

**Oral History Interview of  
Amy and Scott Faris**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
May 11, 2018  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Creative Process Interviews***

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Scott and Amy Faris as they discuss making music to pair up with the silent film, *Metropolis*. In this interview, the Faris's recount making the music and performing the music live with the movie playing in the background. They also includes clips of the music in the interview.

**Length of Interview:** 02:21:32

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### Keywords

Creativity, music composition, film and media studies, *Metropolis*, West Texas music

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

--And cool thing. [Laughter] Yeah, we just had a great "There we just escaped" story. This is Andy Wilkinson with Scott and Amy Faris at the Amusement Park Studio. It is the eleventh of May 2018 in the afternoon—a very hot afternoon. Reminiscent of how hot it was forty-eight years ago—on a Monday instead of a Friday—May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1970, the big tornado. And that's what we're talking about is how we escaped by the skin of our teeth. But we're going to talk about a lot of other things today, and so we here we are.

**Scott Faris (SF):**

Here we are.

AW:

And while we were starting our coffee I took a photograph of the—

SF:

Board of Doom?

**Amy Faris (AF):**

Yeah. [Laughter]

AW:

The *Metropolis Elektro*. This is like a Gantt chart, right? Is that kind of what it is?

SF:

Yeah. This is the only way I could figure out how to organize all this crap.

AW:

Yeah, I know it. And it's interesting it's on poster board. This is very old-school. But I tried every computer program known to man and nothing beats a big poster board. [Laughter]

AF:

It doesn't.

AW:

I mean the only drawback to it is it's hard to wrangle around and it could burn up in a fire. [Laughter]

AF:

That is true. We've taken pictures of it.

SF:

Yeah, we've taken pictures of it. But there's no other way. I mean I will do that with large—You can see I have whiteboards, like, all over my studio. They're in practically every room. They're all over the place.

AW:

I like it.

SF:

I have to do that. But this needed to be more permanent, because of how—

AF:

Big.

SF:

--large the work is. It's a hundred and fifty six minutes. There's eighty-nine pieces.

AF:

Right.

SF:

Individual pieces of it.

AW:

Eight-nine pieces?

SF

Eighty-nine pieces.

AF:

Yeah, I'll show you.

AW:

Oh my goodness.

AF:

So this big purple thing—and it's not even—this isn't really all of it. There's pieces missing. This is the whole work.



AW:

Oh my goodness. [Pages turning quickly]

AF:

It's just—

AW:

I mean, I knew this was big work, but I had no idea it was—

AF:

Huge.

AW:

--gargantuan. [Laughter]

AF:

It's hard to wrangle. And then this was just my parts that I played on piano with my notes for sounds.

SF:

And there's a notebook like this—or at least a set of scores—for every player.

AF:

In fact, I bought one because Scott designed them and they look so cool. Here, hold the notebook.

AW:

Well, maybe when I get ready to do another musical I'll get you to design my books, because mine are pretty plain.

AF:

Look at this pretty thing!

AW:

Oh that's great.

SF:

Yeah, those are our scores.

AF:

Isn't that great looking?

AW:

Oh yeah.

AF:

I thought they looked so cool. Scott did a really good job on that.

AW:

Did you use Finale?

AF:

I did.

SF:

In the process of switching—

AW:

Yeah, we talked about that the other day.

AF:

Trying.

AW:

I've got a musical play that—a musical—that I need to score, and I've tried to get grad students to score it and they never get around to it. I am so clumsy with Finale. I've thought about—

AF:

It's hard.

AW:

--ditching it and seeing about—because all I need is a lead line.

AF:

Just lead sheets?

AW:

Yeah.



AF:

With chord symbols in the—

AW:

Just for the melody. Because I want to publish the play. So I thought, well I could do that if it were a software that wasn't so—

SF:

Obtuse?

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

It is.

AW:

And little hidden things everywhere.

AF:

Not user friendly.

AW:

No.

SF:

Not user friendly and not—

AF:

Intuitive.

SF:

Not intuitive at all. And no—the documentation was just abysmal for years. I mean, it's better now. Thank God for the internet. You know what I mean?

AW:

But still, it's still not—

SF:

Yeah, and that's one of the issues that we're having too is we just upgraded her computer and now Finale is broken. So we've got to go upgrade that, and we don't really want to upgrade that. We just want to switch over, but we have all the scores.

AF:

And I want to make corrections to all those scores and try to and immediately—

AW:

Can you export it in a format that—

AF:

I bet.

AW:

--Sibelius will. I think you can. Sibelius will. Because Sibelius is like Max used to be. We've got to be able to read everybody else's files because there's not enough of our own, you know, type of thing.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Right, yeah.

AW:

I think you can do that.

SF:

I hope it doesn't involve export. I hope it's just an import, because if it involves export we still have to upgrade the thing because we can't open it. [laughter]

AF:

Right, it kicks me out.

AW:

No, I think it will—if you've got your files on a hard drive—if I remember correctly—Sibelius should be able to import those.

AF:

Great. Good deal.

SF:

That'd be good.

AW:

You might try it.

SF:

We haven't got that far yet.

AF:

I'm going to. Absolutely.

AW:

Well, when you get into Sibelius a little bit let me know what you think, because—

AF:

I've done a couple tutorials.

AW:

Have you?

AF:

I like it. It's very different, and I spent so much time doing Finale mainly for this project. Because I was like, I kind of have to now. I have to keep scores.

AW:

Did you do a keyboard entry?

AF:

I just entered it all note-by-note on the computer.

AW:

Yeah, I tried the keyboard and I'm not a very good keyboardist. You're a good keyboardist. I'm not a good—but I got a hundred and seventy eight rests or something. [Laughter] What is this? What is this?

SF:

You know, David Brandon did that when he did all the Parkening Method books and stuff, and he said what he would do is he would play the bass lines separately from the melody lines and the harmony lines and he would do it at half speed. Then quantize it, and it would be okay.

AW:

Wow.

SF:

[Disbelieving noise] [Laughter]

AW:

You know I'm doing good enough because I'm not a keyboard player. And then there's no way I thought, Well I'll just do it with my guitar. No, because it wouldn't do polyphonic.

AF:

Right.

SF:

Yeah, MIDI doesn't track—at least still in my opinion doesn't do it very well.

AF:

I found it easier and faster just to enter it.

AW:

This was in the nineties—early nineties—and there was no way. I mean, I couldn't. And plus to get the thing to put onto your guitar to make it you get every string. Well that was like a seven hundred dollar add-on or something—

SF:

And didn't work.

AW:

And it didn't work. I thought I can hire somebody for that.

SF:

Seven hundred bucks, yeah!

AW:

There's European countries I could buy somebody for seven hundred dollars. [laughter]

AF:  
Right.

AW:  
So anyway, I'd be interested to hear how you do with Sibelius, because I'd like to—

AF:  
Yeah, I like it so far.

AW:  
--I'd like to get that one—I don't know if I'll find an actual music publisher company. I mean, not music, but play. One of those publishing houses that will send this out and say, "You too. It's your high school."

AF:  
Exactly. That'd be cool.

AW:  
But even if it doesn't, I'm going to—I'll just publish it in my own publishing company just to have it.

AF:  
Absolutely.

SF:  
Yeah, absolutely.

AW:  
Anyway. But we're not here to talk about me. [Laughter] We're here to talk about you.

SF:  
Well, so one of the things that we thought we'd do—

AW:  
Because you—

SF:  
Yeah, go ahead Andy.

SF:

No. No, no, no. You said—I was just going to get you to say what you thought you were going to do, because—I'd looked over I'd past notes and I just had that we were going to start with *Metropolis*. But let's hear your idea, because we don't have to do this all today, for one thing.

AF:

It's a good thing. [Laughter] Because I started this notebook last Saturday. Every page is a different piece.

AW:

Hold on one second. I'm going to take one more photograph of you and this notebook festooned with—

AF:

These are where Scott has to weigh in.

SF:

Those are where I need to write notes.

AF:

He has to weigh in on that.

AW:

Okay, so I'm going to do that. And you want to flip one or two or do you need to?

AF:

Yes, sure. [Pages flipping] Let me get one that has, like, so much writing on it.

AW:

Sure.

AF:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

Like this one has two—more than one page of different themes that come in.

AW:

Okay, let me just take a—okay. And that's really all we need to do to get us an idea of what it is—is being—what we're talking about here on the recording. We all have a little reference photo. Okay, so you thought—

SF:

Yeah, so we thought we'd talk a little bit about how we approach the project. Kind of how it started, how we approached it. Amy took this notebook and wrote down every single piece and what themes were in each piece.

AF:

And when they're varied.

SF:

And where they show up elsewhere.

AW:

Now this is contemporaneous with the process? This notebook?

AF:

This was to help me with this interview.

SF:

Remember. [Laughter]

AW:

Oh to help with the interview?

AF:

Because it's been five years.

AW:

Oh cool.

AF:

And a lot of this I'm unfamiliar—

AW:

So this is a specific—how cool.



AF:

We wanted to be—we wanted to trace each theme and how it evolved through the whole work.

AW:

I've never had anybody do a whole fresh notebook for me for an interview. How very—

AF:

[Laughter] My daughter gave me this art deco looking, and I thought it's perfect for this purpose.

AW:

I love it. And it is perfect. It is perfect.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

So and then we thought we would play some examples, because you haven't—you know—let you hear some of the work and the width of the style—stylistically—the width of the styles that we use. And then some examples of where that—the themes—played through the entire work. Because there are themes that—predominately, Amy is the intelligent musician. I'm the idiot guitar player. So I mean, when she's notating stuff I mean she's literally weaving theme upon theme, upon theme. Like what you'd hear John Williams do or something like that. But it's fascinating to see those things come out. And we both actually did that. There would be moments where I would have created a theme on my guitar that shows up in a piece—

AF:

In a different instrument.

SF:

In a different instrument.

AF:

Right.

SF:

And same thing. I'm writing a piece—

AF:

Different keys. Minor and major.

SF:

--and trying to make some baby string line that's really crap compared to what she does, but I'm stealing lines from what she did in—you know—

AF:

Which is what made it so good. Is that we each wrote scenes and then we layered them over each other and each one of us was almost representative of one of the main characters in the love story.

SF:

Yes, that's right.

AF:

And we considered it a little bit like that. Because they were a duo who kind of adopted the same outlook on things in life, right?

SF:

Yeah, absolutely.

AF:

When Freder met Maria, his whole outlook changed.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Yeah. And then they were a united force to bring about good and not that we're lofty or anything like that, but we kind of liked Scott being Freder and me being Maria, just because it's kind of—you know.

AW:

There you go.

SF:

The theme.

AF:

And Fritz Lang and his wife were also, you know, co-creators.

AW:

So, are you going to begin with why?

SF:

Why we did this? [Laughter] Yeah.

AW:

Okay. That's where I wanted to start. [laughter]

SF:

Well, and so we pulled all our notes and all our stuff. This is the first yellow legal pad of where we started writing the themes, who the people are, what's going on in the film. And then this is from a talk that we gave called "Merging historical film and modern music: the creative process behind *Metropolis Elektro*" that we did at the Tech research conference. I think I mentioned that to you when we saw each other the other day. And it was cool because I opened this up and went, "Oh, that's how it happened!" Because we talked about that.

AW:

Do you have extra copies of that?

SF:

We don't, but I can make sure you get a copy of this.

AF:

Let me see if I do in here.

SF:

Make sure that it doesn't have any specific notes that are different—you know what I mean—that you might need.

AF:

Written—yeah, I've got them.

SF:

We made these little books so that we could go—

AW:

Sure. I understand that.

SF:

--as we spoke. You know what I mean?

AW:

We're in the midst of collecting Terry and Jo Harvey Allen's stuff, and you know she's got script and script and script.

AF:

Oh that's cool.

AW:

They all are annotated, and so it's like, "Well, yeah, we'll give you these, but I need copies because this has all my notes on it."

SF:

Well yeah, and that's sort of what we're experiencing too, is that we're going, "If we're going to do this again, we have to have this piece of paper." You know what I mean?

AF:

I have mine and there is nothing in it that's important. It just tells me, "Go to piano."

AW:

Well, can you run off a copy or something?

AF:

You have a copier here?

SF:

I do not.

AW:

We don't have to do it today, but I would like to get—

AF:

Okay. I've got one at home in my office.

SF:

We will absolutely make that happen.

AW:  
Great.

AF:  
Yeah.

AW:  
Now before we go any further, one thing on your—

AF:  
However, you can look at it while Scott talks.

AW:  
--on your yellow pad—

SF:  
Yeah.

AW:  
--on the back maybe—

SF:  
Yeah.

AW:  
--write down, "This is the first blah blah blah," so that if you get hit by a meteor we can identify that. I mean, we're talking about, this is May eleventh. My father-in-law was police chief on May eleventh, and we have in our archive—I got from him—a yellow pad almost identical to that that he kept notes for the night of the tornado and the two or three days afterwards.

AF:  
Oh wow.

SF:  
Wow.

AW:  
And you know, so those kinds of things are—

SF:

That history nobody else has.

AW:

Sure.

SF:

It's gone.

AW:

And that's the kind of stuff that will disappear, because it's a yellow pad and people will—you know.

SF:

Yeah. They throw that in the trash, because they go, "Oh it was in the filing cabinet." You know?

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

Yeah, exactly.

SF:

Well, and so what ended up happening is Amy and I had been playing around in bands for ages and we had started playing in a band—we created a band called Strawberry Crush. It was us and Joey Harris and Brian Tate and a guy named Josh Peterson, and just some various guest artists.

AW:

This is before Rapunzel?

SF:

No, this is post that. This is Rachel is born—

AW:

Oh got it. Okay.

AF:

This is Rachel's early teenager years.

SF:

Yeah, she's—this is after 100 Love Sonnets and our touring period.

AF:

This is right before *Metropolis*.

SF:

Yeah, this is right before *Metropolis*. We just—we'd been out of a band for a little while and we just decided to put something together. We didn't give a crap about making money or anything, it was just, let's go have some fun and play only stuff we like. [Laughter] You know what I mean? And so we started playing around and kind of naturally gravitate towards the art scene in town. Charles Adams liked us and so he hired us to play at the CASP [Charles Adams Studio Project] thing down there. We were playing there one night and met Tonya Hagy, who at that time was the head of the First Friday Art Trail. Just like, I don't know, just hit it off, you know. And so she loved our gig and started—we kind of became one of the bands they liked down there. You know what I mean. And so one day we get this phone call out of the blue, and it was for the Flat Line Film Festival, and it was Tonya. And she said, "Hey, I don't know if I can talk to you about this yet, but I'm going to. We've asked another band to do this but they won't call us back, and I really want you guys instead. Would you be interested in writing a score to *Phantom of the Opera*, or would you be interested in playing music while *Phantom of the Opera* plays?" And I said, "Yes, on one condition." And she said, "What's that?" And I said, "Can we change the film to *Metropolis*?" [laughter]

AF:

We looked at *Phantom of the Opera*.

SF:

God, it's terrible.

AF:

And was like, "No." [Laughter] It's so random.

AW:

Yeah, and no besides it's so Bela Lugosi, so—

SF:

Yes.

AW:

Yeah, right. So how were you aware of *Metropolis* in the first place?



SF:

When I was an undergrad at Tech—I have a degree in sculpture—

AW:

Right.

SF:

--I was very influenced by the German expressionist movement. I was a sculptor and I was also interested in film. I was interested in music and my pieces were kinetic and had music in them and all this stuff.

AW:

Right, we talked about that, I think, in one of our earlier—

SF:

Yeah. And so I was real influenced by that movement, and the three films that—there were three films that just grabbed me. *Nosferatu*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and *Metropolis*. *Metropolis* being my favorite, obviously.

AW:

Yeah, because the others suffer from some of the same vibe as *The Phantom of the Opera*.

SF:

You're right. And there's no rhythm. And you know—I mean, *Nosferatu* you can—I mean that ship chase is forty-five minutes of a boat! [Laughter] You know what I mean?

AW:

Right. Yeah, yeah.

SF:

And so I—

AF:

Everything was different back then.

SF:

And I was doing metal work and so that—the Maria image, you know, really stuck with me. And playing in rock bands and stuff, and growing up as part of the *Star Wars* generation. I mean, if you can't see the connection between Maria and C-3P0, I mean, you're not paying attention.

AW:

Did they actually credit Maria in their thinking about C-3P0, I wonder? Have you read that?

AF:

I wonder.

SF:

You know, actually I don't—I could be just speaking out of my rear, but it seems to me that I have seen something about that, where Lucas has said, "This came from that. It came from that." *Star Wars* came from the old samurai films.

AW:

Yeah, right.

SF:

All of those old things. And so all of that kind of showed up. But yeah, I think he did actually. I think he was pretty decent about saying, "Oh yeah, I stole that." [Laughter]

AW:

Yeah, no, I think he was. Because he was doing it in the notation of paying homage to those things.

SF:

That's correct.

AW:

So I think he would have said it if it'd been the case, and I just wondered if you knew that.

SF:

Yeah.

AW:

Cool.

AF:

Not for a fact, but.

SF:

Yeah, not for a fact. But I'm pretty sure.

AF:

I think we've heard that.

AW:

Well, I can ask my son. He knows all things *Star Wars*.

SF:

He would know that. Yes, he would. So yeah, that's kind of where it came from.

AW:

So Tonya—that was okay? “We’ll switch films?”

SF:

Absolutely.

AF:

Yeah.

AW:

Oh cool.

AF:

It really was.

SF:

And I was thrilled.

AF:

And we told her why. There's just more of an inner rhythm happening in *Metropolis*. It's more rock and roll. To us, it fits who we are more.

AW:

Well it's—if I may interject my own, although this is your interview—it's also—it's still fresh. And those other things are not fresh.

SF:

It's a dystopian society. We're living in one.

AF:

The themes of it.

AW:

Right, and even when you're happy you imagine it going that way. So it is a fresh idea. Cool.

SF:

And such an influential film as well. And so she said yes. I did find out eventually the backstory, and I guess it's okay to say this. I'm not trying to be derogatory to another band that I greatly respect. But it was Thrift Store Cowboys that they had asked to do it, who are great. But they didn't call them back.

AW:

Well that's—they're my friends too, but that's—

SF:

That happens.

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

I'm happy that we just jumped in there. We're like, "Woo hoo!"

SF:

And we're really glad.

AF:

We were so excited.

SF:

We both kind of felt like it was fate, if that makes sense. That it was supposed to be us.

AW:

So the original gig is to play live music to the screening of the film?

SF:

Yes. And I look—

AF:

We didn't want it just improve.

SF:

Yeah, I look back at that and I think, not that they would have done a bad job, because they're a great band, but they would not have written a score.

AW:

Oh no. That's not their—

SF:

That's not their gig. They would have played their songs and the film would have been going on behind them.

AW:

And it would have been *Phantom of the Opera*.

SF:

Yeah. And so for us, we really looked at this and this was something that we both wanted to do.

AF:

Always.

SF:

Kind of desperately.

AW:

So what other things have you thought about doing in this vein prior to this opportunity?

AF:

Nothing.

SF:

Well that's not entirely true. Even in *Rapunzel* we had done—

AF:

We had video, multimedia stuff going on, yeah.

SF:

Synched to the band. We had a band called the HiFi Collective that we synched video with what we were doing. So we'd always been kind of on that.

AW:  
On that page?

SF:  
Yeah.

AW:  
No pun intended.

SF:  
Yeah.

AF:  
But never like a real film we were going to put music to it. I don't think we've got that big.

SF:  
No, we've never got that big.

AW:  
So there's a big difference—and I know from writing, mainly to historical events—there's a big difference being able to create the whole thing and being bound to an existing thing.

AF:  
Yeah.

SF:  
Yes.

AW:  
So probably what you'd been doing in Rapunzel and others was all de novo.

SF:  
That's right.

AW:  
And now you've had this chance to write to something that has its own life.

SF:  
Yes.

AW:

So did you think about that? Was that a worry or was it a consideration or did you—

SF:

We absolutely thought about it.

AF:

We really did, yeah. We wanted to not just make traditional film music—that kind of just enhances the feelings but it may just not even be noticeable to the audience—we wanted to approach it like an artist. Like, this is another layer. This is how we interpret what's going on in the film. This is our feelings about what's happening on the screen. This was like another layer of art on top of the movie. That's what we wanted to do.

AW:

Yeah. And again, if I may interject. I just finished this novel and I have a blind projectionist who is attune to music, and who can describe the scene by listening to the score.

AF:

Cool!

AW:

Okay, so I get what you're saying. I mean, I invented the guy. But the notion of the—and I think Jon, there was just as thing on Jon Williams. You mentioned him. I think he talked about it in the same way. That it was just—it was the same as if you were the videographer or the lighting director or the costumer or whatever. That it was an element that had to be done properly for the film to come together.

SF:

Yeah, and it's so different approaching a film that was made in 1927. It's so different than approaching a modern film. First off, it's a silent film. So there's no dialogue other than some interstitial screens or whatever. And so you don't—the pacing is so dramatically different than what we're accustomed to now. And so it's a different experience for an audience. For instance, when we did *Between Earth and Sky*—the film that we did for Paul—

AW:

Hunton.

SF:

Hunton, yeah, over at KTTZ. Our mission there was to enhance the emotion of the film and get out of the way. We're there so that you feel more.



AW:

Like Keith Ferguson would describe bass playing. "It should be heard but not listened to."  
[Laughter]

SF:

As soon as you start paying attention to it you're doing it wrong.

AW:

Well going back again to this being the 1920's, I would guess—I'm not an authority on—I've seen plenty of silent film, you know—I would guess that the pacing is fundamentally different when filmmakers were looking—knowing that it was going to be silent.

SF:

Yes! Yeah.

AW:

So did you feel—was that something that you looked at?

AF:

Oh goodness, they would stay on a face forever. I mean, it was so different. And we're used to just image, image, image.

AW:

Yeah, and the tear that—

SF:

Right, and you would see it go all the way down and the next one would go down and then you'd understand that she's crying. And nowadays you would see one little job drop and we'd be on to something else.

AW:

Yeah, a car chase.

AF:

Right, and I mean it was—we did the two and a half hour version that was rereleased in 2010. And we were like—I specifically thought, I want to entertain people.

AW:

Two and a half hours is a long time.

AF:

It's a long time.

SF:

Yes it is. Yes it is.

AF:

And I was—being rock and roll entertainers for so long, we were kind of programmed to entertain. Don't lose your audience. That's where there's so many pieces—not very long—and we switch up the genres continually. We don't want them to get bored.

SF:

Yeah, so we weren't trying to do like a score to a modern film where you don't want to be heard, you don't want to draw attention to it. We knew that if we're going to reach a larger audience, outside of the one hundred people in Lubbock that actually have ever heard of *Metropolis*—you know what I mean? [laughter]

AW:

The silent film Nazis.

SF:

Yeah, right, yeah. And there's five of those in town, you know what I mean? So if we wanted to reach a wider audience, we needed to engage them with this film with the live performance. We wanted the music to be its own art, like Amy said, as a layer on top. It's a different approach. So we did not mind it being noticeable as something different. When a singer comes out and sings a number.

AW:

Plus, doing it live is also a different animal than doing a soundtrack.

AF:

Oh yeah.

SF:

That is correct.

AF:

Big time. Yes.

AW:

So you couldn't get away without performing if you're live.

AF:

Right.

AW:

I mean, people expect—

AF:

Yeah, and we wanted to be fun.

SF:

Yeah, we wanted people to have a good time with this. And normal people, if they sit down and watch *Metropolis* and they see Maria with the tear and the other—you know what I mean. They get—I hate to say it—but they get bored because they're not—the pace is so dramatically different than what we're accustomed to. So for us, yeah, that was a huge thing was to add a layer that makes the film more accessible to a larger audience.

AF:

Right. But to love the film too. And the work that we—you know what I mean—put with it.

SF:

And so it—so we asked that. And Thrift Store never called them back, so we got the gig.

AW:

You can call Daniel up and say, "Thank you."

SF:

Seriously. We ended up—we did receive a small commission for it.

AW:

I was going to ask, did they give you any kind of budget to put—because this is a lot of work?

AF:

We put the budget together, didn't we? And we were terrified that it was going to be asking way to much.

SF:

We were paid four thousand dollars to write the work.

AW:

That's not a lot of money for this amount of work.

AF:

In eight months?

SF:

And we wrote it in eight months. We wrote a hundred and fifty six minutes of music in eight months.

AW:

Okay, so during that eight months you could have done anything else other than take out the trash, pretty much for that amount of work.

AF:

My house fell apart.

SF:

I worked around the clock. I didn't sleep. Because I had business. I was still doing this.

AF:

We were trying and there was a month or so after *Metropolis* where it was like, "We've got to kind of build business back up." Because we just—

AW:

Ignored it, right?

AF:

Everything.

SF:

That's right. Almost killed it.

AF:

We dropped all of it.

SF:

We dropped a lot of balls during that time.

AF:  
Yeah.

SF:  
What really—the four grand—we probably got paid ten cents an hour. [Laughter]

AW:  
I know. You don't ever—in our business—want to calculate that by the hour.

AF:  
No, no, no.

AW:  
Nor do you ever want to calculate net. [Laughter]

SF:  
That's the truth.

AW:  
Both those things will frighten you.

SF:  
We did find out—I don't mean to interrupt you, but the thing that we did feel is that if we could get one under our belts—

AW:  
Sure.

SF:  
--then the next person who comes along, we can go, "It's this much." [Laughter]

AW:  
Right. Exactly.

SF:  
And go, "Here's what we can do."

AW:  
And does your intellectual property have an economic life after this?

SF:

Yes it does.

AF:

Absolutely.

AW:

And that's the other thing. In some ways when we get paid to do a piece like this, we're getting R&D money.

SF:

That's exactly right.

AF:

That's right. Exactly.

SF:

And the whole project, by the time it was done, including in-kind contributions—which there's a lot of that—but the proj—it was about a fifty grand project by the time it was said and done. I don't—LHUCA was not [laughter]—that wasn't what they originally signed on for.

AF:

No, they so let us increase the scope like crazy.

SF:

Yeah, it was amazing. Because we came to them and we said—we brought about half of it to them and said, "Here's what we have so far."

AW:

And they were like—

SF:

"Holy shit." [laughter] I think is what they were like.

AW:

This isn't the organist going [makes musical noise]. It's not that sort of—

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

Yeah.

AW:

But I think at that—certainly they were enthused.

SF:

Oh they were. Yeah, they really, really were.

AW:

Who was the director then?

SF:

Karen Wiley.

AF:

Karen. Karen Wiley.

AW:

Karen, yeah.

AF:

Karen and Tonya were the main—

SF:

And they went out and fundraised for it and they got it all taken care of.

AF:

Yeah, we did a Kickstarter.

SF:

We did a Kickstarter.

AF:

Through LHUCA.

SF:

Got fully funded on it.



AW:  
Really?

AF:  
Uh-huh. Guitar Center donated some stuff.

AW:  
That was in fairly early Kickstarter days, too.

SF:  
Yeah, it was.

AF:  
It was.

AW:  
So it probably worked pretty well, didn't it?

SF:  
Yeah we got—it's not as overdone.

AF:  
At the last minute, it did.

AW:  
I think it always works at the last minute.

AF:  
You're right.

AW:  
But it wasn't—I mean like now you see Kickstarter all the—

AF:  
Oh it's too—

SF:  
There's too many people doing it. It doesn't—

AW:

Well that's very cool. Very cool.

SF:

Yeah, and so that's kind of how it came about. And that was—what—in probably July of 2013, is that right?

AF:

Twelve.

SF:

July of 2012.

AF:

We were supposed to do it at Flatland Film Festival of October of that year.

AW:

Of 2012?

AF:

Yeah. And we were like, "We've done the first half? In September. We're done with that."

AW:

Can you run half the movie?

SF:

Yeah, and we're both on the verge of a nervous breakdown. [laughter]

AF:

They were very sweet to extend to March.

SF:

To March, yeah. Which is—we couldn't—

AF:

We couldn't have done—to that extent.

SF:

But it was a passion thing. We couldn't.

AF:

It absolutely was.

SF:

We just wanted it.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

So bad. And we wanted—Lubbock is an absolute music mecca, and it's just—the players here, the musicality here, all of that—is just so phenomenal. But Amy and I have always a little bit been the outliers. I didn't grow up here, so I didn't grow up with Buddy Holly, and I didn't grow up with that as a part of my culture. And so I have always been—while I love Buddy Holly and I respect that and I think that's phenomenal—I want to know where it's going next. And so we've always been like—

AW:

So did Buddy.

AF:

It's true.

SF:

You're right.

AW:

Not to many—the “I wish I were Buddy” crowd, they don't want to think about the Buddy that was about to come.

SF:

That's right.

AF:

He was a pioneer.

AW:

Which is kind of sad.

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SF:

Who knows whether they—Lubbock didn't necessarily accept him then anyways, so you know.

AW:

I think you know this, we have the blueprints—the architectural blueprints—for the studio he was going to build here in town, which was so way ahead of the curve.

AF:

So cool. I bet.

SF:

Yeah, I've seen the plans for it. It was super cool. Guy was amazing.

AW:

So we've got a little bit of the why. How do you begin with something this huge? How do you start off?

SF:

We do a lot of writing in Colorado. My family has a house up there. My granddad passed away in '07 and we kept his house, so that's our retreat. And Amy and I have both kind of found that life gets so busy that it's really hard to write here sometimes. Especially, the very beginning of a project, we need isolation.

AW:

When you spend a lot of time looking out the window?

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

So we took a retreat to Colorado and we sat down and we put a TV in the living room and we sat down on the couch, and grabbed this very yellow legal pad. [Laughter]

AW:

The one that we're—

SF:

The one that is sitting here. And what we decided to do—

AW:

Let me—while you're holding it—I've got a picture of the—

AF:

Inaugural—

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

--Legal pad, there. Making sure I've heard from my dad. I'm sorry.

AW:

All right.

SF:

And we—so we sat down and we talked about the approach first a little bit, before we even watched it, because we'd seen it before. Because I made her watch it when we were dating because I was in art school going, "This is so cool!" [Laughter]

AW:

So you had—you were both familiar with it. It wasn't just the one of you.

AF:

Yes. But I was not familiar with the extended, longer—

SF:

Neither of us were.

AW:

Oh yeah, because they—

SF:

All the extra footage they discovered in Argentina. Sixteen millimeter safely copies.

AF:

Yeah.

AW:

That hadn't even been run in movie houses, right?

SF:

I had been lost—it was lost since 1927.

AW:

That's what I mean.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

Because the film was made—released—in '27. They sent it to Hollywood. Hollywood went—

AW:

“What do we do with this?”

SF:

“This is crap.” Chop, chop, chop, chop. Threw it away. And so the only versions we've ever seen—because of the rise of—

AW:

That was chopped up.

SF:

--because of the rise of Hitler after that and the decimation of Europe and Germany and everything else. I mean it was lost. The German version—the original version—was lost.

AW:

Yeah.

SF:

And so yeah, so we only saw the American bastardized version up until then. So the holes that got completed—they discovered two things. They discovered the sixteen millimeter safety copies in Argentina, and then they also discovered—what was—oh crap—the original composer's name?

AF:

Huppertz.

SF:

Huppertz. They discovered his original score, with the notes of what order the scenes went in. So they could put the film back.

AW:

So they used his score to put—to reassemble the film?

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

They used the score to reassemble the film, which was—talk about the impact of music. That's pretty cool.

AW:

Yeah, it is.

AF:

Gottfried. Gottfried Huppertz, that's—I'm not saying it right, but—

SF:

Yeah, Gottfried. And so there's this new version that practically no one has ever seen. And so that was really cool.

AW:

It would be a long stretch to get modern audiences to watch anyway, through the length.

AF:

Yeah. Right.

SF:

Correct. Yet, the story's more coherent.

AF:

It does make more sense, yeah.

SF:

Than the original.



AW:

Did you get to listen to that score?

SF:

We—

AF:

It was on the DVD that we had of the 2010 release, yeah.

SF:

But we opted initially—

AF:

To not listen to the score.

AW:

I would have done the same thing.

AF:

We didn't want anything to color it.

AW:

Yeah, right.

SF:

We did not want to just regurgitate or to just even to steal, subconsciously. As a matter of fact, later on we did listen to it, once we kind of got our feet under us. And there was one piece that we did keep. And it's dies irae.

AF:

We kept dies irae, yes.

SF:

Which was—what composer is that?

AF:

We don't know.

SF:

It's anonymous?

AF:  
Yeah.

AW:  
Like a folk tune or something?

AF:  
It used in the Catholic mass.

AW:  
Ah, got it.

AF:  
And it's a Latin part of the mass and it's about God's judgment.

AW:  
So it wasn't even Huppertz's—

SF:  
No, it's not even his original work either. He did an arrangement of that.

AF:  
It's from the 1300's. Right.

AW:  
Yeah, cool.

SF:  
And so, but yes, we sat down and watched it in complete silence. Because—

AW:  
Well you have to do that to think about what are you going to do, what does it need?

AF:  
And we wrote down ideas about, "This part seems like it's a club. It seems like it needs some clubby music, or something that's kind of more modern." You know.

SF:

Yeah, and so what we—what we did is we—You know, we talked about the open credits, we talked about having multiple themes, we asked ourselves, “Do we want to reference original music from 1927?” Which the answer was yes.

AW:

You mean the kinds of music?

SF:

The kinds of music that was happening then.

AF:

I researched what was, like, popular then. Yeah.

SF:

And then we listed the primary characters that would all need—

AW:

Their own theme?

SF:

Their own themes. Okay, at the end the thing that—the whole film, the crux of the film, is the quote that the, “The mediator between head and the hands must be the heart.” So that’s the whole crux of the thing. So we’re setting up the head versus the hands. You know. And the heart. And then we literally just started going through writing down what the interstitial things were talking about, going through the text screens, going through the individual parts. Amy was already writing down rhythmic structure—

AW:

I see.

SF:

--and so it’s a short—there weren’t many pages left in this legal pad, but that was the—And then we started talking about who’s going to do it. [laughter]

AF:

That’s right, we divided up—yeah.

SF:

So there wasn’t much in this one, but that was the paper we had handy.

AW:

So I see the red boxes. What are those?

SF:

That's a great question.

AW:

Where you went back and—

SF:

We talked about text screens. Text screens in this film are almost always at a point—at a transitional point.

AW:

Yeah.

SF:

You know what I mean?

AW:

And they were in German?

SF:

Yeah, they were originally German. They did, of course, translate them into English for the version we were watching. So each one of those was a natural break in the flow—in the story arc. Because most of the title screens in the film are used to explain what you're about to see, you know what I mean?

AF:

Right. And they were called intertitles, I think, is right.

SF:

Is it intertitles?

AF:

I think so.

SF:

Okay. I guess that's right.

AF:

I was looking back at my notes.

AW:

Yeah. Because that was a thing that they did.

SF:

Yeah, and so—

AW:

When Maria discovers Freddy.

SF:

Right. Yeah! Bingo. Freder goes down into the—Freder enters the catacombs, and witnesses the horror, or whatever. You know what I mean. Yeah, with the big organ thing. So that's kind of where that came from. And then—I don't know. In the book I was reading, it was kind of interesting—your perspective—in that. Did you read your section what you said about that?

AW:

Oh, when you say “the book” you're talking about this one that you just—

AF:

Oh, the speech we gave?

SF:

Yeah.

AW:

The speech book?

AF:

I was terrified. To start, I hadn't really been writing much in the past few years except for, like, songs for bands we were in and stuff. Which was very different.

AW:

Which is a really different thing.

AF:

And I had classical training, but it was a long time ago. I was just pretty—real scared.

AW:

But your classical training was probably not in composition, was it?

AF:

It was.

SF:

She has a degree in it.

AF:

That's what my degree was in.

AW:

Oh did you study Dr. Van [Mary Jeanne van Appledorn], you said?

AF:

And Steve.

SF:

And Steve Paxton.

AW:

Oh yeah, all right.

AF:

We had the best.

AW:

So you have a good—

SF:

That's where we met, was in Steve Paxton's class. Who I took from Steve.

AW:

--good pedigree.

AF:

Yeah. But, I mean, it had been a long time, because I immediately out of college went on the road in a rock band and did that for years.

AW:

I always wanted to live long enough that I could carry on a conversation with Steve.

AF:

Me too. [Laughter]

SF:

Me too.

AF:

It's got to happen someday.

SF:

He's on a different plane, man. He's way smarter than the rest of us.

AF:

He is.

AW:

We worked together on a project called *Stories from a Storm Cellar* and that was my first experience with Steve. But I loved him. Here he was teaching at Tech and he came equipped with a big roll of duct tape and a Barlow knife and put everything together. All the electronics.

AF:

That's Steve. It sounds like you.

SF:

It's interesting, because when we look at this that training changed Amy and I pretty dramatically, because Steve really felt the popular music was a waste of time. He also felt that a lot of classical music was a waste of time. He was—

AF:

He liked Bob Wills. He did like Bob. I remember that from the trip we went on.

SF:

Yeah, but he really—you could tell—he was very much into twenty-first century Avant-garde. You know what I mean?

AW:

Yeah, sounds. I mean he was—sounds.



SF:

He was a sound guy.

AW:

Yeah, he was a sound guy.

SF:

Very much so. And it's really interesting. For me, that was my introduction to the first level of real professional recording equipment was under him. Because I had access to his 8-Track machine. And so I was in that lab every time I could get in there, I was in there working on stuff. And that thread still—I mean, it shows up all over this. Because there are areas in here that would be more soundscape oriented. There's moments that are—

AF:

And you just are that way.

SF:

I'm that way.

AF:

I'm way more notes, rhythm, you know what I mean? And he's way more sound.

AW:

So here you are with two Avant-garde people, because Dr. Vann—

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Right.

AW:

--also. So in some ways you are. I mean this—

AF:

Absolutely. And then the rock band for years. And then it was just this mishmash of—yeah.

SF:

And both having taught. I taught with David Brandon for eleven years before I taught at South Plains College for nine. When I taught for David Brandon, I'd have a kid come in and want to

play country, so I had to know my three country licks and I'd have a kid come in and want to do a rock song and I had to know those licks. And then we'd be playing blues and then we'd be playing jazz. I wouldn't—I don't pretend to be a jazz player, but I could fool you for about thirty seconds, you know what I mean? [Laughter] Into thinking that I knew what I was doing, in spite of the fact that I didn't know jack. But that permeates the piece too. The width of styles is pretty dramatic.

AW:

Yeah, I'm trying to think of—it was out by then. The one piece that I think of that approximates what you're talking about is Queen's "Flash Gordon".

SF:

Yes. Absolutely.

AF:

Right. Yeah. Yes.

SF:

And Queen was part of the group that did a soundtrack in the eighties to *Metropolis*.

AW:

Really?

SF:

With Giorgio Moroder.

AF:

Yeah, that's right. There was a version with rock songs.

AW:

I don't think I knew about that version.

AF:

It's not great.

SF:

It's kind of cheesy. I hate to say that because great, great bands all over it.

AF:

Yeah, great bands.

SF:

Loverboy was on it. You know, stuff like that.

AW:

Well that's almost like a variety show, not a—

SF:

And it was—they wrote pop songs for it and colorized the film. “Oh it's red now. Now it's green. Now it's—“

AF:

It kind of was just—didn't seem real—I don't know. Just—I don't know.

SF:

It wasn't—it felt, to me, like a bastardization of the film. And I remember even watching it in the eighties going, “Oh this is crap.” [laughter] I hated it, you know.

AW:

Well, and my guess is they were also—when they were writing things—they were going, “Can we release this on a single?”

AF:

Yep.

SF:

That's exactly what.

AW:

Has that ever occurred to you in any of these eighty nine pieces?

AF:

We had one single, which was the love theme, which was the song we wrote in early marriage. But no, not really.

SF:

No, and—

AW:

But that already existed before this?

AF:  
It did.

SF:  
We did use found music. Found our own found music.

AF:  
Our own found music. Right.

SF:  
There were—I think there's three—

AF:  
Three or four.

SF:  
--three or four instances I will give you to as a piece—that's the love theme between Freder and Maria. And it's a song—a love song—that Amy and I co-wrote together. And we felt that it's the kind of the falling in love of the two characters. And we went, that ties with this theme of Amy and I being a team. So we did that. There was one piece from 100 Love Sonnets that we did. That was called "Maniac Smile" that worked—

AF:  
A rap.

SF:  
--perfectly.

AF:  
A rap metal song.

SF:  
Yeah. In one section with Rotwang, who was the crazy mad scientist, and he's trying to capture the good Maria, and chasing her through the catacombs with skulls and bones all over.

AF:  
[Laughter] In the dark.

SF:

And her showing her terror for about forty-five seconds so that you understand how scared she is. And so we did that. And then there was probably maybe one other—or something or a couple others—where we went, “Hey, you know what?” And there were a couple, like, failed pieces that I had done for other clients, where they went, “No, I want to do something else.” And I kept it in the boneyard.

AW:

Oh yeah, sure. Which is why we keep journals.

SF:

Uh-hm. That’s right.

AF:

Exactly.

AW:

There’s no such thing as a failed piece. There’s just one you didn’t use.

SF:

That is exactly right. Now all that stuff sits in my stupid phone. You know what I mean?

AW:

Take care of that phone.

SF:

Well, I back that crap up. So I don’t know—I don’t think that we knew this was not about pop songs.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

So we just didn’t care about that at all.

AF:

We haven’t really cared enough about that in our whole life, actually. [Laughter]

SF:

Look at our house. That's for sure. [laughter] But it was—everything that we did was one hundred percent in service of the film. That's what we wanted. We wanted not to serve—we didn't want the film to serve the music, we wanted the music to serve the film. And keeping in mind that we wanted to open the film to an audience. We wanted to bring people into it. I think. So, you want to hear song examples?

AW:

Sure.

SF:

So we'll—I'm going to give you kind of just an overview, okay, of some stuff.

AW:

I'm going to watch the recording, though, that's here, so.

SF:

Yeah, please do. And film will be up on the TV. We started just with—now this is a piece that Amy composed [music begins] just for the opening titles. And since we're dealing with a film from 1927 we wanted it to feel—we had to limit our palette because of the number of instruments. Basically the number of people we could hire, you know. Which ended up being pretty large. There were twenty four people. But we couldn't have four violinists. We had one. So it had to be a small ensemble thing. But we wanted a piece that felt kind of grand.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

To open it.

AF:

And traditionally, kind of classically. A prelude.

SF:

To feel like a classical prelude like you would have experienced historically. I found the trumpet.

AF:

I think I called this the “Bustling Metropolis Theme.”

SF:

“The Bustling Metropolis Theme.”

AF:

Oh I forgot about that part.

SF:

And there's so long before the film actually starts. [Laughter]

AW:

Right, because I'm watching—I'm saying for the recorder—I'm watching different screens come up with the explanation for the film and its rediscovery and the missing pieces and all that.

AF:

Right.

AW:

So that's what the audience would be watching, so that they are cultured to the—

SF:

To what we're about to see.

AF:

Yeah, right.

AW:

So instead of a program, they had—

SF:

That's correct.

AW:

--it appearing.

SF:

We did have a program and a very funny thing happened it the program.

AF:

That was funny.



SF:

They misspelled “composers.” [Laughter]

AF:

“Composters.” [Laughter]

AW:

Well, that’s—for me that is appropriate.

SF:

So we did look at him and go, “I hope we’re not writing shit.” [Laughter] It is what it is.

AW:

So the instrumentation, like, the strings are live strings and not synths?

SF:

Live strings. There is a synth string reinforcing this. The trumpet was live. The strings were all life. The piano was life, the percussion was live. This was—it was a live event. I mean, we had the players there, you know what I mean? One of the other things that was a huge influence on me as a musician growing up is the band Pink Floyd. And so we’re looking at a music about a dystopian society, you kind of do look to the wall, obviously. And so one of the pieces—which you’re going to see in a second—I entitled “Welcome to the Machine.” An obvious homage to Pink Floyd. But also fits with what’s going on.

AF:

I wanted that to sound like the traditional movie—you know—the movie coming—

SF:

Big, grand.

AW:

So now for the recording, we have the opening screen from *Metropolis*. [Shift to rock music]

SF:

[Long pause] And I just love all the mechanics of this.

AW:

You know, can we pause this just a second? [Music pauses]

SF:

We sure can.

AW:

I am going to recommend a poetry book to you called *Machinery*.

SF:

Ooh.

AW:

And it's by a poet—I thought it was a joke when I first—I found the book at a used store. It's a beautiful art deco book. Black.

SF:

Yeah.

AW:

*Machinery*.

AW:

The author is MacKnight Black.

AF:

Nice.

AW:

And I thought, This is a setup. So I looked him up and he died young. He was a poet. At some little college back east there is a MacKnight Black Chair of Poetry. But it's very art deco and when I was watching that I went, "That's MacKnight Black's poem."

SF:

Oh my gosh. We will absolutely check that out.

AW:

If you can't find one, I think it's called *Machinery*—MacKnight Black—there won't be much. If you can find one it will be cheap. If you can't find one I'll loan you my copy.

SF:

Oh, I love it.

AW:

But you would just enjoy it.

SF:

Yeah, I love it.

AW:

Okay. Back to this. I love this music.

SF:

Okay, so [music plays again] you know, this was one of those things—one of the themes. The nature of machines is to do a repetitive thing, and in this film the dystopian society you have an upper echelon of people who live in utopia, and you have the people who live subterranean—underground—managing the machines so that these people can live in utopia. And these people work ten hour shifts with no breaks, continual manual labor, making sure these machines keep working. This was one of the first things we discovered. If you'll look, the people on the left are coming out of the machine.

AW:

Yeah.

SF:

They're on a quarter note, and the people going into the machine who are fresh—

AW:

Are an eighth note.

SF:

Eighth note.

AW:

Yeah, and you can see it.

AF:

Uh-huh.

SF:

And so one of the things that we found out is that the original composer was on set during the filming with the piano.

AW:

To let them walk?

SF:

And gave them rhythm.

AF:

Yeah, so they had the tempo.

SF:

So in almost—

AF:

So we can dial into it.

SF:

In almost every scene you can discover—you can tap it out—and then all of the sudden people will be moving and it's in time with what you're playing.

AF:

So cool.

SF:

And that just blew our minds, because that moment—when you see that—what a great imagine. And the thing about German expressionism that they were trying to do is not—they were trying to use stuff outside of reality to show a deeper reality. So instead of everybody walking at their own pace you have these two sets and they're communicating something to you. We would just look at that and go, "Wow, they spent a long time walking." No, this meant something back then. And so we wanted to exemplify that. On this, they're going down into the subterranean and so we just—I mean, I don't have the sub on right now—but we wanted to just shake the seats as you [growling noise]. And then the next theme was what we call the "Worker's Theme" and it's an acoustic guitar theme that I wrote. So we wanted the machines to be represented by electric instruments. By—

AW:

And the people by acoustic?

SF:

Yes.

AW:  
Cool.

SF:  
So Maria is piano. The workers are acoustic guitar.

AW:  
Those of us who play guitar would agree with that, yeah. [Guitar starts]

SF:  
Yes. [Song playing] So that's like one of the introductions for one of the first themes that we hit. That acoustic guitar theme is going to wind throughout and grow in variations on the theme and all of that. Probably the next theme—

AF:  
And when do you need to be out?

SF:  
Yeah?

AW:  
I'm good. What time is it?

AF:  
Okay, it's four. Is that right?

SF:  
Yeah.

AW:  
Yeah, I was thinking, you know, five or six?

SF:  
Yeah.

AF:  
Great.

SF:  
That's great by us too. That's perfect.

AW:

We've all—and we don't want to kill ourselves because we're going to this again, but we do want to think about—so as we're going through this, you tell me when we hit a spot. Go, "Oh this is a good place to—"

SF:

To pause?

AW:

"—to pause." And so we know where to take up next time.

SF:

So where we can pick it up? Okay, that's great. And so we go through—as we looked at this, we wanted to represent a lot of different styles.

AW:

So real quickly, how many—have we heard three pieces or four?

SF:

We've now heard three pieces.

AW:

Because the [low humming]—

SF:

The low wave—I mean—

AW:

You didn't count that as a theme?

SF:

We didn't really count that as a piece.

AW:

I was adding that in. Okay.

AF:

I think we did call it "Shift Change."

SF:

We called it something—no, no, “Shift Change” is when they’re walking. We called it “Deep Below”.

AF:

“Deep Below.” We called it “Deep Below”.

SF:

And if you’ll notice on our sheet over here, you can see—

AW:

I see “Deep Below”.

SF:

Here’s the “Prelude” 0:00 to 3:12, “Welcome to the Machine” 3:12 to 4:16, “Shift Change”—so I mean, we literally had to time this out to the second. And when we’re performing it we all have click tracks in our ears, because you have to see that time and you can’t get it by watching the film because it’s behind you.

AW:

Right.

SF:

So we kind of had to organize it that way. So I guess we did kind of call that “Deep Below”, but all that is is—

AF:

A low wave.

SF:

--a steady cascade of low notes that just goes—you know what I mean. We don’t really consider it a piece.

AW:

But in your defense it’s something you had to do and it had to fit what’s going on.

AF:

That’s exactly right.



SF:

You're right. We did have to write something that went there.

AW:

It's a piece to me.

AF:

It is a piece. [crosstalk] It's a piece.

SF:

Yeah, and that's the sound side. I am sound-oriented. Amy is, truthfully, more musical, more music oriented than I am. No, it's—

AF:

It's just different things. They complement each other and work together well.

SF:

Its different things. Yeah. And the work couldn't have happened if we didn't have both of those things.

AW:

Oh yeah, there's no collaboration between two people doing the same thing. That's just an argument. [laughter]

SF:

You're right.

AW:

You have to be doing different things.

AF:

Correct.

SF:

And that's one of the things—like when I used to teach guitar and when I taught at South Plains College. I always talked about how fortunate I am to be married to Amy, because not only do I love her just as a person—I think she's beautiful and all those things—but she is actually a more capable musician than I am. But we both bring real stuff to the table. It's not like, "Oh she's brilliant and I play tambourine in the back." Or, "I'm really good but—"

AF:

It's not like Paul McCartney's wife is.

SF:

Yeah, "I play really good, and she's Linda over there with a tambourine." [Laughter]

AW:

Or who's that girl that John Prine was married to for a while that played that.

AF:

I've always tried to not be seen as that.

AW:

No, those of us on the outside never saw the two of you that way. We always saw you as having different things to add.

AF:

Okay.

SF:

Well, and that's the point. And that's a very rare thing.

AW:

It is a rare thing.

SF:

We're aware of how rare that is. And so there's a strength that that brings, we feel, to projects that we're a part of. So this is a piece called "Garden Chase", and this is the first introduction to Freder. And I can't remember, there may even be a click track in the middle of this one. I can't remember. But Freder comes in—

AF:

Oh yeah, because Freder just won the race. The footrace of the young men of the town.

SF:

Yes. The hero of the utopia. And here he is. There is a man who is going to be putting makeup and preparing all the little—

AF:

He's the pimp.

SF:

The pimp is preparing the women—

AW:

The prize.

SF:

The prizes that Freder gets to choose from. And so we wanted this one [music plays].

AW:

Yeah.

SF:

Which is silly. Well the piece is—I mean if you don't think that's silly. So we did want to involve humor in this, you know.

AF:

Oh I did the little "Freder, Freder" in the—did you hear that?

SF:

Yeah in the music. "Freder, Freder!"

AF:

Yeah, exactly. And the trumpet.

SF:

And that's from the live, so it's not great.

AF:

I was going to say, we've got to edit this.

SF:

Yeah. We've got to fix some trumpet issues in there. And then there was another little piece right in here, I can't remember what it is—

AF:

"Eternal Gardens".

SF:

Yeah, it's off right now. But then this is going to be probably the most important theme in the piece. So there would be some additional music right there and then this.

AF:

On a ragtime piano.

SF:

Yeah, it's a ragtime piece. And then this is "Maria's Theme." Which, obviously—

AW:

Yeah, so now Freder looks up and, "Ah."

SF:

"Oh, I don't want this little trollop anymore."

AW:

Ah the birds. This is just amazing. The birds, the peacocks and egret and the heron and whatever else that was.

SF:

At the time—in here also you can see where new and old scenes get spliced together. There's one of the old ones from the sixteen millimeter safety copy for a second. And now acoustic guitar. These are the children of the workers, so we wanted to weave—it's kind of the beginning of that, if that makes sense.

AF:

I call this the "Fluttery Love Theme".

SF:

"Fluttery Love Theme?"

AW:

"Fluttery Love Theme."

AF:

Where it's going—it's undulating between two chords. That's what I call it. [Music cuts out]

SF:

Oh, come on Pro Tools. Don't crap out on us.

AW:

“Slow Tools,” as we call it.

SF:

Yeah, is that not the truth? [slow music fades and faster music comes in] Oh, “Master of Ceremonies”.

AF:

This the pimp guy is back. The pimp is trying to boss him around. [Music cuts]

SF:

Yeah, my video froze. Hang on just a second.

AW:

That’s all right. So, you know, it makes sense—I think obvious sense—for what you’re writing when we see the art deco drawing design at the beginning of the film and all those things. But I was looking at the very still stylistic makeup, hair, all that sort of thing. How did that impact, if any, what you were writing?

SF:

Massively. I think—first off, Amy and I both love the art deco time period. I mean, what a brilliantly designed time.

AW:

It’s still alive.

SF:

It is!

AF:

And it was such a time of rebellion.

AW:

Yeah. And it’s still—but the art, the poetry, it’s all still fresh.

AF:

Absolutely.

SF:

One of the pieces, which we’ll get to later, from 1927 that Amy wanted to include was—

AF:

I think it was released in '21. "Ain't We Got Fun?"

SF:

"Ain't We Got Fun?"

AW:

Oh yeah.

SF:

Which "Ain't We Got Fun?" was a rebellion song.

AW:

Sure.

SF:

It was against all the social norms. It was, "Let's go out and get lit and laid." [Laughter]

AW:

"Fife foot two, eyes of blue, turn the nose, turn down hose."

SF:

Uh-huh.

AW:

"Turn down hose," that was like, "I'm not wearing underwear." Or something.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Right. Yes, that's right.

AW:

I mean, it was incredibly rebellious.

AF:

Very, like, sexual freedom and liberation starting and all that. Flappers.

SF:

Absolutely. And especially in Germany in the late twenties—in the twenties. Because Germany was a much more open society than the United States was.

AW:

Oh yeah. Well I mean the modern great film *Cabaret*.

SF:

Absolutely.

AW:

Which tends—deals with that and the demise of that under the Third Reich.

SF:

That's right. That's right. Yeah. Absolutely.

AW:

Does that all sound familiar to us now?

AF:

Right.

SF:

Terrifyingly so. You know, what's old is new again. And unfortunately, if we don't learn from history we're doomed to repeat it. Except this time it's us, and that scares the crap out of me.

AW:

Well, we have a comeuppance. "Those Germans, how could they do that?" Well, hmm, maybe we could it too.

SF:

And absolutely. I'm afraid we're seeing it.

AW:

So talk a little bit about—so we're looking at this frozen image. Bless her heart, Maria looks a little like Gene Wilder. [Laughter]

SF:

She does, doesn't she? That's so good!



AW:

In this frame. So she would have been ravishing and we look at it and go, "This is very quaint. This is like my grandmother." I have a picture of my grandmother like that.

AF:

It's true.

AW:

So how do you go from that to—how does that impact your composition and your performance for this piece? I mean this is an old idea that you have to get into and then bring forward.

SF:

Well part of that is there's a transformation of Maria in the story. She—Maria is actually—she's kind of an angelic figure. She is Mary, basically.

AF:

She preaches to the workers--

SF:

She preaches in the underground.

AF:

--In the catacombs.

SF:

That someday a savior is going to come.

AW:

She is a very 1890s populist.

SF:

Yes, very much so.

AF:

That's right.

SF:

And so she is—she's preaching in the catacombs, and Freder later on witnesses this and realizes that he's the one.

AF:

He's the Christ figure.

SF:

And he is the Christ figure. He's the one who's going to bring the head and the hands together. Because his father is the one who built—

AF:

Is the head.

SF:

Metropolis. His father is the head of all of it. And she represents the workers. So them coming together, you know, is going to change the world.

AF:

She looks so—to me she looks really young and she's really not concerned about fashion yet, you know what I mean?

AW:

No, no, no, she's very wide-eyed and very fresh.

AF:

And I wanted the theme to be so simple, and just pure and hopeful. Kind of idealistic and sweet.

SF:

Yes. Yeah. And later on she is captured by an evil scientist named Rotwang, and he takes her essence and he has built a robot, and transfers her image onto the robot.

AF:

Right.

SF:

And this robot is very sensual.

AF:

She's dancing naked at the club.

SF:

Club, and inciting men into lust.

AW:

The robot?

SF:

Yes.

AF:

Yes. That looks just like Maria.

SF:

And they riot and shoot each other and—

AF:

Right.

SF:

--all hell breaks loose.

AF:

Men revolt.

SF:

Because of this wild wanton woman. [laughter]

AW:

Salome and *The Seven Veils*.

AF:

Yes.

SF:

That's exactly right. And there's even a moment where they show—they show an old scene out of the bible that is Babylon, on top of the seven deadly sins reigning supreme kind of thing. And so Maria plays both of these roles. And it is—she is an angelic figure in this beginning.

AF:

And she was young.

SF:

Yeah, she was.

AF:

Gosh, she was in her teens, I think, when this happened. She was young and untried.

SF:

I think she was, like, seventeen to nineteen. Somewhere in that range. And it is humorous, even when they get to the scene where she's in the nightclub. Because we're watching it going, "Wow, there's worse than that on primetime now!" [Laughs]

AF:

"This is not sexy."

SF:

But it's an interesting—there's always that juxtaposition. So "Maria's Theme" mutates over the course of the film. Is that when evil Maria is out. There's a version of that.

AW:

Is it based melodically on the angelic theme?

AF:

Uh-hm. Often.

AW:

Okay.

SF:

Yeah. Absolutely. But twisted, eventually. You know what I mean?

AW:

This is a statement about—

AF:

Can you show him "Bad Maria"?

SF:

I don't know if I have "Bad Maria" up. Let's see if I do. This is one of the ones I didn't get to.

AF:

She's seducing Freder's dad as the robot.

AW:

The bad Maria is, isn't it?

SF:

This one is going to have a click in the middle of it. So this one still has a click with it.

AF:

Okay, it's fine.

SF:

Let me—actually, you know what—

AF:

And you play “Maria’s Theme” on electric—is it slide?

SF:

I play “Maria’s Theme” on slide guitar. So let me see if I can find those. Oh there they are. There are close to two hundred tracks. And so I can't—

AW:

That's a management nightmare right there.

SF:

I literally can't turn them all on simultaneously. I just—there's no way. And to get it to play I actually have to turn stuff off. So I haven't quite figured out how I'm going to mix it all just yet. Where is—ah ha.

AW:

Well, just like we did in the old days. One piece at a time.

SF:

That's right.

AF:

Pretty much.

SF:

See if we've got the—

AF:

It's in Dropbox too.

SF:

I think the drums—let's see if the drums are out. [piano plays] [piano stops] So we start over here for "Bad Maria". And this is where—they're basically telling Freder, "Oh my gosh."

AW:

Oh, so there's Bad Maria? [Laughter]

SF:

And look at those eyes. [cuts out] Oh, come on Pro Tools.

AW:

You know, this is actually some good acting on her part.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

It is.

SF:

Well, for 1927.

AW:

Well, and having no dialogue to do it with. She can't say, "Come on, big boy."

SF:

That's right.

AF:

Exactly. She has to do all the "come hither" looks and the hip shaking.

SF:

Yeah. See if it will restarts. Sorry. [Music plays]

AF:

So you're guitar.

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SF:

So that's "Maria's Theme" on the electric guitar. [Laughter] Pretty hot, huh?

AW:

You want to talk about how long it takes to wink. A wink takes about five seconds.

AF:

Exactly.

SF:

And there's his father. He doesn't know that's not Maria.

AW:

Oh he thinks it's—

AF:

His love.

SF:

Who is in his father's arms. And so—for 1927, [music cuts] that's some pretty serious special effects. Yeah, we're having trouble getting Pro Tools to—so, for whatever it's worth, that's that theme.

AW:

No, well this is enough—for what we're doing right now, this is a great—

SF:

Yeah, so get the idea of what's going on. Oh, Pro Tools is such a pain in the rear.

AF:

I know, I love this little psychedelic part where he falls into a stupor.

SF:

Great moment here.

AW:

Oh I thought it was pretty psychedelic already.



SF:

Yeah, it gets even more. But that was one of the things about this film, too, is that a lot of the film techniques that we still use today were invented on this film. Forced perspective was invented by Fritz Lang.

AW:

Really?

SF:

Yeah, on this film.

AW:

Was Lang a follower of Marx?

SF:

I don't believe so. There's a lot—

AF:

I don't either.

SF:

There's a lot of—"mystery" is the wrong word—

AF:

Speculation?

SF:

There's a lot of speculation and legend.

AW:

About Lang?

SF:

Yeah, about Lang. Because when Hitler rose—the way the history books tell it—Lang was mortified because Hitler loved the film, and felt that he, Hitler, was Freder.

AW:

Hitler thought he was Freder?

SF:

Thought he was the hero. He's the savior of Germany. And actually—was it Goebbels that—is that how you say the name?

AW:

Ger-bles.

SF:

Goebbels came to him—

AW:

And you can say it [quickly and quietly] Goebbels.

SF:

Yes, and asked him to be the head of Nazi film propaganda. And the legend is that he left for Paris that night. We don't know if that's true. There's some thought that that is true, there's some thought that it's not true. Because Fritz was very good at retelling his own history to serve—he came to America. He did eventually—he did leave Germany sometime during that time. And he ended up in America and became a very famous filmmaker here.

AW:

Right. Well, you know the thing about those time periods is like the other question about Heidegger. Was he a Nazi or not? Well, if you survived you're going to get blamed for being that, whether you are or aren't.

SF:

And often, if you survived you were complicit in some form or fashion.

AW:

Well, the fact that you survived is some complicity.

AF:

Yeah, right.

SF:

Exactly. It means you didn't stand up.

AW:

Right. That's what I mean. To some degree.

SF:

And so he fled and—

AW:

Well, this is such a classic theme though. The workers, you know—

AF:

It really is.

SF:

But his wife, Thea von Harbou, who was the screenwriter on the film—they collaborated—loved Hitler, and became a propaganda filmmaker under Hitler.

AW:

Really?

SF:

So they divorced. Because he—

AF:

Of course, there's probably more to it than that. I know Lang got around.

SF:

Oh yeah, he was sleeping around on her. It was—you know what I mean—it was not a. Neither one of them were probably that—you know.

AF:

There was even suspicion he killed his first wife.

SF:

Yeah. Absolutely. And so there's all kinds of—

AW:

Pretty heavy.

SF:

There's all kinds of mess back there. But he did not make propaganda films. We do know that. He did not, for Hitler. He did leave. At some time he fled and he ended up in America. And his wife stayed and made films for Hitler. And we all know how that turned out. And so what a terrifying thing if those legends are true. To have your work that you felt you were saying

something about society. And the very thing that you were speaking against believes that it is the hero of the film, not the protagonist.

AF:

Wow. So timely.

AW:

I know that this happens to the two of you, because it happens to me. Is that someone comes up and they just love your stuff, and they tell you how much they love your stuff. And you're flattered and you're feeling kind of spiffy. And then they say, "Don't you love my other favorite, Garth Brooks?" [Laughter]

SF:

Yeah, something that you just don't care about at all.

AW:

Or that's certainly not you. And you think, "How does this happen?"

SF:

"How did they connect that?"

AW:

"Am I like—" whatever. So yeah. This is a whole lot more significant thing.

SF:

Yeah, the fate of the planet, you know.

AW:

Did you know all this about Lang before you wrote this piece?

AF:

Not a lot of it.

SF:

Discovered as we were writing it. We started buying books and reading voraciously about the history of the film, because we felt that if we were going to tackle this work we needed to know everything we possibly could about the people who were involved, how it was made.

AW:

Did it inform your work as you were going along?

SF:

Absolutely. I think it did.

AF:

Somewhat. I kind of tried not to read a whole lot about the history until after I was done with the work. I kind of wanted to be really not informed by a lot of stuff, other than what came out.

AW:

Yeah, just react to the image.

SF:

I think the area where I probably looked the most was at the core of what German expressionism meant.

AF:

That's true. Yes.

SF:

And what it was. And that idea of trying to communicate emotion using imagery that we don't have. For instance, like if you look at *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, one of the other films that I mentioned early, the thing that's so amazing about it is when they're walking through the town all the buildings—the sets that they built—the buildings curve over you and they're meant to make you feel oppressed and feel like things are closing in on you. And the street pole and the way the shadow goes up the wall looks like—is a foreshadowing of the—and stuff. And so to me, I mean, it's almost more painterly than film. I know that seems kind of weird. Maybe a weird connection to me. But that's what it came from.

AW:

You know, what was going on in the art world—what had just gone on in the art world. The whole idea of the cubists and taking things and working and putting them back together in a different way. That is a quite—you see parallels in all kinds of things.

SF:

Yes. That deconstruction and everything else. And minimalism coming into play. All of those things of stripping things of detail but yet finding maybe the purist image that communicates this. As opposed to this detailed—

AW:

That sounds like a description of a way you would write a piece for this.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

And I think there's a lot of that in what Amy and I do that. If you really look at the work as a whole, I wouldn't call it a minimalist work at all. But one of the things that Amy and I do is when we're writing we try not to throw crap at it. We go, "What does it need?" And that's it. Don't—

AF:

Yeah. Unless, I mean sometimes we add stuff just—I think there's a lot of humor in the music that we wrote for it, actually, too.

SF:

There is.

AF:

I mean, it's comical sometimes. It just flat-out is.

SF:

Well, when she's looking all campy. That's funny. That's why I did that swampy [mimics "Bad Maria"].

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

Right.

SF:

You know, I mean that's what—

AW:

Yeah, I mean she's to the point that even Dad should have gone, "Oh, I don't know. This is looks hokey."

SF:

Exactly. And so yeah. I think we wanted those things in there. What I'm talking about though is mainly we're not just going to throw new instruments at it just so we can have a new instrument in it. If the piece doesn't need guitar, there's no guitar. It doesn't need it.

AF:

Yeah, it really was a pretty stripped down approach, because we also had a limited palette. We couldn't afford a whole orchestra. It was more of a chamber music feel, I think.

AW:

So there's this great book. Well, it's not a great book, but it has a great idea. It's called *The Tower and the Bridge*. It's—a fellow who was a professor of Andrew Vernooy, who was our Dean of Architecture for many years. Great and interesting guy. The book is the study of the history of going from wooden bridges to stone bridges to metal. And then going from wooden buildings to stone buildings to concrete to the metal core with the glass. But one of the unexpected conclusions that he made was that the most efficient structures—both bridge and tower—were those that were—and efficient meant how much weight will it bear? How much stress will it take? Like wind blowing. The most efficient of these, as measured by an engineer, were the most economical and they were the most aesthetic. Now isn't that interesting?

AF:

That is.

SF:

That's fascinating.

AW:

Isn't that interesting?

SF:

Yes.

AW:

What a great conclusion, you know. So when you're talking about, "It only needed this much, why put in extra?" That holds true for—you've heard Jack White talk about his staple experience. You only need three staples—

SF:

Right!



AW:

To put the fabric on the back of the couch. So when I heard that—or heard him say that—I went, “Oh, what if he read the—“

SF:

This book.

AW:

Probably not, but.

SF:

There was quote similar to that. I can't remember who it was and I'm going to mess it up, but where they were talking about design solutions and they were talking about efficiency and everything else. And the last line of it was, “If in the end if it's not beautiful, it's still wrong.” There's something true about that.

AW:

I'm participating as part of a team to do some public art for what may turn out to be an eight hundred million dollar building in Fort Worth.

AF:

Whoa!

SF:

Wow!

AW:

Now I'm not going to make—

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Right.

SF:

I mean, six bucks is six bucks, Andy.

AW:

That's right. And it still doesn't buy a hamburger. [Laughter]

SF:

Exactly.

AW:

But the—that's when I was at dinner a couple weeks ago. I was meeting with the artist that is looking to do these sixty-five foot long, twelve foot tall murals on four sides of the exterior of this thing. But his—so he's giving myself and two other guys who are as the team—he's giving us the notes from their meeting with the architects and the lead architect said at the very end, and it just really struck me—and it struck the artist also—the architect says, “Whatever you do, above all else it has to be beautiful.” And I thought, Oh that's great. Just what he said.

SF:

Yes. Yes. Absolutely.

AW:

So the music, even when it's campy and funny, still has to be beautiful.

SF:

Well the melody is still true. And so yeah. I think that that was—Amy and I have a very different aesthetic from a lot of musicians that we know, in that we're informed a lot by visual art. We're both informed, somewhat, by classical. Her especially. But even me with David Brandon and having done that. Amy much more than I, being a more legitimate composer.

AF:

And we read. We read a lot.

SF:

Voraciously. Both of us.

AF:

And I write poetry. So I mean, we love words too.

SF:

Yeah, so it's not just that we went, “Oh I love the blues so I'm going to be a blues guitar player.” You know what I mean? That's so far from who Amy and I are.

AF:

Something about beautiful, though. I don't—and I tell my students this all the time because it's usually a new concept for children—something doesn't have to be pretty or consonant to be beautiful.

AW:

That's right.

AF:

Because, I mean, for one thing that's just not realistic. And there have to be sounds out there for us to express anger and they don't have to be pleasing to the ear, you know? And in fact, sometimes I like them better when they're not.

SF:

Dissonance.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

I think dissonance is gorgeous. If there's no—

AF:

I think you need some.

SF:

If there's no suspension, you can't resolve anything.

AW:

Yeah. Without the spaces in between the notes there wouldn't be any point in the notes.

SF:

That's right. And so we're not afraid to make it hideous if that's what it needs to be. And I find that beautiful.

AF:

Sometimes it's just the right thing.

SF:

Here's the [music starts] psychedelic moment.

AW:

Oh yeah. Oh and he lands—oh look at those lamps.

AF:  
He's collapsed.

SF:  
In the sickbed. Yeah, you know.

AW:  
Look at those lamps. Wouldn't you die to have those lamps?

AF:  
I know.

SF:  
And so you didn't see filmmaking like that until the sixties, man.

AW:  
Right.

SF:  
That didn't go down again. Nobody did that. That's amazing.

AW:  
I wonder if the images were informed by—you're both too young to ever experience this—but when I was—when I got my tonsils out as a sick child they gave us ether. And you had these hallucinations that were geometric shapes, and they were colored. They were brightly colored.

SF:  
Oh how cool.

AF:  
Interesting.

AW:  
I just remembered—I was talking about that to somebody, and they said, "I had ether too and I had the same hallucinations."

AF:  
Really?

AW:

So it turns out that—

SF:

That that's a thing.

AW:

That's a thing.

SF:

Oh wow.

AW:

And I was looking at those and I'm wondering—I don't know if ether was used in the twenties, but I bet it was.

AF:

I bet you it was.

SF:

You can almost guarantee it.

AW:

It would have been a—but it would have been a hallucination with which the audience would have been familiar.

AF:

That's right.

SF:

Absolutely.

AF:

Interesting.

SF:

That's so cool.

AF:

That is cool.

SF:

And going into a medical stupor, because now the doctor is coming to see you. You know what I mean?

AW:

Yeah, with the big hypodermic—

SF:

Yes.

AW:

--to remind you that he's a doctor.

SF:

That's right. Once again, they have to communicate that.

AW:

Sure.

SF:

He's not wearing a lab coat, so [laughter]. One other place—let me see if I can find this one, because I think this is another good example of where “Maria's Theme” happens. Let's see. Fifty-six. In this particular piece [piano plays] the guy—of course we have Freder. The guy on the right—what is his name again?

AF:

Josaphat.

SF:

Josaphat. Josaphat used to be his dad's right hand man, and he gets fired because Freder discovered the underworld. And so they strike up a friendship and they become part of the revolution. And this is the first time that they come back together. And so this is a meeting, in a way, of—they're talking about Maria, because now Maria is—there've been rumors that this whore—this woman is going whoring, okay, around and inciting people and all of this stuff. And Freder has just gotten back. He exchanged places with a guy in the catacombs working on the machines, and actually experienced it. And has now realized that he is the—

AW:

Right.

SF:  
--the one.

AW:  
The savior.

SF:  
The chosen one. Yes. So this is called "Reunited." [music plays] The "Worker's Theme" again, but it's major.

AW:  
Yeah.

SF:  
But there's still a wistful sadness to what's going on. And there's "Maria's Theme."

AF:  
Right, because he's adopted her muse now.

SF:  
Yes. [Long pause] Oh no, bad news!

AF:  
And it's the "Thin Man Theme".

SF:  
This is the Thin Man, and he is the enforcer. [Music stops] And Pro Tools, Blow Tools. And froze. [Music stops] Golly, man. I'm so sorry. This pain in the—

AW:  
That's all right.

AF:  
It's supposed to sound really angular and spare, gaunt, and clacky.

SF:  
Partly informed by the way the guy looks.

AF:  
Yeah.



SF:

You know, you're talking about the—

AF:

The Thin Man.

SF:

--the hat and this very sharp nose.

AF:

Looks like a Blue Meanie.

SF:

He does. He looks like a Blue Meanie, yes. From the Beatles, there. [Music starts] Didn't restart the video, but—And then it goes on into another section. But you can see where the themes meld.

AW:

Yeah. Yeah.

SF:

And become one as it goes in. A couple of other things I thought that Amy did that I thought were really cool. One of them is at fifty—or let's see—it's at seventy-three. Fifty-five. This particular piece is called "What is Your Price?" and in parenthesis "(Have a Cigar)." Which is an homage to Pink Floyd, obviously. [Music starts and stops] Let's see if I can get this stupid video to show up again.

AF:

Because that's where the "(Have a Cigar)" comes from.

SF:

I have forty-eight gig of RAM and it's still doing this to me. It's got two hundred tracks that it's trying to keep track of.

AW:

Damn.

SF:

So I'm going to have to separate those out.

AW:

Yeah. [Piano starts]

AF:

He's so funny looking.

SF:

Yeah. And the Thin Man is—

AW:

He looks like a cartoon character.

AF:

The Blue Meanies.

SF:

The Blue Meanie from—yeah. And so he's talking to Josaphat.

AW:

And he looks like the grandpa on *The Munsters*, right?

SF:

Yeah. And so he knows Josaphat, because he used to be the right hand man, and he's employed by the father. And so he has come to try to sell out. "No, I don't know anything."

AF:

This theme right here is called the "Impending Doom Theme." That happens a lot.

SF:

That descending line.

AF:

Right. Descending, dramatic cords. Here it is. [Laughter]

SF:

And it shows in the cigarettes with the note that was earlier in the film. So he goes, "I know what you're up to." And of course "Have a Cigar" from Pink Floyd in that moment.

AF:

And then the little "Impending Doom Theme".

SF:

“Doom” again.

AW:

That guy doesn’t have a normal head.

AF:

Correct.

SF:

No he does not.

AF:

Yes.

AW:

His eyes are way too high up.

AF:

Isn’t it weird?

SF:

Yep.

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

And that’s the “Business As Usual Theme” right there, which is the dad’s business theme.

SF:

And “Business As Usual” is another theme that we should look at too, because it’s really cool.

And I know we’re probably getting—I don’t know where we are on time.

AW:

Oh no, we’re doing good.

SF:

Let’s see if I can find that one real quick.

AF:

Can I run to the bathroom?

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

I'm going to check with my dad.

SF:

Yeah, why don't you do that? That's great. "Business As Usual" is a moment in the film that I really love. They're showing kind of the [music starts]—this immense cityscape.

AW:

Yeah, the airplanes flying. Air taxis.

SF:

Yeah, and these were all sets. I mean, they built this. And these buildings were—that was all models. This was one of the pieces—look at him walk.

AW:

Perfectly timed.

SF:

Flawless. Even the tearing off of the piece of the paper is in time. So and he even wrote parts that time to what—you know. The light.

AW:

And the handwriting.

SF:

Yep.

AW:

So by the time you finished this were you tired of the film? [Laughter] You had to have watched this—

SF:

No, because we had to perform it live and we were terrified. Truth be told, we didn't know if we could pull it off.

AW:

I can see how that would be a question.

SF:

And I'll tell you the rest here in a second. There's a moment coming up. Freder comes in to tell his dad. Slows down the piece. I mean just the timing. It's uncanny. It actually—

AW:

So how, in the performance, did you match that timing? It's one thing to do it when you've got it recorded [music stops] but it's a whole other thing to do it—

SF:

This computer was there.

AW:

Uh-huh.

SF:

And—let's see, where is it? This is not the live file, this is the recording file. But right there there's the click tracks for the entire piece. And we took—we had video screens facing us on the entire stage. Not showing the movie, but showing whatever is coming up next. Okay, so if the next piece is "Business As Usual", while you're playing the piece before the screen says, "Business As Usual", eight clicks." That means [snapping in time] bam! And that's "Business As Usual".

AW:

Yeah, so you have eight clicks.

SF:

And it starts.

AW:

And it starts. Yeah.

SF:

And so we had an interesting thing, because we did a full—we got in the hall. We were supposed to get in the hall on Sunday. We were supposed to get all the gear—Guitar Center had promised us the world.

AW:

When you say “the hall”?

SF:

We were at LHUCA. In the Firehouse. And we had the hall from Sunday on. Guitar Center had promised us, I mean, like legit gear. Like they were going to take care of everything and we could have it on Sunday. And on Saturday they yanked the rug out from us a little bit and said, “Well, we can’t really give you all that good gear. We can only give you this.” And it was really substandard. “And you can’t have it until eleven a.m. on Monday.” And it was pretty crappy, to be honest with you. We were still really grateful for what they did as an in-kind donation—

AW:

Yeah, but.

AF:

Guitar Center?

SF:

Guitar Center. But they were—it was crappy. It was really crappy. I’m actually pretty pissed about it still to this—you know what I mean?

AW:

Sure.

SF:

The day before we’re supposed to move into the hall, so now they put us a day behind too. Because we can’t have the gear until 11:00 a.m. on Monday. We started the rehearsal with the classical players.

AW:

Had you been rehearsing any of this—

AF:

Yes.

AW:

--in sections beforehand?

SF:

We had.

AF:

We had the choir come in, do rehearsal. We had the strings a few times come in.

SF:

Yeah. And the amazing—

AF:

And the rock band. We did those pieces too.

SF:

Yeah we did those. And the amazing thing is the—especially the younger players—were in.

AF:

Oh yeah. Whatever it took.

SF:

They were like, “Can we come rehearse some extra?” You know what I mean? And we’re like, “We can only play you for six of these so we’ve only got six booked.” And they were like, “We don’t care.” And they were just—I mean it was amazing.

AF:

It was awesome.

SF:

It was really amazing.

AF:

The generosity of spirit and just the whole love that the musicians had? Incredible. It really was a cool experience.

SF:

It was phenomenal. It really was. And just all the way around.

AF:

Yeah. Whatever it took.

SF:

Yeah. Everybody came together like that. On the day of the show we didn’t get the gear until 11:00, so by the time we started rehearsal at 5:30—



AF:

On the day of the first rehearsal?

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

It wasn't ready. We were supposed to have had another day to get all that. So the headphone mixes were terrible. The clicks weren't working right. The film wasn't synching.

AF:

I think we had to send the classical people home.

SF:

We had to send—

AF:

Didn't we just send them home?

SF:

We eventually just sent them home, yeah. We tried to start with classical people because we know that the classical people are not used to the way rock and roll people work.

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

Played it by ear. Yeah.

SF:

Which is we work until the job is done, and that means if we have to sit there for thirty minutes while somebody else rehearses, we don't really care. That doesn't happen when you're hiring symphony players. You know what I mean? They kind of—they go, "It was an hour service." [Laughter] And they head for the door. And we didn't really have a lot of that, but we were mindful and didn't want to overstay our welcome there. But we had to send them home. I remember at one point—you know, we were in between scenes or something and I had stepped

behind the curtain so that I could be private and just go, “Holy crap. This is not going to work.”  
[Laughter] I mean—

AF:

Yeah, I mean it didn’t seem like it.

SF:

We thought it was going to blow apart.

AW:

So this is a Monday and the show—

SF:

Show is on Thursday. First show is on Thursday.

AW:

Oh Thursday?

AF:

No, Friday.

SF:

No, first show is Friday. We did Friday and Saturday.

AF:

Terrifying, because it’s so much material. Oh my goodness.

AW:

Oh yeah, this is an enormous amount of material.

SF:

And not—none of it is super challenging.

AF:

No.

SF:

It’s challenging to remember it all, and it’s challenging just to read it all. It’s not like any of it is so difficult to play, but it’s also not always that easy. To do it well. And especially at the level that we wanted to deliver it at.

AW:

Well, the simpler, the more naked. And the more naked, one little mistake is—

SF:

Noticeable.

AW:

Right.

SF:

When you have one violin, if the violin messes up, you hear it. If there's one acoustic guitar player—which is me—and I blow it, you know that I blew it.

AF:

Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

SF:

There is safety in numbers.

AF:

That's true.

SF:

And so we did not get the film synched until Thursday.

AW:

Wow.

AF:

Terrifying.

AW:

So how did you rehearse without the synched film?

SF:

We just ran through the music with the click tracks?

AW:

Yeah, well—

AF:

So everybody had their in-ears and yeah.

SF:

And we went through—

AW:

Did the classical players have click tracks?

SF:

Yep. They all had headphones on.

AF:

We didn't want a conductor to distract. We just wanted it to seem—it was kind of like you get on the train, hop on at the right moment, and you just ride.

AW:

But they're not used to that?

AF:

They're not. They did okay.

SF:

They did all right.

AW:

They're waiting for this, right?

SF:

That's right.

AF:

Yeah, and each score, though, would say how many clicks to wait for before the piece began.

SF:

Yeah, and I told them about the screens that we used and everything.

AF:

Exactly. Yep. And it said it on the score, so they knew. But it's hard. You have a lot to concentrate on.

AW:

Well, yeah, and you can't waiver in your concentration.

AF:

No, right.

SF:

No, that's true.

AF:

And if one person blows it, it's blown for everybody. Because that track is going to keep [snapping].

SF:

Yeah. And the film keeps going.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

And it's not one of those ones where you go, "Oh I just missed a little bit. I'll just come back in on the verse." It's like, "Wait a minute. Where am I?!" [Laughter] It's, like, stark terror.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

And so—um—on—

AF:

Thank God for Hannah's idea.

SF:

Which one?

AF:

The first night. To have the microphone where you could talk.

SF:

Oh yeah.

AF:

And say, "Restart the film."

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Because we had to the first night.

SF:

Yeah, one of our singers said, "You know, Scott, you really ought to have a mic on stage in case something goes wrong that no one else can hear, but it speaks to the crew." And I was like, "That is a great idea." So we added that the next morning. But on Thursday—

AW:

[inaudible]

SF:

--we finally made it through the second half of the piece. On Wednesday we made it through the first half. On Thursday we made it through the second half.

AF:

Didn't really get a run through of the whole thing at all.

SF:

Never did. Never did.

AF:

Until performance.

SF:

Until performance.

AW:

This sounds like real theatre.

SF:

Always happens.

AW:

Yeah, no. I've had—we can tell stories about that later. So how did Friday night go?

AF:

Surprisingly well. There was one mess up.

SF:

Yeah. One guy—there was a loop that plays, and it literally is a loop. You press one button and it plays it on the keyboard.

AF:

It's in my key—we both had—

SF:

It's in Amy's keyboard. And he was supposed to stop the loop.

AF:

And did not. At the end of a piece.

SF:

And he didn't. And it kept going and I had to stop everything. And I had to speak into the mic and go, "I need you to roll back." And I had a list of where we were. "Roll back to 56:47, and I need you to restart on my count. One, two, three, go."

AF:

That was the glitch. That was the one.

SF:

And we had one glitch, and it ended up—Rob Peaslee came up to me afterwards and he said, "You know, I didn't realize what you guys had just pulled off until that moment." Because he said, "Everything is happening. You're watching the band, you're watching the string players, you're watching the film, you're having a good time, and all of the sudden everything stopped and you kind of went, 'What's wrong?'" And he said, "All of the sudden I could hear a thing click." He could hear the headphone bleeding. [Snapping in time] And all of the sudden he said, "I went, 'Holy crap. How are they doing this?'"

AW:

Right.



SF:

That he suddenly—and he actually said, “I’m so glad that happened.”

AW:

Yeah, because now I know what was really going on. Yeah.

SF:

He’s like, “I can’t believe that you—“ You know? “—that you—“

AF:

It’s so scary.

SF:

Yeah, we were terrified. And I remember—

AF:

This is our first nightmare right now.

SF:

Yeah. I remember the last piece is called “Head, Hands, Heart.” And, so, the culmination of the film. And it’s a very triumphant piece that Amy and I wrote. It’s my favorite piece of music in the whole thing.

AF:

I cried last night listening to it.

SF:

I know. I know.

AF:

Now.

AW:

It’s good.

SF:

And it’s a really neat piece of music.

AW:

“No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader.” I think that’s Robert Frost.

AF:

I like that.

SF:

That's good. Yeah, absolutely.

AF:

That's right.

SF:

And so we're going along and just to be honest, you're holding on for dear life. I mean we didn't have time to think about it.

AF:

Yeah, we were exhausted.

SF:

I mean it was borderline heart attack crap. I'm not joking at all. I mean health was shot. Amy had to have surgery the next week. Didn't you have surgery the next week?

AF:

Yeah, I was looking forward to it. [Laughter] The sleep!

SF:

Yeah, being on anesthetic and being like on pain meds for a week.

AW:

"Oh thank God, I'm going under."

SF:

Yes!

AF:

Seriously, I was like, "This will be a relief."

SF:

And when we hit the last piece it didn't dawn on either one of us until that moment, and it was like—

AF:

“Wow.”

SF:

“We did it. Holy crap!”

AF:

It was such a moment of [gasp] just pure elation.

SF:

Yeah, I mean, like, chills right now.

AW:

So what was it like having to come back, though, for Saturday night? And think, “We’ve got to do it over again.”

AF:

It was exciting.

SF:

It was exciting.

AW:

Because you knew you could do it?

AF:

Well the crowd absolutely went crazy, and just the feedback we got, like, immediately was like, “Oh my goodness.” So this hasn’t just this thing I’ve written in my office by myself has a life now, and people like it! Because it was a total shot in the dark. I didn’t know how people would feel.

SF:

Well, people could have hated it.

AF:

Right.

AW:

Sure.

SF:

And it could have been crap. You always run the risk.

AF:

So we were kind of buoyed up by that. That people really seemed to respond. We were like, "Okay. I think we finally know what we're doing."

AW:

Yeah, since I'm full of quotes, Paul Milosevich says, "One of the greatest things about painting is you can fail." You know?

AF:

Um-hm.

AW:

"Greatest thing of art, you can fail."

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

That is absolutely correct. My problem is I don't think this has audio with it. Let me see if it does.

AW:

This is the piece that you like at the end?

SF:

No, this one doesn't have any audio with it. Dang it.

AF:

I have some in—there's some in Dropbox.

SF:

Of the audio? But not a video? This was the—unfortunately, you can't hear the music, but this is from a video that we put on the website. And so there's—this is the moment. We just literally had just finished and—

AW:

This is the first—

SF:

That was the first night, and the audience erupted. And seconds after that the whole place was on its feet and it was just—I wish I had the one with the audio, because literally—well that was for the background of the website.

AF:

I found it just the other day.

SF:

You found the video?

AF:

It's in Dropbox.

SF:

Oh it is?

AF:

I think.

SF:

With the audio on it?

AF:

I heard the—yeah.

SF:

Well, let's—yeah—let's look at it.

AW:

You know, one thing for the archive that would be nice is to burn a set of these that we could—

AF:

We could do the trailer.

SF:

We'd love to. Easily.

AW:

Just whatever you have.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

The one where people talk about. I found that the other day.

AW:

Yeah, anything connected to it. You can't have too many digital copies, because who knows?

SF:

Yeah, that's for damn sure.

AF:

Right. That's true.

SF:

Where was it, Amy? Do you remember what it's under?

AF:

It's okay.

SF:

"Video cues?" "Speaking?" I'm not seeing it.

AF:

It's okay. But yeah. That kind of helped us.

SF:

Yeah, we were buoyed by that.

AF:

Because we were like, "It is possible now. We know it's possible."

SF:

I wish I had that. I don't know where it is.

AF:

It's all right. I found it somewhere.

AW:

That's all right. We'll get a chance to hear that.

SF:

Yeah, but so that was—honest to God, Amy and I have been a part of a lot of different projects, and we kind of for some reason gravitate to these enormous things that are just well beyond what humans should attempt.

AW:

Yeah. Ten cents an hour things.

SF:

Yeah. Ten cents an hour things. And have been if not always artistically successful, at least somehow we found a way to make it political, if that makes sense.

AW:

Yeah. Oh no. I know.

SF:

And this one, I truthfully didn't know.

AF:

No.

SF:

This one scared me worse than anything I've ever done in my life, because honest to God when that rehearsal happened on Monday, I mean I went home in tears. Because I was like, "This is not going to happen."

AW:

Yeah, but you also know in theatre if you have a good rehearsal it's going to be a bad show.

SF:

There's truth.

AW:

And vice versa. You've got to get the bad stuff out. The hundred ugly frogs that have to be kissed before you can get the—



AF:

That's true.

SF:

To the prince.

AF:

And I mean part of the problem was, though, I think with the classical players I was especially afraid, because they often have this viewpoint of, "Well, these are rock and roll people. What they've written can't be that hard. I'll get in there and sight read it."

SF:

Which is actually what happened.

AF:

And I kept saying—and it did happen. And I knew it would. And I kept saying, "Look, there are some parts that are a little challenging. You may want to go over this. You need to probably look over it a few times."

SF:

And they didn't.

AF:

So it was just a matter of sheer not having had the practice that terrified me.

SF:

And that individual did not—there was one individual that felt that they were good enough to walk in and sight read it and they had a very difficult part. And it did not go well on their first run through. Or their second run through. [laughter] Or their tenth run through. So yeah. And I think there's a difference, you know—if you're playing in a rock band, you're certainly not in it to earn a living, so you just do whatever it takes.

AF:

Well, you're used to practicing.

SF:

Yeah. I mean we were used to rehearsing three nights a week and not getting paid for that crap, but we just did it.

AW:

In stage music, you have to remember it.

SF:

That's right.

AW:

You don't sight read it. You may have a chart when you're getting started, but—

AF:

Right.

SF:

But you have to perform.

AF:

In rock bands we always did. That's been weird to me. Getting used to always having to read for gigs now. You know what I mean?

SF:

And that is the primary difference.

AF:

We used to have everything memorized.

SF:

But how do you memorize this?

AF:

There'd be no way for this work.

AW:

Well, I mean—I have such a modest piece—the one I was telling you about. It's a play, but there are only ten songs. But they come at certain times and so there's no way—no matter how well you know the songs or the play—you have to have—

SF:

Notes.

AW:

--a stand and notes and charts. Otherwise you can't make it work. That's just—

AF:

Yeah. It's a matter of communication with everybody involved.

AW:

Well, and keeping things a little square so they don't sound square out front.

SF:

Yeah. Totally.

AW:

I understand that. And that's a different thing. What—and this is of course complete conjecture, so you can laugh at me when I ask, but—could you have done this without the classical training that you had?

AF:

Uhn-uh.

AW:

No?

AF:

No. It wouldn't have sounded the same. I mean I still looked up a lot of stuff in my orchestration book about, "Okay, what are the ranges of violin," and all that.

AW:

The oboe and that kind of stuff.

AF:

Right. What are the things I can do? What are the little effects I can do? What are—because I'd forgotten a lot of that. But I don't think so. It wouldn't have come out the same.

AW:

Yeah.

SF:

To me, it would have—I guess one of the things that I feel is that like if only Amy had done it and it was only classical, it would have felt a little like a one note.

AF:  
Yeah.

SF:  
And if only I—not that Amy doesn't do rock and roll, but you know. She does. Obviously. But if all it had been was me doing open tuning guitar and things [growling noises] dumb, loud, rock guitar. How boring is that? I get bored. You know what I mean? And so if she didn't have that training, we couldn't have done this. I couldn't have done this by myself.

AF:  
Well, I couldn't have either. I know nothing about technology.

SF:  
No, she's a technophobe.

AF:  
Oh I am.

SF:  
Completely. Like that's the one thing that I did bring to the table that she couldn't do, was I could figure out how to do all these clicks and get it to all the different people and give them what they need and figure out, "Oh we need to do this with these video screens and do this thing."

AF:  
And you could make loops.

SF:  
Yeah, I built loops.

AF:  
That happened over pieces. I could never build a loop. I don't know the first thing about how they even do that.

SF:  
The modern side of that. So there's—it's that strengths and weaknesses thing again.

AF:  
Yeah.

AW:

So what is next for the piece? I know you're still working on all these things? And I don't think we've even gotten to your book full of notes on—

AF:

Oh.

SF:

Not even at all.

AF:

No, it's okay. We don't need—I really made that as a starting point for myself, so that I could make sheets like I did for Scott. Like, “Maria's Theme” happens in this piece, this piece here, here, here, here.”

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

Yeah.

SF:

Yeah. Just to go back and—because like those themes—sometimes you're writing it and you don't even really realize.

AF:

Exactly.

SF:

Like, the bassline in the “Welcome to the Machine.” The [singing]. I mean, that's so dumb. I mean that's really simplistic, but it—

AF:

No, it needs to be just that.

SF:

But it showed up in some of the acoustic pieces that I was writing as the bassline for the acoustic piece, and I wasn't even necessarily aware. It was just the gut saying—and then I looked at later and went, “Oh.”

AF:

I love when you go back and discover all those things that happened that you didn't know where happening.

SF:

Yeah, and then you can say, "Yeah, I—" [laughter] "I thought that through."

AW:

Wait until you get as old as I am. I do those things and then a few minutes go by and I go back to it and go, "Wow, I didn't know I did that."

SF:

Yes.

AW:

Because you work through it and then you go back and there it is. And that's kind of handy to come around.

AF:

It's really cool.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

I think our next thing is actually—hopefully—

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

We're going to perform this—we're looking at February—for Comic Con?

SF:

With Lubbock-Con. Yeah. Your son was the one who put us in touch with them.

AF:

So I'm hoping that happens.

AW:

Yeah, I hope I'm going to be here for that, because I missed Thursday night. I was traveling and bummed out about that. I still—

SF:

Yeah. Make sure the way that works.

AW:

Yeah, be even more bummed out. Now I'm getting to see—get into the—But what about—of course there's a whole intellectual issue with film, but it just strikes me that this needs to be married to the video.

AF:

I agree.

SF:

It does. There's a difficulty, because the 2012 release—

AF:

Ten.

SF:

Or 2010 release—excuse me—*Metropolis* is public domain. It was made in 1927. Except this is similar to photography. So if you do a new print—

AW:

It's like an arrangement. In music.

SF:

So they have copyrighted the film again. In 2010. And at present there are no known instances of them allowing anyone to—like we've got stuff on YouTube. There's a long history of people doing this with *Metropolis*. We're certainly not the first people to come up with this idea. It's been done numerous, numerous times. We just wanted to do it to the best of our ability with the hopes that it might be the best one. [Laughs] We certainly wanted it to be better than the eighties one, if that makes sense. That's what we were shooting for, you know. There's no known instance that I can see of them allowing that to happen. When we perform it we do have to pay licensing to allow the film to be shown. They knew that we were doing it, okay? At the time we did this the film was so fresh that the answer was going to be a dead, "No." To let us release it with the film. My hope is that by 2019 nobody cares anymore.



AW:

Has anybody connected with the rights heard your piece?

AF:

No.

SF:

Not yet.

AF:

Like, I have this recurring dream—and you don't know about this—in my brain of us walking into the offices in New York of Kino Lorber and showing them what we've done and, you know—

SF:

That's the plan.

AW:

Yeah. Cool.

SF:

We'll probably get told no.

AF:

Sure.

SF:

And if we do we can always pare back and release it with the public domain version.

AF:

And we'll release the soundtrack regardless.

SF:

We'll release the soundtrack. And the plan for the soundtrack—what we hope to do—what we'd really like to do is actually release it on vinyl. Which means we'd have to pare back pieces. But then again, do we really need three minutes of [low growling] as the elevator goes down?

AW:

I don't know, pretty cool.

SF:

Yeah, but you know what I mean.

AF:

I'd love it where you could like start it with the film and it would just, like, play along with it. That'd be cool.

SF:

Yeah, and that's why—

AW:

Now that would be cool.

SF:

And that's why we thought—

AW:

And they would—

AF:

People would love that.

AW:

And they would—they couldn't stop you from that.

AF:

That's right. They could turn the volume down on the film and just watch it.

SF:

And that's what we kind of thought, is if they won't let us do we'll do it with the—

AW:

Gorilla film score.

SF:

--a digital download, much like Pink Floyd *Dark Side of the Moon* with—

AF:

Is it *Wizard of Oz*, they say?

SF:

*Wizard of Oz*. If you start it at the lion it's pretty uncanny what goes on. You know what I mean? That that could—there's a cult thing that could happen with that that could actually be kind of cool. So we do plan to ask them. And the plan is that by the time February happens that this is ready and released. That's the goal. That's one of the reasons I'm doing all this—coming back to this and putting it all together. I've got to get it into mixable shape.

AW:

Yeah.

SF:

We've got some—

AW:

So it'll actually run.

SF:

Yeah. I have to have one file that has everything, but then I might have to start parting it out, because I can't run it.

AW:

Well can you boil it down to—not an MP3, but something in a two-track format that takes up—

SF:

Less. Less.

AW:

Less space?

SF:

And what I do is we'll pull each of these eighty-nine pieces out as a separate piece, mix it, and then put it back in with the film. That's what we did learn on *Between Earth and Sky*. Because we wrote these pieces, but you can't—even at seventy minutes of music, which is what that was—the computer couldn't keep up.

AW:

Right.

SF:

By the time you have ninety eight tracks with all these different pianos and guitars and strings and vibraphones and just all this stuff all over the place, it just can't—I don't have the machine that can keep up with that. Especially then running a video that's—how huge? How many gigabytes is that? What I had to do is take each track and take a snippet of the movie, record it with that, turn the video off, mix it, import that into a master file with the movie, and then we ended up with these twelve tracks. Or whatever. That we could then go, "Yeah, this piece. This is how we crossfade into that one." And that became manageable. So we learned somewhat in the interim that I think is going to help. So that is going to be the approach. That's what I have to do.

AW:

So do you have your eyes and ears or hearts or head and hands—

SF:

Yeah.

AW:

--on another kind of piece? Another piece to do something similar?

SF:

Well we did the ballet last year.

AF:

Right. That was cool.

SF:

Ballet Lubbock. *Click*. And we still want to release that as well. So between—

AF:

We're going to start releasing as singles for that.

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

It's just too overwhelming otherwise. Just piece by piece. We've got one ready to go.

SF:

Yeah. Everything we do—this, we had hoped to have it ready for release at the event. Well that was a joke. And then we had hoped to have it done three months after that. Well, that was a joke.

And now it's five years later and we're still not done. But it's four albums' worth of material. And I'm not getting paid for that. I can't eat that.

AW:

This would be a hundred dollar record set if you did it on vinyl.

AF:

Really.

SF:

Well and something like this is—that's the kind of product that this is. This is a specialty.

AW:

Sure.

SF:

This is not meant—

AW:

Well, but that's all that'll sell today anyway, you know. I heard just a month ago that next year iTunes will no longer sell downloads.

AF:

Yeah, I heard that too.

SF:

Yeah. That sucks.

AW:

That's driving the nail in the coffin.

SF:

Yeah. How many musicians are going down on that one?

AW:

Well, what's left of the ones who hadn't already gone down?

SF:

That's exactly right. That's exactly right.

AW:

But performing it live is a whole different matter.

AF:

That's right.

SF:

Well, and it is the type of event that people want to take a piece of it home. And you could very easily release it on CD for less.

AF:

Sure.

SF:

And you could have a twenty-five dollar CD—double CD set—if you need to. Because you will have to pay double—it'll have to be a double CD. But then you could have the hundred dollar vinyl package that has the poster and the digital download of the movie version that you can start with the—

AF:

We want to tour it, too.

SF:

Yeah, that's the biggest thing.

AF:

The night of the gala—which I'm sorry about what happened with your video. I was very angry.

SF:

Oh gosh. That was awful.

AW:

Well that—

AF:

I was angry.

AW:

You know, fortunately—this is going to sound like the humble brag and I don't mean it to be that way—but I had enough chances to win a thing or two that I realized pretty early on that the awards are not about the person getting it, but about the people giving it.

AF:

Giver.

AW:

And so when you're there and getting your award and you look around and it's you and the janitor [laughter]. It's like, "Oh well."

SF:

Amy got the "Woman of Excellence" thing from YWCA, which was super, super cool and a super huge honor, so not to denigrate that all, but you do sort of feel a little like cannon fodder for the—

AW:

Well they run them through pretty—I was there this year—

AF:

The tickets are expensive.

SF:

Yeah. I mean, it's a money maker. That's what it really is and we know that.

AW:

Well the gala, I'll say this, nobody is going to listen to it for a while—I see I'm about to run out of battery anyway—so I get the award, you know, and it's nice to get something—especially in your hometown—so they say, "We're going to give you four tickets." I thought, Well, that's me plus four tickets. Well, no, it turns out I'm one of the four tickets. But I have two children and they have—

SF:

Spouses.

AF:

Right.



AW:

So that's four tickets. And I said, so I called them up, I said, "Oh no sweat. Just sell me an extra ticket, but make sure we all sit at the same table." And I'm very cavalier about that. And they said, "Okay, yeah, the charge will be coming through on your whatever, and it'll be under whatever name." I said, "Great. How much will it be and I'll be looking for it?" They said, "Two fifty." And I said, "Well I just wanted one ticket." [laughter]

SF:

Right? Exactly.

AW:

They said, "That is one ticket." And I went, "Oh." I'm glad I didn't invite cousins.

SF:

Right? Yeah. Like glad the grandkids aren't coming.

AW:

So you get those and you think, "Wait a minute."

AF:

"What an honor."

AW:

Yeah, "What an honor."

SF:

Did I just pay for my statue? [Laughs]

AW:

Kenny went with me—Kenny and a whole group of us went out to Elko, Nevada to play the Stockmen's Hotel and Casino, because Murphy and his band were going to play. Murphy had something come up and they called me in last minute, so I put together a band.

SF:

Oh cool.

AW:

Yeah, it was very cool. We got it there. We didn't make—I mean, we just didn't make any money. And so we got back and I managed to pay Kenny and everybody. But they had this giant marquis and my name in like four foot tall letters, "Andy Wilkinson." And all this. Kenny looked

at that and he sent me a copy on his phone and he says, "So those letters cost you like a hundred and twelve dollars a piece."

SF:

[Laughter] Yes! That's like my favorite moment in *Spinal Tap*, where it says, "Puppet Show (and Spinal Tap)."

AF:

But anyway, what happened that night was that your son approached us about Comic Con, which was awesome. And then someone offered to raise money for us.

AW:

Oh cool.

AF:

He said, "I want to see *Metropolis* again. I believe in it. What are y'all doing with it? I want to help fundraise in any way possible."

AW:

That's the thing to do.

AF:

He wants us to tour it in other cities.

SF:

And we suck at that.

AF:

We are bad at that.

SF:

I hate that.

AW:

Yeah, well, boy touring—can you pare it down in any way?

SF:

We can.

AF:

We would need to. I think we got it to maybe—

SF:

Fourteen people.

AF:

--if people do double duty. Yeah, fourteen people.

SF:

We can get it down to fourteen people with a two person crew, which is enough to put on a bus. We can make that work. I mean it's a Greyhound style bus. It's not the bunks, you know what I mean? But we can actually do it. And we got the cost—last time I worked it up—down to about seven or eight grand a night. Which is a doable.

AF:

It is.

SF:

It's still a lot of cash.

AF:

Of course that was in 20—what '15? Or '14?

SF:

Yeah. So it's going to have gone up. But it's manageable.

AW:

Well, maybe, depending on where you tour it. Because the costs are gasoline and hotel, you know?

SF:

Yeah.

AF:

Exactly.

SF:

That's right. But I do think it's feasible. I think we actually can. We would have to do some things on tape. There's just going to have to be. But in the modern world that's not as offensive as it used to be.

AF:

That's not a problem now.

AW:

No, and you can also synthesize some things and that's not as offensive.

SF:

That's right.

AW:

And besides, if you have fourteen people on the stage it doesn't matter if you're synthesizing things for the other twenty that aren't there.

SF:

That's correct. That's exactly correct.

AF:

And we've thought even of hiring string players from universities wherever we play. They might come in for the week.

AW:

Yeah. And go in early enough to rehearse it.

SF:

And then have a two-track of good strings just in case. [Laughter] You can just suddenly bolster them with.

AF:

Your soundman knows what to do.

AW:

Like the Andy Griffith routine where they're getting Barney to be quiet or anything. [Laughter]

AF:

Yes.

SF:

Yes. Yes. Oh my gosh. But yeah, I think we can get it down. We researched that really heavily. And then we just—

AF:

We were thinking about doing it with Alamo Drafthouse, right?

SF:

Yeah. And Alamo expressed interest. We just dropped the ball because we could never finish it.

AW:

Doing a series of their places?

AF:

Uh-huh. Which would be awesome.

AW:

Well, you know the interesting thing is all across America—and Alan Mundy and I tried to put together a tour to do this. He wanted to call it *Lubbock and Beyond*, because in Dickens or Spur or Guthrie—I can't remember—there's a service station that is also the bus station, and there was a hand lettered sign—you know, "Childress, fifteen dollars. Amarillo, thirty dollars." And all this. And then the last one was, "Lubbock and beyond, fifty dollars."

SF:

I love it. That's hilarious. So good.

AW:

But what we were looking at was that so many—there was like a fad for a while—of small towns renovating these—

SF:

Theatres.

AW:

--combination theatres. They were at the end of the vaudeville era, at the beginning of the film era. They were all over the place.

AF:

Like in Brownfield.

SF:  
Yeah.

AW:  
Brownfield. Plainview.

SF:  
Levelland.

AW:  
The Cactus.

SF:  
Post.

AF:  
Post, yeah.

AW:  
Dalhart. I mean you find them all over. And so all these communities spent all their money on bricks and mortar, and now what do we do with it? Alan's idea was, "Let's put together a group of like four or five acts and so that we have every other month we can have these people come into these places and do a performance."

SF:  
Smart.

AF:  
Oh fun.

AW:  
And we—the problem was Alan's not a booking agent, neither am I, we never did quite get that together. But I think there are places that if you're able to tour an interesting piece, then you can—there's something to be done for it.

AF:  
I think so.

SF:  
I think so too.

AF:

We know people, like, in so many places. Seattle and we have people linked with fine arts organizations and theatres and stuff.

AW:

Well, once you get a little bit of it and a little success, they'll find you.

SF:

It snowballs.

AF:

Right. Just feel like it's so hard to get it off to the ground. It's such a huge, massive, like—

AW:

Well, yeah, but you've actually done the heavy lifting already. I'm just looking—

AF:

We wrote it, yes.

AW:

--that you have the pieces on the chart. That's what I'm talking about.

SF:

Yeah, it did get to the point where it was almost depressing to keep working on it, because once you got a year out from the event and you kind of went, "We're still not done." And now we've had the same experience with *Click*, too. It's that when you do one of those juggernaut things, it takes over your life and then you have to stop and—

AW:

Experienced with what?

SF:

Withdrawal. Oh, no I mean with the ballet. With *Click*.

AF:

Yeah, right.

SF:

The same experience. We still haven't released it and it's just because as soon as the ballet is over it's like, "Oh crap, I've got to go put a business back together. Oh crap, I've got to go—I



better start paying attention to my students so I don't lose them all." Because I've been a flake for however long because I can't—because there's too much on my plate. And so that's the danger of the large pieces, is that you never finish. And so we haven't found a way to finish at least this portion of it.

AW:

Well, let me just give you some advice that Barry Corbin gave me when I got to write my first play, because he's—

SF:

Same thing.

AW:

--he said—you know, he called me up, wanted to do a one man show. I said—I'm thinking to myself because I'm stupid and I've never been in theatre, and I'm thinking, A one man show? That sounds like a long song. So I said to him, "Who's going to write this?" He says, "Well, I hope you will." And I went, "Well, sure, I can write that." [Laughter] Doesn't matter I've never been an actor.

SF:

Right. Right. Never had to pace that before. Never had to—yeah, right.

AW:

Never done any of that. So anyway, it was a great learning experience. And the good thing is not only he's a great human being, but he's a fine writer. So I get—I work through it and I get to the end and I'm trying to figure out how to conclude it, you know? Not conclude what happens on stage—I've already come up to that—but how do I know when I'm finished rewriting it?

AF:

Yes.

AW:

And so I called Barry up one day, and I was just depressed. Because we haven't had a chance to do a walk through or a reading or anything like that, because he's a film star. He's traveling around. I can't just show up. I mean, we did some of that, but not enough of it. So I say, I'm whining, "How do we—I don't know—how do I know when it's over?" He says, "Goddammit, Andy. We never do finish them. We just abandon them." [Laughter] And I went, "Oh, I got it."

SF:

That makes so much sense.

AF:

Really does.

SF:

That makes so much sense.

AW:

At some point you just abandon it and let it be. It has its own life. I mean, that's really what he was saying. It has its own life. And so—

SF:

And you have to let it do that.

AW:

You have to let it do that.

AF:

Yeah, that's true.

SF:

We're not real good at that.

AW:

Well, most of us aren't. I teach process, not product. That's the mantra in my classes. That doesn't mean I follow that all the time.

SF:

Exactly. Well, you know, like I was working on—just kind of prepping some of the files this morning and there was one piece that I was like—

AW:

“Oh I can fix that.”

SF:

Yeah, I'm going through and I'm listening through and I'm thinking, Oh I still need to rerecord guitar for this. And I came across one of the live tracks, because we tracked all the live stuff. And, you know, it's live stuff which means the strings were out of tune and the trumpet missed this input and I missed this and blah, blah, blah. You're just ripping yourself to shreds and there's no way you're going to release that. You know what I mean? That's what goes through your head. So you go, “Well, I'll just rerecord it all.” Which is what we did. And we've got 95

percent of it rerecorded. But that five percent you have to finish the five percent before you can finish. And I'm going through and I discovered that guitar part on one of the live tracks and went, "Well, I could just pull it off of that and that's fine." And you go, oh that's kind of liberating. Because there's this—Amy and I, unfortunately, both are cursed with perfectionism. That it's like I sat in the studio with David Brandon for eleven years. I know what perfect is. I've seen it. And so I want to be that. And I'm simply not.

AW:

Yeah.

AF:

Yeah.

AW:

I have such limited guitar skills I gave up on perfectionism a long time ago. In fact, Valhalla to me is adequacy.

SF:

Yes. [Laughter]

AW:

If I can be adequate on the guitar I am extraordinarily happy.

SF:

Yes, thank you.

AW:

Just let me be adequate.

SF:

Yes.

AW:

Because Lloyd Maines has been producing my stuff from day one. I'm like you; I know what can—

SF:

You have sat next to a genius and watched him do it. Why would I pick up a guitar after that?

AW:

Yeah. And then people say—come up to me after a gig and say, “I really like the way you play guitar. You’re a great guitar player.” And it took me a long time to understand, because at first I thought, You are so stupid! Who are you listening to? But I realized most of the time it’s because they don’t have language to express some of the things. So they say, “Well, you sound like Kenny Rogers.” Or, “You play great guitar.”

AF:

Right. Something easy to pick on.

SF:

And—to normal people—they do equate what we do with rocket science and brain surgery.

AW:

Right, and also when they say, “You’re a great guitar player.” What they mean is, “I enjoyed what you did.”

SF:

Yes. And, “It moved me.”

AW:

Yeah. It really doesn’t mean that you’re a great guitar player.

SF:

“You’re Tommy Emmanuel.”

AF:

Technically.

SF:

Yeah, exactly.

AF:

Exactly. That’s true.

AW:

Which also reminds us that when we worry about being Tommy Emmanuel or we do the open tuning thing for twenty minutes the only person who’s left listening to that in the end is you.

AF:

Dang straight.

SF:

Right. Because that doesn't matter.

AW:

Yeah, not to them. Most of the time.

SF:

Yeah, no. You're absolutely correct. And so there is a point at which, yeah, I think we have to get a point where we go, "No, I'm abandoning that. That is as much as I can do."

AW:

Or you can just let it have its own life.

SF:

Yeah.

AW:

Well, what do we talk about next time? We've been here a couple hours.

SF:

Boy, I don't know. I mean, that's a pretty good overview of what the process was on this project.

AW:

Yeah, I loved that.

SF:

The other things we have—the 100 Love Sonnets time period was really important to Amy and I, and the best band that we were ever part of. I mean, that was really good. And then *Click* as well is something that we should probably—

AW:

Okay, I'm just going to write down, "Next time. 100 Love Sonnets." *Click* is C-I-i—?

SF:

--c-k.

AW:

Just like I would have. Not q-e.

SF:

Yeah.

AW:

And we don't have to get them both done that time, but I—and I know you have a lot of things—but as soon as you're ready to do that, just give me a whistle. Let me know.

SF:

Great.

AW:

And then we do want to think about—it's premature to do it now, because you're still doing all this work—but this stuff needs to be archived.

SF:

We agree.

AF:

Yes.

SF:

We've already talked about that.

AW:

And especially these big projects like this. It needs to be archived while you're young and alive and can remember all of it and can talk about it all.

AF:

True.

AW:

And have it there for posterity. We actually have people come through and look at Dr. Vann's scores.

AF:

Cool. I should do that.

SF:

Yeah, you should.

AW:

And she has some nice ones, you know. And so it's—this stuff has—there will be a life to it.

SF:

That's great. And that's part of letting it go, you know? And it's important to do that. And items like that. When we're done I don't want it around. I don't want to look at it anymore. It's been on my dang wall for five years.

AW:

I know it.

AF:

Plus I warped it the other day.

SF:

Oh I bent it on purpose.

AF:

Oh, because I cleaned the back of it with a wet paper towel because it was nasty.

SF:

Oh is that why it started curving?

AF:

Yeah, sorry.

SF:

Dang it! [Laughter] I wondered why it started curving.

AF:

Sorry.

AW:

No, but that's part of it. That kind of artifact and you're book and the big piles of paper. All that stuff is significant.

SF:

Yeah, and what it ends up being for us is clutter.



AF:  
Exactly.

SF:  
At some point. You know what I mean? There's a certain amount of stuff that—

AF:  
This is all the originals from *Metropolis*. Dates.

SF:  
Handwritten with dates.

AW:  
That is incredibly important stuff.

AF:  
Is it?

AW:  
Oh yes.

AF:  
It helped me as I was making my notebook because I could—

AW:  
That is incredibly important stuff.

AF:  
Sometimes I wrote, "I want it to sound creepier."

AW:  
This is all about the process. That stuff is the mother's milk.

AF:  
Great. Well, okay then.

AW:  
So don't throw that away.

AF:

Oh I won't throw it away.

SF:

Andy, one thing that I just wanted to say is just thank you for including us in this. We may have said it before, but Amy and I have always sort of felt in our younger years like the outliers. [Laughter] And I think that's a feeling that everyone in Lubbock actually has, you know what I mean? I think that's a common thing. But if you feel like an outlier, you're an outsider. Does that make sense?

AW:

Well, but you know, I think that's true with the arts. You're always a part of but not the thing. Because if you're not a little bit on the edge of the crowd, you can't be the observer. You've got to not only be doing it but you've got to be observing it. You've got to be divorced enough from it that you can tell the truth, which is why nobody invites you to too many cocktail parties.

AF:

Dang straight. Not that I'd want to go anyway.

AW:

No, I know. But they'll have you come but they never want you to be a—you know, and someone—I was in police work for twelve years, and people would say, "Well, how did you go from that to writing and being in the arts?" And I said, "It was perfect training." First of all, you had to become an observer.

SF:

Yeah. You watch.

AW:

Your life depended upon it. And you had to be a—develop what natural ability you might have had to judge people and situations very quickly. But the other thing was you were always required, but never welcomed.

SF:

Yes.

AW:

And so at cocktail parties people would say, "What do you do?", "Well, I'm a policeman." And he'd look around and you're standing all by yourself.

SF:

Yeah, right. Suddenly you're alone. [Laughter]

AW:

So it's the same thing. I write. I write novels—or I write plays—and they say, "Oh [judgmental mumbling]." And then they often—

SF:

And all of us—

AW:

"Hor d'oeuvres table." Because they don't want to show up in what you're doing.

SF:

We have had that very same experience. A couple of those. One being auctioned off for—

AF:

[Sighs]

AW:

A dinner?

AF:

That LHUCA gala. The worst thing ever and nobody wanted us.

SF:

It was the most uncomfortable thing.

AW:

Yeah. It is uncomfortable. And then you show up and they say, "Do you know Steely Dan?"

SF:

Yes.

AF:

Like nobody would even bid on us.

SF:

Yeah, it was just like, "Oh my gosh. They started that too high."

AF:

And we're there in the room!

SF:

And we're sitting here and they're bidding on us and I just feel this tall and I just want to crawl under the table.

AF:

Exactly. It was so bad. It was horrible.

SF:

And then the second one was actually from an artist at the gala—at the LHUCA Gala this year.

AF:

You're right.

AW:

Who was it?

SF:

We were sitting next to an artist and he looks over at his wife—we're all having a really good conversation—and he looks over at his wife and he goes—and he was kind of a pompous ass.

AF:

Uh yeah.

SF:

And he goes, "All the rich people are at that table. Why aren't we with them?" And I just went, "Uh."

AF:

He really did, and we were like, "Wow."

SF:

"Well."

AW:

Yeah. When I turn off the tape recorder I have to get names.

SF:

Yeah. There was a little bit—I felt going, “F you too, man.” You know what I mean?

AF:

It was so ugly.

SF:

Oh my gosh, that is so rude. It’s like, “Wow.” What am I? Chopped liver? Yes! I am.

AW:

And then afterwards I would wake up in the middle of the night and say, “I should have said--”

SF:

Yes.

AF:

Right.

AW:

--“Because you’re not worth it.”

SF:

That’s exactly right. Yeah, it was just like—

AF:

Wow.

AW:

I don’t much like those things. I like hanging out with the people and having a drink, but I don’t like those hoity toity things.

AF:

No.

*[End of Recording]*