

# PETER THOMAS INTERVIEW

conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2010 by G.B. / Idea: T.H.C. / Transl. D.P.



## The genesis of the soundtrack to Bruce Lee's first blockbuster 'THE BIG BOSS'

*Peter Thomas is regarded as one of the most famous and successful European composers of scores. His soundtracks for "Raumpatrouille Orion", "Jerry Cotton", Edgar Wallace's thrillers and several other productions for the film industry have gained cult status. Nevertheless, only a few insiders may know that Peter Thomas was the composer from the international version of Bruce Lee's 'The Big Boss'. How did it come to an employment of a Berliner?*

*Mr. Thomas, when and by whom were you offered to contribute to the movie 'The Big Boss' with your musical talent?*

PT: Shortly before the composing of the international version of the movie I got contacted because in many countries the original soundtrack wasn't appealing to the audience. CINERAMA, more precisely, Georg M. Reuther from Vienna, who I've known since 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', offered me to set to music 'The Big Boss'.

*Did you have to consider any restrictions when you composed the piece of work or did you have free hand?*

PT: I had already signed a contract with the company in Singapore concerning the composition of music. Imagine, if I **couldn't** have worked at my own discretion, the producer would have done it on his own the soundtrack himself.

*How difficult was the transformation process when you composed the score – did you have to watch the movie several times?*

PT: I watched it only once – just as a common viewer experiences it, except that there was no music yet. It's always the first time I watch a movie that releases the 'initial spark'. Then I started working ALONE, without any other persons. When composing, it's always good to decide on your own how, where and when music shall sound. In the cutting room I watched the movie in little episodes in order to select the parts of those scenes I wanted to set to music. In order to know what's happening in each scene, I jotted down important details, especially to find/for possible points of synchronization.

*Did you also have a closer look at the leading actor BRUCE LEE or did the plot inspire you to compose the music?*

PT: Obviously it's the plot! But mixed with the self-centered opinion of Peter Thomas, who - and that was the difficult part – managed to bring the storyline of the movie, which is distant and unknown to us, to a common ground through music. And seemingly, it worked out...

*Why were you neither acknowledged for the composition of 'The Big Boss', nor mentioned in the credits?*

PT: Well, I thought they mentioned Peter Thomas in the opening or closing credits. I was - am the official composer in all the countries all over the world where they play my score. By the way, there was also a Hollywood-movie, called "Dragon – The Bruce Lee Story", where the theme music of 'The Big Boss' was played while Bruce Lee was sitting in the cinema, watching his own première. It seems that in the hurry nobody asked Peter Thomas or thought of mentioning his name in the credits – from this point of view/actually, it was taken advantage of him. Only ten years later, I think, they admitted I had to be given a share for this sequence. But this means that for several years I didn't get a penny for the showings. Even the ubiquitous GEMA (society for musical copyright enforcement), which tried hard to organize the copyrights on the part of the US-American company, only achieved it after TEN years!

*Do you happen to know in which countries (Europe, USA, UK, Asia) they use YOUR soundtrack?*

PT: I guess that my soundtrack **isn't** played in the British version and in the country of origin.

*Did you collaborate with the Hongkongese composer Joseph Koo for the internationally known version?*

PT: Nice question, but I don't even know a composer called Joseph Koo!

*Were you engaged for further projects "made in Hong Kong" during the early 70ies?*

PT: Nope, end of story!

*How do you feel about the interest in your BIG BOSS-soundtrack today – is it available on CD?*

PT: Isn't it fantastic that music by a Berliner has been popular for more than three decades and is still 'en vogue'?! To date, the CD can be purchased online at Amazon PETER THOMAS SOUND ORCHESTER: EASY LOUNGIN' COLLECTION - TWENTY EASY LISTENING CLASSICS. Soon it'll be available also at [ALL MEDIA SCORE](#) which will release the soundtrack from 'The Big Boss' for the first time on CD in November 2010!

**G.B.: Thank you for the interview, Mr. PETER THOMAS, and all the BEST !**