

JOHN BARRY BIO

Few composers of the past half-century have enjoyed as much popular success or worldwide influence as John Barry. The winner of five Oscars, four Grammys and other honors ranging from America's Golden Globe to Britain's Anthony Asquith Award, he has written some of the most memorable movie music of our time: *Born Free*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Goldfinger*, *Out of Africa*, *Dances With Wolves*, *Somewhere in Time* and dozens of other scores.

Critics have marvelled for decades at the Barry touch – a remarkable ability to capture the mood and flavor of every kind of movie, from the fanciful adventure of a James Bond thriller to the epic romantic visions of today's leading filmmakers, while retaining a style that is uniquely his own.

He was born John Barry Prendergast in York, England, in 1933. His father owned a chain of theaters, where John worked as a youth and where he first became fascinated by both movies and movie music. He played the trumpet and studied music throughout his teen years, as well as during a three-year stint in the Army (that included correspondence-course instruction with famed Stan Kenton arranger Bill Russo).

After leaving the service, he formed a band, the John Barry Seven, which played rock 'n' roll at various live venues and on such seminal TV dance shows as *Six-Five Special*, *Oh Boy!* and *Drumbeat*. By 1958 his band was backing up-and-coming rock star Adam Faith, and when Faith made his film debut in the 1960 juvenile-delinquent movie *Beat Girl*, it was Barry who supplied its hip jazz-and-rock score. *Beat Girl* became the first British movie to issue a soundtrack on long-playing records.

Barry's experiments with string arrangements (notably on his original album *Stringbeat*), his arranger-producer credits for EMI artists, and his long-held desire to compose on a broader musical canvas, soon led to a series of assignments for low-budget films. All that changed when James Bond entered the picture in 1962.

Barry's work as arranger, conductor and performer of "The James Bond Theme" in the first 007 film, *Dr. No*, turned the tune into a commercial success, making him the first choice of producers Albert R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman to compose the scores for subsequent films. His bold, brassy and exciting music became a key element of the Bond formula. He scored *From Russia With Love*; pushed The Beatles out of the no. 1 album spot in America with the *Goldfinger* soundtrack; and maintained the tradition throughout the 1960s with *Thunderball*, *You Only Live Twice* and *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.

On Her Majesty's... was especially noteworthy for Barry's collaboration with lyricist Hal David and vocalist Louis Armstrong on the touching love song "We Have All the Time in the World" – the timelessness of which was confirmed when

it became a top-10 hit in the U.K. 25 years later after its use in a Guinness television commercial.

Barry became the acknowledged architect of the '60s spy-music genre, which continues to influence film and TV composers today. He scored 11 Bond films in all, and his Bond songs were performed by some of the hottest names in popular music, from Shirley Bassey (*Goldfinger*, *Diamonds Are Forever*, *Moonraker*) and Nancy Sinatra (*You Only Live Twice*) to Duran Duran (*A View to a Kill*) and a-ha and The Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde (*The Living Daylights*).

But, while Barry was becoming world-famous for his 007 scores, he was also embracing very different musical styles for vastly different movies: A light and lyrical touch for the African-lion family film *Born Free*, which won him Oscars for Best Song and Best Score; a taut, dramatic and surprisingly American score for producer Sam Spiegel's all-star *The Chase*; and jazzy contemporary organ solos for Richard Lester's *The Knack... and How to Get It*, to name just a few.

At the same time, the composer's restless search for unusual sonorities led him to explore the fringes of the musical spectrum, resulting in some of the 1960s' freshest, most innovative scores: a cimbalom for *The Ipcress File*, a barrel organ for *The Quiller Memorandum*, a breathy female voice for *The Knack*, a harpsichord for *The Whisperers*, a Moog synthesizer for *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, and many others.

The music of John Barry distinguished many of the movie hits of the time, from the wide-screen action of *Zulu* to the critically acclaimed, now-classic adaptation of James Goldman's *The Lion in Winter* with Peter O'Toole and Katharine Hepburn. For the latter – a score that deftly combined choir singing in Latin with the darker colors of the orchestra to suggest 12th-century England – Barry won his third Academy Award, as well as the British Film Academy's prestigious Anthony Asquith Award for original film music. On the heels of these top honors, he won his first Grammy Award for the wistful harmonica theme of John Schlesinger's much-talked-about *Midnight Cowboy*.

One of his most fruitful collaborations was with director Bryan Forbes, who first hired the composer to write a pair of jazz numbers for *The L-Shaped Room* in 1963. His confidence in Barry resulted in full dramatic scores, often employing unique ensembles, for subsequent Forbes films: a chamber group for the suspenseful *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*, a grim, atmospheric approach for the prisoner-of-war drama *King Rat*; a sympathetic score for Dame Edith Evans in *The Whisperers*, a lively period score for the comedy *The Wrong Box*. For their 1968 Michael Caine film *Deadfall*, Barry wrote a miniature guitar concerto for a 15-minute jewel-robbery sequence that remains one of the decade's most unique marriages of cinematic imagery and orchestral music.

The 1970s saw Barry branching out in all musical directions, from stage to

screen to television. Having enjoyed a successful West End run with the musical *Passion Flower Hotel* in 1965, he collaborated with famed lyricist Alan Jay Lerner on the daring *Lolita, My Love* for the American stage, then created a huge West End hit in 1974's *Billy*, starring Michael Crawford and co-written by longtime friend and lyricist Don Black.

Varied movie assignments continued to elicit diverse music from the now-seasoned and much in-demand composer-arranger-conductor. He received another Oscar nomination for his delicate and dramatic score for *Mary, Queen of Scots*, then wrote several songs (again with Don Black) for the all-star musical adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Artistic successes such as Nicolas Roeg's extraordinary *Walkabout* and John Schlesinger's *The Day of the Locust*, and commercial hits like *King Kong*, *The Deep* and *The Black Hole* were all enhanced by Barry scores.

Television also provided Barry with a chart hit in the theme for *The Persuaders!*, ATV's popular series starring Tony Curtis and Roger Moore. Katharine Hepburn, a fan and friend since *The Lion in Winter*, convinced Barry to score her major TV appearances including *The Glass Menagerie* (entirely for solo piano, played by the composer) and *Love Among the Ruins* (the charming, Emmy-winning film with Hepburn and Laurence Olivier). Also in the '70s, Barry's music for the Roosevelt biopics *Eleanor and Franklin* and its sequel *Eleanor and Franklin: The White House Years*, were among the decade's most distinguished musical achievements for the small screen.

Originally considered an "action" composer, largely on the basis on his famed James Bond music, Barry began to shed that label with several richly romantic scores in the 1970s and '80s, notably the Sean Connery-Audrey Hepburn Robin Hood tale *Robin & Marian*, and the cult favorite *Somewhere in Time*, whose multiple cable-TV showings turned the soundtrack into a gold-record hit. A steamy, jazz-inflected score for *Body Heat* followed, as did an expansive, moving and unforgettable score for Sydney Pollack's film *Out of Africa*, which won Barry his fourth Academy Award. He also won a Grammy and a Golden Globe for *Out of Africa*, and collected yet another Grammy for his music for Francis Ford Coppola's *The Cotton Club*.

A serious illness in 1988 led to a long recuperation period for the composer. He returned after a two-year hiatus with a complex and thrilling symphonic score for Kevin Costner's epic western *Dances With Wolves*, earning him a fifth Oscar and a fourth Grammy. Barry now holds the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences' record for more Oscar wins than any other Englishman.

Since then, there have been a variety of accomplishments in many different arenas of music. He received a seventh Oscar nomination for the melancholy score of Richard Attenborough's film *Chaplin*. He scored a 3-D IMAX movie, the

New York travelogue *Across the Sea of Time*. He made a triumphant return to the concert hall, conducting the English Chamber Orchestra in London's Royal Albert Hall in 1998 and 1999. He returned to his jazz roots for the score of *Playing by Heart*, and to his spy-movie past for the music of *Enigma*. And he wrote two all-instrumental albums, *The Beyondness of Things* and *Eternal Echoes*, both acclaimed by critics for their warmly nostalgic and memorable themes that aren't from movies but easily could be.

In 1999, Barry was named an Officer of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II for his outstanding achievements in music. Also that year, he was honored at London's annual Music Industry Trust Dinner, a star-studded event that raised more than \$200,000 for charity. In 2001, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of York. In 2004, he realized a long-held dream in mounting a musical (again with longtime collaborator Don Black) of Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*. In 2005 he became the first composer to receive the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Fellowship and in 2008 – in commemoration of his 75th birthday – he was named a “Billion Dollar Composer” by the show-business trade paper *Daily Variety*.

Barry now lives in Oyster Bay, New York, with his wife Laurie and their son Jonpatrick.