

TRENT REZNOR AND ATTICUS ROSS

GO NE G I R L

SOUNDTRACK FROM THE MOTION PICTURE

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Amy Dunne

BY JENNIFER
the inspiration for the
successful "Amazing
children's series,
Elliot Dunne, has
been declared as missing.
last seen on the
of her fifth
anniversary, and
heard from
since.

Dunne

one

0



AMY DUNNE

and well-loved little

...BAND BECOMES



LOCAL...
OPENS...
FOR A...
Mr. Lewis...
the North...
Police D...
detect...
inve...
st...
d...

NICK DUNNE,

tells police he had no involvement in her recent disappearance
However Nick is now considered primary suspect in the
investigation.

THE HAUNTING SOUND OF GONE GIRL

"It's fun not being in charge," Trent Reznor says in a way that suggests both philosophy and playfulness. "It's fun being in service to something else. As long as it's a respectful, challenging situation, which it is with David Fincher, it's fun taking direction and being assigned to do things with starting points I wouldn't necessarily choose. If all I did was scoring, I'd probably start to feel like I need to be in charge of something again. But right now, it's got a nice balance between those two worlds."

DAVID FINCHER RECENTLY SAID THAT WHEN YOU CAME OUT OF A GONE GIRL SCREENING YOU'D OBSERVED, "IT MAKES ME FEEL BAD ABOUT MYSELF." WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE FILM?

Well, everything makes me feel bad about myself. Let's be straight about that [laughs]. No, when I first saw a good chunk of the film, it felt like he went there. It's uncompromising. I felt it was a surprisingly nasty film on a few levels – the parody side of it, the commentary on society and the media right now, the rumination on marriage. A lot of it stuck with you. And it goes into a couple of gratuitous directions at times, which I think adds to the power. So, in lesser hands, the film could probably be bogged down into something almost procedural, but it felt like a thrill ride to me.

I left that first screening thinking, "OK, this is going to be exciting to work on." Not that I ever thought it wouldn't be, but it was seeing it put together and seeing the combination of restraint and tone and subtlety, I was impressed.

YOU'VE SAID THE SCORE WAS "ATTEMPTING TO GIVE YOU A HUG." WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

It's very critical to sit with David and try to get inside his head and translate what he's saying or feeling into an approach. Often there will be some sometimes cryptic clues that lead us down paths that we may not initially take.

In this case, David said, "Hey, this could be a bad idea but..." – and most of his suggestions start with that disclaimer [laughs]. But he mentioned that, "some of this movie deals with the concept of façades and appearances – whether it be to your spouse or to the public – I was getting my back adjusted and when I was laying on the table there was this sickly, saccharine music that was intended to make you feel comfortable or relax." Like bird sounds, but done with an insincere callousness to it. And he said, "Maybe let's pursue an idea where we are trying to tell you either subconsciously or blatantly that everything's OK here." Because there are certain sections of the movie that go back and forth between Amy Dunne's perspective, painting a certain picture of events and then reality. So that led to results that we wouldn't come up with on our own. That's part of what's exciting about working with him.

WHEN ELSE HAS THAT HAPPENED?

Another good example of that was "Immigrant Song" on Dragon Tattoo. David said, "Hey, this might be a bad idea but...what about a really aggressive version of 'Immigrant Song' with a female vocal." He didn't explain why. It wouldn't necessarily be my starting point where I'd think, "Hey, let's take a classic Led Zeppelin song and open ourselves up for criticism and failure."

But when you then start to realize, "Oh, he's thinking about that for the opening credits and he's thinking about cutting every beat of the song with a different scene in the credits and he's thought about lyrically what that song might be saying juxtaposed against this character of Lisbeth," I hadn't thought about any of that. I'm just hearing Led Zeppelin. "How would I possibly do that to give it justice?" And we wound up with something that I think works really well in a situation that wouldn't have been where my instinct would have led. But I was pleased with the results. It turned out pretty good.

HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH A SOUND PALATE FOR YOUR FILM SCORES?

If it's a Nine Inch Nails record or a remix or How to Destroy Angels or film, really the first step Atticus and I do is spend some time thinking about what limitations we want to place on ourselves. For example, the Nine Inch Nails record Ghosts: Let's finish a track every day, start to finish, from the moment of composition to the final mix. That's the rule. And let's start with a visual image, like a photograph, and try to dress that image as a piece or a blob of sound. We're not concerned about a pop song or anything like that. With the Nine Inch Nails record The Slip, let's make it so it sounds like garage electronics. Picture a garage band, but it's an Arp synth plugged in instead of a guitar. Get a feel, make it feel live. And we'll break those rules, but it tends to give an identity to the project. The danger can be, primarily, when it's one guy or two guys in a room full of shit, your options become too great and you spin around and climb up your ass and it feel unfocused.

So the films, the first step is similar. We'll become familiar with the source material and then, very importantly, sit and talk with David and get an idea of what he's visualizing, what he's imagining the role of music is going to be in the film. How much space does it take up? What's the feeling? Is it cold? Is it dark? Is it bright? Is it bombastic? And then make some decisions about what instruments to use based on that idea.

In the case of Gone Girl, it felt organic-y to start. As we started working on it, it felt like it could use the idea of orchestra, so we ended up using an orchestra for bits of it to layer in with what we've done, which was an interesting process. Dragon Tattoo was cold and icy, and that implied a certain subset of synthesizers that were more digital, lots of bells, lots of metal-y type objects. Before that, The Social Network felt like it wanted to be a nod to the more analog, video game-y type propulsive, maybe retro-y, back to the Eighties – even though the timeframe isn't right – but the implication that it wanted to sound a little more sequence-y.

ON THE GONE GIRL TRACK "THE WAY HE LOOKS AT ME," THERE ARE ALL THESE SQUISHY NOISES AND MACHINE SOUNDS. HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THAT?

That's one of my favorite tracks on there. When we were thinking about what to use and how to compose, it started with a few seeds that David had planted. One of the things we wound up with were these little homemade boxes that this company called Folktek made with little mics in them. It's very low-tech. There's some guitar strings that capture in a loop then, where if you hit it, it loops into this little repeating pattern. What we liked about it was it felt liked it was trying to find order. But it's not right, and it's not precise. It created this kind of unease that felt, when we were getting into moments of tension in the film, like it could be a good foundation. So instead of it naturally building, it always feels like the foot's dragging or something is kind of stuck in there.

HOW DID YOU ENJOY SCORING THE "LOVE SCENE" BETWEEN NEIL PATRICK HARRIS AND ROSAMUND PIKE IN GONE GIRL?

It wasn't really that difficult. I was wondering how far to take it. That's a good one where, "How over the top should the music go? How experimental would you want to get?" We did several variations, but I led with the one in the movie.

I don't think even listened past that one, because it framed it just right and that's what we stuck with. But we knew that was an important part that needed to cross a line. It was one of those moments.

THIS IS THE THIRD DAVID FINCHER FILM YOU'VE SCORED. WHAT IS IT ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM THAT KEEPS YOU COMING BACK?

I like him. I respect him. It's inspiring to be around somebody that, I thought I was a prick...and I say that with love.

Let me define that a little better. He has carved out a place where he and his filmmaking crew – the best people in their respective fields – where, year-round, their job is to make the very best thing that they're all capable of. And I'm rushing to keep up with those guys. I would imagine it would be like being on a fantastic sports team where everybody's...I don't know, that's a terrible analogy because I don't give a shit about sports. But the point is, the goal is making the best thing we can make in an uncompromised fashion. He's trying to make the best art he can make, and it happens to be in a fairly mainstream place. That's exciting to me. And he creates a nurturing environment where I'm not fighting with the studio about making it nicer. He protects the people who are making the film and his actors. In a world of art versus commerce and compromises, I find it very inspiring to be around him.

YOU'VE DONE SOUNDTRACK WORK IN THE PAST, WITH NATURAL BORN KILLERS AND LOST HIGHWAY, AND I IMAGINE YOU GET A LOT OF REQUESTS FOR MORE. WHY THE FILMMAKER MONOGAMY?

The two films you mentioned, I wasn't in the trenches of making the films. And I respect those guys [Oliver Stone and David Lynch] very much. Being in it with David has been a great experience. I'm not opposed to working with anybody else. I just haven't had time.

I've been able to keep composing scores precious because I've done a limited amount. If it turned into four or five films a year, I don't know that I have that much to say that could be interesting. I don't know that I could speak the vocabulary of the action blockbuster. I'd be interested in trying to see if I could compose like that, but more for a challenge to myself rather than, do I think that's the art I want to do? I don't know.




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