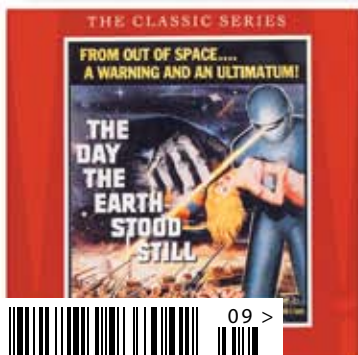


# FILM SCORE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 9/10



# 101 GREAT FILM SCORES ON CD



**ALAN SILVESTRI: CAST AWAY**  
**PLUS: BACK TO THE FUTURE**  
**HOWARD SHORE: THE CELL**



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**FILM SCORE™**  
MONTHLY

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2000

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ON THE COVER: EIGHT OUT OF 101 AIN'T BAD

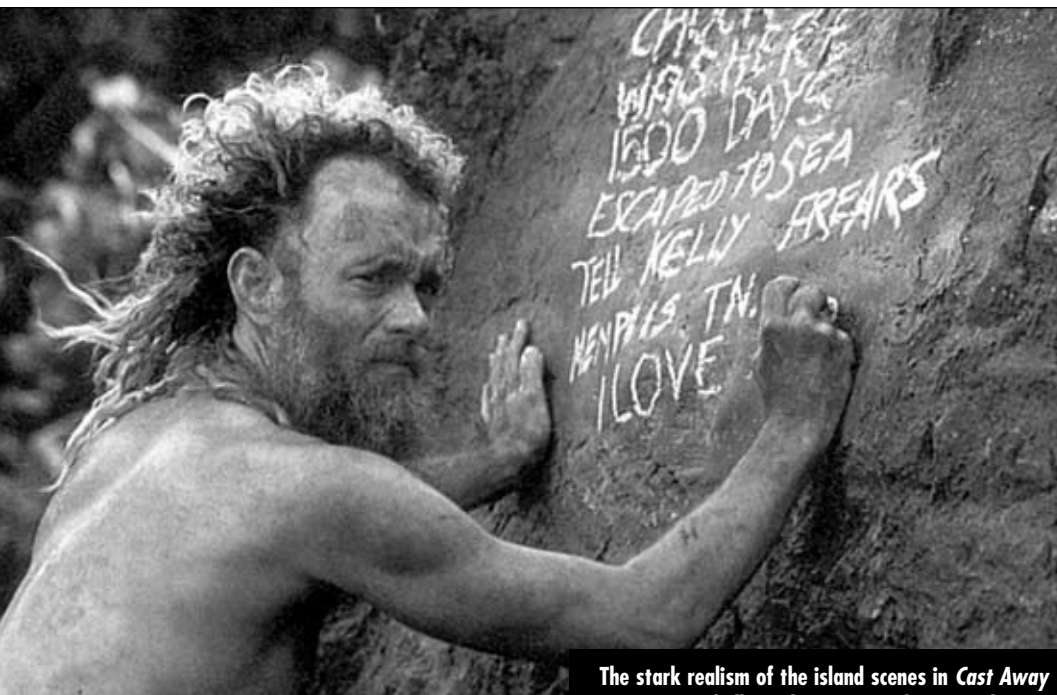
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# To Score or Not To Score?

COMPOSER ALAN SILVESTRI FINDS HIS MUSIC IN A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

by Jeff Bond



The stark realism of the island scenes in *Cast Away* challenged conventional scoring choices.

**T**HE PRODUCTION OF DIRECTOR ROBERT ZEMECKIS' FILM *CAST AWAY* FOLLOWED AN UNUSUAL PATH IN ITS JOURNEY TO THE SCREEN. THE FILM FOLLOWS TOM HANKS AS A MAN LOST ON A DESERTED ISLAND AND FORGOTTEN BY CIVILIZATION FOR FOUR YEARS; AND PART OF THE PLAN IN FILMING WAS TO SHUT DOWN THE PRODUCTION SO THAT HANKS COULD LOSE A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF WEIGHT IN ORDER TO APPEAR CONVINCING AS AN EMACIATED REAL-LIFE SURVIVOR LATER ON IN THE FILM. DURING THE HIA-TUS, ZEMECKIS FILMED THE HARRISON

Ford supernatural thriller *What Lies Beneath*, which was scored by Zemeckis' long-time musical collaborator Alan Silvestri. Silvestri wrote around an hour of music for *What Lies Beneath*, more or less average for a contemporary thriller.

## On Shifting Sands

Silvestri's work on *Cast Away*, however, was anything but average. As Silvestri explains, the problem in scoring *Cast Away* came not from finding the right music for the picture, but in determining just when a musical score would enter the film at all. "There's a big transition for Hanks' character on the island," Silvestri recalls. "There's a four-year time change, and we were able to see that come up before we went off to do *What Lies Beneath*, and there was a substantial part of the film spent on the island. So we got to live with that piece of film for a long time, and even though this was a film with great cinematography, one of America's finest actors and everything that the film industry and America can support resource-wise, it has an almost European point of view and flavor."

The stark realism of the movie's island section forced Silvestri and Zemeckis to wrestle with the choice of including underscoring in these sequences. "From many talks with Bob Zemeckis about the film, everyone involved seemed to struggle right from the beginning with not wanting this to take the easy way out," Silvestri says. "Not wanting to soften what folks had to experience on the island with Tom, because one of the great things about the film is he is you, he is me—he's like an ordinary guy who's watching the news on CNN one day and the next day he's on this island. And he's seen *Gilligan's Island*, he's seen *Robinson Crusoe*, he's grown up watching all these movies, and maybe he's even seen *Survivor*, but here he is now. It's about what would really happen, and I think it's magnificent the way both Bob and Tom approached how it would really happen on film. Part of it is we always tried to let the film call for the music, and what we found on the island was that anytime we would consider music or try music it would start to feel, for lack of a better word, like a movie. It was destroying everything that the filmmaker wanted to create in terms of an impression. Look, we all know that to make fire you get two sticks and you rub them together. But if you and I had to go out right now and make a fire by rubbing sticks, it ain't as easy as it sounds, and neither is anything else that goes with surviving. So it's actually through the choice to be absent musically on the island that ultimately helps to allow for this kind of raw impression of this guy trying to survive."

## Composing the Anti-Score

While the tendency in current film scoring is to overload the movie with music, the result is often a balm that coats the film and prevents it from having to support itself dramatically on its own terms. Silvestri attributes much of the film's ability to function without underscoring to the performance of Tom Hanks. "Hanks is so magnificent that you don't feel you need any shoring up or any kind of help to stay engaged while you're watching the film," Silvestri says. "The film begins with him in his normal life. He's like a FedEx trouble-shooter and he's sent to get

CAST AWAY ARTWORK ©2000 10TH CENTURY FOX/DREAMWORKS

something back on track in another part of the world, so the start of the film is seeing him in his life and his normal routine. A love story is established between him and Helen Hunt—he's going to go away for two days and be right back, takes a plane to Malaysia and it goes down. He winds up on this island for at least two-thirds of the film, and we tried to be very open-minded about this; we just sat and watched the film. We just kept going, 'Not yet. Not yet.' Interestingly enough, the first time either of us felt music could be in the film was when he left the island. Early on there had been an aborted attempt when he had almost been killed trying to get through this surf to escape from the island. It's a very big moment when he crashes through this sort of do-or-die wave, and once again everything in you is saying, 'Well, surely that would be the moment,' but it wasn't. The music's place in this movie kind of found itself. It's basically one theme that plays in a number of places from the time when he leaves the island through the end of the film."

Silvestri says that the complete lack of a music score in the first two-thirds of the movie makes the music's ultimate appearance that much more powerful. "When it does come in it's a composer's dream because you have not had this element in the film up

to this point," the composer notes. "Oddly enough the most emotional moment in the film is when Tom leaves the island, because you have this intense sense that although it was challenging to the point of almost killing him, there's still this sense that he's leaving something for the unknown, but this time he's doing it intentionally."

### Transcendent Writing

While Silvestri compares the feel of the film and the scoring approach to European movie traditions, he did not take the tack of composers like Ennio Morricone, who often writes self-contained pieces of music that are recorded separately and then married to the film later (sometimes even influencing the movie's editing rhythms). Silvestri did score and time specifically to picture. "Thematically it's one theme with a number of parts," he says. "It was designed and orchestrated and recorded for each specific place, so we didn't record a piece of music and then track it around the film. Changes in the weighting of the orchestration and the pacing of the material were unique to each place that we used. But in a funny way it doesn't

score action, it doesn't score surface emotional tracking. It's always like this other layer of something, whether you would call it fate or his higher power or however you may want to describe that, it always seemed to be there in that way with the music. So there are a number of different kinds of emotional scenes and moments, and the theme seems to transcend the literal."

Silvestri's approach of limiting the music in the film included restricting the score's orchestral palette. "When I was thinking orchestrally about how I would approach all this, I kept removing things and

removing things and ultimately the score was performed with an oboe, an English horn and a string orchestra, nothing else," he says. "I didn't even want a finger cymbal in it. Right down to the end credits it was still down to those two woodwinds and strings, and we did add piano to the end credits. But a substantial amount is solo oboe. Every time I tried to think of doing something more it started to feel like a movie. And even imagining it you knew that you would destroy this movie if you became willful about trying to bring too much music to it." **FSM**

**Anytime we considered or tried music it would start to feel, for lack of a better word, like a movie.**



"It has the fun and flamboyance of amusement parks, the melancholy isolation of the leading man, and the tension of a suspense thriller all packed into these cuts on a record. Amazing - the picture couldn't work without the music, but the music works without the picture!"

-James Goldstone, Director, Rollercoaster



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- Randall D. Larson, Soundtrack Magazine

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# Future Past Perfect

By Jon and Al Kaplan



WHAT MAKES THE BACK TO THE FUTURE SERIES SO SUCCESSFUL AS FILM SCORES? ACCORDING TO SOME PEOPLE, NOTHING. BUT THE REST OF US KNOW THAT ALAN SILVESTRI'S BACK TO THE FUTURE IS AS MUCH FUN NOW AS IT WAS 15 YEARS AGO—MY GOD, HAS IT BEEN THAT LONG?

Who could have predicted that Silvestri, the guy who did *CHiPs* and *Romancing the Stone*, could pull off a score to support a film like *Back to the Future*? Silvestri was actually coming right off of *Fandango*, where he honed his vertical-writing skills and tackled a full orchestra for the first time in his career. In some ways *Fandango* was a test run; a fledgling *Back to the Future* without the indelible themes and motives. It showed Silvestri's craft and potential, but no one went to see the supremely average movie (which eschewed substantial portions of Silvestri's music in favor of the temp track) and hence no one heard the score. The experience was by no means a waste for Silvestri, who discovered that he had the tools necessary to compose an exciting and compositionally sound orchestral score—and this just in time to put his talents to work in his second collaboration with Robert Zemeckis: the hugely successful *Back to the Future*.

*Back to the Future* put Silvestri on the map and kept him there. His underscore, and especially the prominently used main theme, is one of the prime factors in the movie's success. Zemeckis was lucky that Silvestri turned out such a bold score, but Silvestri, too, was lucky that *Back to the Future* succeeded as a film that spawned two sequels. Even today, everyday people are often able to identify the *BTTF* theme, but does anyone know Craig Safan's great theme for *The Last Starfighter*? In some ways *Back to the Future* made Alan Silvestri, while Alan Silvestri made *Back to the Future*. Had Silvestri written his *Back to the Future* score—note for note—for *Fandango* and never met Robert Zemeckis, we may never have heard from the talented composer again. It's like the age-old *Star Wars* argument: Did Williams' music "make" those movies or did the success of the movies "make" John Williams? It's impossible to say (though it's tempting to say the former), but Williams was already established so he didn't really need *Star Wars* the way it needed him.

## He's No Huey Lewis

Part of the charm of *Back to the Future* is that its opening act sets us up for a fun but schlocky '80s comedy—before pulling the rug out from under us and delivering genuine heart, excitement and ingenuity. The film's use of music, or lack thereof, parallels this concept. The first 15 minutes of the film have no underscore at all, instead featuring Huey Lewis' "The Power of Love." At first viewing, one couldn't help but anticipate a song score approach like *Weird Science* or even *Ghostbusters*. But while "The Power of Love" isn't the only song in *Back to the Future*, it's Silvestri's dramatic underscore that magically drives the story. From the first cues, where Silvestri suddenly takes charge in the Twin Pines Mall parking lot scene, we know we're in for some "serious sh-t."

MCA infuriated a lot of people with their original *BTTF* album, which contained several songs and only two Silvestri cues (the main march and a suite that combined various cues from the climax of the film). Missing music included the Twin Pines Mall chase; all of the hustle-bustle "explanation" material; most important, the climactic second half of the clock tower sequence.



Some argue that with a full release of *Back to the Future II* (also on MCA), a legitimate album of the first score is unnecessary. While several cues from the original *BTTF* do pop up in the sequel, the lion's share of Silvestri's most ingenious writing toils on the unreleased tracks from the first film. The upcoming DVD release is rumored to have an isolated score track (and there's always Varèse Sarabande's horrendous re-recording), but Silvestri's greatest film-scoring achievement has yet to be done justice on an album.

The following is a breakdown of the key themes and motives in all three *BTTF* scores, similar to Doug Adams' fabulous dissections of *Star Wars*. A serious analysis of the themes should help any Silvestri fan appreciate his scores more than they already do—if such a thing is possible. For those who were never too high on *Back to the Future* music to begin with, there's the slightest chance that this article might elevate it for you. That's unlikely though—the music speaks volumes for itself, so if you never held it in any regard, there's always your trusty shotgun.

Please forgive the arbitrary names we assign to the themes—they're not leitmotifs...

## Back to the Future

### The Magic of Time Travel

The building blocks of Silvestri's *BTTF* vocabulary are introduced immediately in the Twin Pines Mall parking lot scenes: The first is an ethereal, six-note descending synth motive consisting of two major triads a tritone apart. This instantly establishes an octatonic flavor that figures prominently in all three *BTTF* films. In fact, those looking to pinpoint what makes Alan Silvestri sound like Alan Silvestri should know that the composer has made a career (at least as far as his action music is concerned) out of manipulating the octatonic scale. This scale rests at the core of many popular sci-fi scores; hence its instant conjuring of pop sci-fi lore in *BTTF*. Think of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (or more recently *Mars Attacks!*); the bug music in *Starship Troopers*; or any number of Goldsmith action scores. In *BTTF*, this motive lends a sense of wonder and magic to the story's concept of time travel. It appears at key moments like the first appearance of the DeLorean; Doc's blinking eyes after we think he's dead; the introductory title cards for both sequel films. It's a calling card that quickly and efficiently says "Back to the Future" even more than the...

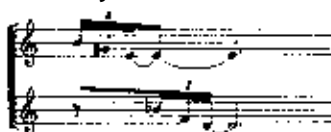
### Back to the Future Main Theme

Silvestri teases us with condensed versions of the main theme for the first half of the movie—at least until the wild skateboard chase. Part of the effectiveness of this theme is that it's 20 notes long, but it's so catchy that all Silvestri has to do is use a handful of notes at any given moment and we know exactly where he's coming from. The first three notes of the melody are particularly memorable because they move by a descending fifth and an unstable ascending tritone. It can be dangerous to hinge a main idea so strongly on a tritone, but Silvestri's theme becomes optimistically Lydian when it's presented

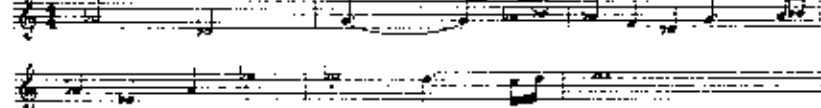


### BACK TO THE FUTURE MUSICAL SAMPLES

#### The Magic of Time Travel



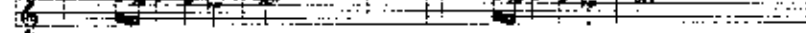
#### Back to the Future Main Theme



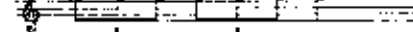
#### Main Theme Bridge



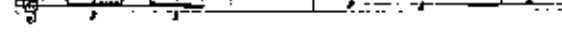
#### "B" Theme



#### "B" Theme Bridge



#### Closing Fanfare





in a faster “heroic mode” (as in the skateboard chase). There’s also something inherently uplifting in the I-II progression that kicks off the theme—it’s similar in effect to “Tonight” from *West Side Story* or Yoda’s theme from *The Empire Strikes Back*. (Incidentally, take away the third note in Yoda’s theme and you’ve got *Back to the Future*!)

The first three notes of the *BTTF* theme also work perfectly over the octatonic material, so Silvestri can easily mesh the A-theme with any of his subsidiary action motives. The majestic stepwise and descending B-section of the theme is reserved for key moments in the first film (when Marty does exciting things with his skateboard; moments of closure between Marty’s parents; when the DeLorean reaches 88 miles per hour), but also serves as a fanfare to kick off the classic *Back to the Future* march. The B-theme is used more freely in the sequels.

The main theme features two final components worthy of mention.

The first idea is composed of quartal, fast-rising strings that act as a bridge between phrases of the A-theme. This is perhaps the only instance in the score where you can hear Silvestri nodding to the temp track (Jerry Goldsmith’s *First Blood*). The other motive is a percussive triplet-counterline that figures prominently in all three *BTTF* scores. This one accents between the phrases of the B-theme, and eventually becomes its own entity as a snare ostinato in the clock tower cues. It also acts as the rousing closing fanfare of the *BTTF* march (it finishes the march in the end credits of each film). In *Back to the Future III*, Silvestri cleverly incorporates it into his Indian music, as Marty is chased by a pack of marauding natives.

Part of the appeal of Silvestri’s balls-to-the-wall John Williams-style theme is that he makes it work for an everyday kid like Marty McFly. We’re used to hearing such themes for an Indiana Jones or a Superman, but Silvestri attaches one to a regular Joe, someone any kid in the ’80s could (and did) identify with. The end result glorifies the “cool kid and his skateboard” in a way that no number of Huey Lewis songs could have ever done.

### Explanation Motive

This is a frenetic, bustling motive that consists of leaping intervals. The idea almost always accompanies Doc Brown’s rapid-fire scientific explanations but somehow, despite its frantic activity, never gets in the way of Christopher Lloyd’s delivery—the secret here is the use of a stable, regular rhythm and an inner pedal that grounds the chaotic interval jumps. Silvestri’s orchestra is diligently milling to and fro, working like a crazed-but-determined machine (like Doc), and adds a sense of bubbling excitement to Brown’s dialogue. The music ensures that Christopher Lloyd’s character is not seen as a scatter-brained schmuck but rather, a good-natured mad scientist. Nowadays, composers are taught and/or instructed to lay low and strip their music down to bare essentials during most dialogue scenes. Silvestri’s *BTTF* delivers a triumphant “In your face!” to this school of thought. And while this tactic is not appropriate for all films, in *Back to the Future* it works miracles.

### Military Ostinato

Silvestri uses a five-note militaristic ostinato as a “preparation for time travel” riff in all three *BTTF* films. Usually voiced in snare and timpani, this simple, primal motive also has a cameo in the climactic “preparation for battle” sequence in *Predator*, where Arnold Schwarzenegger sharpens his knives and smears his body with grey mud.

### Danger Motive

One of *BTTF*’s most ubiquitous motives is an eight-note low-end piano figure that’s vital in the score’s many action sequences. This motive undergoes many transformations, especially in terms of intervallic order, but is consistently marked by a similar contour and a driving, mechanical rhythm (not unlike the explanation motive). The danger motive is particularly effective in kicking off the Twin Pines Mall chase scene with a slicing Stravinsky-esque setting. The writing that follows (for Marty evading the Libyans—by the way, how often do you see the words “Libyan” and “Lydian” in the same article?) is incredibly propulsive, marked by odd meters, thunderous percussion and a jagged trumpet fanfare. Silvestri’s skilled manipulations of his motives and endless capacity for generating memorable material from the smallest fragments of his themes are most notable in this tremendous sequence.



## Lyon Estates Fanfare

This octatonic fanfare rears its head only once in the first *BTTF* film (as Marty sees his neighborhood as a “farm-land as far as the eye can see”). However, it also turns up in *BTTF II* in the alternate 1985 sequence, so it’s worth mentioning. The motive has a foreboding sense of grandeur—plus, it appears in Silvestri’s *The Abyss* when Michael Biehn closes the door on the water tentacle.

## Future Repercussions Motive

In the sequence where Marty brings Doc’s “1955 version” to see the hidden DeLorean, Silvestri introduces yet another recurring motive important to the trilogy: a percussive rhythm usually reserved for muted brass. Its sharp attacks at the beginning of each phrase make it a distant cousin to the time travel motive—but with a more precarious edge. Note its use when Doc points out that Marty’s brother is fading from existence.

## Americana Theme

Silvestri engages in a bittersweet Americana development of his *BTTF* theme for scenes that discuss Doc’s impending murder in 1985. Silvestri does away with the tritone and replaces it with a perfect fourth, lending a more noble and rested quality to the melody. Why such a calm and beautiful theme under such tragic subject matter? Silvestri is scoring the bond between Marty and Doc, not the conflict generated when Doc refuses to listen to Marty’s warning. If anything, the theme could be labeled a clarion call for Doc’s refusal to die. Witness the theme’s reiteration when Doc sits up and reveals his bulletproof vest to Marty—or even when Marty receives Doc’s 70-year-old letter from the Western Union man in *BTTF II*. (This fine theory is unfortunately rendered absurd when the theme plays as Marty discovers the new black truck in his garage.)

## Suspense Motive

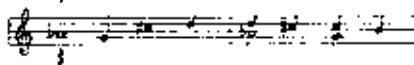
The suspense motive is a portentous, dissonant string concoction that doesn’t play much of a role in the first film (it sounds as Doc refuels the DeLorean in the first parking lot scene). It’s only in *BTTF II* that this music becomes an all-out stamp of depression, underscoring the film’s sinister “alternate 1985” sequences, where Marty finds out that his father has been murdered and that strangers are living in his house.

At the risk of opening up a whole can of worms, the aforementioned suspense motive fits a pattern that recurs in countless Silvestri scores. It’s a seven-note, rhythmically regular idea that’s almost always shaped the same way. Look for it in *Blown Away*, *Predator*, *Eraser*, *The Abyss* and several others. It’s something of a Silvestri trademark, as are his patented uses of the octatonic scale.

## Ironic Fanfare

Each *BTTF* film ends with some kind of outrageous visual twist, and Silvestri follows suit with an ironic fanfare that leaps in unexpected directions and steps chromatically when reaching its landing points. It says in no uncertain terms: “You didn’t see that one coming, did you, sucker?” Strangely enough, this fanfare is all but mixed out of the first film; we can barely make it out aside from its last three notes. You can probably blame that on the loud DeLorean sound effects. In the second two films, it can be heard in all its glory: when Marty “2” runs around the corner to surprise Doc in *BTTF II*, and when the train takes flight in *BTTF III*.

### Suspense Motive

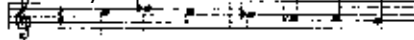


### A WHOLE CAN OF WORMS

#### *Predator*



#### *The Abyss*



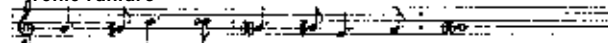
#### *Blown Away*



#### *Eraser*



### Ironic Fanfare



# Back to the Future Part II

This score is sort of the “embarrassing nephew that no one wants to talk about” of the *BTTF* trilogy. It’s mostly a rehash of the material from the first score (albeit played by a smaller orchestra). Silvestri has chalked this up to Zemeckis’ lack of input (the director was busy shooting *BTTF III* while the scoring went on). Silvestri does squeeze in a few new ideas, but in many ways this score is to the original what Basil Poledouris’ *Conan the Destroyer* is to *Conan the Barbarian*.

## Evil Biff and More Octatonicism

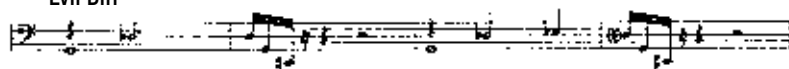
Evil Biff gets his own motive, a constipated yet menacing low-end chromatic piano riff that culminates with the first three notes of the *BTTF* theme. Silvestri also introduces a funeral-style lament for the dead (for George McFly’s tombstone and Doc’s tombstone in *BTTF III*) and a dramatic, tritone-focused theme, used along with the suspense motive from the first film to play up the pathos of the alternate-1985 scenes. Silvestri later adds another octatonic variation (tunnel chase theme) for the film’s final action set piece where Marty attempts to swipe the sports almanac from Biff’s car. This motive is grounded by the clock tower snare ostinato from the first film, but the theme itself originally surfaced in *Predator* (where Arnold Schwarzenegger throws a truck at



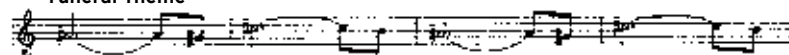


## BACK TO THE FUTURE II

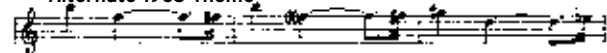
### Evil Biff



### Funeral Theme



### Alternate 1985 Theme



### Tunnel Chase Theme



a group of unsuspecting guerrillas). These new motives are few and far between—most of the score consists of reiterations of the *BTTF* B-theme representing Marty and Doc's heroic deeds. Look at how little there is to say about *BTTF II*! This is why it's easier to analyze the *Back to the Future* trilogy than the *Star Wars* trilogy.

## Back to the Future Part III

### The Old West Theme

*BTTF III* follows the Jerry Goldsmith *Final Conflict* school of scoring: "This movie sucks, but this is *my* trilogy!" and features a plethora of new thematic material, even an Elmer Bernstein-style Old West theme. Brass-driven and characterized by a descent to a rousing octave leap, the theme lovingly pokes fun at western clichés just as the film attempts to. We've got Pat Buttram and Dub Taylor spoofing themselves, so why not nudge Bernstein and Morricone at the same time? This theme is excitingly developed during the film's climactic train sequence, where it's voiced in low brass over a chugga-chugga "train" rendition of Silvestri's eight-note danger motive.

### Love Theme (Doc and Clara)

Silvestri also writes a melancholy love theme for Doc and Clara (played by the delightfully opaque Mary Steenburgen). It has a tragic air to it; a lament on *BTTF III*'s main story thrust: Doc and Clara are perfect for each other but are cruelly separated by the laws of time. The theme is structurally similar to Silvestri's solo trumpet theme from *Predator*, where it served as moving funeral music for Jesse the Body Ventura.

(The reason we keep bringing up *Predator* is not simply because it is Silvestri's second-best score, but also because it is relevant. For some balance we will now bring up another Silvestri score.) The *BTTF III* love theme often lapses into a delicate flute lullaby reminiscent of Silvestri's feather theme for *Forrest Gump*. There. Since *BTTF III* revolves around the romance between Doc and Clara, there's precious little room for the Marty and Doc's Americana theme. In fact, it doesn't appear once in this film. But Silvestri does manage to get in a warm new theme for Doc advising Marty and Jennifer to make their futures "good ones" ("The Future Isn't Written").

### New Action Material

The best new material in *BTTF III* is Silvestri's action writing in the final act of the film. Silvestri concocts a tricky Lydian melody that winds itself up twice before shooting upward and trudging down an octatonic scale. This material actually makes up the bulk of the score in various guises, occasionally popping up between statements of the love theme (in a more subdued form) and, in particular, kicking off the scene where Doc starts up the train. Silvestri lets the theme run its course during the final train chase, but reminds us that we're watching a *Back to the Future* movie by layering an augmented version of the first three notes of the main *BTTF* theme over top.

## 'Round the Clock Bonus Coverage

### The Enchantment Under the Sea Dance

One of the original *BTTF*'s central conflicts is resolved when Marty's parents kiss on the dance floor: the defining moment when Lorraine realizes she's going to spend the rest of her life with George McFly. Silvestri faced an interesting challenge with this sequence, as he had to recognize the drama of the scene while also reckoning with "Earth Angel," the song being performed by the band on-stage. In a brilliant move, Silvestri embraces the source music, first weaving underneath with a pounding timpani and dissonant tremolo string writing (as Marty's hand starts its erasure from existence). This material gradually overwhelms the source music, and eventually builds into two overlapping statements of the first five notes of the *BTTF* theme. When Marty's parents finally kiss, we're taken right back into a climactic verse of "Earth Angel"—but it's now accompanied by Silvestri's orchestra, complete with moving counterlines and capped off by another fleeting statement of the *BTTF* theme. There have been few, if any, better combinations of source music and dramatic underscore in American film.

### The Clock Tower Sequence

Silvestri's two clock tower cues from the first *BTTF* showcase the best writing of his career; they're a tour de force of contrapuntal magic and motivic development. The first clock tower cue makes up the bulk of the "Back to the Future Suite" on MCA's original album. Marty and Doc's farewell conversation is ingeniously underlined by the fusion of a bold horn statement of the main theme with the relentless, militaristic snare ostinato. The passage simultaneously evokes Marty's sorrow and frustration (this could be the last time he'll see Doc alive), as well as a sense of impending excitement (the lightning bolt hits in less than five minutes). After a full, expanded statement of the theme, the woodwinds repeat it atop a new contrapuntal low brass idea. The three layers (two simple and slowly developing lines over a fateful snare ostinato) make for a terrific emotional compliment with the picture as Doc and Marty shout their goodbyes over the howling wind.

Again, Silvestri is not afraid to make himself heard in an important dialogue scene.

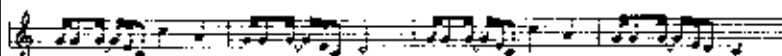
The second clock tower cue begins with a reprisal of the slicing string figure from the Twin Pines Mall cue. Marty slides across the hood of the DeLorean and speeds off into the distance, leaving Doc to rewire the clock tower. The cue becomes a sort of manic rondeau, with full-blooded statements of the *BTTF* theme juxtaposed with passages that furiously shape subsidiary material. Of particular note is a jagged 8-note figure voiced in low strings and piano. It fuses two central ideas from the score: the first five notes of an octatonic scale capped off by the first three notes of the *BTTF* theme. Doc's struggle to rewire the clock tower receives the brunt of this material, while Marty's approach is juiced up by suspended-cymbal-dressed presentations of the *BTTF* theme. It all makes for the musical equivalent of a marijuana-rush—when fans complain about the lack of a complete album for the first *BTTF*, this is the cue most have in mind.

### The End

Straight to the point—Silvestri has proven he's got the versatility needed to succeed in this business (he's done comedies, dramas, cartoons and just about every other genre imaginable). In 1987, he scored *Predator* and proved that *BTTF* was no fluke. Even richer in thematic material than *BTTF*, *Predator* sports rhythmic motives that are not only great ear-candy, but also work wonders at heightening the suspense-level of the film. Maybe we'll take a look at that score some time in the future...or in the past. **FSM**

The Kaplan brothers are currently working off their indentured servitude at *FSM*; you can reach them by writing to [barg@flashcom.net](mailto:barg@flashcom.net)

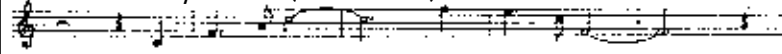
### BACK TO THE FUTURE III Old West Theme



### Love Theme (Doc and Clara)



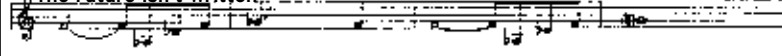
### Jesse "the Body" Ventura (from Predator)



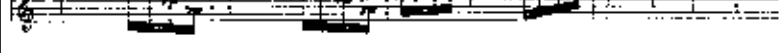
### Lullaby



### The Future Isn't Written



### BACK TO THE FUTURE III Action Theme

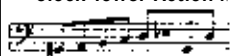


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