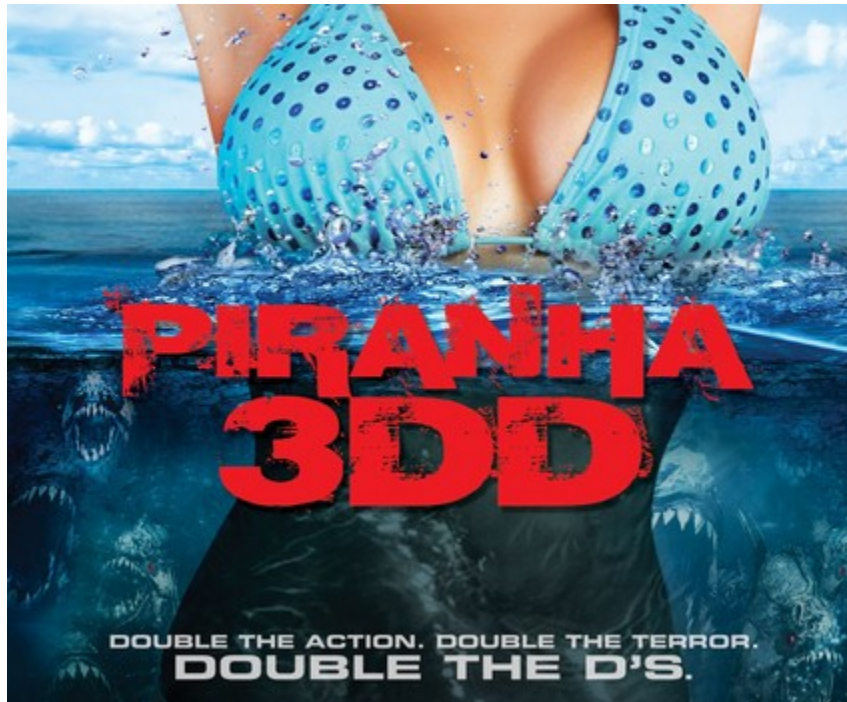


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Composer interview: Elia Cmiral sinks his teeth into 'Piranha 3DD'

HALLOWEEN | OCTOBER 27, 2012 | BY: MARK MORTON |



Piranha 3DD

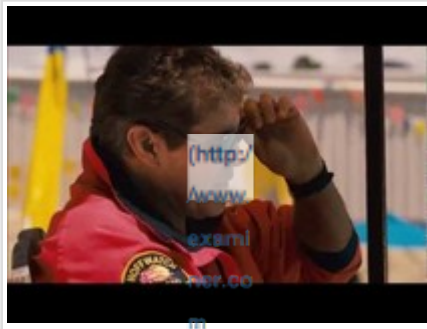
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Continuing with our horror-focused features this [Halloween](http://www.examiner.com/halloween) (<http://www.examiner.com/halloween>) season, we now turn our attention to a film from the blink-and-you'd-miss-it files, the sequel to the splash n' splatter 2010 film "[Piranha 3D](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002ZG98KK/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B002ZG98KK&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20)" (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002ZG98KK/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B002ZG98KK&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20), the cleverly-monikered "[Piranha 3DD](http://www.examiner.com/topic/piranha-3dd)" (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/piranha-3dd>). Delayed for over a year, the film was eventually released at the beginning of summer, but most people were not even aware of it until it popped up on various Video On-Demand websites.

Composing the music for "Piranha 3DD" was Czech-born Elia Cmiral, who is no stranger to horror, with such films as "The Rats," "Lost Boys: The Thirst," "The Deaths of Ian Stone," and "Wrong Turn" to his credit. Read on, as we venture into the murky waters with Mr. Elia Cmiral!



Video: [Piranha 3DD Trailer Official 2012](http://www.examiner.com/video/piranha-3dd-trailer-official-2012) (<http://www.examiner.com/video/piranha-3dd-trailer-official-2012>)

"Piranha 3DD" had been delayed/in production for almost two years now and has finally just been released this summer. How long were you attached to the project before the problems began to arise?

I scored the first half of the movie, and then I got the note that they wanted to do reshoots, so I stopped writing for about two months. And then, I had to do my own re-writes to adapt to the new version of the film. And then came another wave of reshoots and edits – this went on about three times. It wasn't really too bad, because I used all of my material. I actually had a lot of fun doing this film.

Having spent some time with the score, it sounds like you ignored the work [Michael Wandmacher](http://www.examiner.com/article/composer-interview-crashing-spring-break-with-piranha-3d-s-michael-wandmacher)

did for the original "Piranha 3D" (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/piranha-3d/articles>)" and there are moments that sound like you actually paid a bit of homage to Pino Donaggio's score for the "Piranha" (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00317LM8S/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00317LM8S&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20)" film from 1978.

Oh, thank you, I definitely take that as a compliment. I think Michael actually did want to do this one, but from what I understood from the producers, they did not want to go in the same direction. This film has a very different vibe from the first one. They wanted a more fun, emotional rollercoaster more than serious horror. I saw part of the previous film, but I did not take any direction from it. I think "Piranha 3DD" is much closer in spirit to the original film from the 1970s than "Piranha 3D." It's supposed to be great popcorn fun.

Something that leapt out at me immediately, and I think this has become a hallmark of yours, is how the score goes through so many different movements and styles through the course of the film.

Thank you very much! When I got this film, I saw an opportunity to write different kinds of music in differing genres. I even discussed it with the director, because originally I tried to go in a different direction – I tried to smooth out the mood, and it really didn't feel right. The movie is so all over the place – from the love triangle, to the piranhas, to the crowds. It really did have a connection with the 1970s version, so I suggested to be a little more eclectic with the music, and in my opinion, it worked great.

Yeah, I was really surprised when listening to the score, because the "Piranha" films are basically splat-stick horror and what I was hearing was humanistic drama.

To be honest with you, the original score (the retail music) is not in the same order as it is in the film. When I put a [soundtrack](http://www.examiner.com/topic/soundtrack) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/soundtrack>) together, I try to arrange it by musical meaning. So the lead track on the score is actually a more-orchestrated and dramatic version of the music you hear

towards the end of the movie; in Reel 5, when the bad guy sees what has happened in the water park - he's covered in blood, people are screaming. He is finally aware that what was supposed to be a big moneymaker has become horror. It's very, very dramatic, but it's hilarious how it works with the movie, because playing the music straight elevates the fun. It sounds illogical, but it's great.

And what I love about that entire plot-point of keeping something open to make a buck that ultimately becomes a bloodbath is that it hearkens back to “[Jaws \(http://www.examiner.com/article/haunted-halloween-harmony-steven-spielberg-s-jaws-soundtrack-by-john-williams\)](http://www.examiner.com/article/haunted-halloween-harmony-steven-spielberg-s-jaws-soundtrack-by-john-williams)”.

Exactly! There's even a little homage to the “Jaws” motif at the end of one cue.

I also heard a little nod to “Jaws” on the track ‘[Searching for the Cow \(http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=3909&RD_PARM1=https%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Falbum%2Fsearching-for-the-cow%2Fid526556912%3Fi%3D526556919\)](http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=3909&RD_PARM1=https%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Falbum%2Fsearching-for-the-cow%2Fid526556912%3Fi%3D526556919)’, which reminded me a bit of ‘[Ben Gardner’s Boat \(http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=3909&RD_PARM1=https%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Falbum%2Fben-gardners-boat%2Fid4422096%3Fi%3D4422048\)](http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=3909&RD_PARM1=https%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Falbum%2Fben-gardners-boat%2Fid4422096%3Fi%3D4422048)’.

[Laughs] I will take that as a compliment! ‘Searching for the Cow’ was a really cool cue that kicks off the movie, where a farmer finds his cow that is full of baby piranhas. It's very mysterious and suspenseful, and I enjoyed making that one very much.

Did the use of 3-D technology play a role in the way you manipulated certain cues?

Definitely, whenever the piranha would jut out of the screen, I made the music rush louder with the hits and crescendos more than I would with the regular music. Hey, with this kind of movie, everything over-the-top is great!

Tell me about how the track ‘[School of Piranhas \(http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=3909&RD_PARM1=https%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Falbum%2Fschool-of-piranhas%2Fid526556912%3Fi%3D526557329\)](http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=3909&RD_PARM1=https%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Falbum%2Fschool-of-piranhas%2Fid526556912%3Fi%3D526557329)’ came about. It’s a cool, very minimalist track that appears close to the end of the score and sounds like it was written in the 1970s.

[Laughs] I really like that track. From the beginning of the project, I was searching for the perfect motif to represent the piranha. Obviously, I wanted to give a nod to “[Jaws \(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007STBUIW/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B007STBUIW&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20\)](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007STBUIW/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B007STBUIW&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20)” and other killer monster movies but make it my own. John Williams is the master, what can I say? What he did was perfect, but he did it for one monster, one killing machine. With “Piranha”, there are a lot of them, they move in a school, and their movements are precise and unpredictable.

The idea for this motif actually came from a discussion with Richard Glasser from Dimension/Weinstein Company. We talked and talked about it, and I played a couple of ideas on the piano, kind of improvising. And he said, “*These things move very quickly in a school.*” So I brought in a violin and a piccolo violin, and I transposed them in different keys and tempos and articulations – similar to the way a school of fish move.

Even though they are in a group, each fish moves slightly differently. And to me, it sounded like organized chaos. That cue does not actually appear in the movie, but little pieces of it are remixed here and there throughout the movie.

So tell me, how does a serious musician look at a scene, where a fish comes out of someone’s vagina and bites a penis, and write a straightforward piece of music to go along with that?

Well, what can I say...? *[Laughs]*, it goes with the profession. This is not the first film I scored that was about animals. I think the first one was [“The Rats \(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00006G8JM/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00006G8JM&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20\)”](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00006G8JM/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00006G8JM&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20). *[Laughs]* So, it’s kind of the same thing. How do you seriously score rats eating people? I’m a film composer; this is my profession. I simply write for the movies I get. I’m sure there are movies I would like to score, but I only score the movies that come to me.

And I put all of my imagination, abilities and talents into each project. It makes no difference to me what kind of movie it is. Sure a movie like [“Journey to the End of the Night \(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000KB48AM/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000KB48AM&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20\)”](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000KB48AM/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000KB48AM&linkCode=as2&tag=examinercom0e-20) is easier for me to score, because I just happen to like drama. Scoring “Piranha 3DD” is definitely more difficult, but I don’t really try to analyze the film. I come from a more emotional side of writing, and I don’t score exactly what I see, because the movie doesn’t need that. The score should be what you feel.

The original score to “Piranha 3DD” is currently available at iTunes (http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=5573&RD_PARM1=http%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Falbum%2Fpiranha-3dd-original-motion%2Fid526556912), Amazon (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007V4QM2S/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=examinercom0e-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B007V4QM2S), and Amazon Digital (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0083L32YE/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=examinercom0e-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0083L32YE).

“Piranha 3DD” is currently available for online streaming at iTunes (http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=pfkJy7zT6PA&subid=&offerid=146261.1&type=10&tmpid=5573&RD_PARM1=http%3A%2F%2Fitunes.apple.com%2Fus%2Fmovie%2Fpiranha-3dd%2Fid525890728) and Amazon (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0085157B8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=examinercom0e-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0085157B8).



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Mark is an avid film, television, and video game music collector. He ...