

NEIL ARGO



A film and television composer, Neil Argo's dramatic and provocative scores have been heard around the world. From *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Melrose Place*, to the far reaches of South African National Geographic documentaries, he has been attached to many noteworthy projects.

Studying both piano and percussion, upon graduation from high school, Neil elected to serve his country in the United States Air Force. But rather than flying planes, Neil's musical talents led him to be an integral part of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) Band. A joint military music organization comprised of all branches of the military from throughout the world, the group afforded Neil to travel and perform internationally.

Completion of military duty led to a Bachelor Degree in Music Composition at North Texas State University at Denton, a school highly regarded for jazz studies in performance and composition. It was here that Neil discovered his talent for writing music and was encouraged to major in music composition.

Neil received his Master of Music, Music Theory and Composition at the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley. It was here that Neil further developed his jazz and contemporary music repertoire, which expanded to include composing, orchestrating and conducting for various sized ensembles. He began writing for corporate and commercial clients while keeping an eye on the long-term goal of writing for film and television.

During this period, Neil was a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Award, and became the first composer-in-residence for Colorado. This led to his scoring of *Zebulon Pike and The Blue Mountain*, a highly acclaimed, feature length docudrama.

As Neil's music and reputation continued to expand, he met Marty Stouffer in Aspen, and was asked to write the main theme for a new television series, *Wild America*, which has subsequently become a major international series and was recently developed into a motion picture. In addition to the theme, Neil underscored many of the episodes. The "Born to Run" episode of *Wild America* won the Gold Award at the 27th Annual International Film and Television



Festival of New York. After 12 seasons on PBS, the series is currently in syndication through Paramount Television.

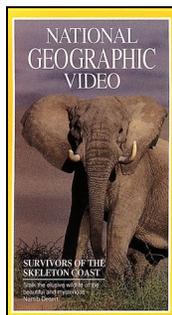
“‘Wild America’ gave me the opportunity to learn the mechanics of composing for pictures, how to pace myself on short schedules to meet production deadlines and how to listen and ‘hear’ the demands of the producer/director who was not a musician.

“We had a sizable music budget which allowed me a 25-piece orchestra for each episode. Today, that would almost be unheard of on a PBS series. As a result, I was able to develop more of my orchestration knowledge, as well as perfect my conducting to picture.”

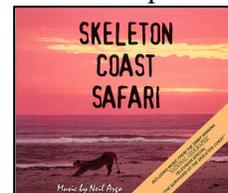
The success of *Wild America* became the catalyst for Neil to move to Los Angeles to continue his pursuit of writing for film and television. Arriving in Los Angeles, Neil was introduced to Rocky Moriana, then director of Aaron Spelling’s Music Department. He was invited to attend scoring sessions for many of Spelling’s popular television productions, and was invited to write for several of the shows, including *The Colbys* and *Hotel*. Moving further into the scoring arena, Neil scored for Paramount Television’s *MacGyver* and *(The New) Mission: Impossible*. Returning to Spelling Entertainment, he was attached to the very successful *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Hearts Are Wild*, *Melrose Place* and *Burke’s Law*.

While writing for television, Neil continued to pursue film scoring, which led to his composing the score for *The Cat Story*, produced by Film Buff Productions/MGM-UA Filmland, and directed by Andy Tennant. He then went on to *The Laureate*, winner of the Golden Eagle Award at the Houston International Film and Video Festival. The following year, Neil scored *Pictures from the Floating World*, a UCLA film project. Later, Palatine Cinema signed Neil to score *Un Incontro / An Encounter*.

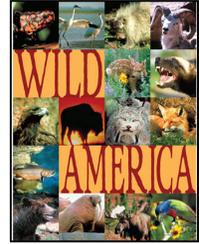
“Music in film lends itself to the magic of film. With film, you have an event. With music, you have an event. With music in film, you have an experience that cannot be replicated without living the experience.”



A highlight of Neil’s scoring career was his attachment to the highly regarded, Emmy Award-winning *Survivors of the Skeleton Coast* for National Geographic Television. The special has led to his music being a part of the internationally syndicated series, *Skeleton Coast Safari*, a tremendous success in its first season. The soundtrack was released on the Cantiga Music label.



Further recognizing Neil's work, Kronos Records is releasing the long-awaited soundtrack from the Television series *Wild America* in a limited edition. Neil's music played an integral role in the success of the series, which has been enjoyed by millions over the years, and has been performed by orchestras nationwide. Kronos Records has also released Neil's soundtrack from *P.J.*, yet another highly acclaimed film score.



“Wild America was a hit on PBS nationally, and later, in syndication, it aired on CBS, NBC and around the world. It's very special for me when children hear the theme, and immediately identify it with the show. I continue to thank Marty and Mark Stouffer for giving me my first opportunity to score for Television.”

Neil's scores have involved full studio orchestras, as well as electronic synthesized music. While he prefers the magnificent sound of an acoustic ensemble, he has also developed hybrid scores using both acoustic and electronic elements.

“Music has always been the major part of my life since I was very young, and the reason I identified with it so quickly was because of its honesty of expression. Music expresses so well what we feel, which is an ‘inside of us’ experience.

“It is no surprise, therefore, that when married to images on film, we see that the effect of music is magical.”



In addition to his film and television career, Neil has taught orchestration and film scoring as an Associate Professor at California State University at Northridge, and has been a guest lecturer at numerous colleges and universities across America. He is also a member of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and a member of the Media Task Force at Biola University, La Mirada, California, where he also taught music technology as applied to film and television production, theory and private instruction.

Neil and his wife are residents of Los Angeles, California.



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NEIL ARGO

COMPOSER CONDUCTOR ORCHESTRATOR SONGWRITER

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Los Angeles

INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

Audience Choice, Silver Medal for Excellence, Music in a Short Film

Park City Film Music Festival, *The Devil Always Wins*, Ouvrier Films, Russ Emanuel, dir.

Jury Choice, Bronze Medal for Excellence, Music in a Short Film

Park City Film Music Festival, *Plastic for Everyone*, Ouvrier Films, Russ Emanuel, dir.

Best Original Score

International Digital Video and High Definition Festival, *Perfect Red*, David Covarrubias, dir.

Director's Choice Gold Award, Film Score

Park City Film Music Festival, *Chasing the Green*, Russell Emanuel, dir.

Best Impact of Music in a Feature Film, Bronze Medal for Excellence, Artistic Excellence

Park City Film Music Festival, *P.J.*, Russell Emanuel, dir.

Best Use of Music in a Short Film, Bronze Medal for Excellence

Park City Film Music Festival, *Perfect Red*, David Covarrubias, dir.

Best Musical Score

Melbourne Independent Filmmakers Festival, *Girl With Gun (GWG)*, Russell Emanuel, dir.

Silver Medal, Jury Choice for Best Impact of Music in a Narrative Short Film

Park City Film Music Festival, *Mavet*, Emile Haris, dir.

Silver Medal, Jury Choice for Best Impact of Music in a Narrative Short Film

Park City Film Music Festival, *Girl With Gun (GWG)*, Russell Emanuel, dir.

Best Original Score, Nominee

The Legends of Nethiah, Russell Emanuel, dir., Hollywood Music in Media Awards

Best Original Score, Nominee

International Digital Video and High Definition Festival, *Girl With Gun (GWG)*, Russell Emanuel, dir.

MOTION PICTURES

CHAVEZ: CAGE OF GLORY
Destiny Entertainment

Hector Echavarria, dir.
Gina Hattenbach, exec. prod.
Pablo Garcia, Patrick Kilpatrick, Travis Murray, prods.

THE LEGENDS OF NETHIAH
WorldsLastHero Productions / Starrunner

Russ Emanuel, dir.
Howard Nash, Jeremiah Sayys, prods.

A SISTER'S CALL (Feature Documentary)
Grey Hawk Productions / Kartemquim Films

Kyle Tekiela, dir.
Rebecca Schaper, exec. prod.
Peter Miller, Gordon Quinn, Laurel Ripley, prods.

A CELEBRATION IS A CELEBRATION IS A CELEBRATION
MagicHours Pictures / The New York Film Academy

Tong (Michelle) Zhou, dir./prod.

EDUARDO AND TED
Meyerhardt Films / The Scottsdale Film School

Brittany Meyerhardt, dir.
Jake Hartin, prod.

CHASING THE GREEN
Igold Productions

Russ Emanuel, dir.
Craig Frankel, exec. prod., Howard Nash, prod.

P.J.
P.J. Pictures

Russell Emanuel, dir.
Craig Frankel, Russell W. Hooper III, exec. prods.
Michael McQuown, Tomax Aponte, Robert Kwartler, prods.

LITTLE BOBA
Laughing Raven Productions

Scott Brown, dir./prod.

PERFECT RED
Russem Productions

David Covarrubias, dir.
Russell Emanuel, prod.

REMEMBER
Da Soir Films

Luis Pazos, dir./prod.

GWG (GIRL WITH GUN)
Russem Productions

Russell Emanuel, dir.
Kevin Kung, Suda Suebsang, exec. prods.
Lisa O'Dell, Emile Haris, Russell Emmanuel, Phil Miller,
prods.

MAVET
Russem Productions

Emile Haris, dir.
Russell Emanuel, Anika Leichtweiss, prods.

HER KNIGHT
Russem Productions

Russell Emanuel, dir.
Peter Frintrup, Russell Emanuel, prods.

THE LAST LEAF
Autumn Entertainment

Joe Knee, dir.
Fred Knee, exec. prod.
Eric K Jonet, Joe Knee, prods.

STORYTELLERS OF LINCOLN COUNTY (Feature Documentary)
Old Mill Productions

Delana Michaels, dir.
Michael Clements, prod.

ANDY DEVINE: THE CAT STORY
MGM / Film Buff Productions

Andy Tennant, dir./prod.
Ed Hunsaker, prod.

UN INCONTRO (AN ENCOUNTER)
Palotine Cinema / PBS

Silvanus Slaughter, dir.
Stephen Michael Scappa, exec. prod.

TELEVISION – TELEFILMS

BRING HIM HOME
Disney Channel / Family Arthouse Productions

Robert Fedor, dir.
William J. Immerman, Allen O'Brien, exec. prods.
Catherine Hurd, Natasha Kummerfeldt, prods.

THE LAUREATE
Showtime / American Film Institute
Bronze Award, Worldfest Houston

Robert Jacobson, dir.
John Wiseman, prod.

HUSH LITTLE BABY DON'T YOU CRY
Viacom / Filmworks / Prism Entertainment / Frameline Productions

Don Hawks, dir.
Henry Boots, prod.

TELEVISION – SERIES / PILOTS / SPECIALS

REDWIND POINT (Pre-Production)
Redwind Point Productions

Various, dirs.
Vincent Brando, prod.

BEVERLY HILLS 90210 (Multiples, Additional Music)
FBS / Spelling Television

Various dirs.
Aaron Spelling, E. Duke Vincent, Charles Rosin, Darren Star,
Michael Braverman, exec. prods.

BURKE'S LAW (Multiples, Additional Music)
CBS / Spelling Television

Various dirs.
E. Duke Vincent, exec. prod.
Aaron Spelling, Joel J. Feigenbaum, Abby Singer, prods.

MELROSE PLACE (Multiples, Additional Music)
FBS / Spelling Television

Various, dirs.
Aaron Spelling, E. Duke Vincent, Frank South, Charles Pratt
Jr., Darren Star, James Kahn, exec. prods.
Chip Hayes, Carol Mendelsohn, Peter Dunne, prods.

HEARTS ARE WILD (Multiples, Additional Music)
FBS / Spelling Television

Roger Young, Charles Correll, dirs.
E. Duke Vincent, exec. prod., Chip Hayes, prod.

(THE NEW) MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE (Multiples)
ABC / Paramount Television

Various dirs.
Michael Fisher, Jeffrey M. Hayes, exec. dirs.
Ted Roberts, Walter Brough, Frank Abatemarco, prods.

MACGYVER (Multiples, Orchestrator)
ABC / Paramount Television

Various dirs.
Jerrold L. Ludwig, Stephen Downing, exec. prods.
Judy Burns, Victor Hsu, Hal Klein, Bill Froelich, Michael
Greenburg, Robert Hargrove, prods.

HOTEL (Multiples, Orchestrator)
ABC / Aaron Spelling Productions

Various dirs.
Aaron Spelling, Douglas S. Cramer, exec. prods.
Harry Colman, Geoffrey Fischer, James Fritzhand, Dennis
Hammer, Bill & Jo La Mond, Andrew Laskos, Duane Poole,
Tom Swale, prods.

DYNASTY (Multiples, Orchestrator)
ABC / Aaron Spelling Productions

Various dirs.
Aaron Spelling, Richard Shapiro, Elaine Rich,
Douglas S. Cramer, exec. prods.
Edward DeBlasio, E. Duke Vincent, David Paulsen, prods.

MY INDIAN SUMMER (Special)
CBS / Big Daddy Productions

John Behring, dir.
Kerri C. & Scoot A. Friedland, exec. prods.
Les Sheldon, Norman Marcus, prods.

CELEBRITY CATCH & RELEASE (Pilot)
Poor Boy Productions

Michael Semon, prod.

NATIONAL SPORTS LAUGH (Pilot)
ESPN / High Plains Productions

David Parsons, dir./prod.

TELEVISION – DOCUMENTARIES

RESTORATION OF PARADISE
Russem Productions

Russell Emanuel, dir.
David & Martha Carlberg, prods.

WARRIORS...IN THEIR OWN WORDS
LOOC Foundation / Pratt Productions

Rex J. Pratt, dir.
Rex J. Pratt, Cheryl Forç t Cohen, Prods.

SURVIVORS OF THE SKELETON COAST (Special)
NBC / PBS / National Geographic Television

Des & Jen Bartlett, dirs./prods., Marty Stouffer, dir.
Nick Noxon, Tom Simon, exec. prods.

SKELETON COAST SAFARI (Theme, Multiples)
PBS / BBC / ITEL / Skeleton Coast Films

Des & Jen Bartlett, dirs./prods.

ANIMAL MINDS
TBS / National Geographic Explorer
Animal Behavior Society Semifinalist

John Rubin, dir.
Keenan Smart, Michael Rosenfelt, exec. prods.
Claire Downing, prod.

THOMPSON WORLD WAR II MEMOIRS
PBS / Deborah Klose Productions

Deborah Klose, dir./prod.

MARTY STOUFFER'S WILD AMERICA
(Theme, Multiples)
PBS / Rysher Entertainment / Paramount Television
Gold Award, International Film and Television Festival of New York

Marty Stouffer, dir./prod.

ZEBULON PIKE AND THE BLUE MOUNTAIN
PBS / Tamarack Productions
Best Historical Documentary, CINE Golden Eagle Competition

John Henry Johnson, dir./prod.

A COMMUNITY OF CARING (Special)
SMTV / Directors Guild of America
Emmy Award (Local Award for Best Public Produced Cable Production)

Nancy Malone, exec. prod.

CHOICES (Two-Part Series)
Kentucky Medical Association Alliance

Ernest Martin, dir.
Jan Crase, prod.

WEB SERIAL

CULT 11 (Theme, Multiples)
Ouvrier Productions

John Ouvrier, prod.

ALBUMS – COMPOSER / PRODUCER

Wild America – Limited Edition Original Soundtrack Album (Kronos Records)
P.J. – Limited Edition Original Soundtrack Album (Kronos Records)
Skeleton Coast Safari – Original Soundtrack Album (National Geographic)
Baby Preschool Musical Pacifier (Baby Prodigy)
A Family Christmas Portrait (Cantiga Music)

COMMERCIALS / PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS (Partial List)

AT&T – Corporate Educational Program (Telly Award)
Sports Radio Network – National Identification Package
Denver Center for the Performing Arts – Signature Theme
State of Wyoming Travel Commission – Television Promotion Campaign
Teledyne Waterpik – National Sales Promotion Soundtrack
Silverado Bank – Television Corporate Image Campaign

LIVE PERFORMANCE

The Music of Nature, music from “Wild America” and National Geographic’s “Survivors of the Skeleton Coast,” conducting The Augustana Arts Orchestra, Phipps IMAX Theatre, Museum of Nature and Science, Denver, Colorado

THEATRICAL PRESENTATION – MUSIC DIRECTOR

Anne of a Thousand Days – Theatre Tribe Productions

COMMISSIONS AND GRANTS IN COMPOSITION

National Endowments for the Arts
Composer-In-Residence, Colorado Council on the Arts

CLASSICAL COMPOSITIONS

String Orchestra no. 1

Four Sketches for Brass

La Jornada De La Vida for Winds, Brass, and Percussion

In Memoriam - Emily Dickinson for Septet and Mezzo

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Media Task Force, Biola University

Society of Composers & Lyricists

Academy of Television Arts and Sciences

National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (Grammy Awards)

EDUCATION AND ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

University of Northern Colorado – Master of Music, Music Theory and Composition; 1994 Honored Alumni of the Year

North Texas State University – Bachelor of Music, Composition



Randall Larson's
SOUNDTRAX

Soundtrax: Episode 2008-21
November 27th, 2008
By Randall D. Larson



Neil Argo (**Wild America, Skeleton Coast Safari, episodes of Melrose Place, Burke's Law, MacGyver, etc.**) has scored a new theatrical release called **P.J.**

Based on a 1984 play by Mark McQuown, the film stars John Heard, Vincent Pastore, Robert Piccardo, and Hallie Kate Eisenberg, and is about a man named P.J. who witnesses a horrific accident and subsequently retreats into himself. He is brought to a hospital where the resident psychiatrist (Heard) tried to get through to him with the help of P.J.'s bitter girlfriend; meanwhile the doctor is facing his own inner demons.

The film embraces Argo's reflective and thoughtful score, which won a Bronze medal for "Best Impact of Music in a Feature Film" at this year's Park City Film Music Festival. A soundtrack release should be hopefully forthcoming; in the meantime samples of this and other scores are available on the composer's web site and are well worth having a listen to.

Argo's music is quietly intimate, emphasizing acoustic guitar which is often heard solo in the body of the film. His main theme is introduced in the Main Title, a compelling and uplifting melody for strings over piano, which is developed out more fully in the nearly 5-minute End Title suite, which progresses into a warm and quite lovely piano and saxophone piece, very nicely textured and arranged. It's a very pretty melody, nicely carried along and gives the film a full sense of emotive poignancy.

The motif is fragmented and recurs amidst the body of the film, as in the thoughtful "How Did He Know?" There are also a variety of solo acoustic guitar pieces and several short jazzy "hip" string bass motifs laced throughout the score to enhance brief moments of P.J.'s recovery. A melancholy motif associated with the New York skyline, which has meaning for P.J., is provided through tender winds and strings; the character of Claire also has her own very despondent theme for layered strings with a hint of woodwinds. "Save Me," in particular, provides a fervent musical cry for help in its pleasing high strings.

But gradually the score's fragments come together and the cues take on a more confident melodic progression, culminating in the very pleasing "Montage Wrap" and "Conclusion," which resolves the story, and the score, and the fairly downhearted mood of both, into and light and airy musical denouement of recovery and reassurance.

www.NeilArgo.com www.PJtheMovie.com

MOVIE MUSIC UK

Film Score Reviews by Jonathan Broxton since 1997



Almost any film music reviewer will attest to the fact that you find more duds than gems when dealing with scores from little-known composers, and I didn't expect much from this score. I am pleased to reported (sic) that Mr. Argo's score for "P.J." is a hidden gem, one that I sincerely hope is made available to the public at some point.

This intimate orchestral score was a very pleasant surprise, reminding me a little bit of the low-key work of Elmer Bernstein. The opening "P. J. Main Title" is a gorgeous (though brief) piece of music that hooked me immediately. Performed by a string ensemble, woodwinds, and piano, it's a heartbreakingly old-fashioned and lush composition that will surely appeal to fans of composers like Bernstein and Delerue. The theme shows up every now and then, but not enough to wear out it's welcome by any means.

Throughout much of the score, the music remains very low-key, relying a minimal amount of players. Early cues such as "Big Seizure!" offer one of the primary thematic ideas heard in the score, some ominously serene string writing that may remind some listeners of the calmer passages in Jerry Goldsmith's "Alien". As we move along, the acoustic guitar begins to play an increasing large role, sometimes taking on reflective solo cues ("Mental Institutions") and occasionally collaborating with the strings ("A Latin Quarrel"). One of my favorite guitar pieces is the gentle "Goodbye", which effectively demonstrates just how effective quiet simplicity can be at times.

The string writing starts to dominate again as we head into the final third of the album. The finest portion of the album probably begins with "Show Me New York", which kicks off a series of very fine cues such as "Save Me", "It's a Miracle", "Claire Remembered", "Get Together", and "Montage Wrap". In all of these cues, Argo carefully avoids letting the music become too explicitly emotional. They are moving and thoughtful pieces, but he usually holds back just a little bit, waiting until precisely the right moments to unleash pure Melodic bliss. The big payoff comes at the end, with the brief "Conclusion" and the sublime "End Title", which gives us a gentle jazz arrangement of that wonderful main theme.

If the score is ever made available to the public, I hope that it will be re-arranged into a slightly tighter listening experience. That being said, this is an excellent effort. It's precisely the sort of timeless film scoring that we hear so precious little of these days, and that deserves recognition. If you ever get the chance to pick up a copy, by all means do so. **Rating: **** (out of five)**
(Reviewed by Clark Douglas)

SOUNDTRACK

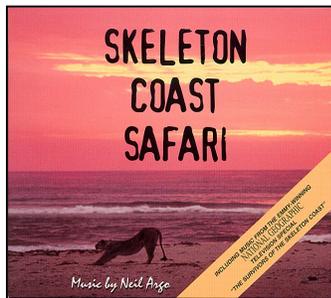
Volume 21 / Number 84 — Winter 2002

Reviewed by Randall Larson

Skeleton Coast Safari

Music by Neil Argo

Cantiga Music nA0002 (14 tracks; 34:47) ****



Long time television composer Neil Argo (PBS's **WILD AMERICA**) has released this World Beat flavored soundtrack, compiling music from the 1993 National Geographic documentary, **SURVIVORS OF THE SKELETON COAST** along with cues from the PBS series it inspired, **SKELETON COAST SAFARI** (five cues each). Argo has supplemented these tracks with two original compositions in a complementary style.

The main theme for **SURVIVORS** is a wonderful, richly orchestrated melody for a full ensemble of woodwinds, French horn, and violins over cello, while that for **SAFARI** is a muted synth and percussion dominated theme. "The Skeleton Coast" introduces the West African coastal landscape with an evocative mix of woodwinds, drums, and synths. "Moroccan Night" mixes ethnic instruments with vocalisms, performed, oddly enough, on mostly Chinese instruments but retaining an appropriate atmosphere for the setting. Half of the cues feature drums and synths only, yet the programming is fresh and the melodies compelling. "African River Run" and "Ultralight Photography," feature sampled woodwinds over rhythmic percussion, while "Sand Dune Elephants" captures a neat sonic texture. "Lions Chasing Giraffes" stops short of being true chase/action music, "Land Cruising Namibia" is all percussion and synth, while "Coastal Beaches," which closes out the CD, adds a clear-toned alto sax and acoustic guitar.

The music throughout the CD is relaxing and absorbing, tranquil and persuasive.

For more information, see www.NeilArgo.com.