



Elia Cmiral (Composer - 'Pulse')

'Fingers Firmly On Our Heartbeats'

Composer **Elia Cmiral** scores "Pulse" for director Jim Sonzero and The Weinstein Company/Dimension Films. Inspired by a popular Japanese film, the Wes Craven-penned thriller tells the story of young computer hackers who channel a mysterious signal that opens a doorway to another world, full of forces looking for a portal to cross over in order to wreak

havoc.

Starring a hot young cast that includes Kristen Bell ("Veronica Mars"), Ian Somerhalder ("Lost") and Christina Milian ("Love Don't Cost a Thing"), the film opens August 11. This is Cmiral's second collaboration with Craven, having scored "Wes Craven Presents: They" in 2002.

For "Pulse," Cmiral crafted a contemporary electronica/modern orchestral score. Using an ISDN connection from his home in Los Angeles, he conducted seventy minutes of score with a sixty piece orchestra located in his native Czech Republic. With three programmers to handle the huge amount of sound design and five orchestrators, he used extensive synths and percussion programming, a programmed choir and live voices including his own.

Born in Czechoslovakia, Elia Cmiral quickly established himself as one of Europe's leading young composers after graduating from the prestigious Prague Music Conservatory. He wrote scores for several European films and three ballets before coming to the United States to attend USC's famous Film Scoring Program, after which he was hired to produce tango-based music for "Apartment Zero," composing a now-classic full length score in a scant ten days.

By the mid-1990s, Cmiral had garnered a reputation with Hollywood executives, and after scoring the successful "Nash Bridges" television series, he was selected to score John Frankenheimer's suspense thriller "Ronin," starring Robert DeNiro. Following the success of "Ronin," Elia has continued

to provide highly original and evocative scores for major Hollywood studios as well as independent filmmakers, including "Stigmata," "Battlefield Earth," "Bones" and "Species 3."

This year, in addition to "Pulse," Cmiral scored the dark drama "Journey to the End of the Night," directed by Eric Eason for Millennium Films, which premiered at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival in New York.

Chatting recently with Elia, and being that this was his second collaboration with Wes Craven, I first wondered what had brought him back to working again with the horror master? *"Just a coincidence. I've never met Wes Craven personally, unfortunately, but this can change in the future. To the first collaboration at film 'They' I was brought by the director Robert Harmon and to the second at 'Pulse' I was recommended to the director Jim Sonzero by my friend picture editor."*

What were the biggest musical obstacles in trying to create an original score - one that lasted seventy minutes - with a sixty piece orchestra in the Czech Republic? *"The movie went through a long reshaping process and I had to follow up the changes and constantly come up with different ideas for the same scenes. I actually wrote three scores thanks to many changes and great dynamics in the postproduction and many cues ended up with double digit versions. It's a very creative process and not an easy one but looking back I am glad I went through this and found in myself new resources."*

Was you using an ISDN connection, three programmers, and five orchestrators usual for a composer? *"Each project is different and I always try to choose the best approach. At score for 'Pulse' I try organically balance an orchestral score with electronica/sound design. To handle such amount of work I needed besides me two more people for programming and because of the short schedule before orchestra recording I needed more orchestrators. The whole score was orchestrated and ready for recording in less then one week."*

"The decision to record orchestra in Prague through internet using an ISDN connection has also practical reasons."

Where does one first go to create a score for a story of young computer hackers who channel a mysterious signal that opens a doorway to another world?! *"The producers wanted the orchestral, classical horror score, but since the nature of the plot I wanted also seamlessly incorporate my own soundscape and it to the orchestra. I am not talking about electronic mock-ups of the orchestra where sampled strings substitute the real ones, but inventing the original sounds supporting the nature of the plot. And these sounds would be part of the orchestra pallet."*

"So, in the very beginning of the process, with one of my programmers I developed a number of significantly recognizable sounds which I used throughout the whole score. For example, one of them is an extremely low single pulse tumbledown – Hey this is for the 'Pulse' movie! - which shakes subwoofers in the theater. Director Jim Sonzero loved it and we used it much more than I originally planned."

"Jim made me explore every possible or impossible musical and sonic corner. He was always very open to suggestions, especially unconventional solutions. He was very detail driven, like myself. I loved it."

Did director Wes Craven give you any pointers as to what he would like to hear along the way, perhaps?

"In the very beginning of the production I had a conference phone conversation with producers, where they outlined the general direction of the score. Wes Craven unfortunately did not participate this conversation. I would personally love to hear his opinion."



What are your memories of being asked to produce a tango-based musical score for 'Apartment Zero,' your first time composing in the US back in the early 1990s? *"'Apartment Zero' was my very first score here in US and I have the best memories from it both emotional and musical. Also challenge, and a great creative communication with the director and fun."*

What other upcoming projects are you also involved with? *"I am currently helping a friend who is a director with his project. There are another couple of things in my mind but I am also rather superstitious and don't like to talk about things in advance."*

What '80s (and possibly cheesy!) pop song would you love to re-compose today if asked ... and why?! *"I have a good memories of '80s and love it as it is. Even the cheesy one. Who wants to change it!?"*

Lastly, I like Penguins ... do you?! *"I like Penguins, but they are not my favorites. Even I admit they are cute, they are also little to slow for me. I like more action."*

Thanx again for doing this for us today, and we wish you all the best for the future *"Thank you, it was a pleasure to do interview with you."*

Interviewed by Russell A. Trunk