

Soundtrack albums biggest sellers

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By MARTHA HUME

In 1977, the American pop-music business first began to feel the impact of new-wave (punk rock) music and saw a continuing growth in country-music sales. One trend, however, has gone virtually unnoticed: this year movie soundtracks began to sell again.

Looking back at last year's charts, the seeming strength of the return to the soundtrack is almost phenomenal. Among 1977's 100 best-selling albums were the soundtracks from *A Star Is Born*, *Rocky*, *Car Wash*, *The Song Remains the Same* and *Star Wars*. In 1978, the soundtracks from *Saturday Night Fever*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *You Light Up My Life* and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* have made the best-seller charts already. In fact *Saturday Night Fever* has now replaced Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* as number one.

There's no immediate end in sight. Movies scheduled for 1978 release include *Superman*, with a

John Williams soundtrack; *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, with an all-star soundtrack; *Grease*, a remake of the successful Broadway production; Sylvester Stallone's *Paradise Alley* may have a shot at soundtrack success, as may *The Buddy Holly Story*. It looks as if 1978 might be the biggest year for soundtrack sales since the early 1960s, when the success of *The Sound of Music* had record companies scrambling to release the music from any movie.

The reasons for the resurgence in the popularity of movie music are complex. The obvious explanation is that movies are more popular now than they have been for the past decade. According to *Variety*, 1977 was "the biggest year in film history." Domestic box-office sales reached \$2.3 billion, and in the last two holiday weeks of the year, they reached \$10 million a day. When motion pictures are this popular, everything connected with them will benefit.

The 1977-78 soundtracks fall into three categories. First, in such cases as *A Star Is Born* and *Saturday Night Fever* — whose

soundtracks feature Streisand/Kristofferson and the Bee Gees respectively — the star, rather than the film, can sell records. It has been proven that a Streisand album always sells well, and lately Bee Gees album sales are doing almost as well.

In the second category is "You Light Up My Life". It seems the song sold the movie rather than vice versa.

In the third category, one name suffices: John Williams, who did the soundtracks for *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters* and is now at work on *Superman*. With the exception of the latter, which has not yet been released, all have become best-selling records. The films that Williams has scored have also been major box-office hits, so one can't quite say that his music has sold itself on its own merits. On the other hand the theme from *Star Wars* was popular enough to be "covered" by Meco — albeit with a different arrangement — and the same group has just released a *Close Encounters* cover. Williams' themes are big, majestic and romantic — in short, Wagnerian. Director Stanley Kubrick was probably the



John Williams: the film score king. He has done soundtracks for "Jaws", "Star Wars", "Close Encounters" and is now at work on "Superman". [Columbia Pictures]

first to test the appeal of such music when he sued Wagner's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Williams has paid attention to the past. The dramatic kick one feels while listening to "Star Wars" may be filling the void left when classic rock music stopped delivering a similar, if not identical, emotional kick.

If any conclusion can be drawn from all this, it's that American

music buyers are seeking songs that are more instrumentally complex than ever before. This doesn't mean they want more complicated music (Williams' themes are complex, but they certainly are not complicated), but that the music we are now hearing is just plain big enough to pack a gut punch. What remains to be seen is whether this music will seep into popular music. We've got an entire new year to find out.

Christine Lavin

Collective reschedules performance

By PAUL MEYER

It was a howling blizzard in New York City on Monday. The airports closed down and Christine Lavin couldn't get here. The Folk Collective had to cancel her Tuesday night performance at Mem. Hall. Perhaps it was for the best though, since by Tuesday night the blizzard was in full swing here. The coffeehouse has been rescheduled tonight at 8:30 in Memorial Hall. Christine will be there. We hope you will make it too.

In the Spring of '74 Christine won the Fourth Annual Stephen Fensterer Memorial Folk Festival held at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. From there she took off on a tour of the midwest, performing for a total of 26,000 high school students in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. The following year she spent in Miami and Key West, Florida, singing in bars, harbor cruise ships, nursing homes, outdoor festivals and was even a guest performer at the Miccosukee Indian Reservation Music Festival in the Everglades.

Also while in Florida, she once entered a talent competition in a gay bar, competing against female impersonators, and won. Eventually she traveled back up north, performing in college coffeehouses, then spent five months baking and waitressing at the Caffe Lena in Saratoga Springs, New York where she has since become a regular performer.

Christine's employment career has had its moments, and she draws on these true life experiences for her writing. She was a Crackerjack seller in Miami's Orange Bowl, a string bean inspector in a canning factory in Geneva, New York, a toilet seat counter in Shelbyville, Indiana, a freelance reporter for the Miami Phoenix and, also reported for the politically oriented Albany, New York "New Citizen". This political involvement led her into becoming a campaign worker on the Committee to Elect U. Utah Phillips President in 1976. He ran on the Sloth & Indolence Ticket of the Do-Nothing Party, so in keeping with his political philosophy, Christine did nothing

to help him get elected. He lost. She has also completed writing and rewriting her first novel, *Letters to Boom Boom*. It will be published in early 1978. Maybe. Her first published magazine article — a revealing look at what actually goes on behind the scenes during audition night at "Catch A Rising Star" — ran this Fall in New York Magazine.

Dave Van Ronk calls Christine "One very talented songwriter and performer who will go a long way." She has performed in concert with not only Van Ronk himself, but with such noted performers as Don McLean, Tim Hardin, Oscar Brand and Ramblin Jack Elliott, in such places as The Other End in New York City, The Salt in Newport, Rhode Island, The Main Point in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania and the Nassau Folk Festival at Nassau Community College. In 1976 she judged the Stephen Fensterer Memorial Folk Festival Competition.

Christine's material covers a wide range of subjects — from an encounter with an army of

papillon d'amour (commonly known as Crabs) to a cynical tune about a one-night romance with an astrologer (*Star-Crossed Lovers*) to serious love ballads. She is presently living in Manhattan and

has completed a 6-month stand as the wandering minstrel in Anita's Chili Parlor on New York's Upper West Side. She still might be there today, except the place burned down. That's show biz.

The Increasing Times

Ah, the American Dream — what is it? Whatever it is, it's changing, or so says the Department of Commerce.

The Department, which keeps track of such things, says drinking is up and smoking is up, so maybe the national nerves are fraying a bit. Beer drinking is slightly off, with only 31.6 gallons per capita consumed last year. But wine is more than filling the gap, with wine sales up 500 percent in the last 10 years.

Perhaps it's not surprising that with all that drinking going on, folks are turning to lush, multi-ply toilet papers, which stress (quote)

"softness, absorbency, fragrance, strength, and better value through expanded roll size."

Meanwhile, men are using more perfume, and young women are visiting beauty shops more, and are re-discovering dresses.

The Commerce Department has even learned that death rituals are changing. At some of the newer-style funerals, relatives and friends reportedly gather to discuss the deceased's way of life. And finally, cremation is becoming increasingly popular, with 25 percent choosing that way of making their final exit in Hawaii and the West coast. (Newsprint)

CBC

'Riddle of Sand'

Erskine Childers, author of the great spy story, *The Riddle of the Sands*, was executed by his own Irish countrymen in 1922. His story of intrigue about two young Englishmen who sail to the Frisian Islands to try to discover the riddle of the sands will be read on CBC Radio's *Nightcap*, weeknights at 11:20, 11:50 nst. Starting Monday, Feb. 13, 15 episodes from the book will be heard during the latter part of the show.

A republican rebel of the outlawed IRA, Childers was arrested by Irish Free State

soldiers for having an automatic pistol in his possession. He was court-martialed and shot. An idealist and gentleman to the end, Childers shook hands with each member of the firing squad before giving them the signal to shoot.

Childers' novel, *The Riddle of the Sands*, sub-titled *A Record of Secret Service*, has been acclaimed as one of the finest stories of intrigue of all time. It has also been ranked with the best of Joseph Conrad with its dramatic description of the sea and sailing.

Published in 1900, the book gained immediate popularity and was a factor in forcing the British Admiralty to re-consider North Sea defense strategy.

The Riddle of the Sands is read by actor Chris Wiggins, who is well-known to CBC listeners for his frequent performances in radio and television dramas. He has also written several radio plays, recently starred in the Canadian film, *Why Shoot the Teacher*, and has performed on stages across Canada.

Trivia Answers

1. Electric Sky Church
2. Texas Guitar Slim
3. Atlanta Pop Festival, July 1970
4. The person who developed the prototype of a now classic Gibson electric guitar.
5. Sparrow
6. Southern Comfort
7. Seattle, Washington
8. Keith Moon
9. The Amboy Dukes
10. Bob Dylan.