

Paul Rigby

(The Audiophile Man)

HEADLINE INTERVIEWS SOUNDTRACKS REVIEW VINYL

LALO SCHIFRIN – THE CHAMELEON

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Warner Bros.-Seven Arts presents

STEVE McQUEEN

in

BULLITT

Music composed and conducted by
LALO SCHIFRIN



Title: Bullitt OST

Label: Speakers Corner

I beg your indulgence on this particular review because I want to illuminate the disc around an interview I did some time ago now with its composer, Lalo Schifrin, who shed light on the creation of the record but also referred to other associated works, *Enter The Dragon* and *Dirty Harry*. I include my old interview below, which hopefully provides an insight into *Bullitt's* production and, even when discussing other projects, hopefully allows you to see more of the man and his temperament as an artist.

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Argentinean born, Lalo Schifrin, is one of the most versatile composers on the scene today – and he wants you to know it. As a pianist, composer and conductor, he is equally at home conducting a symphony orchestra, performing at an international jazz festival, scoring a film or television show. However, it's those classic film and TV scores that he's most well known for.



Schifrin is adamant, he hates any suggestion of procedure, any accusation of soundtrack by rote, any hint that a template may be involved. He's an *artist* and he'll tear your throat out if you say otherwise. My first mistake.

"I studied *music!*" Schifrin snaps through a half ingested sandwich, "I don't want to sound like a snob or arrogant but you really should study classical music, get yourself *The Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky." Blood fills his cheeks. He discards the sandwich. I've obviously said something wrong. I scramble to remember what it might have been, "I have a technique, yes. I have influences but I have my own personality. I write a soundtrack from the beginning to the end, in one unified way. I don't do films that fit my style, I adapt my style to films. I like the challenge. I am a chameleon!"

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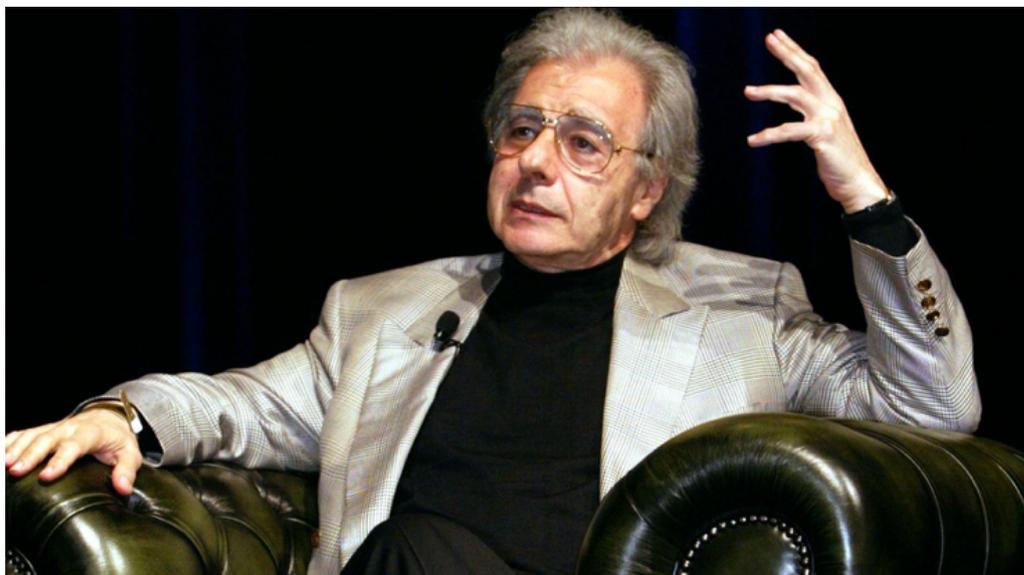


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Then he talks about his non-film work, defensively listing his many talents and describing his broad creative brush.

I try to bring him back to film but Schifrin bites back, "I am sorry to disappoint you. You are not going to be able to pin me down because I am a chameleon!" That word again. Then we both count to 10. I wonder if he'll go for the sandwich again or even if he'll throw it at me.

Which is why I gently offer Schifrin *Enter The Dragon*, *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry* for discussion and he deigns to give me the essence of his immaculate conception.

"There were, at the time, three styles of thriller: the American style, the detective in action; the English style, Hitchcock's suspense element and the French style, psychological elements," he said. "*Dirty Harry* follows the American tradition. However, Harry is in action, so I don't have a major theme for him. His time comes in moments of pathos – when the girl dies or, at the end, when he throws his badge, his rejection of the system."

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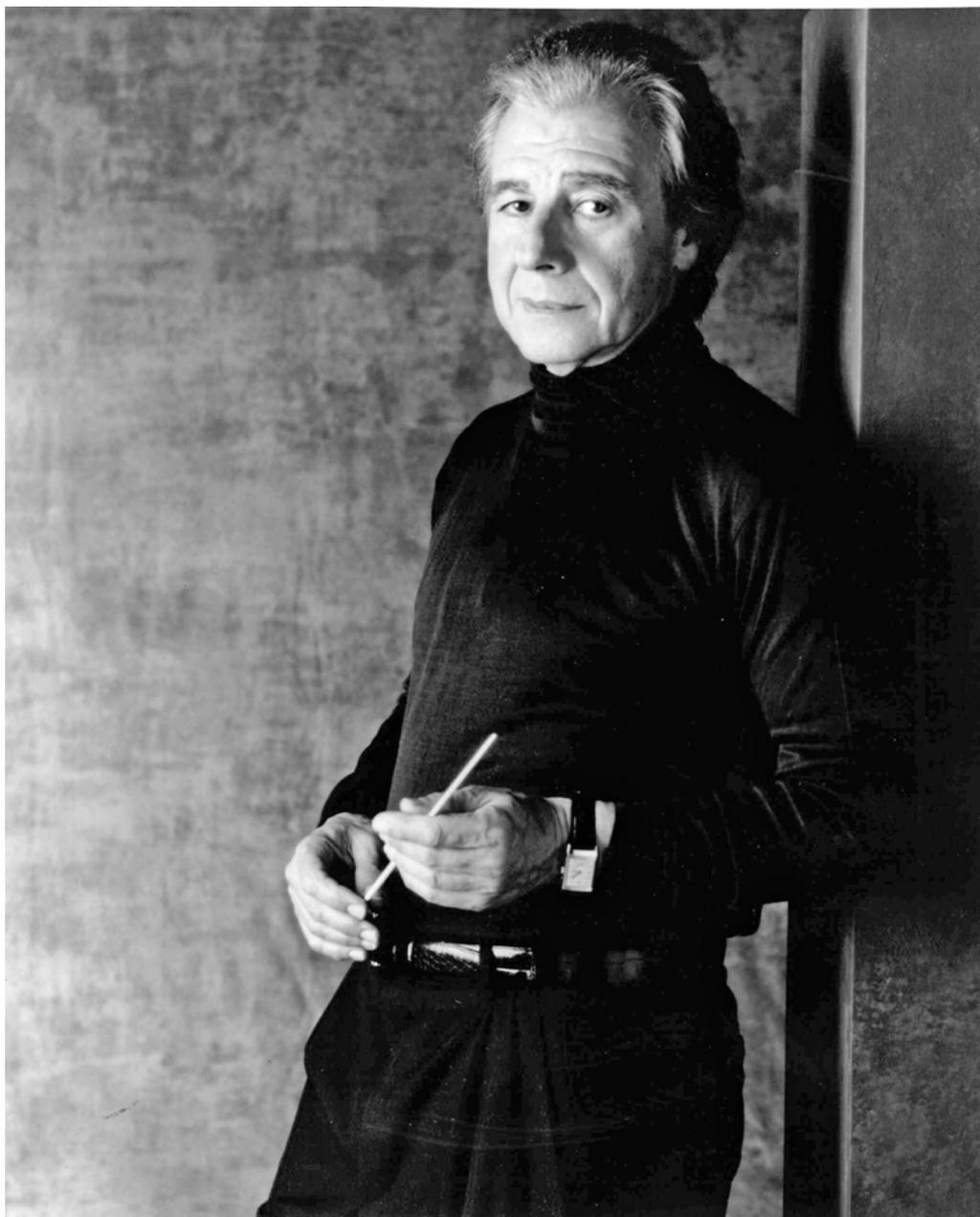


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“Hitchcock stated that the villain is more important than the hero in a motion picture and, for Dirty Harry’s villain, Scorpio, Schifrin gets into the man’s head,” said Schifrin. “Don Siegel, director, was confused at Schifrin’s insistence in using haunting female voices for Scorpio’s ‘theme’. He wears a belt with a peace sign on it. He lives a paradox, he’s a killer. The man hears voices.”

Bullitt follows the British film model, according to Schifrin, depending more on suspense. For this film, Schifrin was just as determined to leave music out, “I didn’t write any music for the chase,” Schifrin recalls. “I told the director, Peter Yates, it’s not necessary to have music here. You’ll have more freedom to use sound effects.”

As for *Enter The Dragon*? It falls out of Schifrin’s classification. It’s a fantasy, “Everything is exaggerated. *Dirty Harry* and *Bullitt* are set in realism.”

Speakers Corner’s new *Bullitt* vinyl release is excellent, incidentally. Nicely mastered and carefully packaged.



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