to *Alice* and everything in between, not to mention being there with me long before composing or orchestrating were things we even thought about.

Thank you Johnny for your beautiful introductory words.

To even try and thank Tim Burton is almost silly at this point. There would be no 25th anniversary box set. There would be no film-composing career for myself. I would probably be a used-car salesman if not for him, so I’ll leave it right there...

SPECIAL THANKS FROM TIM BURTON

There are so many people to thank on this project that I’m glad Danny did most of it. I’d personally like to thank Derek Frey, Leah Gallo, Holly Kempf, Richard Kraft, and Laura Engel. I’d write an extensive thanks to Danny, but I think I’ll save that for the 50th anniversary box set.

THANKS

SPECIAL THANKS

Kris Ahrend, Joseph Billie, Paul Broucek, David Bufano, Shelly Bunge, Alison Burton, Dan Butler, Tom Cavanaugh, Phil Cohen, Philip Shrut, Melanie Cook, Scott Van Dort, Mark Dunn, Jesenia Gallegos, Leah Gallow, Sophie Branson Gill, Dominic Griffin, Marc Gurvitz, Jennie Harris, Keith Harvey, Julianna Hays, Melanie Jones, Josh Johnson, Julie Heath, Jessica Heidt, Scott Holtzman, David Jessen, David Klane, Robert Kraft, Sylvia Krask, Camille Kuznetz, David Lee, David Leiman, Mitchell Lieb, Jason Linn, Roni Lubliner, Lisa Margolis, Keila Miranda, Justin Nanfelt, Brian Netto, Pamela Sollie, Eric Polin, Richard Proldsofer, Diarmuid Quinn, Timothy Rogier, Glenn Schwartz, Kristin Shrader, Randy Spendlove, Kendell Swenson, Tricia Tierno, Jennifer Towle, Robert Townsend, Ryan Tracey, Anna Trumbo, Lia Vollack, Nicole Walsh, Tom Whalley, Allie Willensky, Greg Young, Jamie Young, Gene Zacharewicz, Monica Zeirhut.

THANKS FOR YOUR INPUT & ASSISTANCE

Reza Aminy, Neil S. Bulk, Nick Busby, Megan Cavallari, Paul Cote, Victor Field, Mike Gerhard, Jeremy Glassman, Peter Hackman, Thor Joachim Haga, Tor Y. Harbin, Alice Instone-Brewer, Herbert Kaplan, Joshua Kaufman, David Kay, Lukas Kendall, Nicky Lammertink, Mark Malmstrom, Chris Mangione, Mike Matessino, John May, Michael McMahan, Thomas Mueller, Nat Murphy, Caleb Nelson, James Nelson, Nick Redman, Shaun Rutherford, Scott Saslow, Koray Savas, Daniel Schweiger, John Takis, Thomas Van Parys, Matt Verboys, Taylor White, Amer Zahid...

A SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE WHO GAVE GENEROUSLY OF THEIR TIME IN MAKING THEMSELVES AVAILABLE TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR THIS BOOK:

Allison Abbate, Bill Abbott, Jon Amiel, John August, Bob Badami, Rick Baker, Steve Bartek, Timur Bekmambetov, Jon Brion, Paul Broucek, Jon Burlingame, Tim Burton, Carter Burwell, Helena Bonham Carter, Bruce Cohen, Guillermo Del Toro, Alexandre Desplat, Denise Di Novi, Bruce Dukov, Danny Elfman, Laura Engel, Bob Fernandez, Derek Frey, Mike Gerhard, Phillip Glass, Taylor Hackford, Paul Haggis, Don Hahn, Rick Heinrichs, Dan Jinks, Joe Johnston, Jeffrey Jones, Tom Jones, Michael Keaton, Lukas Kendall, Mike Knobloch, Richard Kraft, Robert Kraft, Gary LeMel, Chris Lebenzon, Ang Lee, Deborah Lurie, John Mauceri, Chris Montan, Erroll Morris, Mark Mothersbaugh, Shawn Murphy, Lennie Neihaus, Kathy Nelson, Thomas Newman, James Newton Howard, Catherine O’Hara, Bobbi Page, Ken Page, Jon Peters, John Powell, Brett Ratner, Paul Reubens, Emil Richards, David Rockwell, Doreen Ringer Ross, Joe Roth, Deep Roy, Scott Rudin, Dennis Sands, Gus Van Sant, Ellen Segal, Henry Selick, Marc Shaiman, Edward Shearmur, Howard Shore, Alan Silvestri, Randy Spendlove, Twyla Tharp, Caroline Thompson, Suzanne Todd, Bob Townson, Dan Vebber, Lia Vollack, Billy Weber, Bo Welch, Taylor White, Richard Zanuck.

IN MEMORY OF

Julian Bratolyubov, Debbi Datz-Pyle & Patti Zimmitti

CREDITS

THE DANNY ELFMAN & TIM BURTON 25TH ANNIVERSARY MUSIC BOX

<i>Produced by</i>	Danny Elfman and Tim Burton	<i>Business Affairs for the Producers</i>	Doug Mark, David Ferreria, Linda Osher
<i>Executive Producers</i>	Laura Engel and Richard Kraft	<i>Business Affairs</i>	Damian Elahi <i>for Warner Bros. Records</i>
<i>Produced for Warner Bros. Records</i>	Wendy Griffiths and Xavier Ramos	<i>Mastering</i>	Patricia Sullivan at Bernie Grundman Mastering
<i>Associate Producers</i>	Derek Frey and Melisa McGregor	<i>A&R Coordinator</i>	Nick Haussling
<i>Production Coordinators</i>	Sarah DeMatos and Andrew Rossiter	<i>Mastering Coordinator</i>	Andy Kalyvas
<i>Art Direction</i>	Matt Taylor and Ellen Wakayama	<i>Production</i>	Francesca Del Regno, Kathy Malloy, Eileen Lucero
<i>Design</i>	Matt Taylor and Anna Tes	<i>Publicity</i>	Brian Bumbery, TJ Tauriello
<i>Art Coordinators</i>	Leah Gallo and Holly Kempf	<i>Digital Commerce</i>	Alexis Smith
<i>Music Editing</i>	Shie Rozow, Melisa McGregor, Greg Maloney, Ellen Segal		

DANSE MACABRE: 25 YEARS OF DANNY ELFMAN & TIM BURTON BOOK

<i>Written by</i>	Jeff Bond
<i>Foreword by</i>	Johnny Depp
<i>Art Direction</i>	Matt Taylor for Varnish Studio Inc
<i>Design</i>	Matt Taylor, Anna Tes, Peter Grant
<i>Managing Editor</i>	Eileen Lucero
<i>Editors</i>	Kristin Blandford, Melissa Karaban, Elizabeth Shepard
<i>Transcriptions</i>	Sarah DeMatos, Alexander Kovacs, Anna Trumbo
<i>Photo Researcher</i>	Dan Goldwasser
<i>Photo Coordinators</i>	Melisa McGregor, Michelle Rosado, Rachel Reyes
<i>Photo Clearances</i>	Monika Clinger and Karen Dola

A CONVERSATION WITH DANNY ELFMAN & TIM BURTON DVD

<i>Produced by</i>	Tim Burton, Danny Elfman, Richard Kraft, Laura Engel, Allison Abbate, Derek Frey, Wendy Griffiths, Special Treats
<i>Interviewed by</i>	Richard Kraft
<i>Edited by</i>	Adam Shell
<i>Assistant Editor</i>	Josh Lever
<i>Production Coordinators</i>	Melanie Jones, Sarah DeMatos, Andrew Rossiter
<i>DVD Production</i>	Drue Madrid
<i>DVD Package Design</i>	Matt Taylor, Anna Tes
<i>Filmed at Air Studios</i>	London, September 12, 2010

CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY <i>Johnny Depp</i>			
1	ONLY A LAD <i>Elfman Before Burton</i>	11	
OINGO BOINGO & THE FORBIDDEN ZONE			
2	SUBURBIA <i>Art & Alienation</i>	31	
TIM BURTON'S EARLY YEARS			
3	THE BIG RACE <i>The Adventure Begins</i>	39	
PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE			
4	SHOWTIME! <i>Anthem For A Bio-Exorcist</i>	52	
BEETLEJUICE			
5	DESCENT INTO MYSTERY <i>Defining The Dark Knight</i>	71	
BATMAN & BATMAN RETURNS			
<i>Batman</i>	73	<i>Batman Returns</i>	89
<i>Criticism & Imitation</i>	84		
6	EDWARD MEETS THE WORLD <i>Scissors & Celestes</i>	97	
EDWARD SCISSORHANDS			
7	WHAT'S THIS? <i>Stop-Motion Musical</i>	111	
TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS			
8	GOODBYE, GOODBYE <i>Struggles & Changes</i>	131	
<i>Ed Wood</i>	133	<i>Oingo Boingo—"Goodbye, Goodbye"</i>	137
9	UNGODLY EXPERIMENTS <i>A Reunion</i>	145	
MARS ATTACKS!			

10	INTO THE WOODS <i>Headless Horror</i>	157	
<i>Sleepy Hollow</i>	159	<i>R-E-S-P-E-C-T</i>	170
11	DECONSTRUCTION <i>A Classic Reimagined</i>	173	
PLANET OF THE APES			
12	STORYTIME <i>Circuses, Giants & Witches</i>	189	
BIG FISH			
13	THE GOLDEN TICKET <i>Adventures In Loompaland</i>	201	
CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY			
14	ACCORDING TO PLAN <i>Stop-Motion Returns</i>	211	
TIM BURTON'S CORPSE BRIDE			
15	NO PLACE LIKE LONDON <i>Blood On Fleet Street</i>	221	
SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET			
16	ONLY A DREAM <i>Down The Rabbit Hole</i>	231	
ALICE IN WONDERLAND			
17	ETIQUETTE LESSON <i>The Monster Kids Grow Up</i>	243	
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART & OTHER PROJECTS			
<i>Museum Of Modern Art</i>	245	<i>Edward Scissorhands Ballet</i>	249
<i>Serenada Schizophrana</i>	246	<i>Bones</i>	250
<i>The Melancholy Death Of</i>	247	<i>The Overeager Overture</i>	250
<i>Oyster Boy & Other Stories</i>	247	<i>The Art Of Tim Burton</i>	252
<i>Rabbit & Rogue</i>	249		
18	THE FINALE <i>Artistic Brothers</i>	258	
DANNY ELFMAN & TIM BURTON: THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY			



FOREWORD BY
JOHNNY DEPP

Danny and Tim, without doubt, are the two greatest gifts this job ever gave me. I would be neither here, there, nor probably anywhere without them and their general magnificence.

Now, the world is fully aware of the individual genius to be found betwixt the two, but what is more important here is the way in which these unique talents combine and ultimately complement one another, allowing the other's work to bloom in a way unforeseen independently.

Essentially, Danny's darkly sonorous creations are the audio manifestations of Tim's singularly shadowy visions. He is the Ralph Steadman to Tim's Hunter S. Thompson. Together they breathe color into one another's worlds—from my initial experience, working alongside them both—on *Edward Scissorhands*, throughout the many projects that constitute a relationship, which now spans some 20 years...and counting. His music, so warm and inviting, yet somehow unnerving, ultimately manages to sound both elegant and haunting, perfectly defining the character of that very first collaboration. Having then unearthed the precise mood of Tim's film, within the divine notes of his celestial score, Danny soundtracked the tale's soul deep into the hearts of millions.

Subsequently, their working relationship has never floundered. Time after time, their industry gives birth to new beings of wonder and weirdness, charged to delight and excite cinemagoers the planet 'round.

So, a match made in the stars, you might say. Tim and Danny, it was simply meant to be.

1



ONLY A LAD
Elfman Before Burton



Danny Elfman in Africa

Photographed on a transport bus in West Africa by his travel partner Leon Schneiderman.

BOINGO BOINGO & THE FORBIDDEN ZONE

In a California suburb called Baldwin Hills in the late 1950s, at the height of the Atomic Age, a young boy named Danny Elfman found himself drawn by a strange and irresistible force.

First alone, then with other enthusiasts of his kind, the red-headed youngster crossed through the emerging urban sprawl toward the high-arched vintage architecture of the Baldwin Theatre on Coliseum and La Brea, a cinema that catered to the finicky tastes of this very specific demographic. “It was like the *Village Of The Damned*,” Elfman recalls. “It was pretty much the same scenario every weekend on that leisurely walk to the movie theater. Gradually, as I went, I’d find myself among an ever-increasing gang of boys, all shuffling along purposefully toward the same destination. As each block went by, more boys would join the expedition. By the time we got to the theater, the gang had swelled to a joyful mob, brimming over with anticipation for what was to come...several short serial episodes of various heroes and villains, ending most assuredly, in a death-defying cliff-hanger...and finally two feature films. (Sadly, I can only say boys, because I almost never saw a girl at the theater.) The films were almost all horror, fantasy, sci-fi, and a certain amount of action. In short...boy stuff. I mean no offense to Disney, but if a Disney movie were playing, we’d boycott and go to another theater. If the Baldwin Theatre was playing something like *Mary Poppins*, for example, then we would go to the Miralta or the Culver Theatre, which were more likely to play *Tales Of Terror* or *Eyes Without A Face*, because that was our sole objective: The quest for The Three M’s... monsters, mutants, and misfits.

What the young Danny Elfman couldn’t have realized was that he was receiving an education in cinema, a training ground for his eventual



Baldwin Theatre

Built in 1949, young Danny Elfman’s matinee theater of choice was shut down in the late ’80s.

career, and that one day he would write music for exactly the kind of films he was drawn to as a child. What he also couldn’t know was that at just this time, a few miles away in Burbank, another boy just being born would jumpstart Elfman’s career as a film composer. Baby Tim Burton had some catching up to do, but with the Universal monster movies establishing a Saturday-afternoon matinee tradition on television, the future director of films like *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*, *Beetlejuice*, and *Edward Scissorhands* managed to make impressive headway.

“My parents told me that even before I was talking I’d be watching monster movies. In those days they’d be on TV all the time—Saturday afternoon, morning. It was before music videos and other forms of entertainment, so they showed a lot of movies on TV. I was lucky to be



Danny Elfman and family (top)

Danny (the runt) poses with older brother Richard and parents, Blossom (aka Clare) and Milton Elfman.

Danny and Richard Elfman at poolside (right)

Pasty-white 12-year-old Danny can't match the muscles of his well-tanned 16-year-old brother Richard.

Young Danny (bottom)

Already demonstrating an infatuation with puppets.



born during the era when *Frankenstein* or *Creature From The Black Lagoon* or *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* would often be playing on TV. I watched those things from the beginning of my life really.”

Starting in 1985 with *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, Tim Burton and Danny Elfman would collaborate on a baker's dozen of distinctive and wildly imaginative films over the next quarter century: *Beetlejuice*, *Batman*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Batman Returns*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Mars Attacks!*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Planet Of The Apes*, *Big Fish*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, *Corpse Bride*, and *Alice In Wonderland*, all contained the music of Danny Elfman, previously best-known as the frontman for the rock band Oingo Boingo, who would write a series of bold musical scores, making a name for himself as one of the most original musical voices in Hollywood history.

Ironically, music wasn't even on Danny Elfman's mind. "Music was the last thing I imagined doing as a kid. Science was my first love and movies were second. I imagined I was going to be a radiation biologist 'cause that's what I excelled in," Elfman says. "I took special summer courses and since it was the '60s, I was actually handling radioactive isotopes and atomic test-site sand (I kid you not). In my bedroom, I had strontium-90 and cobalt-60, which I would inject into flies in a woefully unsuccessful attempt to create mutant insects... a hobby I don't recommend for youngsters today."

Danny Elfman's brother Richard adds, "Danny wasn't a typical kid. I'm four years older than he is, so we didn't always go to the same movies. Danny wasn't into sports. He wasn't into the typical pop culture stuff. He wasn't into music. No record collection. No garage bands. No radio playing in his room. No going to concerts. We had classical music around the house. And I started playing Afro-Latin percussion at one point. But growing up, no one ever would have guessed that Danny Elfman would make a career in music, let alone be recognized as an original musical genius."

That's not to say that the young Elfman didn't make the attempt. "I did in fact try out for the school orchestra in elementary school and was rejected for possessing 'no propensity for music,'" Danny adds. "And that was that. Any musical inclinations I had went dormant."

His interest in movies, however, lived on, almost to the exclusion of every other childhood activity. "When I think of my childhood, I can't remember what games I played. I can't remember a lot of things I did, but I do remember being at the theater—sometimes both days of the weekend. There were movies I saw four or five times in a weekend. When *The Time Machine* came out, I think I saw it seven times. I would sneak back in. I would see it as many times as I could and Sunday I'd go see it again. By the time I turned 16, there were two repertory houses—the Fox Venice and the Nuart—playing two art films every night of the week, playing 14 movies a week. So, by the time I was 20, I had seen hundreds of movies. I had a huge film education."

Looking around Elfman's workspace and his Los Angeles residence today (intentionally or unintentionally a dead ringer for Bruce Wayne's stately Wayne Manor), the echoes of the musician's upbringing are wildly evident: Both spaces are chock-a-block with skeletons, taxidermies, movie memorabilia, and oddball knickknacks from the past—there must be a monkey's paw around somewhere.

"As a kid I had a tremendous fear of missing limbs or amputations," Elfman acknowledges. "The first movie that ever scared the crap out of me was *The Beast With Five Fingers*, which was directed

THE MYSTIC KNIGHTS AND OINGO BOINGO

In 1970, Richard Elfman dropped out of college and joined Le Grand Magic Circus—a musical theater company based in Paris. His brother Danny briefly joined the group en route to Africa, producing one of his first music compositions for violin and percussion to open the show. Richard Elfman remained with the Magic Circus until his return to Los Angeles in 1972, where he launched The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo with his childhood friends Gene Cunningham and Matthew Bright. When Danny Elfman returned from his tour of Africa, Richard appointed him musical director of the group.

Richard Elfman's concept for the group was that it would avoid contemporary music and revive classic songs and performances by Duke Ellington, Django Reinhardt, Josephine Baker, and Cab Calloway, as well as some unusual new works by Danny Elfman. Rick Elfman directed and performed with The Mystic Knights until 1976, after which Danny Elfman took over as director and lead singer. Other than a novelty record called "You Got Your Baby Back" about kidnapped heiress Patty Hearst, there are few Mystic Knights recordings, and the band was largely a local phenomenon in L.A. (albeit a potent one). But the band did appear on the peculiar TV game show *The Gong Show* in 1976 (they were not gonged). Probably the best surviving artifact of the troupe's work is Richard Elfman's movie *Forbidden Zone*, which was filmed in black and white (and later colorized for release on DVD) and features most of the band members in starring roles, including Danny Elfman as Satan singing a take on Cab Calloway's "Minnie The Moocher."

In 1979, Danny Elfman decided to disband The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo. The band had grown to a 10- to 12-piece ensemble, with each



13-year-old Danny at the science show

Danny Elfman begins his short-lived, radioactive experiments on houseflies.



Dangers of science

Sporting a career-threatening hand injury after a failed attempt at building a rocket bomb nearly took off several fingers.

by Robert Florey, and I had recurring nightmares about being pursued by a severed hand. I'd dream I'd be there with my family and 'The Hand' would come crawling in and my parents would flippantly comment, 'Just ignore it—it won't bother you if you don't bother it.' But it would always be coming *toward me*. I'd be moving constantly to another spot, all the time watching it creep along...always in my direction. Its intentions were very clear...it wanted me!"

The young Elfman learned early on to turn his phobias into inspirations. "When I was a little older I saw this movie called *Tormented*, which had this guy who kills his wife—something to do with a lighthouse. The protagonist keeps seeing apparitions of her...and in one scene her living head appeared on a table, and it frightened me."

Like many kids of his era, Elfman was addicted to Forrest Ackerman's magazine *Famous Monsters Of Filmland*, which celebrated monster and horror films, their stars, and behind-the-scenes talent. "That was my bible. In one issue there was a full-page photo of the woman's severed head from *Tormented* and I couldn't look at it. One day my brother Rick somehow noticed how I would carefully skip that page as I thumbed through the magazine. He saw an insidious opportunity that he simply couldn't resist.

"We had only one phone in the house in this nook off the kitchen, so one day I'm sitting in that little nook talking to a friend, and my brother cut the dreaded page out of my magazine and very quietly taped it next to where I was sitting. I'm talking on the phone and I turn and there's the head right next to me, and Rick's standing there laughing. I remember hearing the ocean roaring in my ears and seeing sparkly flashing lights, like maybe I was going to pass out—but I didn't."

Elfman quickly became determined to reverse his brother's macabre victory. "I really couldn't let that image have so much power over me. I took it, walked into my room, and taped it to my wall facing my bed so it was the first thing I saw in the morning and the last thing I saw before I went to sleep. Whenever I played in my room, it was always there looking at me until finally it lost all its power and I could look straight at it and laugh. This was a really important moment in my life—though I didn't understand it at the time. I learned to remove the 'juju,'...remove the power of a fearful thing and, in the process, learned to beat my own fear and perhaps help to gain the sense that I had some level of control over my life."

The young Danny Elfman still didn't have any idea as to what he might do when he grew up. But a major clue came in the form of music scores

by one of the most iconoclastic and temperamental composers ever to work in the medium of film: Bernard Herrmann.

Herrmann had started at the top: His first film score was for Orson Welles' 1941 film *Citizen Kane*, still consistently cited by critics as the greatest movie ever made. In the '50s and '60s, Herrmann had collaborated with another giant filmmaker, Alfred Hitchcock, on enormously popular, defining thrillers like *Vertigo*, *North By Northwest*, and *Psycho*. Elfman would discover those works later, but for an 11-year-old kid, Herrmann's association with science fiction and fantasy films couldn't be ignored. "The first film score I ever noticed (I'm guessing I was about 11) was *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. That was the moment I became aware of the potentially powerful effect music could have in a film and that it wasn't *just there*—it came from an individual with a name. I began noticing Bernard Herrmann's name more and more in many of my favorite films...*Jason And The Argonauts*, *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad*, *Mysterious Island*..." Elfman's affinity for the stop-motion artistry of Ray Harryhausen led him to the latter three fantasy films, which were populated by Harryhausen's animated monsters. "I got to a point where if I saw both Harryhausen and Herrmann in the same title sequence, I already knew the movie was going to be a huge favorite—something really special."

It wasn't until his late teens that music began to move to the forefront of Danny Elfman's consciousness—although he considers it, like many other aspects of his life, to be the result of a fluke. "I'd have to put the entire blame for this incredibly misshaped career of mine on something as simple as the fact that I was supposed to go to one high school, and instead I went to another where I didn't know anybody. Most of my new friends happened to be musicians—or at least very musical. So there I was—a kid who didn't play anything, who hung out with musicians who exposed me to a whole new world. One friend was already a professional trumpet player and composer at 17. His name is Michael Byron and we're still friends. He turned me on to *The Rite Of Spring* and *The Firebird Suite*, the Stravinsky works. And that was what turned me around completely. It was a total reversal of everything I knew. It was one of those epiphany moments and I tend to overreact to those. So within a year of that, I had thrown out all my records and I was only buying jazz and 20th century 'classical' or orchestral music."

Elfman was immediately drawn to Stravinsky and his contemporaries, not just because of the music itself but for the *stories* these composers seemed to be telling. "I never heard music growing up, other than Beethoven and Mozart. And I have to say I didn't and still don't really have a great affinity for them. I understand that they were amazing geniuses and I'm not trying to trivialize them; I understand how deeply they affect so many people. But they simply didn't move me in the way that Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and then later Shostakovich, Bartok, and others did. These composers just opened up something because the music brought with it such imagery...and what might happen harmonically from moment to moment could be unexpected and explosive. It never went where I thought it was going, whereas everything I had heard before that, tended to follow patterns of 8 and 16 bars, and as you listen you can anticipate where it is heading.

"The beauty of hearing *The Rite Of Spring* is that I never could tell what was coming around the corner or where it was going next—the sudden shifts in dynamics, the way the melodies come and go and transform...unexpected radical tempo shifts. I loved that because it tapped into the same

member playing at least three instruments and the group mounting increasingly elaborate live shows—but Elfman felt the Knights had run their course. Steve Bartek and the three horn players (Leon Schneiderman, Sam Phipps, and Dale Turner) became part of a new band that Elfman put together, which was inspired by the British ska bands Danny had become interested in.

"We considered ourselves post punk and irreverent, and eclectic—sorry, always hated the 'new wave' banner with a passion—and enjoyed doing all contemporary and original material without props or sets or theater," Elfman says.

The band tried out a number of drummers before settling on Johnny Vatos, who would stay with the band until its end; the group also went through several bass players, starting with Kerry Hatch and finally settling on John Avila, who remained with Oingo Boingo for over a decade. Richard Gibbs also became the longest-running keyboard player for the group although this position, too, rotated at least three other musicians.



Bartek and Elfman's Boingo back cover

Back cover to Boingo's *Nothing To Fear* with Steve Bartek and Danny Elfman.



Elfman at home with African instrument (above)

Danny Elfman with musical instruments brought back from Africa.

Elfman in Mauritania, 18 years old (left)

Traversing the Sahara aboard an empty freight wagon on one of the world's longest trains. This legendary iron-ore train was the only way to get through Mauritania.



wild intensity of the jazz I was listening to at the time, where everything felt unchained and expressive. For me, that music felt like it was to a symphony orchestra what jazz music was—it was totally free, almost like it was improvised. Of course, with few exceptions, very little is improvised in orchestral music—everything is written, but this was written in a way that felt wild and improvised.”

By the time Elfman was 17 or 18, his obsessions had some focus. “By then I was really listening to music. I had evolved from a kid who loves sci-fi and horror movies to an all-around film lover. I rediscovered Bernard Herrmann through Orson Welles and Hitchcock, whom I was becoming obsessed with, going back one by one through his early movies. And I began really listening to the scores in the great (and not so great) films between the early 1930s into the 1960s...the truly golden years of great film scores. As a young man, even though I really knew nothing technically about music, I could recognize the scores of Erich Korngold, or Dimitri Tiomkin, or Max Steiner, as well as Herrmann. I went insane over Fellini and his musical collaborator Nino Rota. I was a fan and I started to collect as best one could in that era with records and cassettes of recorded scores. But at the same time, I wasn’t studying them; I was still just a fan.”

It was Elfman’s friends in high school—and good old American peer pressure—that eventually set him down the road to finally picking up a musical instrument. “Because my friends played music, I secretly bought myself a violin, having fallen in love with the gypsy violin music of Stéphane Grappelli. I was thinking, ‘It’s obviously too late for me being all of 17 while my friends probably started when they were kids, and I’ve undoubtedly already missed my chance to be any good—but what the hell.’”

According to Richard Elfman, Danny showed an amazing aptitude very early on, despite his seeming lack of interest. “It was kind of like one of those cases where someone can suddenly speak Italian, as though from some past life.”

“Naturally I was—like all my friends—trying to figure out what college I could get into and if I did get in, what I would study,” Danny Elfman says. “Film? Art? Literature? One thing was for sure: The travel/wanderlust bug had bitten me really badly. Then came the intervention of *fate*. Coming home late one night, I was rear-ended by a drunk on Sunset Boulevard. My car was totaled and I was banged up. From that accident I received what I considered to be a fortune in my insurance settlement... about \$1,800! That, I thought, was enough to get me around the world. College would have to wait.”



Mauritania, African marimba (top)

Elfman and his traveling partner Leon Schneiderman toured through West Africa with their own instrument—listening, playing and taking a few pictures.

Mauritania, African group marching (left)

Danny began his life-long interest and studies in ethnic percussion during this trip.



For Elfman the toughest decision and ultimately the most confusing one was the choice of a name for the band. Several options were tried out, including “Plan 9” (referencing Ed Wood’s famed bad movie *Plan 9 From Outer Space*), before Elfman decided to use the “Oingo Boingo” from *The Mystic Knights*. “I regret that more than any other single thing I’ve done,” Elfman says now. “Over the entire 17 years we were together, I tried and tried to explain the difference between the two ensembles, which shared half the same name, and half the same members, but shared no music or aesthetic between them. And I’m still trying to explain it now.”

The same year the long-gestating *Forbidden Zone* was released, Oingo Boingo released its first EP, simply entitled *Oingo Boingo* on I.R.S. Records, which contained the successful single, “Only A Lad.” The song earned the band a (not completely accurate) description as “new wave.” A full-length album titled *Only A Lad* followed in 1981.

Oingo Boingo consolidated its reputation as one of the most fervently followed cult bands in Southern California, releasing three albums on A&M records, including 1982’s *Nothing To Fear* and 1983’s *Good For Your Soul*. After switching record labels from A&M to MCA—first releasing Elfman’s solo album entitled *So-Lo* featuring the song “Gratitude”—the band released *Dead Man’s Party* in 1985, which included the hit singles “Weird Science” and “Just Another Day.” “Weird Science” was Danny Elfman’s title song for the John Hughes movie, and Oingo Boingo soon saw major exposure due to film appearances and soundtrack contributions that rivaled anything the band’s concert appearances and albums generated. The band’s songs appeared in *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* (“Goodbye, Goodbye”), *That Was Then, This Is Now* (“Just Another Day”), and the band itself appeared playing “Dead Man’s Party” in *Back To School*, which Danny Elfman also scored.



The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo

Danny Elfman (in whiteface on right with drum) in his early days with The Mystic Knights, the performance troupe launched by his brother Richard.

One of Elfman's high school friends was budding saxophonist Leon Schneiderman, and the two young men began planning a yearlong trip around the world. "I began my last year of high school thinking only about that trip," Elfman remembers. "That's all I cared about. I doubled up on classes and got out of school six months early, specifically so I could get the f**k out of L.A. and go as far away as I possibly could."

Elfman's proficiency on the violin was developing rapidly. And a detour on the way to Africa—his first planned destination on the world tour—resulted in a remarkable battlefield promotion and the young musician's first taste of life on the stage. "En route to Morocco I made a stopover in Paris to see my brother [Richard]," Elfman said. "He was a conga-drum/Latin-percussion player with a completely crazy off-the-wall musical theatrical troupe called Le Grand Magic Circus. I had planned on staying with him for a week or so. One day the director of the troupe, who happened to be visiting my brother, heard me practicing in the next room. His name was Jérôme Savary (he ended up becoming head of the National Theater in France) and he asked, 'Would you like to come play with us?' I couldn't have been more shocked. I actually got hired to be their fiddle player, and I toured with them for a month through the South of France and in Belgium. It was my very first time performing. I bought a mandolin somewhere along the way, and I wrote a little piece on it and began playing that in the show, too. Amazingly, Jérôme asked me to play my first little composition as their overture. The audiences were big and very enthusiastic, occasionally to the point of mini-riots. I was performing in front of an audience, and I hadn't been playing any instrument longer than four or five months. The whole thing was nuts—like a crazy dream."

"Danny aced out a violinist from the Paris Opera," Richard Elfman recalls of the Le Grand Magic Circus incident. "Danny could improvise on his violin when needed, the classically trained player could not. Danny and I opened the show with a piece of his—me on percussion, Danny on violin and mandolin—the first 'Danny Elfman' composition to be performed publicly."

Determined to continue his trip, Danny Elfman headed to Africa with Schneiderman. Meanwhile, brother Richard Elfman returned to Los Angeles, where he started The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo, roughly inspired by Le Grand Magic Circus. "I was having a great time with Le Grand Magic Circus in Paris and learned a lot from Jérôme Savary," Richard says. "After a year or two, I simply wanted to create my own group. Back in L.A., I saw an advertisement for 'original entertainment' for some new, glitzy venue. I somehow talked my way into the job, then formed the group to play the gig—which included my high school friend, Gene Cunningham, and Marie (soon-to-be my Mrs.) Elfman, the leading lady from the Magic Circus. Our motto at that time was 'nothing contemporary.' We re-created the great music of the past that people could no longer see live anymore: Cab Calloway, Josephine Baker, Django Reinhardt, and, yes, Celia Cruz."

"Rick was trying to get me to come back and join him," Danny says. "I was picking up letters from him (while I was) in Mali, Ghana, Senegal, and replying, 'I still got a long way to go' and in my mind I was still thinking I was going around the world."

In 1987, the band released its self-titled album *Boi-ngo*, followed by 1988's *Boingo Alive*, a live—but not a concert—album recorded on a rehearsal soundstage. After five years of scoring motion pictures as well as writing and performing with Oingo Boingo, Danny Elfman's advancing sophistication in orchestral music began to show itself in 1990's *Dark At The End Of The Tunnel*. After 1991, the band left MCA and eventually released *Boingo* on Giant Records in 1994 during Danny Elfman's brief experimentation with shortening the group's name yet again. After several years of arranging and rearranging the makeup of the band, shuffling various members in and out, the group finally reverted to the name Oingo Boingo for its final "Farewell Tour," culminating in its final Halloween concert appearance at the Universal Amphitheater in Los Angeles in 1995—out of which came the 1996 long-form concert video, *Oingo Boingo Farewell: Live From The Universal Amphitheatre*.



Le Grand Magic Circus

Elfman, in a rare shot, holding his violin during a performance somewhere in France.

Elfman and Schneiderman (who brought a saxophone) wandered down the west coast of Africa practicing their instruments as they went, while Elfman collected African art and the beginnings of a large African percussion collection. “Most of our traveling consisted of being tightly packed into open trucks that were supposed to leave at noon but might actually depart closer to midnight if not the next day,” Danny says. “They don’t leave until the truck is so full of people that you don’t know how it’s going to move, but it finally does. In Mauritania, we once traveled in the empty cargo car of an iron-ore train that was so long in the hazy, sandy sky, you could see neither the front nor the back of it. It was like an eternally long train traversing the middle of nowhere. It was pretty incredible.”

The long journey was arduous and physically debilitating for the young musician. “By the time I got to East Africa, I had already been gone for close to a year and had been sick a lot,” Danny says. “I had contracted malaria three times. I still believe that my life was very likely saved by a German doctor in a village in Senegal. I don’t know what I

had, but after a week of dehydration and not being able to eat anything, I was fading and having these incredible fevers. This doctor was going through the village and the people brought him to me. He gave me a huge shot of penicillin. And I think I’m only here today because of that kind traveling German doctor who by sheer luck, happened to be in the same region I was at that particular moment. By the time I finally got to Nairobi, I had been diagnosed with hepatitis as well and I said, ‘I’m ready to come home.’ I hadn’t really planned on being gone much longer than a year anyway, and it had already been 10 and a half months. I hadn’t even left the African continent. So, the rest of the world was for another trip.”

Elfman was still recovering from his illnesses when he returned home where his brother Richard—and The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo—awaited. “The first day home, Rick said, ‘I know you’re sick...you just have to sit in on rehearsals. You don’t have to start playing yet.’ He didn’t even give me a single day to stay in bed. ‘You don’t have to do anything—just sit and listen.’ So, he appointed me musical director of The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo. Now you have to understand, that means musical director of a troupe that was really eight ragtag street musicians. Everybody played a little bit of this, a little bit of that, but nobody read music or really actually played anything very well. So, here was a musical director who neither read nor wrote music, leading a high-spirited ragtag ensemble who didn’t read anyway, and that was my job.”

Danny Elfman’s fate as a musician was sealed during the next few years, with any prior plans to attend college or get more formal musical training thrown by the wayside. At 19 he was fronting a “street troupe” that began to develop its own cult audience—and he would continue to work with the band through most of the ’70s. “I took over The Mystic Knights for those later years when Rick left to develop *Forbidden Zone* and took it as far as I could go with it. It became like a multimedia thing with animation and film clips and all this crazy stuff. The troupe grew and I started recruiting better musicians. Then I started teaching myself to write music. My brother and I both loved old jazz: Django Reinhardt, Duke Ellington, and Cab Calloway, and I used to perform a lot of those pieces. So I had to learn how to transcribe solos and parts. The first thing I ever tried to write down was a Duke Ellington piano solo, which was good training. But I taught myself to write without ever learning how to read.”

The Mystic Knights stage shows resembled anything from a 1930s cabaret act to one of those old Ernie Kovacs blackout sketches with guys playing musical instruments while wearing gorilla suits—or some

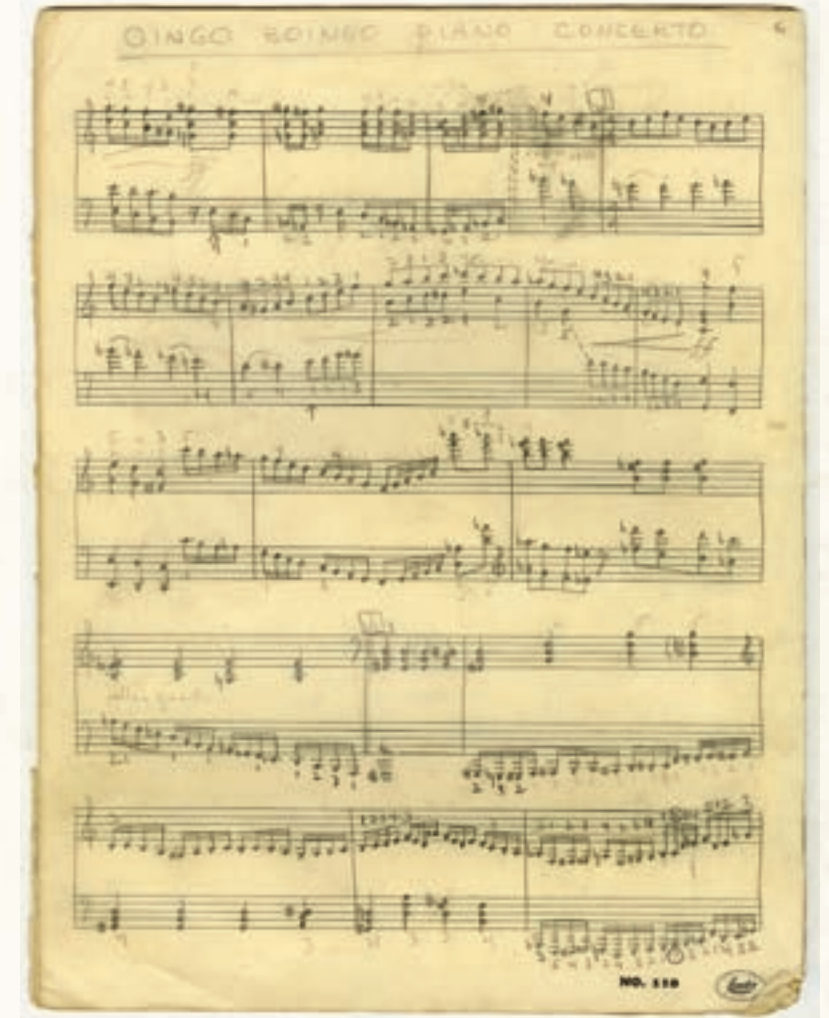
twisted entertainment show for children that would have never been allowed on TV. Danny was able to sneak in references to his favorite Russian composers (riffing on Prokofiev’s *Lieutenant Kijé Suite* in one piece) and putting together a Balinese gamelan septet with the players dressed like mutants from a post-apocalyptic science-fiction film.

At that time, during the mid-’70s, future studio executive producer Joe Roth (*Edward Scissorhands*, *Alice In Wonderland*) ran a club now known as The Improvisation. He remembers The Mystic Knights working there. “I thought they were fantastic and that Danny was completely out of his mind,” he says of the group. “I’m kind of a classical rock guy, so I wasn’t used to seeing such an eclectic mix—sort of like a circus band—making really good music.”

Elfman also had not forgotten his love of Stravinsky and Prokofiev, and he still harbored a strong desire to explore more complicated arrangements. That passion led him to compose his first attempt at a concert work: *Oingo Boingo Piano Concerto No. 1 1/2*. “It was a very ambitious complicated piece for eight players,” Elfman says, “and it was the first time I really composed five or so minutes from scratch, mostly inspired by Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire Du Soldat* and a Prokofiev piano concerto. Now I need to say right here that it was in no way, shape, or form even remotely in the strata of the Stravinsky piece, and the piano part was nowhere near as difficult as the Prokofiev part, but I was going for that madness and I did manage to write it all down.”

With Danny and Richard Elfman disagreeing over the musical direction of the band, Richard Elfman eventually left the group to focus more on his interests in film, and Danny Elfman became the *de facto* director of The Mystic Knights in 1976. He had begun to lose interest in the elaborate and ultimately burdensome stage paraphernalia of the band and began to streamline the group during the last three or four years of its existence when The Mystic Knights had their first extended runs in theaters in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Around 1978-1979, Elfman began thinking of other things to do. The catalyst turned out to be the “2 Tone” ska revival striking in England at the time.

“It was sudden for me—out of the blue—a total revelation, which kicked my ass and turned me around completely...waking up one morning and hearing The Specials playing a ska tune. I thought, ‘Wow this is great.’ And it reminded me of the energy of the pop music I listened to when I was in West Africa called ‘High Life.’ It had that kind of energy. And I remember thinking it was what I wanted to do. Then I heard



Early composition for The Mystic Knights

Elfman’s first attempts at composing in the *Oingo Boingo Piano Concerto No. 1 1/2*.

Madness and XTC and Selector. I didn't listen to any contemporary music when I was in The Mystic Knights, and suddenly I'm hearing this and said, 'I love this—I want to start a band.' So bang, I'm a 27-year-old starting a band, and once again I'm thinking, 'Ah, it's too late for me—you're supposed to start bands when you are 17. You don't start bands when you are 27 years old—that's crazy. I'm 10 years older than anybody else starting a band.' But I thought, 'F**k it—that's what I'm going to do.' The Mystic Knights would never touch a piece of music written after 1935 unless it was an original piece—it really stopped cold at 1940 for that ensemble." Oingo Boingo was an electronic, guitar-driven rock band, smaller and lighter on its feet than the elaborate production that The Mystic Knights had been.

Elfman's brief flirtation with concert composition through his piano concerto now seemed like a waste of time. "I thought, 'All composing and scribbling was more or less a waste of time because now I'm playing electric guitar. What difference does it make? You don't need to write down music in a rock band.'"

Ironically, just as Oingo Boingo was coming together, Elfman got his first shot at providing songs and underscoring music for his brother Richard's film project *Forbidden Zone*. Produced on a shoestring budget (which Richard Elfman and his then-wife Marie-Pascale initially financed by "flipping" houses), *Forbidden Zone* was a filmed riff on The Mystic Knights' bizarre stage shows, mixing original songs with characters lip-synching to old recordings of songs by the likes of Cab Calloway and Josephine Baker. The raucous stage performances were tied together with a tacked-on plot about a suburban family that discovers their house contains a doorway to "the sixth dimension." Star power was provided by a pre-*Fantasy Island* Hervé Villechaize and Susan Tyrrell (the two of whom, amazingly, had dated prior to costarring in the production), who played the decadent king and queen of the *Forbidden Zone*.

"*Forbidden Zone* was essentially a way of capturing on film what the original Mystic Knights had been doing onstage," Richard Elfman says. "Danny wrote some songs for the film and played Satan, reprising a version of Cab Calloway's 'Minnie The Moocher' from our earlier stage show. *Forbidden* was a mélange of Harlem jazz, French cabaret, Yiddish theater, '40s Latin—and more."

One group that was impressed with the results was the band Devo and its leader (and eventual film composer) Mark Mothersbaugh. "In a way we were more visual artists than we were sound artists," Mothersbaugh

says. "We liked the idea that techniques and technology were secondary to the artistic idea, so film to us was a strong focus. One of the first things we saw when we came out to Los Angeles was *Forbidden Zone*, and I remember us really liking that and being impressed by it. A lot of these things that were happening at the time all felt related to comics and underground art and this new take on what music and art were supposed to be."

Richard Elfman approached Danny to handle music for the movie—but it was hardly a conventional scoring assignment. "Rick comes up with *Forbidden Zone* and was like, 'Yeah I need songs for it.' I said, 'Great!' It was just like what we've always done...go off and write crazy songs like I did with the troupe. The last thing that occurred to me was the possibility of it providing a doorway into film scoring, which at that time really hadn't occurred to me as an option anyhow. I was very interested in new forms of musical theater—what else could I do with theater? And then suddenly I veered completely 180 degrees into a rock band. I had no interest in scoring at that point. After we finished recording the songs for him, Rick finished the movie, and we went off and did our thing. Finally, almost a year later, he called me in to finish the score, which was all performed by The Mystic Knights, so I was writing for the same guys I always worked with. It was just like goofing, just having fun. It was so close to what we did anyhow that I never really thought about the fact that I was actually scoring a film."

One of Elfman's bandmates in Oingo Boingo was Steve Bartek, an Ohioan who taught himself guitar as a young teen. He soon began co-writing songs with a next-door neighbor, George Bunnell, who later joined the band The Strawberry Alarm Clock. Bunnell convinced Bartek—who was just 14 at the time—to join him and perform flute on the band's first album. After getting his taste of performing, Bartek used music residuals to help pay for college and got a degree in composition from UCLA. Bartek joined The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo in 1975 after auditioning for Elfman. "He asked me if I could play Django Reinhardt because that was a big part of their repertoire," Bartek recalls. "Something we had in common actually was that he had gone to CalArts as an auditor and studied Balinese dance and music. At the same time, I had worked with the Javanese gamelan at UCLA—my saving grace was going downstairs at UCLA and playing gamelan music."

Steve Bartek's musical tastes crossed over with Elfman's in a number of unexpected ways, considering that the two young men were fronting



School boy, age 16-17 (The "Me" Decade) (above)
Elfman in high school holding a mysterious package.

Top of the heap, age 18 (left)
In route to West Africa, Elfman landed on Lanzarote in the Canary Islands where he lived for a while.



The *Forbidden Zone* soundtrack (top)

One of the early releases from Varèse Sarabande Records, which would later release numerous film scores including a number of Danny Elfman's.

On the set with Dad (*Forbidden Beard*) (above)

Elfman clowns around in an Oingo Boingo video set with his father Milton who was in costume for the video.

The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo black-and-white poster (upper left)

Promotional poster for The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo stage performance.

Laura Engel and Danny Elfman in music video (lower left)

Oingo Boingo manager and future film music agent Laura Engel with Elfman in a scene from a Boingo music video.



one of the most idiosyncratic rock bands in Los Angeles. Like Elfman, Bartek had grown up watching sci-fi and fantasy movies with Bernard Herrmann scores, and he had developed a great appreciation for other concert and film composers, including Federico Fellini's frequent composer Nino Rota. "Herrmann and Rota were big on my top-10 hit list," Bartek recalls. "I grew up watching Harryhausen movies with Bernard Herrmann scores...and Stravinsky was another crossing point...I wanted to be one of them. When I was in college I studied Harry Partch and Olivier Messiaen and this kind of off-center stuff that Danny was aware of too."

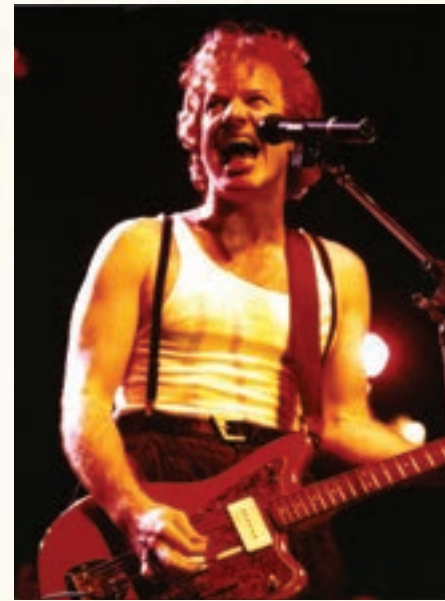
Bartek got involved with Elfman's first movie in his capacity as an Oingo Boingo guitarist and performer. "The first thing Danny did was write a song called 'Queen's Revenge.' We had a little orchestra, one of each instrument. He wrote it before they shot the scene; they had to lip-synch to what we recorded. The movie actually didn't get finished for another year or so, at which point Danny did the score. By then Oingo Boingo had switched from a theater act, which is what we were when he had written 'Queen's Revenge,' to a rock 'n' roll band, which is what we were when he finally did the score. So that's why it covers all bases. *Forbidden Zone* itself was a test piece of stuff Danny would do later. There is a beautiful piano piece he wrote. And there's a scene where a guy's hanging like a candelabra, scored with piano and harp. A lot of it is slide guitar, which was really fun to do, and it's all Danny's style."

"Creating a score to weave everything together seemed impossible," Richard Elfman recalls. "But Danny undertook the challenge and pulled it off brilliantly. On a few numbers, which Danny hadn't orchestrated, he threw away the previously recorded instrumental tracks, keeping only the vocals and painstakingly replaced the instrumentation with his own quirky, original arrangements, something which is very, very difficult to do."

After finishing his work on *Forbidden Zone*, Elfman went back to focusing on Oingo Boingo full time. Boingo wasn't any more typical as a rock band than The Mystic Knights had been a typical theater troupe. Laura Engel, who would become the show's stage and tour manager and then the band's manager (and eventually one of Elfman's film music agents), remembers interviewing for the job in the late '70s: "I talked briefly with this guy who I thought was maybe their production manager. He said, 'Come back and see me before the show and I'll tell you what to do.' Just before the show, I walked up the little back stairs toward the dressing rooms, and I was expecting him, the production manager, to come down and tell me what to do for the show...and it's Danny! He came down wearing an ape suit up to his neck with crazy makeup and black lipstick. That's the way they opened The Mystic Knights show at the time—they all came out dressed as apes playing Brazilian drums and spoofed *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I was surprised. I didn't know he was in the band."

Once Engel began to work with the band regularly, she quickly realized that the visual component was a crucial element. "Danny's songs were like little movie vignettes. In The Mystic Knights, we had film clips and props and sets. Then in Oingo Boingo, it was the songs and performance. In 1980, the band released a 12-inch EP (extended-play) album simply called *Oingo Boingo*, which the band distributed on its own, and then I.R.S. Records picked it up. The album included the songs 'Only A Lad' and 'I'm So Bad' from an earlier demo, as well as 'Violent Love' and 'Ain't This The Life.'





Danny Elfman performs (top)

Onstage as lead singer of Oingo Boingo.

Elfman gets a quick passport photo (left)

A passport photo taken street-side to obtain one of the many visas necessary to move between countries in West Africa.

One of the EPs got in the hands of Jed ‘The Fish,’ who was a young DJ at KROQ, and he started playing it. Our concerts went from small crowds to drawing long lines! All of a sudden at this one show at Madame Wong’s, the line wrapped around the block and (club co-owner) Esther Wong said, ‘You’ve got to play a second show.’ That all happened just from Jed playing our EP on the radio and talking us up.”

By 1984, Oingo had signed with MCA Records and Danny Elfman chafed at the thought of being assigned an “A&R” (“artists and repertoire”) representative for the record company. Elfman knew Kathy Nelson, a young woman at the company who would later become president of film music at Universal for a number of years. “Back in the day, A&R people were like, ‘Oh no, this song isn’t good enough,’” Nelson remembers. “A&R people really meddled. Danny, being who he is, didn’t want an A&R person, because he didn’t want somebody telling him which song to record or how to record it or what it should sound like, so he said, ‘I want Kathy to be my A&R person.’ We became fast friends, and I was the A&R chick and Laura Engel was the roadie, and we were Danny’s girls.”

“Kathy immediately got it,” Engel says. “Danny Elfman, Oingo Boingo—these guys need to do music in movies.’ So she started pushing Boingo songs and licensing them into movies and getting Danny opportunities to write songs for movies.” Elfman’s song “Goodbye, Goodbye” had been used in Amy Heckerling’s *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* in 1982, and with Nelson in his corner he contributed “Something Isn’t Right” and “Who Do You Want To Be Today” to 1984’s *Bachelor Party*. The title track from Elfman’s album *Gratitude*, was included on the soundtrack album to Martin Brest’s smash hit *Beverly Hills Cop*.

Boingo’s first forays into the hype of songs in film and their commercialism were put into perspective as Elfman displayed his first gold record—*Beverly Hills Cop* soundtrack—in his bathroom over the toilet. Scribbled across it was his handwritten message, “Don’t mean sh*t.”

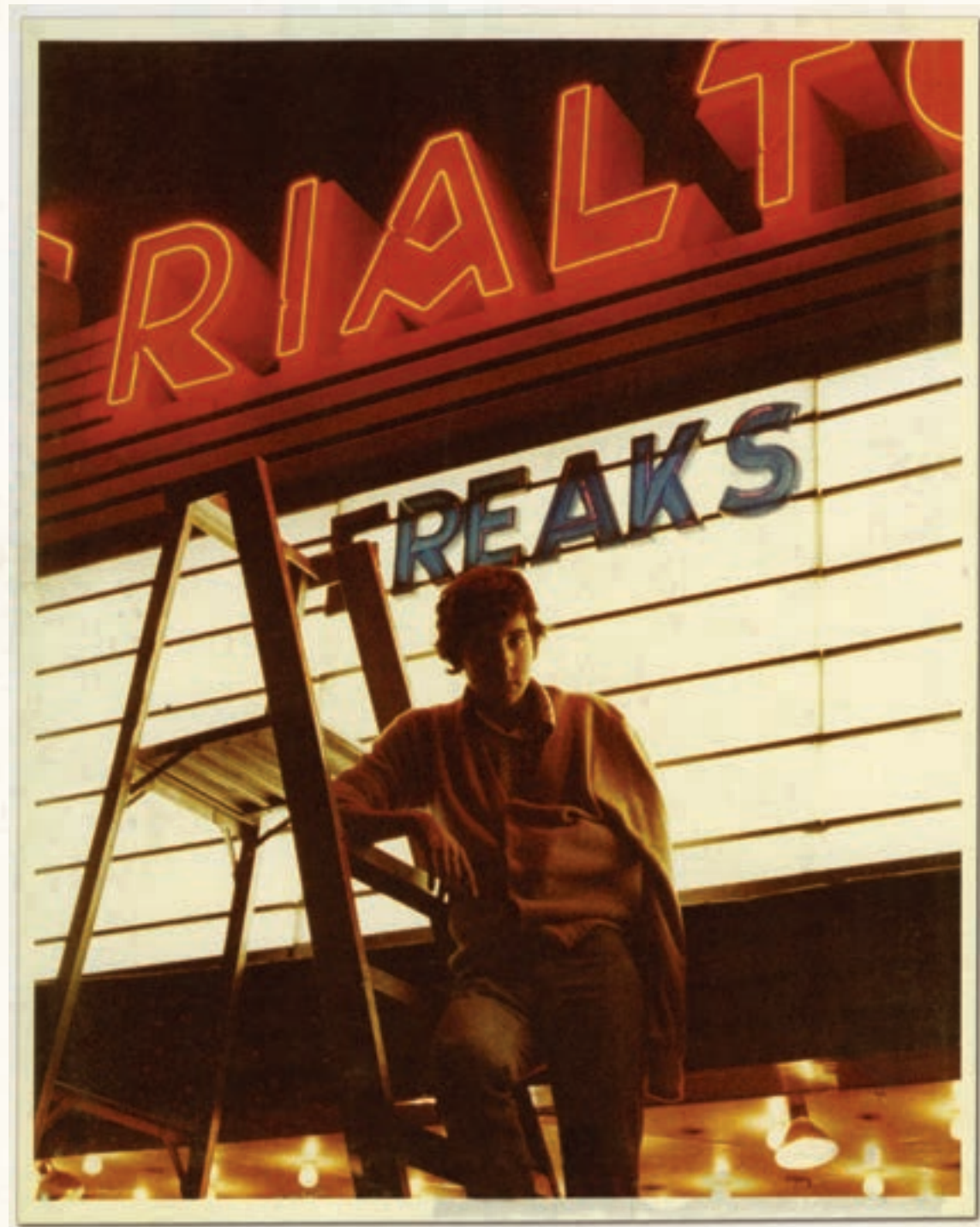
The inscription reflects the irony that tempered the band’s entrée into the hype of commercial film and film soundtracks. They received a gold record for their contribution to the soundtrack despite the fact that the song had not made the final cut of the film.



2



SUBURBIA
Art & Alienation



Freaks

Burton poses at the Rialto Theatre in South Pasadena, California, where he and other CalArt students held movie nights.

TIM BURTON'S EARLY YEARS

In Burbank, California, at some point in the early '70s, local garbage trucks were briefly festooned with the artwork of Tim Burton.

A good decade or so before he would embark on a film-directing career, the young Burton already showed promise as a cartoonist. His father worked for the local water and power company, and through him, Tim found out about a contest to produce art for the Burbank refuse collection vehicles. "I won 10 dollars for that one," Burton recalls today. "The drawing was just some guy with a garbage can—no big deal. My poster was on the side of a garbage truck for six months. That was my first success—absolutely. I've been very lucky to feel confident but never had too high an opinion of myself, probably based on that."

Growing up in Burbank, just across the Hollywood hills from the sprawling, urban, and racially mixed environment that spawned Danny Elfman, the young Tim Burton spent much of the '60s and early '70s alienated from the town's strangely cloistered suburban environs. Burbank was (and is) home to numerous movie-studio lots, including Warner Bros., Walt Disney, and Universal, as well as NBC Studios, where Johnny Carson and later Jay Leno taped *The Tonight Show* every weekday. But its quaint main street of ma-and-pa shops and abundant residential blocks, stretching from the foothills to the Cahuenga Pass, give it an enduring small-town feel.

For the young Tim Burton, the same feeling that drew residents to the area created his ongoing sense of alienation. Burton spent a great deal of his formative years being told what not to do, and feeling profoundly out of place in what he *did* do. He had a talent for drawing, although he

did it in his own unique style. And as he explored artistic disciplines, he would often butt heads with art teachers determined to convince him that he wasn't drawing "the right way."

Burton had difficulty fitting into the acutely normalized social fabric of Burbank as he grew into his teens. But he always found a welcoming environment on television and in movie theaters in the form of horror and monster movies. "I didn't have a lot of friends," he says, "but there's enough weird movies out there, so you can go a long time without friends and see something new every day that kind of speaks to you. I felt quite lucky because local L.A. television stations played these movies all the time; one week it would be *Black Sunday*, another week it would be *Carnival Of Souls*—they showed pretty cool stuff! All those movies had a certain dynamic that made them unforgettable—they were etched in your mind like a dream. It was weird that they would show them on Saturday afternoon, then they'd show a clip and say, 'This is what we're showing next week,' and you'd think, 'Man, I can't wait to see that one!'"

Burton absorbed everything from the Universal horror films to Godzilla movies to science fiction—anything with a shambling monster had him glued to the television.

Like Danny Elfman, Tim Burton became enraptured by the dream-like stop-motion imagery of Ray Harryhausen. "*Jason And The Argonauts* was the first one I saw on Catalina Island at the Avalon Theater," Burton remembers. "That was probably one of the first super-strong moments for me because it was a combination of the movie, the theater on Catalina Island, which was like being inside a big seashell, and it was all like a drug—the perfect mixture of theater, movie, and timing. Everything."



Stop-motion awesomeness from *Jason And The Argonauts*, 1963

Ray Harryhausen's animated skeleton warriors (in this film and 1957's *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad*) inspired both the young Tim Burton and Danny Elfman.

He quickly found other behind-the-camera idols, movie directors whose names the young Burton knew guaranteed a mesmerizing film experience. "Mario Bava was one," Burton says. "You would see *Black Sunday* on Saturday-afternoon TV—it was like, 'What the f**k is this?' Fantastic. He was brilliant and his movies are like dreams come true, really. James Whale was another guy—I saw his name on *Frankenstein*, obviously, and *The Invisible Man*. And Jack Arnold also."

As a kid, Burton discovered a studio tour of the Universal lot and marveled to be walking on the cobblestone streets where *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *The Wolf Man* had been filmed. Tim Burton often found he identified with the monsters in these seminal horror films more than the people—the monsters, he felt, had soul, and their anguish and alienation echoed something he felt inside himself.

At 16, Burton won a scholarship to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia—a college formed by Walt Disney in 1960 and, ironically, the place where Danny Elfman had hung out (without being enrolled) to study and play Indonesian percussion instruments. "Disney had been using the same animators since *Snow White*, and they

had taken a very leisurely approach to training new people," Burton recalls. He was quickly enrolled in a training program for Disney animators and was chosen in 1979 to join the Disney animation department to work on sequences for *The Fox And The Hound*. "Disney and I were a bad mix. I got all the cute fox scenes to draw, and I couldn't draw all those four-legged Disney foxes. I just couldn't do it. I couldn't even fake the Disney style. Mine looked like road kills."

Don Hahn, an assistant director on *The Fox And The Hound* and production manager on *The Black Cauldron*, says Burton was part of a younger generation of filmmakers who got their start at the studio: "The studio was really split by age. You had a lot of guys in their 50s and 60s who were finally getting to the point where they could express themselves and be directors; and then you had guys in their 20s coming in from CalArts: Tim, John Lasseter, and Brad Bird. All these guys were there as the young generation, and the studio just didn't know what to do with them, so literally, one by one, they left."

At Disney, Burton found an environment that was at once soul-crushing and rewarding. Burton hated the work, and the classically adorable Disney drawing style was anathema to his offbeat sensibilities. But his talent quickly earned him champions and sponsors within Disney, and he found himself promoted to conceptual artist on *The Black Cauldron*, designing oddball creatures and environments that were never used by the production but clearly marked him as a unique talent and asset to the company.

In 1982, Tom Wilhite, vice president of development at Disney, gave Burton \$60,000 to film a stop-motion animated short called *Vincent*, which he completed with Rick Heinrichs. Heinrichs, who would later work as a set designer on *Edward Scissorhands* and as production designer for Burton's *Planet Of The Apes* and *Sleepy Hollow*, recalls that Burton's musical taste at the time was prophetic. "One of my first introductions to Tim was him sitting there sketching and listening to Danny Elfman and Oingo Boingo and hearing all the different sounds that Danny was experimenting with," Heinrichs says. "I was just wandering around Tim's room and seeing the amazing caricature and character artwork that he was developing for projects in the future."

Wilhite was known for pushing unusual projects like 1982's *Tron* into production, and *Vincent* fell into a similarly idiosyncratic vein. Set to a poetic narration, the black-and-white film was inspired by Dr. Seuss, the Roger Corman/Edgar Allan Poe films, and of course their frequent star, Vincent Price. Price had fascinated Burton since his childhood viewings



Tim Burton and Rick Heinrichs, 1982

Co-creator Rick Heinrichs (left) and Tim Burton (right) pose with a stop-motion puppet and set built by Heinrichs, from Burton's ode to Vincent Price, *Vincent*.



Tim and the Real Vincent, 1982

Burton with his screen hero, actor Vincent Price (right), during the making of *Vincent*.

MONSTER KIDS

Danny Elfman and Tim Burton grew up during a wonderful, terrifying, and generally unheralded period of American history. It came about, during the late '50s and early '60s, concurrent with the period when Universal sold a huge package of its classic monster movies to television. *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Mummy*, *The Wolf Man*, and all their various sequels and spin-offs—even the relatively recent *Creature From The Black Lagoon*—were suddenly shown regularly on Saturday afternoons and on Friday and Saturday nights. Local "horror movie hosts" like Zacherley, Vampira, and Ghoulardi added a personality factor that turned kids into insiders with a sense of humor that took the edge off the scares and made the old horror films more kid-friendly. And a wave of pop culture tie-ins,



Plan 9 From Outer Space poster, 1958

Movie poster for Ed Wood's legendary zombies 'n' flying saucers thriller, often voted "The Worst Film of All Time."



Tim Burton and his friend Joe Ranft (left)

Burton and Ranft attended CalArts together before moving on to Disney Animation. Their friendship and work together continued until Ranft's death in 2005.

Frankenweenie, 1984 (top)

Child actor Barret Oliver and Shelley Duvall flank the titular Frankenweenie, a pet dog risen from the dead, in Burton's early live-action film.



of films like *House Of Usher* and *The Tingler*. “He got me interested because the characters he played all had a certain tortured nature to them,” Burton says, “so I ended up responding to that. Price was fairly consistent—his characters always had a certain melodramatic, tortured quality to them. And no matter how bad or good the movies were, he maintained that about himself.”

With the film mostly completed, Burton presented the movie to Price himself, who was 71 at the time. “It obviously was an homage to Price, and I sent it to him having no idea if he would respond or say ‘f**k off’ or whatever,” Burton says. “But it was amazing—it was the first *movie* experience I had and the first *good* experience I had because he helped get the short movie made and said he would narrate and introduce it. And that was like a beautiful dream to me—somebody I grew up watching, and he turned out to be a really supportive, good person. It was amazing.” (*Vincent* got a small theatrical release in Los Angeles with the film *Tex* and won the Audience Award at the Ottawa International Animation Festival.)

With Disney's Julie Hickson providing a great deal of continuing support, Burton again worked with Heinrichs on a short, idiosyncratic version of *Hansel And Gretel* done with Japanese actors and began developing ideas for what would later become *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. His first live-action film, *Frankenweenie*—which was 25 minutes long, made with a budget of \$1 million and written by Lennie Ripp—was based on Burton's story about a young boy who reanimates his dog after it's been run over by a car. *Frankenweenie* was to be released on a bill with the reissue of the Disney classic *Pinocchio*, but Burton's film got a PG rating from the MPAA, making it impossible for it to be coupled with the G-rated *Pinocchio*. But enough people saw the film to position Burton as a potential director to watch, and its star Shelley Duvall quickly hired him to direct an episode of her *Faerie Tale Theatre* series, “Aladdin And His Wonderful Lamp.”

“I was lucky to get the opportunity to make those films,” Burton says of his early Disney shorts. “At the time, especially at Disney, there was not a slip-through-the-cracks kind of thing. I was lucky to have that, even though they never got shown anywhere, it was a good calling card to get the next job. I got full support. In fact, every movie since then has been much more difficult to get made.”

like the Aurora monster movie models and TV shows like *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters* eventually followed.

“There's a term that I love that was concocted by [actor and Hollywood memorabilia collector] Bob Burns, which is ‘monster kids,’” director Guillermo Del Toro (*Hellboy II: The Golden Army*) says. “Both Danny and I—as Tim is—are all monster kids because we grew up in essentially a time when you were in awe of the classic monsters of Universal. This was also when Hammer Films was in the throes of resurrecting the genre in a very modern and violent way. At the same time, we were growing up in a time where TV, sci-fi, and TV horror were also having a great golden era. All we watched, listened to, drank, and ate was monsters. It was a great generation for Harryhausen, Rod Serling, *The Haunted Mansion*, and Universal monsters lovers. Both of us have talked about it. It's funny enough; people imagine these geeky discussions late at night about the virtues of Boris Karloff's Frankenstein against Glenn Strange's Frankenstein or equally obscure dissertations. But in reality, once you sort of sniff each other out, you realize you are a monster kid. You integrate it into conversation rather than making it a topic so you don't talk about it as much.”

3



THE BIG RACE
The Adventure Begins



Pee-wee's Big Adventure, 1985

The opening bike race dream sequence, given a majestic mood of triumph by Danny Elfman's first orchestral film score.

PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE

Tim Burton's first feature film opportunity came about as a result of the rise of one of the most peculiar and original comic characters ever to be embraced by the American public: Pee-wee Herman. Paul Reubens had introduced the diminutive Pee-wee during his work with *The Groundlings*, an improvisational comedy group that performed regularly in Los Angeles, and actor Phil Hartman had worked with Reubens on developing the character. Reubens began performing the character in a stage show called *The Pee-wee Herman Show* that was eventually taped and run as a special on HBO. The stage show (which featured Pee-wee interacting with a variety of puppets and human characters in a spoof of children's television programs like *The Pinky Lee Show* and *Howdy Doody*) would later be developed into the cult Saturday-morning TV show *Pee-wee's Playhouse*. And Reubens' appearances in character on *Late Night With David Letterman* quickly turned him into a popular talent with an office on the Warner Bros. studio lot and a movie production deal.

"I was writing with Phil Hartman and a guy named Mike Varhol, and we were working in a bungalow on the Warner Bros. lot," Reubens remembers. "We were writing a kind of remake of *Pollyanna*—to have Pee-wee be the *Pollyanna* character. And I was always complaining about not having a bicycle. Every time we walked anywhere on the lot, everybody was on a bike and I kept saying to the producers, 'Where's a bike? How do I get a bike? What do you have to do to get a bike here?' And one day I came back from lunch and there was a bike—a 1947 Schwinn Racer that they had chained up outside—with a little caricature of me on a sign that read: 'Bicycle parking for Pee-wee Herman only.' And I looked at it and went, 'Oh, my God, we're writing the wrong movie.' And we ran

into the bungalow and just started writing what became *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*—the bicycle movie."

Reubens and his co-writers turned the script in to the studio in record time, and Reubens got busy searching for a director for the project. "At that time there was 'the director's book.' And I made a list of about 200 or 250 directors, all of whom had made either a movie I liked or a *scene* in a movie I liked." The studio ignored Reubens' wish list, and a month later offered their choice of director—someone not on the actor's original list and totally unacceptable to Reubens. "I did say to them, 'I just spent 15 years getting to this point, and that's the wrong director.' The studio explained to me that we had a 'go' picture—we had a 'go' deal if we were to agree to this—and when I continued to say no, the studio came back and said I had one week to find somebody who was available, affordable, and approvable. I remember that: The Three A's."

Reubens continues, "I went out to a party that night and a lot of the people there were from *The Groundlings*. So I ran around and asked everybody, 'Does anybody know of a new, young film director?' And a girl who I knew in *The Groundlings* turned around and gasped and looked at me and went, 'Oh, my God, I just saw...oh, my God...oh, Paul, I know who it is...this is so perfect!' And she was talking about Tim. She had just seen *Frankenweenie* and in the middle of freaking out about it she said, 'Paul, you know Shelley Duvall who was in *Frankenweenie*. Call Shelley!'

"I called Shelley right after I got home and I said to her, 'Tim Burton, *Frankenweenie*. Somebody just raved about him,' and she said—same thing—'Oh, my God, Paul...he is the most perfect person for you. That's perfect, perfect, perfect!'"



Large Marge

Burton draws guidance for the stop-motion animation scene of Large Marge's facial transformation.

Reubens and his team screened *Frankenweenie* the next day and had the same reaction. “I’ve said this a few times in the last 25 years, but I knew, literally 12 seconds or less into *Frankenweenie*, here’s the guy,” Reubens says. The first shot of the movie, the first 15 seconds of *Frankenweenie* has it all. It has style and flare and personality, and it’s just loaded. I just looked at it and thought, ‘Here’s somebody who understands art direction completely and is a director of style and art—an artist.’”

When Reubens went back to the studio with the idea of Burton directing *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*, the reaction was blasé. “Oh yeah, Tim Burton. Big surprise,” Reubens recalls them saying. “Yes, we’ve heard of Tim Burton. Tim Burton’s been offered every single film that we have in development here. He’s passed on every single film. He won’t even read your script.” However Reubens’ producing partner Rich Abramson was too persistent and resourceful to let the opportunity slide—he managed to get the script to Burton, who immediately agreed to direct it.

Burton and Reubens hit it off immediately. “I just remember being very simpatico with Tim—just feeling like we were into the same stuff,” Reubens says. “We could speak in shorthand right away, immediately, like we had known each other for a long time. He was a little bit younger than me and he looked *way* younger. My friends would come on the set and ask, ‘Who’s the director? And I’d say, ‘Right there’...and they’d say, ‘No, come on. Who’s the director?’ Back then he had the same bad hair that he’s famous for.”

Burton describes landing the directing assignment on *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* as “...actually one of the easiest jobs [I ever got]; it was easier than getting the restaurant job I had before that. I was quite lucky to get it. I got the opportunity to do *Pee-wee* based off a couple of short films, and Paul Reubens and then the producers and then a couple of executives at Warner Bros. were very supportive of me. So I had the combination of everybody’s support without really having done much. I felt very lucky.”

Reubens and Burton were utterly in synch from the word go: Pee-wee Herman’s world was one seen through the exaggerated, just-slightly-on-the-edge-of-hysteria lens of a spoiled, idiosyncratic child. With Pee-wee searching desperately for his stolen 40s-style Schwinn bicycle, *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* was a road movie as filmed by wildly imaginative 7-year-old kids—a movie that seemed to have exploded out of a gigantic toy box.

“It was perfect,” Burton says, “because I liked the material, and I felt very comfortable that I would be able to support it because Paul’s character was so strong. He was Pee-wee.”

Given the movie’s low budget, comedy genre, youth-oriented demographic, and the vibe of the period, one might have expected an electronic or rock score—or hiring an experienced film composer known for comedy.

“The studio wanted Elmer Bernstein or Ira Newborn,” recalls Elfman’s agent Richard Kraft. “They were the go-to comedy composers of that time.” Mark Knopfler had also been one of the top choices to score *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*, but the studio balked because Knopfler owned the publishing rights to all his music, film compositions included. Van Dyke Parks, who had just scored Robert Altman’s quirky *Popeye*, was also briefly considered, but tracks of his previous music just didn’t play well against the film.

Burton was familiar with Elfman from Oingo Boingo. “I’d go to see them in clubs,” Burton says. “I had always liked their music. Of all groups that I went to see, which were mainly the punk kind of stuff, I always felt that because they had more people in the band and used weirder instruments, the music seemed to be more story-oriented in some way, more filmic. So when the *Pee-wee* movie came about, it was great, because being low-budget, they were more willing to take a chance. They took a chance on me; they took a chance with Danny.”

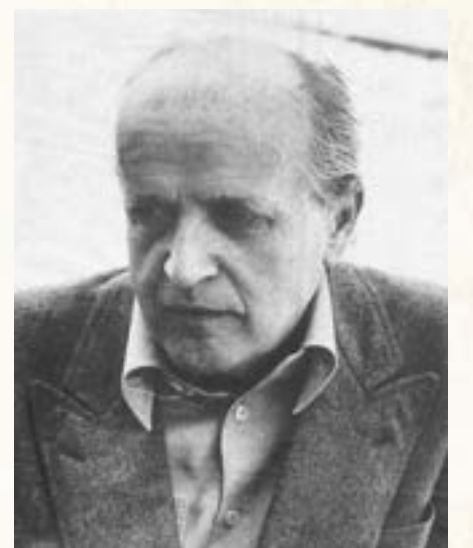
One of the key behind-the-scenes talents on the film was editor Billy Weber, who had worked with Terrence Malick on the legendary art films *Badlands* and *Days Of Heaven* and had assisted in editing Martin Scorsese’s masterpiece *Taxi Driver*. Weber had just finished editing *Beverly Hills Cop*, and *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* producer Bob Shapiro wanted an experienced editor to work with Tim Burton. Weber says, “Jerry Bruckheimer, one of the producers of *Beverly Hills Cop*, thought that it was a big mistake for me to go from what’s going to be a hit movie, *Beverly Hills Cop*, to cutting a Pee-wee Herman movie and I said, ‘I really like this director, so I’m going to do it.’”

Weber was involved in a pivotal incident that led to the hiring of Danny Elfman to score the film. “I was cutting the movie and we weren’t done shooting yet,” Weber says. “There’s a scene when Pee-wee has a dream after he’s had the motorcycle accident.” Weber had just finished cutting the dream scene prior to one of Burton’s visits to the cutting room and he offered to show the completed sequence to Burton. “I said, ‘You know what? I’m going to put some music on that will play against it.’ This is before tape and CDs, so I put a record on. I pulled the score from *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad* by Bernard Herrmann. I looked at the album and said, ‘We’ll try this cut here.’ I had never tried any music against this scene at the time. I pushed the forward button on the KEM, my editing machine, and I put the needle down on the album right at that moment. We played a cut from the movie called ‘The Duel With The Skeleton.’ It played the scene like it was scored for it. Tim stood in front of the machine with his mouth open during the entire sequence because it hit every cut and it ended as the scene ended. I’ve never had a moment quite like that. Tim looked at me and said, ‘I can’t believe that.’ I said, ‘It’s really great, isn’t it? It’s terrific!’ We never touched the cut and that piece of music always played as the temp music for that scene when we had our screenings for the movie. No one else in the world knew that we had that piece of music playing against that scene, just me and Tim.”

Weber and Paul Reubens suggested bringing Danny Elfman in. “They arranged a meeting and Danny came into Bob Shapiro’s office, and Tim and I were there,” Weber recalls. “So, Danny comes

NINO ROTA

Danny Elfman frequently cites Italian composer Nino Rota as an important inspiration for his music, particularly the semi-European, festival-like moments of *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*. When *Pee-wee* premiered in 1985, American audiences might have felt at least a subconscious ghost of Bernard Herrmann from their familiarity with Alfred Hitchcock and Ray Harryhausen films, just as Danny Elfman had grown up inspired by those movies. But after the 1970s, the screening and celebration of foreign films in the United States—and, in particular, the amazingly idiosyncratic, hallucinatory work of Federico Fellini—became increasingly rare. Rota’s exultant, carnival-like scores for films like Fellini’s *Roma, 8 1/2*, *La Strada*, *Nights Of Cabiria*, *La Dolce Vita*, *Juliet Of The Spirits*, *Satyricon*, and *Amarcord* likely defined the sound of Italian cinema to the American ear throughout



Nino Rota, 1963

Rota’s carnival-style scores for director Federico Fellini inspired some of the feel of Danny Elfman’s music for *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*.

in and he sits down and he says, 'Well, you know, I've wanted to do movie scores for a long time. My favorite composer is Nino Rota, but my favorite piece of movie music is an obscure piece from a movie called *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad* and it's called "The Duel With The Skeleton..." Tim and I looked at each other and just said, 'Well, it's done.'"

Burton remembers being aware of Danny Elfman's music long before meeting him for the first time. "I used to see Danny in clubs when I was still jobless," Burton says. "I saw him before he saw me, I think. The funny thing is where we *didn't* see each other, which is in the hallways somewhere at CalArts, where we were actually crossing paths at the same time without ever meeting. But also I remember going to some of those clubs in L.A. and listening to Oingo Boingo and thinking that the music was just so cinematic and so visual as well. His music was always like a movie. We started talking about Bernard Herrmann who we both knew from the Ray Harryhausen films... then Hitchcock... and Nino Rota's music for Fellini... different kinds of music that was unusual, but that really fit the films they were in. I've always felt, even before making films, that music was an integral part. It's another character; it sets the tone. When you see all the Harryhausen animation—the specific themes it has for the skeleton fight or certain characters—you can still hear it in your mind. They made an impression when you were a child and it sticks with you. I just remember feeling a connected spirit. It was easy because we had references from things we both liked and grew up watching and so that, even not being a great communicator I felt like it was easy to communicate, because we had similar tastes and things."

No one was more surprised than Elfman when he realized that the filmmakers were looking for an orchestral score.

"It was exactly like the moment when I got hired for *Le Grand Magic Circus*," Elfman recalls. "It was totally unexpected and totally out of the blue with nothing to prepare me for it in any way, shape, or form. I get a call from my manager saying, 'I spoke with these guys and they are interested in you doing a meeting for this new Pee-wee Herman film.' I knew who Pee-wee was; I had seen his show. I was thinking, 'Oh cool, Pee-wee... he's doing a movie... and they want me to do some music?' At first I didn't understand... 'They want the band? What are they looking for?' And then I met Tim for the first time."

Elfman quickly discovered that Tim Burton shared many of his interests—and that the score for *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* would not necessarily be influenced by rock or contemporary comedy scoring, but by some of

the great film music of the past. "Tim and I had a similar background; I liked him and we really hit it off," Elfman says.

Despite Burton's, Reubens', and Billy Weber's immediate resolve that Elfman was the perfect man to score the picture, Danny left the meeting with a combination of inspiration and self-doubt: "I came out of the meeting with Tim with some music in my head. I went home and quickly performed it into my little 8-track tape player, mixed it onto a cassette, and sent it off to Tim fully expecting never to hear back. To my surprise I got a call a week or so later from my manager saying, 'You got the gig.' My first reaction was, 'Tell them I can't do it. I'm just not equipped. I'm just going to screw it all up; it's not going to work.' And my manager said, 'I've been working on this all week—you call them and tell them you quit.'"

Elfman's fallback position with Oingo Boingo helped out in making the decision. "I didn't have the nerve to call Tim up and tell him I was chickening out; and I think I decided, 'Well, it's on Tim. If he wants to take the chance of me f**king up his movie, it's not my fault. He would have made a dumb decision and he'll learn you never hire rock 'n' roll guys to score a film.'"

Elfman committed. And he quickly found himself adjusting to the magnitude of the task: "When they hired me, we must have had a conversation about bringing in an orchestra. And I guess somehow there was a budget to do a couple of sessions. I said, 'God, I have to write a film score. I don't want to hum it into a tape recorder.' And I had to tell myself, 'Wait—you wrote down *Oingo Boingo Piano Concerto No. 1 1/2*, and if you could do that, you could write this.' I just went by that logic and it wasn't really incorrect. If you could write for eight parts, you could write for an orchestra. Because when you're writing for an orchestra, even though on something like *Pee-wee* the orchestra was 65 players, you aren't writing 65 separate parts. For a very simple score like that, it might mean writing between 6 to 12 parts for a typical cue, which really wasn't that big a leap, once I got back to having music paper in front of me and remembering where Middle C was and I could start writing again. But it was really crucial that I wrote that Boingo piano concerto because I never would have taken *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* had I not. I hadn't been writing that long, and now I had a six-year break where I hadn't written a note. There was this horrible moment when I had blank paper in front of me, and I was trying to write down the main titles to *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* and I thought, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa. OK, calm down! It will come back—it's like riding a bike.' And it did."



Burton on the set of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*

Directing his first feature film, Burton takes a moment before the upcoming basement scene for Pee-wee's "evidence" meeting about his stolen bike.

The composer spotted the film with Burton, a process during which the two men developed a semi-instinctive, low-verbiage communication rite that would largely hold true over the next quarter of a century. "We don't communicate much differently now than we did then—not a lot of talking," Elfman says. "In our spotting sessions we'll discuss where the music starts and stops and if he has a concern about the scene: 'Some tension here' or 'this shouldn't be a sad moment,' or something like that. The funny thing about a Tim Burton spotting session is that if it's a 90-minute movie, you can expect to be there for 100 minutes."

"It was interesting because the movie was supposed to be a comedy—so they were like, 'What kind of music is this?'" Burton remembers. "They didn't want it to be in stereo, because a comedy should be mono. In stereo doesn't make it any funnier, so I remember there was a bit of a fight to even have it in stereo. I don't think it was even settled while [Danny was] recording."

As Elfman developed the work, he began to realize that in order to flesh out the music into a fully orchestrated score that musicians could play, he was going to need help. He reached out to the first potential candidate to come to mind—his Oingo Boingo guitarist Steve Bartek. "I'm starting to write some stuff," Elfman says, "and I'm thinking, 'Crap, I need an orchestrator... where do I look?' I asked Steve at a rehearsal, 'Dude, have you ever done any orchestration?' And he said, 'I took a class at UCLA.' I said, 'Great, do you want to do this thing with me?' So, here's a composer who has never composed,

the '50s, '60s, and '70s, and Rota was equally adept at creating a mood of soulful melancholy for the films of Fellini's countryman, Luchino Visconti.

Rota became a more familiar name to American audiences when he scored Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo & Juliet*, and his elegiac theme for Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers became a hit song, "A Time For Us." Henry Mancini's instrumental recording of the tune ("Love Theme From Romeo & Juliet (A Time For Us)") became a #1 Pop hit in June of 1969.

But it was Rota's contribution to Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* that became the composer's most lasting contribution to American musical culture. His mournful solo trumpet theme and his melancholic waltz theme for Marlon Brando's Don Vito Corleone earned Rota an Oscar nomination, which was then withdrawn when it was discovered that Rota had reused music from an older score called *Fortunella*. Later the Academy decided it didn't care and awarded Rota an Oscar anyway for *The Godfather: Part II*, which he would have shared with Carmine Coppola—but Rota didn't attend the ceremony.

Elfman says, "Growing up, I had a special fascination for Nino Rota as well as Bernard Herrmann. First of all, I deeply loved Fellini's movies. I must have seen *Juliet Of The Spirits* a hundred times. And the score to *Fellini's Casanova* was deeply influential on me. The film is little-known and unsuccessful, but to me it was an unsung classic. I consider it a musical, although it was never called that, as it was filled with amazing musical numbers where characters would begin to sing. Even as early as Oingo Boingo, I was already quoting bits from that score. And then he goes on to write one of the greatest, epic, melodic scores in Hollywood scoring history, *The Godfather*. What more can I say?"



Danny Elfman at recording sessions of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, 1985

Flanked by some of the veteran Hollywood instrumental players at the *Pee-wee* sessions at Warner Bros.

with an orchestrator who has never orchestrated. But I figured, OK, he *did* go to music school! He had to have learned something.”

Elfman and Bartek immediately discussed the type of sound the score would explore, and Bartek was gratified to find out that for this first effort, he and Elfman would be paying homage to the styles of classic film scores that both men had long been fascinated by, especially Rota’s scores for the Fellini films and Bernard Herrmann. “Danny and I had talked about *Casanova* and the electric piano sound in that particularly,” Bartek says, citing Fellini’s 1976 costume biopic. “Tim and Paul were looking for a classic approach rather than a dipsy, comedy approach.” Bartek was an important addition to the team who would wind up working with Elfman on virtually all of his future film scores. “He is like a fantastic extension of Danny Elfman’s mind,” says concertmaster Bruce Dukov, who would also perform on a number of Elfman’s scores to come. Both Elfman and Bartek still needed to be educated in the process and technicalities of putting a score together—and quickly.

“We had all the help that Warner Bros. could afford to pay,” Bartek recalls. “The biggest help was Bob Badami, the music editor. He held our hands and he actually spent a lot of time with me because Danny had just gotten a synch box. You could lock clicks to a videotape, so Danny would play along and figure out how many number of beats it would take to synchronize the music precisely to the screen action...or scene changes, things like that. It was all a huge learning curve.”

Music editor Bob Badami was brought onboard by Billy Weber. Both men had worked with Jerry Bruckheimer on *Top Gun*. “They wanted someone who had some experience with rock ’n’ roll to help Danny,” Badami says. “I think Danny definitely wanted to do an orchestral score. He is so smart and so bright and so self-taught that he took it as a challenge.”

Composer Lennie Niehaus became another crucial collaborator, as he completed Elfman’s and Bartek’s orchestrations and conducted the score. “I had been writing movie scores for Clint Eastwood for a few years,” Niehaus says. “They asked me if I wanted to help on orchestrations for the *Pee-wee* movie and conduct the score. I came in and Steve Bartek had sketches for me—they were good sketches. It was one of those things where, you know, it had to be done yesterday. I said ‘You have the French horns going above the range they can play. At this point the trumpet should take over smoothly and play this where it gets too high.’ Because of the time constraints, I just took it, made a few corrections, and conducted it.”

Niehaus knew Elfman was self-taught, but he found that fact irrelevant. “These days if you hear it, you hear it,” Niehaus says. “You don’t have to go to USC or UCLA to learn. Maybe the techniques of writing...but if you seem to have an innate feeling for it, which he obviously did, it doesn’t matter how you get there. Danny seemed to have a knack for doing what the movie calls for without really having to sit down and study other scores—he has it all in his head.”

“I was very lucky to get hooked up with Lennie along with Steve my first time out,” Elfman says. “Lennie did such a great job and made the entire first experience in front of an orchestra feel really calm and professional and totally under control, which is exactly the opposite of how I felt, which was practically bursting out of my skin. Also, he was true to the music. He never tried to fight it. That’s very important to me, though I didn’t realize how valuable that was until later when I had a few bad experiences with orchestrators where they injected their own personality into my music and it came out feeling all wrong. I learned that had I been given the wrong guiding hands on that maiden voyage, it could have very easily been complete hell instead of the wonderful experience it was.”

Building a score that had both electronic and orchestral elements stretched the capabilities of both Elfman and Bartek at a time before Danny would develop the computer “kit” that would allow him to duplicate everything produced in his studio and bring it to the recording sessions for a score. “At the time, we didn’t have any sequencers,” Bartek says, “so I bought this little Japanese computer with a tiny little chiclet keyboard and it had a little sequencer in it. I think we used that for the sequenced pattern in ‘The Breakfast Machine’ cue. Danny would write it all on paper and give me the sketch, and we’d sit and talk about it. I would then flesh it out and give it to Lennie Niehaus, and Lenny would take it and do the orchestration.”

Even as Elfman worked, some people were yet to be convinced he was the man for the job. “Bob Shapiro was still very nervous about Danny,” Billy Weber recalls. “Here was this young guy from Oingo Boingo who he had never even heard of. It was a very West Coast band. And he didn’t know anything about them.”

At the time, Elfman was working out of a studio in his house in Topanga, and Weber arranged to bring Shapiro there to preview some of Elfman’s cues. “There’s this scene in the movie where Pee-wee was riding through the park. When we shot it, Paul Reubens started to sing a little thing that just literally came out of his mouth with no melody, nothing. It was awful, but it was always in because it was part of the

dialogue track. Danny took that and made that the score for that scene. It was beyond brilliant. It was utter genius. When Bob Shapiro saw that scene at Danny's house—what Danny had done with it—that locked it. That ended any doubt that Danny was a genius.”

As the score developed, it became more an homage to classic film-score genres than a contemporary-sounding pop riff. This might have seemed surprising in retrospect, but it was in line with what everyone on the project seemed to agree was the best approach to the movie. “All of us had the same references growing up: the horror movies, the matinee-type films, the cheesy '60s films,” Badami says. “I think Danny came into it with something you can't really learn, which is film sense—how music plays. Danny had the ability to write a tune and the ability to imagine how it could go against picture. He came more formed than you would have thought.”

Formed or not, Danny Elfman wasn't quite prepared for what he was about to experience once his score was ready to be performed and recorded onstage at Warner Bros. “The first live orchestra I ever heard in my life was my orchestra in *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*—and it was amazing. It's funny because in hindsight it was such a relatively small orchestra, but at that moment it sounded so big to me. It was a pretty amazing moment—addictive, too.” And Elfman wasn't the only man on the stage to get hooked. “I remember our reaction,” Steve Bartek says. “We decided to start with the opening, the bike race. And as the first two bars played, and Danny and I just looked at each other, it was like, ‘Oh, my God.’ It was obvious we wanted to do more of this stuff.”

“Hearing the music played by an orchestra was probably one of the most exciting experiences I've ever had,” Tim Burton adds. “It was incredible and so funny to see Danny because he'd never done anything like that. It's always magical when you've never done something. I guess it's like having sex; it can be great, but it's never quite the same as that first time. Music is always important—that was really the first time where it was like a character, definitely a character.”

Even Badami, an old pro, was impressed. “It was actually one of the most memorable moments of my career. We had been listening to Danny's crap synthesizer this whole time, and finally we got to the scoring session. Everyone was nervous. It was Tim's first film and Danny's first real orchestral score, and the first cue that came up was the bicycle cue in the beginning of the movie. And just hearing that and really experiencing it through them—because they had been listening to it in this very primitive way—was thrilling. A Hollywood orchestra is going to play something

reasonably well the first time, and the way it came across this first cue was really great. I think all of Danny's sessions are nerve-racking, but this just started things off in a great way. It was fantastic.”

“It was amazing,” Tim Burton agrees. “It was the first time I had ever been on a real big recording—I remember it was the old Warner Bros. recording studio. It had this circus-like striping on the side of the walls. That was the first time really seeing a big orchestra and that's before they showed it on a TV screen; it was projected film, large-screen format. Seeing an orchestra play, I remember that just being very exciting. From that day on I got excited. The pressure was off me and was on Danny, so I got to relax a little bit. That was funny. It was great though having seen Danny and his band in clubs and then seeing him in that completely different universe. It was exciting to see the change from one kind of environment to a completely different environment, playing such a different kind of music as well.”

Pee-wee himself, Paul Reubens, immediately knew the instinct to hire Danny had been spot on: “It literally made the movie. I can't imagine the movie without that score. It brought such vitality and energy and ‘cartoony-ness’ to that movie. It just created a world, certainly on the screen, that Tim had so much to do with visually. It has been the beauty of their collaborations over and over and over again. They just support each other so beautifully.”

For Tim Burton, the score cemented his impression of what Danny Elfman's music could do for a movie. “*Pee-wee* was an unusual film. Even though it was a comedy, it wasn't like a normal kind of comedy, so it didn't seem like it required a normal kind of score. That's the first time where I realized how Danny helps the picture. You know, it's a weird character, the Pee-wee character. The music helps set him in the world he needs to be set in. That's been important for every movie since then as well.”

Elfman's music was brash, kaleidoscopic, and hilariously attuned to the manic performance of Paul Reubens as Pee-wee Herman. The film's opening creates a juvenile dream of glory that cements Pee-wee's feverish relationship with his beloved bicycle; the character's subsequent wake-up ritual via a Rube Goldberg “breakfast machine” gets a maniacal, carnival-like accompaniment. The disappearance of Pee-wee's bicycle and the character's torturous nightmares about the bike get the full Bernard Herrmann treatment as Burton shoots the haunted Pee-wee in arresting, Hitchcock-like framings. A fight in a huge indoor pool



**Recording sessions for
Pee-wee's Big Adventure,
1985 (top)**

On what is now the Clint Eastwood Scoring Stage at Warner Bros., Lennie Niehaus conducts the orchestra to a projected scene from the movie.

***Pee-wee's Big Adventure*,
1985 (left)**

Elfman confers with conductor Lennie Niehaus between takes while recording the *Pee-wee* score.

between Pee-wee and chunky nemesis Francis Buxton (Mark Holton) is scored like a battle between titanic sea monsters.

Later in a wordless sequence, an increasingly frustrated and exhausted Pee-wee attempts to thumb a ride on a desert highway while Elfman supplies a harmonica solo (brilliantly performed by Tommy Morgan) so insistent and annoying it becomes a bravura comic character in itself. Elfman recalls the hitchhiking cue as one of his favorites in the film: “An amazing harmonica player named Tommy Morgan comes in, and I wrote this part that I didn’t think anyone could play in one pass. Well, I was wrong. He piled up multiple harmonicas in his hands and played it all perfectly in one pass. Then to make things really weird, I turn around and David Byrne happens to be standing there. I remember I was really embarrassed—I mean, I was incredibly nervous to begin with. And suddenly out of nowhere this guy who I was in awe of was watching me work. And of all the pieces of music to choose for that moment, it just had to be a harmonica solo. I was mortified. And I blurt out, ‘There’s



Man with Dinosaur

Burton's drawing of the dinosaur in the Andy chase sequence for *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*.

all this other stuff with a whole orchestra... really.’ And he just smiled politely and nodded—just checking it all out. In hindsight, however, it’s one of my favorite moments in the score—that simple little piece.”

Pee-wee's Big Adventure was released late in the summer of 1985 to mixed reviews (this was, after all, possibly one of the strangest comedies ever made). “The reviews of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* were *really* bad,” Burton says. “I remember one review, and I’ll never forget this, which said, ‘Everything is great—the costumes are brilliant, the photography is great, the script is fabulous, the actors are all great—the only thing that’s terrible is the direction.’ One said, ‘On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the best, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* gets a minus one.’ It’s the first ‘minus one’ I remember seeing.”

Audiences, however, loved the movie. “I think it was Warner’s second-biggest-grossing movie of the year,” Billy Weber remembers. “The budget was \$11 million—maybe \$8 million. We had previews with recruited audiences. We had one at Warner Bros. that got a very mediocre reception. Somebody, maybe Bob Shapiro, maybe the studio, said, ‘Let’s take it off the lot.’ So, we went to Austin, Texas. Two hundred people showed up at that screening dressed as Pee-wee Herman—the suit, the red bowtie, everything. And that screening scored like a 94. It just went through the roof. They loved it. Then we flew from Austin to San Diego and did one in San Diego. It wasn’t as insane as the Austin one, but it was very successful. So, we knew this was a movie, that if they picked the right place, was going to do well.”

Despite the test screenings, the Warner Bros. distributors had little faith in the picture. “They opened it in four cities,” Weber says, “and it out-grossed *Back To The Future* in all four places. So, that’s when they opened it wider. I don’t think it played in more than 800 theaters. It made \$4 million its opening weekend in the 800 theaters. It was just fantastic. To this day, that’s my measuring stick for any movie that opens because I know that *Pee-wee* did \$4 million in 800 theaters, and if you take those numbers and compare them to anything that’s going on now, you can see what’s a hit.”

The film went on to earn over \$40 million at the box office. No one was more surprised than Danny Elfman. “First off, it was a surprise anybody saw it because working on it, it was like, ‘Nobody is going to see this movie anyhow.’” In the rush of publicity that mounted as the film gathered a feverish cult momentum over the following months, the composer’s score did not go unnoticed. Many of the film’s reviews—even some of the

negative ones—enthusiastically praised Elfman’s musical contribution. Kirk Ellis of *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote, “Danny Elfman’s playful score delightfully complements the picture’s general good-naturedness.”

One of the people most impressed with the score was the man who would quickly become Elfman’s agent, Richard Kraft. Kraft was a junior agent at the Bart-Milander Agency and a world-class film music enthusiast. When he was 9 or 10, Kraft and his brother would track down and interview famous film composers like Elmer Bernstein for fun. He had taken note of Elfman’s Oingo Boingo music, and while head of music for Cannon Films, he tried unsuccessfully to get an Oingo Boingo song to be used for the main title of the film *Making The Grade*. But nothing prepared him for *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*.

“I drove to San Diego to be at [opening night of] one of the first four test-city screenings, since I was such a fan of Elfman’s work on *Forbidden Zone*,” Kraft recalls. “I was so interested to see what he was going to come up with, and it was jaw-dropping. My mind was blown. Rarely has a first film score been that auspicious, that bold—I was almost hyperventilating during the end titles. During the whole movie I was thinking, ‘This is great.’ But when I heard that whistle and then the suite of themes, I knew for sure no one was writing music like this. It was so hyper-caffeinated and so thematic and so witty, and it just became my single-minded mission to become his agent.”

Kraft says Elfman’s first collaboration with Tim Burton was a uniquely fortunate event. “Danny was given a canvas to really write something and he seized it. And Danny walked into the situation not caring if he succeeded. It was a fluke and so he had that risk-taking attitude of, ‘I’ll just do whatever I think is a good idea. If they throw it out, so what—this isn’t my day job.’”

Danny Elfman is far from the first rock artist to tackle a film score, but he may be most uniquely suited to the discipline of any to tackle the job before or since. “Most people don’t make the transition from being a rock person to being a film composer, because they don’t really understand the dynamics of film,” Kraft says. “They understand a 3-minute song form. But with the exception of Randy Newman and a few other people, the questions you ask when you’re writing a film score are so different. It’s ‘What do I do for the 38 seconds of Pee-wee’s bike getting locked up and it has all these chains on it?’ That’s a different question than you would have if you were writing a pop song. And ‘I’m being chased by a large man with a dinosaur bone—how does one approach that?’”

For Kraft, Elfman’s *Pee-wee* score demonstrated the musician’s ability to not only reference and honor some prestigious film-scoring landmarks, but to filter them through his personality and compose something contemporary and fresh. “The major influence for Danny was Nino Rota and the Fellini scores. It’s like he takes the cream of an idea—he gets to the essence of what we love about those Fellini scores—then blends it with a lot of other influences musically, and then comes out with some Elfman-esque way of doing it.”

As *Pee-wee* racked up grosses and a legion of fans, it was clear that a dynamic new voice in comedy film scoring had come along, and that Elfman had found an eager collaborator in Tim Burton. Two small projects with Burton quickly followed: an episode of the updated *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* television show with a remake of the original series episode “The Jar,” done from Burton’s uniquely garish perspective, starring Griffin Dunne and Fiona Lewis. Elfman’s percolating score appropriately referenced Herrmann’s *Hitchcock* and *The Twilight Zone* work. Interestingly, Bernard Herrmann had actually scored the original hour-long version of “The Jar” in 1964.

“The Jar” was one of Richard Kraft’s first chances to see Danny Elfman at work, and the experience only added to Kraft’s growing respect for the young composer: At that session of ‘The Jar,’ I visualized Elfman as if he had been an early TV composer in the ‘60s working on *The Twilight Zone* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* episodes. The kind of music he was doing for ‘The Jar’ reminded me of what Jerry Goldsmith did with a small ensemble on classic episodes of *The Twilight Zone*. And I think that light bulb went off in my head that Danny was going to be the next Jerry Goldsmith.”

“I still remember it being quirky and light,” Elfman says of the score he wrote for the TV episode. “It was a small ensemble so it was different; I didn’t have a full orchestra. I was writing for bass clarinet and contrabassoon, and that was such a pleasure, hearing the tones that I had loved so dearly from Herrmann’s scores.”

“Danny actually wrote ‘The Jar’ on the road,” Steve Bartek says. “The band was playing and he’d have his little keyboard set up in his hotel room, write down his score-sketches, hand it over to me, and I’d orchestrate it. Then we sent it in and when we got back off the road, it was ready to record. It was like a weird thing...he was going to work on the road.”

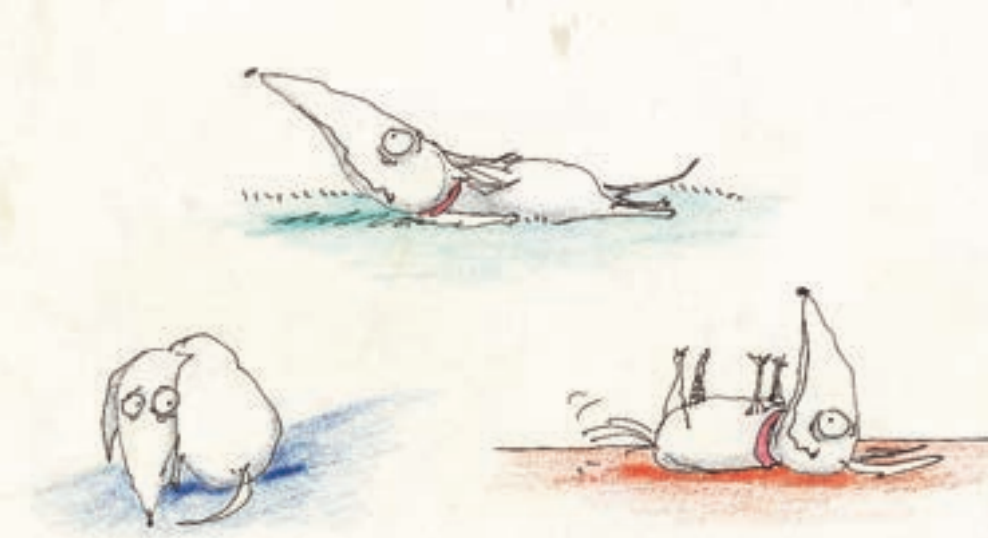
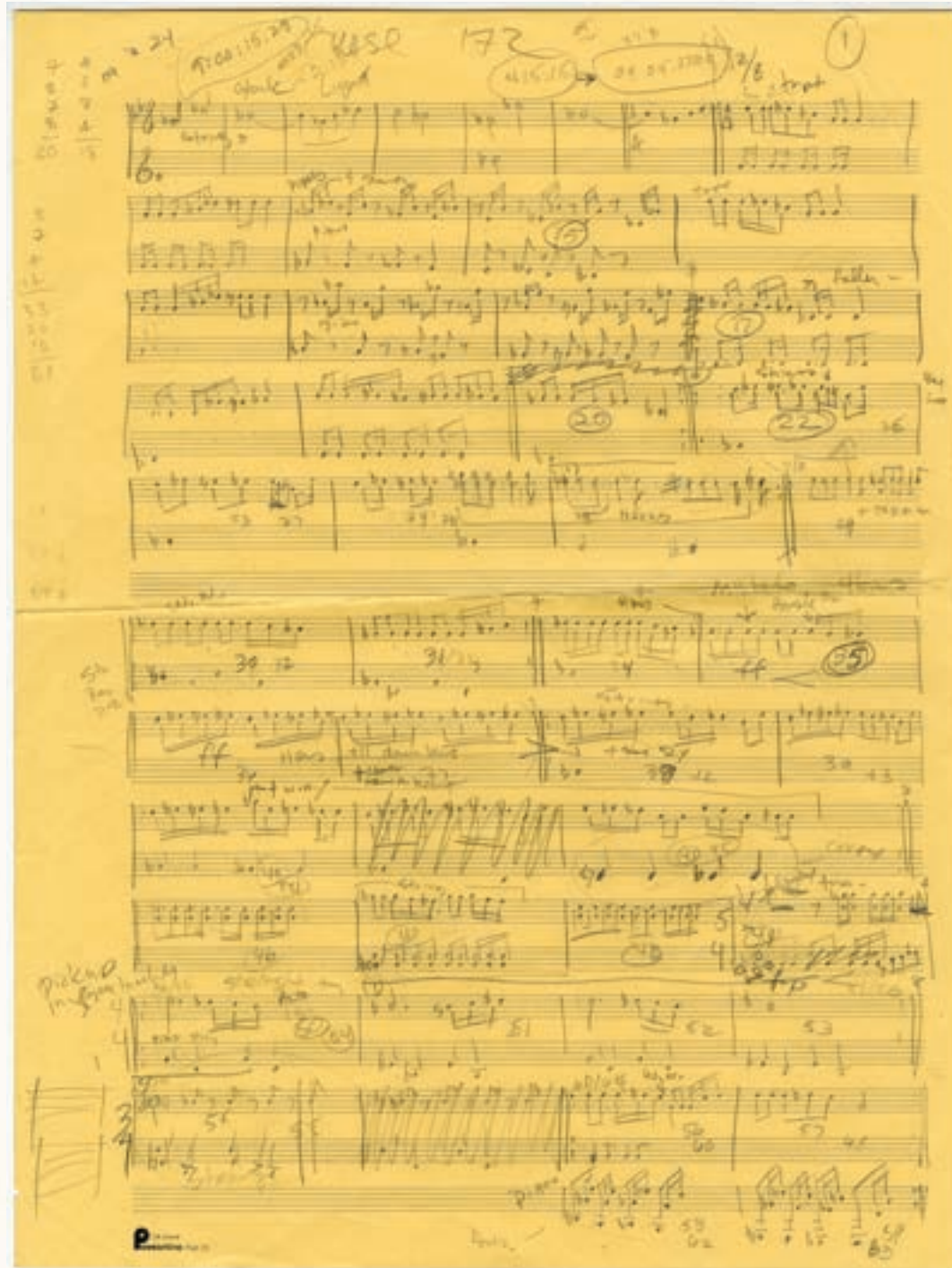
Laura Engel says she worked with Elfman to create a touring case that would facilitate Danny’s ability to work on scores on the road.

***Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, sketch (right)**

An early page from one of Elfman's sketches for *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*.

***Family Dog* (opposite page)**

Concept sketches by Tim Burton of the character Family Dog.



“When Danny was scoring movies, we created a small road case that contained his writing rig so he could pull that into his hotel rooms to write.”

Another foray into television was *Family Dog*, a series executive-produced by Burton based on his character designs. The show’s pilot was directed by animator and future director of *The Incredibles* Brad Bird as part of Steven Spielberg’s *Amazing Stories* anthology series. Elfman composed the pilot score and the main and end titles for the series. “My involvement was pretty much from a design point of view,” Burton says. “I did storyboards and designed some more characters, because I just love the idea of trying to do something from a dog’s point of view. I don’t know why, but I always relate to dogs. Edward Scissorhands is like a dog to me.”

“The run of *Family Dog* lasted a whopping five episodes,” Richard Kraft says. “Kind of a stark contrast to the other animated series Danny did around the same time called *The Simpsons*—which is now entering its 22nd year on the air.”

Based on its unprecedented success, Elfman predicts his obituary will undoubtedly start with “Danny Elfman, the guy who wrote *The Simpsons* theme....”

Matt Groening was a rock critic prior to creating Bart and Homer. He has been quoted as remembering, “I actually was a big fan of Danny Elfman’s first band—The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo, which was kind of a Cab Calloway, big band thing. And then I saw Oingo Boingo and—look, rock critics, you know, we’re ordinary—I gave it a bad review. I enraged Danny Elfman so much with my bad review that he actually wrote a letter to the editor. This is again, way, way before *The Simpsons*. And then it came time to do *The Simpsons* TV show and we wanted a great film-score composer. I wanted Danny Elfman and I thought, ‘Oh, he’ll never remember.’ He remembered. He did forgive me because I also did a cartoon once, a comic strip called ‘How To Be A Feisty Rock Critic,’ in which I made fun of all rock critics. And Danny Elfman approved very much of that.”

STEVE BARTEK

Guitarist Steve Bartek took flute lessons in third grade to impress a female classmate. It’s not clear whether he ever won over the girl, but his decision turned out to be a good one for his career. Bartek also taught himself guitar and by the age of 14 was writing songs and performing flute on albums for The Strawberry Alarm Clock. The residuals Bartek earned from his Strawberry Alarm Clock songs helped him pay for college, and he wound up getting a degree in composition from UCLA.

Later he auditioned for Danny Elfman and The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo, and from 1979 to 1995, he played lead guitar for Oingo Boingo. When Danny Elfman took on the job of writing his first theatrical film score for *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* in 1985, he asked Bartek to work with him on orchestrating the score. Bartek quickly proved to be, as concertmaster Bruce Dukov described him, “a fantastic extension of Danny



Steve Bartek

Steve Bartek, Elfman’s primary orchestrator and lead guitarist of Oingo Boingo.



Danny Elfman, 1985 (top)

Elfman at his first recording session, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*.

Alfred Hitchcock Presents: *The Jar* (right)

Griffin Dunne starred in one of Tim Burton's few television directing assignments.



Jon Burlingame, author of *TV's Biggest Hits* notes, "Groening wanted something frantic, frenetic, and bold. He felt that a lot of the animated shows had timid themes. He wanted a theme that reminded him of his childhood [with] the '60s kind of fun and lively. And that's what Danny delivered. Danny wrote something, that while undeniably Elfman, was also a little reminiscent of classic Hanna Barbera."

Around this period, Elfman also provided music for Paul Reubens' cult hit children's series *Pee-wee's Playhouse* at Reubens' request—he would also score Reubens' sequel to *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, *Big Top Pee-wee*, directed by Randal Kleiser, in 1988.

Elfman's songwriting career with Oingo Boingo also continued to intersect with movie work. "When I was working on *Weird Science* for John Hughes, I thought, 'Oh, God, we need a song,'" Kathy Nelson remembers. "I would always call Danny for everything that had to do with movies. So, I called him one day while he was driving home on the Ventura Freeway, and I said, 'Danny, I can't think of anybody besides you who could ever write a song called *Weird Science*, but I need a song' and I told him what the movie was about. And 10 minutes later he called me back from his cell phone, still on the 101 [freeway], and he goes, 'OK, I wrote the song.' And he sang it to me!"

"That was the first title song for a movie," Laura Engel says. "We actually had a Top 40 song with that." After *Weird Science*, Oingo Boingo appeared in the Rodney Dangerfield hit *Back To School* (which Elfman would also score) performing "Dead Man's Party"; later "Not My Slave" was featured in Jonathan Demme's *Something Wild*.

More comedy began to fall into Elfman's lap: In addition to *Back To School* was a string of mostly forgettable, small quirky films. "At the time, I was a junior agent," Kraft remembers. "I had no clout and the senior agents were trying to sign Danny to do movies like *Terms Of Endearment*, which was a big movie at the time. And he was not at all interested. They had no vision whatsoever, and so Danny passed on having us represent him. But I did remember he said he loved horror and science-fiction movies, so I'd keep calling him: 'Here's David Cronenberg's number—he's doing a remake of *The Fly*. Here's Paul Verhoeven's movie *Robocop*—I just read the script and it's great.' But Danny was never available to do any of these movies because Boingo was still a touring band. But after enough of these phone calls to him, he said, 'If I ever do another movie, I'll let you be my agent.'"

Even with the offers coming in, Elfman found he couldn't commit to everything because he had a touring and recording schedule continuing with Oingo Boingo. "It was the beginning of 10 really tricky years, where I was both in the band and scoring films and trying to divvy my year up between the two. I wrote all the music for Oingo Boingo, and we'd have tours and we would have to produce an album. And yet I would try to get one or two movies in around them. On the first couple of films, I actually paid the band. I would take my salary for the film, which wasn't a ton, and I'd pay half of it to the band because I'd say, 'We're not going to work for the next six weeks. I'm going to be doing this thing, so here's some money.' I bought my right to take the time."

Elfman's mind." Bartek dove in headfirst with Elfman to tackle *Pee-wee*, *Back To School*, *Beetlejuice*, and ultimately the gargantuan job of orchestrating *Batman*—Elfman's first full-scale symphonic action score—in 1989.

After the success of *Batman*, Bartek began taking on scoring assignments of his own and worked periodically writing original scores, while continuing to work on orchestrations for Elfman on almost all of his film-scoring assignments. On his own, Bartek wrote scores for *Past Midnight*, *Cabin Boy*, *Coldblooded*, *Romy And Michelle's High School Reunion*, *Meet The Deedles*, *Snow Day*, *Novocaine*, and episodes of *Desperate Housewives* and *The Tick*. He's also done arrangements and album production outside of his film work and has performed guitar for composer Bear McCreary on episodes of *Battlestar Galactica* and *Trauma*. In 2005, he shared a BMI Award with Elfman, Stewart Copeland, and Steve Jablonsky for their *Desperate Housewives* music.

4



SHOWTIME!
Anthem For A Bio-Exorcist



Beetlejuice with an upset stomach.

Beetlejuice with an Upset Stomach

Artwork by Tim Burton.

BEETLEJUICE

By the time Danny Elfman approached his second feature film with Tim Burton, he had at least four features under his belt—and there would be six films with Elfman scores released in 1988, the year *Beetlejuice* was released. While *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* had been perfect for Tim Burton's sensibilities, *Beetlejuice* was a script written by Michael McDowell, who had written the update of "The Jar" for Burton and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. The script had been forwarded to Burton by David Geffen while Burton was struggling to find a movie project different from the endless gross-out comedies and buddy-cop shoot-'em-ups being made at the time.

Beetlejuice was a strange throwback to something like *Topper* or *The Ghost And Mrs. Muir*—movies that dealt with ghosts as sympathetic beings still trying to get along in the "real world." Alec Baldwin and Geena Davis play a young married couple, the Maitlands, whose wedded bliss is cut short in the opening minutes of the film by a car accident, after which they glumly haunt their own New England house. When a group of insufferable, artistic New Yorkers (Jeffrey Jones, Catherine O'Hara, and Winona Ryder) move in, the dead couple make the mistake of calling in "bio-exorcist" Beetlejuice (Michael Keaton), who specializes in helping ghosts who are "haunted" by the living. "After *Pee-wee*, I got sent a lot of really bad comedy scripts, like every bad comedy that they wanted to do," Tim Burton recalls. "Then they sent *Beetlejuice* and my first impression of that was, 'I can't believe anybody wants to do this.' It was very abstract. And after getting all these bad comedy scripts, I couldn't believe that some studio wanted to make it. That intrigued me about it. The great thing is when they don't really know what the movie is

about, they can't really comment on it too much. That's what I always like. It's always good to find projects they don't really understand to begin with."

After the success of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, Burton was able to assemble a stellar cast and turn *Beetlejuice* into a far more elaborate production than his first feature film. But if *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* was idiosyncratic, *Beetlejuice* was almost indescribable. With its lead characters dying at the very beginning of the movie, the bulk of the film takes place in an afterlife where anything can happen. Furniture comes to life, giant striped "sandworms" invade at unexpected moments, and a waiting room in "Limbo" is crowded with football players from a plane crash and victims of sharks and headhunters. Even before it hit theaters, no one had seen anything like *Beetlejuice*.

"You have visionary stylists once in a blue moon who make movies that are beloved that never made any money," Richard Kraft says. "Like the original Czechoslovakian *Baron Munchausen* from the '40s, or *The 5,000 Fingers Of Dr. T*, or *The Red Shoes*, or *The Night Of The Hunter*. And it's usually a disaster. The story always is: The studio is sitting there thinking, 'What the hell is this?' And the movies never got released, or they were dumped on the bottom half of a drive-in double bill. So, with the exception of Stanley Kubrick, I don't believe there's been a whacked-out stylist like Burton who's been able to get away with it. There was nothing that resembled *Beetlejuice* before *Beetlejuice*."

While *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* had been informed by the playhouse aesthetic of Paul Reubens' character, *Beetlejuice* more recognizably sprang from Tim Burton's sketch pad, with a strong assist from production designer Bo Welch and visual effects consultant Rick Heinrichs. "*Beetlejuice* and

my experience with Tim really was a huge eye-opener and more or less has shaped, dictated, and defined my career since,” Welch says. “It was my second job as a production designer, basically the department head, and I was very lucky to have that as my second movie. The experience of working with Tim is having your head turned around 180 degrees, especially after my previous movie experience, which got hung up in literalism and details of reality instead of artistic expression. So, it was revelatory and defined the rest of my working career. To this day, I get jobs because of *Beetlejuice* or *Edward Scissorhands* or *Batman*.”

Catherine O’Hara, who wound up marrying Welch after the film was completed, says she never found the movie’s outlandish production design off-putting or intimidating: “Maybe that’s why I was invited to be a part of it, because none of it seemed freakish to me—all of it seemed right. I don’t remember looking around thinking, ‘What? This is weird.’ I kept saying to Bo that everything on the set could kill you. We had the coffee table with the nails sticking up...I guess there was just a lot of killing and death. Our dining room chairs were these rabbit skins stretched out. There was just a lot of dangerous stuff on the set. What a great job for a designer...to do a movie that’s so much about the sets. The whole problem between Geena Davis and Alec Baldwin’s characters and our characters was that we redid their house. That was the big conflict. It was a great design movie, which is all Tim’s world.”

Welch acknowledges O’Hara’s point: *Beetlejuice* was, on some level, a battle between opposing forms of bad taste in architecture. “The conflict is an aesthetic collision, which is so funny to me because I see it every day. That’s what my life is—aesthetic collisions and how you work your way out of them. So, I don’t think people consciously say, ‘I want to go see that movie because there is an interior design conflict,’ but ultimately that is what’s happening there. There’s a whole Tim-informed vocabulary and color-and-texture vocabulary that you learn to embrace. But then some of the architectural and interior design ideas were also genuinely loathsome to people and yet kind of vaguely avant-garde fun.”

“That movie ended up becoming much more of an improv movie—it started to veer quite a ways from the script,” Burton says. “I remember initially I wanted Sammy Davis Jr. to play Beetlejuice. They almost fired me based off of that alone. But then Michael Keaton came in and he did a great job. Through people like him and the others like Catherine O’Hara and all these people who I work with who were good at improv, they helped shape the movie.”



Tim Burton and Michael Keaton

On the set of *Beetlejuice*.

Actor Michael Keaton remembers that even finding the title character was an exercise in exploration. He also remembers being immediately impressed with Tim Burton: “On *Beetlejuice* we had several meetings, and I knew from the get-go that I really liked this guy. That was the first thing and it was clear, after talking to him for about 10 minutes, that he was a genuine artist. It’s not uncommon for me, when I don’t quite get something, to just ask a lot of questions and meet two, three, four times, whatever. So we had meetings and then finally I thought, ‘You know I’m getting closer on this thing, getting closer to understanding it.’ I had an idea from a couple of things he said. I called the wardrobe department over at Sony, and I said, ‘Send me racks of wardrobe from this period, this period, this period, various types of periods.’ I went home and went to work for a few days and just started creating things. I called a makeup artist and told her how I wanted my hair to be standing on end as though I was jolted with electricity...and how I wanted mold on my face, because



Beetlejuice with Balloon Head

Artwork by Tim Burton.

DJ TIM BURTON

Beetlejuice marked the debut of a distinctive, often tongue-in-cheek approach to source music and pop music interpolation for Tim Burton’s films that would flower in *Edward Scissorhands* and to some extent in *Big Fish*. But on *Beetlejuice*, the result came about when a song choice—dictated in the screenplay—wouldn’t work out in execution.

One of the most bizarre and unforgettable scenes in *Beetlejuice* is when a dinner party at the Deetz’s (with celebrity guests Dick Cavett and Robert Goulet) goes horribly wrong; the Maitlands employ Beetlejuice to briefly possess the mortals at the dinner table, “marionetting” their bodies to dance around the table until horribly animated shrimp plates grab their faces. The original dance number had been in the Motown vein. “That was something Warren Skaaren put into the script,” Burton remembers. “The people reacting to a musical number—and he had picked this *Big Chill*/yuppie kind of Motown music that was very happening at the time. I didn’t want to do it. So, I started listening to a bunch of music, and I liked the Belafonte songs. There was something about Adam and Barbara being on vacation and this kind of calypso music, which I liked.”

Actor Jeffrey Jones recalls that this scene was almost not filmed: “We were a couple of days behind. Tim was being pressured to cut something or to pick up the pace. One of the scenes that was being considering to be cut was the ‘Day-O’ scene, dancing around the table. Originally it was set up in the movie that the ghosts, Geena [Davis] and Alec [Baldwin], are Sam & Dave fans. So, the music was going to be Sam & Dave, but it was too slow, kind of bluesy.” In rehearsals, Burton, the actors, and the choreographer discussed some musical alternatives for the scene. “Catherine O’Hara said that she



Tim Burton, 1988

Tim Burton directs his second feature, *Beetlejuice*.

Tim had described him in a lot of different ways, 'He lived up to all time periods; he was present and not present. He could be present at any time in the world and universe. It's as though he's lived in different eras. He's a guy who lives under rocks and kind of comes out of everything. He's packed away in places and disappears and then pops up again when his name is called.' So one idea I took and played with was the idea of somebody being packed away, living under rocks or in deep, dark crevices. The first day I walked on set in makeup, the character had not been seen. So when I showed up, it was either going to work or it wasn't because I was already down the road with what I was going to do."

Once Keaton started performing with *Beetlejuice's* distinctively rasping, staccato snarl of a voice, Burton responded immediately. "What's great about Tim—he kind of lit up and his hair started flying around and his hands started waving through the air," Keaton says. "We just started shooting and then he starts adding even more ideas and throwing them at me. I just hit the ground running, thinking, 'Well, there's no turning back—this is what I have in mind. If this doesn't work, I guess they'll have to recast it or something.'"

Though Burton originally conceived the role to be played by Sammy Davis Jr., Michael Keaton as Beetlejuice achieves what may be the first live-action performance worthy of a Warner Bros. cartoon character (he's a kind of combination of Yosemite Sam and Regan from *The Exorcist*). The actor says he had Daffy Duck at the back of his mind: "I was a fan and I really liked all those Warner Bros. cartoon characters, the animated characters—and this was in the world of Daffy Duck. Bugs Bunny always won; he always figured it out. He was the ultimate con man, always the one-up guy. Daffy gets close but never quite gets there. For him it was a world of frustration. That was a running thing with the Daffy Duck character, and that was one of the elements that I incorporated as well when I put together that character."

Actor Jeffrey Jones says that Burton was still getting used to being on a movie set with a big cast and crew: "Tim's an artist and he was accustomed to being alone with his pens, drawing. He wasn't very verbal. That was then; he doesn't have that problem now. He's much more accustomed to the world that he's occupying now. Initially, he had some real difficulty trying to express himself. So, I think he was more comfortable dealing with people who already knew what he was like and who got him, who understood what he was trying to say when he was having difficulty actually expressing himself. The art direction was terrific. No doubt about it—it was unique and special to him. I don't think anybody was taken aback by it. It was just very, very imaginative and graphic."

With several films under his belt, Danny Elfman went to work trying to find an aesthetic for the score, in effect transferring the maniacal energy of *Pee-wee* into some hellish, upside-down netherworld. The results are first heard in the film's rambunctious main title music: an almost pastoral title sequence in which the camera floats over picture-perfect helicopter views of the New England countryside. The scene gradually fades to reveal that it's actually a miniature landscape assembled in the Maitland's attic. This becomes obvious at the end of the sequence when the camera closes in on a small model of the Maitland's house and a seemingly gigantic—but actually normal-sized—spider begins to crawl over the roof.



Harry Belafonte

Belafonte's calypso classics, "Day-O (The Banana Boat Song)" and "Jump In The Line (Shake, Shake, Señora)" were featured in *Beetlejuice*.

thought it wasn't energetic enough," Jones continues. "She suggested calypso. Something like calypso would be better, more energetic, and off-the-wall in keeping with the piece. Then I popped up with two suggestions: one was Lord Invader's 'Yankee Dollar' and the other was 'Day-O' by Harry Belafonte. That's how it happened. It was written down, and then Denise Di Novi went off and looked for clearance and got it on 'Day-O.' The scene was in danger of being cut because of time constraints and luckily it didn't—apparently it's one of those scenes that is most remembered."

The Harry Belafonte number became one of the high points of the film, and Danny Elfman employs it to ingeniously creepy effect at the beginning of his main title. Burton ended the film with an uproarious treatment of Belafonte's "Jump In The Line (Shake, Shake, Señora)" with Lydia, the

Elfman's main—title, full of pumping “oompa-oompa” rhythms from tubas and trombones, noodling woodwinds, and a diabolical fiddle—ingeniously played against the sunlit, floating images to suggest the anarchic Beetlejuice character lurking in the shadows, ready to turn the proceedings upside down. “One of the things I’ve always appreciated about Tim is that he’d let me do stuff like this,” Elfman says. “The first place to go in that opening would be some light airy flying music because the camera is gliding over the landscape—and my instincts told me the opposite. I said, ‘It doesn’t matter what we’re seeing at that moment. What we should hear is where we’re going to be in 45 minutes. The opening title should take us to where we’re *heading*, not to where we are.’ So, reluctantly I played it for Tim and he seemed delighted. Whereas another director would just go, ‘What the hell are you doing?’ That was always the beauty with Tim. There was no sense of ‘Oh, my God, what are you doing?’ Stick with the program.”

“One great thing about Danny’s music, the sounds that he makes are very descriptive,” Jeffrey Jones says. “One of the problems with soundtracks in movies is you want something that is distinctive and memorable but doesn’t detract. Danny is really good at that. My understanding of him was that he was always looking for new instruments and new sounds. So, his music is very rich. And certainly *Beetlejuice*—it started with a bang.”

As Steve Bartek points out, getting the score recording process “started with a bang” was part of his and Elfman’s philosophy on their first few movie jobs. “The idea was to play the main title kind of as a piece of music on its own and let everybody get excited about it,” Bartek says. “We’d get the director and producer into the spirit of the score with an exciting title cue.” Unfortunately this wasn’t the ideal way to get the best performance for the main title. “We later realized what you want to do is get the orchestra used to all the themes and *then* record the main title.”

Recording the *Beetlejuice* main title quickly turned into one of the toughest conflicts Elfman was ever to experience in his career as a film composer. The *Beetlejuice* title cue was the first piece recorded for the score—and also the *last* piece recorded, after a high-profile personnel switch. Elfman and Bartek had retained the services of Lennie Niehaus on their few film projects, but Elfman discovered that Niehaus wouldn’t be available to work on *Beetlejuice*. A new conductor would have to be found. “And I said to [Warner Bros. music executive] Gary LeMel, ‘It might be fun to work with some great old-school conductor,’” Elfman recalls.

LeMel says that Elfman’s unorthodox background and methods were unimportant because he achieved the results everyone wanted: “Everyone knew that Danny wasn’t a great musician as far as reading stuff, which didn’t hold him back. A lot of guys read perfectly and have no concept of what they are doing. I thought I had done the hippest thing putting Danny together with this old-timer legend, Lionel Newman.” “Oh, man, that would be so cool,” remembers Elfman, “How cool would that be? Well, it was catastrophic.”

Lionel Newman wasn’t just a Hollywood legend—his entire family was a Hollywood legend. He was the brother of Alfred Newman (music director at 20th Century Fox from 1940 to 1960 and composer of more than 200 film scores, including *How The West Was Won*, *The Robe*, and *Airport*) and uncle to Randy Newman, Thomas Newman, and David Newman. Lionel was a composer and orchestrator as well, with 11 Oscar nominations (and a win for *Hello, Dolly!*). He became musical director for 20th Century Fox Television in 1960 and eventually senior vice president of music at the studio, overseeing scores like John Williams’ first three *Star Wars* soundtracks and conducting on scores such as *Cleopatra*, *The Sand Pebbles*, *The Omen*, and *Alien*.

Lionel Newman could be cantankerous and had a habit of conjuring up teasing nicknames for composers: Elmer Bernstein was “The Wrong Bernstein,” Jerry Goldsmith (who Newman thought vain) was “Gorgeous.” By the time of *Beetlejuice*, Newman was semi-retired and the studio system that he and his brother had helped build and maintain was on its last legs. Lionel was a noted perfectionist, tough with an orchestra, and he was used to a level of interpretation that most studio conductors by 1988 no longer enjoyed.

As Lionel Newman took up the baton on the main title sequence of *Beetlejuice*, Danny Elfman quickly realized that the performance wasn’t matching his vision for the music. “This was a major conductor dilemma,” Elfman says. “Lionel decided to interpret the music, and every interpretation he did was incorrect if not diametrically opposed to what I wanted. I was in the recording booth. Every question asked by the orchestra, he would answer before I could jump in on the talkback, and it was usually the opposite of what I was about to say.”



The Waiting Room

Burton conceptualizes characters through drawing, populating the afterlife waiting room in *Beetlejuice*.

Steve Bartek was involved in trying to get performance instructions to the players. “It didn’t seem obvious to me. But by the end of the day, it seemed obvious to Danny that Lionel had his own agenda,” Bartek says. “And everything we were doing from the booth, listening to it and saying, ‘Oh, let’s change this, let’s change that, you have to be louder, you have to be softer, let’s change those notes’... and we’d tell the conductor in a respectful way and he would tell them. But some of the players were telling us, ‘Hey, that’s not what he told us.’ And it’s understandable because it was crazy stuff. We had things like the tuba and piccolo in two octaves, a minor 9th. All the players were going, ‘Huh?’ But that’s what we were going for, to go ahead and get ugly.”

According to Elfman, that first recording date for *Beetlejuice* remains the only time he’s gone through an entire session with no music recorded: “Every time a rehearsal finished, Steve and I would quickly divvy up the information we needed to relay from our notes. ‘OK, you go talk to the violins; I’m going to run out and give some notes to the pianist and percussion.’ We’d both run out the door and split off in two directions. Steve is talking to one group and I’m sitting there with the pianist saying, ‘Oh, in bar 50, that’s really supposed to be this.’ And Lionel, who is doing his thing, says, ‘Excuse me, *Beethoven*, I’m trying to work here—some people are trying to work here!’ And the whole orchestra goes dead silent...they were all looking at their feet... the discomfort in the room was so thick it was excruciating. We got to the lunch break and I told Gary it was not going to work, and they understood. The next day they already lined up Bill Ross as a replacement conductor. They said, ‘We’ve got a guy—he’s younger, much more amenable.’ With less than 24 hours’ notice, Bill stepped in conducting. He was great, and we were able to get back and finish the score, but just barely.”

The instrumental performances Elfman wanted on *Beetlejuice* were intentionally idiosyncratic, like an orchestra spinning out of control, barely hanging on to the notes—an approach that might have seemed insane to a more traditional conductor. Elfman acknowledges that at this stage his written

Maitlands, and the team of dead football players dancing to the number.

Burton had somewhat less input into the pop music in his next film, *Batman*—although, despite what would become a conflict over the film’s musical vision and whether it would favor Danny Elfman or *Purple Rain*’s maestro Prince, Burton says he never had any bad feelings about His Royal Badness. “I love Prince. I saw him twice at Wembley when I was shooting *Batman*. I think he’s incredible. Here was a guy who was looking at a movie and doing his thing to it. It’s like what comic book people do; it’s their impression. I love that. I wish there were more of that kind of thing. It’s cool to have crossover things like that. But I couldn’t make the songs work, and I think I did a disservice to the movie and to him. Still, the record company wanted those things to be in there. Obviously, they made a lot of money from it. So I guess, in that respect, they achieved something. But I don’t feel I made it work very well. The songs put it too much into a specific time frame.”

Burton’s approach to songs seems to deliberately fog the issues of time and place, particularly in his use of one of his favorite performers from childhood, singer Tom Jones. Jones’ hit “It’s Not Unusual” has appeared in countless movies, often as a signifier of kitsch. The song’s appearance in *Edward Scissorhands* initially seems to indicate the same approach, but by the time Jones’ full-throated, passionate “With These Hands” is introduced, it becomes clear that the dynamic performer is functioning as the inner voice of Edward’s soul, pleading for understanding and love. Since Jones’ songs have appeared in around 100 movies, he was unaware that his recordings would be featured in *Edward Scissorhands*. “The first I knew of it was when I watched the movie,” he says. “It was fantastic. First there was the one song, and then the sec-



Beetlejuice “Main Title” score

Orchestrated score for the “Main Title” sequence of *Beetlejuice*.

scores weren't quite detailed enough to indicate his full intent: “Early on, I didn't get enough of the dynamics correctly onto the paper. I got the music onto the paper, but I had to get the performance from them live. Since then, I've tried to get better at getting the performance as much as possible onto the paper. This was a total case of interpretation. That's why I was forever putting off of doing orchestral arrangements for concerts of my work. Because when it's misinterpreted, it sounded so bad—the energy that made *Beetlejuice* work for me was all missing. Take the same piece and sap the energy out of it, and it's not the same piece. It was supposed to be playing at a tempo and a crispness...like they are marching in line and almost about to trip over each other.”

Today Elfman says he bears Lionel Newman no ill will. “I feel terrible that this kid, who didn't know sh*t, was the first and only person to fire him in his career. He was a great guy with great history. All he was doing was stepping into a situation, and his own musical instincts of a certain nature said this is how music is supposed to be played. He was just doing his thing.”

With Bill Ross picking up the baton in place of Newman, the *Beetlejuice* score was recorded, and Elfman's bustling, anarchic main title came to life. Paul Shure, concertmaster of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and a member of The Hollywood String Quartet in the '50s, performed the score's distinctive, diabolical fiddle. A droll, dark-humored tango accompanied Winona Ryder's character in her dealings with the deceased Maitlands. And Elfman concocted a bravura musical climax to accompany Burton's fantastically bizarre climax involving hideous sculptural furniture coming to life, invading sandworms, a grotesque wedding ceremony, and Beetlejuice's transformation into a monstrous merry-go-round as he battles against the Maitland's attempts to exorcise the “bio-exorcist” himself.

“I think Danny plays pretty much nonstop the last reel of the movie,” Richard Kraft says, noting that those 20 minutes are indelible: “...as opposed to movies now, where 20 minutes of score can go by and make no impression whatsoever. But there is such architecture to what Danny constructed. If you do the bullet points of what's going on in the finale of *Beetlejuice*, it is a smorgasbord of ideas played at a frantic pace. It could have been really confusing. But Danny had clarity. He somehow saw it was very much about the energy. He found the energy that was going to build while he would comment on the individual things that were going on in a very Carl Stalling way. For some music, there is an overreach in

ideas during a collage. Danny's music in *Beetlejuice* is a collage for sure—but it feels very organized. And only he knew what the organization was.”

“I love the music at the end,” Catherine O'Hara says. “The whole wedding scene when Beetlejuice is trying to marry Winona's character, Lydia, those violins as it ends—in that moment it builds up to such a crescendo...to such a great climax of whether or not this wedding is going to happen. And then the wedding doesn't happen. It represents all the characters somehow. You totally feel the failure of Beetlejuice...the delight of Lydia getting freed...and Geena Davis and Alec Baldwin's characters saving the day. It somehow covers everyone and what all the characters are going through and what the audience is going through without telling anybody what to feel.”

Steve Bartek says that one of Elfman's advantages in film scoring is his background as a songwriter: “The main title's got a verse and a chorus, and it gets you there. Despite the complex ending, [Danny] brings back themes in a psychologically rewarding way. They come back when you need something to remind you that you're still in that movie, and you're not just stuck in sandworm action stuff. There's just enough of a theme coming back in proper perspective with whatever the characters are doing, but there's enough musical structure to make it feel like you're moving somewhere.”

Elfman's music wound up contributing a vital element to *Beetlejuice*: It clued audiences in. “The studio didn't necessarily believe in *Beetlejuice* all that much,” music editor Bob Badami recalls.

Richard Kraft attended a preview in Sherman Oaks, California: “*Beetlejuice* had tested poorly with the temporary music track. It was too weird because it was alternating between comedy music and horror movie music. So no one knew what the tone of the movie was. Then they reviewed it with Danny's score in it, and the test scores went up. Nothing had changed other than the music. The music was great. But the greatest thing about it was that it let the audience understand what the movie was.”

“They wanted to change the title to *House Ghost* and I threatened to jump out the window,” Tim Burton recalls. “I remember this is why I always wanted to show the test screening with the score, because every time we test without the score we get a much lower score. We test it with the score, and we get so much higher. It's happened almost every single time. I'll never forget the guy running the market research—[Danny's] score was in there and it tested so much better. The market research guy said, ‘Tim your movie is testing great, but that music score—it's just so serious. It's so heavy and dark.’ And I'm thinking, ‘Wait a minute—you are the guy doing this market research. It says here on the research data that they loved the score.’ It's like, ‘What kind of Kafkaesque sort of situation is this? You don't even believe your own market research?’ I've been leery of that ever since, but I've always taken note that the movie always tested so much better with [the] score in there.”

Michael Keaton says he had no idea what to expect from Elfman's music but quickly realized how much Danny was contributing to the movie: “Tim had referenced him because he had loved him and loved the Oingo Boingo band, and so I heard bits and pieces of Danny when he was with Oingo Boingo. I thought, ‘I don't know how that's going to fit into a movie,’ because I had no other frame of reference. When I heard the score, it was so perfect and creative and imaginative. I thought, ‘Oh, man, this really works.’ I saw a trailer after an [early] screening...and frankly, people just didn't know what they were looking at. The trailers weren't particularly successful at all. When I saw the trailer with

ond, and of course it was great. ‘With These Hands’ was a great ballad I recorded in the '60s. [Burton] used that for *Edward Scissorhands*, who didn't have hands of course. When the woman was sort of seducing him, they played ‘With These Hands,’ which I thought was a perfect choice. And thank God it was my version of it, because that song was old and had been recorded quite a few times before I did it. It was supposed to be on my first album, but my producer at the time, Peter Sullivan, said, ‘We'll hold this one; it sounds like it could be a single.’ So then he worked on it—he sort of took more time, which producers do when something is up for a single. I was thrilled because I knew the song very well, since I was a kid. I was in New York when I had the song out. I was at the Friars Club and this old chap came over to the table and said, ‘You've done something to this song that wasn't there when I wrote it.’ He was the guy who wrote the song! It's great to get something like that from a songwriter when you do something that they approve of. So it was always a special record to me because other people had done it and my version was a hit in the '60s. And then of course Tim Burton got a hold of it and put it in *Edward Scissorhands*, and that's when I realized Tim Burton likes what I do.”

Burton would later cast Jones in *Mars Attacks!*, showing him performing “It's Not Unusual” in Las Vegas before it's destroyed by invading Martians. Jones, whose most recent album is *Praise & Blame*, says Burton's affectionate use of him and his songs got him exposure to a new generation. “Tim Burton is this cool director and a lot of young people have seen his films. So, I think it was great exposure for me. Some young people have never heard my records. Now they were interested in them because they were in *Edward Scissorhands*.”

Burton's other source/pop endeavors have been extremely eclectic. Siouxsie And The Banshees

Danny's music on it, I thought, 'Holy moly, this is a giant leap.' And then I thought, 'OK, that was pretty great. Clearly Danny knows how to do this.' I didn't know who Danny Elfman was or who he was going to be."

Burton says Elfman's music was crucial to the picture: "That is a film that really needed the score to guide you as to what the movie was. That's why, again, even more than *Pee-wee*, you've got a score that really was important to the movie."

Composer John Powell (*The Bourne Identity* trilogy and *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*) was first exposed to Elfman's film scores via *Beetlejuice*. "It was a total mind-explosion," Powell says. "So much invention, so much energy, such emotional melodic character—and it also worked so well with the film!"

Jon Brion (who's written scores for *Punch-Drunk Love* and *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind*) says that *Beetlejuice* announced a couple of bold new talents—and a new genre: "Tim, as far as everybody else is concerned, came out of nowhere. He had his conglomeration of influences. And as you look at it across his whole career, you see what constitutes that—and the same with Danny. Before the arrival of both of them—there really hadn't been anything like that around. We now accept it as a standard form. Like anybody who does something new, after a period of time, it's like hindsight is 20/20—reverse engineering. It's like, 'Oh, well, yes...of course comedy horror!' Danny's sort of comedic-horror film music already existed in his band—this sort of hyper-cartoon. I was at a friend's house and they were playing a bunch of old Boingo records, which I never knew really well. And I was cracking up going, 'Oh, my God! Listen to it! It's all there!' It was all sitting there the whole time. That influence is just absolutely pervasive, so it's obviously deep on Danny's list of likes. And Tim's—it's more obvious to see—but that makes total sense. It's a fairly passionate thing for both of them. When you put decades on top of love of that sort for something, you now not only have your basic love for it, but you also have tons of particulars. You know more movies within that genre. Not only do you know more movies, but you now know more about what makes these tick, so your taste becomes even more exacting."

Beetlejuice was Tim Burton's second hit in a row. Made on a \$15 million budget (not that far removed from the \$8-11 million of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*), the film grossed over \$73 million. Tim Burton had tapped into something unexpected and perhaps indefinable, other than describing it as "Tim Burton." That there was an audience—

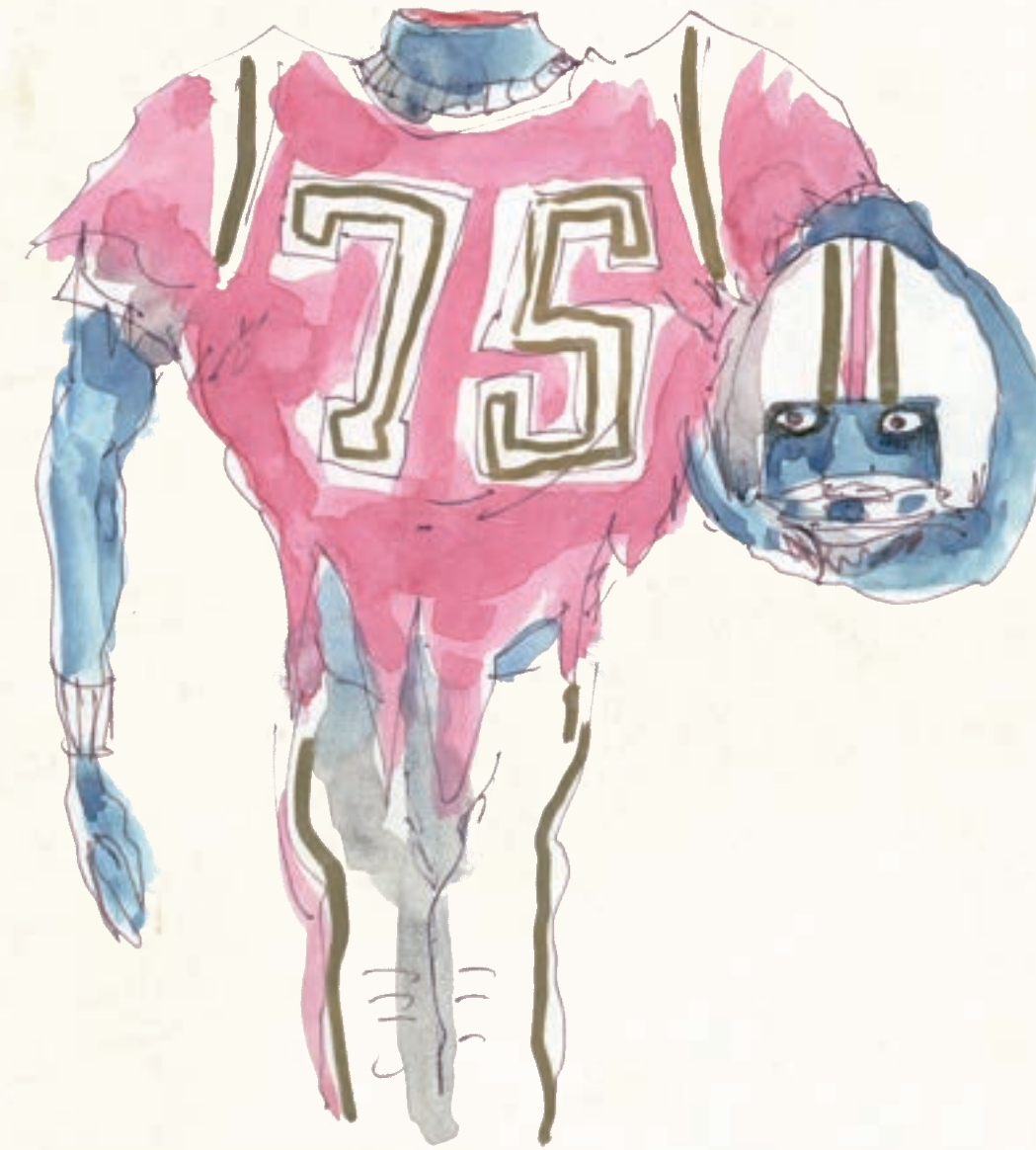
a huge one—for such an idiosyncratic talent and for two such unique movies was remarkable, but for Burton, *Beetlejuice* immediately transformed him from "promising" to "bankable."

"I think that by the time he had done *Beetlejuice*, he had a pretty solid command of what he was doing," Kraft says of Elfman. "And he definitely could do the 'oompa-oompa' comedy aspect of it. But there was an emotional element with the Winona Ryder character that indicated things he was going to be doing later in his musical development."

Immediately after *Beetlejuice*, Elfman tackled two additional scores that demonstrated his range and his growing demand in Hollywood. *Midnight Run* was director Martin Brest's takeoff of the buddy-cop genre, this time teaming a no-nonsense bounty hunter played by Robert De Niro with a fussy white-collar criminal played by Charles Grodin. Elfman's big band/jazz-fusion score was hip and contemporary, seeming to redouble the fun quotient of a movie that was already a rollicking good time. "I already knew Danny from *Pee-wee*, so I knew that he could do it," editor Billy Weber says. "So we gave it to Danny, and the first thing Danny wrote for the movie was for a scene when De Niro and Grodin come to see De Niro's [character's] ex-wife. Not only is that the first thing Danny ever wrote for the movie, it was a demo that he gave us—what you hear in the movie is the synth mock-up. They had a great pianist named Ralph Grierson come in and re-record it on the piano. It was great, but it could never match up to the idiosyncratic nature of Danny's demos."

The second project was *Scrooged*, a heavily promoted, dark holiday comedy with Bill Murray as a heartless TV executive who's haunted, *à la* the famed Charles Dickens tale, by three ghosts on Christmas Eve. Director Richard Donner had wanted John Williams or Jerry Goldsmith—whom he had worked with on *Superman: The Movie* and *The Omen*, respectively, and to great effect—to write the score. But Donner decided to see Elfman's potential to finesse both the heavyweight, supernatural drama inherent in the story and the comedy aspect. Elfman's score was striking, both magical and spine-chilling, with a distinctive approach to choral writing that hinted at some of his future style on *Edward Scissorhands*.

For Burton, the success of *Beetlejuice* meant that he would now be able to do two projects he had been developing since the premiere of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*. One was deeply personal, deeply idiosyncratic; the other was Burton's stab at one of the most iconic and commercial characters in popular culture.



Headless Football Player

Tim Burton's drawing of a crash victim in the *Beetlejuice* afterlife.

were recruited to work with Danny Elfman for the "Face To Face" song on *Batman Returns*. But *Big Fish* features a far more traditional lineup of performances meant to evoke specific and deeply American eras for its character Edward Bloom: Eddie Vedder's "Man Of The Hour," Bing Crosby's recording of "Dinah," Buddy Holly's sweet "Everyday," Elvis Presley's classic "All Shook Up," and The Allman Brothers' "Ramblin' Man" create an Americana soundscape for the film. Finally, *Alice In Wonderland* featured Avril Lavigne's "Alice," the kind of end-title single that's a rarity in Burton's films.



This is Tom Jones

Tom Jones' song "With These Hands" was featured in *Edward Scissorhands*. Later, Jones would join the cast of *Mars Attacks!*

5



DESCENT INTO MYSTERY
Defining The Dark Knight



Batman and The Joker

Burton uses pastels to visualize the scene where Batman and The Joker face off.

BATMAN & BATMAN RETURNS

BATMAN

Ever since he first unfurled his inky black cape in the pages of *Detective Comics* in 1939, the Caped Crusader—Batman—has been second only to Superman in the pantheon of comic book superheroes. The character weathered the ups and downs of the comic book industry, staying in print from 1939 to the present day and appearing in movie serials and, notably, a colorful 1966 television series that briefly became a pop culture phenomenon.

Richard Donner's 1978 *Superman: The Movie*—with Christopher Reeve as the Man of Steel—put a superhero where none had been before: in a big-budgeted, post-*Star Wars* blockbuster. The next logical step was a big-screen *Batman*, and plans for such a film were underway as early as 1979. But the poor performance of the later *Superman* sequels helped to bury the idea of more comic book superhero films and kept the *Batman* project mired in “development hell.”

Shortly after *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* became a surprise hit, Warner Bros. approached Tim Burton about the possibility of directing a *Batman* film. Burton had been impressed by Alan Moore's 1988 comic series *Batman: The Killing Joke*, and he found a psychological appeal in the Batman character that was lacking in the more brightly colored standard bearer of the superhero genre, Superman.

Burton began work on the idea of a new *Batman* film with several screenwriters, but the project wasn't given a green light—or a star—until *Beetlejuice* opened to tremendous box office in 1988. “I remember I was working on it for a while, but for some reason it didn't get a green light until the first weekend when *Beetlejuice* was successful,” Burton says. “[Batman] was a character I always liked. It was probably my favorite comic book character, just because I liked the characters and the themes.”

Burton proceeded at full steam with his own interpretation of the Caped Crusader. Burton saw Batman's alter ego, Bruce Wayne, as a split personality that needed to hide inside an armored bat costume in order to make himself terrifying—and seemingly indestructible—to paranoid and superstitious criminals. In effect, Batman would be as odd and as psychologically disturbed as any of his foes. Producer Jon Peters suggested that *Beetlejuice*'s star, Michael Keaton, would be a daring choice for Batman—and Burton enthusiastically agreed. Small in stature and full of manic energy, Michael Keaton had been known exclusively for comic roles, and the announcement of his casting created a firestorm of controversy.

“Tim talked to me and said, ‘Look I'm going to send you the script because I think I'm doing *Batman*.’” Michael Keaton recalls. “I didn't have any take on *Batman* except what I knew...I wasn't ever a superhero fan or necessarily a comic book fan, but when Tim said to read Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight*, I took a look at the Frank Miller stuff—and I know Tim a little bit by this time—and I go, ‘Oh, OK, this is going to be interesting.’ I wasn't farther than page seven or eight, and I went, ‘Oh, this is *really* interesting, and yeah, I get it.’”

Keaton seemed to be the perfect solution to Burton's problems with the entire superhero genre. “People thought we were going to end up doing the TV show or something,” Burton says of the reaction when an actor known for comedy was cast in the pivotal role of Bruce Wayne. “The thing that kept going through my mind when I saw these action-adventure hero types was, ‘I just can't see them putting on a Batsuit. I can't see it.’ I was seeing these big, macho guys, and thinking, ‘Why would this big, macho, Arnold Schwarzenegger-type person dress up as



I'm Batman

Michael Keaton as the The Dark Knight in Tim Burton's *Batman*.

a bat? A bat is this wild thing. I'd worked with Michael before, and so I thought he would be perfect, because he's got that look in his eye."

Keaton had no idea there was any controversy over his casting until late in filming. "Frankly, I didn't get why this would be such a big deal—I really didn't think about it. I was unaware of it until we had already started shooting and I was flying home for a break. I had *The Wall Street Journal* and I saw an article about this concern over me. I was kind of baffled by it. It didn't really affect me except I wondered why it was such an issue. So, I thought, 'OK, I don't know why. It doesn't make sense. Whatever. We are pretty far into this movie now—let's focus on the movie.' Then the whole controversy got mentioned again later after we wrapped."

To maintain secrecy and avoid prying fans, the *Batman* production (with a final screenplay by Sam Hamm and Warren Skaaren) was centered

at Pinewood Studios in Great Britain. "I think it was another lucky break that we ended up doing it in England, just to get away, because it was the kind of movie that had a lot of hype from the get go," Burton says. "So being in England was good because we got to focus on the movie more than listening to all the hype. It helped being away from the studio politics. Even though it was a big kind of movie, being away makes you feel like you are making a film—and not part of a business. Luckily, in those days, you didn't hear the word 'franchise.' Those terms weren't created yet at that point."

Jack Nicholson, who had been under consideration to play The Joker since the beginnings of the *Batman* film project in 1979, signed an enormously lucrative deal to play the Clown Prince of Crime, and Burton filled out the cast with other, equally offbeat thespians: Jack Palance as an ill-fated crime lord, Hammer Films veteran Michael Gough

as Alfred the Butler, Billy Dee Williams as Harvey Dent, and Pat Hingle as Commissioner Gordon. Kim Basinger replaced an injured Sean Young as Vicki Vale, a reporter who falls for Bruce Wayne and discovers his secret identity.

Costume designer Bob Ringwood designed a black rubber Batsuit sculpted with an exaggerated musculature to make the average-sized Bruce Wayne seem larger and more powerful than he actually was. Production designer Anton Furst built a nightmarish Gotham City, envisioned as a riot of conflicting architectural styles, most often shrouded in darkness and fog. Makeup artist Nick Dudman created a horrific makeup for Jack Nicholson's Joker, and the character's unveiling in an early trailer (uttering the line "Wait 'til they get a load of me...") caused a sensation.

When Tim Burton's *Batman* movie was entering postproduction in 1989, there was only one model for a blockbuster superhero movie—and it was the wrong one. Richard Donner's *Superman* had been the Norman Rockwell side of American comic books: bright, optimistic, and colorful. Batman had arguably worked that side of the street in the '60s with the Adam West television series and the DC comic books, which were briefly influenced by the pop art success of the show. In the intervening years, however, Batman had become a dark, brooding, and violent character, and Tim Burton's film honed in on that. There had never been a big-budget blockbuster that reflected the contemporary influence of people like Frank Miller and Alan Moore.

"No one knew what *Batman* was going to be," Richard Kraft recalls. "The reference point at that time was the TV series. And Michael Keaton was cast and the number one question people asked me when I said Danny was doing *Batman*, was 'Oh, is he using the *Batman* TV theme?' Outside the world of comic book geeks, more people knew the *Batman* theme than remembered the actual TV shows. What came with knowing only the *Batman* theme and the fact that Tim Burton was directing a movie starring Michael Keaton was an assumption (by most people) that it was going to be a campy comedy, a goofy movie. The precedents in recent years were George Pal's *Doc Savage*, which was a disaster, or *Superman*, which was an ultra-earnest and a very John Williams world of music. And, in fact, the studio wanted Tim to hire John Williams for *Batman*, because that was the logical person."

Tim Burton had elected to retain Danny Elfman as his composer for *Batman*, an idea that produced almost as much confusion as excitement.

Elfman's two previous scores for Burton had been brilliant, genre-defining works, bursting with imagination, innovation, and an unmistakable musical personality. But they had been written for comedies. The new, dark era of superheroes hadn't yet been defined—and no one had yet heard a score by Danny Elfman that suggested what he could do with such a film. Both *Pee-wee* and *Beetlejuice* had their own brand of frenetic, tongue-in-cheek action music, but how would Elfman score dead-serious action, melodrama, violence, and heroic might? *Batman*'s production was mammoth, and its promotional budget was equally huge. The stakes were enormously high.

"I really, really had to go through the wringer on that one," Elfman recalls. "That was really the toughest experience of my professional life."

Batman producer Jon Peters was no stranger to spectacle: He had made his film debut as a child actor in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*. With his business partner Peter Guber, Peters had shepherded the *Batman* project since the first attempt had floundered in the early '80s. Peters had produced *Flashdance*, *The Witches Of Eastwick*, *Gorillas In The Mist*, and *Rain Man*. And his vision for *Batman* wasn't simply as a movie: For Peters, the film debut of the Caped Crusader needed to be a cultural event. Even as Danny Elfman girded his loins to tackle his first big-budget action film, Peters had his own vision of what the music for *Batman* would be. It involved not just one, but three major rock stars. Peters had dated Barbra Streisand starting in 1974; he had produced her album *Butterfly* that year and later was a producer on her movie remake of *A Star Is Born*, leading to high-profile careers in music and movies. "Since my experience with Barbra Streisand, I've been very involved in maybe 50, 60 soundtracks," Peters says. "And at one point, Peter Guber and I owned Casablanca Records; we had a great affinity for film music. Originally, what we wanted to do was have Michael Jackson and Prince 'warring' music. Meaning, Michael would have been the sound of Batman and Prince would have been the sound of The Joker, and they would have worked together."

Danny Elfman heard about the plan directly from Peters during his first visit to the set in London: "The first time I was ever out there, Jon Peters said, 'Prince will write The Joker theme, George Michael the love theme, and Michael Jackson the Batman theme.'" I said, 'What do I do?' And [Peters] said, 'You'll be the captain of the ship.' Bob Badami is walking around and the conversation is getting darker, and I didn't realize until later that he is moving himself between us." Elfman



Prince
Prince's "Batdance" charted at #1.

continues, "He's very consciously moving us apart because we had just come from Jon's office where we talked about boxing. He showed me how to do a sucker punch (I still remember his tutorial, though I haven't had a chance to try it out yet), and Bob knew that I have a temper and he knew very well that Jon could easily kick my ass. I think he's figuring, better safe than sorry... better create some distance between us."

Badami remembers the event vividly: "At a certain point, it was clear that this wasn't a good thing. It was lunchtime and we found Tim in the commissary, and we went to him like kids going to see Dad. Like, 'Dad, what is he talking about?' Tim was like, 'Nah, forget about it. Don't worry about it.' Jon Peters just had a point of view, and to Tim's credit, he stuck to his guns."

Despite Burton's reassurances, Elfman was under no illusions that his position on the film couldn't be usurped, especially by a player as big as Prince. Although sales on his previous album had been disappointing, His Royal Badness was at the peak of his influence and popularity while *Batman* was in production. "There was this big push to get me to co-write the score with Prince—and there was no way," Elfman says. "I just wasn't interested. I felt like the movie wasn't a pop movie. I thought it really needed a particular tone that given the chance, I could find, but if it started becoming a pop score, it would become a whole different

animal, which wouldn't be right. Obviously, in a different situation, working with Prince would probably be an amazing experience. He is, without a doubt, uniquely talented, an amazing musician, and a great, great writer. It was incredibly difficult because I had tons of admiration for the guy—but not as a film composer. I just couldn't see it. So, I had to shut down shop for over a month and let Prince do his thing. I still believed 100 percent in Tim, and his movie, but I had to let this play itself out."

For Elfman, this was the crucible that would ultimately test his commitment to his new career: "It was my tenth film. Before that, I always felt like I was just blindly banging from thing to thing without any clear idea or goal. I didn't know how it fit into my life. Up until *Batman*, it was a part-time job. It was something I did when I wasn't recording, touring, or writing for the band. And it was around this time that I began to feel like maybe this was what I really *should* be doing with my life. Psychologically I was wrestling with the possibility that I might be stubbornly and stupidly walking away not only from this huge movie but maybe from my entire new career."

Elfman didn't doubt Tim Burton's commitment to keep him on the project, but he also knew that other forces could undermine that commitment: "Tim at that point wasn't yet a power player. *Beetlejuice* and *Pee-wee* identified him as having a very strong voice but he was not yet in a position where he could call all the shots. It was a time when I had to really consider how far I was willing to go to dig my feet into my own beliefs or if any of it really mattered. Maybe I shouldn't give a f**k—just go with the flow and essentially be an orchestrator or arranger for Prince, take the paycheck, and hope for a better opportunity in the future. In hindsight, I can see that coming from a rock band was very mixed training for me because it gave me something of an arrogant attitude and a 'take it or leave it' approach, knowing that I had this other life... this alternate reality. But in hindsight I could also see how it could have led me to a short career that might have stalled at that precise moment. In my world, in my band, I had a lot of control over my own destiny. In the movie world, I had very little, if any. It was hard."

"Danny called me asking how he should deal with the whole situation," Richard Kraft recalls. "And there was a lot of pressure because this was also the period of songs in movies, selling soundtracks, and movies being marketed around songs. And Jon Peters was a very P.T. Barnum-esque character. He wanted to be there for Tim, but the idea of doing a collaborative score with a famous pop icon did not thrill him."

"I decided it was better to hang back and see what happened," Elfman says. "To make sure that even though I was not onboard for this experiment, that Tim knew that I was still there for him if he needed me." Of the original plan to orchestrate music by Prince, Michael Jackson, and George Michael, Jackson bailed out first, while George Michael's record-label conflict could never be worked out. Prince remained in the mix and wrote songs dedicated to specific characters in the movie, nine in total.

"We needed two numbers," Burton recalls. "One for when The Joker goes into the museum, and the other for the parade sequence, and I actually used music by Prince for those scenes when we shot them. But what happened was, it snowballed. It got bigger. Prince really got into the movie and wrote a bunch of songs." Burton of course knew of Jon Peters' original plan for the film that involved a lot of songs from various artists. "They can make that work for *Top Gun*, but my stuff isn't like that. It needs to be finessed a bit more. And I don't think those songs work. It doesn't have anything to do with Prince's music; it has more to do with their integration into the film. I liked them on their own, but I'm not proficient enough to make something like that work if it's not right."

A version of the film was screened that contained music produced by Prince only—songs and electronics—but very few people were privy to it. "I'm probably the only one who did see it," Warner's Gary LeMel says. "Prince asked me to come to Minneapolis because he wanted to play me something in the studio. So I did. And he, in typical Prince fashion, stayed up all night. He played me some stuff that had nothing to do with the movie, and at some point he said, 'I want you to see this; I want your opinion.' He played almost the entire movie, and he had scored almost the entire movie. It was much smaller, more rock 'n' roll, nothing like Danny's score. I sort of talked him out of it. I said, 'Look, they really want that big score. It's wonderful but it's not for this movie. This movie has got to be huge, as great as your score is, it's small and intimate, and that's not what they're looking for.' 'They' meaning the studio, and I was representing the studio. I've got to tell you it's great—it just wasn't that movie."

Even Jon Peters agrees the Prince "score" didn't work: "Prince is good in pieces. He's good in bites. That's why I thought it would be interesting to get Danny to work with Michael Jackson and Prince, because then you've got three geniuses working together. But I think when it came to the Prince music, the songs worked out great. But his score... no, it wasn't great."

Elfman remembers, "Sitting that out was incredibly hard. In the end, there is a whole score by Prince. I never heard it. There was a screening in London and I got a call asking, 'Can you be on a plane tomorrow?' Making what felt like a career-ending decision and coming out alive on the other side was incredibly exhilarating. I was *so* ready to go."

The Prince experiment ended with the two songs Burton needed—used as source only—remaining in the film. The job to score *Batman* was Danny Elfman's alone once again, and once again Elfman had to face the prospect of essentially inventing a new genre. "The only examples up to that point were John Williams' [scores], and we knew we didn't want it to sound like John Williams," Elfman says. "We just didn't know what we wanted it to sound like. So, it really was like reaching out in the dark."

"Dark" was in fact the word—somehow the black-on-black, gothic environment Tim Burton had created needed to be re-created musically. "On *Batman*, I think the word 'opera' was the only main direction Tim Burton gave," Kraft says. "But a word like that opens up a completely different way of thinking."

For Steve Bartek, it was like *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* all over again. "I remember the pressure to deliver being huge. I remember that I went to buy a bunch of opera scores. Danny was talking opera—that was the feel he wanted for the piece. So, I did a lot of studying, orchestration-wise. And as far as the scope of the piece, Danny dug in."

Walking among Anton Furst's cavernous sets in London, Elfman began to absorb the new *Batman* aesthetic. Editor Ray Lovejoy showed him a third of the movie in the editing room, and Elfman mulled it over on a 747 on the return flight from London. In his head, over the roar of four jet engines, Elfman began to hear the *Batman* theme: "Halfway into the flight this melody starts and I go, 'F**K, this could be it.' Now I don't have the ability to grab a napkin and just start writing music on it without some kind of keyboard at hand, and I learned early on to never travel without a portable tape recorder, because I so often get my best ideas in the car while driving. I knew I had to capture it. So, I kept grabbing my stupid little tape recorder and running into the bathroom to attempt to capture this idea. I couldn't do it in my seat because there were too many people around me, and I'm way too shy and self-conscious to start singing in my seat on a flight. I'm starting to get down the first part, and then I hear the second part. 'OK, now how do I convey counterpoint? OK, here's a rhythm. Here's a French horn line.' So, I'm running in and out [of the bathroom], over the course of two or three hours, and the



Danny Elfman in his home studio

Elfman working in his Topanga Canyon home studio around the time of composing *Batman*.



Batman recording session, CTS Studios, London, 1989

Orchestrator Steve Bartek (second from left), conductor Shirley Walker, Danny Elfman, music editor Bob Badami (second from right), and engineer Eric Tomlinson (far right).

more I'm going in there, the more the flight attendants are getting nervous. I'm at a point where I'm coming out all excited and they are going, 'Can we help you sir? Are you all right? Is there anything we can get you?' Then five minutes later I'm back in there again but not looking sick. Clearly they thought I must have been shooting up in there or something because I was excitedly running in and out of the bathroom."

Elfman was dealing with the added noise of jet engines in the confines of the bathroom, which was a natural echo chamber. And he was desperate to finish, because he knew that the airline's traditional "landing music" would likely cancel out any real ideas he had. "It only takes four bars of 'Hey Jude' to instantly annihilate anything you have playing in your head," he says. "Sure enough, we land, they put on the music, and it's like an eraser—total eraser—it was gone. I rush home and I turn on my tape recorder. And I'm in front of my music paper, piano—all there ready to go—and all I hear is engine roar. I hear my voice but it's not clear. It's mostly noise with me hollering over it. I keep listening and listening and listening—and suddenly, bam! It was back. It was just enough...here's the first part...here's the harmony...here's the second part...here's the rhythm. And it was like, 'Ah, here it is!' I wrote it down, and that did, in fact, become the titles to *Batman*."

Elfman still had to present his themes to Burton and Peters. "When I came in, in 1985, it was the very beginning of having rudimentary ways of doing demos—it was primitive, Elfman says. "But by *Beetlejuice* I was already mocking up the whole score. It's very much the same now but the orchestral samples used to be much cheesier and with very few choices. A lot of them were coming out of this little box with a knob and you turn it to like, 'Clarinet,' 'Strings Long,' 'Strings Short.' You had choices like that. It's not like now where I can go through half a dozen different libraries to choose a clarinet or another instrument that I like. But on the other hand, I couldn't have functioned in that earlier era without the aid of something, because earlier on, a composer had to play piano. Piano is how you presented your score. You weren't a composer without being a pianist, period."

Bob Badami remembers that there was still a great deal of studio concern over the project. "Danny created this mock-up of the *Batman* theme. Everyone came over to his house in Topanga and we had this meeting."

"Jon never heard of Danny," LeMel says. "He was trying to maneuver Tim into doing Jon's vision, which wasn't terrible or anything, but they

weren't on the same page. He kept asking me, 'Does Danny have a theme? He's got to have this great theme.' I finally got him to go with me to Danny's house in Topanga Canyon. I talked to Danny before and I said, 'I know you have a great melody—just play it for him. And I'll try to move it in your direction so we all get what we want.'"

"I didn't know how to do a good presentation at that point," Elfman notes. "So, I'm playing all these different pieces of score and Jon's going, 'I don't understand it. I don't know; I don't get it,' and finally Tim whispers to me, 'Play the march. Play the march!' I put on what he called 'the march,' which was essentially the title music, and Jon jumps out of his chair and starts conducting. At that moment, I knew that I was home free."

Jon Peters had been the toughest nut to crack, and the mega-producer remembers the circumstance well: "The thing that I remember the most was Danny's little tree house in Topanga Canyon and going down into this little recording room and hearing what ended up being the *Batman* theme. This was a giant movie and it was like, 'Wait a minute. Who is this hippie? Who is this guy?' And he was like a little madman. But I had worked with Streisand, John Williams—I've worked with some of the greats. Danny Elfman is like a strange, interesting John Williams. And the funny thing is, when you know Tim, Tim is this wild genius—hair sticking out everywhere. Danny Elfman, at the time, was similar. I was frightened, quite frankly, that this was going to be a mess. But when I heard his theme overlaid on some of the footage, it was amazing. I think you have to give the credit to Tim Burton because Tim really believed in Danny, and I wasn't really sure if he was the perfect guy or not. I was set on this Prince/Michael Jackson thing. But when I first came to his house to hear some of the stuff he did for some of the sequences, the melody, the theme, I was blown away. I realized that Tim was right, and this guy was amazingly talented. And then the rest is history."

"He played it and he totally sold it," Badami confirms. "They loved it. As primitive as it sounded, it sounded right. And then it was like, 'OK, do the score.'"

Elfman hadn't entirely escaped the task of collaborating with Prince, however. In addition to his two source cues, Prince's song "Scandalous" would have a backing instrumental motif adapted by Elfman as a love theme for Bruce Wayne and Vicki Vale. Elfman took the assignment to adapt the Prince motif in stride. "That's vastly different than a co-composition from beginning to end. I had no problem with the idea of, 'Can you stick a song melody in this piece of music?' 'Sure, why not?

I can do that. It's not like I'm such a purist that I can't conceive of somebody else's melody ever appearing in my score.' But there's a big difference between that and who is defining the *tone* of the score—because it's all about tone, especially in a film like *Batman*. Beyond that there is melody, and beyond that is what you do with melody. But tone is critical." Elfman created an ingenious effect by mirroring the piano chords that introduce the love theme in a separate effect heard during the initial face-off between Batman and Jack Napier—soon to become The Joker—in the factory shoot-out early in the film. The effect subtly indicates that Batman and The Joker will soon be tied together by the same woman.

As Elfman developed his themes, he and Steve Bartek worked on creating an orchestral palette equal to the task of characterizing The Dark Knight, Gotham City, and the film's entire gothic, operatic tone. "I remember working with him on the theme where Batman takes Vicki back to the cave," Bartek says. "That was just outside of what the rest of the score had been, but it was engrossingly beautiful and he was playing it for me. Generally my job with Danny, then in particular, was leaving things out. Sometimes he simply had too many things going on...he was very linear thinking. Part of my task was to figure out how much of this was actually going to work simultaneously. In that particular piece, I had to come back to him and say, 'These two work together...these two work together...this does something different...which ones do we want to use? Using them all will be too messy.' Those were the kind of conversations I had with him. As far as the scope of the overall arc of the entire composition, that was all on his hands."

Assigned to conduct the score was one unusual woman: Shirley Walker, who had previously conducted *Scrooged* for Elfman and long before that created music for *Apocalypse Now* with Carmine Coppola. "She was wonderful to work with," Bartek recalls. "She was very open. She helped me and didn't belittle anything I did. She had constructive criticisms, and she was of the sort that didn't disdain the fact that Danny didn't have any formal training."

Once at the CTS (originally Cine-Tele Sound Studios) recording stage in Lansdowne with The Sinfonia of London Orchestra, Walker found herself in a slightly different apocalypse. The male-dominated orchestra didn't quite know what to make of a female conductor. "It was a little bit like the schoolmistress walking in on the first day of school," Elfman recalls. "I think they purposely loved to misbehave a bit, so she'd get



Batman, score
From the score to "Descent Into Mystery" from *Batman*.

stern with them and chastise them. Perhaps that brought back fond memories? But the orchestra at that time was practically all male; with a few exceptions, that was the typical orchestra in 1989. It was soon to change. But at that moment, that's how it was...and they were like, 'What is this? A baton holder wearing a dress?'—like she was a strange exotic creature."

Walker would eventually take advantage of the attention from *Batman* to launch an action-scoring career of her own that made her unique as a female composer for many years. She wrote underscore for the bulk of the *Batman: The Animated Series* (Elfman provided the show's theme music), which was launched after the success of the first *Batman* film, and she also was the principal composer for the entertaining TV series adaptation of another DC Comics hero, *The Flash* (which also had title music by Elfman, incorporated into much of Walker's underscore). For The Sinfonia of London Orchestra, she remained, as Elfman pointed out, more of a schoolmistress. By the end of the sessions, she seemed to have earned the hidebound British musicians' grudging respect, and the recording studio personnel pitched in to purchase Walker a gift when the sessions were completed. They chose to present Shirley Walker with a set of dishes.

The recording sessions at CTS were plagued with technical problems. "It was kind of a historic studio, kind of big and boom-y," Bartek remembers. "Some of the microphones didn't work. We had intense little woodwind parts and the woodwind parts didn't show up—you couldn't hear them. Our engineer had a great track record but he had never worked there. And so we were depending on the second engineers mostly to pick the mics and put them in the right places. So, there were a lot of technical problems that were kind of out of our hands. We had these mixes and we had to dig for certain instruments to make it sound like the music we thought we were recording."

Elfman also discovered the particular traditions of British labor made getting any meaningful work done late in the day extremely problematic: "They booked triple sessions, meaning a morning and afternoon session, a dinner break, and an evening session. I learned very quickly in England that if you wanted to get your accuracy, especially in your brass players, you had to record it during the daytime because many of them were... how shall we say?...a bit *too relaxed* at night. These are the days when they had pubs right in the studio. So, at the lunch break and the dinner break, there'd be a rush for the pub. You get the most accuracy in the morning,

still decent in the afternoon, and at night it was already starting to get a bit wobbly. I had never recorded in England; I'd never seen musicians drinking on their breaks. But in England it's a whole different ball game. I didn't know what to expect. Don't get me wrong—they were amazing musicians. It was just more new stuff to deal with in an already tough situation. We were very rushed. There was absolutely no time and we felt lucky to just get the notes recorded. I wasn't really fine-tuning anything. Because of the schedule, it was like warfare more than, 'Let's have fun and let's make it creative.'"

"CTS was a clunky studio," Bob Badami remembers. "There's a scene in the church tower where it's a big waltz, and for some reason we were given a tape that was at the wrong speed or something. Yet, don't get me wrong—we're talking about some of the finest musicians on the planet. No doubt there. But...these very strange circumstances required navigation that I was not accustomed to."

Despite the technical challenges, Peters, Burton, and the Warner Bros. executives in attendance were blown away by the score. From the brooding opening woodwinds and the snare-driven, darkly powerful main title, to the bizarre moments of humor for The Joker leading up to the fantastic "Waltz To The Death" fight climax, Elfman had done more than simply provide Batman with an appropriate score. He had defined the comic book superhero genre. "I believe they started with the main title, and I knew I was witnessing something historic," Richard Kraft says. "I wasn't at *Star Wars*, but I know I can always say I was at the *Batman* session. I knew what was taking place was going to be one of the Top 10 classic scores of all time, that it will be a reference point from now on about everything."

Tim Burton says the pressure on Elfman was enormous, but it was enormously gratifying to see the results on the scoring stage: "The thing is, we [were] both in the same boat because I hadn't really done a movie like that either. It's like we are kind of at the same place at the same time in a certain way. Again, that time was really, really exciting because it was the biggest orchestra we had at that point. It was in London. It was exciting. Musicians in London were great. It was just very, very exciting."

"Superman was wholesome and Americana and positive," Badami notes. "Here you're dealing with Batman, which is a darker character by far, and the gothic nature of Gotham City—the whole look and feel was unified by the score, I think. The sense of humor that Danny brings to The Joker character and the influence that Tim brings upon Danny's

writing—there's something special about the combination of these two people; it shows in the work."

"To me...the 'Oh, my God, I may never, ever be at a scoring session as great as this' was when they were doing the sequence in the cathedral... going up the stairs," Kraft continues. "To be in something that powerful but also that operatic—I've never experienced anything like that. And I'm looking at Danny, who up to this point had done almost all comedy. And I'm sitting there thinking we just turned a corner. I don't think he'll be doing talking-horse movies anymore."

Sound-recordist Shawn Murphy was brought in after the sessions to remix some of the cues in an attempt to remedy a few of the sound problems that had cropped up during the recording. "I think it was Danny's first venture into real orchestral music for that type of picture that really, really worked," Murphy says. "Despite the fact that we all felt that it could have been better performed...better recorded...better dubbed, none of that matters because it was such a great piece of work and the picture was so terrific. Musically, it was so interesting and diverse and worked well with the picture. It was very complex. And it was Danny's style."

Jon Peters was another member of the production who walked away from the sessions utterly astounded by what Elfman had produced. "Once he heard the main title march, he went from being my adversary to my supporter," Elfman says. "He was incredibly supportive of everything after that point, including telling me they were going to put out a score album."

By this point Elfman was well aware that Batman's "soundtrack album" was going to be a record by Prince, with all the songs the rock maestro had written for the movie: "Jon says, 'We are going to do a second album for the score,' and I thought, 'Right, he's just telling me that.' But Jon, for all his pluses and minuses, when he threw himself behind you, he threw himself behind you," Elfman continues. "I wasn't aware of there ever having been two soundtrack albums released for the same movie before. But he pulled it off. It was an incredible experience, because selling him on my vision about what the music should be was the hardest thing I ever had to do. But once sold, it was a done deal."

Despite the support of Peters, the Prince album remained a fact. Elfman's score album would not be released until six weeks after Prince's album gobbled up the lions' share of publicity and market sales. Elfman, a rock musician himself, was seeing first hand the hapless position of a film composer when faced with the presence of a high-profile rock musician on any movie project. To the public, the announcement that a rocker

has been signed to provide music for a movie is inevitably interpreted as the rocker “scoring” the picture, particularly since such announcements are made in the trades with a great deal of fanfare, while standard composer scoring deals are not.

“In Danny’s contract, I negotiated that he had one guaranteed track on the soundtrack album(s). The word had parentheses ‘s’ at the end,” Kraft says. “So, ‘soundtrack album(s).’ And I argued that the Prince album was a soundtrack album, and [Danny] needs to have a track on that album. And they argued, ‘It’s not a soundtrack.’ I found ads that Warner Bros. had taken out marketing the Prince album as a soundtrack album from *Batman*. And so they ended up paying Danny for one track, that non-existent track on the Prince album. So, I love that album. My son was born that year, and Prince sort of paid for the hospital bills.”

When *Batman* opened, Jon Peters achieved his goal. *Batman* was huge—more than a hit, it was a mega-hit. With a \$42 million take its opening weekend alone, Burton’s *Batman* was a pop culture phenomenon that ultimately took in more than \$250 million (around twice that in today’s dollars, adjusted for inflation), raising the bar for every would-be blockbuster to follow in its wake. “It was such a success that the *Batman* of today—the [Christian Bale]/Heath Ledger *Batman* [*The Dark Knight*]—the gross of that is the equivalent of our gross,” Peters says. “We did about \$500 million-plus in film rentals 15 years ago, at a ticket price of five dollars. So it would be equivalent to today. That’s how big that movie was then. It broke the genre. Ignorance is bliss. I didn’t know what you could or couldn’t do in my career—I still don’t. I just did it. The budget was \$43 million, which was unheard of at that time. People were scared they were going to lose their jobs. Nobody had ever had a comic book come to life, and we wanted to make the movie dark and interesting and special. Even Jack Nicholson didn’t want to do it. I had to bribe him with a private jet, a masseur... I had all other kinds of accoutrements to get him to come to Europe, to be able to get him in the movie. He was afraid it was going to ruin his career.”

The Prince *Batman* soundtrack album was a blockbuster unto itself, its yellow Bat-logo album cover plastered over record stores all across the country. The Prince album was #1 on the *Billboard* charts for six weeks and sold more than 3 million copies domestically. Publicity for the album and its reclusive star was relentless. And, inevitably, Prince began getting credit not just for the two songs heard in the film but for *all* the music in the film. The low point was reached when aging

critic Vincent Canby, in a column in the esteemed *New York Times*, incorrectly stated that “...we hear music so doomy you might think it to be Mahler, though it’s really Prince in a cosmic mode.” Canby probably could have been forgiven since he likely didn’t know Prince from Bruce Springsteen, but other mistaken plaudits for the film’s score followed. Elfman found the whole thing all too predictable: “It was so aggravating for me—all that work and somebody else getting the credit. It kind of drove me a little crazy, in fact. It was really a kind of rite of passage, I guess. It was the moment that I had to walk through the flames. I knew I’d get burns; I just hoped I didn’t end up crispy.”

More than a few critics did manage to take note of Elfman’s contribution, however. And when Jon Peters finally made good on his promise, the *Batman* score album debuted at #76—unusually high for a score album—and eventually made it up to #32 on the charts, becoming one of the biggest albums of the year. More importantly, it helped to raise Elfman’s profile, providing the rebuttal to anyone laboring under the delusion that Prince had written the *Batman* score. Elfman’s music became a force of its own; the young composer had created an entirely new sound for superhero movies that would influence almost every later film in the genre.

James Newton Howard, who would later work on a much different style of *Batman* score with Hans Zimmer for Christopher Nolan’s *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*, says Elfman’s achievement on the first *Batman* was unique: “I think he branded it. I think he does the musical equivalent of what Tim does visually. It was a very difficult job. It was complex and active and busy and lots of notes, and he wrote a very simple yet efficient tune, which I thought worked very well. He knows what the music is supposed to feel like in all environments. I think one either knows intuitively or one doesn’t, and he wrote a score for *Batman* that was very, very different from his other scores. I think that’s an indication of a very talented composer.”

Michael Keaton says he was struck by the score from its first uses in the movie’s trailers: “One of the most imaginative trailer campaigns that I have ever seen was that first *Batman* when it was nothing but the logo. Then a week or two go by and you’d see the logo again with one little thing, like the date. Then they started playing it with score. Then somewhere in the early trailer, the shot—I think it was a ground shot of the Batmobile coming into the Batcave or out of the Batcave; they played that unbelievable score of Danny’s. People went insane in theaters. I was just blown away by the score. Early on, when Tim had said he was going



Danny DeVito, Michael Keaton, and Tim Burton

The stars of *Batman Returns* with their director.

to use Danny again on *Batman*, I thought, ‘Well, OK, I guess so.’ I was ready for something just off center and quirky. When I heard the music in the trailer and I started seeing some scenes with what Danny was putting on that, I was just knocked out. Some of the strains of that *Batman* score were so surprising and beautiful and dramatic and unnerving and dangerous. Just killer.”

“It was the kind of score, that I wouldn’t call traditional,” Burton says. “At that time, [Danny] set a tone that’s gone on since then. It was a different kind of score. It satisfied the biggest kind of movie that they wanted and it fit the character; it fit the movie. It was another character as it was supposed to be. It was good that way.”

The impact of Elfman’s score to *Batman* was felt around the globe. “I was 13 when *Batman* came out, and it was the film that made me fall in love with film scores,” says La-La Land Records producer Michael Gerhard, who recently released a complete *Expanded Archival Collection* of the score. “As soon as that Warner shield came on, I knew I was in



for something. It was the first soundtrack I went out and bought on cassette, because I didn’t have a CD player. I played it so much that I had to buy another one about a year later.” In academia, music professor Dr. Janet Halfyard published a 192-page scholarly analysis of the score written by a man who had never taken a music course. And across the Atlantic, French composer Alexandre Desplat, who would eventually compose the scores to *The Queen* and *The Curious Case Of Benjamin Button*, connected to Elfman’s work. “He really brought a new voice into the mid-’80s to take over, and it was really refreshing to hear his music,” Desplat says. “He’s so full of energy and ideas; he’s jumping here and there. It’s so rich and exciting and so witty, also. There’s always a little cheeky quality to it. It’s all these amazing elements that I love so much, and he’s got a great melodic talent, creating the world that belongs to nothing else. It’s just his own world of magic and sensitivity, which is really, really special. We both like movies and the way that music can convey emotions in movies. He’s got a huge talent for action movies and



Batman and Director

Michael Keaton and Tim Burton on the set.

these big, big, big, films with lots of energy. He does things that I can't even think about doing."

With the movie breaking box-office records, film studios opened the floodgates, rushing comic book movies into production. And it seemed that there was only one man with the know-how to provide music for the burgeoning genre. Exhausted and recovering on vacation from the *Batman* ordeal, Danny Elfman found himself suddenly called back to replace the score on Warren Beatty's big-budget comic-strip fantasy, *Dick Tracy*.

Shawn Murphy and other *Batman* alumni were soon at work on *Dick Tracy*, along with Danny. "*Dick Tracy* was, I think, an interesting picture, because it was under constant change via the director and editor, and Danny also had to write a lot of different versions of the cues for that picture," Murphy says. "We probably produced more mixed material than for any other film I've ever worked on, because there were multiple versions and multiple orchestrations for every cue, which the director had asked for. Stylistically, I think there was the whole thing of, 'Should it be Danny? Should it be more conventionally, old Hollywood? How should it sound?' That was the orchestration and Danny's composition carried through all those different versions. I think it was hard work for him."

At this point, Elfman was the most in-demand film composer in Hollywood and had his pick of choices—but with everything on his

table, Elfman leaped at the chance to work with relatively unknown director, Sam Raimi, on the low-budget kinetic and fantastically violent *Darkman*, because he was obsessed with Raimi's *Evil Dead* films, which he would view repeatedly while touring with Oingo Boingo. Elfman thought Raimi was the directing talent to watch, and he shocked Universal execs by signing onto *Darkman*—one factor that earned the film additional attention and support at the studio.

"*Darkman* was more of a conventional experience," recalls engineer Murphy. "Even though it was a smaller picture in terms of the grandiose style, it was still a complicated orchestral score, maybe a little more in keeping with what *Batman* was originally stylistically."

In the aftermath of the phenomenon that was *Batman*, the influence of his music was showing up in everything. Much as John Williams became the signature sound of the '70s, Danny Elfman had become the signature sound of the '90s.

CRITICISM & IMITATION

Part of the cost of Danny Elfman's success after *Batman* was an increasingly jaundiced view of his music. Elfman now was in great demand, not only for comic book and action movies, but dramas, fantasy films, crime capers—suddenly every type of genre seemed open to him, and producers and studios actively competed with each other to get a Danny Elfman score on their pictures. Danny was now on a level playing field with his contemporaries and gaining more traction than a lot of the Hollywood old-guard film composers. A backlash of some kind was inevitable, and the grumbling from more established composers and musicians soon became quite audible.

"Psychologically, I felt like I was constantly persecuted in that period," Elfman recalls. "I understood why, but I was annoyed by the fact that I was persecuted by people who would then rip me off. And that made it harder to deal with. I understand somebody going, 'This is crap.' I was used to that my whole life—with everything I did, having lots of people say, 'This is crap.' It was like that with Oingo Boingo; it was like that with *The Mystic Knights*. The criticism didn't annoy me, because I used to actually take great pride in extreme criticism. I used to reprint bad reviews in our advertising when we were in *The Mystic Knights*. Oingo Boingo was once called 'dance music for kids who can't dance.' I love that quote; I used it frequently. I used to take the bad reviews and use them the way movies use their good reviews. But what I didn't expect

were people giving me a hard time over my music and then *doing it*. So that was the thing that was shocking to me during my first 10 years as a composer. One of the difficult things in that period is that the voices of the naysayers were so strong and vigorous that everyone was searching for the smoking gun, meaning: Who was writing my music?"

Lukas Kendall, who published a magazine in Los Angeles about film music called *Film Score Monthly*, took an active role in investigating the story and eventually in getting the word out that, yes, Danny Elfman wrote his own music. "For the first 10 years or so of his film career," Kendall says, "Danny was subject to some very peculiar criticism that went like this: 'I hate his music and he doesn't even write it himself anyway.' At the time, it was a cultural and a generational case of sour grapes. There were a lot of old gray-haired men who resented that he got to go to the head of the class. I think *Batman* was really the movie that set him off much more than the comedies. Because it was one thing when he was doing what they could write off as stupid comedy scores, but when he was doing *their* world, *Batman*, this colossal symphonic score, they treated him like he was illegitimate. People really assumed there was no way he could be responsible for that score, overlooking the fact that it sounds entirely like him and subsequent comic book scores all sounded like him. Whenever people have tried to rip him off, it's never nearly as good."

"When he first came on the scene, Danny was accused by many of the old guard (or jealous new guard) of being a 'hummer,' which is not as sexy as it sounds," says composer Marc Shaiman (*Hairspray*, *Sleepless In Seattle*). "It means they assumed he only 'hummed' his scores, and a learned man hidden away in a back closet actually wrote the score. I was also accused of 'humming' at the start of my own film-scoring career, so it's just wonderful to think how Danny proved them wrong with one score after another that contained his highly distinctive sound."

Sometimes it seemed everyone but Elfman was being credited for his scores—even in the case of *Beetlejuice*. "At the BMI awards that year, there was a table full of composers where someone I knew happened to be sitting. When I got my award, one composer said out loud to another, 'Bill Ross wrote that score.' And they all agreed, like it was common knowledge. So there it was, out in the open at a table full of composers that the guy who had never even seen the score until the day he started conducting, because he was replacing Lionel Newman, had actually written that score." Rumors circulated that conductor Shirley Walker, who had only orchestrated a handful of cues on *Batman*, had written

that score. Richard Kraft observes, "Danny worked on it from day one to the end, but somehow it made it more interesting to say Shirley wrote it, because that's got a whole other level: This woman, who's writing all this music, is being shoved into a back room by a rock-star hummer."

The one man who might have actually been in a position to ghost-write for Elfman rarely seemed to be singled out as the man behind the curtain. But Steve Bartek was often asked whether Danny wrote his own music. "Back then it was pervasive," he says. "I never did interviews, even when I was in the band; I didn't like talking to people about work. But anybody I would talk to about the scores would be like, 'Nudge, nudge...you actually did all the work. We know.' 'No, Danny writes it all down and gives it to me, and he's responsible for it.' Danny had to deal with that stuff constantly. He was getting it from the professional side. I was getting it from interviews and outside."

"If anybody should be given credit for being my ghost, it should be Steve, not a conductor," Elfman says in hindsight. "It's like cheating Steve out of the unfair credit that he should be getting. If the rumor mill should be going anywhere, it should be going straight to Steve Bartek. It was just one of those things that I had to live with in those days. It all caught me so off guard, and I found myself constantly having to be defensive. I used to always say constantly back then, 'Hate my music all you want, but give me credit for writing it'—because there was written manuscript for everything in my own hand, and doing the work to produce those manuscripts was making my life brutally miserable in that period. Writing it, 'demo-ing' the whole thing, and then writing it all down by hand—transcribing my own stuff—it pretty much was my whole life in that period when I was working on these scores."

"I think it probably bothered me more than Danny, because people were more comfortable saying it to my face than they were saying it to Danny's face," Kraft says. "It was almost too difficult to accept that without pedigree—you could possibly do this. I mean nobody questioned that Tim could direct these movies with his background as an animator. Every year, everyone accepts a talented actor who directed his or her first movie. Of course an actor can direct a movie. But this is a world where there are a lot of people who don't write music and take credit for it. And the part that bothered me was I knew the truth. I was the person at Danny's studio having him play me all these incredible cues and me hearing the exact same music performed on the scoring stage. Plus, he works too hard. He's no dabbler. He's one of the worst delegators in the

world. He's such a control freak and such a hard worker, that for him to sort of be dismissed like this was aggravating."

Elfman says his being self-taught did lead to situations on the scoring stage that fed the false impression that he wasn't composing: "I think the players were confused, and rightfully so, because I couldn't answer questions about notes quickly in my own score. So if asked, 'Danny, is that an errant G-flat in bar 127, because I'm hearing an F coming from there'—that's really something I should be able to answer very quickly, and that for me is the hardest part of my job. The struggle to quickly answer a note question because of my total lack of training—it's all ear for me. When I hear it, I can answer it very quickly. I can tell what notes are missing and I can tell what notes should be there, but without hearing it, just looking at the paper, I'm rather lost. I was able to read exactly as fast as I could write, which is slowly."

Composer Ed Shearmur (*The Wings Of The Dove*, *Sky Captain And The World Of Tomorrow*) says that regardless of what Elfman's process is, the end result is indelible: "I had a composition teacher at Cambridge who would look at something you brought to him. He wouldn't bring it to the piano, but he would read the score and say, 'Well, this is very well heard,' and what he meant by that was that the idea that you imagined in your head was the idea that you managed to get down on the paper. I think this is very true of everything that Danny does. He is able to articulate his ideas in such a precise and evolved fashion. There's no mistake—there's no accident about Danny getting his music finished. He hears what he hears, and that's what he makes. The idea is the idea, and I think that's why he's had the career that he's had—because he has an unlimited resource of ideas, and he's able to get those ideas communicated, produced, and finished."

John Mauceri, who has conducted two of Elfman's concert works, says any questions as to Danny's authorship of his work are ridiculous: "If he has a background that doesn't give him an immediate facility to correct something the way somebody who has gone to a music school, that's just a mechanical operation other people can provide for him. It's as simple as that. But he's absolutely in charge, and he absolutely writes every note. And if he doesn't like what he hears, he knows how to fix it."

Paul Broucek, president of music at Warner Bros. Pictures, says the biggest argument against the idea that Elfman didn't write his own music is that no one has successfully imitated him. "Nobody has had

the balls to try to do a full-on Danny Elfman. It wouldn't work; it wouldn't be Danny. That's never happened because his voice is so unique. Sadly—part of human nature, not just [in] our business but lots of businesses—when somebody is really successful and really explodes like Danny did, it brings out the naysayers. Danny took some heat. There were some people who were outwardly critical of him because 'you know, anybody can do that kind of pop thing.' It was professional jealousy."

Film Score Monthly editor Lukas Kendall arranged to print some of Elfman's sketches in his magazine, which may have helped convince at least a few people that Danny was writing his own music. "I think that two things made people accept the fact that he wrote his own music," Kendall says. "One was that he went and did many different other kinds of scores. He did *Sommersby*... *Dead Presidents*... he went off in these other creative directions. He did *Good Will Hunting*. And two, there was such a generational turnover of film composers that the gray-haired old men, some of whom ended up probably working for Danny, mostly retired or died."



Lining up the shot

Tim Burton and Jack Nicholson on the set of *Batman*.



BATMAN RETURNS

In 1992, Tim Burton and Danny Elfman made their way back to Gotham City for the *Batman* sequel: *Batman Returns*—and found it a much kinder and gentler place. The incredible success of the first film had cemented Tim Burton's position as one of the most unique power players in Hollywood and turned Danny Elfman into the most sought-after American film composer next to John Williams. If any further doubt remained, it was erased when Burton's interim movie, *Edward Scissorhands*, became a huge hit, too. Both Burton and Elfman had endured second-guessing, meddling, and intense studio oversight on their early films—but in each case, the instincts of both men were proven right, both artistically and commercially.

The resulting atmosphere set the stage for one of the most original and idiosyncratic superhero films ever made. *Batman Returns* had originally been intended as a direct follow-up to the first film, with numerous plot threads planted in the first film, bearing fruit in the second (and an intended third) movie. Billy Dee Williams' brief appearance as D.A. Harvey Dent in the first film had been designed specifically to set him up as Batman's eventual foe Two-Face, and even story elements connected to Jack Nicholson's dead Joker character had been intended to continue into a second movie.

Tim Burton hadn't originally been signed to direct the sequel, but when the first movie became a phenomenon, Warner Bros. eagerly signed him for *Batman Returns*. Burton chafed at the idea of simply continuing the first *Batman* movie in the sequel and successfully lobbied for a more original script. The Harvey Dent character was dropped (and Williams' contract was bought out at great expense) and replaced by a different villain, Max Shreck (Christopher Walken)—a manipulative industrialist who uses the grotesque Penguin (Danny DeVito) and the sexually charged, malevolent Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer) to create an anarchic sideshow, while he consolidates his power in Gotham City.

If the first *Batman* film only partially reflected Tim Burton's aesthetic and intentions, *Batman Returns* was 100 percent Burton. "I always liked the characters of Batman and they always had good villains," Burton says. "Catwoman, Penguin—it just seemed interesting, the kind of animal theme and the freakish nature of the characters. Obviously, *Batman* was the known thing, but it was the other characters that got me into it."

Michael Keaton's Batman/Bruce Wayne was more organically entwined in the proceedings, engaging with DeVito's Penguin in a "duel of the freaks" and becoming involved in a psychologically tortured love affair with Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman, with both characters interacting almost as multiple personalities. After the grueling experience of shooting and scoring in London, Burton insisted on making the film at Warner Bros. studios and had refrigerated sets built that both gave the illusion of a chilly, Christmastime setting for the film and also created an environment where the live king penguins that populated the Penguin's lair could thrive. "It was all shot indoors," Elfman remembers. "It was very weird. I will never try and speak for Tim or his process. It was my impression that he wanted to shoot it all inside to keep it contained and to keep it all very chilly and cold, and it was in the middle of summer. The set was insane because it was August and 103 degrees outside in Burbank; and you walk in there and it's about 40 degrees, so you could see the condensation steam coming out of people's mouths as they talk. It was a very weird, very fun set to visit. I loved it."

Production designer Bo Welch had the job of pushing the look of Batman's world—envisioned by Anton Furst for the first film—into a new dimension. "That was sort of the beginning of these kind of movies," Welch says, "where, first of all, we start making the movie before the script is really nailed down, and there's all that craziness that comes with large movies. But aesthetically, I wanted it to feel like a companion to the first movie. It was still *Batman*; it was still Michael Keaton. But Tim was not interested in doing the same thing again, so we tried to push things differently in terms of scale and the kind of weirdness of it."

"*Batman Returns* was a darker movie," producer Denise Di Novi says. "A lot of fans still feel that it is the best *Batman* in many ways. But it was more visually outrageous...the Danny DeVito character was really out there, and the score was just so operatic and powerful."

Besides DeVito and Michelle Pfeiffer, there was another high-profile guest star in the film—although this one didn't have a single line of dialogue. Paul Reubens—Pee-wee Herman himself—appeared in the film's pre-title sequence with Diane Salinger as the aristocratic parents of Oswald Cobblepot, who is born with physical abnormalities that cause his horrified parents to abandon him in the sewers of Gotham and leave him to grow to adulthood as the Penguin. Having Reubens and



Catwoman

Watercolor by Tim Burton.

The Penguin (previous page)

Acrylic painting by Tim Burton.

Salinger (who had played Francophile greasy-spoon waitress Simone alongside Reubens in *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*) open the film was Burton's tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of the humble beginnings that had led him to this point as a filmmaker, and also an affectionate favor to Reubens.

"That was just an incredible moment for me," Reubens says. "To be in the middle of that dark fantasy and be doing what I was doing and playing who I was playing—and I knew it was the opening scene of the movie and it was this horrible thing and it was all silent. I thought it was done really beautifully, but you know what I remember the most, in addition to that—everything I just said—I had also just been through a total personal crisis. I had been arrested in 1991, and that was like the first thing I did was go out and do that movie." Reubens actually returned to the set to have his makeup artist Ve Neill make him up as Pee-wee Herman for his first post-scandal public appearance at the MTV Movie Awards.

Editor Chris Lebenzon, who's worked on many features with Burton and Elfman, says Danny was on set early on, to get ideas—and that resulted in a bit of trouble with pyrotechnics. "The thing about Danny and Tim is, because they're such a great, almost legendary working couple, Danny knows very early on, when we're doing a movie... the expectations on him are high because of their history and because of who he is, so he's very forthcoming with ideas early on. I remember on the *Batman Returns* set, there was a big explosion. It's when the Catwoman blew up that toy store. Apparently, it was a huge deal. They cleared all the way around the set. There were cops everywhere, and there was caution tape and everything. And they were remote-operating the cameras because it was a real explosion. It turns out, Danny was hiding in the set to watch it. And actually, I don't even think Tim was in there, but people found out, and Danny got his hand slapped by the studio. A composer wouldn't even be around during shooting, not to mention hanging out on a dangerous set, but it kind of speaks to the whimsical nature of the guy and the relationship with the director."

Lebenzon says that Elfman had enough influence at the point of *Batman Returns* to affect the cut of the movie: "I remember one time, he asked me to lengthen a certain section of the movie to make a little more room for that huge Batman theme that he's so famous for. He could play it out in a couple bars rather than one, and I didn't quite know what he was doing there anyway, so I obliged him. It's very rare for a composer

to be requesting things like that so early, but you know, it worked out for the best, which is his strength. I'd have to say he's different than other composers in that he hits, in a very detailed way, all the cuts. And sometimes, to be honest, Tim works to simplify that when they're working together. So, whatever the result is, it's a sort of push-and-pull of Danny's sensibilities versus Tim's desire for simplicity of melody. I'd have to say, that's the biggest characteristic that's unusual between the two of them... that certainly works."

The name of Christopher Walken's character (Max Shreck) was a key to Burton's intentions for *Batman Returns*: Max "Schreck" (with a slight variation in spelling) was the stage name of the actor that played the vampire in F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, and *Batman Returns* was, in a way, Burton's celebration of the classic, gothic monster movies he had loved as a kid. Pfeiffer's Catwoman could have stepped out of *The Cat People*, and the waddling, top-hatted Penguin of the comics and TV series was transformed into a misshapen freak of nature, who at one point howls, "I am not a human being! I am an animal!" Burton's sympathy and affection for these outcast creatures of the night was obvious, and it dominated the film.

"I think one of the biggest misconceptions about Tim is that he's dark," Richard Kraft says. "Almost all of his movies are very sweet. Tim's famous for saying, 'You could always relate better to the monsters in the movies than the people pursuing them.' And you think about it, starting with *Frankenstein*, Boris Karloff is the empathetic character and Colin Clive is the snooze. And in any Ray Harryhausen movie, the monster has empathy and the people poking him with sticks are bland. The monsters always had the well-written parts. What is great about Tim's outsiders is, he's putting them through a funhouse mirror. We can look at them. There are many heavy, dramatic movies about people feeling alienated, but they're shot with fluorescent lighting pointing down and staring at it, so that it's uncomfortable to watch, and the stark reality makes it actually hard to connect to it. But because Tim will distort and caricaturize, and Danny will score with some *über*-passion—there is a real deep earnestness to those emotions."

Having established his martial, propulsive *Batman* theme in the original movie, Elfman had far more freedom to explore atmosphere and character in *Batman Returns*. The film's elaborate, gothically heartbreaking opening has the Penguin's aristocratic parents, the Cobblepots, callously dumping their deformed son into a river in a coffin-like black

cradle, which is swept into the cavernous Gotham City sewer system until it comes to rest in an underground lair peopled by penguins and circus freaks. "I think I was already starting to get some variations on the *Batman* theme that I wanted to do, which I ended up using in the title sequence," Elfman says. "I really loved the title sequence with the cradle and the sewers. Then I wrote this kind of Christian, marching soldiers theme for the Penguin. I don't know why—I wanted it to sound almost hymn-like. That was just my picture of this off-kilter evangelist, the Penguin. He had such fervor to him and yet he was this twisted thing. I saw him as a deformed martyr out there trying to change the world. The Penguin was the heart of the movie to me."

While the Penguin material dominated the score, Elfman's music was crucially important for the Catwoman character and her transformation from Shreck's mousey, abused secretary into a slinky, post-feminist avenger. Elfman layered the character in a veil of string-pitch bends, an orchestral evocation of meowing cats. "That was a little bit more obvious," Elfman says. "Something feline and slinky and fun." Elfman's music provides a kind of emotional rationale for Selina Kyle's metamorphosis into Catwoman—a scene that is largely wordless, with music that creates a supernatural feel for the first, bizarre image of the seemingly dead woman being nipped and scratched at by alley cats. Since there's no rational explanation for Selina's resurrection at the hands of the cats, Elfman's music provides its own, and it swells into a sinuous anthem for Selina as she trashes her apartment, throws her old life away, and emerges as the vinyl-suited, whip-wielding Catwoman. "One of my favorite pieces of music was when Catwoman becomes Catwoman," Tim Burton says. "I loved her theme. There was ripe opportunity for taking the stuff that [Danny] did and expanding on it. I know he used different instrumentation and played around with the same material but expanding it and doing other thematic things with characters."

Shawn Murphy also recalls a great deal of rehearsal and experimentation for the cue: "I remember [Danny] trying a lot of different effects, and I remember both incorporating them into the cue and recording them with overlays so that he would have some control of them. A lot of those cues were recorded, more or less, in one piece. Not a huge amount of editorial work done on them—it's phenomenal."

Catwoman wasn't the only one in the production sporting a whip. "I had a whip for many years—it was my lucky whip," Elfman points out. "It was given to me by Mike Fisher, the percussionist, who along with

Michelle Pfeiffer as Catwoman

Latex-clad Michelle Pfeiffer added psychological dimension to the role of Catwoman.



Emil Richards had been part of the same percussion section with me for a long time with me. We needed to record a whip crack for something... I can't remember what. I learned how to use it and liked carrying it around, and then it was just something that kind of became my security blanket, my teddy bear. I always had my whip. I must have done 30 movies without ever leaving my whip home. I figured someone would start some kind of legend or stories, like how the time I dragged a cellist out and tied her between two stands and whipped her in front of everybody just to impose discipline."

Percussionist Emil Richards, who's played on everything from Simon & Garfunkel's *Scarborough Fair* to Elfman's *Spider-Man* score, remembers the whip well. "Danny needed the sound of a whip, and for that we used two clapboards—we call them slapsticks, two clapboards clap together. Danny came in [to the studio] with a real whip—I think only the percussion had stayed afterward—and he came out and he says, 'I want this better! And he's cracking the whip like he's really going to give us a hard time!'"

While there was no pressure to collaborate with a rock star on the order of Prince, Warner Bros. did sign Siouxsie And The Banshees to perform a song, "Face To Face," that would play over an encounter on a dance floor between Bruce Wayne and Selina Kyle—with both characters suddenly finding themselves aware of the other's "secret identity." This time Elfman worked for a more coherent blend of song and score, weaving the *Batman* theme into the piece. "I orchestrated the strings," says Steve Bartek. As I remember it, Danny met with them over the phone and worked back and forth with what they were doing and what he was doing. Siouxsie And The Banshees are from our era. When we were in the clubs, they were in the clubs. Before that point, they were very raw. I remember the great thing about her is she's always singing out of tune. They did a version of 'Dear Prudence' and the background was kind of B-list, but her vocal was just raw and compelling at that point. So, I was excited when he was doing that with her."

Ultimately *Batman Returns* sported a more complex and varied score than its predecessor and was not subject to the recording problems that haunted the first *Batman*. "I think Tim had to probably accede to some of the studio requests on the first film. And on the second one, he didn't have to as much," score-recordist Shawn Murphy says. "He could make the characters more interesting and more peculiar and eclectic. The second *Batman* is what we all had wished the first *Batman* was, in terms of music recording and music performance, and re-recording and dubbing. It turned out to

be a really entertaining picture and definitely more eccentric than the first, in terms of the characters and the dramatic approach."

"He just becomes the characters," Burton says of Elfman's music. "That's what's good about it. He doesn't really verbalize it; he just kind of gets inside the characters and does them."

In the grand tradition of classic monster movies, the death of the Penguin near the end of the film is staged as a grand opera by Burton, and Elfman's music fit the bill perfectly. "In *Batman Returns*, one of the most gorgeous things in the score was the death of the Penguin," Richard Kraft says. "That feeling of being this freak, and his only family was this pack of penguins, and they carry him off and put him in the water—Danny understood that emotion and scored it."

"I just loved the fact that Tim would actually do this sad scene of him being pulled to the water by two penguins and then cast adrift," Elfman says. "That was just too perfect for me."

"*Returns* is to *Batman* as *Empire* is to *Star Wars*," Mike Gerhard says. "It's a vastly more rich and complicated score than its predecessor. You only have to listen to the climax of the film to hear the complex nature of Mr. Elfman's score, as he interweaves Batman's heroic theme with the menacing circus music of Penguin's henchmen with the tragic tune he wrote for the Penguin's demise, and the melancholy sensuality he created for Catwoman's character. It makes me wonder if Mr. Burton were given the opportunity to make another *Batman* film, what kind of wonderful themes Elfman would have written for other members of Batman's Rogues Gallery."

Production designer Bo Welch acknowledges that Elfman's music, by its very complexity, reflects the super-detailed, ornate look of Burton's films. "I think he consciously does that, but it's all about tone, these movies. The art direction, props, acting, editing, music—all of those things—when they share a common tone, the effect of all of these pieces is greater than its sum. So you look at dailies and they're one thing, and they're unusual and they're cool, and you see art direction, then you bring this layer of Danny's music in, and it's like, 'Oh, my God.' There's an energy and a joy and a madness to his scores that is also *the movie*. They're delicate and powerful and manly, and they're radically mad and blissfully joyful—all at the same time. That's what I love about them. Danny manages to beautifully underline and enhance the tone that defines a Tim Burton movie, and he does it so beautifully and perfectly, time after time, that obviously it's a marriage made in film heaven."

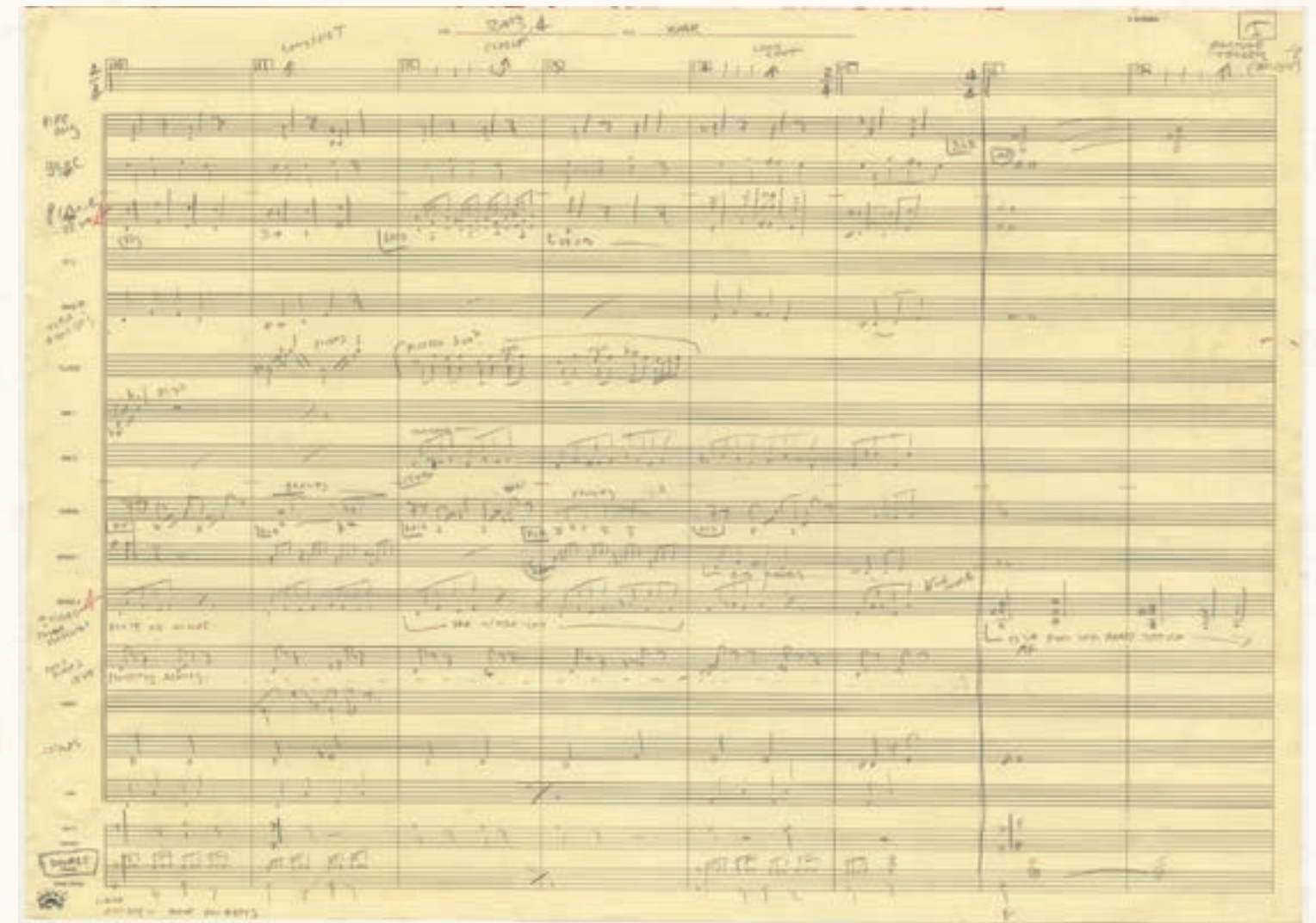


On the set of *Batman Returns* (left)

Tim Burton directs Michelle Pfeiffer and Michael Keaton in *Batman Returns*.

Batman Returns, sketch (bottom)

A page from Elfman's sketch for the score from *Batman Returns*.



6



EDWARD MEETS THE WORLD
Scissors & Celestes



Edward Scissorhands
Concept artwork by Tim Burton.

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

Shortly after the release of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, editor Billy Weber and his wife had dinner with Tim Burton. The director told the couple of an idea he had for a movie about a strange young man with scissors for hands, who is brought into a suburban community and struggles to find acceptance. “That was literally out of Tim’s head,” Weber says. “He told us all about *Edward Scissorhands*. It hadn’t been written yet, but he told us the whole story and what it was about. It just seemed the perfect film for him.”

In fact, the idea for the character of Edward went back even further, beginning as just a drawing of a pale, scraggly-haired young man with clusters of black shear blades in place of fingers. “It was just an image that I liked,” Burton says. “It came subconsciously and was linked to a character who wants to touch but can’t, who was both creative and destructive. It was very much linked to a feeling. I remember growing up and feeling that there was not a lot of room for acceptance. You are taught at a very early age to conform to certain things. It’s a situation, at least in America, that’s very prevalent and which starts from day one at school: This person’s smart...this person’s not smart. This person’s good at sports...this one’s not. This person’s weird...this one’s normal. From day one you’re categorized. I fell into the ‘weird’ category because I was quiet; I was interiorized.”

Burton found the idea of a person who might cut anything or anyone he touched a compelling metaphor for the difficulties of people connecting with one another. “The image made itself apparent and probably came to the surface when I was a teenager,” Burton says. “Because it is a very teenage thing—it had to do with relationships. I just felt like I couldn’t

communicate. It was the feeling that your image and how people perceive you is at odds with what’s inside you, which is a fairly common feeling. So, it had to do with image and perception.”

Burton hired writer Caroline Thompson to write a screenplay based on his story during preproduction on *Beetlejuice*. At the time, it seemed like a workable “small” movie idea to fall back on in case *Beetlejuice* didn’t hit. After *Batman* became a monster blockbuster, Burton would seem to have had the freedom to make just about anything he wanted—but Warner Bros. wanted another *Batman*, and Burton wasn’t interested in moving directly into a sequel, especially after the grueling pressure-cooker experience of making the first *Batman*. He proposed *Edward Scissorhands* to Warner Bros. as an alternative, but the studio didn’t bite and Burton wound up taking the project to 20th Century Fox.

In fact, making the biggest movie hit of the era brought with it no guarantees. “You knew going in [*Batman*] was kind of a semi-expensive movie, a big movie, so you hoped it did well,” Burton says. “It was lucky to do well, and I actually thought, after that point, that it would be easy to get the next movie done. At the time, I learned no movie is easy to get done. *Edward Scissorhands* was probably the hardest movie to get made, and I thought, ‘Well, *Batman* is a success—it’s going to be easy.’ But it didn’t turn out to be the case.”

Burton definitely wanted to focus on a smaller project after the mammoth production of *Batman*, however, and *Edward Scissorhands* seemed the perfect subject: “That story had been with me for a long time and it just felt like time to do something a bit more personal, lower budget. Even with all of that, I was surprised at how difficult it was to get made. Even going lower budget, it was a struggle, but it was a struggle worth

taking. You have to fight for every movie no matter what it is, so that one was no different, really.”

“Right after *Batman*, everybody wanted Tim to do either the sequel to *Beetlejuice* or another *Batman*,” Denise Di Novi remembers. “He stood strong and said that he wanted to do *Edward Scissorhands*, which was really a return to when he did his smaller films—*Frankenweenie* and *Vincent*—that really came from him. Scissorhands was an image in his mind that he had drawn and a character that he kind of invented out of whole cloth, and it was a very personal film for him. It was my first film with Tim, so I felt like I won the lottery in terms of the filmmaker I was working with.”

In a sense, *Edward Scissorhands* was the first full-fledged Tim Burton feature film. He had exercised enormous creative control over *Beetlejuice*, but the basic story had originated with another screenwriter. *Scissorhands* was a deeply personal story of kindness and alienation and it seemed a clear reflection of Burton’s own upbringing in Burbank, where he was at odds with the pastel ranch houses and commercialism around him. “When Tim is directing truly his own movies—and I would say *Beetlejuice* and certainly *Edward Scissorhands* fall into that category—you are in Tim’s world,” art director Rick Heinrichs says. “It’s a world of juxtaposition of what’s normal, what’s over the top, what’s considered acceptable socially, and what’s beautiful. And it’s all of those things that Tim really tries to play with—the beauty of the lonely genius or someone with the unusual talent who is scorned for it by the supposed normal people. Tim’s themes seem to come back to a very specific kind of feeling and emotion . . . that I’m sure has to do with his childhood and the way he grew up. I’m sure he’d say that it’s not really about him—it’s not autobiographical. But obviously everybody is affected by their own upbringing. There are those themes that Tim keeps returning to that are so compelling.”

The screenplay had a shy housewife and Avon Lady, Peg (Dianne Wiest), who discovers Edward in a dark, fairy-tale castle situated on a hilltop overlooking her suburb. In flashbacks we discover that Edward is a robot boy constructed by a kindly mad scientist (Vincent Price), who died before gifting Edward with human hands. With his obvious innocence and the creative skill he demonstrates with his hands, sculpting shrubs, hairdos, and dog fur into stylized works of art, Edward is at first embraced by Peg’s suburban neighbors, but eventually they impress their own pettiness, sexual frustration, and bigotry onto him and drive him from their world and back to his origins. The blocky, pastel rigidity of

Peg’s neighborhood was a reflection of Burton’s childhood memories of life in the San Fernando Valley. “Any time you think back to something, the further away it is, the more extreme, the more heightened it becomes,” Burton says. “The interesting thing about these neighborhoods is that they’re so close together, you know everybody—but there’s stuff underneath that you just don’t know. Sexual stuff. There’s a certain kind of kinkiness to the suburbs. There’s a certain kind of vagueness, a blankness, and I got this very strongly from my family.”

Burton worked with Thompson on the story. “I had read [Caroline Thompson’s] book, *First Born*, which was about an abortion that came back to life,” Burton remembers. “It was good. It had sociological things that were thematic but also had fantastical elements to it, which was nice, and the combination of those things I liked. It was close to the feeling I wanted for *Edward Scissorhands*.”

“Tim and I were introduced by our agents, because they didn’t really know what to do with either one of us,” Thompson recalls. “I had written a strange little novel that I adapted to a movie with director Penelope Spheeris that got set up and never got made. We became best friends right off the bat and really wanted to work together. Tim told me about a drawing he had made in high school of a man called Edward with scissors instead of hands. I said, ‘Stop right there. I know exactly what to do with that.’ For some reason, it was just an idea that completely sparked with an idea that I was thinking about. I was a prose writer, so the first pass I took at it was a prose pass, and it took me three weeks to write a 70-page treatment.” Thompson says Burton presented the idea to Warner Bros. with deliberate indifference, knowing that the studio had little interest in the material and very much wanting to make this deeply personal story with people who understood and embraced its themes.

“Scott Rudin at Fox recognized Tim’s serious talent early on and basically would have agreed to make the phone book with him, I think,” Thompson says. “So, we set it up there, but we set it up with very unusual parameters—we took absolutely no meetings, no notes, no nothing. The deal was I would write the script and we would turn it in to the studio, and they would have a weekend to decide whether or not they wanted to make it. And that was that. It didn’t cost them very much money. It was a no-risk situation, and for us it was a tremendous amount of creative freedom.”

Thompson’s finished screenplay artfully balances a kind of ironic, suburban poetry for Peg’s Avon endeavors and her neighbors’ gossipy fixations with a more realistic treatment of Peg’s cheerleader daughter



Tim Burton, Winona Ryder, and AMC Matador

Tim Burton directs his fourth feature, *Edward Scissorhands*.

Kim (Winona Ryder) and her relentlessly agro, football player boyfriend Jim (Anthony Michael Hall)—all of which makes the triangle between the vulnerable Edward, Kim, and Jim painfully involving as the story accelerates toward tragedy.

Edward Scissorhands was a field day for art direction, with production designer Bo Welch painting an entire tract neighborhood in Florida in pastels and building the ornate, black-on-black exterior of the scientist’s castle full-size, while set designer Rick Heinrichs worked on the ornate, impressionistic castle interiors.

“We built the exterior of the castle, that shell, completely,” Welch recalls. “Today, if you were to approach that movie with the same script, you would end up building the first eight feet [or so] to contain the actor, and then the rest would be a digital composite, but we actually built that sucker. When I first read it, I sat down with Tim and said, ‘OK, we have this suburban neighborhood and we have this castle. I know your aesthetic; I know how this should look. The two things couldn’t be more at odds with one another. Do we make any attempt at resolving that?’ And he just sort of looks at you and says, ‘No.’ And it was just that—the adjacency of that castle on that hill and that neighborhood—that gives it the joy and the friction that makes it so cool.”

ON THE STEPPES OF CENTRAL ASIA: ELFMAN’S AND BURTON’S RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

If Danny Elfman’s *Edward Scissorhands* score bears a bit of the feel of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, he comes by the influence honestly. And if you ask conductor John Mauceri, it’s not simply because Elfman became fascinated by the works of Igor Stravinsky, Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, and other Russian classical masters when he was a young man. When Mauceri heard the premiere of Elfman’s concert work *Serenada Schizophrana* at Carnegie Hall in 2005, he says he didn’t know what to expect: “When I heard it, not knowing anything about it, I met Danny for the first time at a reception afterward. I said to him, ‘You have to be of Russian Jewish descent; there’s no question in my mind,’ and he said to his mother, ‘Mom, are we Russian Jewish descent?’ And she said, ‘Of course we are.’ So, I think he may be unaware of the kinds of traditions that he taps into.”

From Tchaikovsky’s deeply familiar, unabashedly romantic ballets *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker* to the anarchic, primitive violence of Stravinsky’s *The Rite Of Spring*, Russian classical compositions run the gamut of emotions and scale from microscopic to apocalyptic. But perhaps there’s a vulnerability and a deep-thinking soulfulness that is endemic to the Russian character, hammered into the Russian psyche from hundreds of years of social and economic upheavals, their country’s mind-boggling territorial expanses, and its extremes of climate. Director Timur Bekmambetov—who worked with Elfman on *Wanted* and teamed with Tim Burton in producing the poetic computer-animated, post-apocalyptic fable *9*—sees connections to his home country in both Elfman and Burton. “I think for Danny it was very interesting and encouraging to work with a



Edward Scissorhands

Concept artwork by Tim Burton.

Burton's concept of the neighborhood beneath the castle as a toy-like environment of pastel houses required Welch to redesign an entire, newly established suburban cul-de-sac. "We took over this neighborhood that was 25, 30 houses. It was brand new and we went door-to-door, basically, and moved all the people out and painted their houses and uniformly reduced window sizes and then cut down their tiny little trees and brought in our trees. So, even the neighborhood we found, we art-directed pretty extensively."

Casting the character of Edward was a major challenge that led to one of the most rewarding working relationships of Burton's career. A number of high-profile celebrities, including Tom Cruise and Michael Jackson, were considered for *Edward Scissorhands*, and the studio was particularly interested in having a major star in the part. But Burton couldn't find the vulnerability he was seeking for the character in any of the stars under consideration. He focused on Johnny Depp, then known primarily for the youth-oriented cop show *21 Jump Street*. Depp was being marketed as a young star in the mold of the "Brat Pack" actors in vogue at the time, but the young actor was never comfortable with the label and was eager to do more serious work. He didn't have the marquee power that Fox was seeking, and Burton had to fight to get him cast as Edward. But ultimately he won out, and Depp's unique sensitivity in the role (which was in many ways a 'Chaplinesque,' silent performance) quickly became part of the film's remarkable appeal.

Danny Elfman's score was another key factor in the film's success. His first three scores for Tim Burton had all been surprising, highly successful, and in the words of one *Scissorhands* character, "distinctive and unique." Elfman had essentially defined three different genres with *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, *Beetlejuice*, and *Batman*. With *Edward Scissorhands*, he would define a fourth, and create one of the most recognizable and imitated works of his career.

"It's definitely one of my favorite composing experiences," Elfman says. "I felt kind of cut loose from everything [except] Tim...and free from all outside pressure. You can only have that experience on little films where you're flying under the studio's radar. You feel like you can kind of do anything. From the beginning, I could see that this film was special and very close to Tim's heart. Like with my previous films with Tim, there was really nothing to look at for a musical model to start with...so, we didn't bother trying...I was able to just let my mind wander. Whatever pressure I was under was all internal. I was starting

to feel a sense of expectation out there that was unique to my collaboration with Tim. People were beginning to expect something special, but I tried to keep that out of my head, as that kind of thing can really mess you up."

Burton says he didn't envy his composer's job of coming up with a musical approach for *Edward Scissorhands*: "It was a weird movie. It's a hard movie to feel confidence in, in a certain way. It's sort of half a categorization, really. So, I think it kind of confused everybody. In that particular score, you couldn't even use inspirations from, let's say, Bernard Herrmann or other composers that we like, and stuff that you kind of go, 'Oh, it's a little bit this-esque or that-esque.' It wasn't really into any of that stuff."

By the time of *Edward Scissorhands*, any doubts about the abilities of either Elfman or Burton had virtually vanished. And the added pressure that had been persistent on *Batman* was absent on *Scissorhands*, as it was understood that this was a small, personal film and not a blockbuster-by-design. Elfman embraced the film's fairy-tale elements and created a delicate and soothing opening of choir and celeste, playing off the customized 20th Century Fox logo adorned in falling snow—a soulful and moving bookend Burton had created, which would dovetail with the reveal of the snow's source at the end of the movie. Elfman's opening music wrapped chimes around a lonely choral theme for Edward, which eventually gives way to the heartbreaking "Ice Dance" theme that is tied to the grandmother character (and narrator) seen at the beginning of the film and to her connection to the Winona Ryder character seen later.

"I just started out with these two themes," Elfman says. "I was kind of conditioned into thinking that only one could survive, that you could only have one theme for a character. Neither of us could decide between them. And in the end, we just used them both. Eventually, I just said, 'You know, this is the storybook theme and this is Edward's other theme used for the ice dance.'" Elfman figured he had free reign to do what he wanted since he was sure not many people were going to see *Edward Scissorhands* anyway, "which is what I thought most of the time on Tim's films, including *Batman* by the way," he continues. "I said, 'This will be a wonderful little cult film.' So, you can really kind of get away with anything. I aimed small. I felt that what I'd come up with was pretty nice but wasn't really going to make any kind of dent or really stand out very much. I was very fond of it, but not at all confident that I had done a good job. I just couldn't tell."

Even in demo form, Elfman's music was clearly something special. In fact, it was so immediately effective that it seemed too good to be true. "I remember Danny was really nervous about nailing the theme to that movie," Richard Kraft recalls. "He wanted to write something really special, and he called me in a panic to come over to his studio to listen to what he had written because he thought it might sound like something else. He played it to me over and over, and we were racking our brains. I listened to it and I thought this is among the best film music I ever heard. I ran through every John Barry theme I could think of because it had a little Barry-esque element to it, but it wasn't any John Barry piece. I went through every film score I could think of, and I've never found any similarity. I think it's just the theme to *Edward Scissorhands*. But it was one of those things when something is so simple and perfect, it's scary."

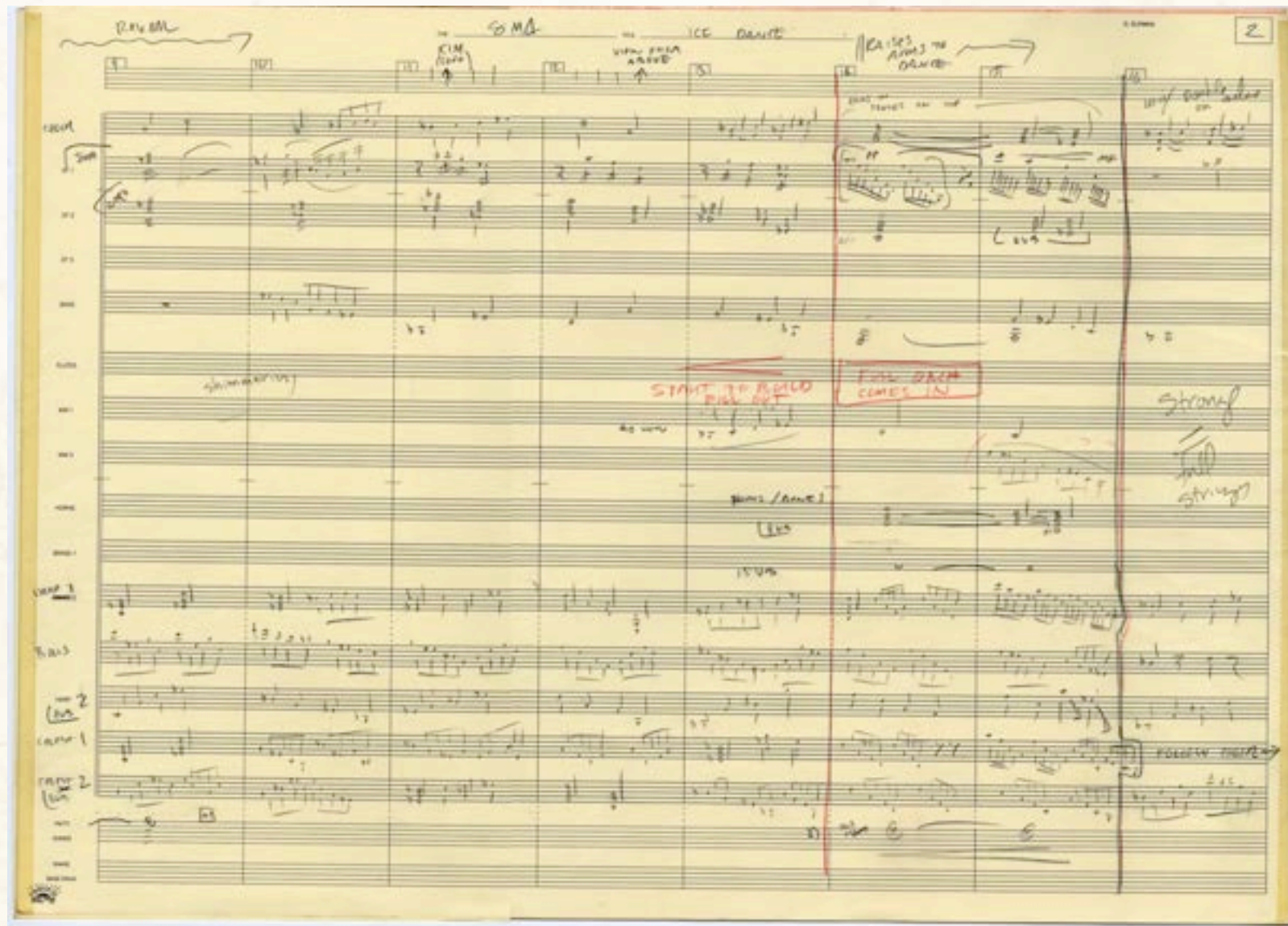
Russian director because it's part of his background," Bekmambetov says. "It's part of him, and he was trying to entertain me with these Russian themes and self-irony that we have a lot in Russia. We're self-ironic because of the lives we have; we cannot survive without it. It was an interesting experience for him, and me for sure, because it was exactly the right tone. This is exactly why I decided to call him."

Bekmambetov says that Burton's cinematic fables play well in Russia and have a uniquely Russian character: "I remember these gothic, dark, very romantic, sentimental movies from the end of the '80s, which was something new. Somehow, Tim has an intellectual connection with a Russian audience. It reminds me of Russian music and Russian culture. For example, we have famous romantic poets from 19th century like Pushkin and Lermontov. All his movies, tonally, have a similarity—and connections."

Elfman adds, "The connection with Russian music was there from the beginning, but I have no idea why. It was instantaneous. I do believe that somehow it's in the blood, though obviously that makes no sense. But there it is. There's this combination of irony and soul in the literature and the music that is deep and beautiful, and I have been hooked since I read my first line of *Crime And Punishment* as a teenager."



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Edward Scissorhands sketch

A page from Elfman's sketch to his often-imitated cue, "Ice Dance" from *Edward Scissorhands*.



Tim Burton and Vincent Price on set

Burton reunited with his childhood hero, Vincent Price, in *Edward Scissorhands*.

Steve Bartek observes, "The biggest thing was the boy's choir and the women's choir. That whole sound and texture is what Danny was going for. The choir in *Batman* was more opera stuff. In *Edward*, it set the tone for the way Danny wanted the women to sing, and he was very specific. We worked with them and got the boy's choir to integrate with it. We all learned a lot about voices on that."

Recording engineer Shawn Murphy points out that isolating the chimes in the main theme and bringing them forward was a crucial challenge in getting the sound of the score right. "A big element in the score was a celeste sound," he says. "We did a bunch of tests of multiple celestes, because we knew there would at least be two of them live all the time."

Despite the feeling of intimacy that Burton creates through the cloistered neighborhood environment in the film, Elfman's score explores a surprising range of emotions and styles. While the film's delicate, miniaturist opening music and the haunting "Ice Dance" cue have become iconic and irrevocably tied to the movie, the score is full of numerous other expressive and memorable moments, including the bustling, faux monstrous cookie machine music and the soulful underscoring of Vincent Price's scenes that musically mirrors the sensitivity in Price's eyes and makes concrete the unspoken love between the Scientist and Edward.

But the score's most spectacular showcase is "Edwardo The Barber," which begins with the comic, Rota-esque echoes of Elfman's distinctive *Pee-wee* sound, before a playful but sonorous, rapid-fire gypsy violin showcases Edward as a virtuoso dog groomer. Once man-hungry neighbor Joyce (Kathy Baker) begs for a haircut, Elfman introduces elegant, seductive Latin rhythms, which underscore Joyce's sensuous response to Edward's ministrations. For all the semi-ironic, subtly comic approaches, the cue ends on a moment of heartbreaking simplicity and empathy to show Edward's caring and affection for his new mother Peg, as she shyly sits down in the hairdresser's chair.

Steve Bartek says that at that point, he had found a groove working with Elfman: "I think we knew we could do it. I think Danny was much more confident about his writing. It all seemed to flow easier. I think Danny was honing his language. There's the big machine in the center that harkens back a little to the machine in *Pee-wee*—it's kind of similar, but to me it's way more sophisticated and actually used the orchestra better."

Record producer Robert Townson, whose Varèse Sarabande label has released more than a dozen of Elfman's soundtracks, saw the score as a landmark for the composer: "*Edward Scissorhands*, to me, was a huge work for him and came at a period where everything coming from Danny is like a wonder. It's like exploring the world for the first time—exploring all of the aspects of an orchestra and then the choir in that one. It just captured so much of the evolving sophistication in his music.

Composer James Newton Howard (*The Sixth Sense*, *Michael Clayton*) says he found all of Elfman's scores for Burton's early films "...nothing short of groundbreaking. I thought Danny's score to *Edward Scissorhands* was just spectacular."

Also touched by the score to *Scissorhands* was Broadcast Music, Inc.'s Doreen Ringer Ross, who has handed out 25 BMI Film Music Awards to Elfman over the years. "I remember being struck by the snowflake scene," Ringer Ross says. "I [was] blown away at its utter beauty and how that juxtaposed to the *Pee-wee* scores, the *Batman* scores, the stuff that had that great comic book sense of humor and dynamic to it. Suddenly there was this gorgeous, heartfelt, exquisite piece of music, and yet it had [Elfman's] brushstroke, just like everything Van Gogh painted had a brushstroke that was very identifiable. It was just so beautiful."

While each of Elfman's previous scores for Burton seemed to be gigantic leaps of capability, where Danny's talents were concerned,



Danny Elfman and Vincent Price

Danny Elfman also shares Tim Burton's appreciation of horror veteran Vincent Price.

Bartek says that each score lays groundwork that provided clues as to where Elfman was going: “*Beetlejuice* had some intense stuff at the end, which, in scope, related to some of what he did in *Batman*. And even the romantic theme in *Pee-wee*, it’s heartfelt and has an emotion and gets to the point. It seemed to me he showed he could do all those things.”

Producer Denise Di Novi says Danny Elfman had captured Tim Burton’s mystique in music: “There are people that just get Tim’s personality and have a similar way of looking at the world, which I would describe as sort of a gentle, loving darkness. It’s not an edgy, scary darkness. It’s kind of a humanistic darkness. Danny has it. Tim’s subjects can be dark but he always has a playfulness thrown in there, and you hear that in Danny’s music.”

Caroline Thompson remembers: “Probably the greatest moment of my career was watching the first preview of *Edward Scissorhands*, where they had laughed at all the places I hoped they would laugh. And then there was a point at which the entire audience started to sniffle, and then there was some outright weeping. It was wonderful. It was in Pasadena. Tim was vomiting in the bathroom almost the whole time as he used to do at all his previews.” Thompson recalls that the initial read on the audience was intimidating. “When this audience walked in, everybody looked so much like the bad kid (Anthony Michael Hall),” she says. “We thought, ‘Oh, sh*t, we are up sh*t creek.’” Not to worry: The audience completely went with the movie.”

For such a strange and personal film, *Edward Scissorhands* did extraordinarily well at the box office, making more than \$56 million, almost three times its \$20 million budget. It again proved that Tim Burton was one of the few truly idiosyncratic American filmmakers who could connect with a mass audience. “*Edward* became a very beloved movie, particularly among outsider-feeling people,” Thompson says. “Johnny Depp was recently interviewed—I don’t know if it was by Jay Leno or David Letterman—and he mentioned *Edward Scissorhands* and the audience went nuts. I mean it’s quite beloved still, it seems. It’s found a place in the culture.”

Edward Scissorhands became another signpost in Danny Elfman’s career. “The most important thing that he ever did—and that sound was ripped off by so many people because it possessed the most extraordinary quality in the sound—was *Edward Scissorhands*,” says concertmaster Bruce Dukov. “That was, I think, his landmark. It has this incredible fantasy and this modal, and these chords that sounded just like it came

out of a heavenly choir. It created this mystery and eeriness that people used so many times in TV commercials. It’s all over the place. That was his real second stage that he was in, and he really created that sound. That’s something not many composers can say, that they’ve created a sound that everybody’s emulated.”

“I’ve never heard a score that’s been reused more in temp scores or in commercials or anything,” Burton says. “I still hear it today! It’s on *Dancing On Ice* for God’s sake! For a movie that is so weird and nobody wanted to make, it’s quite shocking how much you hear it all the time. It’s the most used score. Even in my field, when we’re doing the edit and they stick it into another temp score for me, I go, ‘Take it out!’ I love the score, but I can’t hear it in anything else.”

Joe Roth, who oversaw the project at Fox, was particularly struck by the score. “I actually couldn’t believe how sweet and sensitive the score was,” Roth says. “And I was taken aback, in a good way, by Danny’s versatility. Film scoring is a very precise, specific job, which a lot of musicians don’t get. And here’s a guy from a kind of wild, improvisational type of band who can make a 9-second cue work. That’s not an easy skill to come by.”

“What was beautiful about *Edward Scissorhands* was that everybody brought their best to it, and without Danny, it would not have been half the movie it turned out to be,” Thompson says. “Everybody brought their ‘A’ game to it, between [costume designer] Colleen Atwood and Bo Welch, Tim, Danny—everybody was making the same movie, but it took each person to participate to make the movie come alive. It was by far the most interesting experience I’ve had and the most seamless collaboration I’ve had.”

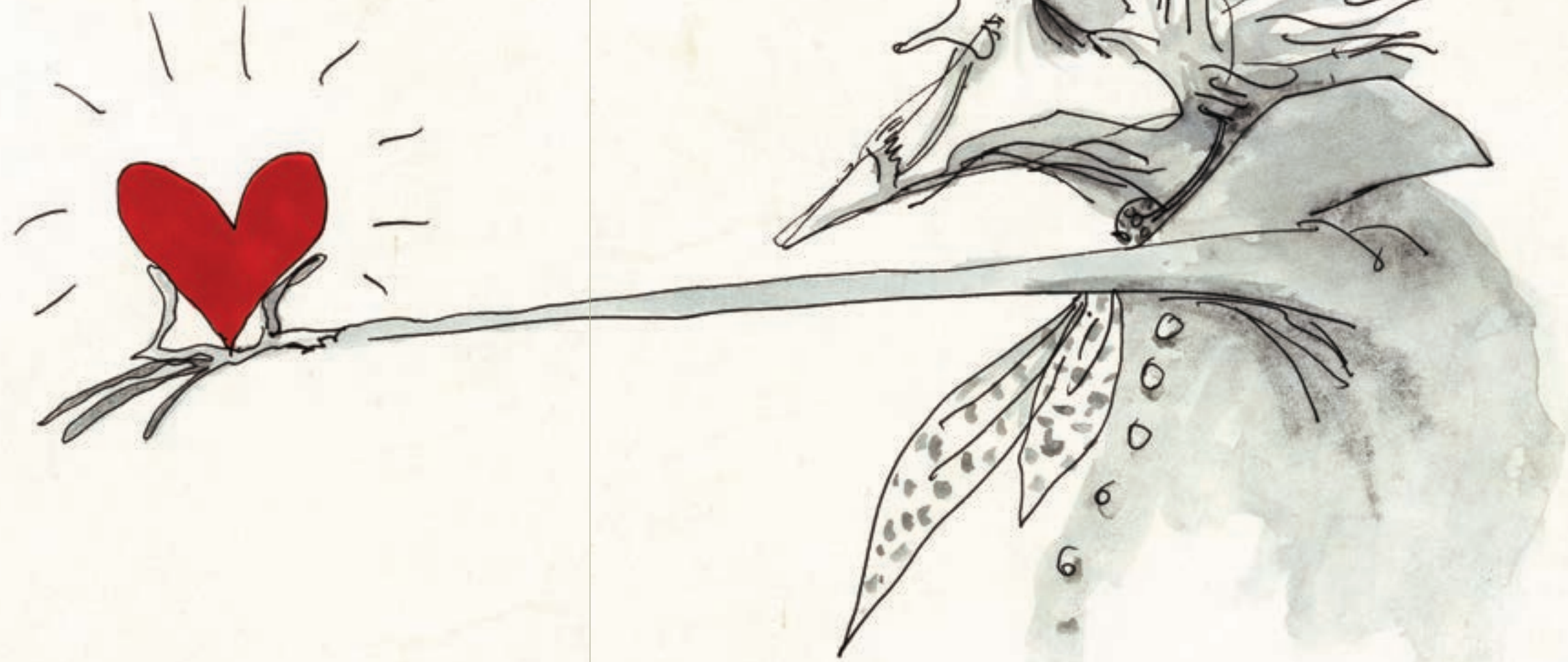
Despite the score’s great impact, Elfman’s work on *Edward Scissorhands* failed to be recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. If the snubbing of the low-budget comedy scores for *Pee-wee* and *Beetlejuice* was unsurprising, and perhaps the failure to nominate the blockbuster *Batman* score could be dismissed as a fluke, passing over *Edward Scissorhands* looked like a deliberate statement. “I think the Academy’s failure to nominate *Edward Scissorhands* for Best Original Dramatic Score in 1990 is one of the all-time injustices to a composer in Hollywood,” author Jon Burlingame says. “I think that score is in many ways a masterpiece. All the more impressive because Danny had only really been in the business for five years and, in many ways, was still learning his craft. It’s like both sides of Danny: It’s the

fantasy side and also a bit of the horror side. Why did that happen? Because the Academy's music branch, at the time, did not believe that Danny, this guy from Oingo Boingo, really could write a score like that."

Conductor John Mauceri, who has championed film music in his concerts at the Hollywood Bowl and numerous other venues, sees *Edward Scissorhands* as one of Danny Elfman's pivotal contributions to music. "I think what makes Danny really special here is how he passed into a fantasy world of childhood with his use of certain instruments and harmonies that add a bittersweet quality," Mauceri says. "He starts with the child worlds of Tchaikovsky, especially in *The Nutcracker* where Tchaikovsky really invents the music of childhood with the use of the celeste. Then [he] puts it in minor keys and floats it around in ways that childhood is not so simple and beautiful and happy—but really full of nightmarish and scary things. So, in *Edward Scissorhands*, he's reinvented the sound of childhood. I think Danny has had an extraordinary series of inventions that go beyond him. He's created new symbols of music, new ways to express things that other composers are borrowing and exploring themselves."

Composer Marc Shaiman counts himself among the many composers who's been pressured to imitate Elfman's music, especially from *Edward Scissorhands*. "Danny holds the title of 'Most Dreaded CD To Spy Sitting In A Music Editor's Office' because his music is so often used in temp scores," Shaiman says. "And trying to beat a cue from, say, *Edward Scissorhands* when you are scoring a fantasy moment with heart and soul... well, let's just say there are a *lot* of moments when I have sat up in a movie theater and known exactly which Elfman cue was in the temp—often at my own films."

In fact, the score and the film have become signatures for Burton's and Elfman's careers. "I think it's hard to beat on so many levels," Bob Badami says. "When you think about Tim, he basically grew up like that. It is definitely his most personal film. It's very pure. And people, especially teenagers, relate to that story and the character. The film was really the perfect combination of Burton and Elfman."



The Inventor

Tim Burton's sketch of the inventor in *Edward Scissorhands* was drawn with Vincent Price in mind, who later starred in the role.



WHAT'S THIS?
Stop-Motion Musical



Tim Burton with stop-motion figures

Burton in the San Francisco-based puppet shop for *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* combined two of Burton's childhood fascinations: stop-motion animation, which he had fallen in love with while watching Ray Harryhausen movies like *Jason And The Argonauts* and *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad*, and holiday Christmas specials such as *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer* and *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. Like *The Wizard Of Oz*, the various holiday specials that aired on network television in the early to mid-'60s became formative parts of the lives of children growing up during that period, as they were run and rerun every year. Kids memorized their vivid characters and their catchy songs and musical underscores. Burton already had a child's love of Dr. Seuss, which made the classic, Chuck Jones-directed *How The Grinch Stole Christmas!*, with its sickly green, misunderstood villain, the Grinch, a natural favorite for the director.

Rudolph, which first aired on ABC in 1964, had the added appeal of being made with stop-motion animation techniques. Producing partners Arthur Rankin and Jules Bass capitalized on the success of *Rudolph* with a series of specials in stop-motion. For Burton, the most appealing may have been *Mad Monster Party*, a feature-length, comic assemblage of classic monsters, including Dr. Frankenstein (voiced by Boris Karloff), his bride (the inimitable Phyllis Diller), Dracula, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, and even King Kong (described as 'The Thing' when Rankin/Bass couldn't get the rights to the character). Originally designed as a television special, *Mad Monster Party* was a flop when it was released in theaters, but it went on to become a modest cult success, particularly among the goth set.

The Nightmare Before Christmas would become Tim Burton's entry in this highly specialized genre, one that grew from a modest ambition into

a phenomenon—but not without a few bumps along the way. Burton had begun developing the idea about a collision between the holidays of Halloween and Christmas while at Disney. "*Nightmare* started many, many years ago when I was at Disney just drawing things without any real direction or anything," Burton says. "I always liked *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer* growing up and *The Grinch*...and just the idea of wanting to do a holiday special. I think I first thought of it as a TV thing but then sort of held out for 10 years to just do it, because it felt like stop-motion was the right thing to do."

As with many of the creative ideas Burton formulated during his time at the famed animation studio, he was encouraged by Disney brass when he presented the idea of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, which was to be stop-motion animated, potentially done as a television special, and constructed around a poem to be narrated by Vincent Price, who had just helped Burton out so spectacularly with *Vincent*.

Encouragement didn't necessarily lead to financing or production, however, and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* eventually fell by the wayside. But with *Batman* under his belt, the idea of reviving the project seemed promising, and when *Edward Scissorhands* became a hit, every Tim Burton concept that had once been deemed too oddball now suddenly seemed like potential money in the bank. Since the *Nightmare* project had been conjured up while Burton was working at Disney, the studio owned the idea and Burton's original materials, and the director had to approach Disney with the idea of either buying *Nightmare* back or producing it with them. After *Batman*, Disney was eager to get back into the Tim Burton business and the deal was struck.

Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer, 1964

Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer was Rankin-Bass' first animated holiday special—and it still runs annually on television near Christmas.



Mad Monster Party, 1967

Rankin-Bass' stop-motion animated musical feature *Mad Monster Party* was an inspiration for Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.



How The Grinch Stole Christmas! 1966

Dr. Seuss' scabrous, misunderstood Grinch laid some groundwork for Tim Burton's mix of scarieness and holiday spirit in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.



But Burton knew that *The Nightmare Before Christmas* would be a time-consuming, long-range product because of the nature of stop-motion production, and he was committed to making *Batman Returns*. He eventually chose stop-motion animator Henry Selick to direct *Nightmare*, with Burton supervising the work as well as character design, art direction, and, of course, the film's story. The idea of doing a movie entirely in stop-motion was irresistible. "[Stop-motion is] tactile," Burton says. "You can do great things with computers. It's all great, but there's still something about that tactile thing. It goes back to Harryhausen, Bernard Herrmann, and all that stuff. But also I throw in the Rankin/Bass specials, *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer*... those were such a staple from my childhood. There was talk about doing it in drawn animation, but that just seemed really right for stop-motion and that's why it took 10 years longer to get made, because nobody wanted to really do that."

Burton originally had screenwriter Michael McDowell (*Beetlejuice*) work on the story, but he eventually began to focus on the idea of *Nightmare* as a kind of operetta, just as many of the classic holiday TV specials had been musicals. Burton had a potential songwriter close at hand: Danny Elfman. "I remember getting a call from Danny about Tim's new film," Richard Kraft says. "I don't even think he said it was a musical. Danny said, 'Tim has a story and he wants me to write some songs.' No one once ever used the word 'musical' or used the word 'animated' because that time was during the Alan Menken era, and Disney animated musicals were very specific things. I think it was simply more talk at the time about stop-motion animation and the excitement about revitalizing it."

"Danny got involved before almost anybody," Burton says. "I think he was working on it before anybody was. I remember Danny and I just sitting down and kind of going, 'Well, this is the rough idea of the story' and Danny was just writing. I would go over to his house and we would treat it like an operetta, not like the musicals that [Disney] did, but more like that old-fashioned kind of thing, where the songs are more ingrained in the story. I would begin to tell him the story and he'd write a song; he wrote them pretty quickly, actually, at least the initial pass on them. We worked in a weird way, where there was the outline and the songs, and then we worked out the script. There was a lot going on—that was what was so difficult about it. They were doing the storyboards up there; we were doing the script. All this stuff was happening at once. It's not the best way to do it, but this was a new thing we were trying to do. So, Danny and I would go through my little outline, and I'd say

Jack does this, and then he does that, and then he falls into Christmas Town. We'd worked together so much that it didn't matter that we didn't know what we were doing; at least we knew each other. And again, since we had worked together before, he worked very quickly, which was good because we needed the songs so we could do the script. He would play me stuff the next week, sometimes the next day. He wrote all of them within a couple of months."

Not only was Elfman contributing to characterization and narrative for the film, but also Tim Burton was getting involved in musical aspects of the production in a way he had never done before. "Tim would talk about what Jack's going through emotionally, and I'm kind of feeling what he's talking about," Elfman says. "I'm going, 'Yes, I understand.' And he also had lyrics that he had written for 'Jack's Lament.' I think even the opening, 'There are few who deny, at what I do, I am the best, for my talents are renowned far and wide...' You know, it just started with lines that he had, and I took off from there." Elfman's lyric and melodic ideas were triggered by the lines Burton was feeding him. "He's really very good at it. If the credits were completely accurate, they should have read, 'Lyrics by Danny Elfman and Tim Burton' or at the very least 'Additional Lyrics by Tim Burton' because he had some really good lines in here... in fact, some of my favorites."

Even with a pile of drawings, a story outline, and a number of song demos, something was missing. "The script hadn't come together and they were running out of time," Elfman remembers. "It was like, 'Let's just start with the songs and tell as much of the story as we can in song.' Before we knew it, in a really short period of time, we had 10 songs."

Eventually, they needed a real script. Elfman recalls, "My girlfriend at that time was (*Scissorhands* writer) Caroline Thompson, and she was champing at the bit, hearing me at work. I lived at her house when I wrote all these songs because my house in Topanga Canyon was being renovated. She gave me a little back room to turn into a mini studio, and so I wrote all the songs back there. At this point she's going nuts because she's hearing all the music, the whole story, the whole thing. So, one day Tim and I were talking, and I finally blurted out that Caroline was really, *really* itching to go on this. And in the end, somehow things came together and she got her wish and wrote the script. It all worked perfectly."

The Nightmare Before Christmas story involved the bizarre denizens of Halloween Town and their king, Jack Skellington, who is suffering an existential crisis as he realizes his enthusiasm for the town's annual celebration of Halloween is waning. Jack accidentally discovers another world—Christmas Town—that reignites his enthusiasm for the holidays. But a rival "underworld figure," Oogie Boogie, has Christmas Town's Santa Claus kidnapped, and Jack must effect a rescue so that Christmas can still be celebrated. Meanwhile, a winsome, reanimated dead girl, Sally, navigates her dysfunctional relationship with the mad scientist who created her, Dr. Finklestein, and she falls hopelessly in love with Jack. "The characters that were designed for *Nightmare* had the added burden of not having any eyeballs," Burton points out. "The first rule of animation is: Eyes for Expression. But a lot of the characters either don't have any eyes, or their eyes are sewn shut. I thought if we could give life to these characters that have no eyes, it would be great. So, after drawing all those foxes with their wet drippy eyes at Disney, there was a little subversion in having these characters with no eyes."

RAY HARRYHAUSEN

Stop-motion animator Ray Harryhausen is probably responsible for more filmmaking careers than any other artist. A disciple of Willis O'Brien, the man who brought the original 1933 *King Kong* to life, Harryhausen worked with his mentor on another giant monkey film, *Mighty Joe Young*, before launching his own career series of black-and-white science-fiction films in the '50s: *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*, *It Came From Beneath The Sea*, *20 Million Miles To Earth*, and *Earth Vs. The Flying Saucers*, one of the seminal influences on Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!*

Harryhausen painstakingly animated stop-motion characters that he designed and built, and while his movies were directed by men like Nathan Juran and Don Chaffey, they were constructed around Harryhausen's animation set pieces, making Harryhausen the real auteur behind their look and development. Harryhausen's classic, color fantasy films (*The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad*, *Mysterious Island*, *Jason And The Argonauts*, and *The 3 Worlds Of Gulliver*) were even more influential than his science-fiction efforts, and Harryhausen had a deep appreciation for the power of music to add life and emotion to his fanciful creatures. His longtime producing partner Charles Schnee hired Bernard Herrmann to score four of his films, and Herrmann's striking orchestral arrangements fused with Harryhausen's amazing, dreamlike imagery to produce some unforgettable moments that would stick in the minds of both Tim Burton and Danny Elfman from childhood through their adult careers. The animator's revived skeletons that terrorized the heroes of *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad* and *Jason And The Argonauts* still rattle about in loving homage form in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Corpse Bride*, and Harryhausen's thrashing dinosaurs, sulfur-eating Venusians and



Jack Skellington and Bonejangles puppets (above)

Two animated skeletal figures with singing voices by Danny Elfman: Jack from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and Bones from *Corpse Bride*.

Caroline Thompson (right)

Writer of the screenplays for *Edward Scissorhands* and *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*.



Elfman threw himself into the songwriting project with enormous enthusiasm. This was the first full musical project for Burton and Elfman—writing lyrics and melodies, creating demos, testing potential voices for the characters where their songs were concerned, and developing the film's story side-by-side with Tim Burton. It was no surprise that the Jack Skellington character began taking on a strong aspect of Danny Elfman's personality.

Allison Abbate, artistic coordinator on the picture (and later a producer on *Corpse Bride* and *Fantastic Mr. Fox*) remembers Elfman's central role in the production: "Danny *was* Jack Skellington. The lyrics and the music were the driving force of that film. And one of the most creatively stimulating parts of working on that movie was working with him, as an actor and performer, but also as the writer of this operatic sort of showpiece. For me, it was a great part of the experience, and I feel like I learned so much about music and filmmaking and story development and character development, just through the way we realized the lyrics of those songs."

"I think the reason why Danny so related to Jack Skellington is that [Jack's situation] was exactly what was going on in Danny's life," Laura Engel points out. "Danny was the Pumpkin King of Oingo Boingo. There had been this expectation of him being in Oingo Boingo for so long. Their Halloween shows were the big event of the year and would always sell out. So, there was a sense of being trapped: Your success leads to expectations, and your expectations lead you to feel like you're put in a box."

Richard Kraft observes, "When I first heard the lyrics to 'Jack's Lament,' it was eerily reminiscent of a phone call I'd had with Danny about a week before, where he was talking about his frustrations with Oingo Boingo. It felt like they [were] making *The Danny Elfman Story* starring Danny as depicted by a puppet."

"Danny definitely cast himself psychically as Jack," Caroline Thompson says. "Danny's world-weary rock 'n' roll star aspect definitely found a voice in Jack. There's no doubt about that. Danny is a true artist in that nothing is intellectual. It's all instinctive. So, he would never be talking about it in that way. I could sense that he would put his world-weariness into it, but it wasn't a conscious decision to do that."

Elfman acknowledges that his relationship to Oingo Boingo did play a part in his interpretation of the Jack Skellington character: "Writing the songs for Jack Skellington was more autobiographical, in the sense

of giving voice to a character that wants to leave his world. I understood what it was like to be the king of a little tiny kingdom and wanting to get out, because I was at the point where I really wanted to get out of Oingo Boingo, but I didn't know how. I had seven other guys who were reliant on the band for their sole income. I went through a number of years where every year I would say, 'This will be my last year, last year, last year.' Nobody believed me until finally '94 when I said, 'Next year, '95—that really is it.' To be a leader of a band, you are definitely the king of a completely isolated, cut-off reality. Psychologically, I understood Jack Skellington very well and I more or less wrote from his perspective, of this guy who is really torn between what he knows and is loved for, and the big unknown out there that haunts him. Jack was definitely part of my personality, but remember, he was Tim's creation, not mine, so Jack was completely part of his personality as well. Jack was born from Tim's mind. In the end, it was such an odd melding and overlapping of persona, psyche, personalities... some psychiatrist could have a field day with it. Maybe if Ingmar Bergman were alive, he would do a movie about it."

Henry Selick observes, "I think that ultimately Jack is a stand-in for Danny, for Tim, and for myself as far as how he moves. In many cases, his extreme stylization inspired us to go more Fred Astaire... thin, strong, and elegant. I ended up acting him out because I was sort of built the same way, so a lot of key gestures came directly from me. But as far as who he was as a character, you take everything: Tim's drawings, his brilliant design, and what Danny was putting out there in the songs."

Elfman's alternate career in Oingo Boingo finally dovetailed with his composing career—not in producing a rock score, but in incorporating all the varied talents Elfman had developed after years of working with the rock band. "It was nothing like writing songs for Oingo Boingo," Elfman notes. "It's a whole different process. You are writing about a story. In the band you write about anything. This was specifically telling a story in a weird orchestral style. And the score itself was actually very difficult because it was like a puzzle. It was a short movie; there were all these songs and the score was really playing between them." Elfman would incorporate little bits of melody of upcoming songs into the score of the scenes that preceded them. With so many songs, the task was delicate but ultimately rewarding as the final elements fell into place.

Abbate explains that Elfman's songs were as crucial to the development of character as they were to the overall story: "He writes beautiful music coupled with insightful lyrics that are interesting, tell a story, and also build a character. If you look at the songs from *Nightmare*, all of Jack Skellington's emotional arc is told in song, and it's such a powerful character."

Disney's head of music, Chris Montan, remembers getting his first indication of Danny Elfman's capabilities as a musical songwriter on the movie: "*Nightmare* was so much fun because I don't think Danny had ever written a musical at that point. He'd obviously written a lot of songs. I remember when he played me the first demo tape. I was blown away by the level—not just of the music, but the lyric. Because, obviously, musical lyric writing is very different from writing an individual pop song or rock song. The level of storytelling—the responsibility of storytelling is much greater. And when you look at songs like 'Making Christmas' and 'This Is Halloween,' you can't separate the songs from that movie. They are part of the DNA of that film."

cannibalistic Cyclopes are echoed in the sandworms and living furniture of *Beetlejuice* and the bike-gobbling T. Rex in *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*.

Tim Burton infused films like *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *James And The Giant Peach*, and *Corpse Bride* with his enthusiasm for the stop-motion process. "There's an energy with stop-motion that you can't even describe," Burton says. "It's to do with giving things life, and I guess that's why I wanted to get into animation originally. To give life to something that doesn't have it, is cool, and even more so in three dimensions—because at least for me, it feels even more real. Even on the early films, any time we could throw in some stop-motion, the better."

Elfman adds, "The double 'H': That was the great anticipation of my childhood and adolescence—the combination of Harryhausen and Herrmann, which guaranteed my loving a movie even before I saw it. And now, I have to say, one of the great things about having a 5-year-old, is that I get to rediscover Harryhausen all over again. With little prompting, my son Oliver has become a Harryhausen fan. He already knows his name and draws endless drawings of the Kraken, and Perseus holding Medusa's head (all images from *Clash Of The Titans*.) And *Sinbad* and *Jason* are very much alive in our house. It is my joy to watch another generation fall in love with the magic that Harryhausen created."



Ray Harryhausen and friend

The master stop-motion animator inspired most of the great genre filmmakers of the '70s, '80s, and '90s—including Tim Burton and Danny Elfman.

Montan says Elfman clearly had to invest a great deal of himself in the project: “I’ve worked on a lot of musicals with a lot of different, very well-known writers; one of the things I would say is very distinctive about Danny, is that he took on a lot of the roles himself. He was arranging it. He was writing it. He was conceiving it. He was working on the script. There are quite a few songs in the movie—more than we would typically put in an animated movie—so Danny had a huge screenwriting responsibility, because he had that much of the time devoted to the song side of it. I remember working in the studio on something else and he was in the neighboring studio, and I could see how many hats he was wearing. I was just amazed at how many things he was good at so quickly.”

“I think it’s rare that there’s a composer who can actually write songs that well,” says Fox president of music Robert Kraft (no relation to Richard Kraft). “It’s really rare. Without naming names, there’s a number of composers I’ve worked with who say, ‘Let me take a shot at the song’ and they’re not even close. They don’t think of it in song form; they don’t understand. That’s where Danny is such a monstrous threat. You can pretty much get him to appear in a lot of different guises on a film: songwriting, score, story.”

As the production developed, Elfman began taking on a highly unusual number of creative roles in the process, including associate producer of the film. He was writing music and lyrics; he was the lead vocalist and wound up playing much of the supporting cast. And in addition to writing and performing many of the songs, he was also the composer of the film’s score. Elfman even supervised the music dub of the film. “In some strange way, Danny was performing the functions traditionally handled by an entire music team,” says Robert Kraft, “Frankly, I’m surprised he didn’t also sweep the sets.”

With the exception of the female role of Sally, Danny played the entire ensemble of characters in *Nightmare* for the demo recordings. Reaching into a grab bag of voices and altering them with tape speed, Danny became Jack, the Mayor, Oogie Boogie, Sandy Claws, Lock, Shock, and Barrel—and every other citizen of Halloween Town. The recording sessions were a mind-blowing demonstration of vocal schizophrenia. For the demos, Elfman also created all the song arrangements and programmed all the parts. Listening to the demos, it is striking how much was in place before the contributions of the final cast and orchestrators.

Danny Elfman’s demos laid down some of the templates for vocal performances, and it was quickly determined that at least as far as the

music was concerned, Elfman would perform Jack Skellington’s songs himself for the finished film. The challenge was to find other performers to flesh out the film’s quirky animated characters.

Steve Bartek remembers that the production stretched out over a two-year period. “Danny came up with most of the songs in a very short period of time, Bartek says. “The first step was to find voices to do the characters. So we spent a lot of time auditioning singers. When we finally decided on singers, we had to run through the parts for one of the tunes or scenes and then send them to the animators. The animators would make changes—as they were animating, they would want the scene to do something different—so we would have to bring the singers back and redo the part. It was interesting casting Oogie Boogie.”

Oogie Boogie is the film’s supernatural heavy, a Rabelaisian character covered in sack cloth, whose features are just black holes cut out of a fabric face, scarecrow-style. Burton’s concept for Oogie Boogie was inspired by a 1932 Max Fleischer cartoon called *Minnie The Moocher*, in which a runaway Betty Boop is serenaded by a singing walrus—rotoscoped animation based on jazz singer Cab Calloway and his performance of the song “Minnie The Moocher,” which Calloway made into a million-selling hit the year before.

“The Cab Calloway thing was a specific reference,” Burton says. “When Danny and I were talking about it, it had more to do with this feeling of remembering seeing these Betty Boop cartoons, where this weird character would come out. It would do this weird musical number in the middle of nowhere, and it was like: ‘What the hell is that?’ Again, it had to do with the feeling of remembering that from when I was a child. A lot of those images come more from feelings than they do from anything specific.”

For Oogie Boogie, the filmmakers wanted Tom Waits or Buster Poindexter from the New York Dolls, who actually recorded a demo. Richard Kraft recalls, “I contacted Cab Calloway’s manager to see if the legendary inspiration for the song was healthy enough to do it. I was worried if he wouldn’t be able to pull it off, and it would have been too sad to [try and then] have it not work out. Originally, Vincent Price was narrating the movie, but he wasn’t in good health, so that was a recent disappointment. To me, the dream was, ‘Please let Cab be strong enough and in good enough voice to do this.’” When that didn’t work out, Kraft made some calls and asked, “Who would you cast if you were doing a Broadway Cab Calloway show, because it needs a legitimate theater



Jack Skellington as Santa, 1993

Artwork by Tim Burton from the illustrated book *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.



Halloween Town Welcomes Santa, 1993

Artwork by Tim Burton from the illustrated book *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

singer. A friend recommended Ken Page, who had been in the show *Ain't Misbehavin'*—so he came in. Danny's demo is very good, but watching the right person playing the part, it just really made it come to life."

Ken Page remembers that he immediately "got" the idea of Oogie Boogie's song: "It was a take on the song 'St. James Infirmary,' that sort of slow-jazz drag. I think that's what they meant when they talked about Cab Calloway. When I went to do the voice work they said, 'Well, what do you think his voice is?' I said to Danny... and Henry Selick, 'My feeling is he's somewhere between Bert Lahr of *The Wizard Of Oz* and Mercedes McCambridge's voice work of the demon in *The Exorcist*,' and they were like, 'Yeah!' I said, 'See, I'm as weird as you two are.' So, they would give me certain readings of what it had to be and how they thought of it, and I would just play with it."

Once the supporting characters were cast with actors like Glenn Shadix (as the Mayor) and the fantastically creepy William Hickey as Dr. Finklestein, the story's female lead became pivotal. Catherine O'Hara, a veteran of *Beetlejuice* like Shadix, took on the role of the patchwork girl, Sally, while also performing with Elfman and Paul Reubens on the rambunctious "Kidnap The Sandy Claws" number.

Burton and Henry Selick discussed the character of Sally with O'Hara, impressing on her the importance of conveying fragility and soulfulness, as Sally is victimized by the selfish Finklestein and pines after Jack Skellington. "She's patched together and she's man-made, so when it came to that singing voice, I had sort of a choir boy in mind because it's a frail, thin voice," O'Hara says. "It's not a big strong voice. It's a thin voice but she's also a frail being. Strong in character but physically frail."

With Jack Skellington dominating the story but totally wrapped up in his obsession with Christmas Town, Sally becomes the hidden romantic heart of the movie. "She is so in love with him," O'Hara admits. "She keeps reminding the audience that he is somebody to be loved, too. I guess she helps say more about Jack."

O'Hara sings one of the only songs in the movie that doesn't feature either Jack Skellington or Oogie Boogie—"Sally's Song." "It's a beautiful song, so that's intimidating," O'Hara says. "Danny had strong ideas about what he wanted. I remember it took a while for me to figure out that I didn't want the click track, because I'd be too affected by it and I'd sing right with the beat. You are just freer if you aren't hearing it. It was difficult at the beginning because, technically, I wasn't experienced. Once we clicked into what we both needed and what I needed technically to help me do my job, then it went smoothly. I'm really proud to be a part of it because it's such a beautiful song."

While Danny's vocal performance of Jack Skellington was retained for the songs, Burton went in a more subdued direction for the character's speaking voice. Elfman suggested actor Tim Curry (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*) as a close vocal match to his own voice, but Chris Sarandon was chosen to voice Skellington. The multi-voice Elfman also played the character of Barrel and The Clown With The Tear-Away Face and sang multiple background and chorus voices.

Once the song's instrumental performances and the film's score began to be recorded, many of the session players Elfman had worked with for years suddenly saw a new aspect of the composer.

CAB CALLOWAY

The brash and imposing figure of Oogie Boogie may have seemed to spring from whole cloth (pun very much intended) to many of the younger viewers of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, but Tim Burton and Danny Elfman intended the character as an homage to one of the great bandleaders and jazz vocalists of the 20th century, Cab Calloway. Like most of the kids of their generation, Burton and Elfman didn't have to be precocious jazz aficionados to become familiar with Calloway's work: They simply watched television, which during the '50s and '60s often ran numerous Max Fleischer, Warner Bros., and Walt Disney cartoons in the early morning and late afternoon. Calloway lent his voice, and even his distinctive dance moves, to Max Fleischer's Betty Boop cartoon called *Minnie The Moocher*, in which an animated walrus, voiced by Calloway, sang the title song.

Cabell "Cab" Calloway III was born on Christmas Day, 1907, and as a young boy he impressed his parents enough with the way he sang at church to convince them to purchase voice lessons for him. He soon began performing in Baltimore jazz clubs and toured with his older sister, Blanche, in a musical revue and eventually moved with her to Chicago. While working at Chicago's Sunset Café, he met Louis Armstrong, who instructed him in the "scat" style of singing, and after becoming bandleader for a small band called The Missourians, in 1930, Calloway and the group were hired as a replacement for The Duke Ellington Orchestra at The Cotton Club while Ellington and his group were on tour. Eventually, Calloway and his band rivaled the popularity of The Duke Ellington Orchestra and he, too, began touring nationwide and doing weekly radio broadcasts from The Cotton Club on NBC, making Calloway and Ellington two of the first black artists to gain popularity on network radio.

Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* Before Christmas, spotting notes (upper left)

Spotting notes for the "Opening" of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, lyrics (upper right)

Elfman's working draft of lyrics for "Poor Jack" from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

(lower left)

Elfman's handwritten lyrics to "Finale" from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

(lower right)

Color-coded breakdown of singers for the recording session of "Kidnap The Sandy Claws" (aka "The Scheming Song").



"Although the orchestra knew who he was," recalls concertmaster Bruce Dukov, "a lot of them had never *heard* him. On *The Nightmare Before Christmas*...I didn't know that he had sung [on some of the songs]. I was listening to the timbre of the voice in the song and I'm thinking, 'That sounds like Danny!' I thought he had the most extraordinary, clear, wonderful tonal voice. It was an unusual revelation to a lot of the people in the orchestra that he was such a good singer."

Elfman worked with Bill Jackson to record most of the vocals and with Shawn Murphy to record the orchestra and instrumental performances in a manner befitting the unusual film. "Danny's concept of it was he wanted it to be an old-fashioned musical," Murphy recalls, "I think we were able to create an old-time approach to the music recording and production and yet it still sounds modern—not dated or deficient in any way. But we have the whole sound quality of the picture on the old-fashioned side, which is wonderful."

In an early attempt to drum up publicity for the movie, Burton and Elfman attended ShoWest, the famed Las Vegas convention where studios and filmmakers preview their wares for theater owners. Elfman had to sing onstage, in character as Jack Skellington, to the crowd of industry pros. "That was the hardest thing in the whole world," Elfman says. "It was scary. It was very different. I had been used to having a guitar in my hands and singing rock songs. Getting up and singing a Jack Skellington song in front of ShoWest...it's not exactly the crowd you have in the palm of your hand. It's a bunch of movie theater owners. I think that was one of the weirdest and most frightening performance moments of my life."

"I was frightened and I'm just sitting there watching it," Burton recalls.

As more and more of Henry Selick's animation took form and songs were performed and recorded, hopes for the finished film grew high. But *The Nightmare Before Christmas* quickly fell prey to the same bugaboo that had threatened both *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* and *Beetlejuice*: audience testing. "I was at the kids' focus group and it was really awful," Elfman recalls. "When you do a focus group with kids, you can tell them beforehand, 'The movie is unfinished, so there will be storyboards, pictures, and drawings in some sections.' They still won't understand it. And afterward, every hand shot up, 'Why were there just drawings and stick figures? I didn't like that.' They didn't get it at all. I was in an elevator with some of the executives after the screening, and I overheard someone say something to the effect of, 'This movie is definitely not for kids.' That was like a death knell at Disney. That sentiment soon became common knowledge. At almost every interview I did, I was asked, 'So, this movie is really not for kids then, right?' The merchandising soon came to a halt."

"I remember Disney at that point saying that they weren't going to put out a trailer for the movie," Burton remembers. "Which, to this day, I thought, 'Well, you put out trailers for really crappy movies—how come you're not going to put a trailer out...?' 'Well, the character's got no eyeballs...' But again, it's too scary for kids. We've had that from day one: 'Oh, it's too weird...it's too this... it's too that' and then it ends up becoming the norm. Tiny kids, it's like one of their favorites. I'm still, to this day, sick of hearing about that kind of stuff."

Even more problematic was the fact of what *Nightmare* clearly was not: another Disney animated musical in the mold of *Beauty And The Beast* or *The Little Mermaid*. "I think it was way too 'outside

Calloway recorded "Minnie The Moocher" in 1931, and it quickly became his signature song with its popularity only reinforced when it was adapted for the animated Betty Boop cartoon a year later. His song "St. James Infirmary (Blues)" was subsequently performed in the Betty Boop short *Snow-White* and "The Old Man Of The Mountain" was sung in another Betty Boop cartoon titled after the song.

Calloway went on to make a number of film and television appearances over the next 50 years, including *Stormy Weather* and *The Cincinnati Kid*, and he revived interest in his career when he appeared in the big-budget comedy *The Blues Brothers* in 1980, to perform "Minnie The Moocher." He made appearances on *Sesame Street* and World Wrestling Entertainment's *WrestleMania 2*, and was the focus of a Janet Jackson music video called "Alright" in 1990.

Along the way, Calloway was presented with an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree by the University of Rochester, the National Medal of Arts, a Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award, as well as a Grammy Hall of Fame Award for "Minnie The Moocher," and he was inducted into the Big Band & Jazz Hall of Fame in 1987.

"You can't say before Cab there was anything like him," Broadway actor and singer Ken Page says. "He was an originator of what he did. I think in a certain way he was an early example of what we call crossover, because I think the general public, meaning black and white, really adopted his music and took to his style and the big band. And because he was a *performer* with his band, it also had another impact. He wasn't just standing there conducting like Duke Ellington. He actually sang and performed, and his style was so unique that there was no one else like him." Page says that Calloway's ubiquity made it easy to understand what Tim



Zero lights the way for Jack and his skeletal sleigh

A concept drawing by Tim Burton for *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, a spin on *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer*.

the box' for Disney to understand," Elfman says. "And the songs, even more so. This was a very weird and difficult time for me personally, emotionally, artistically...everything. Here I had put so much into this project for so long, like nothing I had done before. I was really proud of it. Tim's vision was so amazing and vivid and Henry had done such a great job bringing it to life. Caroline and everyone involved really did such great work. And now, everything seemed to be getting derailed after this one bad screening for kids. I was really hurt by the fact that here I was with a movie that contained more songs and music in it, relative to the length of the film, than anything Disney had done since *Fantasia*. And as the marketing came out, it was never even mentioned that it was a musical, or even had songs, as if they were ashamed of it...avoiding it completely."

In hindsight, Elfman has a more moderated view of the experience. "First of all, it was not my movie—it was Tim's. He had been down this road before. I had not. I was taking everything much, much too personally—something I still have an unfortunate tendency to do, but I was much worse then. Also, Tim and I had consciously decided to do a style of music that we felt should be timeless, kind of old-school and off-

kilter but definitely not contemporary and most definitely *not* Broadway inspired, which is what Disney understood best. So, the fact that it came back and bit me in the ass when Disney shied away from it should not have been such a surprise. But now is now—and then was then. Just for the record, I still have 20/20 hindsight."

"You kind of have to put yourself back in the time when the movie was made," says Don Hahn, who produced the 2006 3-D rerelease of the film. "It was a real conservative approach to movies and releasing movies—and what would have the Disney name on it. I think people looked at this movie and thought, 'Wow, it's all skeletons and it's dark.' Tim wanted to desaturate and have it almost black and white. And where does this belong in the Disney canon? Should this be a Touchstone movie? Should this have the Disney label on it? Certainly in the studio they were wondering how to market it."

Disney rolled *Nightmare* out cautiously, and it earned only around \$6 million in its first couple of weeks in October 1993. After finally opening wide at the end of October and early November, its tally jumped up from \$16 to \$26 million, and by the end of its run in January 1994, it had taken in just under \$50 million. After the gargantuan grosses

of the *Batman* films, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* had to be seen as a disappointment. But after the movie was released on home video, it began to inspire a growing legion of devoted fans. *The Nightmare Before Christmas* merchandise began selling, first in Japan, and gradually to enthusiastic collectors in the U.S. Over the next six years, the cult steadily grew. "It was a real slow build," Elfman says. "It's the only thing I've ever worked on like that, in my career, where it kind of bombed when it came out and then slowly took on a life over the next decade. There aren't many movies like that. Here and there, there's a movie you can say really developed its following after the movie came out. It was incredibly gratifying to see this happen and I never expected it. I was in Tokyo with Tim for the opening of *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, and we were both amazed by all the Jack Skellington and Sally stuff there was everywhere."

"It kind of did its thing and then went away," Steve Bartek says. "At that point, it was like any other movie—it's going to disappear. But then suddenly years later it became a cult hit." To facilitate the low-budget demands of making the film, Elfman agreed to take a deferred fee based on bonuses of the film's success. As it turns out, patience was a virtue as Elfman unexpectedly received his final deferred bonus on the film...13 years after its initial release.

Selick reflects, "I always felt that there were a few too many songs. I loved all the songs, but I thought it would be a challenge to the audience. I mean, a full-blown musical...with what? Eleven songs! And Tim's attitude was, 'We'll animate them, and if it's too many, we'll cut a couple.' Of course, once I animated them with my team, I didn't want to cut any. What I found when the film came out was I could feel a certain percentage of the audience disengage by the seventh song. I was disappointed. I thought they should work a little harder, but what was at that time mildly detrimental became maybe the greatest strength of the movie. People fell in love with it over the long haul, and I think it turned out to be exactly the right number of songs. They're the glue. They show the soul of the character. So, in time, it was really, really cool to see it develop a cult and a fan base that pretty much loved the whole package."

Composer John Powell (*Happy Feet*, *How To Train Your Dragon*) remembers going to see *Nightmare* "with great anxiety" after having been so impressed by Elfman's *Beetlejuice* score. "Could this one really be as good as I hoped?" he says. "As I sat through songs and score, I was

struck by how extraordinary this piece of work was—operatic in structure, complex yet memorable melodies wrapped up in perfect orchestral texture. To this day, I use *Nightmare* as the finest example of what an animated musical can be—a bar to which I will measure everything I do."

Another fan of the film was *Forrest Gump* composer Alan Silvestri's son Joe, who had been diagnosed with juvenile diabetes at the age of 2. "As parents of a kid with a chronic illness, of course my wife and I wanted to go out and see what we could do to help our son," Silvestri says. "We decided to put on a charity event at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. We had a 70-piece orchestra. My son's all-time favorite movie was *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and so Danny agreed to come and do something as part of the program. I think he was a little nervous about all this, which made him all the more endearing. I stuck with him in the wings before he came out. He asked my son to come down with his mom to ringside—and this was a little guy sitting on his mom's lap. And Danny walked out with this orchestra behind him and knelt on the stage in front of my son and sang 'Jack's Lament.' My little guy just was transfixed and transformed. And so, it was such an amazing gift that he gave my son. Our entire family will never forget it and never be able to thank him enough for coming and doing that for us. I'm one of Danny's champions."

As they saw DVD and merchandise sales for the movie climb, Disney experimented with holiday rereleases of the film. The company had great experience in this area and had made millions in additional revenue over the years by bringing out classic animation and live-action films in rerelease, allowing new generations of children to experience films like *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*, *Mary Poppins*, and *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* in theaters. The first rerelease of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* was in October 2000, and a wider rerelease in 2006 brought in \$8 million. After that, Disney made *Nightmare* into an annual holiday event, refurbishing the film in 3-D and even incorporating its characters, and eventually its music, into the famed Haunted Mansion ride at Disneyland during the holiday season.

As the rereleases geared up, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* merchandise—the mother lode every kid-oriented movie release seeks—began to almost generate itself. "It took off in this kind

of gasoline-fire way with, oddly, underground bootleg products and things,” Hahn says. “It sort of surprised people—Disney didn’t market it that much to create that many toys, but you’d start to see stuff crop up in Tokyo or the Camden Markets in London and you’d see all these unauthorized Jack Skellington heads. Eventually, Disney figured out they had this iconic thing on their hands that was plugging into something in people’s brains. But it was amazing that it became much more than a little niche, goth film. It’s become a general family audience [movie] and everybody goes to the theater every Halloween to see it. Eventually, its recurring success led to us trying to figure out what we could do to enhance it and make it stick around a little bit longer, and that’s when we converted it into 3-D. At that time—it’s been four years ago already [since 2006]—it was still a little bit of a new idea. We went to ILM and they had some amazing technology to help us convert it. And Tim was all for it. He was amazingly forward-looking. He would look at the dailies and the final film and actually said he thought the film had been improved by putting it in 3-D, because you felt like you were there in the sets and really experiencing it. So, of course now, it’s this hit film that comes out every year.”

Years after its initial release, Disney Music’s Chris Montan and Tom MacDougall put together special album reissues of music from the film, with new covers by talents like Fiona Apple, Amy Lee (of Evanescence), The Polyphonic Spree, Sparklehorse, Datarock, Korn, and Marilyn Manson—themselves fans of the original movie. Manson actually credited his work on the project with revitalizing his music career: “It’s unfortunate but I actually have to thank this project—because I had gotten so disillusioned by the music industry, because I’ve had a real torturous experience with Columbine, and after that I wasn’t going to make another record. After I sang this song, I immediately got so excited that I started working on an album and finished it in a month’s or two-month’s time. If I hadn’t worked on this song, I don’t think I would have gotten as excited about singing again. I have to thank Danny for that.”

Collector and entrepreneur Taylor White, who sold *Nightmare* merchandise through his store, Creature Features, followed the growth of the line from dime-store toys to high-end collectibles. “When the film opened, interest in merchandising was immediate and intense, though the only major companies to offer products were Applause, Hasbro, and Burger King,” White said. “Early fans’ appetites were ravenous, though the selection was initially sparse with a variety of toy

figures, a coffin-shaped cookie jar, a Mayor-shaped music box, and assorted figural knick-knacks. Jun Planning in Japan was the first manufacturer to satisfy the market with an explosion of elaborate high-end toys, first in Japan, then via import into the U.S. *Star Wars* may have cornered the market on the volume of merchandise sold, but *Nightmare* definitely rivals in terms of outright devotion and enthusiasm. In fact, Burton’s newfound *Nightmare* fashion brand easily trumps George Lucas as it’s infinitely cooler for a teenager to wear a T-shirt or hat with Jack and Sally than C-3P0 and R2-D2.”

The Nightmare Before Christmas crossed over into mainstream culture years after the movie came out when *Nightmare* merchandise was sold in almost every shop in Disneyland alongside Grumpy and Goofy plush toys. Jack Skellington has become almost as iconic and ubiquitous as Mickey Mouse. Even the *National Enquirer* began advertising *The Nightmare Before Christmas* collectibles in between pages for Hummel figurines and Elvis collector plates.

“Sometimes I’ll see people wearing the *Nightmare* Burger King watch in the weirdest places,” Burton says. “I just saw somebody wearing it who worked at Carnegie Hall, and it’s incredible. People will come up and they’ll have a little picture of Jack with them. It’s funny because sometimes when things connect with people, maybe not a large group, but with some, it’s really wonderful to me. A lot of people and critics don’t get that there is an emotion underneath these weird, stupid-looking things. Some people do, and that probably means the most to me: that people get the emotional quality underneath the stupid façade.”

“I’ve signed body parts for people who have full-body tattoos of the artwork and the characters of that movie,” Catherine O’Hara says. “Tim and Danny have such a devoted following to that movie. People relate to it and it cuts to their core somehow. Tim has done a few movies about outsiders. There’s been a lot written about that—the people who don’t quite fit in, or don’t think they do, I guess. It’s the whole goth thing; it’s the whole vampire thing. I think there is a whole faction of society of vulnerable, lost souls, and they are quite sweet but they are drawn to this whole dark thing, too. Maybe it just makes them feel a little stronger to be associated with things on the surface that are dark and scary, because they know how vulnerable they really are. But most of the people I have met who are into that are just the sweetest people. Maybe that whole look and the association with that look make them feel protected.”



Jack Skellington

One of Burton’s concept drawings for Jack.

Burton and Danny Elfman wanted for the Oogie Boogie character in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. “When they said, ‘a Cab Calloway-esque take on...’—I knew exactly what they meant. I’ve done a lot of shows where kids are like, ‘OK, whatever you were on Broadway, big deal.’ Then [when] they find out I am the voice of Oogie Boogie, it’s like, ‘Oh, my God, you are the voice of Oogie Boogie!’ I’m like, ‘OK, all right.’ I always want to say to them, ‘Thank you...that’s wonderful...and I appreciate it. But there’s a reference to that you might enjoy—because if you like *that*, you might enjoy Cab Calloway.’”

Elfman adds, “In my theatrical *Mystic Knights* days, Cab Calloway was my performing idol. I had a white zoot-suit-style outfit made to look very much like his. I sang three or four of his songs over the years and tried hard to mimic his vocal style; although, in the end, I felt that I never did him justice as a singer. His voice was much more powerful than mine and his vocal stylizations and scat singing were so insanely wild and off-the-hook. In my opinion, Cab can only be imitated, never topped.”



Cab Calloway

Inspiration for the character of Oogie Boogie.



Marilyn Manson, Danny Elfman, Paul Reubens, and Tim Burton (above)

At the premiere of *The Nightmare Before Christmas 3-D*, Manson performed "This Is Halloween" on the album *Nightmare Revisited*. Reubens was the film's voice of Lock.

Henry Selick and Tim Burton on set (left)

Director Selick and producer Burton during the shoot with puppets of Sally and Dr. Finklestein.



"I didn't realize the status of it until I went to Japan," Ken Page says. "I think it was the first time that they put Boogie and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* into the Disney [theme] park there. I was amazed by the fan devotion and cult status of this movie in Tokyo. People were dressed up when I went to the park, just walking around dressed up as Jack and Sally. I went to a store that was all *The Nightmare Before Christmas* merchandise. Someone brought a 3-foot tall Oogie Boogie character for me to sign. It was amazing."

Page has continued to voice Oogie Boogie in *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* video games and Disneyland's annual *Nightmare*-themed makeover of The Haunted Mansion attraction—and even an upcoming Oogie Boogie version of the old Milton Bradley game, *Operation*, which allows kids to remove icky worms and bugs from Oogie Boogie's body. "At a point early on, I made the decision—if I could and they wanted me—to stick with it. I thought, 'I don't want a voice-double out there doing what I originated. I can do it, so why not stick with it.' I think it's benefited the franchise in that there's been a constant that people seem to identify with."

"Over the course of a decade, I think Disney came to slowly understand what it was," Elfman says. "That there was an audience out there for this movie. And although *Nightmare* wasn't part of the Disney Animation world that they had painstakingly built up, they came around to recognizing its uniqueness and value. And to their credit, although it took a long time, Disney did a great job picking up the ball and running with it."

Page describes the movie as more than a cult film—he thinks it's a classic movie, primarily because of Burton and Elfman's original intent and inspirations: the "old-fashioned" approach and references to musical forms and performances that date back to the '30s adds a resonance that many contemporary "children's movies" lack. "I think that has something to do with why it has stuck, why it has become a classic even beyond a cult favorite," Page says. "It's because it references things that are also classic and also time-tested. People may not even be aware of it but it's there, and that's why it appeals on a certain level. Lots and lots of things in it have those references and echo the vocabulary that everybody came to it with."

Caroline Thompson says that in hindsight, the film's greatest achievement was its resurrection of the stop-motion art form. "I really admire Tim for keeping stop-motion alive. He probably reinvigorated

it in this country. It's such a laborious process but the results are so beautiful—my hat goes off to him in a big, big way because there's nothing like it."

In 1996, Tim Burton produced his next stop-motion project for Disney, *James And The Giant Peach*, with Selick directing. As a sort of follow-up to *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, the decision was made to do the film largely with stop-motion animation. In an age of CGI imagery, Burton and Selick still preferred handmade stop-motion. "It has a certain reality that you can't get any other way," Selick says. "Real materials, real cloth, real puppets are there on the screen bathed in real life." Burton's Jack Skellington from *Nightmare* even makes a brief cameo in the film.

Like *Nightmare*, *Peach* was also a musical. Originally, Broadway's Marc Shaiman and David Zippel were to have provided tunes for the movie, but Selick eventually turned to songwriter Randy Newman to provide the film's musical numbers and score.

The rights to Roald Dahl's classic children's novel *James And The Giant Peach* were unobtainable during the author's lifetime based on the writer's disdain for the 1971 film adaptation of his *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* (retitled *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*). Burton convinced Dahl's estate that *Peach* would be handled more respectfully, an approach that paid even greater dividends a few years later when Burton decided to make his own version of *Charlie*.



GOODBYE, GOODBYE
Struggles & Changes



ED WOOD

Once it achieved success through high-profile, wide-release revivals, and merchandising, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* became a crowning moment for both Tim Burton and Danny Elfman. But nothing felt further from that reality than the mood during the film's premiere at the New York Film Festival in October of 1993. A widening rift between Elfman and Tim Burton was about to crack wide open.

Elfman was frustrated and hurt by Disney's lack of faith in the project and their seemingly passive approach to marketing it. The studio consistently refused to refer to the film as a musical, and even trailers for the film featured repurposed music by James Horner rather than any of Danny's score from *Nightmare* itself. Elfman felt his contributions—the most extensive and personal work he'd done for a film so far—were being downplayed and ignored.

Additionally both Burton and Elfman had to constantly make adjustments and readjustments to the variety of roles they were playing on the project. "I think Danny was mad at me from *Nightmare*," Burton acknowledges. "*Nightmare* was hard because between Danny, Henry, and Caroline, we were like a bunch of kids, fighting. That's what I felt like anyway."

"It's one of those movies that takes forever," Denise Di Novi says. "And because he played, he sang, he composed, he participated in the story making, Danny was involved in the movie in a much deeper way. So, that is really true partnership on Tim and Danny's part."

Elfman was also suffocating under the weight of fronting Oingo Boingo. Every year Elfman thought of dissolving the band as his workload on films—and *Nightmare* in particular—started to take its toll. After 15 years,

Boingo had gone from band to burden. After 10 albums, countless concerts, endless miles on the road while trying to juggle a meteoric film-scoring career out of a portable, jerry-rigged recording rack shuffled from hotel room to hotel room, Elfman felt ready to throw in the towel.

As well-wishers poured out of the premiere at the El Capitan Theater in Hollywood to congratulate Elfman on his many accomplishments in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, Danny began to seriously consider making good on his long-standing promise to disband Oingo Boingo... and to also possibly end his artistic partnership with Tim Burton.

In 1994, *Ed Wood*—the black-and-white, stylized biopic about the hypnotizingly abysmal filmmaker of such zero-budget masterpieces as *Plan 9 From Outer Space*—became the first Tim Burton feature film that was not scored by Danny Elfman.

Danny Elfman sat out *Ed Wood* at a time when his estrangement from Burton over the conflicts on *The Nightmare Before Christmas* seemed like it might be permanent.

"I just think that in hindsight, somewhere over the course of 25 years, there had to be a meltdown, our personalities being what they are," Elfman says. "Tim is Tim. He has a real uniquely single-minded vision of what he wants and what he needs. I can be pretty stubborn myself. Being in a rock band doesn't give you the training to be a film composer where you really have to squash many of your own feelings and yield to a greater whole that you can't necessarily control. I think that really, in a weird way, it was something I just had to learn to come to terms with."

Elfman puts the experience in the context of the Jack Skellington character from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* as a metaphor for his own experience. "It really is different being Jack Skellington in Halloween

Town, which was essentially my role in the band, and coming into this new film composing Christmas Town. Christmas Town wasn't the world I dominated and was able to control in the same way I was used to. So, inevitably, there had to be a moment when Jack was going to have a problem there, and finally it happened. In the end, when you think of your biggest family squabble, it's usually over something relatively small. But there's a lot of emotional charge building up to that point. It doesn't have to be a major thing to trigger the China Syndrome, the nuclear meltdown. It could be caused by a complete systematic failure, but the trigger might also be nothing but a spilled soda."

Elfman says he and Burton used to joke that they would wind up like Alfred Hitchcock and Bernard Herrmann, whose incredible artistic collaboration disintegrated—never to recover—over a single incident. Now it seemed like the half-serious prediction had come true. "It happened and there we were," Elfman says.

By the time *Ed Wood* was finished, Danny Elfman and Tim Burton were no longer speaking. "The situation with Danny right now, I don't know if it will stay that way or not," Burton said at the time. "I don't know what to say about it, because I don't know where it's going. We're taking a little vacation from each other."

In the interim, Burton came up with an intriguing idea for a possible replacement for Elfman on the movie: Henry Mancini. While he was known for his pop comic scores for movies like *The Pink Panther* and *Breakfast At Tiffany's*, Mancini had begun his career toiling on library cues for Universal monster movies like *Creature From The Black Lagoon*, *It Came From Outer Space*, and *Tarantula*. Years earlier, Richard Kraft had given Tim Burton a present of a CD of re-recordings of these cues by Mancini and many other composers called *Mancini In Surround: Mostly Monsters, Murders & Mysteries*, and Burton had loved the '50s-style horror music. Latin club music and the bongo-driven vibe of music of the period in which the film took place were also an integral part of Mancini's musical personality.

"The teaming of Burton and Mancini would be a perfect mirror of the touching relationship between *Ed Wood* and Bela Lugosi in the film," says Kraft. "Mancini was so excited about the prospect of collaborating with Burton on something that touched deeply to his humble roots as a B-movie monster composer." Unfortunately, by the time *Ed Wood* was being made, Mancini had developed the cancer that would end his life in 1994, and he was too ill to work on the movie. Instead Burton

hired Howard Shore, a frequent David Cronenberg collaborator, to score *Ed Wood*.

"I felt like I was coming in and I was a pinch hitter," Shore says.

Shore took a lean, percussive approach to the movie that spoke directly to the period, with plenty of bongos and even a love theme developed from a brief snippet of library music from the *Ed Wood* film *Glen Or Glenda*. "It was just a great fun world to work in," remembers Shore. Whenever Shore thought he needed to record another take because of an imperfection, Burton would say, "No, no, it's great, it's great." "It was really like working on an *Ed Wood* movie," Shore says. "It was a very fun creative process."

Though Burton and producer Denise Di Novi were happy with Shore's work, Elfman was still on their mind. Di Novi says, "I think it was just like a breather, like a lot of relationships have—you need to take a breather. But it wasn't really acrimonious."

Shore says he assumed Elfman and Burton would reteam at some point. "I think they had such a great collaboration, and I just thought of what I was doing at the time and I wasn't thinking of the future. So when Tim and Danny really did come back together, it was a great thing. They had such a great period of working together and they've just had a great, creative collaboration. I felt lucky to be able to work with Tim on one film like that. It was fun and really an honor to do it."

Ed Wood was a rare box-office misfire for Burton, pulling in only \$5 million in theaters. The film, however, won two Academy Awards, one for Martin Landau's profane and deeply touching portrayal of Bela Lugosi, and another for Rick Baker and Ve Neill's remarkable makeup transformation of Landau into the famous horror star. It remains one of Burton's personal favorites. "It was a fine line between good and bad—and Ed was known for being bad—but the fact is he was quite good at the same time. That artistic dynamic of what's good and what's bad is razor-thin in a way. That's what I loved about making that movie—I grew up watching his movies and loved them because they were unique. And here he's looked upon as someone who's terrible or bad and, in fact, he's pretty good because you remember his movies."



Johnny Depp as Ed Wood (previous page)

Johnny Depp turned in a powerful performance as the worst director of all time, Ed Wood.

Johnny Depp and Martin Landau (above)

Depp as Ed Wood with veteran actor Martin Landau, who won an Oscar for his portrayal of Bela Lugosi.

Ed Wood's creatures of the night (left)

Bald wrestler Tor Johnson (George "The Animal" Steele) and Vampira (Lisa Marie) haunt an unconvincing graveyard.





OINGO-BOINGO—"GOODBYE, GOODBYE"

In 1994, in the aftermath of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, Elfman made the decision to shut down Oingo Boingo once and for all. In addition to the stress of balancing the band's commitments with his film-scoring career and general fatigue, Elfman had suffered debilitating hearing loss after countless raucous concerts and recording sessions. He felt he could no longer subject his ears to the strain. And moving between film and rock projects had stretched him thin—even though for a while the constant gear switching had been inspiring. "There was a long stretch, almost 10 years, where it seemed to balance itself out," Elfman says. "When I was on the road touring, I would long for the simplicity of sitting alone in my little studio writing a score, never having to repeat anything, which I had to do every night onstage. When I was under the heavy deadlines and intense artistic pressure of trying to complete a film score on time, obsessing over a few bars of music endlessly, I longed for the pure sweaty exhilaration of being onstage in front of an audience."

Elfman had been ready to move on since at least 1990. In 1992, he decided to give the band another shot, reducing the name to Boingo after switching labels from MCA to Giant Records and releasing the self-titled album *Boingo* in 1994. He also cut loose his longtime horn section in an attempt to trim the band down, something he later deeply regretted. Although the band was mostly on hiatus throughout 1994 while Elfman worked on films, they still performed their annual Halloween show and did a 28-day tour built around the event that October. Elfman struggled with the decision of whether to do another tour or start another album, but after recording a few demos for a potential new record, Danny realized he'd reached the end of the line. Rather than simply disbanding Boingo and leaving the band's fans high and dry, the group agreed to do one final farewell performance tour in 1995, with ample warning for people to join Boingo in its final shows.

Oingo Boingo had never done a live concert album (their 1988 album *Boingo Alive* had been recorded in a studio under controlled conditions with the potential for overlays, but performed as a live event). Laura Engel pitched the idea of documenting the group's final performances for a live concert video to Oingo Boingo's original record label, A&M

Records, with the concert to play at the Universal Amphitheatre. A&M balked at the costs of filming the concerts, arguing that even Madonna's live concert videos had sold poorly and that there was no market for long-form concert videos. Eventually, the band members agreed to finance the video themselves and Engel produced *Oingo Boingo Farewell: Live From The Universal Amphitheatre*. "I think we did five nights at Universal Amphitheatre for *Farewell*," Engel recalls. "Universal told me it was the quickest five-night sellout in their history at that point. Then we also added one or two days at Irvine Meadows nearby. We sold a lot of tickets in L.A.; it was nice to have gotten that successful."

With a year's anticipation for fans, the Halloween 1995 farewell concert was packed with ecstatic, emotional crowds that made for a rousing, bittersweet concert video that was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Long Form Music Video.

Engel reminisces, "I still miss the band at Halloween. For years I knew exactly what I'd be doing every year at Halloween, and for a while afterward, I sort of didn't know what to do with myself."

Leaving the group behind meant far more available time and thought to put into film music. Elfman explains, "Rather than doing one or two films a year for 10 years and struggling to fit them in, suddenly it's like, 'Oh, I could do three. Maybe I could even do four if I wanted to work all year. So, it meant less saying no.'"

After *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, Danny Elfman's career in film scoring added a number of milestones. After the comic book might of *Batman*, *Dick Tracy*, *Darkman*, and *Batman Returns*, and the delicate artistry of *Edward Scissorhands*, Elfman's skills as a composer of "serious" film music were becoming more and more evident. With his collaboration with Burton in limbo, Elfman forged working relationships with an important new set of directors, including Taylor Hackford, Michael Apted, Brian De Palma, Peter Jackson, Jon Amiel, the Hughes Brothers, and Gus Van Sant.

Two movies were particularly important in elevating Elfman's reputation as a dramatic composer, rather than simply someone known for comedy, fantasy, and comic book action. Jon Amiel's *Sommersby*, released in 1993, was a remake of the 1982 French film *The Return*



Stage presence

Elfman performs with Oingo Boingo to a sell-out crowd.

Oingo Boingo (previous page)

Danny Elfman leaves the stage after a huge outdoor concert.

Of Martin Guerre. The film *Sommersby* went shockingly against the grain by including a downbeat ending where the hero Jack Sommersby is found guilty of murder and hanged.

Director Jon Amiel says he chose Danny Elfman to score the film precisely because Elfman had never done anything like *Sommersby*: “Up to that point, Danny was kind of known for *Beetlejuice*, *Pee-wee* essentially—wildly inventive music. To do a period love story didn’t seem at first glance to be an obvious choice for Danny. I was incredibly drawn to the idea, partly because I’ve tried my hand at writing music at various stages of my life, and I recognized Danny’s incredibly eclectic talent. I’m always excited by the idea of somebody working outside their own box and thrillingly, Danny agreed.”

The studio was tremendously nervous about the movie’s ending because nobody had killed the romantic lead in a movie for at least 15 years. “They kept saying, ‘Jon, I don’t know. This is worrying. You have to have an alternative ending,’ and I was adamant that the film had to end this way,” Amiel says.

According to Amiel, test audiences—told they were going to see a love story between Jodie Foster and Richard Gere—chuckled through the dark humor of the film’s courtroom scenes, confident that Gere’s character would be saved at the last second. “Then we hang the f**ker and they were numb with shock and disbelief,” Amiel says. “In come 350 audience cards and there are two questions: ‘What scenes do you like most?’ ... ‘What scenes do you like the least?’ Ninety percent of the cards—under ‘What scenes do you like the least?’—wrote, ‘THE ENDING!!’”

Amiel convinced the studio to retest the film without the temp score and with Elfman’s music. “Danny wrote his score and the numbers went down!” Amiel was in a panic. “I was called the following day to an emergency meeting at Warner Bros. There were eight, nine executives sitting around a big table and essentially they said, ‘Jon, Danny Elfman’s a great f**king composer, but he can’t write a tune and the score is no good. It’s gotta go.’ Literally, they wanted to throw out the score and find a different composer. I was actually quite well-prepared for this meeting. I brought in a tape recorder with a cassette in it of the main love theme and I said, ‘Guys, this is a great score. This is not just a good score. It’s a *great* score and you’re wrong. The only mistake I think we made is that maybe we played the mystery theme slightly too much and didn’t play the love theme enough. But I’m going to play this theme now and I want you all to listen to it, and if you tell me this isn’t a great theme, I’ll pack up and

go home.’ So, I play them the main love theme... they all sit dutifully and listened. And at the end, they finally go, rather grudgingly, ‘Well, yeah, OK. You’re right. That’s a good theme—I guess if there is more of it.’ They said, ‘But the real problem is Arnon Milchan. He hates the score.’”

Arnon Milchan was running New Regency, the film company that was producing *Sommersby*, and had produced *Once Upon A Time In America* with a memorable score by Ennio Morricone, which Milchan would constantly play in his office for Amiel, declaring “Now *this* is music! We gotta have a score like this!”

“So after the Warner meeting, I take myself off to Morton’s where Arnon is having dinner,” Amiel says. “I drag him out to the car park and we sit in his car where I play him the music again, with the same appeal, and he grudgingly, finally accepts it.”

After a few tweaks involving adding more of the love theme, the test scores went way up and the movie became a substantial success.

“Cut to a year later,” Amiel continues, “New Regency produces its new logo. What is the music for the logo? The *Sommersby* theme! Now, cut to 18 months later: Gary Fleder, who was making a movie for New Regency—I meet him at some function and he goes, ‘I f**king hate you.’ And I said, ‘Why?’ He said, ‘Because Arnon Milchan keeps dragging me into his office and playing me the *Sommersby* theme music and telling me, ‘Now *that’s* music!’”

The second film to help redefine Elfman as a film music talent was Taylor Hackford’s *Dolores Claiborne* in 1995. In this adaptation of the Stephen King novel, Kathy Bates plays a New England woman on trial for murder whose reporter daughter (Jennifer Jason Leigh) begins to unravel the mysteries of her family’s past, including Dolores’ relationship to her cruel and abusive husband Joe (David Strathairn). “This was an ultra dramatic kind of gothic tale—it takes place in two different time periods and is very much a dream piece, a memory piece,” Hackford says.

While director Hackford was familiar with Elfman’s work, he wasn’t convinced Danny was the right choice for the material until he began talking to Elfman about music. “I had told Danny that I was listening to Russian composers,” says Hackford. “He said, ‘Listen—that’s my first love. You know me from Oingo Boingo and you know me from the stuff here, but what I really cut my teeth on is Prokofiev and Shostakovich,’ which surprised me. So, it was interesting to me to see Danny in a different light.”



Danny Elfman with Gus Van Sant

Elfman has received Oscar nominations for his scores to Van Sant's *Good Will Hunting* and *Milk*.



Hackford says Elfman's ultimate contribution to the movie was huge. "I think scores are always major contributions, but I think the mood of *Dolores*, in particular, the sadness of what the piece was, the preponderance of memory—that's very, very important. I think Danny's score was immensely important. Interestingly enough, the score was totally different than anything Danny had ever done before."

Hackford says *Dolores Claiborne* happened during an unexpectedly tumultuous part of Elfman's life, one that gave the director an unexpected view of the composer: "Danny had lived for years in Topanga Canyon. He had a house there that he had originally moved into as a rock 'n' roll person. These houses were built as kind of vacation or weekend homes for people in downtown Los Angeles in the '20s and '30s. Danny had moved into this place, and it was pretty funky, but as he made a success of himself and made more money, instead of buying a new place, he just renovated and kept adding rooms to this place and his studio was there. It was the El Niño winter when we were working together and it was a record rainstorm season. There was a creek about 20, 25 feet below Danny's house. That creek turned into a raging, torrent river, and it came down and absolutely wiped part of his house out including his studio. So, in that instance, when someone has their life, their life possessions, the life in his house that he had for 20, 25 years, and all his things were destroyed, you could expect him to say, 'Listen, I'm lost. I'm bereft. I'm crazy. I can't go on with this.' But Danny said, 'I won't let you down.' He moved into a motel in Burbank, got his computer and his keyboard set up, and just stayed there until we scored. He said to his assistant, 'You take care of the house; you take care of all that stuff. I've got to finish this score.' He showed me what a *mensch* he really is."

Soon after that, Elfman's replacement score for Brian De Palma's *Mission: Impossible* paid homage to the classic Lalo Schifrin television music, particularly in a bravura climactic sequence involving a bullet train, a helicopter, and a very long tunnel—with Elfman's music clanging and pinging with prerecorded metallic percussion effects and throbbing, propulsive brass. The dynamic score again demonstrated Elfman's mastery of narrative as he sewed together the film's plot, and it showcased a new muscularity and experimentation in his action music that would carry him forward to later projects like *Wanted* and *Terminator Salvation*.

The project also demonstrated Elfman's respect for the grand old masters of his medium. Elfman had arranged a supercharged new version of Lalo Schifrin's famous 5/4-time main theme from the TV series for

the movie's opening, and when he discovered that Schifrin's credit was buried in the end credits alongside the film's various song credits, he was furious. He demanded that the studio give Schifrin a credit up front, and when they insisted that there was no more room in the title cards because editing of the sequence was finished, he volunteered to share his billing card with Schifrin.

Just as his fascination with the *Evil Dead* films led him to track down director Sam Raimi, Elfman's admiration of the fantastically hallucinatory, biographical art film *Heavenly Creatures* inspired him to seek out its director, Peter Jackson, on the New Zealand director's first Hollywood film, *The Frighteners*. The resulting movie was a kind of upside-down *Ghostbusters*, with Michael J. Fox working with a bizarre team of ghosts to solve supernatural crimes. *The Frighteners* also indirectly led Elfman to an Academy Award nomination. Legendary makeup effects artist Rick Baker had finished working on the Peter Jackson film and had moved on to Barry Sonnenfeld's *Men In Black* when Elfman was recording *The Frighteners* score at Sony, where *Men In Black* was shooting.

"Peter invited me to the scoring session and I met Danny," Baker says. "We talked a bit and I found out we were fans of the same movies. And then he said to me that at one point, he wanted to be a makeup artist. That's what he thought he wanted to do—make monsters. I think it happened to so many 'monster kids,' people of my generation, and I just thought that was such a cool thing. I said, 'We're filming—we got some monsters on our stage just down the way if you want to come by and have a look at it.' I said, 'It would be really cool if you scored *Men In Black*.' So, we walked to one of the stages, and I showed him around and introduced him to Barry and said, 'Maybe Danny should score this movie?'" Sonnenfeld and Elfman started talking—and that's exactly what happened.

Elfman also sharpened his street-cred bona fides by working with the Hughes Brothers on their urban caper thriller *Dead Presidents*, mixing hip-hop effects within an urban suspense score. (When agent Richard Kraft asked Albert and Allen Hughes why they were interested in getting a score by Elfman, the directors of this violent crime-thriller exclaimed, "The guy did *Pee-wee!*") Director Brett Ratner was particularly impressed with *Dead Presidents*. "My favorite contemporary score—I have two—one is *Enter The Dragon*, which is why I work with Lalo Schifrin, and the other one was done by Danny Elfman for my friends, the Hughes brothers, and that's *Dead Presidents*. I thought it was the most brilliant score I had heard."

Gus Van Sant's *To Die For* had been one of Sony's lowest-testing films, and Elfman, as usual, found a way to put the film's tricky, dark-humored tone across to audiences. "I guess you always sort of try to emotionally accent the intentions of the story, and I think that is something he does very well," Van Sant says of working with Danny. "The movie was pretty interesting in that it was a dark comedy in a time when Sony pictures didn't really know where to put a dark comedy—if studios ever know where to put a dark comedy. It tested really poorly, but Danny said he was used to that because Tim's films had often tested very poorly, and Tim's stuff is dark comedy as well. Danny was really great in making it understandable."

Conductor John Mauceri, a champion of film music who would later conduct several original concert pieces of Elfman's, says the composer's keen grasp of irony is one of the greatest weapons in his arsenal. "Before Danny, the idea of irony might have been expressed by a bassoon, for example,





Scoring session

Pete Anthony conducts a score for Danny Elfman.

which was generally used for comic and movie music. But Danny started using pizzicato strings on *Desperate Housewives*, and now everybody is using that because he has a way of making a musical choice. The moment it happens, you get it. It communicates very complex emotions. Irony is not easy to write. I don't think Mozart wrote irony. Irony depends on foreground, background, chance, and intelligence—just to have something be ironic. Irony can go right over a person's head."

One film that Elfman did not end up completing had a profound effect on an up-and-coming composer. After their collaboration on *Midnight Run*, Elfman and director Martin Brest embarked on *The Scent Of A Woman*, but creative differences found Elfman wanting to leave the project but not leave the director high and dry. His choice for his own replacement was Thomas Newman, whose early innovative work had impressed Elfman. "He gave me a big break," recalls Newman.

"I remember Danny was working really hard and struggling with Marty, just saying no to almost everything. He had me over to his house to see if I was willing to do it before he offered my name up. He was very kind, and it ended up being a very generous thing for him to do and a great moment in my career," says Newman, who subsequently went on to receive 10 Oscar nominations for such films as *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Finding Nemo*.



Members of Oingo Boingo

From left to right, back to front: Mike Bacich, John Avila, Sam Phipps, Leon Schneiderman, Steve Bartek, Dale Turner, Danny Elfman, Johnny "Vatos" Hernandez. Oingo Boingo, circa 1989.

9



UNGODLY EXPERIMENTS
A Reunion



Mars Attacks! Alien Ambassador, 1996

Burton paints with glitter.

MARS ATTACKS!

The *Garbage Pail Kids Movie* notwithstanding, 1996's *Mars Attacks!* was undoubtedly the most ambitious motion picture ever to be based on a series of Topps bubblegum trading cards. Combining elements of *The War Of The Worlds*, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *Dr. Strangelove*, and particularly the black-and-white Ray Harryhausen sci-fi thriller *Earth Vs. The Flying Saucers*, the movie was originally intended to be another stop-motion spectacle—at least in terms of how it presented the skull-faced, bug-eyed, bulging-brained Martians. But advances in CG allowed Industrial Light & Magic to create the anarchic creatures as hilariously unnerving digital characters, which took fiendish delight in launching a bloodthirsty all-out assault on the hapless planet Earth.

"I didn't have the [trading] cards of *Mars Attacks!* growing up, but I remember seeing them," Tim Burton says. "I just thought they were really quite strong and compelling. I like the sort of subversive nature of them. I remember, I felt like an alien at that time for some reason. You know how you feel certain ways? It's just that things aren't quite what they seem, the kind of anarchy of the characters and the kind of juxtaposition of things. I don't know. It just felt like a strange experiment in a way, even though it wasn't."

Burton cast the film's human beings (played by Jack Nicholson in a Peter Sellers-like dual role, as well as Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Michael J. Fox, and Rod Steiger) as clueless, featherweight, and daffy—and he keyed his rooting interest on the Martians (who at one point display their contempt for an Earth-made nuclear weapon by using it as an atomic bong). "I've always liked all those Irwin Allen films—those 'celebrities getting killed' movies," he notes. "That's a genre in

itself, where you have Charlton Heston married to Ava Gardner, and her father is Lorne Greene, who is about three years younger than his daughter Ava Gardner. You get all these weird mixes of people in those movies. So, that was one aspect of it, yeah. I don't think there was one overriding thematic thing. But it seemed like a good idea just to blow away celebrities with ray guns."

Despite its mock epic, apocalyptic format, sound-recordist Shawn Murphy remembers the project as a return to Tim Burton's more familiar territory: "If you look at *Edward Scissorhands* and you look at *Mars Attacks!* a few years later, there are cinematic elements from Tim that are very similar. The whole suburbia element in *Edward Scissorhands* carries over to *Mars Attacks!* if you think about it. There's this whole otherworldly story going on, which is true in both as well: There's a whole group of characters who live in a world that is unlike everyone else's world. How do you tie those elements together stylistically? I think Tim did that wonderfully in both pictures. They both have Tom Jones."

In fact, Tom Jones (shown performing his Vegas nightclub act in the film before it's interrupted by the Martian hordes) is possibly the most appealing human character in *Mars Attacks!*, and it wasn't lost on the singer that he was playing a man who was a cut above most of the other people depicted in the movie. "When I read the script," Jones remembers, "I thought, 'These are a bunch of bloody idiots.' They were all overplayed—everybody did that on purpose, overplayed their parts. Tim Burton said [to me], 'You can be the serious one—just play yourself. You don't have to overdo it like everybody else is.' I went to see it in the theater just to see what the reaction would be, and when I came on singing the song 'It's Not Unusual' in the nightclub scene, the people in the cinema applauded. I thought, 'Wow.' It was fantastic."



In the booth (top)

Danny Elfman, Tim Burton, and recording engineer Dennis Sands.

Listening to a playback (right)

Steve Bartek, Mark Eshelman, and Danny Elfman focus on the music during a playback.



“Sometimes I actually felt like I was turning into Ed Wood,” Burton says of the film’s weird, deliberately cheesy tone. “But it was definitely a movie where I threw in a bunch of different ideas. I remember feeling like I had felt when I was working at Disney in the animation department, where you just try a bunch of different stuff and throw it into the thing and see what happens. But it can cause certain things to become at odds with each other.”

As the project developed, more than a few members of Burton’s team were hoping that Danny Elfman might return to score *Mars Attacks!* Elfman’s quirky, unexpected approaches, his longtime love of horror, monster, and science-fiction movies—the more bizarre the better—and his peerless grasp of offbeat humor all seemed tailor-made for a project as whacked-out as *Mars Attacks!*

“It was really obvious that Danny had to do it,” Bob Badami says. “And I hope that I was instrumental in trying to bring them to that realization, because it was the movie that you want Tim Burton to make and Danny would have to score it. *Ed Wood* was a different film and the music wasn’t as important in it somehow. And it’s not a knock against the score in any way, but it isn’t necessarily as important an element in that film as other Tim Burton films. The cool thing about *Mars Attacks!* is that we had to create a storyboard version of it initially before it was really shot. And when you start looking at it, Danny had to do it. And I think Tim recognized that. I think we all were just really encouraging that relationship, especially given the material.”

Elfman himself was well aware that *Mars Attacks!* was being made. “I was in bitter denial that I wasn’t on it. I really felt like crap. I’m not sure exactly what led to what, but at some point there was a communication between a producer and Richard Kraft inquiring if I would consider speaking with Tim. Evidently he was in Kansas shooting. To make a long story short, next day I was on a plane for Kansas. We met in a coffee shop; there was really no drama. It was just like... ‘That sucked. Let’s just forget about it, reset, and get on with it.’ I didn’t care. I was just so happy to see him.”

“We just got right back to work,” Burton says. “I’ve known Danny for so long—it’s just like, ‘Let’s do it!’”

After reuniting, Burton and Elfman jumped into *Mars Attacks!* with vigor. “It was the fastest spotting session that I have had in my 20-plus years of music editing,” recalls Ellen Segal. “It took about an hour and a half to go through the whole show. They did it at time-and-a-half speed as far as the KEM (editing machine) went. Chris Lebenzon was just running the KEM at double pace. Tim would just say, ‘OK, start here, stop there, start here, stop there.’ And then Danny was like, ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.’ And I was just trying to take notes as fast as I could. Literally, I’ve been in spotting sessions with Danny that have lasted 12 hours or two days. They’re long because directors will either tell you what they’ve tried or what they would like to try, or what didn’t work or how they think the scene should be played with music. And Tim wasn’t that way at all. He’d say, ‘Well, you know what this needs to be here, and maybe it should start around here and then stops around... maybe around, well... you know.’”

One of the first things Elfman tackled was the movie’s eye-popping and insidiously funny opening sequence, in which an army of spinning metal flying saucers slowly rises from the red surface of Mars to form a massive armada—wave after wave of spinning discs flying in formation directly

THEREMIN

The theremin, an early electronic instrument patented in America in 1928 by Russian inventor Leon Theremin, is one of the most unique and evocative musical instruments ever to be heard on a movie soundtrack. It was reportedly developed as part of a Russian project to develop motion-detector technology around 1920. It was later refined by Professor Theremin and enthusiastically embraced by Russian leader Vladimir Lenin, who commissioned the construction of several hundred of the instruments and sent Theremin on a world tour to promote the device. One of the earliest electronic musical instruments, the theremin is played without physical contact from the performer, and this unusual technique, along with the eerie, oscillating tones it creates give the instrument a strangely magical quality. Two antennae extend from the body of the instrument and the player changes the location and attitude of the hands in relation to the antenna to adjust pitch and volume. Vibrating the fingers and hands creates a vibrato effect.

Performances on the theremin were briefly popular in the ’30s after its introduction in the United States, and it was used in classical, avant-garde and film music thereafter. American inventor Robert Moog used his own interest in and research on the theremin to develop the Moog synthesizer, the predecessor to modern synthesizers and sequencers. But the theremin retains its own fascination and has been used in numerous film scores, including Miklós Rózsa’s *The Lost Weekend* and *Spellbound*, Bernard Herrmann’s *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, and Dimitri Tiomkin’s *The Thing (From Another World)*. Elmer Bernstein used the sound of the theremin to create the sickening, terrifying music for the arrival of the Angel of



On location

Tim Burton directing on the set of *Mars Attacks!*—his seventh film as a director.

toward Earth. Elfman concocted an insistent, quirky march rhythm that built to titanic proportions against the eerie wail of a theremin—the sci-fi clarion call that had first grabbed the young Danny Elfman’s attention in Bernard Herrmann’s score to *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. “It was one of the rare pieces where the first time they showed me a rough cut and showed me a mock-up of the flying saucers, I heard the exact piece of music just as it would end up appearing in the final score,” Elfman remembers. “I had to ask them to stop the film so I could run out in the lobby and make a bunch of notes really, really quickly because I was going to lose it. Believe me, I wish they were all that easy.... One screening and ‘Bam!... got it!’”

Elfman had his inspiration so early that he was able to mock up a version of what would become the main title music in time for the piece to be used in trailers for the film. Later, the music was recorded with a full orchestra at the massive Todd-AO scoring stage in Studio City,

California. “I got to play on the main title,” Ellen Segal remembers. “Danny had set up about seven trash cans and tops on the stage, and Steve was there and Danny and we were all out there, clanking the trash cans in time with the main title.”

Putting the trailer music together gave Elfman a head start on the score. “It’s fun to do the trailers,” he says. “You get a whole session devoted to a single piece of music. It’s usually before the score is done, or even started, so it’s a great chance to try out ideas, mess with it a little, pull out the stops, get a single idea going, and not worry about the scene changes.”

The main title music was the perfect launchpad for the movie—even in abbreviated trailer form, it generated buzz and immediately encapsulated what *Mars Attacks!* would be. “Danny always liked to make sure the opening of the movie is like a big song—something that is a piece in itself and is memorable,” Steve Bartek points out. “So, a lot of time is put into those titles. I’m sure every composer does that, too. It’s just that the way he constructs them is not necessarily exactly the way the rest of the movie is going to be. Often, there is more of a driving element or something to make the titles feel more distinct.”

Elfman also built some of his trademark, idiosyncratic choral effects into the score, which he worked on with choral director Bobbi Page. “What I love about Danny and working with him is that he does know what he wants and he will work to find it,” Page says. “We had a big woman’s group on *Mars Attacks!* We made all sorts of crazy sounds—even the vowels we would sing—approaching them in unusual, odd ways. Danny had specific ideas about all of it.”

One of Elfman’s unexpected challenges working on the score was the attempt to employ a real theremin in the recording sessions. The instrument, invented by Russian Léon Theremin in 1928, created a spine-tingling wail that conjured up memories of a hundred cheap black-and-white ’50s science-fiction thrillers (it was also used as the siren call of alcoholism by Miklós Rózsa in Billy Wilder’s 1945 drama *The Lost Weekend*). Only a few people in the world could play the theremin with the accuracy and expression required for the score. “It’s not like you couldn’t get a theremin; you couldn’t get a *player* for the theremin,” Elfman says. “We tried, but at that point, there were a couple of famous theremin players and they weren’t available. So, we had somebody else in the orchestra, a violinist actually, who had a theremin and gave it a shot.”

After some sessions at Skywalker Sound in Marin County, Elfman and his team relocated to Los Angeles, where they sought a solution



Martians in India

Drawing by Tim Burton for *Mars Attacks!*

in another exotic instrument: the Ondes-Martenot (an electronic musical instrument invented in 1928 by cellist and radio telegraphist Maurice Martenot). “The Ondes-Martenot has a keyboard,” Bartek explains. “My take is it is really low-tech, high technology. There’s a wire going along either side that follows the front of the keyboard. It’s put together well. There are potentiometers on both sides of the wires, so as you are pulling it, you are turning a knob, and the wires turn, too. So with the keyboard in front of you, you can go right to a pitch—because that’s highly tuned, highly synchronized. You can get up to your pitch and you can hold it there, and it’s going to be C, as opposed to a theremin, where there’s no physical reference. And it’s different every time you turn a theremin on, because it depends on how warm it is. The thing about the theremin is, you really have to use your ear.”

Famed film composer Elmer Bernstein had used the Ondes-Martenot on quite a few scores later in his career, particularly in the ’80s on movies like *Heavy Metal* and *Ghostbusters*. “Elmer Bernstein was the one who used it; that’s how we knew of it,” Elfman says. “It was his player, Cynthia Millar.

Death in Cecil B. DeMille’s 1956 biblical epic *The Ten Commandments*.

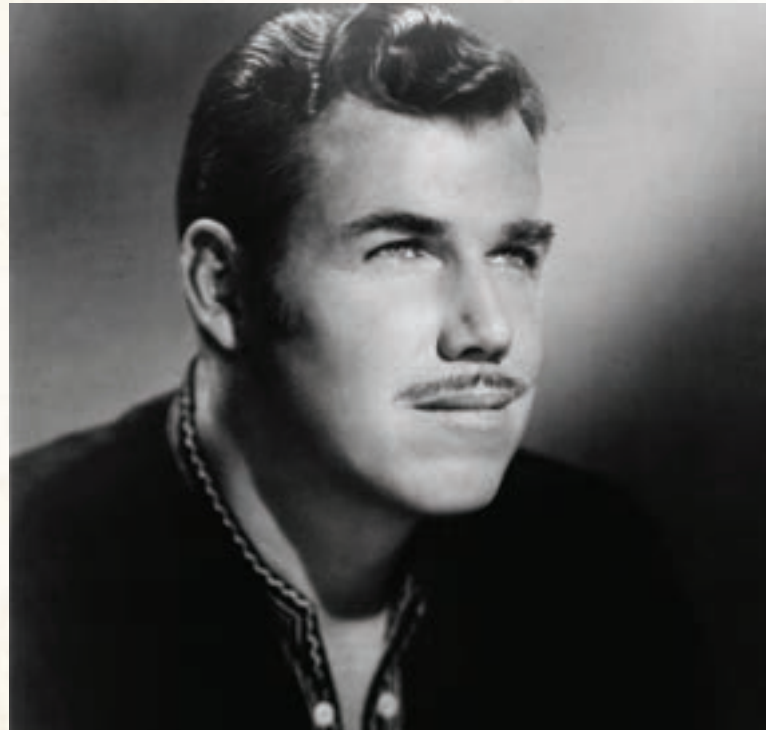
Howard Shore used a theremin in his score to *Ed Wood*, and in addition to *Mars Attacks!*, Danny Elfman employed the theremin on Guillermo Del Toro’s *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*. “The theremin is an incredibly touchy instrument to use, because some people can use it tongue-in-cheek,” Del Toro says. “That’s pretty easy and passive, but the trick is to use it as the great instrument it is. And the beauty of the way Danny uses it is, he uses it in a respectful, truly academic, truly scholarly way, but he also uses it with great passion. He doesn’t say, ‘And now, for the funky parts, let’s bring up the theremin.’ No. He truly understands the instrument and its capacity to move and thrill and its untimely nature—its sort of out-of-time nature.”

The fascinating story of Leon Theremin is told in the award-winning 1995 documentary by Steven M. Martin, *Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey*.



Leon Theremin and his invention

The Russian inventor refined the theremin as a musical instrument—although its development began as motion-detector technology.



Slim Whitman, Secret Weapon

The wailing vibrato of country singer Slim Whitman's yodeling proves to be the one force the invading Martians cannot withstand in *Mars Attacks!*



Jack Nicholson and Glenn Close

Nicholson and Close as the President and First Lady are some of the less-than-stellar representatives of the human race in *Mars Attacks!*

It's a very rare instrument and it probably won't be around much longer as spare parts are nearly impossible to find, but for us, it worked beautifully. It became our theremin."

"Cynthia Millar came in and nailed it like three hours before we mixed it," Bartek adds. It was Shawn Murphy who had the job of balancing the contribution of the original theremin, the Ondes-Martenot, and Elfman's samples. "This was before we had the tools we have now, where we could put it in whatever key we wanted."

There was actually one additional bizarre musical instrument on display in the movie that Danny Elfman had nothing to do with: yodeling country music legend Slim Whitman, who in an ingenious touch is used as mankind's final secret weapon against the marauding Martians. It's likely that Tim Burton's inspiration for using Whitman's singing in the film was a series of unnerving late-night commercials for the man's music that ran in the '70s when the director would have been up surfing for midnight monster movies. The singer's hair-raising vibrato harmonizing qualified him as a kind of human theremin himself. "I just recall in a lot of those old '50s movies, you have to kill them and sometimes it's a sonic thing," Burton says. "It's like, 'Let's kill them with fire; we'll kill them with a certain sound.'" For Burton, Whitman's voice did the trick. "Listen to that—it kind of hits that pitch that sounds like it might kill somebody...."

Steve Bartek says that he and Elfman were well aware of the country singer. "Slim Whitman was one of Oingo Boingo's early jokes because if anything broke down, Danny and the two other guys [who] could actually sing would go into a yodel. They had this whole little routine they'd do, so the whole yodeling thing was just kind of funny and synchronistic."

While the movie afforded Elfman numerous opportunities to score rampaging Martians and mass destruction, there were also smaller-scale scenes that were every bit as bizarre, like the infiltration of the White House by a weirdly gliding, super-beehived Martian girl, and a climactic love scene between the disembodied heads of Pierce Brosnan and Sarah Jessica Parker.

"What I think Danny really enjoyed doing on *Mars Attacks!* was writing the Martian lounge music," Richard Kraft says. "That whole Esquivel world is something Danny has always been interested in and, finally, he had a movie to go do it in—and it's a very specific type of music. What I love about Danny is you can say 'Esquivel' and he'll know what it means and knows how to create it, but it doesn't really sound like the thing you're referencing. It's almost as someone remembers it. It's like



Pierce Brosnan in *Mars Attacks!* (top)

One of the few feature films based on a series of trading cards.

The Invasion (next page)

Burton's painting that led to the opening sequence of *Mars Attacks!*

Danny synthesizes the essence of what an idea is and then gives it back to you in the form of a new idea.”

One element that complicated the final scoring sessions was the advent of digital editing. “The bad thing about that period of time was Avid,” Bartek says ruefully. “For the first round of recording up at Skywalker, we had a huge orchestra for the big scene where the Martians come marching in at the end. We just spent the whole morning on it, had just gotten it done, and Tim comes down with the editor and they start giggling going, ‘Oh... the scene’s completely different.’ It was like our first taste of the horrors of the flexibility of Avid.”

Despite the editing challenges, Burton found the film’s music as fun as the Martians themselves: “We got to do the kind of weird, science-fiction music, which was fun—that kind of Theremin-y sound. It was great—lot of good elements to that one. I think we both like the subversiveness of those characters.”

Mars Attacks! was released to generally positive reviews, but it ran up against a menace more terrifying than a horde of Martians: Another alien-invasion movie, *Independence Day*, had dominated the box office during the summer before *Mars Attacks!* was released, and America was evidently not quite ready for the subversive palette cleanser that Tim Burton’s movie might have been. “It was just a coincidence,” Burton says of the head-to-head flying saucer movies. “Nobody told me about it. Then somebody said, ‘They’re doing this movie; it’s kind of the same thing,’ and I thought, ‘Oh? I’ve never heard of it.’ Then it came out, and eventually I saw some of it on cable. I was surprised how close it was, but then it’s a pretty basic genre I guess. *Independence Day* was different in tone—it was different in everything. It almost seemed like we had done kind of a *Mad* magazine version of *Independence Day*.”

Mars Attacks! made as much money as *Edward Scissorhands*, but cost far more to make. But its anarchic sensibility and outrageous visuals have earned it a cult following of its own, particularly among satirists. Dan Vebber, writer and story editor on Matt Groening’s animated sci-fi takeoff *Futurama*, says, “The score for *Mars Attacks!* is one of the true ‘comedy’ scores I can name, in that there are about five instances throughout the film in which the musical sting *is* the joke, and it’s always a really funny joke.”

Mars Attacks! also served the purpose of bringing creative brothers Tim Burton and Danny Elfman back together. There’s no doubt that

Burton and Elfman were on the same page with *Mars Attacks!* “I think the important thing with the two of them is that they are cut from the same cloth,” Bob Badami says. “In terms of their references and their age and so many things, they have a common ground, and that makes for a good marriage.”

Composer Marc Shaiman takes the marriage analogy further: “When I think of Tim Burton, I think of Danny Elfman; when I think of Danny Elfman, I think of Tim Burton; it is impossible to imagine one without the other. They are like an old married couple, right down to that trial separation some years back. Luckily, for us, the separation didn’t take. How could it? They were meant for each other, like corpses and maggots. Together, they have created their own sound, lovingly respectful of past masters, yet still amazingly original.”

Elfman found the entire saga of leaving the Tim Burton family and then returning to the fold a learning experience. “What I gained from that experience, was that there are times when I find myself too emotionally wrapped up in a situation and I can become myopic,” Elfman says. “I’m too close to see objectively. Now, before I get to the point of a meltdown, I attempt to pull myself back—to freeze the moment and telescope as far back as I can, and look at the same thing from a distance. More than likely I’ll end up surprised that it just doesn’t look like such a big deal from that perspective anymore.”



10



INTO THE WOODS
Headless Horror



Sleepy Hollow, 1999

Concept artwork by Tim Burton for the film's climax.

SLEEPY HOLLOW

Ironically, considering his childhood obsession with the genre, Tim Burton hadn't yet made an all-out horror film prior to 1999's *Sleepy Hollow*. But between *Mars Attacks!* and *Sleepy Hollow*, the director lived through a horror movie of his own when he became involved in an abortive attempt to revive the *Superman* film franchise with *Superman Lives*. Nicholas Cage would have played the Man of Steel with an influence from some more recent comic book stories that depicted Superman with Rambo-like flowing black hair and an updated costume. As with his earlier *Batman*, Burton would have focused on the Superman character's alienation—literally. He planned to interpret the superhero more specifically as an alien from another planet who had difficulty relating to human beings. Warner Bros. eventually cancelled *Superman Lives* when budget projections became too high, and Burton found that he'd wasted more than a year of his life working on the film.

Preproduction design for the film showed some remarkably imaginative concepts that likely would have made *Superman Lives* one of the most unique superhero movies ever made. Some of the plot was based on the DC Comics *Death Of Superman* series, in which Superman is ultimately killed in battle by a creature called Doomsday. In the comic, Doomsday was a more typical, Hulk-like super-villain; but in Burton's version, the character would have been a spiky, crustacean-like space monster four times Superman's size. The story's real villain is the alien genius Brainiac, who descends from space in a spacecraft designed with the features of a metallic spinal column and skull. Burton indulged his love of decapitated heads (featured in his work all the way back to 1982's *Luau*) by having Brainiac depicted as a floating green head, in a clear globe, which

places itself in a multi-armed, tentacled exoskeleton to do battle with Superman.

"We went for Cage because he was a great actor," producer Jon Peters says of the project. "He didn't look so good in the suit. His body was a little weird, but those things can be adjusted. I think the overall thing is if Tim wanted him, he should have him because Tim is Tim and he is, in my opinion, a genius. But we worked on that movie for a year. That would have been great. We were ready—we had sets...we had the Skull Ship, which is how the aliens arrived...it was amazing. But at the last minute they shut it down. It really upset Tim a lot."

Around the same time, Burton published a book of macabre cartoons called *The Melancholy Death Of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*. One of the characters in the book was *Stainboy* (also known as Stain Boy), whose superpower was his ability to leave an ugly stain wherever he went. Burton eventually developed *The World Of Stainboy*, an animated web series with Glenn Shadix voicing and Elfman providing music. "*Stainboy* is one of my favorite characters," remarks Burton, "and in a way he's probably the perfect symbol of that whole *Superman* experience. Truthfully, that's pretty much how I felt. If anybody wants to know what that year was like, then just read that—that's the best description of it."

Sleepy Hollow, an adaptation of Washington Irving's venerable 1820 tale of Ichabod Crane and his encounter with a terrifying headless horseman, was originally developed by makeup effects artist Kevin Yagher and *Se7en* screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker. Like *Superman Lives*, it had never made it out of development hell and Yagher and Walker eventually abandoned the project after Scott Rudin sold the idea to Paramount.



Danny Elfman and agent Richard Kraft, London, 1999 (above)

During a brief break from the grueling recording schedule of *Sleepy Hollow*, Elfman and Kraft take in a few of England's sights.

***Sleepy Hollow* score (left)**

A page from "Introduction" from the score to *Sleepy Hollow*.

With nothing to do after *Superman*, Burton discovered the *Sleepy Hollow* story, which altered the Ichabod Crane character from a gangly schoolteacher to a New York City policeman who is an innovator in forensic techniques—a kind of 19th century CSI man. Burton took to the production with great enthusiasm, hiring frequent collaborator Johnny Depp to play the earnest but rather cowardly Ichabod, Christina Ricci as his potential love interest Katrina Van Tassel, and Christopher Walken in an amazingly bloodthirsty turn as the Headless Horseman. With production designer Rick Heinrichs constructing 90 percent of the film's exteriors on soundstages to Burton's specifications and florid period costumes by Colleen Atwood, *Sleepy Hollow* was an atmospheric and sumptuous marvel to watch. "It's a fascinating story—a story that a lot of people know about but that nobody's really read," Burton says of the original Washington Irving tale. "I think I've always responded to characters who have conflicts of interest within themselves, and Ichabod's a character who's pretty f**ked up, in the sense that he's smart but sometimes there's a kind of tunnel vision. He hits like a girl; he throws like a girl; he acts—as far as I can tell—like a 13-year-old. It's good because I'm not the greatest action director in the world, and he's not the greatest action star, so what we're trying to do is something that hopefully satisfies on that level but comes at it from a slightly different angle."

Production designer Rick Heinrichs thinks the film is Burton's best work of the period. "He was able to absorb the whole 'Hammer Horror' thing, which was so much a part of his childhood, and tell a story that brought in all this other Tim emotional territory—all these other elements from where he's at: the character of Ichabod, that humor/horror thing that Tim loves to play with. It's in the original story to a degree. Tim's not interested in horror for the slash and the blood and all of that, but if it gives power to the story that he wants to tell, he doesn't shrink from it by any means. There's some pretty awful stuff, awful in terms of gory."

"You wouldn't call it Hammer-esque," Burton says of the finished film. "But it's closest to the look of a film [like that], but it sort of became its own thing as well. It's like we never really talked about Hammer or anything there; you just did the same thing where you kinda looked at the movie and kinda went with it."

Danny Elfman's elaborate symphonic score is fascinatingly monothematic. Its mysterious main theme functions as a melody for the threat of the Horseman, for the character of Ichabod Crane, and as a choral siren song for Ichabod's haunting memories of his mother—even as a lilting romantic theme for Ichabod and Katrina. Elsewhere, the score was brimming with Elfman's sonorous, darkly descending nods to Bernard Herrmann, giving the movie the feel of a classic fantasy horror film.

Elfman says he didn't set out intending to write a monothematic score: "It simply unfolded in its own way. *Sleepy Hollow* is a very weird, fun, spooky odd movie. The theme I wrote for young Ichabod in the flashbacks just grew and attached itself to the Horseman as well. It was not intentional. I never try to fight these things as they come together. I know that sounds strange, like I wasn't in control, but often I'm not. Once I get the thing rolling, it starts to control me. A lot of the best scores that I grew up on don't make a lot of sense. Some are very structured and multiple themes unfold in a traditional way, and some don't work that way. There really are no rules."

BERNARD HERRMANN

Bernard Herrmann created the association between the exotic electric instrument—the theremin—and science fiction when he used a theremin to striking effect in Robert Wise's classic film *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. He wrote a clacking, nerve-wracking percussive dance to underscore a sword fight between an undead, animated skeleton and Sinbad in *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad*.

He created the shrieking string glissandi that accompanied the horrifying death of Marion Crane in the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the kinetic fandango that launches Cary Grant into a suspenseful adventure of mistaken identity in Hitchcock's *North By Northwest*, and the swirling, dizzying repeating figures for strings, harp and celeste that swamp and disorient James Stewart in *Vertigo*.

Those are just some of the many innovations during the cantankerous but brilliant composer's long and venerated career. Starting with *Citizen Kane*, Herrmann built a peerless film composition career that climaxed in his stupendous scores for the Alfred Hitchcock films of the '50s and early '60s: *The Trouble With Harry*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Vertigo*, *North By Northwest*, *Psycho*, and *Marnie*.

At the same time that he partnered with one of the most popular and revered filmmakers of all time, Herrmann happily worked on a series of "children's monster pictures" for stop-motion animator Ray Harryhausen: *The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad*, *Jason And The Argonauts*, *Mysterious Island*, and *The 3 Worlds Of Gulliver*, creating dazzling symphonic soundscapes that were as memorable as the animated creatures that stalked and stomped through Harryhausen's movies.



Sleepy Hollow, 1999

Jeffrey Jones, as Reverend Steenwyck, sermonizes at a *Sleepy Hollow* funeral in Burton's first full-fledged horror film.



Hitchcock and Herrmann

Shown in a typically droll Alfred Hitchcock publicity photo, film composer, Bernard Herrmann suffered a stinging artistic breakup with the director while scoring *Torn Curtain* in 1966.

After an emotional breakup with Hitchcock over the espionage thriller *Torn Curtain* in 1966, Herrmann's career faltered for almost a decade. But near the end of his life the uncompromising composer found a new circle of top directors eager to work with him: Brian De Palma (*Obsession*, *Sisters*), Francois Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451*), and Martin Scorsese, who hired Herrmann to score *Taxi Driver* in 1975. Herrmann died in his sleep on Christmas Eve that year—the day he finished recording the *Taxi Driver* score.

“Dramatically, he took the bull by the horns, more than most any other composer does these days,” Shawn Murphy says of the legendary Herrmann. “He was willing to make the music a character in the picture and a very strong story-telling element. And he did it by orchestrations, by composition, and by performance; he was an absolute master at that. I think we all have

Elfman's discussions with Burton about the music were typically lacking in specific directions, focusing mostly on the basic emotion and mood. According to Elfman, he actually prefers this approach to a director who goes into tremendous detail about a particular scene: "Oddly, when a director really starts to deconstruct a scene in great detail, describing what they were *trying* to make, what was intended in the script, or the novel, it's all very interesting, but it doesn't necessarily help you as a composer. In the end, you are still looking at the scene that's there, not at one that isn't. Everything else that goes around it, the subtext, the backstory of the characters, the phase of the lunar cycle, or whether Mercury is in retrograde or not... although it's fascinating, it doesn't bring you any closer to actually writing the music for the three minutes you're about to write."

Apart from Burton's input, there was also some concern on the studio's part that the movie needed to be more romantic. "I did rescore some of the scenes," Elfman recalls. "But there really wasn't a traditional love story in there to score—the love is unrequited. Nonetheless, I tried my best. I really loved the film and its odd tone and, of course, as I always do—Johnny's performance. For some strange reason, it's still one of my favorite scores for Tim."

Elfman's lush, gothically romantic score featured a strong choral component, particularly for Ichabod's memories of his mother and some climactic action moments. "Danny doesn't get passive about the sound," choral director Bobbi Page says. "The choir is definitely an instrument to him. It is a huge part; he's not done when the orchestra's done. The choir is just as important as the violin section, the basses, the French horns—his score is not complete until he's got the voices there and they are doing and filling out that sound for him."

Elfman's own concerns increasingly involved the film's extended and problematic postproduction, during which he wound up writing—and recording—around 90 minutes of music. "That was recorded in London at Watford Town Hall," Shawn Murphy recalls. "Lots of sessions. The film's schedule was ultimately extended about six weeks, so we were there recording for quite a long time and then going back and recording again. It was dubbed in New York. It was basically a freelance band and the picture was in a bit of editorial turmoil, so consequently it was a burden placed on Danny to revise his musical approach to some scenes based on editorial changes."

Scott Rudin remembers Elfman writing to picture changes that were being made literally in the next room by Tim Burton. "We finished the

movie in New York, so Danny moved to New York. We set him up at Sound One. Tim was literally trafficking between editorial and music in the same building because we were so tight on the finishing. We reshot the beginning of the movie. We added a couple of scenes. We had probably 15 pages of added material but it was peppered throughout the movie, so there were no locked reels until very late."

Eventually, Elfman flew to the scoring stage at Watford Town Hall to supervise the recording of the score while Burton, Rudin, and editor Chris Lebenzon remained in New York. The situation was frenetic and unwieldy. Scott Rudin often got up at four in the morning and worked over an ISD line, so that he could coordinate with the activities in London. Elfman was working without Steve Bartek because Bartek had a leg injury at the time, so Conrad Pope orchestrated the bulk of the score. The booth was actually a changing room over the hall, and Elfman, music editor Ellen Segal, Shawn Murphy, and others had to watch the orchestra sessions going on in the hall below over a bank of TV monitors—it was like working on the dark side of the moon.

Elfman's team referred to the recording of *Sleepy Hollow* as the "Watford Hall Death March." According to Segal, the hours were brutal: "We were up like 20, 22 hours every day, working on the changes and getting the changes to the copyists. At that time, the copyists weren't on computers, so he literally had 40 or 50 or however many copyists he could find in London, handwriting all of these changes, trying to be ready for Danny. And it was constant. We were recording 40 miles outside of London and every morning at 6:30, a van would come to pick us up to take us out to the hall." Elfman's agents Richard Kraft and Laura Engel traveled back and forth for many of the recording sessions, and Kraft remembers laying on the floor of the recording stage in a state of jet-lagged stupor, struggling to stay awake so that his snoring wouldn't ruin any takes.

The worst part? Each Friday by five o'clock, every piece of equipment and all personnel had to be unceremoniously cleared out... for the Watford Friday Night Town Hall Dance.

Regardless of the editorial challenges, the finished film was visually majestic and Elfman's sumptuous score was a highlight. Elfman was particularly gratified to see Tim Burton embracing the "dark" mantle that had so often been erroneously applied to his work. "My first reaction was that I was really proud of Tim—that sequence where the Horseman comes into the cabin, slaughters the parents, and kills the kid. The cute



Johnny Depp as Ichabod Crane

The *Sleepy Hollow* script reimagined Crane as a cowardly New York police investigator who uses the latest scientific methods in his work.

enormous respect and admiration for a composer who's willing to put himself out there. Not a lot of guys will do that now. They will recede into whatever the director or the temp track requires them to do. I think Herrmann did what he wanted to do and what he felt was musically and dramatically right, and for that he was extraordinarily strong and his scores are strong. There are elements of those pictures that require themselves to be heard. You can't play them soft."

Danny Elfman had always idolized Herrmann, and he got the chance to play with the maestro's music in Gus Van Sant's unusual shot-for-shot remake of Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1998. "It was really frightening working with the score," Elfman admits. "For me, it was like being handed sacred texts. It was as if I were a priest and someone handed me some sacred scrolls or the Ten Commandments and said, 'here, take care of these.' I was more concerned about waking up in the middle of the night with Herrmann's ghost at the foot of my bed going, 'Ya little f**k... what the hell did you do to my score?' I didn't want that, so I just tried to be as respectful as I could. To me, Bernard Herrmann was like a god. It was his spark that ignited the flame that ultimately opened the door of musical possibilities and allowed me to have my career."

**Christopher Walken in
*Sleepy Hollow***

After playing the smarmy Max Shreck in *Batman Returns*, Christopher Walken turned in a frightening, wordless performance as the Headless Horseman.



HAMMER HORROR

Christopher Lee's presence in Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* is no accident. The towering, sepulchral-voiced actor was once one of the superstars of "Hammer Horror"—a series of blood-drenched and violent but classy thrillers made between the mid-1950s to the 1970s by Hammer Studios in Britain. Hammer had existed in various forms since 1935, but in 1955 it produced a low-budget science-fiction thriller called *The Quatermass Experiment*, based on a television miniseries written by Nigel Kneale and starring American actor Brian Donlevy as rocket scientist Bernard Quatermass, who is overseeing a space mission of three astronauts. When the rocket returns to Earth unexpectedly, two of the astronauts are missing, and the third begins to mutate, eventually turning into a massive, shapeless, Lovecraftian creature that takes up residence in a church loft.

The Quatermass Experiment was a surprise hit and distribution deals in America (which had determined the casting of an American actor in the movie's lead role) added to Hammer's coffers. A



Christopher Lee as Dracula

Lee's notoriety as Hammer Studio's Dracula earned him a role in *Sleepy Hollow*—itself an homage to the "Hammer Horror" style.



Catching a break

Elfman and Burton enjoying a rare moment of relaxation at a Japanese nightclub.

little kid gets it! It was like a jump-up-and-down moment for me in terms watching Tim going to a place I had not seen him go before.”

Burton recalls that he and Elfman almost went through another kind of barrier while recording music for the scene. “I remember there was a mistake one day where it was like a Christian boys’ choir or something. The call sheet said ‘Family Massacre.’ You’re giving these little children things to sing called ‘Family Massacre.’ That’s the time we’d just call it ‘Untitled Number 4’ or something because I remember it upset the teacher quite a lot.”

Elfman says he found the movie’s bloodthirsty foul play refreshing: “*Sleepy Hollow* was the first time for Tim that his villain was not an anti-hero. There was no redeeming this guy. Usually, the villains in his films are the ones that you end up liking most: The Joker, Penguin...

you know his monsters are the characters he’s closest to. So this is the first time that, OK, this is just a guy chopping off heads. It’s not like he’s deformed with a tragic past and we get to see the Headless Horseman in his house functioning in a way that makes us feel sorry for him, like groping around knocking things over trying to make himself breakfast. This was different; he was a pure villain. I really enjoyed it.”

“The moment of the movie I keep coming back to that plays, not just because of Johnny but because of the music too, is Ichabod nervously approaching the witch,” says screenwriter John August, who would soon work with Burton on *Big Fish*. “When Johnny puts the little boy in front of himself, that to me really speaks to the tone of what Danny was able to do with the music—the ability to play comedy and terror simultaneously.”

The completed score not only became a favorite of Elfman’s—but of Burton’s, too. “It’s got a nice melancholy feel,” Burton says. “Again, rather than saying, ‘Let’s do Hammer; let’s do this,’ it’s sort of its own thing.”

Composer James Newton Howard (*The Fugitive*, *Signs*) says he’s always been impressed by Elfman’s action scoring, and *Sleepy Hollow* in particular: “I feel there is always great clarity to his action music. I’m always aware of the heart of the piece and how it’s operating, as opposed to other things I hear where it just feels like it is wandering. And I can tell when Danny has wanted to stretch and be more than he has been, in an action cue, in the same way that I do constantly. And everybody who is into this and takes it seriously is always attempting to do, which is to try to break free of the knee-jerk responses and automatic solutions that we all have. There’s a scene in *Sleepy Hollow*—I remember a tree opened up near the end. I remember hearing that cue and thought, ‘Oh, that’s really great.’ It’s one of those cues that made me *nervous* because it was so good. It was very gestural in its orientation and not so note-y in the traditional sense. I think that is an indication of somebody who is starting to think in a more orchestral way.”

“I thought it was beautiful,” Scott Rudin says of the score. “I thought it was romantic and kind of off the ground and very grand. I thought it had the scale—it had that kind of mystic thing that he and Tim can do together when it’s required. It made you feel like you were watching a classic movie tale. It was an incredibly ambitious score and the movie is also wall-to-wall music. I don’t think there’s 10 minutes in the movie that aren’t scored—just a monstrous amount of music. It was one of my favorite scores I’ve ever had in a movie.”

Rudin came away from the experience impressed by Elfman, and not just in his ability to compose music. “I thought he was incredibly smart, a great storyteller. But what I really loved about Danny was he just had a tremendous, tremendous understanding of narrative. What I always thought was great about him, especially on *Sleepy Hollow*...he was very shrewd in his ability to place subtext. The big action sequences, he would know how to navigate through those with limitless skill. But the thing I thought he did beautifully was he created a role for the love story—from which the love story could happen—and that was all him.”

For Allison Abbate, who would join Burton and Elfman to produce the similarly gothic period project *Corpse Bride*, the *Sleepy Hollow* music has a special connotation: “I like to have the music playing; sometimes it’s too scary, and I have to turn it off,” Abbate says. “I’m just saying sometimes it scares me. That’s why I play it every Halloween. It’s such an intense score—I love it. My house is set back from the road and the kids would have to come up this walkway. I had a big ghost set up on my front lawn and a smoke machine, so when you opened the door it would come out. So, I had the *Sleepy Hollow* music playing and the kids were like, ‘Uh, oh!’...and they would run away.”

sequel, *Quatermass 2* (titled *Enemy From Space* in America) was followed by *X: The Unknown* (originally intended to be another Quatermass tale until Kneale withdrew his permission for the character). Now Hammer had created a successful series of sci-fi horror films.

Hammer’s first giant step into the horror field was 1957’s *The Curse Of Frankenstein*, with Peter Cushing as Frankenstein, and Christopher Lee as the monster. Written by Jimmy Sangster and directed by Terence Fisher, *The Curse Of Frankenstein* was something audiences all over the world had never seen before—a full-color treatment of the Frankenstein legend that was unflinching in its presentation of blood, mayhem, and gore—something that had always been muted by black-and-white photography in the old Universal monster movies.

The Curse Of Frankenstein was a hit and spawned a sequel, but the real action came when Hammer adapted Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, with Christopher



Raquel Welch, *One Million Years B.C.*

Hammer Films’ output included monster films as well as “cave girl” movies like this one, with stop-motion dinosaurs by Ray Harryhausen.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

In 1997, Danny Elfman finally got a little respect from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, earning his first and second Academy Award nominations on the same day: a Best Original Score nomination for Gus Van Sant's *Good Will Hunting* and another nomination, Best Original Musical or Comedy Score, for Barry Sonnenfeld's sci-fi takeoff *Men In Black*. It was almost as if Oscar was making up for lost time.

Good Will Hunting was a warm, low-key drama about Will Hunting (Matt Damon), a young man working as a janitor at MIT who's actually a mathematical genius but hasn't found the guidance he needs to apply and develop his skills. Hunting finds his mentor in a professor played by Robin Williams. Elfman's score was drifting, textural, and sympathetic, cloaking the story in warmth without overplaying the emotions.

Even after their collaboration on *To Die For*, director Gus Van Sant found himself feeling his way through the scoring process with Elfman: "By then he had done almost every genre, so the *Good Will Hunting* idea was different than say, *To Die For* or a Tim Burton film." Van Sant says he didn't give Elfman specific directions for the score, but that the composer was insistent on keeping him involved in the process of developing his musical ideas: "He sort of whips up on a computer four or five different choices. He'll choose a couple of scenes and he'll feel it out. When I first worked with [Danny], I didn't really want choices. I just wanted him to do it and then finish it, and then just show me later after it's completely recorded. That's what I wanted him to do because I had never worked with a composer really. I thought it was I like a machine—sort of give him a film and he'll come back with the score."

Elfman wasn't having any of that, as Van Sant recalls: "Danny said to me, 'No, no... this is the way I have to do it. I have to play you the pieces and then you choose one of them.' I tended to like a lot of them, so I would pick one. [Danny] does that for most of the scenes and then he elaborates on those roughs; then he'll play you the elaboration. So, there are a number of steps where he wants the director to listen. I think he's very savvy that way."

"*Good Will Hunting* was a simpler score, first of all," recording engineer Dennis Sands says. "These big action scores are very complex. For *Good Will Hunting* it was a much more transparent score because the movie called for that. It was a more intimate story."

Paramount president of music Randy Spendlove says the film was another key to advancing Elfman's career. "Obviously he was fabulous with his creative take on Tim Burton movies, and it seemed like the perfect visual and musical marriage. But also, Danny demonstrated how well he could step completely outside of himself—completely outside of that box—and come up with a film score that had the same amount of emotion and creativity while coming from a completely different artistic place. In the case of *Good Will Hunting*, it was very acoustic and earthy—not only acoustic guitar but acoustic drums and acoustic sounds."

Because of shifting postproduction schedules, Elfman found himself working on another project simultaneously with *Good Will Hunting*: Walt Disney's *Flubber*, an update of their special-effects comedies *The Absent-Minded Professor* and *Son Of Flubber* that had starred Fred MacMurray. The new version, filled with Day-Glo green, dancing CGI "flubber," starred Robin Williams, who was also in *Good Will Hunting*. Elfman recalled that during the brief overlap between the two projects it got very weird. "Both films starred Robin Williams. Occasionally I would do a double-take to see if he had the beard or not."

A Simple Plan was Sam Raimi's bid for respect after the lukewarm receptions given the *Evil Dead* sequel *Army Of Darkness* (for which Elfman provided a theme) and the exaggerated gunfighter western *The Quick And The Dead* with Sharon Stone. Bill Paxton and Billy Bob Thornton starred as two brothers who discover a fortune in a crashed private airplane in the woods near their house and realize that if they can keep the secret of the plane's location long enough, they will wind up with the money. Greed and sibling rivalries eventually cause the simple plan to unravel disastrously. Compared to Raimi's hyperkinetic, stylistically overheated previous films, *A Simple Plan* was elegant and understated, helped along by Elfman's icy, subdued score. The film was a modest but highly respected hit and it moved Raimi into a new category that would eventually position him and Elfman to undertake the prestigious *Spider-Man* movie franchise a few years later.

The movie's other residual effect was more personal. While visiting the set of *A Simple Plan*, Elfman met actress Bridget Fonda. It wouldn't be until years later when they met again at a party that he learned that Ms. Fonda was a big fan of Bernard Herrmann's music. Coincidentally, Elfman was to score the titles for the film *Red Dragon* the next morning, which



was an homage to Herrmann. Elfman invited her to the scoring session. "To my utter amazement, she actually showed up," Elfman says. They're now married and have a son.

Men In Black was more along the lines of previous Elfman blockbuster projects. Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones starred as high-tech government agents specializing in dealing with extraterrestrials—who are part of a huge, but secret, wave of immigrants infiltrating human society. Elfman keyed in on the image of the two men in black suits and sunglasses and came up with an energetic riff in the style of Henry Mancini's *Peter Gunn* TV theme—it had the same hip, walking bass line, all played over a knockout main title sequence that follows a CG dragonfly through the deserts of New Mexico until it splatters on the windshield of the title characters. Like *Mars Attacks!*, *Men In Black*, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, was perfectly suited to Elfman's playfully ironic sensibility and the movie became a massive hit that spawned an Elfman-scored sequel shortly after its release. Sonnenfeld says Elfman's music helped ground a seemingly ridiculous story: "Danny Elfman's music helped a tremendous amount. It had an emotional resonance to it so that it didn't feel cute; it felt weighty and important. Elfman did a great job on the music and it just adds to the emotional level of the whole thing."

At the 1998 Oscar ceremony, Elfman found himself up against two formidable foes: James Horner's hugely popular *Titanic*, which would rapidly become part of an Academy Award sweep for James Cameron's film, and *The Full Monty*—which had become a sleeper hit on its own and won the Oscar for Best Original Musical or Comedy Score, despite the fact that it contained only a few minutes of original music and was otherwise dominated by catchy popular songs. Though he took home no awards that evening, Elfman did get the "honor" of watching a bizarre Debbie Allen hip-hop "dance interpretation" of his score to *Men In Black*.

Lee as the Count, and Cushing as Van Helsing. With contact lenses that turned Lee's eyes a feral, bloodshot red, and rivulets of blood that flowed as the Count attacked his victims, *Dracula* was a nerve-shattering experience for audiences and became such a blockbuster hit that Universal turned over the remake rights to all of its monster pictures to the upstart Hammer company.

A remake of *The Mummy* followed (with Lee as Kharis, the Mummy; Cushing as John Banning), by which time Hammer had become a horror factory. Six *Frankenstein* sequels and eight *Dracula* follow-ups were made over the next 18 years, as well as a new version of *Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde*, a remake of *The Phantom Of The Opera* and *H. Rider Haggard's She*, and *The Curse Of The Werewolf*, with a carnivorous Oliver Reed in his first starring role. Though all made on low budgets, the vivid color photography and handsome period sets made the Hammer films look expensive and lush. And with the films' unblinking focus on blood and gore, and eventually sex (with the seductive female vampire films *The Vampire Lovers* and *Lust For A Vampire*, countless bosomy 19th century wenches as monster victims, and a series of fur-bikini "cave girl" films that included *Slave Girls*, *When Dinosaurs Ruled The Earth*, *Creatures The World Forgot*, and Ray Harryhausen's *One Million Years B.C.*) the Hammer films created an irresistible cognitive dissonance in viewers—they were the classiest exploitation films ever made. For kids growing up in the late '50, '60s, and '70s, Hammer films were the ultimate forbidden fruit, the wild "adult" versions of the black-and-white Universal monster films. Many of the directors who grew up during this period, including George Lucas, Peter Jackson, and Tim Burton, sought out Christopher Lee (and Peter Cushing) to add a chill-inducing memory of the Hammer films in their new movies.

11



DECONSTRUCTION
A Classic Reimagined



The Ape Army, 2000

Concept painting by Tim Burton.

PLANET OF THE APES

While *Mars Attacks!* and *Sleepy Hollow* had been adaptations of existing works, Tim Burton's *oeuvre* prior to 2001 had been marked by its originality. Apart from the *Batman* films, the director had successfully avoided anything with the hint of a franchise, and had generated strongly idiosyncratic and unusual films. But it was for that very reason that Burton was recruited to take the reigns of his first nominal remake: *Planet Of The Apes*.

The original 1968 *Planet Of The Apes* (with Charlton Heston as an astronaut who finds himself trapped in a terrifying world where intelligent apes evolved from men) was 20th Century Fox's first successful film franchise, spinning off four sequels and both a live-action television series and a Saturday-morning cartoon show. The *Apes* series had an impressive line of merchandise in the '70s, and it was unusual in that it was driven by a strong core of social and political commentary (the fourth film, *Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes*, was inspired by the 1965 Watts Riots).

Fox had been toying with reviving the *Apes* franchise since around 1990 and some of the biggest directors in Hollywood—including James Cameron and Oliver Stone—were developing the film at various points throughout the decade. The original film had been constructed around a *Twilight Zone*-like twist (Heston's character discovers at the end of the film that he's been on Earth all along), and part of the challenge of any new *Apes* film was to recreate the impact of that revelation without duplicating it.

Early drafts of the script removed the idea that the ape planet was actually Earth and changed the lead from a middle-aged misanthrope

to an appealing younger character, who would eventually be played by Mark Wahlberg. Burton was a great fan of the original movie and had his own strong ideas about the behavior and movement of the ape characters, and he eagerly threw himself into preproduction of the film in 2000.

One of the biggest problems for everyone involved in the production was its delivery date: July 2001—fewer than nine months after sign-off. While the original script contained the elements Fox wanted, it was far from an airtight screenplay. Fox executive Tom Rothman, who had signed Burton and set the release date, paired the director with a veteran of the original movie: producer Richard Zanuck, who was running Fox when the first movie was made in 1967-68. "We met the next morning for breakfast in the Polo Lounge at The Beverly Hills Hotel, way down in the back," Zanuck recalls. "After about halfway through the conversation I said, 'Tim, let me ask you something. We're just meeting, but let's be very frank with one another. I think this script stinks.' And he said, 'Oh, thank God. I thought you *liked* the script.' I said, 'No. I read it last night until about midnight. I finished and turned it over.' We never had a script. That was the problem. This meeting was in October; we started the picture in November. They wouldn't move off their July 4th release date. They had it booked in thousands of theaters. We had various writers coming in every day on the set writing. It was a nightmare, and Tim and I say we will never get ourselves in that position again. But that's what happened. We could have made a wonderful picture out of it, and we just never had the script. But we both learned a tremendous lesson. I learned what I always knew: that you have to have the script. I was saying, 'Well, Tim Burton—he'll do something.'"

Danny and dolls

Danny Elfman at home around the time of scoring *Planet Of The Apes*.

Danny and ferret

Elfman on the scoring stage at Paramount enjoying the company of the studio manager's pet ferret.

"I think *Planet Of The Apes* was one of the different ones because it was a perverse challenge for me," Burton says. "Obviously, there's a classic movie and the first rule of anything is don't redo a classic or mess with a classic, but I sort of felt there had been so many other movies in the series, and a TV show—just something about talking apes sounded interesting and funny to me. You know, it was one of those projects that was difficult because there was a script, but it was too expensive, one of the projects where you start the project maybe before you should, just going down a track, and it was a lot of working it out as we were cutting budgets as we're going on. But at the same time, it was a film that I really enjoyed doing because there was just something funny about dealing with the people. That's why I didn't want to do it CG; there's just something funny about seeing people dressed up as apes talking."

Burton brought his distinctive sense of design to the movie, developing an arresting neoprimitive look with production designer Rick Heinrichs. And the movie was a dream project for makeup genius (and gorilla-obsessive) Rick Baker (*Greystoke: The Legend Of Tarzan, Lord Of The Apes*, and *Gorillas In The Mist*) who created startlingly realistic ape characters for the movie. Baker had temporarily shut down his creature effects shop and let most of his staff go when, "All of a sudden I got a phone call from Tim and it was like, 'Sh*t! This is something I've got to do, *Planet Of The Apes*.' It was such an important makeup film," Baker says. "I thought, 'I'm so the right person to do this and, unfortunately, I lost a lot of people.' It was harder to jump in and do a film when my shop was not up and running. And when Tim talked to me, we were going to start filming in four months. If he would have asked me how long I'd like, I guess I would have probably said a year. The good news is, I was approached about a *Planet Of The Apes* remake that Oliver Stone was going to do about seven years before, and I had done makeup tests for that. I kind of knew how I should do it."

Burton also had specific ideas about updating the performances and movements of the ape characters, using the advantage of decades of research on simians that the original 1968 film didn't have access to. "I just liked the idea of exploring the kind of ape-like quality," Burton says. "Like in the original where the chimpanzees were the nice ones, and when you read about chimpanzees, they're more the crazy ones. So, I liked the idea of kind of infusing it with a bit more human and ape-like behavior and getting that kind of craziness of chimpanzees and the volatile nature of it and the movement, and just exploring that

a bit more. It was a difficult project for me, but there were a lot of great things about it and I enjoyed aspects of making it." Actor Tim Roth contributed a strong performance with his frightening portrayal of the chimpanzee leader General Thade, and Burton even managed to hire Charlton Heston to appear in a cameo—in ape makeup—as Thade's father. "Get your stinking hands off of me, you damn dirty human!"

One of the original film's strongest elements was its Academy Award-nominated score by Jerry Goldsmith: a striking, avant-garde sonic landscape that was vitally important to create the feeling of being lost on a terrifying *alien* planet in a primitive, bizarre civilization. In fact, the original film was probably best known for its Oscar-winning makeup effects by John Chambers, Charlton Heston's gargantuan performance as the rebellious astronaut Taylor, and Jerry Goldsmith's music.

Danny Elfman's agent, Richard Kraft, had also represented Jerry Goldsmith from the late '80s until his death in 2004. "I remember calling Danny and saying, 'Guess what Tim's next movie is going to be... *Planet Of The Apes*.' And there was a silence on the phone—I knew everything that silence meant. To say to Danny, 'The movie you are going to be doing is *Planet Of The Apes*' means you are about to be compared, for the rest of your life, to one of the most innovative film scores ever. And, so, there was no, 'Oh, boy!' at the end of that call."

Elfman remembers the phone call, although he says he knew going in to the project that the last thing he would be asked to do was to re-create or reference Jerry Goldsmith's music. "I knew it was going to be a Tim Burton movie. I knew it was very unlikely that we would want to be paying homage to the original score. I knew going into it I was going to catch a lot of sh*t for this. People love the original music, and I understand that, but there's nothing I can do about that. This is a different movie. It just can't be helped. It's just funny that I had to go through that twice with him, on *Apes* and *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*...two very treasured, musical pieces."

Indeed, Elfman revered Jerry Goldsmith as a composer. "Bernard Herrmann may be my idol, but Jerry Goldsmith is the one who, if I could model myself after any composer's career and his life's work, would be the guy," Elfman says. "His versatility, his ability to constantly adapt, his tenacity, and the way he always brings artistry to movies (occasionally even to ones that did not merit that artistry)—these are all things that I strive for. 'How would Jerry deal with this situation?' is a question I would often pose to myself when I was on a difficult spot or in a difficult film."

Helena Bonham Carter in *Planet Of The Apes*

Tim Burton's "reimagining" of the 1968 science-fiction adventure featured Carter as an alluring "human rights" advocate chimpanzee.

Tim Roth as Thade

Roth starred as the power-hungry and aggressive chimpanzee leader.

The only good human is a dead human

Ape leader General Thade (Tim Roth) confronts human hero Leo Davidson (Mark Wahlberg).

Planet Of The Apes had been a watershed score for Goldsmith (he conducted some of the score while wearing an ape mask as a joke), and ironically Danny Elfman's score for the "reimagining" is more melodic and traditional than the semi-serial, wildly experimental approach Goldsmith was able to take on the 1968 film. "There's a common link in so far as that, Jerry, for the first time, was really experimenting with percussion in that beautiful sense," Elfman says. "For me, percussion has always been the instrument that I've been closest to. There was a point when I was young where I imagined becoming an ethnomusicologist or an ethnic percussionist. It's the only type of instruments I feel actually any bit of adeptness at. I can't play piano to save my life. I've collected percussion my whole life, and I used to build percussion. There was an amazing composer named Harry Partch who was famous for building his own very customized and unique instruments. And he was a huge influence on me. And there was a point where I imagined I might be some kind of contemporary Harry Partch. Jerry's background is as far different from mine as it could possibly be. He was trained to be a composer; I was a street and stage performer, then in a rock band. But there was a common link of a love of percussion, and that goes back to my earliest roots, because the only real musical training that I ever had was with Indonesian gamelan music."

Director Ang Lee, who would soon work with Elfman on Marvel's superhero movie *Hulk*, says Elfman's encyclopedic knowledge of percussion extends to the way each instrument will record: "He knows what will record the best. I wanted to get the biggest sound, and I thought taiko or some kind of big drum would be good for the sound of the *Hulk*. He disagreed, said it wouldn't record well, which we tried, and he was absolutely right. I didn't know it didn't record well, so we used some Indian drums that made it sound bigger. He just knows his stuff really well."

Percussionist Emil Richards, whose work with Elfman dates back to *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, played the tuned metal mixing bowls on Goldsmith's original score and performed on the 2001 *Planet Of The Apes*, among other Danny Elfman scores. His experience puts him in a position to compare Goldsmith with Elfman. "I'd put them in the same category in the sense that Jerry was always marrying percussion instruments together, and Danny does the same thing," Richards says. "In other words, many composers will pick a percussion instrument that has a unique sound and play that right out front by itself, but not Danny and not Jerry. They would mix and match the woods with the metals, with the skins. They would mix them all together so that you wouldn't really hear the instrument by itself all up front, but you hear it combined within the score, orchestrated in a way where it makes so much music and sense."

Richards says he finds the two men personally different in their working styles: "I think Jerry was more excitable. I wouldn't say he'd yell, but he was so excited about his music that he'd come out with a lot of energy, and back and forth with the orchestra. Danny does it in a different way. He's more calm...kind of mellow, and he gets his point across. And everyone understands exactly what he needs and wants. In that sense, their personalities were a bit different, but Danny knows how to get the sounds out of the orchestra and musicians with a much easier, mellower approach."

Universal music executive Kathy Nelson, whose association with Elfman goes back to his Oingo Boingo days, says Danny's maniacal focus on the details of percussion and performance has always been there: "Danny was a perfectionist with the band, and he was like that in the studio, too. I could remember him sending Johnny Avila back into the studio to do two notes of a bass line over and over again. Even on *The Kingdom*, he had a percussionist out there and on the opening titles of

The Kingdom, he wanted this specific lick. He knew exactly what percussion he wanted. The timing would switch as the images switched on the screen. And he was actually singing it to the player with his mouth and the guy couldn't get it, and I said, 'Danny, why don't you just go do it yourself?'—because Danny *could* do it himself. And Danny said, 'No—he's the percussionist!' Then he did the same thing—he did this gorgeous acoustic guitar piece, and he hired every great guitar player in the city to play it. And [*Kingdom* director] Pete Berg kept saying, 'Nope, I like the demo better.'"

One of the distinctive percussion fundamentals in the score, and one that was a frequent element of Jerry Goldsmith's work, especially for science-fiction films like *Planet Of The Apes* and *Alien*, is known as *col legno* (pronounced *co-lay nyo*): the string players strike their instruments across the strings with the wooden back of the bow across the strings instead of bowing or plucking. The resulting sound is paradoxically both brittle and elastic, and instantly memorable. For Burton's *Planet Of The Apes*, Danny Elfman wrote a rhythmic main title piece driven by *col legno* percussion, immediately establishing an exotic, primitive, and spacey vibe for the picture. "*Col legno* means 'with wood'...the back of the bow," Steve Bartek says. "Danny's used that over the years. At one point, we realized that having a regular large orchestra do a section playing *col legno* is less effective than the way Danny was writing it, just using samples or doing an overdub of it separately, because you need everyone doing it or it has to be really quiet. Danny uses it as a motor to keep things running, as opposed to the usual modern use of it, which is for a scary texture."

"These are the things you learn as you go," Elfman says. "It's hard to control the *col legno* in the orchestra. Now, whenever I write a *col legno* part, I make it a separate session."

To create the final score, Elfman combined percussion elements derived both from orchestral performance and samples he created and manipulated from the instruments in his own percussion collection, along with the performance of a large orchestra at the Fox scoring stage. Elfman spent many weeks coming up with the samples and performing all the prerecorded percussion himself. Up to that point, Elfman was recording film music fairly conventionally with a symphonic orchestra, occasionally sweetened with some synth parts. Now, it went the other direction. The synthetic pre-lays *dominated* the score and Elfman was supplementing it with a bottom-heavy orchestra whose proportions were tilted strongly toward the low brass (trombones) and strings (cellos and basses).

Elfman says he didn't develop the approach specifically for *Planet Of The Apes*: "That's been the case on a lot of films I've done, especially some of the big, action sequences. It's what I started doing more after I did *Mission: Impossible*—the idea of going into the studio with a bunch of percussionists and getting a sound library that I like—sometimes my instruments, sometimes theirs, and then starting the score around those samples."

Engineer Dennis Sands says the challenge with Elfman's work lies more in mixing than recording: "Danny often uses a lot of electronics in combination with live players. That's always a special challenge, because it's a very subtle balance between the two. If you have too much of the acoustic elements, the electronic elements don't speak—they sound wimpy. If you have too much electronics, the orchestra sounds small. It's a very, very subtle balance between the two textures. Danny spends a lot of time trying to make each score very unique so the sonic palette he uses, especially in the

JERRY GOLDSMITH

Jerry Goldsmith scored more than 200 films between 1957 and 2003, proving himself to be one of the most innovative and consistently excellent film composers of the late 20th century. He began his career in radio and live television, often bringing startling orchestral effects to early suspense shows and producing striking works for small orchestral ensembles on shows like *Climax!* and *The Twilight Zone*. He wrote popular television themes like *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *The Waltons*, *Barnaby Jones*, and *Room 222*, logo fanfares for the various Hollywood movie studios, and some of the most memorable and dramatically powerful film scores ever written. Over the course of his career, Goldsmith earned 18 Oscar nominations, starting with John Huston's *Freud* in 1962 and ending with the Disney animated feature *Mulan* in 1998. He won the award for the 1976 horror film *The Omen*.

Goldsmith was highly prolific, sometimes scoring as many as six movies a year (in addition to television work during the '60s and '70s). While he had a strong personal style, he was continually evolving, trying out new techniques and tackling projects with wildly different approaches, so that on certain scores his fingerprint was almost impossible to discern, while on many others his stylistic trademarks were unmistakable. More than that, Goldsmith had a genius for defining genres. "He would go in and do a *Star Trek* and then it would define a space movie," Disney music executive Chris Montan says. "He would go and do *The Sand Pebbles* and he would do a historic kind of thing. If Jerry went into a new genre of picture, oftentimes his musical statement would be so superior that people would feel like they had to at least somehow acknowledge it in their version when they did one of those movies, because he had defined it."

Glenn Shadix and Danny Elfman (top right)

Elfman with the late Glenn Shadix in makeup for *Planet Of The Apes*.

Tim Burton and Tim Roth (top left)

Chatting between takes.

Tim Burton and chimp (bottom left)

Bonding with Pericles on the set of *Planet Of The Apes*.

electronics, changes drastically from score to score. My challenge is to, first of all, understand what Danny is trying to do, and then mix it in a creative way that reproduces what he’s looking for in the music and yet enhances it for the movie. A movie like *Planet Of The Apes* is one of those where the samples or the prerecorded elements are at least equal if not more important than the orchestra.”

Even given Elfman’s varied and often challenging body of work, Sands says *Planet Of The Apes* was especially difficult. “*Planet Of The Apes* was probably, sonically, one of the most complex projects I had ever done with Danny. We had some digital machines for the electronics but they weren’t workstations; they were digital reel-to-reel. I think we had eight machines running with various sonic elements all plugged into a big analog console. It was a really, really complex mix.”

Planet Of The Apes shared a couple of challenges with *Sleepy Hollow*. Again there was a potential romantic relationship that was never fully defined, which Elfman was asked to sharpen with music. But in this case the idea was to potentially deemphasize one relationship in favor of another. One of Tim Burton’s ideas was to suggest a romantic potential for the relationship between Mark Wahlberg’s hero (Captain Leo Davidson) and Ari, a chimpanzee—and a champion of “human rights”—played by Helena Bonham Carter. It’s a riff on the characters played by Charlton Heston and Kim Hunter in the original film, in which Hunter’s female chimpanzee Dr. Zira gives Heston’s Colonel Taylor an embarrassed kiss goodbye with an apologetic, “All right—but you’re so damned ugly!”

In the new film, Carter gave a deliberately flirtatious performance and her makeup was streamlined to make her appear more obviously feminine and less ape-like. “That was the hardest nut to crack basically,” makeup artist Rick Baker says. “Tim, I think, actually had the hots for Zira in the original *Planet Of The Apes* as a kid. He wanted the same thing to happen in this movie. We both knew Ari had to be attractive but she had to be an ape, and then it was like, ‘What do you do with the hair?’ We did a lot more playing around with her than we did with a lot of the other apes.”

But the studio, which had jettisoned the social commentary inherent in the earlier *Apes* films for a purely commercial, action-oriented reboot, was more comfortable with the idea of a standard romance between Wahlberg’s character and a pneumatic human slave girl played by model Estella Warren.

But there was very little real romance between the human characters evident in the film. “I’m not sure that we actually did anything different,” Elfman says of the need to express a romantic undercurrent between the characters musically. “It was one of those moments where I had to ask, ‘How do you want me to express this? And where?’ Like what often happens with Tim, his sympathies seemed to exist with the apes, with Helena’s character...once again, with his miscreants.”

“On *Planet Of The Apes*, I wrote music for the trailer,” remembers Elfman. “I remember getting a call from music editor Ellen Segal saying, ‘Look—Tim is trying something that you may be very upset about. He’s taken the trailer music and he’s cut it into the entire fight at the end of the movie.’ I came in and looked at it, and it was like, ‘F**king brilliant.’ It worked so much better than what I wrote. It was actually catching action weirdly, as if it was scored for this sequence.”

Elfman’s battle and action music for the film contains all his trademark complexity and energy. Particularly on a film with such massive scope, the composer says he was compelled by some of the great epic film scores of the past: “I’m always attempting to connect people with this sort of

In the ’60s, Goldsmith created a bongo-driven, energetic counterpart to John Barry’s James Bond spy music in projects like *The Prize*, the James Coburn/Derek Flint movies (*Our Man Flint* and *In Like Flint*), and the TV series *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* He brought a distinctive, often dazzling style to big-budget, world-spanning epics like *The Blue Max*, *The Sand Pebbles*, *The Chairman*, and *The Wind And The Lion*; he wrote muscular, emotionally driven action music for Sylvester Stallone’s *Rambo* movies and delicate, introspective scores for ’60s dramas like *Lonely Are The Brave* and *A Patch Of Blue*. He brought distinctive, wildly inventive approaches to a series of suspense thrillers: a pounding, jagged ostinato that turned hovering helicopters into characters in *Capricorn One*; a thunderous, mocking waltz for aging Nazis in *The Boys From Brazil*; clanging metallic effects and cold piano notes for the deadly medical hijinks in *Coma*; a sawing harmonica giving voice to a homicidal ventriloquist’s dummy in *Magic*. And Goldsmith’s groundbreaking, unnerving experiments in horror—*The Mephisto Waltz*, *Seconds*, the *Omen* films, *Psycho II*, *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, *Poltergeist*, even the darkly comic *Gremlins*—chilled audiences and influenced his contemporaries for years.

Jerry Goldsmith, Richard Kraft, and Danny Elfman

Agent Kraft with his first two clients, Goldsmith and Elfman, both of whom scored different versions of *Planet Of The Apes*.

Planet Of The Apes, scoring session

Elfman's score mixed much of his own percussion and synthesizers with orchestra.

players' expression and looking for things in the music that he's written that aren't necessarily on the page."

Knobloch adds one more recollection about the Burton/Elfman working relationship: "They are the only guys I know, so far, on a scoring date, who spend the downtime talking about and comparing notes on their shrunken heads collection. I'm pretty sure that's unique to those guys; I've never seen any other composer-director collaboration comparing their shrunken heads."

For Burton, Elfman's score helped brand his "reimagining" as its own animal. "You have a classic Jerry Goldsmith score [on the original movie], so again you didn't want to fool around with that. We treated it like we'd treat everything else—sort of dismiss everything else and go for it in your own way. I liked the percussion—there's a lot of it. I liked that aspect of it. It was more electronics. There's stuff in there that [Danny] tried that he hadn't done before, which I enjoyed."

Planet Of The Apes received mixed reviews, but its huge opening weekend and \$100 million gross proved that interest in the idea, and in particular Tim Burton's take on it, was strong.

Richard Zanuck says the film was somewhat defeated by the locked-in release date that forced it into production without a satisfactory script: "We never even had a chance to sneak-preview *Apes* before the release. It was the first time that's ever happened to me. I mean, I'm not a big preview guy, but throughout my career I always make sure that there's not a bad laugh or some damn thing that you can't see. So, I always put it out into a theater. There was no time. We had wall-to-wall, around-the-clock editors. Danny did his score and we rushed it out. I thought his score was a hell of a lot better than the picture."

Around the time of *Planet Of The Apes*, Danny Elfman was continuing to express not only his inimitable style and command of genre but also a rapidly developing capability to tackle projects of increasing sophistication and weight. Before *Planet Of The Apes* he had scored the Russell Crowe hostage drama *Proof Of Life* for Taylor Hackford, who had worked with Elfman on another important progression point in the composer's development, *Dolores Claiborne*. Hackford says their working relationship on *Proof Of Life* was different: "Now it's no longer a situation where it's someone I admire from a distance, but I don't really know him. I know that Danny is capable of lots of possible approaches. We discussed the whole idea of the South American flute and those processes that are so unique to that region. I said I felt that this was a real drama and a bit

of a romance but was also going to have a major action quotient in a way that *Dolores* didn't. The thing I understood from working with Danny on *Dolores* was that I would never have to worry about him delivering."

Elfman next moved to a gentle comedy, Brett Ratner's *The Family Man* with Nicholas Cage. "I was just such a fan of his work but I wanted to do something different than he had done before, and I think my connection with his work is really because of his connection to the emotion of the story," Ratner says. "I remember showing him *The Family Man*. He wanted to see the movie before he decided—and he just got it. His score for *The Family Man* doesn't sound like *Batman* or *Spider-Man*—and I think because he's driven by story. He really cares about characters and emotionality and he designs melodies, and his instrumentation is always about storytelling. It's like, 'Without being heavy-handed, how do I inform the audience of what the director's point of view was or what his vision was, and what he wanted the audience to feel at that moment?' I'm not the master storyteller, but I know if I wanted to push it along somehow, I know Danny will deliver that emotionality that I need or that feeling that I wanted."

Elfman would next reestablish his connection to the superhero genre in two vastly different but equally impressive ways. His working relationship with Sam Raimi paid off in 2002 when Raimi asked him to score the long-awaited big-screen adaptation of Marvel Comics' *Spider-Man*, the only comic book character to rival Superman and *Batman* for pop culture impact. For Raimi, *Spider-Man* was a dream project—he'd had a huge poster of the web-slinging superhero on his bedroom wall as a kid. Just as with Fox's *Planet Of The Apes*, *Spider-Man* had gone through a long and torturous development project under a number of different directors and studios, with radically different views of how to bring the teenaged superhero to the big screen. Raimi was determined to take a classic approach to the character, spinning (no pun intended) off the '60s artwork of John Romita and the more recent, photo-realistic paintings of Alex Ross to bring a vibrant, boldly colorful vision of the comic book to big-screen life. Elfman's title theme was perfect for a young hero, Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire), just discovering his power as its notes surged upward from a low tonal center; his noble theme for Peter's uncle—and spiritual mentor—Ben Parker (Cliff Robertson) seemed to musically express the character's famous line, "With great power comes great responsibility." Elfman wrote a slithering, diabolical melody for Spider-Man's nemesis, the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe) and embraced Raimi's hyperkinetic camera moves and thrilling staging of the heroic web-slinger's pugilistic battles with the villain, mixing live and prerecorded percussion to create one of the most punchy and brutal-sounding action scores of his career.

Percussionist Emil Richards remembers the sessions as exhausting—but rewarding: "The comic book scores are a blast. *Spider-Man*—man, did that score kill me! I remember I came home and said, 'Man, I worked my head off on this one.' The music was intense and great."

Director Sam Raimi found Elfman's score one of the key ingredients of the film and one of the main factors that helped propel the movie beyond what a two-dimensional comic book page can deliver. "I think what Danny does is, he gently carries the audience to that next place—but he allows them to do the work," Raimi says. "He has the unique ability to create a soul to his music.

his contemporaries fell by the wayside, unable to adapt to the ways in which film music and movies themselves changed toward the turn of the millennium. Goldsmith was scoring A-list, big-budget productions like *The Last Castle*, *The Sum Of All Fears*, and *Star Trek: Nemesis* almost up until the last year of his life. He died of cancer in 2004.

Film music agent Richard Kraft represented both Goldsmith and Danny Elfman (Elfman was Kraft's first client, Goldsmith his second), giving him a unique perspective on what he sees as some fascinating similarities between the two composers. "They are both very soft-spoken and very shy, deceptively so," Kraft says. "Their concerns about wanting to please their director were very similar, and frequently they had more experience in filmmaking than the directors they were working for. By the time I was working with Jerry, he had been through so many battles and had scar tissues from those battles, but I was always surprised by how eager he was to jump into work, how much each score actually mattered to him, and what an incredible work ethic he had. And Danny is so similar. He takes what he does very, very seriously and has not let the great film music wars make him any less invested when he's getting into a project. He's never really been able to let go of the sense that every job feels like, 'This could be the last one... I have to do a great job.' And neither goes through an intellectual process of coming up with a film score. They both write from their gut, and after they've written something that is extraordinary, they both have no ability to articulate what they did, why they did, how they did. So, it's frustrating for non-musicians who want to unlock the secrets of Jerry Goldsmith and Danny Elfman's music to turn to the creator to explain how it got there and discover that the use of verbiage from both of them is nonexistent."

He’s a genius—he really is—and when you listen to his music and the diversity of it and how successful it is with the images, I don’t know if there’s a better word to describe him.”

A year later, another Marvel superhero suffered a film-scoring emergency. Just as with *Batman* and *Dick Tracy*, Elfman had just hit one out of the park with *Spider-Man*, and when filmmaker Ang Lee ran into postproduction trouble on Marvel’s *Hulk*, Elfman was the natural choice to provide a rescue. *Hulk* was a Jekyll-and-Hyde update about a meek scientist whose experiments turn him into a rampaging, 12-foot-tall green monster when he gets angry. Lee had been experimenting with a world music approach when Universal decided the music needed a stronger action foundation.

“Kathy Nelson [head of film music for Universal at the time] introduced Danny to me,” director Ang Lee recalls. “Not only does Danny do many of the action, comic book hero movies successfully, he is just a great composer. His facility of all kinds of music is very rich. It’s like a dictionary from *The Simpsons* to *Batman* to a Carnegie Hall concert and Oingo Boingo, and his range is really big. He’s a natural. I also was fighting with something at that point, particularly with *Hulk*. I think with the *Hulk*, I was trying to do something about American culture, the inner violence and ‘macho-ness,’ the mutation. That’s why I was having problems with music. And, at that time, most of the film was pretty done. There’s not a lot of wiggle room for me except music, and Danny came to the rescue. I think I didn’t really do a comic book—I treated it like a horror film—but then I had to *sell* it like a comic book. I didn’t really know what to do except the last emulation was the music. His music to me has a signature American sound. That was very useful. The whole thing took five weeks including recording, and that was a hasty job. He did a heroic favor for me by doing that film. He’s very innovative, works very hard, and most of all, has a capacity to understand music and what a movie needs, which is really incredible.”

Elfman returned to work for Ratner on *Red Dragon*, the third film to feature Anthony Hopkins as serial killer Hannibal Lecter. In a way, this was Danny’s *Psycho*—sharing Bernard Herrmann’s heavy focus on strings but also ornamented by expressive writing for flute and low woodwinds, as well as detailing from Elfman’s distinctive, layered percussion effects, including menacing notes from prepared piano. Once again his title theme, driven by a cascading string figure, stood on its own as a distinctive composition, and Elfman strove to balance

the complex triumvirate of emotions between Lecter, a rival serial killer played by Ralph Fiennes, and Edward Norton’s serial killer hunter Will Graham. “I was so surprised at how humble he was,” Ratner says of Elfman. “He would play me cues, and the cues would be ingenious. He would want my input because he would think, ‘I think I can make this better. Tell me what you’re feeling.’ It wasn’t about what do *you* want the audience to feel? And that’s what was so great. It’s what are you trying to say, and what do *you* want the audience to feel? It’s not always the same thing; it’s not always the same mission.”

Elfman ended 2002 with a brief but highly effective contribution to Rob Marshall’s film adaptation of the stage musical *Chicago*, which went on to win Best Picture at the 2003 Academy Awards. His experience working with The Mystic Knights, with their longstanding motto “nothing contemporary,” served him well as he whipped up a number of gritty, low-down numbers for a brassy jazz band to flesh out the moody, red-light corners of the musical with an appropriate ’30s vibe. After two years of apes, hostages, serial killers, and superheroes, Elfman was ready for a lighter confection, and his next project with Tim Burton would give him just that.

Elfman and chimp (above)

Danny Elfman visiting the set of *Planet Of The Apes*.

Uncle Billy (left)

Danny Elfman’s Ecuadorian shrunken head and scoring stage mascot, Uncle Billy.

12



STORYTIME

Circuses, Giants & Witches



Big Fish Watercolor, 2003
Artwork by Tim Burton.

BIG FISH

After *Sleepy Hollow* and *Planet Of The Apes*, Tim Burton was determined to return to a smaller, more personal film as a respite from the pressure-cooker expectations of his previous blockbusters. The goal was to have a finished script that could be filmed on a smaller budget without a pre-sold release date, merchandising concerns, and all the crushing distractions that Burton had dealt with in his recent projects.

Burton initially went in one direction with producer Richard Zanuck, developing an unusual period film that would take place in Paris, but he would soon be attracted to a screenplay that had been in development for another director. *Big Fish* was a novel by Daniel Wallace—essentially a collection of short stories about a character named Edward Bloom who encounters various fantastic characters over the course of his life. Screenwriter John August bought the rights to the novel and wrote his own screenplay for producers Dan Jinks and Bruce Cohen (*American Beauty*). Steven Spielberg had signed to direct the movie and worked on the project for a year before moving on to something else.

“What was nice and organic about the process is that John August had written a brilliant screenplay,” says Cohen. “When Steven developed it, we made some changes—some specific things that Steven wanted but not a whole lot of stuff. When he decided not to direct it, Steven actually said to us (which was beautiful): ‘Feel free to take out the things I made you put in, because those were specific things for me—and if you want to go get someone else to direct it, it should be John’s vision of the movie.’ So, I think we did do that to some extent. We went back to John’s draft.”

“My father had died and so obviously it was a project that hit me thematically,” Burton says. “I don’t know if it would have hit me as strongly if that hadn’t happened. And it’s probably the most reality-based film I’ve worked on in the sense of a certain thematic reality to it.”

The movie would star Billy Crudup as Bloom’s son Will, Albert Finney as Edward Bloom, and Ewan McGregor as the young Edward Bloom seen in the flashbacks that compose much of the film’s story. Crudup’s character was largely a function of the film and screenplay. “There is a son in the book, but he’s the unknown narrator,” August says. “The only aspects of the real world in the book is that the son comes in and tries to have a conversation with his father four separate times, and every time he tries to have that conversation, his father goes off on tangents. The real structuring of going back and forth between time was a function of the script and took a long time to get right.”

“I remember Dan Jinks and I went to meet with Tim Burton for the first time,” Cohen says. “We thought we were going there to get script notes and hear how Tim wanted to reimagine the script, which is always a bit of a nervous meeting, especially because John August, the writer, had brought up the material—it was *his* material. So, you’re sort of holding your breath. We sat down at the meeting and Tim said, ‘I’m so excited to make this movie; I love the script.’ And we said, ‘Yeah, but what do you want to do with it?’ He was like, ‘No, no, no,’ and he sort of held it. *I love the script!*’ And that was the movie Tim wanted to make: the script that we had sent him.” Although some tweaks would be made to the final shooting script, August’s vision of the script was amazingly close to Burton’s aesthetic.



Witch from *Big Fish*
Concept Artwork by Tim Burton.

“*Big Fish* has two elements,” Cohen elaborates. “One—which is the fantasy world of the Siamese twins, the circus, the giant, and the witch—is classic, vintage, automatic Tim Burton. But then the other—which is this current-day drama that is all about character, performance, and dialogue—is in some sense, very different from what Tim had done before. And to us, that combination was very exciting, because it’s rare to give an artist a chance to both excel at what he’s a master at but also try something new in the same project. And it’s certainly rare for a studio film in Hollywood, and that’s what excited Tim as well. Part of the magic of watching him work was how equally adept he was at the current-day drama stuff as he was at the more traditional Tim Burton stuff.”

For Producer Zanuck the situation was a major relief after the experience on his last film. “We had a much better script on *Big Fish* than we did on *Planet Of The Apes*,” Zanuck says. “We worked it and had great actors and all the rest. It was a smaller picture, so we weren’t under the huge pressure that we were under for *Planet Of The Apes*. And there was no deadline. There was no start line that we were faced with...no end that we had to finish.”

August says that in working on the script, he deliberately made Will his age and Edward Bloom the same age as his father, in order to feel his way through the narrative. “It was one of the most difficult things I’ve ever written, in that to get through that last section, I sort of had to bring myself to tears and then write, and then bring myself to tears and then write. It was awful, but very therapeutic. It was interesting because even as a screenplay, there were a lot of people working on the movie who had a hard time finishing the script. I remember there was a visual-effects supervisor who was like, ‘I hate you!’ And I was like, ‘What did I do to you?’ She said, ‘They wanted me to do a budget breakdown for the visual effects for the movie, and I couldn’t get through the end of the script.’ It just devastated her. The mix between fantasy and reality was always a challenge, a combination. That’s the reason why I was attracted to it.”

Big Fish represented new territory for Burton. It was a much more human, sober story than he had done before. By 2004, Danny Elfman had written for a wide variety of films but still found this one quite tricky. “It was an odd balance between whimsy and drama, and out-and-out romance...very different for Tim. I don’t think it was clear at the start what the musical tone should be. One thing Tim



Love writ large

Sandra Bloom (Alison Lohman) is courted by young Edward Bloom (Ewan McGregor) in a field of wildflowers in *Big Fish*.



The Ringmaster

Burton sketched Amos Calloway with Danny DeVito in mind. He also gave him a suicidal cat sidekick.

did make clear was that it should be simple and lean toward understatement,” Elfman says of Burton’s thoughts on the film’s score. “It was a tough nut to crack. I really did a lot of experimenting. It wasn’t like an easy ‘straightforward seeing it’ and then ‘I get it’ thing. Even as a romantic drama, it still wasn’t traditional. Having done, let’s say, a movie like *Sommersby* or *Dolores Claiborne* didn’t help me approach a movie like *Big Fish*. The tone of *Big Fish* was still very odd and unique, a bit of a tightrope walk: a little too far in either direction and it would topple. And I knew that finding a balance between the human part and the fantastic part was not going to be easy.”

In approaching the themes to the picture, Elfman says he found that some thematic ideas evolved in unexpected directions. One of the recurring themes and images of the film involves water and the legendary “*big fish*” Edward Bloom is always trying to catch—which appears twice to Bloom in later years as a nymph-like woman tantalizing him, either toward love or death. “The theme that I had written originally for this kind of water creature ended up becoming a major theme that followed the Jenny character, and would have a melancholy quality to counter Sandra’s theme,” Elfman says.

In the film, Alison Lohman plays the young Sandra, while Jessica Lange plays her as Edward Bloom’s middle-aged wife. Part of the story told in flashbacks illustrates how the young Edward Bloom first encounters, falls in love with, and eventually wins Sandra. Unlike the half-realized, would-be romantic relationships of *Sleepy Hollow* and *Planet Of The Apes*, the relationship between Edward and Sandra was love writ large. “Tim was very concerned this time that there would be a romantic theme that really played like a romantic theme,” Elfman continues. “That was the love affair of the young couple that really is going to blossom for the first time. She wakes up; she sees Edward in a field of flowers. This isn’t like unrequited love. This is like, love, big time! He sees her in the circus and the circus freezes. It was love at first sight. So first, I evolved this big, old-fashioned love theme that could flourish. Then I had to find a part of the score that relates to the father/son relationship that is really much more subdued and serious and plays more internally. But then there’s this whole other part of the story that still has to be expressed, and that’s where the mermaid/Jenny theme slowly worked its way in and became a stronger part of tying everything together.”

Elfman also worked to get a distinctly American, regional sound for the score that wasn’t too overbearing. “Part of the score is this Appalachian fiddle stuff, solo fiddles that we originally had placed within the orchestra,” Steve Bartek remembers. “We ended up recording them in a separate room. But the big problem was that the British players’ idea of folk fiddle is Scottish and Irish, so we had to push them a little.”

In the film, Will Bloom, who resents his father’s lifetime of telling “tall tales,” reconciles with the old man by becoming the storyteller himself—weaving the fragments of Edward’s stories into a final, elegiac conclusion as Edward lies on his deathbed. In the aftermath of Edward’s death, Will attends his father’s funeral to find that all the larger-than-life denizens of his father’s stories actually exist and have gathered to celebrate the man’s life. The emotionally powerful

TIM BURTON, THESPIAN

Tim Burton has had a small, but notable career as an actor...notable primarily because of the sheer oddity of his five big-screen movie roles. He is one of the thugs who threatens Pee-wee Herman in a rain-swept alley in *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*—a scene that shows the 98-pound weakling Pee-wee so consumed with his quest to find his lost bike that a single, animal snarl from the character sends the threatening goons fleeing into the night.

In Cameron Crowe’s *Singles*, Burton has a brief cameo as a videographer who is described as “the next Martin ScorSEEZE.” When it’s stated that for 10 dollars he will shoot a dating audition video for desperate single Debbie Hunt (Sheila Kelley), Burton briefly looks up at her and delivers his one line: “Twenty.” Burton also appears, quite convincingly, as a corpse in an elaborate overhead tracking shot in Danny DeVito’s *Hoffa*. Burton is one of a number of bodies in open caskets in a mass funeral scene in the film; the camera tracks over casket after casket before lingering on Burton’s pallid



Tim Burton

The director occasionally steps in front of the camera.



Ewan McGregor (left)

McGregor plays young Edward Bloom, portrayed later in life by Albert Finney.

Helena Bonham Carter (top right)

The acclaimed actress portrayed Young Jenny, the Older Jenny, and the Witch in *Big Fish*.

Marion Cotillard (bottom right)

Future Oscar-winner Cotillard made her American film debut in *Big Fish*.

conclusion was one of Elfman's biggest challenges. "That scene is 12 minutes long and I knew very early on that to nail the movie, I had to nail that scene," Elfman says. "I must have spent close to a month working on that because I knew it would contain all my important thematic material...the amount of time I spent on that scene was way out of proportion to the 12-week schedule I had for the entire score. It went through a lot of incarnations. It's not uncommon for me to score something a dozen different ways, but in this case, I did more. Then finally I had it. I relaxed. Tim relaxed. Everything was there and the rest of the score just laid itself out naturally and without struggle."

One of the film's most stylized sequences was set in Communist China during the Korean War, with young Edward Bloom parachuting into the wings of a bizarre USO-style show featuring a set of Siamese twins performing the song "Twice The Love." John August developed the basics of the song in his screenplay. "Where there were songs, I'd write the lyrics to the song. Once Tim signed on board for the movie and it was clear Danny was going to do the music, he took the lyrics and wrote a song that incorporated the lyrics and I never spoke to him about it. It was just something he did. Shortly before the first test screening, I heard the song and I liked it." Elfman's brassy intro to the number, which plays under Edward's hand-to-hand struggle with several Chinese soldiers, briefly gives the scene a James Bond feel that's appropriate for the glamorized Cold War action on screen, although Elfman says he didn't consciously think about the Bond scores when writing the sequence.

Big Fish was released to excellent reviews, and just as the film straddled realism and fantasy, its appeal crossed over between those who loved the idiosyncrasies of Tim Burton films and a more mainstream audience. For men especially, the plot of an estranged son dealing with his father's life and death resonated deeply. "One of the things we loved about *Big Fish* is that men would be bawling," Bruce Cohen says. "Because it's specifically a father-son story. Women loved it as well, and by their own admission, would say, 'Well, I cried through that scene but I cry through lots of movies, but my *husband* was *sobbing*.' The first time it happened at the preview, I hate to admit, we were very excited because you don't really see men sobbing in a movie theater that often. I was, too, but I'm the producer—although in some ways that's an even better sign because I knew what was going to happen. I saw the movie by myself because I happened to have been traveling in London. Tim arranged a screening, and I was literally the only person in the theater and I was sobbing. I was absolutely a mess, which I felt was a really good sign."

Elfman's score kept a core of subdued Americana at its center while exploring the eccentricities of the film's characters and events at the edges. "If it had been anybody else's movie, it would be the strangest movie of their career. But ironically, it's Tim's *normal* movie—the one with the Siamese twins, the giant, and the witch," Richard Kraft observes.

"It's one of my favorite scores that [Danny] did," Burton says. "I remember talking about just going for a certain emotional simplicity, and when I heard the music, I felt strongly that Danny had accomplished that. The score kind of hits you that way. It's more sensitive than some of the others, in a sense, because it's an emotional story. But you don't want to overdo it; at the same

face before tilting up to show Jimmy Hoffa (Jack Nicholson) and other union luminaries gathered in front of the church altar. Behind-the-scenes video shows Burton being made up for the cameo and an outtake in which the shot stops directly over Burton, who tries to stay in character while DeVito and Nicholson hover over his coffin saying, "Tiiiiimmy...Tiiiiimmy..." until Burton opens his eyes and starts laughing. It looks like one of the more expensive blooper reel shots in the history of the genre.

At the opposite end of the budget spectrum is Burton's early student short *Doctor Of Doom* and his appearance as the title character, a mad scientist with a voice dubbed (in a burlesque of Mexican horror films) by Brad Bird. But Burton's crowning achievement as an actor may be his appearance in his own 1982, 30-minute short *Luanu*. It's a takeoff of beach blanket movies, which features a cast of amazingly stupid would-be surfer musclemen whose idyllic pinhead existence is turned upside down by the arrival of a cute Japanese princess (Terrey Hamada) and Burton as The Supreme Being, a mime-faced disembodied head from another world who arrogantly challenges the surfer leader Bob (Mike Gabriel) to a surfing contest. This leads to extended shots of Burton, covered in white-paste makeup with his eyes blackened to give him a kind of early Jack Skellington look, his head sticking up through a hollowed-out surfboard prop sitting in front of a rear-projection screen of roaring California waves, while buckets of water are thrown in his face to simulate surf. When The Supreme Being loses the contest, his echoing voice bellows out his plan to destroy the surfer gang, until a previously unseen, fully uniformed football player appears and drop-kicks the alien creature's head out into the ocean.



On the set
Burton directs the film's emotional climax with Albert Finney.



Richard Zanuck and Tim Burton
Burton confers with his trusted producer Richard Zanuck on the set of *Big Fish*.



Ewan McGregor and Tim Burton
Tim Burton directs Ewan McGregor in *Big Fish*.

time, you want to hit it. It was definitely much more reality-based and more sensitive than the other things. I can just listen to the score and I still get a strong feeling about it. I don't like to watch the movie ever, but if I just listen to the score, that's easier for me."

John August says he never doubted Elfman's ability to give the movie a superb score: "People think of the Danny Elfman themes for the big, dramatic, fantasy aspect of them, but he's also done amazing scores for movies like *A Simple Plan*, which was fantastic. I was 100 percent confident he would do a great job and find that middle ground between the fantasy and the real world."

August was particularly struck by how well Elfman wove together the film's themes in the final sequence. "It's probably a good 4- or 5-minute section that has very little dialogue," August says. "Danny has to be able to understand where the audience is emotionally, support that, and still let the story push forward—and new things are discovered. It's a tricky balance because so much of score can be underlying the emotion. But this had to sort of guide the emotion to where we needed to go—and not in a big hit-you-over-the-head way, but in a very gentle way to get you past Edward Bloom's death."

Burton says, in working out such extended sequences, he relies on some temporary musical guideposts to help him structure the scenes, but for the most part he places his trust in Elfman to discover the right approach on his own. "I'm always thinking about that, but I keep it open-minded," he says. "You're editing, and in the editing room we try temp stuff. I know we try not to let [Danny] listen but it helps me to kind of get an idea a little bit. But I don't over-think it, because I don't want to get too many preconceived ideas. I'd like to leave it open to [Danny] to do [his] thing, and that's the great thing—it's nice to be surprised. Music is the connective [tissue]; you could have a sequence and with the proper music, it could feel like it's five minutes, or it could feel like it's 20 minutes. If you let things sort of extend, it helps tie them together rather than hitting each thing, which sometimes makes it feel longer. So, that was a very interesting process to see stretching things out."

Producer Dan Jinks says Elfman's grasp of fantasy and mystery propelled some of the other sections of the film, tying them into the elaborate narrative: "When the character of young Edward was in the town of Spectre, it was such an oddball place for the character to visit, and there was something that was so unique and wonderful

about it and kind of scary and mystical and playful—and the music delivered all those things at the same time."

Many of Danny Elfman's frequent collaborators regard *Big Fish* as a career high point. "*Big Fish* was one of my favorite scores," says Bruce Dukov. "It had a combination of just about everything he's known for. It had that carnival sound; it had the mysterious layering that he did in *Dolores Claiborne*; it just had everything."

"Tim Burton is somebody who is so wonderful at creating a world. And so often, a chief ingredient in that world is the music of Danny Elfman," Dan Jinks says. "There's something so unique to his sound that you're never surprised when you hear it's Danny Elfman, but it's not like anything he's ever done before."

With *Big Fish*, Elfman finally got nominated for an Oscar for a Tim Burton movie. It represented that both artists had arrived at a level of acceptance, because there was no marketing, no big push for the score to be nominated. It was Elfman's peers, his fellow composers who discovered the score's quality on its own merits.

Big Fish remains one of Tim Burton's most acclaimed and respected films, elevating him to a new level of importance as a filmmaker. With the critical recognition of *Big Fish* behind him, Burton would soon face the challenges of adapting one of the most artistically daring stage musicals of all time.

13



THE GOLDEN TICKET
Adventures In Loompaland



Charlie And The Chocolate Factory, 2005

Johnny Depp stars as chocolatier Willy Wonka in Tim Burton's 11th film as director.

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Following *Planet Of The Apes*, Tim Burton's next project was another remake—but this one was ultimately a happier experience than *Apes*. *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* was a classic children's book by the dark-humored author Roald Dahl, which had already been adapted into a movie musical in 1971, *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*. It starred Gene Wilder as Wonka, an ingenious chocolatier who lures a group of children (including hard-luck orphan Charlie Bucket and a number of horrible tykes representing various childhood vices) into his factory with a worldwide "Golden Ticket" contest. The 1971 movie was sweet and silly, with a warm, quirky, unexpected performance by Gene Wilder, and it featured songs by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley such as "The Candy Man" and "Pure Imagination," which became popular hits—not to mention a catchy song featuring the Oompa-Loompas (the orange-faced little people who work in Wonka's factory), which repeats in various guises throughout the film. But the '70s film didn't approach the slightly unnerving, maddeningly energetic, and joyously fiendish wordplay of the Dahl book.

Like *Planet Of The Apes* and *Batman*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* had long been in development and was circling the drain creatively when Burton took a look at it and elected to return to the original story treatment by Scott Frank—and the Dahl book itself. While Burton had been a major fan of the original *Planet Of The Apes*, he had no such attachments to *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*, and he felt confident he could get closer to the spirit of Dahl's book with a new movie.

But Burton says he had great reservations with early versions of the script. "I could see, in different scripts, the thought process, the

modern thinking of, 'OK, there are all these bad kids, but Charlie's just boring from a movie point of view; he doesn't do anything.' Well, Charlie is like 90 percent of us—kids in school who disappear into the background. But in earlier drafts they were always trying to make him do something, be a whiz kid. 'You've got to make Charlie more proactive, and we've got to take out the father because Willy Wonka's the father figure.' You could see all the story meetings right there: this idea of Willy Wonka as the ultimate father figure. I said, 'No, he's not! In some ways, he's more screwed up than some of the kids.' So, we got rid of that idea."

Burton brought John August, fresh off of *Big Fish*, to update Scott Frank's screenplay. "Tim called me over to meet about *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*," August recalls. "I wanted to do everything from the book and then enough other stuff that you need, so that it all sort of fits together and makes sense. As I pitched it to Tim, it's really reversing who's the protagonist and who is the antagonist and that Charlie is the antagonist who forces Willy Wonka to change."

Burton got to see some of Dahl's original handwritten manuscripts. "He wrote everything longhand," Burton says. "He was even more politically incorrect than what ended up in the book. Originally he had five other kids; he had a kid named 'Herpes' in it. It's not so much that it was politically incorrect, but it's when you're a kid, you like things that are dangerous and scary. That's part of what sparks your growth and creativity. Some kids are great, but we've all been in school, so we all know that nobody can be more horrible to each other than kids. That's why I think Dahl was good—he spoke to kids on their level. He certainly didn't talk down to them; he connected."

Whipping a Cow

Some of *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory's* clever concepts were first sketched by Burton.

Up the Shoot

Tim Burton's concept artwork of the scene where Augustus Gloop is sucked up the tube in the chocolate river.

Squirrel Nutcrackers

Concept painting by Burton of the scene in *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* where Veruca Salt is determined to be a "bad nut."

"It was always a mandate for me to use every possible word out of Dahl's text that I could," August says. "The movie really is exactly the book, and the stuff that's added...framing stuff, establishes how Willy Wonka came to be the crazy old shut-in."

Burton says that thematically, the *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* story has similar qualities to what attracted him to *Batman*, *Edward Scissorhands*, and *Ed Wood*. "It has to do with a character who is semi-antisocial, has difficulty communicating or relating, is slightly out of touch, is living in his own head, is rooted in early family problems—all those things I could relate to in the Wonka character. Charlie's the positive side of oneself, and Willy's the more complicated and probably more accurate side."

Like Burton, Danny Elfman had no emotional attachment to the original *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*. He wrote a driving main title piece and a number of expressive and orchestrally exotic score cues that worked as counterpoint to the amazing imagery inside Wonka's factory. But the real musical challenge involved the Oompa-Loompas. In Burton's film the Oompa-Loompas were all played by diminutive actor Gordeep "Deep" Roy, who was digitally reduced in size and duplicated to create the illusion of an army of Oompa-Loompas. The film is book-ended by a mellifluous narration by actor and choreographer Geoffrey Holder, who had appeared in the '60s fantasy musical *Doctor Dolittle*, the James Bond movie *Live And Let Die*, and a series of "Uncola Nut" commercials for the soft drink 7Up in the '70s. At the end of the film, a pullback reveals that the booming voice of Holder is issuing from one of the Oompa-Loompas, who has been recounting the tale of Charlie and Wonka all along.

Burton planned to create a series of elaborate, Busby Berkeley-style production numbers that would show off both the dazzling environments in the chocolate factory and the digital army of Oompa-Loompas as they serenaded each unfortunate, horrid child to his or her fate. "My original approach to it was to find a style of music and apply that to all the songs," Elfman says. "Tim was like, 'No, no, no, no, no...we're going to *completely* mix it up!' I said, 'Great, let's go.' Although, I was also aware of the fact that was going to make it a weirder experience musically for people, that every song was going from Bollywood to ABBA to Parliament-Funkadelic to Queen and metal from moment to moment. That's where Tim wanted to go and I eagerly jumped aboard."

Deep Roy remembers the day he was drafted into the army of Oompa-Loompas: "I got a call from Tim Burton saying he's doing *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, but he said, 'Don't say anything to anybody. You're

EMIL RICHARDS

Emil Richards is arguably the premier percussionist in the United States, with more than 70 years experience playing mallet instruments and a career that includes the recording of more than 1,300 film scores and collaborations with more than 650 artists, such as Charlie Mingus, Ed Thigpen, Perry Como, Ray Charles, George Shearing, Shorty Rogers, Frank Sinatra, Nelson Riddle, Judy Garland, Sarah Vaughan, Doris Day, The Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, Bing Crosby, Nat King Cole, Frank Zappa, Simon & Garfunkel, George Harrison, and countless others.

Richards was born Emilio Radocchia in Hartford, Connecticut, and was playing the xylophone by age 6. He graduated from the Julius Hartt School of Music and served in the First Cavalry Army Band as assistant bandleader in 1952 and 1953. He has engaged in several worldwide tours, and in 1969 began studying and collecting ethnic percussion instruments during trips to India, Bali, and Europe—an interest he shares with Danny Elfman, along with a fascination with American composer and percussion specialist Harry Partch, who Richards helped relocate to Los Angeles (along with his entire percussion collection) in 1963. Richards currently owns more than 650 percussion instruments.

Emil Richards has helped create some of the most iconic percussion moments in popular culture. He played the bells on Simon & Garfunkel's recording of "Scarborough Fair" and performed the finger snaps for Vic Mizzy's theme music for *The Addams Family* television series. On the original *Planet Of The Apes*, Richards performed on tuned metal mixing bowls in some of the wildest and most disorienting moments of the score. He has performed on scores by Bernard Herrmann,

Wonkavision (top)

Johnny Depp and the remaining cast members about to experience Mike Teavee's demise.

Candy boat (left)

Tim Burton gives direction to Freddie Highmore, who plays Charlie Bucket in *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*.

Oompa-Loompas in Red Uniform

Concept artwork by Tim Burton. (Burton wanted the Oompa-Loompas to look uniform, so Deep Roy ended up playing every single one, a total of 165.)

going to be playing four Oompa-Loompas.’ Four turned out to be a 165 individually. I came to London and he wanted a year commitment; I gave him a year’s commitment, only we finished the movie in 11 months from start to finish. I did meet Danny and he did come to the rehearsals, which was when Tim introduced me to him.”

Roy was involved in other substantial changes when an elaborate Bollywood-style musical number for the demise of Veruca Salt was switched at the last minute. “The ‘Augustus Gloop’ music was originally for the song, ‘Veruca Salt,’” Roy explains. “So I was rehearsing that for a month, and Tim comes and says, ‘I hate to say this to you, but I like this music so much, I’m going to introduce this music for Augustus Gloop.’ He said, ‘I apologize.’ I said, ‘No, Tim. You don’t have to mention anything. You’ve got every right; you’ve got a prerogative. This is what it is.’ We started again—different music, different song, and different movements. So that was that. Then before we even started filming, Tim said to me I got to learn another song and they want to make sure that I move correctly. I did seven of them going in one direction, seven going the other way. He said, ‘This song has to be different.’ I said, ‘OK.’ So, I picked a Tom Jones song, ‘It’s Not Unusual.’ I had to learn that, sing that, dance with that... this was a camera test. So, Tim asked me, ‘Why did you pick a Tom Jones song?’ I said, ‘He’s my favorite singer.’ Tim gave me a high five, said, ‘Tom Jones? I love Tom Jones. I worked with Tom Jones on *Mars Attacks!*’”

For the last song, Roy was to appear as a full band. “I sat with Tim and the choreographer and suggested to them, how about a rock band? Oompa-Loompas and a rock band inside the TV—Tim loved it. He said, ‘You’ve got to talk to the writer, John August.’ So, we brought in John August. I gave him everything that I had in my mind: that I wanted to be a rock star; I wanted to do KISS, the tongue thing, which Tim loved. I did Chuck Berry, the chicken thing—he liked that. That’s how the band was created. I was the lead singer; I played the drums. They had to hire somebody to teach me the drums so that it looked real. Then I had to play the left-hand bass, which was Tim’s idea to do this Beatles thing. To play left-handed, which is Paul McCartney’s thing. It was pretty tough for me: lip-synching and singing... playing the left-hand bass, then the keyboards, then the guitar.”

In a vitally important way, the Oompa-Loompas were neither Deep Roy nor Geoffrey Holder, but Danny Elfman. The Oompa-Loompas would be singing Roald Dahl’s poems as they do in the book after each of the kids meets his or her demise. As poetry, these pieces were iconic, but Elfman quickly found that he would have to alter the words so they would work as lyrics, while still retaining the author’s ideas and intent. All of the Oompa-Loompas would be played by Deep Roy, and Elfman reasoned that they should all have similar voices because of their identical appearances. That voice would be the voice of Danny Elfman. In *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, Elfman had performed a number of singing voices, but in *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, he is *every* singing voice.

Laura Engel says that to this day, many people don’t know that Danny Elfman performed all the song vocals in the movie: “I always told everyone who interviewed him for the movie, ‘That’s Danny singing all the Oompa-Loompa voices, every last one of them,’ and still the majority of people don’t know that was Danny singing.”

The concept and execution, once again, demonstrated Danny Elfman’s unique position and abilities as composer, arranger, and performer. Jerry Goldsmith couldn’t sing, and Bernard Herrmann wasn’t known for his songwriting ability. “One of the most overlooked and taken-for-granted things about Danny is that he’s the leading film composer,” says Richard Kraft. “And oh, by the way, you can give him a task like voicing every singing part in *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. Randy Newman sings but he sings as Randy Newman—and he’s got a great voice. [It’s as if] Danny had to basically play all the Munchkins in The Wizard Of Oz, because there’s that wide of a range

of character types who sing. I remember watching him in his home studio doing a rough demo of one of the songs, and I felt like I was with Mel Blanc. He had to go, ‘OK, now I’m going to do this’ and he’s doing it by himself! There wasn’t a producer telling him, ‘Wouldn’t it be a good idea to have this thing happen?’ And he has to keep perspective of, ‘Is it too much of this...should it be wilder than this...should it be more of that?’ All this is being done in L.A. while Tim’s in London sending him stuff, and I know the demos Danny sent to Tim are almost interchangeable with the final production because he didn’t want to leave any room for confusion of what the songs were going to be. Danny is so underrated as an arranger.”

Elfman says the logistics of moving in and out of songs and score were more difficult than his previous work on *The Nightmare Before Christmas* or what he would do shortly afterward on *Corpse Bride*. “The musical numbers didn’t relate to anything in the score, so it wasn’t like *Nightmare* where I was building around musical sequences with the score. Here, the numbers, when they dropped in, intentionally, they dropped in from out of the blue. No lead-in, no pre-echo—it was just like they should be a surprise, each one of them.”

Steve Bartek worked with Elfman to actualize the five different musical numbers in the film. “We had a high school marching band come in to simulate the sound of a funky Indian marching band orchestra that is sometimes heard in a Bollywood soundtrack. We went to all lengths to do stuff like that for those songs. We had a guitar player do pseudo-Queen riffs for the rock song. I bought a little Brian May amplifier just to get an idea of what the sound was going to be.”

Dennis Sands remembers that near the end of the project, three engineers in three different studios were mixing the songs to meet the film’s postproduction deadline. “Danny did all the vocals himself, pitch-bended them and had to do fancy stuff, then ended up having to do them over and over,” Sands says. “I think there were three Pro Tools—one for the orchestra, one for his vocals, and one for the rhythm section. I remember it was five weeks straight without a day off, every single day, because there were five original songs plus all the score. But it was fun. In my world we don’t get to work on songs very much. By the time we got done, for any given song, we might have 80 tracks of vocals and 300 total tracks to mix.”

“That was one of my favorite scores that [Danny] did, in terms of the songs,” Tim Burton points out. “There was something really funny about that. The original *Willy Wonka* movie kind of started out as a musical, and they sort of dropped it as they went along. And my original thing was to go a bit more toward the book, and he wrote these great lyrics that he used at the end of the demise of every child. You just look in the book and you read that, and it’s kind of like a song. That was a lot of fun to come up with the different genres and [Danny] doing all the voices. I really enjoyed that aspect of it. I just remember the mixture of things that [Danny] used, the sort of psychedelic electronics with the orchestra, and I enjoyed the mix on that one.”

Even with all of the production number razzle-dazzle, Elfman’s score, which reinforced the mystery of Willy Wonka’s past, didn’t go unnoticed. “That’s a very beautiful score,” says composer Philip Glass (*Koyaanisqatsi*, *Mishima*). “I think that what Danny does, especially with that particular score, he will bring an unusual attitude that sets the music off in a different way; and that, in turn, allows

Dave Raksin, Alex North, Max Steiner, Lionel Newman, Hugo Friedhofer, Walter Scharf, Ernest Gold, Jerry Goldsmith, John Williams, and on many of Danny Elfman’s scores. His filmography includes work on *Air Force One*, *Altered States*, *Animal House*, *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, *Bandolero!*, *Black Sunday*, *The Great Race*, *The Hindenburg*, *Ice Station Zebra*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Lost*, *Players*, *Prophecy*, *Roots*, *Seconds*, *Speed Racer*, *Starship Troopers*, and all but one of the *Star Trek* feature films.

Elfman has said that he actually apologized to Richards at the beginning of the *Planet Of The Apes* sessions because he had performed so many of the percussion elements built into the score himself in his studio—which didn’t leave Richards with quite as much “fun stuff” to do during the sessions for the new film. But Richards says his work with Elfman has been consistently rewarding and challenging: “I’ve been working in the film industry for 51 years, and from the very beginning, Danny was so aware of percussion—

Emil Richards

Percussionist Emil Richards performed on the original 1968 *Planet Of The Apes* score and Danny Elfman’s score for the 2000 film.

Boatload of Deep Roy

Burton conceived the idea of stylized production numbers for the Oompa-Loompas, which Danny Elfman wrote and performed.

On the set

Burton directs frequent collaborator Johnny Depp as Willy Wonka.

us to look at the *picture* in a different way. People might innocently think the music has to follow the picture in a certain way; it doesn't work like that. Sometimes the music is doing something a little bit different from the picture. I think Danny is very versatile in the way he matches the images and the music. He has a big range in that way. That goes beyond what people ordinarily think of film music. And that's not something everybody can do. Some people write symphonies but they never write symphonies to go with picture. People who write for dance, for opera, for film, for theater, they are the ones who do that—and Danny is in that category.”

Throughout his career, Elfman has maintained and developed a distinctive and highly recognizable sound, while at the same time showing the ability to create works so different in style that a casual listener might never make the connection between them and Elfman's more familiar scores. But the very fact that the general public knows what “a Danny Elfman score” entails demonstrates his longevity and impact. “He's become what I think a lot of composers strive to become—he's an adjective,” music executive Mike Knobloch says. “The connotation is, ‘I want innovative... I want cool...I want a blend of traditional conventions but forward thinking, exciting, new.’ I think Danny is known for being musically adventurous.”

Charlie And The Chocolate Factory brought in over \$200 million, making it Tim Burton's biggest hit ever at the time of its release. Just as importantly, the movie brought Willy Wonka, Charlie Bucket, and the weird and wonderfully subversive world of Roald Dahl to a new generation of children. But the vision was pure Tim Burton. “It's undeniably Danny and Tim's take on the story,” says composer Ed Shearmur. “It's very rich—and it was necessary for it to be as dark as it is. It was definitely the dark-chocolate version instead of the milk-chocolate version.”

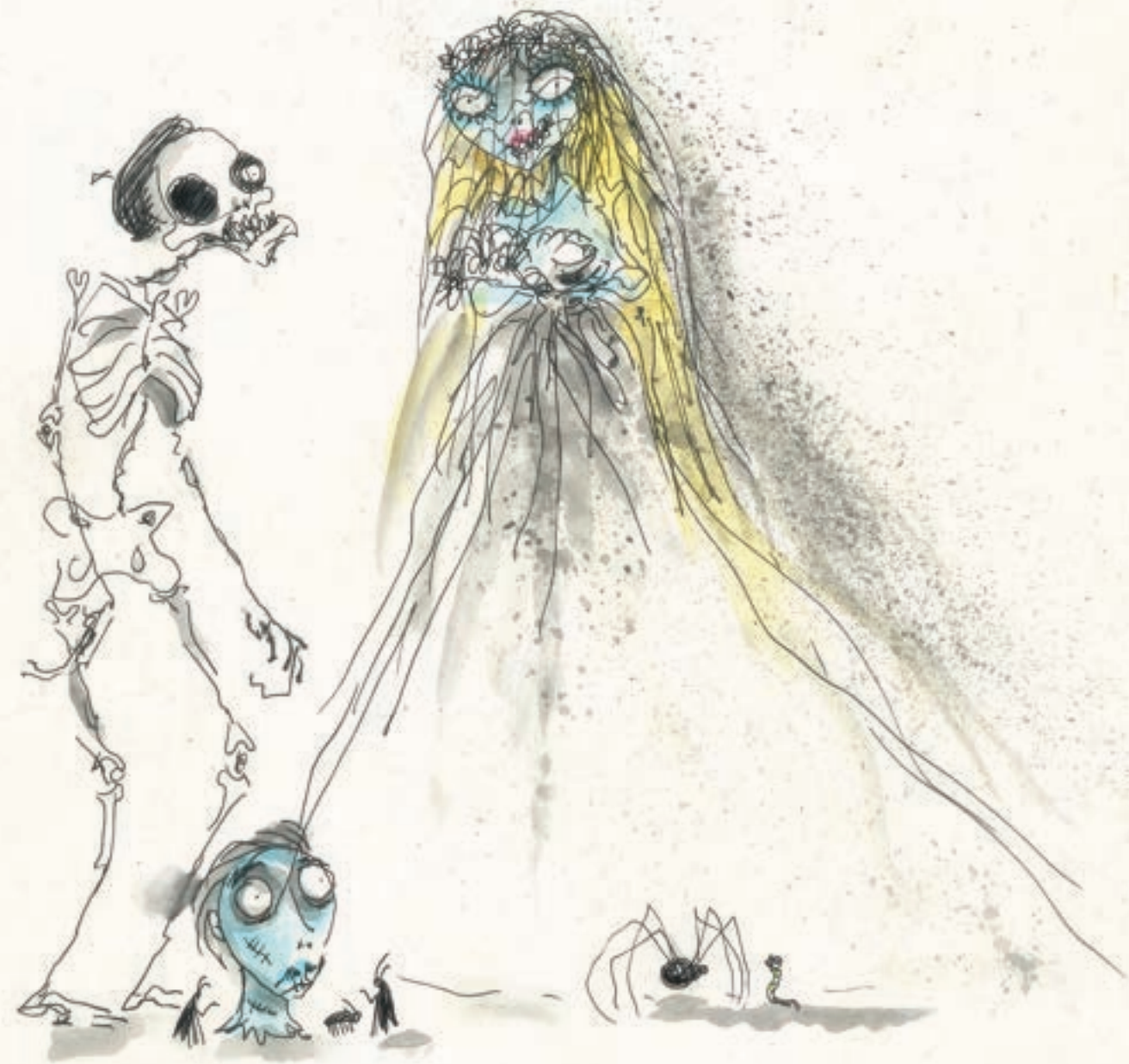
it impressed the heck out of me. He would tell the percussion section, ‘I don't want to hear the same cymbal twice in the cue. I don't want to hear the same gong twice in the same cue.’ We were so surprised because you put up one or two suspended cymbals and you use those throughout the recording, but not for Danny. Danny could hear the timbres of each percussion instrument, and he didn't want to hear the same one struck in the same cue twice. That was so impressive to me. No one has ever been that rigid with anything in percussion, especially gongs and cymbals. You'd think, ‘Who the heck is going to know the difference?’ Danny knows the difference. It enhanced the music so much, I respected him from the very beginning based on that alone.”

Elfman says, “Emil has been an incredible inspiration to me. As I had mentioned in another section, I once dreamed of becoming a reincarnation of the composer Harry Partch because of his incredible use of percussion, or an ethnomusicologist, or an ethnic-percussion player. In some alternate reality, if I had followed that path instead of the one I did follow, Emil would be the one I would have modeled myself after. Not only is he an amazing musician of both orchestral and jazz music, and had played on most of my scores for the last quarter century, but what people outside of our industry don't know about him is his passion for collecting percussion instruments. Quite simply, it is not a collection, but *the* collection. It fills a warehouse (or warehouses) with instruments from all over the world. He is an authority on the percussion of more countries on this planet than I can count. To learn anything at all about most any type of percussion in the world, he is simply ‘The Man’ to go to. He is also one of the kindest, sweetest souls I have had the opportunity to work with.”

14



ACCORDING TO PLAN
Stop-Motion Returns



Corpse Bride, Bonejangles & the Head Waiter, 2005

Character concepts for *Corpse Bride* by Tim Burton.

TIM BURTON'S CORPSE BRIDE

Disney was so pleased with the eventual success of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* that it proposed Tim Burton make a sequel to the picture. Burton demurred, preferring to let *Nightmare* stand on its own. But in 2005, while making the ambitious Roald Dahl adaptation, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, Burton shepherded a second stop-motion musical to fruition. *Tim Burton's Corpse Bride* was originally developed as a story by the late Pixar artist (and vocal performer and voice of Heimlich, the caterpillar, in *A Bug's Life*) Joe Ranft. Ranft was inspired by a European folktale from the 1800s about a young man en route to marry his young bride-to-be. When he drops his wedding ring, it somehow winds up on the finger of a dead, female murder victim—who comes back to life and lays claim to the young groom.

“When we were first developing *Corpse Bride*, I didn’t think it was the same as *Nightmare*,” Burton says. “Less songs, not as [song-] driven, although the songs are story...story points. So, it’s not like some musical numbers that just stop and do it, but it’s an instinctual thing. I don’t know why; it just didn’t seem the same as *Nightmare* in that way—although it was still important. And you know, there’s no real conscious decision why you say these things or feel ’em, it just felt like that was the way you go with it.”

Burton had the story in limbo for many years, but he began serious production on the film in between work on *Big Fish* and *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. Writer John August, who had scripted *Big Fish* and would collaborate with Burton on many of his subsequent projects, worked on the project. “*Corpse Bride* was shot simultaneously with *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*,” August says. “When I came on

Corpse Bride, it wasn’t a musical—it was just a straight story. I read it and it was short, and they were already building puppets for it. I said, ‘I think this wants to be a musical. The setup on this especially feels like a musical—we are doing all this crosscutting and establishing of what it is. That feels like a song.’ At first, I think Tim was a little resistant to having the characters sing.” August decided to start lyrics in the script with ‘According To Plan’ as the first potential song, and he kept writing.

Once the musical direction was approved, August found himself interacting with Danny Elfman. “I actually sat in a room with Danny at the production offices in London talking through what the songs were going to be, because basically they had to be recorded ahead of time so the characters could sing. With stop-motion animation, there was never an opportunity to go back and change things. Once you shoot a frame, it’s done. If we had done CG, it would have been fairly easy to put new words into somebody’s mouth. With this, you are completely locked into whatever was sung or recorded.”

Burton says that developing music before the actual animation is done also provides a level of stylistic direction for the animators. “It helps the animators with the right tone, the melancholy feel of it, so not only on a technical level but on an emotional level, it’s so important for an animator. [Animators are] in a dark room all day—they need any kind of thing to just kind of give what the emotional tone of it is.”

Despite the fact that he was working on it concurrently with *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, Elfman remembers *Corpse Bride* as an enjoyable experience: “*Corpse Bride* was relatively easy and a great relief from a lot of the big things I was doing [at that time]. It had a simple story. As usual I wrote the songs first, of course, but now there’s only four or five





Elfman's bones

After playing two skeleton characters, Jack and Bonejangles, Elfman pieced together his own full body X-ray.

The Bride (previous page)

Helena Bonham Carter voiced the title character in *Corpse Bride*—a living dead girl who's a lot more vibrant than the uptight, alive Victorian characters around her.

of them. And the score was based on this one very simple melody that I also wrote in the beginning. Occasionally, you get that really simple, really sweet film that's like a palette cleanser for a several-year period. *Corpse Bride* was one of those reminders that filmmaking and film scoring can actually, on occasion, be simple and fun."

For the song demos, Elfman took on all the roles, both male and female, and provided all the arrangements and synthesizer mock-ups. As with *Nightmare*, Elfman was still a one-man band as well as a complete repertory company of singers.

With its Victorian setting, *Corpse Bride* was an opportunity to corral a cast of British actors—both dramatic and comedic—led by American Johnny Depp, flanked by Albert Finney, Helena Bonham Carter as the *Corpse Bride*, Emily Watson, Tracey Ullman, Richard E. Grant, Christopher Lee, and Joanna Lumley. "Tim brought them all in the studio," Elfman recalls. "Albert Finney came in with Joanna Lumley. They were like their characters because they were chiding each other when they were each doing their vocal. And Helena [Bonham Carter], as you can imagine, was just totally professional and sang much better than I expected."

Helena Bonham Carter recalls, "Danny pretty much custom-made 'Tears To Shed' around my very limited singing abilities and range. Danny and I disappeared into a recording studio for a day, and bit by bit he extracted what he could lace together. I had always wanted to sing, and I loved my time working with Danny. Later on, I continued to learn and develop my voice for *Sweeney Todd*, but at the start of *Corpse Bride*, I really could only speak. But Danny was the most modest and patient of teachers."

Elfman wrote one of his most beautiful songs, "Erased," written for the Johnny Depp character. Ultimately, it was decided that Depp's character Victor wouldn't sing, so the song was cut and never animated. For "The Wedding Song," Elfman got to plunge into the world of Gilbert and Sullivan, one of his favorite influences. A pre-*Sweeney Todd* Helena Bonham Carter sang the wistful "Tears To Shed" while Tracey Ullman and *Big Fish*'s Albert Finney perform the opening number, "According To Plan." "We recorded Tracy Ullman in Los Angeles," Laura Engel recalls. "She stepped out there and just nailed the stuff as an actress and singer and performer with so much character."

In addition to writing the screenplay, John August contributed to several of the lyrics, including some for a number that echoed the raucous jazz feel of the Oogie Boogie sequence from *The Nightmare Before*



Remains of the day

Johnny Depp provided the voice of Victor, and Danny Elfman the voice of Bonejangles.



At work on Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*

Animator Phil Dale manipulates Victor in *Corpse Bride*.

Christmas. “When we go down to the Land of the Dead, we knew it was going to be a sort of Cab Calloway feel,” August says. “I could write toward that sort of direction, but ultimately it was going to be Danny who had to find a way to musicalize that. I gave it 100 percent and knew that he’s going to take some fraction of that and use it as whatever he needs for a song. I wasn’t intimidated by doing it and I have a good history and appreciation for musicals, but I had never written lyrics before then.”

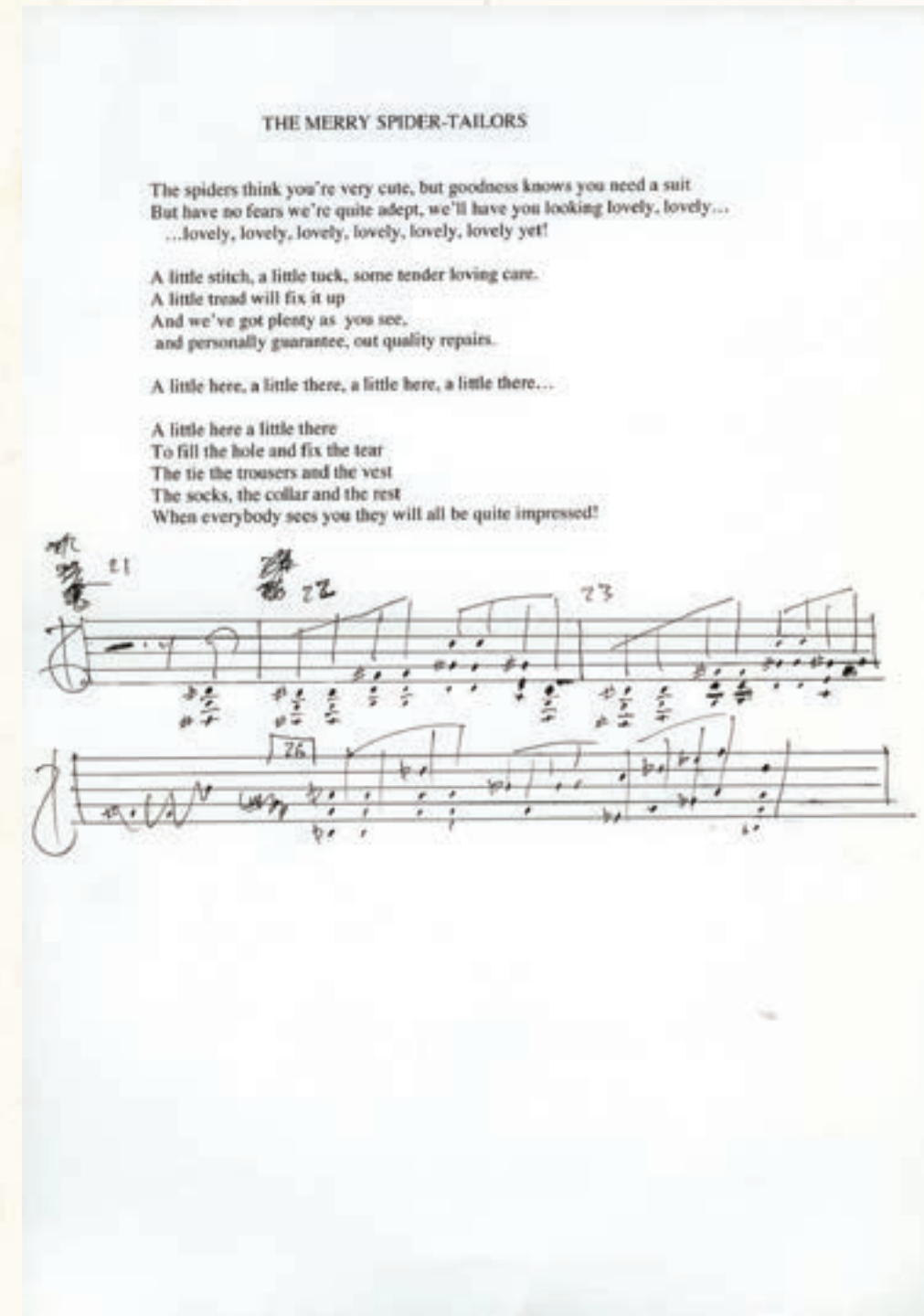
A character named Bonejangles—that Burton based on Sammy Davis Jr., one of his inspirations for *Beetlejuice*—resulted in a 1930s-style jazz

number, although this time the solution to finding a vocalist turned out differently. “I demoed ‘Remains’ but I didn’t really write it for my voice,” Elfman says. “I did a lot of auditions and got some fantastic performances from several actors, but in the end, it was Tim who said, ‘I want you to do it.’ So, off I went into the studio. Now you have to remember this was in one studio at Abbey Road, while we’re recording and mixing *Charlie* in the other studio next door. It was a hard voice for me to do—really rough sounding. I was drinking tea with lemon and honey by the gallons. I was very proud to have finally pulled it off.”

The main theme for Elfman’s score (and the basis of the cut song, “Erased”) was introduced in a piece for solo piano that the Victor character plays early in the film. “I thought the piano piece Danny wrote was one of the best things he’d ever done at the time,” Steve Bartek says. “Some of Danny’s ideas about the voicing of the banjo... had a lot of personality.”

Corpse Bride’s December 2005 opening weekend scared up almost \$30 million, proving that Tim Burton’s distinctive style of stop-motion animated musicals still had enormous appeal. And Danny Elfman’s musical contribution created the perfect mood of melancholy beauty. “I thought Danny’s score to *Corpse Bride* was a wonderful return to a spirit and style of writing that made me fall in love with his music all those years ago,” says composer Michael Giacchino (*The Incredibles*, *Up*). “It was both haunting and emotional, and he so adeptly captured both the loneliness and sheer joy of the two main characters in the film. Interestingly enough, it really played to me more like a live-action film than an animated film. And I think a lot of that credit goes to Danny for scoring the characters and not just the action. Just watch the piano duet scene and you will see what I mean.”

With *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Corpse Bride*, *James And The Giant Peach*, and later *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* and *Sweeney Todd*, Tim Burton would reach an unusual distinction. Quite by accident, he would become one of the most prodigious producers of movie musicals in contemporary film. “I don’t really like musicals, necessarily,” Burton shrugs, seemingly mystified by the accomplishment. “I like music. I think coming from animation and the kind of movies that I liked—even movies that are not musicals but are musical by nature... I mean everything that we’ve done, even if it’s not a musical—music has always been important. *Beetlejuice* has had ‘musical-y’ numbers, and it goes along with movies that are visual—and music and the visuals are of equal importance. It’s not a conscious thing for me.”



THE MERRY SPIDER-TAILORS

The spiders think you're very cute, but goodness knows you need a suit
But have no fears we're quite adept, we'll have you looking lovely, lovely...
...lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely yet!

A little stitch, a little tuck, some tender loving care.
A little tread will fix it up
And we've got plenty as you see,
and personally guarantee, our quality repairs.

A little here, a little there, a little here, a little there...

A little here a little there
To fill the hole and fix the tear
The tie the trousers and the vest
The socks, the collar and the rest
When everybody sees you they will all be quite impressed!



Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*, Piano Prop (above)

From the production of *Corpse Bride*, Elfman was given this piano model prop, which combines elements of a musical instrument and a Victorian casket.

***Corpse Bride*, lyrics (left)**

Danny Elfman's lyrics for "The Merry Spider-Tailors" section of "The Wedding Song."

15



NO PLACE LIKE LONDON
Blood On Fleet Street



SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET

In November of 2005, Tim Burton was in talks to direct Ripley's *Believe It Or Not*, a biopic about Robert Ripley, the man responsible for the famous periodical illustration series, which explored bizarre and unexplainable phenomena all over the world. Jim Carrey would have played Ripley, and the film was tentatively slated to begin production in October the following year. Larry Karaszewski and Scott Alexander, who had written *Ed Wood*, created the script, and Ripley was very much in the mold of Ed Wood and many of Burton's other protagonists: misunderstood, out of the mainstream, but touched by genius and empathy for the other "outsiders" around him.

Carrey's description of the project—and Ripley—sounded like perfect Tim Burton fare: "It's such an incredible world to open up. Ripley was such a champion of the underdog—people who were a little bit different and freakish. He was about celebrating life. He was about proving its specialness."

Unfortunately, at the time, Paramount Pictures was focused on something else: keeping costs down. A year into development, the studio put the production on "indefinite hold" after its budget ballooned to \$150 million. Script changes were in order (the story had Ripley searching for a mysterious, lost tribe of primitives), and after a rewrite from Carrey's collaborator Steve Oedekerk, the production was again slated to start up toward the end of 2008. But ultimately Paramount pulled the plug. This was a time when studios took pride in shutting down big-ticket movies; and a number of other high-profile film projects had suffered the same fate. It was the beginning of a long era in which only branded, proven commodities—sequels, TV shows blown up to big-screen size, video-games, even board games—were deemed viable by the studios.

After being essentially punished for choosing a project that was too risky for the studio, Burton responded by tackling something even more daring and artistically challenging: an audacious adaptation of Stephen Sondheim's famed, dark and gristly stage-musical *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street*. *Sweeney Todd* was familiar, but as a blood-drenched study of vengeance in which murder and mayhem is celebrated, the musical wasn't exactly *The Little Mermaid*. It wasn't even *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Burton had seen the stage production while traveling through England as a student. "I loved it so much, I went three nights in a row—I'd never seen anything like it—the mix of horror and music—and it actually seemed very cinematic to me."

As with *Planet Of The Apes* and *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, a screen adaptation of Sondheim's masterpiece had been long in development with dozens of directors in consideration. Undoubtedly, when *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street* was announced with Burton attached, some people must have questioned, "Tim Burton, directing a musical?" In reality, that question could apply to almost every director mounting a screen musical in 2007, since that genre had been a vanishing breed for the past four decades. But with *A Nightmare Before Christmas*, *James And The Giant Peach*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, and *Corpse Bride*, Burton actually had quite a few musicals under his belt.

Stephen Sondheim had long been reluctant to allow a movie adaptation of *Sweeney Todd*, and he insisted on having approval of any actors who would sing in the production. When Burton came on board, part of his deal was that Johnny Depp would play Sweeney. After initial reservations, Sondheim was ultimately impressed with Depp's work, as well as Helena Bonham Carter's turn as Mrs. Lovett.

Burton chose celebrated Italian art director Dante Ferretti (*The Adventures Of Baron Munchausen, Gangs Of New York*) to design the production and, for some time, considered shooting actors on green screen sets because of budgetary concerns. “We decided to build more sets and not rely on green screen so much, mainly because at the end of the day, it was a musical and it relied on people singing,” Burton says. “Since most of the actors weren’t professional singers, it felt more appropriate to have people on sets. Again it goes back to those old horror movies where you had people on sets. Because it was a very contained piece, it just felt like that was the way to go.”

Burton’s mastery of art direction and artifice had always given his movies the quality of theater, but he says he initially had concerns that working within the proscenium style would be too confining. Ultimately he managed to open up the film’s environment visually, while retaining much of its classic stage settings. “I’d never done anything like this before,” Burton says. “So, what started out as something I thought might be restricting turned out to be quite liberating. It was like doing a silent movie with music, in a way, where having music on the set made the actors move differently; they acted differently. And it was actually really fun to do. I don’t think I’ve enjoyed something so much in quite a while, and it was quite strange. It sort of focused everyone from the actors to the DP and crew. When you have music on the set, it’s just different. It’s an organic process.”

Another strong on-set presence was blood: lots and lots of blood. “The first meeting I had with the studio, I said, ‘There’s no discussion about the blood.’ I’ve seen stage productions where they try to tone down the blood or be politically correct about it, but the fact is, it’s like an old Grand Guignol melodrama or a Hammer horror movie, so that was my first note,” Burton says. “I said, ‘You know what, guys—it’s going to be an R-rated musical.’ We used old-fashioned gore techniques: tubes and pumps and hypodermic syringes filled with blood, because it’s basically a simple story—so we took an old-fashioned approach to it.

Burton’s gamble paid off: Dante Ferretti won an Oscar for *Sweeney Todd*’s art direction, and Johnny Depp and costume designer Colleen Atwood earned Oscar nominations for their work. “I’ve worked with Johnny many times, obviously,” says Burton, “but this is one of my favorite things of his that he’s done. I love the fact that he’s really focused, and he’s good at this sort of Zen of not saying much and just brooding and looking. It’s the difference between a stage show and a movie—

onstage people are far away, and in movies, people get to look into your eyes. The focus and internalization of the character—for me that’s the thing that’s never been able to be shown onstage.”

Burton’s work also pleased Sondheim himself. “In many ways, it’s his simplest film, his most direct film, but you can see that he’s telling a story he really likes,” Sondheim said at the time of the film’s release. “It’s a story that has enough incidents in it, so he doesn’t have to invent extracurricular stuff. He has enthusiasm for the piece, and he just goes for the jugular.”

While Danny Elfman would not contribute music to *Sweeney Todd*, Sondheim (who would supervise the music recording for Burton’s film himself) also explained that one of his inspirations for the musical was Elfman’s composer idol, Bernard Herrmann. “There was a movie I saw when I was 15, *Hangover Square*, with a Bernard Herrmann score. It’s a flamboyant Edwardian melodrama about a composer who goes crazy when he hears a certain sound and goes out and murders the nearest beautiful girl. I remember just loving that score, and I thought it would really be fun to scare an audience and see if you could do it while people are singing. All of Bernard Herrmann’s music particularly impressed me, so actually the score of *Sweeney Todd* is an homage to him.”

“I loved *Sweeney Todd*. I loved it,” exclaims Elfman about Burton’s extraordinary accomplishment. “They brought me out for the premiere in New York, and it was an absolutely incredible experience. I was almost two hours late because of a delayed flight, and was desperately trying to change clothes in a car while rushing across town to the theater. I literally ran in a minute before showtime, sat down, and the movie started. I was just blown away. I was really blown away. On many levels, I think it is Burton’s best film.”

In addition to its Oscar nominations, *Sweeney Todd* won Tim Burton a Best Director award from the National Board of Review. The film also won the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture Musical or Comedy, and Depp won for Best Actor in the same category. *Sweeney* also earned Burton some of the best reviews of his storied career, including this from Roger Ebert: “It combines some of Tim Burton’s favorite elements: The fantastic, the ghoulish, the bizarre, the unspeakable, the romantic, and in Johnny Depp, he has an actor he has worked with since *Edward Scissorhands* and finds a perfect instrument.” (A shocking contrast from Burton’s *Pee-wee* days of getting “minus one” reviews.)



On the set (left)

Tim Burton directs Helena Bonham Carter on the London set of *Sweeney Todd*. Burton won Best Director from the National Board of Review for this film.

Johnny Depp as Sweeney Todd (above)

Depp gives another brave performance for Burton as the singing Sweeney Todd.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street, 2007 (previous page)

Johnny Depp as Sweeney Todd and Helena Bonham Carter as Mrs. Lovett in Tim Burton’s film adaptation of Stephen Sondheim’s stage musical.

While Burton worked with Sondheim on *Sweeney Todd*, Elfman explored a wide range of diverse scoring projects. In 2006 he wrote a delicate and wistful score for a new live-action version of the children's classic *Charlotte's Web*. The movie was one of the first projects Randy Spendlove worked on after joining Paramount as president of music. "Danny brought a magic to that movie," Spendlove says. "The movie would be a very, very different movie today without Danny's musical take on it. His music added that fantasy and that fairy-tale element to what was a very grounded movie. It really brought something that the movie really needed, which is that magical connection between the characters—in this case it was a pig and a spider. Only a Danny Elfman score can take that sort of environment, which was based on a farm and farm animals, and create that magic between the characters."

Elfman explored the opposite end of the spectrum on *Nacho Libre*, a brash, deliberately lowbrow comedy from the makers of *Napoleon Dynamite*. Editor Billy Weber, who was in on the ground floor with Elfman on *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, worked on the film. "This was wonderful stuff because we had some songs that we really wanted to use by a wonderful, old, Mexican rock group called Mr. Loco," Weber says. "It was four guys and they had four really wonderful pieces that we were going to use in the movie. Danny incorporated their music into the score. And the weird thing is, he had actually played with them in Japan with The Mystic Knights just before they retired in the late '70s."

Standard Operating Procedure was the first documentary to feature a Danny Elfman score. Acclaimed filmmaker Errol Morris (*The Thin Blue Line*, *The Fog Of War*) used interviews and dramatic re-creations to explore the abuses of prisoners by allied forces at the Abu Ghraib detention center in Iraq. Morris says the dark underpinnings of the story seemed perfectly suited to Elfman's sensibility. "I had talked about it very early on as a nonfiction horror movie, because it does represent one of the darkest episodes in American history and giving it that element of nightmare—who better than Danny Elfman? In a very real sense, he's the perfect person. There's something incredibly modern about Danny's writing—not a minimalist, certainly a romantic element, but also a post-modern element just in terms of his eclectic use of instruments and orchestrations, odd rhythmic devices. He is, among other things, an incredibly original and innovative composer. You're not getting standard movie music from him any more so than you would be getting standard movie music from Philip Glass. You're getting something that's really quite unique."

Next Elfman teamed with Russian director Timur Bekmambetov (*Night Watch*) on the graphic novel adaptation *Wanted* and conjured up a mesmerizing, Russian-flavored score—even though the film itself had nothing to do with Russia. "*Wanted* was not just an action movie," Bekmambetov says. "It was a movie with a soul—and Danny is deep. He could create deep character music with soul, music that was playful and emotional and ironic. I think for him it was very interesting and encouraging to work with a Russian director because it's part of his background. It's part of him, and he was trying to entertain me with these Russian themes and self-irony that we have a lot in Russia. We're self-ironic because of the lives we have—we cannot survive without it."

In the same year Elfman brought his love of Bernard Herrmann and Ray Harryhausen to bear on Guillermo Del Toro's *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*—another case of a fellow 'monster kid' director seeking out Elfman. Del Toro says, "When we were talking, we articulated the music for *Hellboy II* in terms that were quite simple. I said, 'Bernard Herrmann, Harryhausen scores.' There's a particular moment in the *Hellboy II* score, when the stone statue is rising from the ground. It quotes very, very strongly the Talos statue coming to life in *Jason And The Argonauts*. You can hear the cymbals. I think Danny embraced it but gave it his own twist. We always worked at night in his basement studio. We have great fun talking, and Danny truly [enjoys] discussing the benefits of one type of theremin over another. I wasn't even aware there was more than one type of theremin. The beauty of working with someone like Danny, you know you don't have to make him understand the film; you're not trying to make him understand the genre. He's someone who loves it for the right reasons."

Elfman again returned to classic horror for Joe Johnston's handsome remake of *The Wolfman*. "He did something really different on *Wolfman*," Johnston says. "I told him I wanted to go sort of gothic with it, really moody and dark, and still keep it so odd and quirky. I've worked with some great composers, but a lot of times you sit down, you spot the music with him, and they go off and write the music. They preview it for you, but usually when they do, they're previewing a whole score. Danny previewed every track for me. I went to his house many times and basically listened to it as it was evolving and as he was writing it. It was a very exciting and satisfying way to work and it's going to be hard to work any other way now that I've experienced that. He really recognizes that the movie comes first. He could write a brilliant score, but if it doesn't fit

the film, he's failed, and I've failed, so he's very careful about making sure we are running along parallel tracks as he writes."

Elfman captured the vibe of the Summer of Love while reteaming with director Ang Lee on *Taking Woodstock*—a movie Lee initially imagined without a score at all because of all the preexisting classic rock hits that would be played throughout the film. "I thought we would just use the existing music because the film is so much about that music, but then I found I couldn't really do it with source music only," Lee points out. "So, Danny came in to do something that would blend into some of the greatest music ever written and fill in—make it like one movie and still function as a music score. His score is extremely quiet. It's almost like New York folk. I think in the whole thing we used two guitars—that was it."

For Shane Acker's post-apocalyptic animated-feature *9* (which was produced by Tim Burton and Timur Bekmambetov) Elfman created themes for composer Deborah Lurie to adapt into her score. "*9* was based on a short film with a very specific and unique style, but somehow this didn't make it any clearer to me what this feature version was going to be," Lurie says. "The short was incredibly abstract musically, and it was as much of a surprise to me as it was to anyone else that my score for *9* would end up being orchestral. My first drafts were a lot stranger and synth-based, as that's what Shane initially wanted to explore. The demos that Danny presented early on in the project were mainly orchestral, and ultimately that's how the score ended up, though with a lot of dark, surreal and aggressive synthetic sounds as well—which came out of those early experimental demos I did with Shane. I'm really happy with where it ended up, though the journey to get there was a challenge."

Elfman garnered his fourth Oscar nomination with *Good Will Hunting* director Gus Van Sant on the tragic biopic *Milk* about slain San Francisco politician Harvey Milk. "Danny had to interpret the movie through his own regurgitation of what the story is. He understands the story in the way that *he* understands it, which is probably separate from the way I understand it, which is necessary because he's doing it musically," Van Sant says of his collaboration with Elfman.

Producer Dan Jinks says that Elfman's score to *Milk*, in a way, performs the same function that his music did in *Beetlejuice*: He tells the audience at the beginning of the film where they're going to be emotionally, an hour into the picture. "In *Milk*, the opening cue introduces us to the world of the movie, and there's something very scary and uncertain about the



Danny Elfman and Gus
Elfman and his beloved dog Gus.



Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett

Artwork by Tim Burton, drawn in 2001, long before he was approached about directing the film.

world and San Francisco in the '70s. I remember there were a lot of strings and odd chords that really jarred you into that time period and the story of that guy, and it was just so beautifully effective.”

“I’m so happy when I hear Danny in more intimate scores like *Milk*,” composer Alexandre Desplat (*New Moon*, *The Girl With A Pearl Earring*) says. “His score was beautiful and very smart. He does a very rich palette of timbres; it’s not just a few colored notes—many beautiful colors. You don’t hear that a lot in film music, or music in general. Also, he blends many influences. He doesn’t stick to the simple orchestra. He takes risk; he experiments and that’s very great of him to do that.”

Carter Burwell, whose long collaboration with the Coen Brothers (*Raising Arizona*, *No Country For Old Men*) began shortly before Elfman’s team-up with Tim Burton, is impressed by the sheer number of notes Elfman has written over the years. “I can’t do anything like that,” Burwell says. “To write that way takes a level of energy and enthusiasm—that impresses me. I love the fact that he’s clearly always trying to push himself. I often hear scores like *Milk*, which I would never have heard and said, ‘Oh, that’s a Danny Elfman score.’ He clearly found something in the film that brought him to a new place musically. That’s what I always hope for in myself but so rarely find, but Danny gets that quite a lot. I think he succeeds at making each film really a musical world of its own. The scores are not, in any way, interchangeable. They’re very individual.”

Elfman’s most recent score is for writer-director Paul Haggis’ *The Next Three Days* (a remake of the 2008 French film *Anything For Her*). “I had never met Danny but I know his music back from when he was in *Oingo Boingo*...and he just seemed endlessly inventive,” Haggis says. “This film is a story of a man who is totally alone. He doesn’t talk to anyone; he has to figure out how to break someone out of jail and do all of the planning and execute it without talking to anyone else about it. I had to get into his head because he’s a character that was deeply conflicted. He’s a man who is a normal guy. He’s a schoolteacher; he teaches community college. And just looking at this guy, he doesn’t even have a chance of pulling this off. And he’s scared and he’s confused, and often he does things that truly trouble him as he changes into someone who can do something like this. The music really needed to inform that journey. All I had were Russell [Crowe]’s eyes and Danny’s music.”

Haggis says Elfman continually surprised him as he created music for the film: “His music is a lot more beautiful than I thought it would

be. I keep forgetting the intrinsic beauty of what he brings. That sort of shocked me—it’s just so gorgeous. There was one sequence that was really good; it was an 8- or 10-minute cue at the end of the film. It had all sorts of turning moments in it. One of them was this flashback sequence where a cop is sitting down trying to reimagine what could have happened. You see it through his eyes, and I knew exactly how Danny or any other composer was going to score a flashback: something moody or creepy, very ethereal or something. So, I go to listen to it and we come to this part and as soon as the flashback starts, he starts drums. A drum kit comes in and starts driving it through the sequence. And it’s so completely...I’m about to say, ‘No...’ and the ‘o’ won’t form. And I go, ‘Oh, that’s genius.’ It was just completely the opposite of what anyone else would have done. It told the story in a much more compelling way. Who would have thought of that? No one—he did.”

Elfman provided Haggis with his usual banquet of demo cues—which the director says added up to an embarrassment of riches. “He would bring in a cue, and he would play it for me, and I’d go, ‘Oh, that’s great,’ and he’d go, ‘Yeah, but I have more.’ He’d have eight possibilities lined up and I’d go, ‘Stop, stop! You can’t do this! They’re all great. OK, let’s just throw one of them out.’ He isn’t afraid to just throw out everything he just did and start over. He did it in a very short period. The studio was a little worried because the slot that we had was a little smaller than what we really needed, and I said I’d rather have Danny Elfman for six weeks less than any other composer. It turned out not to be six weeks; it turned out to be just fine because Danny moved some things around for us. But what do you want, genius or not genius? I’ll take genius.”

Architect and Broadway producer David Rockwell, who is working with Elfman in trying to develop a stage musical, observes that Danny “feels like on every project as if he’s risking everything. I think that getting involved in projects where there’s creative risk is the best way to stay creatively sharp and not to repeat yourself. He’s an unbelievable workaholic. Danny is very self-critical in a good way.”

Elfman’s current music editor Bill Abbott says Elfman’s eclectic choices over the past five years surprise even him. “He’s always trying to not get pigeonholed into some kind of ‘I’m just that big, quirky, action-hero, adventure guy’ and he really takes pride in that. He loves taking on projects that are what you wouldn’t consider as Elfman-esque and usually he does a pretty amazing job.”

16



ONLY A DREAM
Down The Rabbit Hole



ALICE IN WONDERLAND

From the Victorian sewers and bloodbaths of *Sweeney Todd*, Tim Burton turned again to a classic adaptation—but this time far lighter fare. Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland* has been adapted to the movie screen in almost every decade of the 20th century and beyond, ever since it debuted as a silent film in 1903. Walt Disney did an animated version; a 1972 British film featured Peter Sellers as the March Hare; and TV impresario Irwin Allen's 1985 production featured the dream cast of Red Buttons, Shelley Winters, Martha Raye, Sammy Davis Jr., Scott Baio, and Telly Savalas as the Cheshire Cat.

Most adaptations followed the same route as Allen's: stuffing big-name actors into silly costumes and makeup to re-create Carroll's nonsensical Wonderland. The various films—and indeed Carroll's text—seemed to be a somewhat random series of encounters between the Alice character and the various bizarre denizens of Wonderland, designed to make satiric political and educational points that were likely lost on most of the modern audiences who watched the film adaptations.

Producer Suzanne Todd, who was involved in developing the project, says she and writer Linda Woolverton wanted to do the story in a way that provided a stronger, more coherent narrative: "We had done just a couple drafts with the studio before we sent it to directors, but it really just started in Linda's and my mind, reading the books. She had written the animated film, *Beauty And The Beast* that had great, critical success. *Alice* was everything that she had done well before in animation. She had crafted a story that hadn't existed in the original work."

Todd says she was as surprised as anyone when Tim Burton expressed an interest in the project. "We had done a couple drafts of the script and

sent it to a few directors. We had sent it to Tim first, but you never think you're actually going to hear back from Tim Burton, much less be able to make a movie with him. We had been talking with other directors and thankfully hadn't found anybody we liked when we literally got the call back from William Morris, 'Oh, Tim read it. He wants to meet,' which was pretty exciting. I think that he read it and saw something in his head."

"I got a call from Disney saying 'Alice in 3-D' and it just seemed like a good combination of medium and material," Burton says. "There's been many [film adaptations of] *Alice* made in the past, and I never really connected to any of them because they were always just very weird, without any sort of foundation. I liked the script that gave it a context, and she's slightly older. I liked the elements about it."

In taking on the story, Burton assembled an eclectic cast, some of whom would be unrecognizable by the time their characters were rendered in computer animation. In addition to Johnny Depp as The Mad Hatter, Crispin Glover played the menacing Stayne, the Knave of Hearts; Anne Hathaway and Helena Bonham Carter faced off as the White Queen and the Red Queen; and Alan Rickman portrayed the Blue Caterpillar. Burton and screenwriter Linda Woolverton worked to bring a stronger narrative to the proceedings, framing the movie in a way that lets Alice (Mia Wasikowska)—much like Dorothy in *The Wizard Of Oz*—solve her own internal conflict by working it out through her dealings with the denizens of "Underland." In Burton's and Woolverton's hands, the traditionally passive Alice took on a more feminist perspective, chafing under an ill-considered engagement and flowering into an adventuress of great independence during her travels through the Looking Glass.

Alice In Wonderland marked Burton's first major experience with green-screen shooting. Nearly all of the film's environments were rendered digitally, and many of the characters are either full digital creations or digitally enhanced actors (such as Matt Lucas's digitally distorted—and doubled—Tweedledee and Tweedledum). Burton also championed the decision to enhance the film's already eye-popping visual look by releasing it in 3-D. "It wasn't originally our intention, but it was one of the first ideas that Tim had mentioned, which everybody jumped on immediately," Suzanne Todd says. "I will say when it came time to actually start work on the production part of it, it was much more work and more complicated than Tim expected, because he hadn't worked in that particular side of CG and everything it took to make the 3-D. He's an expert in great many areas, but this was something new for him."

It took a director of Burton's particular brilliance with visual imagery to retain the narrative and shooting style of *Alice In Wonderland*, while working with actors on bare green-screen stages who were speaking to characters that had yet to be rendered. "I think directors become very used to being asked a thousand questions every day," Todd explains. "A lot of directors joke about it. They say when they go home from work they don't want their wives to say, 'What do you want for dinner?' because they can't take one more question. If on a regular movie they would have to answer a thousand questions, on this movie it would be five thousand questions. For Tim, I think the level of effort he had to put into the movie every single day, all through post, was more like when a director is shooting or in production. But on this one, it literally just carried all the way through. Like there was never even a 5 or 10 percent reduction in how much energy it took from him every single day."

Danny Elfman admits Burton warned him that the scoring of their 13th film together would be the most challenging: "In the beginning, when we started out, ages before the film was finished, Tim said that this one was going to be hell with the schedule we were on. So, it's not like there were any surprises when, many months later, it was...well... to say the least, it wasn't easy."

"The difficulty with this one—and it's a new thing for us—was I couldn't show [Danny] anything, because the film didn't materialize until the very, very end," Burton says. "It was the scariest film [we] ever made. And this is where all that time working together came in handy

in the sense that we've worked together enough, so this could happen. This was a film where working with people that I've worked with before was the most helpful, because I could at least rely on the fact that I think it'll turn out OK. But that was about it, because it was a one-off thing...it was lucky that it turned out at all. Because you saw shots... we were recording and sound-mixing with nothing. By the time it was too late, the shots show up. It's amazing that it matches up at all."

"It was totally unique for him," Elfman says of Burton's work with green screen. "He's used to seeing almost everything in camera, and certainly by the time he's editing—and this time he didn't. And he kept saying, 'I don't know how to respond to the music, because I don't have the movie yet. The backgrounds aren't in, many of the characters aren't finished...I don't know what it is. Maybe it's the right piece; maybe it's wrong.' I understood where his anxiety came from. He wasn't seeing what he was imagining, so it was hard for him to find the center and how it should be driven."

Elfman himself wound up scoring much of the film to uncompleted green-screen footage—actors on bare stage backdrops who would later be replaced with digital character animation and environments. But he found his end of the work far less problematic than Burton. "For me, that in itself wasn't the hard part," Elfman says. "Tim kept saying, 'How do you even know what to write if there's nothing to look at really?' I'm used to that. I'm following the characters and how the background fills in around them is not going to change my approach much, but it changed his ability to respond to things. He didn't know how he felt because he didn't know what he was seeing yet."

Elfman says that Burton also had a much shorter time frame in which to work: "I felt really bad for him because he came out in August for a month to visit with his family, and we were scheduled to go back for September and October and then in November and December to go to London and record. He said, 'I can't go home. I'm going to have to be here every single day between now and February.' And I think that was a brutal reality—to come out for a month and realize you can't go home. It was so much bigger on a day-to-day basis than what he was expecting. I tried to take an attitude on *Alice* of, 'I don't care what I have to go through. I may have to write things 20 times...or I may not, but just to try to be calm and help Tim through it the best I can.' I found that the best way to work on *Alice*, more than ever in our relationship, was to just try and be relaxed and go whatever way



Johnny Depp as The Mad Hatter

Depp turned in his seventh performance for director Burton in *Alice In Wonderland*.

Alice In Wonderland, 2010 (previous page)

Helena Bonham Carter is the Red Queen in *Alice In Wonderland*, Tim Burton's 14th film as director.



The Mad Hatter

Burton's colorful concept of The Mad Hatter was shaped by Johnny Depp's input into the character.



Alice In Wonderland

A bite of cake causes Alice to grow.

he needed to go and be as flexible as possible. You're trying to get into someone's subconscious, and on *Alice* that subconscious was a very difficult place to reach. Finally, [when] shots came in, he had a better sense of it; the music was making more sense and everything came together at the very last second."

Elfman's score is surging, English-flavored in the manner of his early *Black Beauty* score for director Caroline Thompson, and tinged with nobility and a feeling of destiny. A repeating figure, reminiscent of both *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* and parts of Elfman's concert work *Serenada Schizophrana*, propels the score, and Elfman's "Alice's Theme" is voiced by choir at certain moments, including in an extended end title composition.

"I had finished the first round of sessions where I had recorded the first version of 'Alice's Theme' with a London choir and was listening to it in the airport waiting for my flight home," Elfman says. "It hit me immediately that I had to add lyrics. The orchestra was always playing these two chords, which I always heard as the two syllables 'A-lice' from the moment I wrote it, like the orchestra was playing her name. I had to hear it actually sung. I wrote all the lyrics right there in the airport and kind of became obsessed with it. Then I went home to finish the score for about two more weeks before the final sessions. The problem was explaining this idea to Tim. At this point, Tim needed a new nutty musical idea that wasn't really necessary for the film like he needed a hole in the head. More to the point, I felt that if I mentioned it to him at that juncture, his head would have actually exploded. To say his plate was full was a wild understatement. Besides, like most di-

RICHARD ZANUCK

Richard Zanuck is one of the most prodigious film moguls, and one of the most successful producers in motion picture history. The son of Darryl F. Zanuck, who helped found 20th Century Fox Studios in 1933 and ran the studio off and on until 1971, Richard Zanuck was appointed producer of Richard Fleischer's 1959 film *Compulsion*, about the famous Leopold and Loeb murders. Shortly afterward, he ran Fox for his father until a power struggle at the end of the decade led to the younger Zanuck being fired by his father. While at Fox, Richard Zanuck shepherded the production of *The Sound Of Music*, the original *Planet Of The Apes*, and its sequel, *Beneath The Planet Of The Apes*—and he married Linda Harrison, the gorgeous actress and model who played the mute human woman Nova in the two *Apes* films. Zanuck also signed composers Jerry Goldsmith and John Williams to multi-picture deals at the studio, raising their earnings to make them more in line with much of the other creative talent at the studios.

After a brief stint at Warner Bros., Richard Zanuck teamed with producer David Brown in 1972 to form an independent production company (Zanuck/Brown Productions) that would produce Steven Spielberg's first two movies, *The Sugarland Express* and *Jaws*. Zanuck and Brown also produced *Jaws 2*, Clint Eastwood's *The Eiger Sanction*, *Cocoon*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, and *Deep Impact* (David Brown died in February of 2010).

Zanuck has lent his extraordinary experience and expertise to five Tim Burton films: *Planet Of The Apes*, *Big Fish*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Alice In Wonderland*. Zanuck sees it as his job to take on the minute details of the production process so that Burton is free to think and create. "It's his brain," Zanuck says. "And my

OH WOULD YOU TELL ME
 HAVE YOU BEEN
 ALICE PLEASE... ALICE

OH WOULD YOU TELL ME
 ALICE PLEASE...

OH ALICE DEAR WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN
 WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD WHAT TIME YOU WERE
 OH TELL US PLEASE WHAT TIME YOU WERE
 [SO NEAR (SO) FAR (OR) IN BETWEEN] -
 ALICE PLEASE ALICE

AND HOW FAR CAN A YOUNG GIRL FALL

DID SOMEONE LEAD YOU BY THE HAND
 (HOW DID YOU FALL TO)
 HOW MANY MILES TO WONDERLAND
 OH TELL US SO WE'LL UNDERSTAND
 ALICE PLEASE - ALICE

WHAT ARE THEY LIKE THE PEOPLE THERE?
 HOW DO THEY SPEAK WHAT DO THEY WEAR?
 OH TELL US DEAR WE DO SO CARE
 ALICE PLEASE ALICE -

AND WERE YOU AFRAID
 OH WERE YOU SCARED?

OH TELL US WHERE YOU SAW SCARRO?
 ALICE OH - ALICE

SO MANY DOORS - HOW DID YOU CHOOSE
 SO MUCH TO SAW SO MUCH TO LOOK
 [AND COULD YOU ENTER JUST A CAT]
 SO MANY THINGS GOT IN YOUR WAY
 NO THE TODAY NO THE TODAY
 SO WATCH YOUR BACK
 AND WATCH YOUR HEAD
 REMEMBER WHAT THE DOORHOUSE SAID
 ALICE

Alice In Wonderland, lyrics
 Danny Elfman's handwritten lyrics for "Alice's Theme" written at Heathrow Airport, while returning from *Alice* choir session.



Alice In Wonderland scoring session
 Conductor Pete Anthony on the Sony Scoring Stage in Culver City recording *Alice In Wonderland*.



In the control room
 Burton, Steve Bartek, Elfman, and engineer Dennis Sands are joined by Elfman's son, Oliver.

job, really, is to keep that brain free and clear from all the other nonsense that goes on, not only at the studio level but at the actual set level. I call it his laboratory—his brain. I always say, 'You've got to spend more time in your laboratory. I'm cleaning that out for you. Nobody can enter, just you.' And that's where [Tim] does all of his great work. Most directors get hounded to death by all kinds of things that have very little to do with making the picture when you come right down to it. They're besieged—before the picture starts, during the picture, and after the picture. It's just an assault. I'm always amazed that they can think straight."

Zanuck says Tim Burton has kept him on his toes and still interested in filmmaking. "For 50 years, I have produced films, working with some of the most gifted directors of all time. The past nine years, I have been producing films directed by Tim Burton (probably the most telling reason I'm still in the business). Tim is unquestionably as much of a visionary and as talented as anyone I've ever worked with and certainly the most artistic and imaginative. He thinks visually, not only in general and broad conceptual terms, but in the detailed minutiae as well. In his films, like his art, he highlights the essential elements yet keeps them uncluttered and easily interpreted. I have studied this for five films, and every time I'm convinced I know how he is going to approach a scene, I am constantly surprised—even if I mentally try to 'Burtonalize' it in advance. The one thing I can be certain of is pace and tempo. Tim will never overindulge or linger. His work is never tedious or boring. It's just not in his bones."

Burton himself says that Richard Zanuck is unlike any other producer in the film industry: "His unique background gives him a rich experience from which to draw. What an evolution, starting with his father being founder of Fox studios, to a



Alice In Wonderland Royal Premiere

Tim Burton and Danny Elfman at the Royal Premiere of *Alice In Wonderland*. Burton and Elfman celebrate their 13th film in collaboration.



Directing Alice

Tim Burton works with actress Mia Wasikowska as Alice.

rectors, Tim needs to actually hear something to react. Conceptualizing a piece of music serves little purpose. Tim is very responsive to music. He hears it and his reactions are quick and visceral. He likes it or doesn't and I never try to argue the reasons. I have learned that arguing with a director about why they should like a piece of music when they don't is like arguing with a woman about why she should love you when she doesn't. It's impossible. Either they feel it or they don't. No amount of words will help. So I returned for the final choir session again in London and had prepared the theme several ways, shorter and longer, with and without lyrics. Even though I really loved having the lyrics, I was completely ready to toss it and move on. I just had to hear it once." Ultimately, Burton responded to Elfman's music and it found its way into the film's end titles.

While the sheer, crazed variety of characters and environments in *Alice In Wonderland* could have encouraged a wild, unhinged score—something Elfman has proved again and again that he's more than capable of—the final result is smoother than one might expect. Elfman says he worked closely with Burton to achieve the desired result and that he's learned to tell early on when he's moving in the wrong direction: "I know [Tim's] body language...there are two modes: head in the hands, suffering—like I'm torturing him—and the other is like, kind of following it along, nodding. I never had doubts about him. I knew the score would come together. I just knew it would take a lot of patience, to give him room to go through his internal process and to try to help him find his equilibrium and finally to follow his instincts as they became clear—not dissimilar to *Big Fish* in certain ways. It took a little time. In the end, it all paid off. I think it all came together beautifully. Tim really did a fabulous job. Finishing that movie on schedule was no small miracle."

Burton returns the compliment—while acknowledging that it's miraculous that anything good could have come out of such a mysterious process: "I'm amazed because I really liked the score, but only the people that were there at the end know how bad [the experience] was, how scary. Any of us there at the end, [Danny] especially, were kind of winging it. We were all kind of winging it anyway, but this was kind of a real 'OK, we think this is going to be *this*, but we don't really know.' It's kind of like everything else where things are locked in. It was good because there was no other way—otherwise [Danny] would have gone nuts because all the changes that have to happen once you get it written out."

Composer Thomas Newman (*American Beauty*, *The Green Mile*) sees *Alice* as part of the natural development of Elfman as a composer: "It is the refinement of all the things that may have once been influences but are now firmly entrenched in his own aesthetic. The choir, which was always operating in the movie as an element of color, starts to stand out in the end titles, almost in an oratorio kind of way."

Joe Roth, who bought *Edward Scissorhands* as chairman of 20th Century Fox and was a producer on *Alice In Wonderland*, has a unique perspective on Elfman and Burton: "I did *Edward Scissorhands* 20 years ago and *Alice* this year, and so I got to see them 20 years apart with no intervening experiences. It was like watching a young married couple become an older married couple in the sense that on *Alice*, they were clearly like a healthy, long-term married couple. Tim was very demanding and they both had a real point of view. Danny was very outspoken and it was clear this was the way they worked and always worked. On *Scissorhands* they were both younger, and I would say, softer. That was kind of a magical movie. And 20 years later, they're still working together, but I think their views were much more pointed. By the time they got to *Alice*, they're both at the very top of their game. And they have their own relationship: very personal. Tim's like the demanding husband and Danny is like the sometimes beleaguered housewife trying to please, but they ultimately always get where they need to go."

Richard Zanuck—who has worked with everyone from Franklin Schaffner and Jerry Goldsmith on the 1968 *Planet Of The Apes*, to Steven Spielberg and John Williams on *Jaws*, to Danny Elfman and Tim Burton on their *Planet Of The Apes*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, and *Alice In Wonderland*—says the communication between composer and director is always challenging. "Music is one thing very few people really know much about. They know what they like when they hear it, but it's hard for them to describe something. You can describe attitudes and how you want this to feel and then I suppose you can go and listen to other scores and say, 'I want something like this.' But if you're not a musician, really, it's hard to talk that language with any kind of precision. So, as a result, a lot of filmmakers like Steven and Tim stay with who they know the best."

Alice followed James Cameron's *Avatar* into theaters, launching a scramble to convert other films to 3-D—with results that have been, for the most part, disappointing. What the 3-D lemmings missed was that *Avatar* and *Alice In Wonderland* were dazzling films by two filmmakers at the absolute top of their game. In both cases, the directors of these movies had vivid and powerful visions of their respective films in their heads and had the discipline and imagination to translate that vision onto movie screens, all while directing props and actors on what was often a bare stage.

Following a Facebook campaign that created a voracious appetite for the film while it was still in production, *Alice* opened on March 5, 2010, to a jaw-dropping weekend gross of \$116 million. Audiences and critics embraced Burton's vision, making *Alice In Wonderland* the most successful film in Tim Burton's career. With more than a billion dollars in worldwide gross, it is now the fifth highest-grossing film of all time.

young Richard serving as president of his father's studio, to his subsequent firing by his father, which he did not allow to stop him. Instead he ended up as an independent producer working on films such as *Jaws*, and continued on to a diverse array of films. In 2000, he started working with me. Our first collaboration was *Planet Of The Apes*—the original version of which he had worked on while serving at Fox. Richard has come full circle and gone beyond. It's an honor and pleasure to work with someone who has experienced so much and still loves making films."

Danny Elfman adds, "I have seen Tim working with a lot of producers in the last quarter century. It took him a while to find the perfect match, but fortunately, he did. Richard Zanuck is a rare breed. He's tough as nails and yet totally fluid in his ability to get the job done right. I've never seen his energy flag. I have so much respect for the man. He's a true champion for Tim, and from my perspective, he never tries to veer him away from his unique vision, which many producers would try to do in their effort to get a *more commercial* product out there. On the contrary, I think his total commitment is to help Tim manifest that vision in its truest sense."



Richard Zanuck

The veteran producer on both the original and Tim Burton's *Planet Of The Apes* as well as Burton's recent films.

17



ETIQUETTE LESSON
The Monster Kids Grow Up



The World Of Stainboy

Concept artwork by Burton from a series of web shorts about malformed and misunderstood characters, many first seen in *The Melancholy Death Of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
& OTHER PROJECTS

Almost half a century ago, Danny Elfman and a gang of monster-loving filmgoers descended upon a Baldwin Hills theater and reveled in mutations and dismemberments. Around the same time, Tim Burton was sitting wide-eyed in front of the TV, absorbing the history of horror films, from classics to the most mesmerizing grade-Z schlock imaginable. For both these impressionable youths, movies were fever dreams that infected them with the virus of creativity, shaping their future lives and careers.

Decades ago as teenagers, they started to express their creative imaginations: Burton through experimental student films like *Stalk Of The Celery* and Elfman as a street performer in the guise of the Devil.

Over the course of 25 years and 13 films together, these artists have created iconic moments, characters, images, and music. This baker's dozen of oddball, off-center, and unconventional high-risk films have struck a collective chord with moviegoers around the globe and brought in theatrical grosses of close to \$3.5 billion worldwide.

Both Burton and Elfman have taken their artistry beyond the confines of the local movie theater.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

On November 22, 2009, Tim Burton attended the unveiling of a major new art installation at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. Featured among the works of Van Gogh, Picasso, Dali, Mondrian, Warhol, Gauguin, Monet, Matisse, Kahlo, and Pollock and other masters was a major new headlining exhibit of the work of one of this era's most influential artists: Tim Burton.

Over its five-month run, more than 810,000 visitors poured through this retrospective of Burton's illustrations, photographs, and sculptures. It was the museum's largest turnout ever for a living artist (and third-place runner-up of all time, behind exhibits of Picasso and Matisse.) *The New York Times* called it, "The ultimate revenge of the art nerd."

Joining Burton at his opening night gala were friends and co-workers, including Johnny Depp, Danny DeVito, Catherine O'Hara, Rick Heinrichs, and Danny Elfman, who also provided prerecorded musical accompaniment for portions of the MoMA exhibit.



Staring Contest

Tim Burton draws a scene from the first web short in *The World Of Stainboy*.



Danny Elfman at Carnegie Hall

Danny Elfman made his classical music debut at Carnegie Hall with his *Serenada Schizophrana*.

SERENADA SCHIZOPHRANA

A few years earlier, on February 23, 2005, Burton accompanied Elfman as the two of them entered one of the world's most prestigious venues of classical music, New York City's Carnegie Hall. This was the concert stage of Toscanini where works by Dvorak, Strauss, Gershwin, Rachmaninoff, Varese, Bartok, and Schoenberg had their world premieres. Joining their ranks was the composer of *Oingo Boingo Piano Concerto No. 1 1/2* debuting his first symphonic concert work, *Serenada Schizophrana*: Danny Elfman.

One year earlier, Danny Elfman was approached by the American Composers Orchestra to write an original orchestral piece. Elfman originally thought this would be a small-scale work done for Zankel Hall, a theater underneath Carnegie Hall that premieres avant-garde, experimental works. Instead the project was promoted into a debut at Carnegie Hall proper. "Elfman came aboard thinking he was doing a low-pressure, off-the-beaten-path piece for a theater that's adjacent to a New York subway line," Richard Kraft says. "The small orchestral piece he had planned would eventually morph into a 46-minute symphony and a very high-profile commission. The old joke is how to get to Carnegie Hall? Practice. And in Elfman's case, it's score a whole lot of movies."

"Moving the concert upstairs into the main hall gave me about a month longer to write the piece, which was a great relief for me as my wife, as luck would have it, was due to give birth the same week as the original date...but it also ramped up the pressure about a hundred fold," Elfman says. "It wasn't until I flew out to New York and heard a concert in Carnegie Hall that I realized the gravity of the situation. I thought to myself, 'This is the playground of the big boys.' It was as though my first film was *Batman* instead of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*. I had nine films between *Pee-wee* and *Batman*, and in this case it felt as if I was skipping a few steps. I found it paralyzing, but I had an idea for two pianos and orchestra." Elfman had at least one advantage in that he actually had more experience writing for a large orchestra than he did for smaller ensembles—the opposite of most budding concert composers.

Danny Elfman wasn't the only person nervous about his Carnegie Hall debut. "I remember I was freaking out," Tim Burton remembers of his attendance at the event. "But it was the same way I'd feel about seeing Danny in a club and then seeing him in a recording studio with a big orchestra. It was like sort of a weirdly surreal natural progression into something else. But I was actually quite nervous."

Elfman started writing stream-of-consciousness, short compositions, working out more than a dozen two- to three-minute pieces at the rate of one to three per day before starting over with fresh ideas the following day. With 14 pieces completed, he began expanding seven of them and eventually elaborated on six more. He ultimately created a suite of six movements ("Pianos," "Blue Strings," "A Brass Thing," "The Quadruped Patrol," "I Forget," "Bells And Whistles," and "End Tag"), each of which could stand on its own thematically. "It was my intention that the totality of it was neither too serious, which I wanted to avoid, nor too light and whimsical. I really wanted to create a contrast from absurd to melodic to intense and let each piece play off the others. As the pieces were coming together, they also fell into an order. I tried to allow them to evolve themselves."

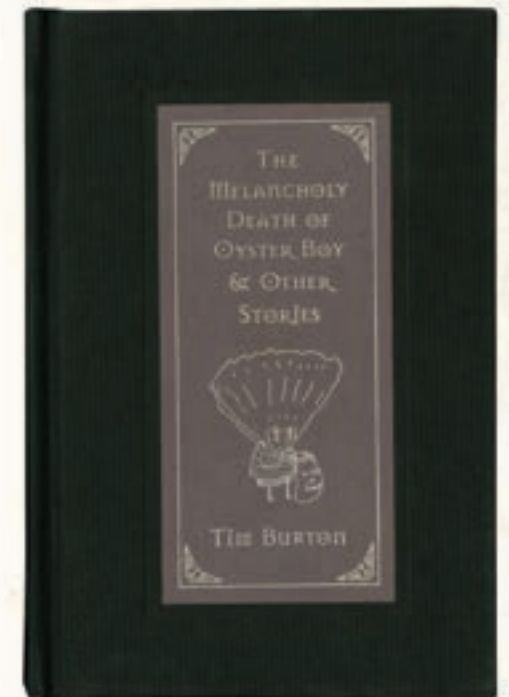
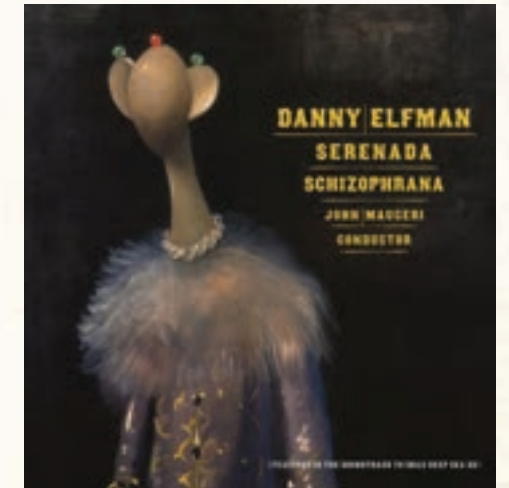
One of the composers impressed with the piece was classical icon Philip Glass (*Einstein On The Beach*). "I thought it was great," Glass says. "He did it in New York for the American Composers Orchestra. I don't think they really understood it, but he knew what he was doing. It was a very powerful piece. I think that orchestra thought he was a Hollywood guy and it would be a kind of easy thing to do. It wasn't easy; it was a very difficult piece and it was very demanding. I think they were a little surprised. But the piece came out very well. He has gifts that are unique and he has contributions to the work that are unique." (John Mauceri conducted the work for a Sony Classical recording.)

THE MELANCHOLY DEATH OF OYSTER BOY & OTHER STORIES

Tim Burton has also left his imprint in the world of children's poetry. Always a fan of the whimsy of Dr. Seuss and the acerbic wit of Roald Dahl, Burton wrote and illustrated the critically acclaimed collection of 23 macabre stories, *The Melancholy Death Of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*, featuring such poems as "The Girl Who Turned Into A Bed," "Roy, The Toxic Boy," "The Pin Cushion Queen," and "Mummy Boy" who was mistaken for a piñata and featured such couplets as, "They took a baseball bat and whacked open his head; Mummy Boy fell to the ground; he finally was dead. Inside of his head were no candy or prizes, just a few stray beetles of various sizes."

Critics compared it to the works of Roald Dahl, Shel Silverstein, and Edward Gorey. Entertainment Weekly said, "Burton's creepy stories conjure up the fantastical, even the slightly demented," and singled out this line about "Brie Boy": "The other children never let Brie Boy play...but at least he went well with a nice Chardonnay."

One of the book's characters, Stainboy (also known as Stain Boy), found his way off the page and onto the worldwide web as an animated internet series, *The World Of Stainboy*, with Elfman providing the unnerving underscore. Burton says he finds his collaborations with Elfman on smaller-scaled works like these refreshing: "[These are] little projects that are just kind of Internet projects, and sometimes I don't even know what it is. And I'll send it to Danny, 'Can you make anything out of this? Just do a couple little things here for this or that?' On the MoMA show, we had some little pieces and I'd show Danny a picture and say, 'Can you do anything with this?' So, there's a lot of funny little things that we don't even know what they are. It's not for movies, but still



The Melancholy Death Of Oyster Boy & Other Stories

Tim Burton's second published book, a collection of macabre childhood bedtime verses, contained 23 poetic stories about deformed outcasts.



Rabbit & Rogue, 2008 (above and right)
 Danny Elfman collaborated with choreographer Twyla Tharp on his first ballet, which debuted at Lincoln Center with the American Ballet Theatre.



whether it's an environmental little piece or whatever, it's the same kind of thing where sound and visuals are all equally important. That is a case where there is no pressure; there's nobody breathing down your neck or anything."

RABBIT & ROGUE

After attending a performance of *In The Upper Room* by Philip Glass, Danny Elfman was asked by the American Ballet Theatre to accept a commission for a major new work. Elfman was so impressed by the choreography of *Upper Room's* Twyla Tharp that he approached her to be his collaborator.

"We listened to a lot of music; we talked about a lot of music," remembers Tharp. "We basically came up with a form for it, movements. It evolved over the course of a year and a half, or two. Each of the sections, very differently, gives the feeling of a different place, of being in a different room, of being in a different time frame. For example 'The Rag,' which is and is not a rag, then that long and quite wonderfully developed section that precedes the finale...is kind of the meat of the piece and a densely composed piece of work."

Premiered by the American Ballet Theater at Lincoln Center in New York on June 5, 2008, Danny Elfman's collaboration with Tharp—*Rabbit & Rogue*—spawned another ambitious 45 minutes of music in five movements ("Frolic," "Rag," "Lyric," "Gamelan," and "Finale"), although the scale is somewhat smaller than *Serenada Schizophrana*. Dancers Ethan Stiefel and Herman Cornejo played the title characters, who act out an elaborate and sometimes witty balance of power through the ballet's five sections.

Tharp was impressed by Elfman's work ethic: "[Danny] would send in sketches. I would say, 'This has some visceral content to it. I think this is a good idea; why don't we see about developing it this way or that way.' He's a terrific collaborator. He's absolutely the best. There's no ego investment. There really is just, 'Let's try to make this project have as much logic to it and as much meaning and impact as possible.' He's a real craftsman—sort of a consummate professional in terms of the ways in which he delivers the sound, his access to computer programs; his scoring is extraordinarily detailed—even at the early stage of things, which was very helpful to me because I could take it into the studio and say, 'OK. These bars work, these don't for me,' and right way, overnight, it would be back."

Tharp also says she never pigeonholed Elfman either as a rock musician or a film composer: "I don't compartmentalize. I never really have. To me, Willie 'The Lion' Smith is a classicist. It's a kind of a state of intention more than a category. Danny is definitely a classicist. Not a lot of people have the imagination to look at or listen to someone who has a vibrancy and enormous vitality in their work. It has to always be, 'Well, they've done *this* so I guess that's what they will do next,' as opposed to 'No, they have talent and an energy and heaven only knows what it can produce.'"

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS BALLET

In 2005, Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* found its way on to the ballet stage when Matthew Bourne, the innovative choreographer of the all-male production of *Swan Lake*, approached the director for the rights to adapt Burton's beloved cult movie into a theatrical production. Bourne was taken by Burton's character of Edward as well as the "beautifully, achingly romantic score by Danny Elfman, which would be the backbone of our stage version."

Burton and Elfman had discussed the potential of *Scissorhands* as a stage musical before, and Bourne, the creator of the world's longest-running ballet production and a five-time Olivier Award winner, seemed the perfect man to create the *Edward Scissorhands Ballet*.

Caroline Thompson adapted her screenplay and Danny Elfman wrote the ballet's original score. Bourne and Elfman worked extensively to develop the project, and Elfman began composing about 30 minutes of music. However, Bourne's commitment to a stage production of *Mary Poppins*, and Elfman's other film scoring jobs, eventually prevented the two artists from completing their collaboration. When an opening date for the ballet was finally chosen, it conflicted with Elfman's work on *Corpse Bride*, so another composer was chosen to write the score, (adapting some of the themes from the film score). The ballet premiered in England at Sadler's Wells Theatre without incorporation of any of Elfman's original contributions to the score. About 25-minutes of Elfman's demos of the work's original intentions survive and demonstrate the beginnings of Danny's capabilities to compose a major symphonic work outside of motion pictures.

BONES

Tim Burton adapted his distinct cinematic style to a more compact format when the band The Killers approached him to direct his first and only music video for their song, “Bones.” “We were just kicking around ideas for the video and we thought, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if Tim Burton could shoot this?’” commented bassist Mark Stoermer. “We reached out to his people and he came back and said he wanted to work with us, which was amazing.” The video starred model/actress Devon Aoki and a horde of skeleton creatures, as well as clips from *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* and Ray Harryhausen’s *Jason And The Argonauts*. It won Best Video at the 2007 Shockwaves NME Awards. The band was thrilled: “It’s Tim. There are some skeletons, some darkness, and some romance,” Stoermer says. “What more could you want?”

THE OVEREAGER OVERTURE

When John Mauceri decided to step down from his post as conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra in 2006, after 15 years at the podium, he commissioned Danny Elfman to write an overture for his final concert at the Bowl. “The idea was to come up with something like the overture to Leonard Bernstein’s *Candide*,” Richard Kraft says. “But that piece is the overture to an actual musical and Danny decided to write ‘an overture to a nonexistent musical’—which was the original title of the piece.”

Elfman in effect had to create all the tunes that would have been in a musical and then adapt them into an overture. The 8-minute piece, titled *The Overeager Overture* is an explosive medley quoting several thematic ideas from something that doesn’t exist in any other form. After debuting at Carnegie Hall the previous year, Elfman was back on his home turf, introducing a new work at a venue that had long been used to celebrate both classical and Hollywood music.

There has always been an element of suspicion for concert composers who have written for film and vice versa, despite the fact that even some of the most prestigious talents of the 20th century moved effortlessly between these mediums. But Elfman says he doesn’t hold any of these genres in higher esteem than any other. “I never fancied myself a serious composer,” Elfman insists. “I never fancied myself a *composer*. So, I’m not a serious composer who’s frustrated wanting to do my serious work. I do intend to do much more concert work.”

The concert field has become an exciting ground of exploration for Elfman. This is an area that was once the province of a number of film

The Overeager Overture score

Conductor John Mauceri commissioned Danny Elfman to compose an overture for his final concert after 15 years with the Hollywood Bowl in 2006.

composers from the Golden Age to the '50s and '60s—people like Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Bernard Herrmann, Franz Waxman, Miklós Rózsa, Alex North, Jerome Moross, Jerry Goldsmith, John Williams, and Leonard Rosenman. Great concert composers like Sergei Prokofiev and Aaron Copland scored films, and great film composers created concert works, and in the best cases, one discipline informed the other, allowing the best of these very separate worlds to pass back and forth to the enrichment of both.

Elfman’s view is somewhat less optimistic. For someone whose acceptance in the world of film scoring took an unusually long time to gain traction, his interloping into the concert hall seems an equally risky sortie. “I will never be accepted in the classical world, and my approach and attitude about classical and modern music is very much out of the center of what’s being celebrated in this era,” Elfman says. “But I feel like I’ve been out of the center of everything my whole life, so it shouldn’t be any different now. I feel like there’s a vein of contemporary orchestral music that’s not being tapped into. In my opinion, much composition in the last 50 years has gone in a direction that’s become very academic; where to go to a concert and understand it, you have to have a background in contemporary music.”

Elfman rejects this philosophy: “When I started writing for orchestra outside of film, I thought how interesting it might be if my god-daughters, who were 9 and 12 years old at the time, could enjoy it without any orchestral musical education. I wanted to write something they could get pulled up into. To do that means going way afool of the current popular trends in contemporary orchestra music. Critics have said, ‘He’s just writing film music without a film.’ But my attitude is, *I’m writing narrative music for orchestra*. And that’s not just film music—that’s what classical music was until the mid-20th century. That’s the music I love. Much of Prokofiev’s and Shostakovich’s and Stravinsky’s music had wonderful narratives to it. I’m not saying that music can’t take on great density or go into all kinds of places, but I love the idea of writing a piece of orchestral music that anybody can listen to, just like it might have been for people listening to music ages ago. I’m coming at it from a really weird perspective, and I expect to take quite a beating on future works. But I’m loving it.”

“I just think that his writing is continuously improving,” percussionist Emil Richards says. “He’s becoming more and more musical. The continuity astounds me. Every composer is locked into having to write

music for the picture, but Danny seems now to be coming into a place where the music can stand on its own without a film.”

Concertmaster Bruce Dukov says Elfman has evolved personally as well: “He actually comes out and jokes with everybody now. He’s very relaxed and easy. He’s very confident. He’s always been confident about what he wants, but he never really felt comfortable in the early stages coming out in front of the musicians—he’d always been in the booth. And then as he started seeing that we aren’t a bunch of snobs...that we were all accepting and enjoying what he was doing, then he started to feel more comfortable about coming out.”

“The plain fact is that from day one I’ve always been pretty intimidated by those musicians,” Elfman says. “Not because they try to intimidate me, but simply because they’re so awesome in what they do. I could never do what they do. Not ever. I don’t know why I can apply such discipline to my writing, but never to playing an instrument. To me, what these men and women do is like voodoo. And watching them play makes me feel like a chimpanzee watching a magic show. They’re just so amazing. I really do feel like I’m a different species in their presence—a lower one.”



Danny Elfman and Philip Glass
Elfman presents an award to his classical music hero.

THE ART OF TIM BURTON

Tim Burton's artwork may have made its public debut on the side of Burbank city garbage trucks, but by 2009 it was on display in far more prestigious venues.

In 2009, Steeles Publishing released *The Art Of Tim Burton*, an elaborate, 434-page art book compiling over a thousand illustrations, covering 40 years of the film director's life, work, and career. The book examines Burton's childhood fascinations with monsters, clowns, and other oddities—and the way in which these obsessions influenced his art and his films from early works like *Vincent* (1982) and *Frankenweenie* (1984) to blockbusters *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* (2005) and *Alice In Wonderland* (2009). Examples from Burton's original artworks and drawings from his book of poetry *The Melancholy Death Of Oyster Boy & Other Stories* (1997) and from *The World Of Stainboy* web shorts (2000) are also included, as are numerous stand-alone illustrations and paintings. Filled with misunderstood mutant children, bizarre but appealing animals, and zombified femme fatales, the book reinforces producer Richard Zanuck's opinion of Burton as "an artist who makes films."

The Art Of Tim Burton also contains insight from a number of Burton's friends and collaborators, including costume designer Colleen Atwood, Helena Bonham Carter, Johnny Depp, Danny DeVito, Ray Harryhausen, Martin Landau, Christopher Lee, Winona Ryder—and, of course, Danny Elfman. The first printing of the deluxe edition of the book quickly sold out and has become a highly sought-after collector's item. The book-review website Book Legion points out that *The Art Of Tim Burton* is an amazingly comprehensive look at Burton's output: "When you get an art book, it's generally a sampling. This book feels more like an ultimate portfolio."

The book was written by Leah Gallo, designed by Holly Kempf, and edited by Gallo, Kempf and Derek Frey. Frey has worked with Burton since *Mars Attacks!* and has served as associate producer—from *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* through *Alice In Wonderland*. "Tim reluctantly allowed us to sift through decades of his largely unseen artwork," Frey says about the arduous process of creating the book. "It was a welcome challenge and the result is a true testament of Tim's talent as a prolific artist."

Elfman adds, "Coming out to New York for Tim's MoMA exhibit was so exciting and so surrealistic. I mean, I had an idea of what was going to be there. Tim brought me over to a workshop/warehouse where

he was putting together some of the large sculptural pieces for the exhibit so I could get some ideas for music to accompany them. Of course, writing that music was so fun and provided a much-needed break from the intensive scoring I was doing at that moment...which is probably why I wrote a zillion of them; I just didn't want to stop. But when I finally got to the show, it was way beyond what I had expected. Wow! Tim in the f**king MoMA. Amazing! It was very dream-like—Tim stuff everywhere. I thought I knew his art really well, but at that moment I realized that there was so much more than I had imagined. Looking at his book, which I do frequently, is a vivid reminder of that. So much revealing windows into his psyche and his past, even his childhood. And to make it even weirder, just about everyone he had worked with over the previous 25 years was there. It was very much like the end of *Big Fish* where all the characters from Edward Bloom's life come to his funeral to see him off. Of course, Tim wasn't dead... (or if he was, he was certainly the most lively animated corpse I had ever seen). But it still felt very much like a huge celebration of his life with everyone there from his past. 'How incredible, how wonderful,' I thought, 'to have this happen and *not* have to be dead!' It was a great, great night that I'll never forget."



The Art Of Tim Burton Deluxe-Edition Book

In 2009, Steeles Publishing released *The Art Of Tim Burton*, a 434-page collection of over 1,000 illustrations.



Tim Burton at the Museum of Modern Art, 2009

Burton stands with his 21-foot inflatable, Balloon Boy, part of the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition of his artwork, which drew over 800,000 visitors.

18



THE FINALE
Artistic Brothers



25 years, 13 films

Tim Burton and Danny Elfman at the recording sessions of *Alice In Wonderland*.

DANNY ELFMAN & TIM BURTON: THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Tim Burton has maintained his success by finding projects that allow his imagination and vision free rein. With the success of *Alice In Wonderland*, he has returned to the “mouse house” for his next project. Burton will revisit the early crucible of his creativity at Disney with a new, full-length, 3-D stop-motion version of *Frankenweenie*, to be shot in black-and-white just like the original live-action film.

Frankenweenie's producer Richard Zanuck observes: “I’ve been doing this now for 50 years. I’m 75, but Tim, I would say, is probably the singular reason that I keep working—because he’s fun to work with, and it’s fun to see how his brain works. I’ve had the good fortune throughout my career to work with all of the best. Every one of them is brilliant in their own way, but Tim is the only real artist. He paints these movies frame by frame in his mind. He’s a real visionary. That’s why I can hardly wait to rush in, even if it’s six o’clock in the morning, every day to see him do his magic. When we’re shooting, I’ll put myself off to sleep at night trying to think how he’s going to stage tomorrow’s work. *And I’ve never been right*. I get all excited to see how he’s going to move the people, how he’s going to move the camera, how he’s going to light it—all of those things. And he’s always done something different than what I’ve imagined.”

Frankenweenie will mark the 14th collaboration between Tim Burton and Danny Elfman over a period that will cover 27 years. Alfred Hitchcock and Bernard Herrmann worked on only nine films together over a 20-year period. For spaghetti-western director Sergio Leone and Ennio Morricone, it was six films over a 20-year period. Among legendary director/composer collaborations, only Federico Fellini

and Nino Rota, and Steven Spielberg and John Williams outdistance Burton and Elfman for the sheer number of films done together.

Howard Shore, through his work with David Cronenberg, also operates in a similar league with Elfman and Burton in terms of a long working relationship between a director and composer. “You build up a certain shorthand; you build up a trust,” Shore says of such collaborations. “The language becomes much more intuitive—how you discuss things and how you feel about things. You actually take things, I think, to a much more internal, finer level when you’ve worked with somebody for a long time. You see all the little nuances in their work and you react to them because you’ve worked with them many times before. And when you’ve worked with a director many times, there is no going backward. Everything is forward motion because they know all your work. So every time you work together, something new has to come out of it for it to keep going forward.”

For Carter Burwell, whose work with the Coen Brothers charts similar lengthy territory, the working process gets streamlined in such an enduring creative relationship. “I also think there are these possibilities for risk-taking that are harder to achieve in a situation where people are less certain of each other,” Burwell says. “It’s harder to put something totally unexpected in front of a director if you don’t know them, than it is if there is trust already established. I think that’s the great thing in Danny’s relationship with Tim. I don’t feel either one of them repeats themselves as artists, and I think partly because of the trust and the comfort that everyone’s able to take more chances.”

After overseeing several films with Burton and Elfman, Zanuck sees their connection as, “Some kind of osmosis because they know each other so well.”

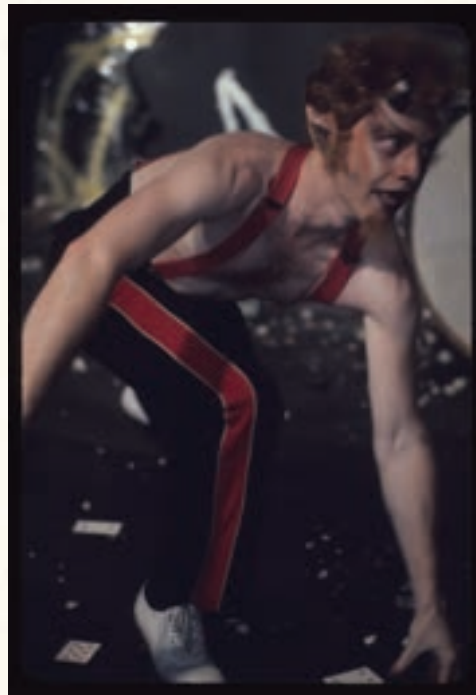


Danny and Tim (above)

Tim Burton and Danny Elfman at a lemonade stand in Tokyo during the *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* tour, 2005: Photo by Derek Frey

Danny as the Devil (right)

Elfman as the Devil on the set of *Forbidden Zone*.



Danny Elfman, who was once an intruder and looked upon with suspicion by his elders in the world of film scoring, has now become one of the most respected practitioners in the field. Tim Burton, whose art teachers once scolded him for not knowing the right way to draw, now has his artwork displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The boy once afraid of disembodied heads, and the boy who once *played* a disembodied head—are now each men of tremendous success and influence. Tim Burton, whose early reviews were in “minus one” territory, is now one of the few film directors to express a critically acclaimed vision and reach a massive and devoted audience. Danny Elfman, whose music was once dismissed as an aberration, is now one of the gatekeepers upholding much of the great traditions of film scoring.

The journey has not always been easy. Both Burton and Elfman have become used to fighting for their unique vision. Their stubborn pursuit of their instinctive, personal artistry is what has made each of them such enduring, and instantly recognizable, cultural touchstones.

“The biggest misconception about what it’s like working with Tim,” Elfman says, “is that ‘Oh, everything must be real easy because you guys have like a shorthand, and you each know what the other is going to do.’ And I say, ‘On the contrary, I never know what Tim’s next film is going to ask of me, or what it’s going to be like.’ I never have any way of predicting. They say, ‘When you write a piece of music you must already know that he’s going to love it.’ And I say, ‘On the contrary, that couldn’t be less true.’ The work is as intensive now as it was 25 years ago, and I find it a kind of annoying misconception.”

Burton finds the impression equally off-putting, noting that it implies both men are settling into a risk-averse and unchallenging mode: “I actually get kind of offended by it because especially when you’ve worked together for a long period of time, you always try to treat things like you never did them before—it’s not easy and it kind of undermines the work and the fun [to think that it is]. I think if we ever said, ‘Oh, let’s just do this,’ we’d get bored and we wouldn’t want to do it. We always want to go out of our way to make sure that doesn’t happen.”

There are few directors or film composers whose names are truly household names, and whose work can be described—accurately—by the man on the street. But Elfman and Burton have not only carved out unmistakable artistic niches for themselves, they’ve also proven time and time again that they’re not constrained by the straitjackets within which many familiar Hollywood talents find themselves trapped.

When Burton was a kid watching the preview for the next Saturday afternoon’s horror movie, his heart would pound because he “couldn’t wait to see that”—and now he generates that kind of anticipation as one of the most popular and successful filmmakers of the last 25 years. Danny Elfman—once so excited by Stravinsky and Prokofiev that he threw out his rock record collection to make room for the jazz and classical music that thrilled him—now debuts his works at the same concert hall as those musical giants. The two kids who couldn’t quite find their place in the culture are now arbiters of culture, with Burton a judge at the Cannes Film Festival and Elfman judging the film festival at Venice. They have defined genres, created indelible and enduring characters, and inspired a loyal and emotional fan following.

More importantly, they’ve inspired each other. The Burton/Elfman marriage is one-of-a-kind. Editor Chris Lebenzon says, “Danny’s strength with Tim, you can’t talk about. Words don’t describe it. It just has a certain magic at the end.”

“Tim and Danny share a love for shrunken heads, massive modesty, and an access to huge creative energy, the difference being that one channels it through sound and the other visually,” observes Helena Bonham Carter. “They are great brave individualists, not daunted by the pull of the crowd: At school Tim realized he couldn’t draw how he was ‘meant to’—and from a music perspective, I believe Danny began the same way.”

Composer Jon Brion marvels at the pure happenstance that brought Elfman and Burton together. “It’s rather a remarkable thing that those guys met,” Brion says. “Amongst my musician friends, somebody had a real remarkable insight once about The Beatles: ‘You know what the most remarkable thing about that band is? That those two guys met.’ Any one of those guys could have fronted a very successful band in the ’60s. George Harrison or Paul McCartney could have fronted a band that would have competed with the other ’60s bands and the fact that those two Herculean writers managed to meet and actually get along, long enough to make some stuff, is pretty remarkable. So, as idiosyncratic as Danny and Tim both are, not only did they find each other, but you’ve got one of those lovely partnerships that keeps going, on both fronts. I think it’s very easy for all of us to take for granted because, in terms of popular consciousness, they’ve both been at it for 25 years. It’s easily taken for granted. There are certain stylistic things, which have been co-opted by everyone else to the point where you forget how ‘out of nowhere’ it was for people to see and hear this stuff.”

“I think their voices were almost born together,” observes director Guillermo Del Toro. “That is a symbiotic relationship, almost you could say that it was gestated in the filmic womb. They were birthed into the film world essentially at the same time. It’s almost more than human, a twin telepathic relationship.”

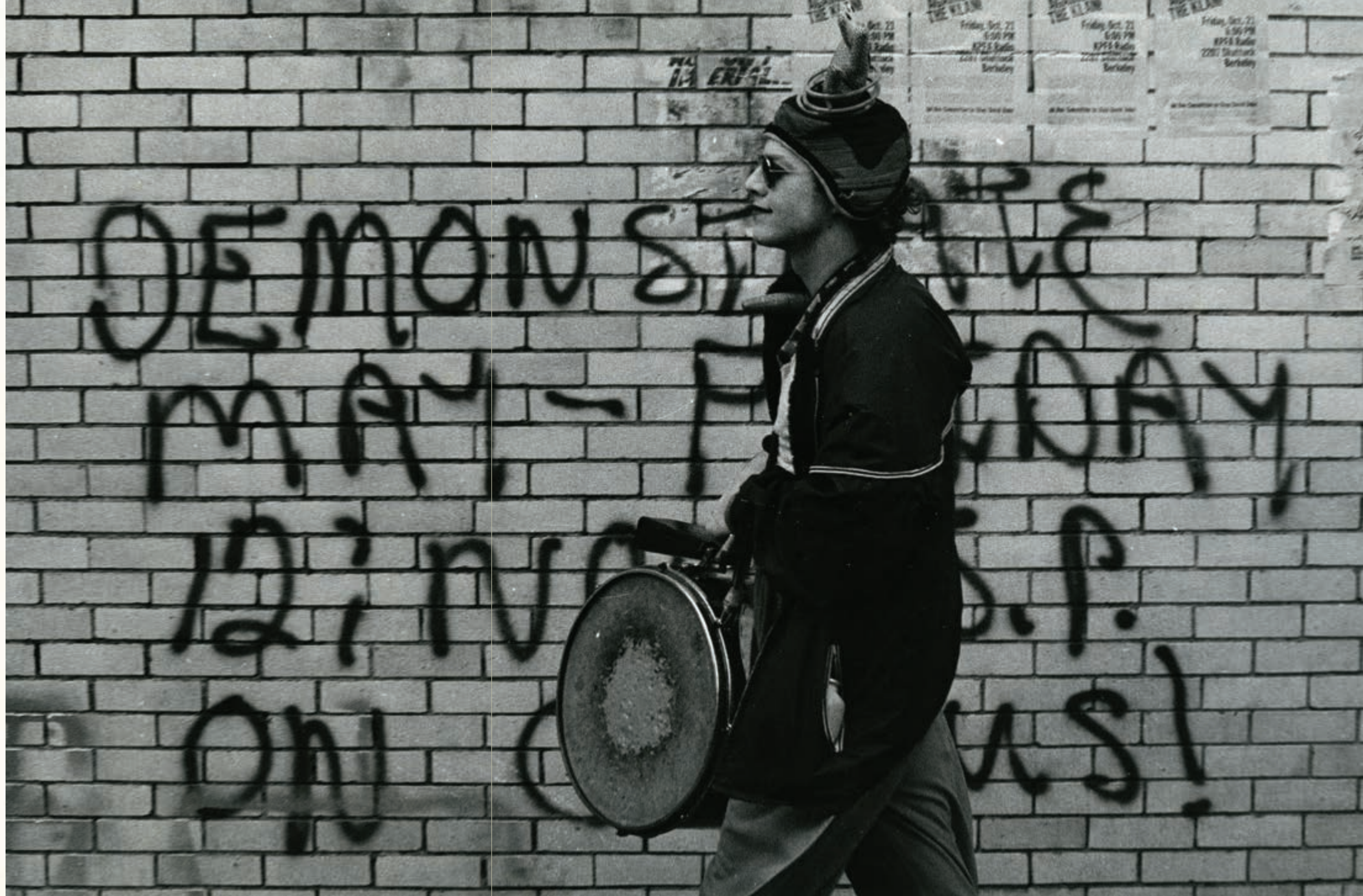
For Tim Burton, it’s not so surprising that he and Danny Elfman met and forged such a long-standing collaborative relationship. “You recognize that when you first meet somebody,” Burton says. “OK, this guy wants to do different things. And you know, everyone tries to pigeonhole you and say, ‘Oh, we want a Danny Elfman score.’ And you don’t want a Danny Elfman score. You just want to try different things. And that’s a continuous fight. You fight that your whole life.”

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

After scoring Tim Burton’s *Batman*, his first all-out comic-book action film, Danny Elfman was hired by director Sam Raimi to score *Darkman*, an equally kinetic and gothic, hard-boiled action-thriller with echoes of *The Shadow* and *Phantom Of The Opera*. When Elfman was writing the climactic cue of the movie, he noted that the climax involved a face-off between the film’s hero and villain in a locale of vertiginous height, with the antagonist falling to his death at the end of the sequence—very much like the climax of *Batman*. As an inside joke, Elfman gave the climactic cue in *Darkman* the same title as the climactic cue in *Batman*: “The Final Confrontation.” The composer has since tried to use the title on most of the action films he’s worked on, or really any project that boils down to a climactic showdown between protagonist and antagonist. Further examples include *Edward Scissorhands*, *Batman Returns*, *Sleepy Hollow*, and *Alice In Wonderland*.

Elfman leads the band

Danny Elfman in the days of The Mystic Knights Of The Oingo Boingo.



APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cline, Rich. *Shadows On The Wall*. 2007 interview with Matt Groening.

Levy, Emanuel. Stephen Sondheim on the film adaptation of *Sweeney Todd*. Emanuellevy.com.

Lustig, Jessica. Danny Elfman on the premiere of *Serenada Schizophrana* at Carnegie Hall. Americancomposers.org

Montgomery, James. “Killers Are (Beetle) Juiced For Tim Burton.” MTV.com.

Roberts, Sheila. “Interview With The Cast OfThe Number 23.” Moviesonline.ca.

Salisbury, Mark. *Burton On Burton*. Faber and Faber Limited, 1995.

Zuckerman, Andrew. *Music*. Abrams Books, 2010.

“Marilyn Manson vs. Danny Elfman.” Ign.com.

Men In Black Deluxe Edition DVD (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment). Barry Sonnenfeld, audio commentary track.

Pee-wee's Big Adventure (Warner Home Video). Danny Elfman, audio commentary track.

Planet OfThe Apes DVD (Fox Home Video). Danny Elfman, audio commentary track.

PHOTO & ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

A

African marching band: Photo by Danny Elfman

African playing Balafon with kids watching: Photo by Danny Elfman

Alfred Hitchcock Presents: The Jar courtesy Universal Studios Licensing LLLP

Alice In Wonderland © 2010 Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Alice In Wonderland scoring session photograph: Courtesy of Walt Disney Pictures © 2010 Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Alice In Wonderland scoring session photograph with Danny Elfman and Tim Burton: Courtesy of Walt Disney Pictures © 2010 Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Alice In Wonderland scoring session photograph with Danny Elfman, Tim Burton, Steve Bartek, and Oliver Elfman: Courtesy of Walt Disney Pictures © 2010 Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Amazing Stories: Family Dog courtesy Universal Studios Licensing LLLP

B

Batman © Warner Bros. Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Batman Returns © Warner Bros. Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Batman, Catwoman, The Joker, The Penguin, and Batman logo are TM & © DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. Used with Permission.

Beetlejuice © The Geffen Film Company. Licensed by Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Big Fish courtesy of Columbia Pictures.

Boi-ngo ©1987 Geffen Records. Courtesy of Geffen Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Alice In Wonderland* © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Batman* © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc./TM & © DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Batman Returns* © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc./TM & © DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Beetlejuice* © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Beetlejuice* Concept Art © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: Materials from *Big Fish* motion picture courtesy of Columbia Pictures.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Corpse Bride* © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Edward Scissorhands* ©1990 Twentieth Century Fox. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Mars Attacks!* © Warner Bros.

Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *The Nightmare Before Christmas Big Fish* © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*/Large Marge © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *Planet OfThe Apes* © 2001 Twentieth Century Fox. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: Materials from *Sleepy Hollow* motion picture courtesy of Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton Artwork: *The World OfStainboy*©Tim Burton

Tim Burton/Danny Elfman image: courtesy AP Images.

Tim Burton and Danny Elfman at the *Alice In Wonderland* premiere, London. © 2010 Leah Gallo. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton and Danny Elfman “Catching a break” at a nightclub in Tokyo, Japan: Photo by Derek Frey

Tim Burton and Danny Elfman at a lemonade stand in Tokyo, 2005: Photo by Derek Frey

Tim Burton and Joe Ranft: Photo by Randy Cartwright

Tim Burton with Balloon Boy: Photo © 2008 Leah Gallo. All Rights Reserved.

APPENDIX

PHOTO & ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Tim Burton with *The Nightmare Before Christmas* stop-motion figures: © Disney

C

Charlie And The Chocolate Factory © Theobald Film Productions LLP. Licensed by Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* miniature piano: Photo by Melisa McGregor

Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* © Patalex II Productions Limited. Licensed by Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

D

Dark At The End OfThe Tunnel ©1990 Geffen Records. Courtesy of Geffen Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises.

Darkman (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack) Courtesy Universal Studios.

Dead Man's Party ©1985 Geffen Records. Courtesy of Geffen Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises.

Dead Presidents ©1995 Hollywood Pictures.

Johnny Depp and Tim Burton in West Hollywood, Calif., Dec. 5, 2007: AP Photo/Kevork Djansezian

Dick Tracy (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack): Courtesy Warner Bros. Records.

Dolores Claiborne © Castle Rock Entertainment. Licensed by Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Dolores Claiborne (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack): Courtesy © Warner Bros. Inc. All Rights Reserved.

E

Edward Scissorhands ©1990 Twentieth Century Fox. All Rights Reserved.

Ed Wood courtesy of Touchstone Pictures ©1994 Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Danny Elfman as the Devil: Photo by Michael Dobo.

Danny Elfman in Africa with scarf: Photo by Leon Schneiderman.

Danny Elfman in Africa perched on rock: Photo by Leon Schneiderman.

Danny Elfman at home with African instruments: Photo courtesy of Chris Hunter.

Danny Elfman with doll: Photo by Lisa Jones.

Danny Elfman with long hair and mysterious package: Photo by Denny Moers.

Danny Elfman's bound scores: Photo by Michelle Rosado.

G

Dan Goldwasser/ScoringSessions.com.

Good For Your Soul ©1983 A&M Records. Courtesy of A&M Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises.

Good Will Hunting ©1997 Miramax Film Corp.

J

Jack Skellington and Bonejangles: Photo by Melisa McGregor

M

Mars Attacks! © Warner Bros., a division of Time Warner Entertainment Company, L.P. All Rights Reserved.

The Melancholy Death Of Oyster Boy & Other Stories by Tim Burton © 1998 by Tim Burton. Courtesy of Harper Collins Publishers.

Milk (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack): Courtesy Universal Studios.

Mission: Impossible (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack): Courtesy Paramount Pictures.

N

Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* ©1993 Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas Arrivals!* Vince Bucci/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images.

Nothing To Fear ©1982 A&M Records. Courtesy of A&M Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises.

Nothing To Fear back cover image courtesy Jules Bates.

O

Only A Lad ©1981 A&M Records. Courtesy of A&M Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises.

P

Ken Page/Amanda Edwards: Wireimage/Getty Images.

Palm Springs International Film Fest Awards Gala Press Room 2007/Stephen Shugerman: Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images.

Pee-wee's Big Adventure © Warner Bros. Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Photofest.

Planet OfThe Apes ©2001 Twentieth Century Fox. All Rights Reserved.

R

Rabbit & Rogue: Ethan Stiefel, Craig Salstein, Horacio Milberg in Twyla Tharp's *Rabbit & Rogue* Photo courtesy American Ballet Theatre © Rosalie O'Connor.

Nino Rota Image: Courtesy Rolls Press/Popperfoto/Getty Images.

S

Serenada Schizophrana courtesy Sony Music Entertainment.

Serenada Schizophrana artwork courtesy of theArtist © George Condo, 1996.

Sleepy Hollow courtesy Paramount Pictures.

Sommersby (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack) Courtesy Warner Bros. Records.

“Starving Artists”: ©1967 Rankin-Bass Productions/Rick Goldschmidt Archives.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street © DreamWorks L.L.C. and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

T

Caroline Thompson/Barry King: Wireimage/Getty Images.

To Die For (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack): Courtesy Sony Pictures Entertainment and Rank Film Distributors Ltd.

“Trick Or Treat”: Drawings by Tim Burton/© Disney Enterprises, Inc.

W

Slim Whitman Image: © Bettman/Corbis.

