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SEPTEMBER EO UPDATE SUPPLEMENTAL

MN DEMOLAY CONCLAVE

From our Grand Master Pat Hart's last report:

I would like to note that our International Master Councilor Austin Whitaker and International Congress Secretary Buddy Herring visited the Jurisdictional Conclave of Minnesota. I understand that they had a great time and felt that Minnesota DeMolay is on the move for great success!



Circus Time

The Zurah Shrine Circus will again be setting up ten at the Target Center in downtown Minneapolis with performance scheduled Friday OCTOBER 5 at 10:30am and 7:00pm, Saturday October 6m 10:30am, 3:00pm and 7:30pm and Sunday performances at 1:30pm and 6:00pm. **Differences** this year !! The circus is earlier, not MEA weekend as in the past and this year we will have our own booth located on the skyway level.

Advisor Registration 2008

I am in receipt of 2008 Advisor Registration Materials, I will be scheduling Meetings with the Advisory Councils in the next few months with all material to be returned to DI before the end of the year. **Please plan on attending these important meetings when scheduled.**

FYI...doh

The Simpsons' Songsmith Hits 400
The maestro of d'oh-re-mi composes a new Simpsons score every week.
By Annemarie Donkin
Signal Staff Writer

History was being made at the Newman Scoring Stage on the 20th Century Fox lot May 4 when Emmy Award-winning composer, stepped up to the podium in front of 35 of the top L.A. session musicians, to start the recording session for the 400th episode of "The Simpsons," the most successful animated series in television history.



Behind him in the engineering booth were Clausen's long-time colleagues, engineer Rick Riccio, who was expertly tweaking the mixing board and music editor Chris Ledesma, who runs the ProTools recording gear and keeps track of every cue. Also in the booth were orchestrators Dell Hake and Alf's son, Scott Clausen, a composer in his own right.

They listened to the nuances of each cue and gave Clausen expert feedback. They all spoke in musical code - there were no wasted words.

At the break, the group enjoyed snacks from a table groaning with cold cuts, crudités, fruit and a yellow and purple Simpson's cake, complete with a portrait of the iconic family crafted in frosting. Fox Music President, Richard Kraft, came by to congratulate everyone on another television milestone.

According to Kraft, "The Simpsons" is one of the few television shows still scored with live musicians, which is what creates the "three-dimensionality" of the series - most shows now use synthesized music. But Clausen, the ultimate professional, knows first hand what it takes to write and record a new score every week. Yet, what also makes it worthwhile for him is the privilege to work with some of the finest musicians in the industry, who rarely need more than two takes to record a final track.

"The secret for me is the great team," Clausen said. "Needless to say, we have spent hundreds of hours together and I like to keep it light and fun, which is an advantage in such a high-pressure atmosphere."

At the final break, Clausen gave harpist Gayle Levant a warm hug.

"She is the best harpist in town," he gushed, giving her shoulder a squeeze. "She has been with me since the beginning."

Back in the booth, Ledesma, a long-time resident of the Santa Clarita Valley, still gets a thrill from each session. Asked how it felt to record the 400th episode, he grinned.

"It is fabulous," he said. "It is still amazing to see it all come together."

Ledesma has also meticulously kept track of each cue recorded since the show started - the 400th episode began with a six-second cue, 1M3, officially the 24,279th Simpson's music cue.

During the three-hour session, they would record 22 cues, ranging from 7 to 34 seconds each, to complete the 18th season with the episode, "You Kent Always Say What You Want," that aired May 20 on the Fox network.

For this episode, the legendary Tommy Morgan was on harmonica in the ISO (isolation) booth, playing a snippet of the original score from "Midnight Cowboy." Later, they would bring in a bagpipe player for a scene in which Marge is running through a St. Patrick's Day Parade. These are the kind of details that set Clausen's scores apart - as he draws upon an astonishing range of musical styles from jazz, rock, pop and classical to Klezmer and even Indian sitar - typical for a man who uses all the tricks in the book and even makes up a few of his own to evoke the unique essence of each musical style.

Each cue is timed to the hundredth of a second via "click" tracks to synchronize exactly to the action on the monitors. Precision is the key, the animation is locked - it is the music that must be written to fit. Clausen even writes all of the original songs for the show - many of which have taken on a life of their own and have been recorded into many successful albums.

His CD credits (as songwriter, conductor and producer) include the hit Rhino Records releases "The Simpsons: Songs In The Key Of Springfield: Original Music From The Television Series" and "Go Simpsonic With The Simpsons: More Original Music From The Television Series." This year, he has produced a new CD of Simpsons songs entitled "The Simpsons: Testify," which will be released on Sept. 18 by Shout! Factory Records in Los Angeles.

"It has been eight years since we put out a song album," he said. "The fans have been clamoring for this material."

Meanwhile, he has a complete discography of his albums and songs from all of the films and television shows he has scored, in addition to several jazz albums, including his latest, "Swing Can Really Hang You Up The Most," recorded with a group of top L.A. jazz musicians (available exclusively online at <http://Alfclausen.com>).

Clausen lives with his wife, Sally, in a modest house off Sand Canyon in Canyon Country and works from his home studio. What may explain his prodigious work ethic could be traced to his Midwestern roots. Clausen was born Minneapolis, Minn. and raised in North Dakota in what he describes as a supportive, hardworking family with just the right kind of work

ethic. He studied French horn and sang in the choir in junior high and high school, then entered North Dakota State University as a mechanical engineering major while also studying the acoustic bass. But after a life changing trip to New York the summer before his junior year, he returned to college and devoted himself full-time to music.

"My parents sent me to New York for six weeks to visit my cousin Harold Heiberg and his wife, Eva," Clausen said. "Harold is a professional musician and is now on the staff of the University of North Texas, where he teaches music in the opera department."

In the early '60s, New York was a hotbed of jazz, rock, classical music and Broadway and the young Clausen absorbed it all.

"What really grabbed me was the joyous impact of musical theater on Broadway," he said. "The experience was so incredible. In six weeks I saw the original "West Side Story" (with Carol Lawrence and Larry Kert) shortly after it opened, "The Music Man" with Robert Preston, "My Fair Lady" (with Julie Andrews and Rex Harrison) and "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," with Robert Morse. That was a very life changing experience for me."

After graduating from NDSU, Clausen spent some time studying for his master's degree in music theory at the University of Wisconsin, spurred on by taking a correspondence course in composing and arranging from the Berklee School of Music in Boston. He loved the correspondence course so much that the only logical step was to pack up his Volkswagen, move to Boston and study at Berklee.

"It was the best decision I ever made," he said. Clausen graduated from Berklee in 1966 with a professional diploma in composition and arranging.

"I taught music at Berklee full time after graduation; everything from elementary harmony, arranging, counterpoint, to principals of harmonic progression," he said. "I would teach 22 hours of class and six hours of ensemble, five days a week, and taught there for a year before moving to Los Angeles in 1967."

In Los Angeles, he picked up jobs from music copying to writing jingles and eventually, arranging music for variety shows.

Through networking with colleagues, he got gigs arranging music for the "Donny and Marie Show" and eventually became its music director. Several years later, that same networking with colleagues landed him the job as composer for the ABC TV series "Moonlighting," which garnered him six Emmy nominations. While still on "Moonlighting," he began writing the scores for the sitcom, "ALF" (no relation, he insists) and later, through his numerous industry contacts, began working on "The Simpsons." Rick Riccio, his long time music engineer, recalls the start of the "ALF" series in 1986.

"It was the first episode of "ALF" at Alpha Studios with Alf, and I drove up in my Alpha Romeo," he recalled. "I remember thinking, how many Alfs do you need? Maybe it was meant to be."

The Simpsons

"The Simpsons" seems to be the juggernaut that just keeps going on.

"I didn't think it would last this long," Clausen said. "We had no idea when we started that it would have such a positive response from the public. We thought we would shoot for maybe three or four years, the magic number in television is 100 episodes, that is when you go into syndication, but we passed 100 (episodes) a long time ago."

Since then, Clausen has been on fire, cranking out about 22 scores per season for the past 17 years. It is a challenge he cheerfully undertakes, starting a new score every Sunday and recording it the following Friday.

During the week, he writes a new underscore and sometimes songs for each episode, tweaking and rehearsing each cue that may range from 1 to 35 seconds or more. Each cue is individually crafted to fit perfectly. What may seem like a sound byte that goes by in a flash is just the sort of seamless interaction Clausen is trying to achieve from the score - bringing life to the characters without the music standing out.

"The interesting thing about 'The Simpsons,' is that it operates with virtually complete autonomy," he said. "The network does not give notes, for the most part, which enables the producers to really take dramatic chances that might not be taken when it's a decision by committee. Of course, that leads the producers to take some shots at Fox on occasion - as Krusty the Clown says, 'We kid because we love.'"

Clausen still remembers the first 'Simpsons' episode he composed, for the fourth episode of the second season, that

also served as his audition - 42 cues for the first "Treehouse of Horror" Halloween special.

"It is still one of my favorite episodes," he said.

Clausen's work ethic has always driven him through his life and career, making him one of the most prolific composers in the business. His conservative estimate is he has written more than 12,000 cues and songs for "The Simpsons."

"My head hurts at the thought of 17 more years," he said, citing the famous Matt Groening quote on the occasion of the 350th episode that they were "only halfway there."

"I shuddered," Clausen laughed.

He said Groening is still very much involved with the story line for each episode, which influences the songs and music. In fact, Groening has, on more than one occasion, credited Clausen's scores with saving an episode from a weak plot or sloppy animation.

Scoring Sessions and Songs

In keeping with Groening's original vision for the show, Clausen's approach is to create a score for each episode just like a film composer.

"Each episode is like its own little movie," Clausen said. "I came in at the beginning of the second season, and that concept was already in the mindset of the producers, who really had no expectations, they decided they were going to try something different, cutting edge. Fox was a relatively new studio and gave them carte blanche to do what they wanted to do - the production company operates with one foot over the cliff, so to speak, which is sometimes a good thing."

Therefore, depending on the plot, each score is mostly original music, but often includes snippets from jingles, ethnic music, jazz, rock or clips from famous movie scores like "Raiders of the Lost Ark" whatever it takes to bring the animation to life.

Clausen said all of the original songs germinate from the script pages, where the lyrics are already crafted by the writers. He puts music to the lyrics as opposed to the other way around.

"It happens one of two ways," he said. "When we score, the animation is locked (meaning the scenes are complete), so I compose to picture. From a song perspective, we pre-record the song tracks as demos eight to nine months beforehand and the animators animate to the song tracks, then the fully-animated episode comes back to me and we throw away the 'scratch' rhythm section and replace it with a full orchestral track."

Some of the songs, including the famous "Kamp Krusty" theme song, have been written virtually on the podium during a recording session.

"At this point, it is a nice way to work, the lyrics are basically very structured and I can turn them around very quickly," he said. "The lyrics define the territory from the get go and sometimes the songs are designed to be parodies of existing material." All of which can send the music librarians scrambling to find obscure songs and scores.

Clausen explained where some of his background musical knowledge emanates.

"When I was in high school I was in an organization called DeMolay, a young men's group sponsored by the Masons and popular in the Midwest," he said. "They taught leadership skills, and I got a little exposure to the inner workings of a pseudo-secret society. So when I started to write the 'Stonecutters' song (when Homer was inducted into the Stonecutter's society), I flashed back with an appreciation of what the writers were trying to do. That was the thrust of the emotional content, and off I went - it came out as a regal drinking song."