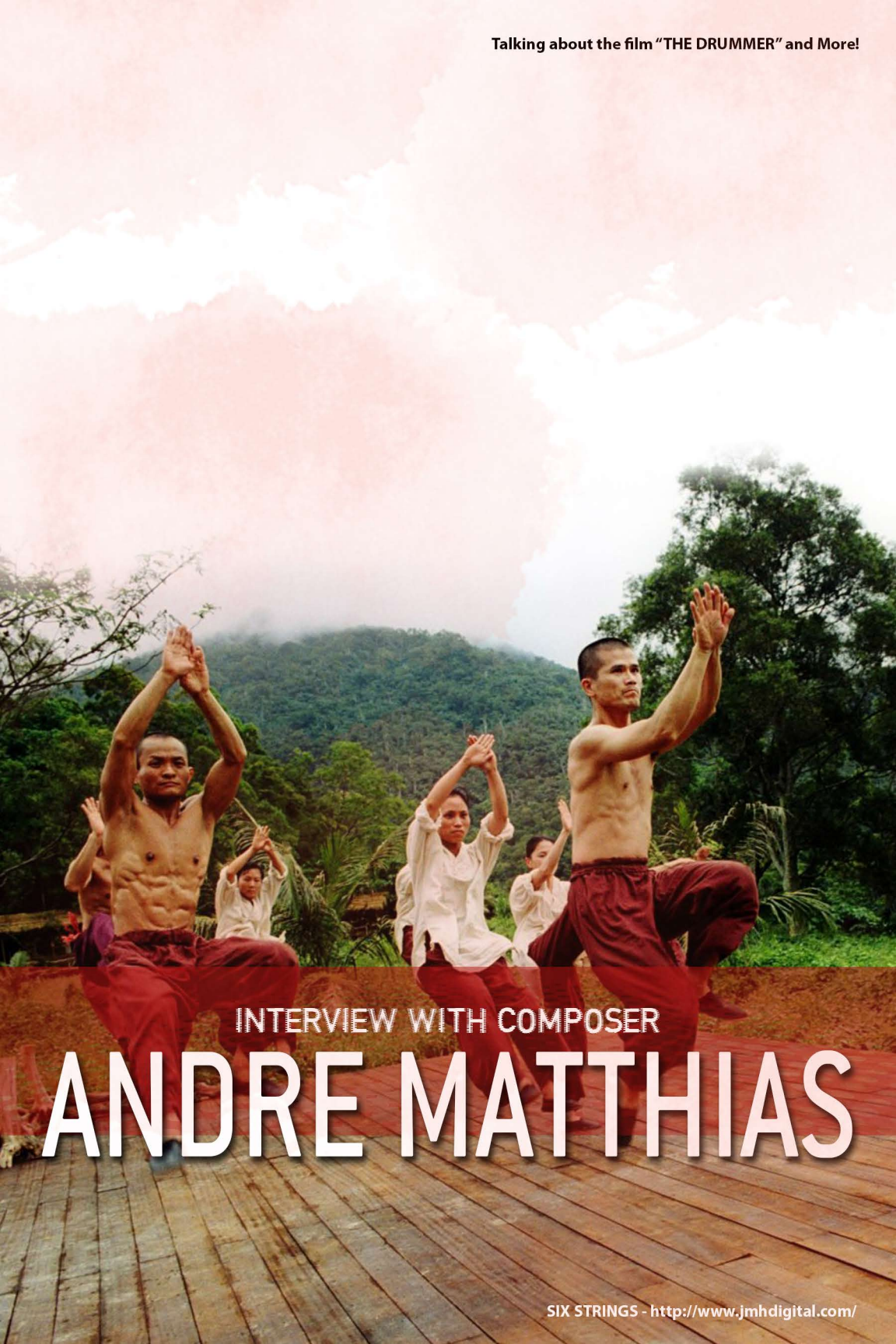


Talking about the film "THE DRUMMER" and More!



INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER

ANDRE MATTHIAS

INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER... ANDRE MATTHIAS



Andre Matthias took private piano and composition lessons before studying Musicology at the University of Hamburg.

An avid fan of film music since the age of 12, he composed his first scores for the Hamburg University Players. After finishing his Master's Degree, he scored many student films and the odd feature length project in between, before breaking onto the big screen with THE DRUMMER (nominated for Best Original Film Score at the 27th Hong Kong Film Awards). His next movies were, amongst others, the critically acclaimed THE LIGHT THIEF, the futuristic thriller CONTROL, BLESSED BENEFIT and CENTAUR.



FIRST, THANK YOU!!

JEREMY [SIX STRINGS]: What can you tell us about your original involvement in the film "THE DRUMMER" and your feeling in overall acceptance to the film and the score?

ANDRE MATTHIAS: "THE DRUMMER" was my first theatrical film. The movie was a German co-production, so they were looking for a German composer. I was lucky enough to be asked to write a few demos for the film after meeting Kenneth Bi, the director, at a café in Berlin in early 2006. It was a fun meeting, and I left exalted and determined to get the job. I wrote two demos. One was a very melodic piece with stark dynamic contrasts, which became the main theme from "THE DRUMMER". We basically made no changes to it whatsoever. The other demo was a very abstract piece, quite moody and "modern", at least to my ears. That one impressed no one and was quickly discarded. Thankfully I got the job, and a long production period began. I started writing the music while they were still shooting and editing. So the music and the movie evolved together, which is quite unusual. The first version of the film I received was almost 3 hours long and I quickly started mapping out the music and began scoring scenes. Little did I know how much the movie was still going to change, and many of my cues ended up in very different scenes than the ones they had originally been written for. We also tried different approaches for several scenes, so we always had some spare cues Kenneth could experiment with during the long editing process. In the end we were left with quite a lot of recordings that went unused in the finished film. Some of which found their way onto the original soundtrack album and others were left on the cutting room floor, so to speak.

The movie was received very favourably all over the world and the music with it. I was very lucky to have scored this very poetic movie as my first film. It was definitely a movie where the music was noticed. The film itself has a small but ardent following and I wish more people would know about it. It's really very special and worth checking out.

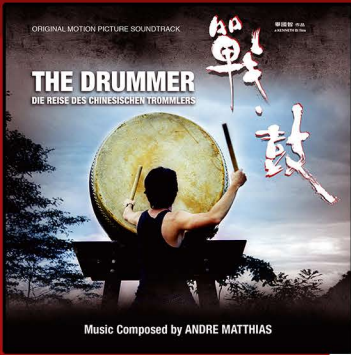
JEREMY [SIX STRINGS]: Has it been cool to be re-involved with the current re-release of "THE DRUMMER" with the musical extension with "MORE MUSIC: THE DRUMMER" and what are you hoping people will come away with extended release?

ANDRE MATTHIAS: Given that so much music was left off the film and the original CD, "MORE MUSIC FROM THE DRUMMER" was something I always wanted to do from the get go. I had little involvement with the selection of tracks on the original EMI Hong Kong CD, but it was a good selection and I was so happy that an actual CD was released with my name on it and everything. Being a fan and collector of film music that meant quite a lot to me and still does. For the German CD release on Normal Records I was able to include five additional tracks that I felt were a nice addition and also presented more of the music that was actually heard in the film. As for the bonus album, I never thought we'd pull it off. After all, this wasn't "BRAVEHEART" or "GLADIATOR" where people would clamour for a second album. It was more a fun thing I did for my friends and family, but somehow I never forgot about it. So when we talked about the fact that the soundtrack to "THE DRUMMER" never had a digital release outside its physical form (both CDs have been out of print for years) and wouldn't it be nice to finally release it as a download as well, I suggested adding the second album as a bonus. The compilation has changed over the years, but I think this final version is probably the best. It's not as polished as the original soundtrack, as some tracks are original demos and layouts which never saw a mixing studio, but I think it still holds together pretty well. It was definitely great fun putting it together, and I hope that people will enjoy it as much as the original soundtrack. In a way, it's presented as an alternative soundtrack, with a similar structure than the first one with the inclusion of music by U-Theatre and Monkey Insane. I think the secondary theme, which I originally called the "funeral theme", because that's the scene it was originally written for, gets more of a workout in this second album than it did in the first one.

JEREMY [SIX STRINGS]: How does the music from "THE DRUMMER" differ from other projects like "4 ASSASSINS" or "THE LIGHT THIEF", the real question what is your method from score to score?

ANDRE MATTHIAS: My method from score to score changes with the demands placed upon me. In the case of "THE LIGHT THIEF" it was a total change to "THE DRUMMER", because I was actually presented with a finished cut of the film, which had been temped with what I think was traditional Kyrgyz music. This daunted me at first, because I felt that I probably wasn't the right person to write in this very authentic style without just copying it. But Aktan Arym Kubat, the director, told me that he didn't want me to copy anything. Instead he wanted me to just take inspiration from the temp music and translate it into my own language. That was a huge relief and everything came together very quickly after that. That was probably the fastest and least complicated film I have worked on so far.

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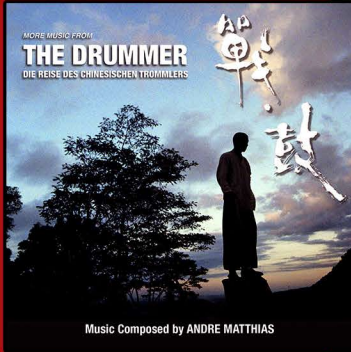
"FOUR ASSASSINS" was very different again. In this case I was presented with finished scenes but not a finished film. That's okay for working on the scenes, but in the end one has to check if everything still works just as well once everything is edited together. "FOUR ASSASSINS" is a much more traditional movie and it was my first thriller score for a feature film. In a way, it's actually more of a drama than a thriller, but it still has this thriller/noir flair and quite a few moments of tension. This one wasn't temped at all, which allowed me to come up with my own approach. My original main title music was originally much quieter and subtle, more like "Is That All I Meant to You?". But it was felt that the opening music should be stronger, so I rewrote it to be more driving and rhythmic. Funny enough, for some later scenes it was the other way around. I felt that the music needed to provide some sense of movement, but we ended up with the quieter, more subtle approach instead. You just never know.

JEREMY [SIX STRINGS]: What future do you see for music, is the Cd completely dead or do you think it will make a comeback like vinyl?

ANDRE MATTHIAS: Unfortunately the CD market is indeed declining dramatically. In terms of the environment and less plastic garbage, that's probably a good thing, but my collector's heart is still bleeding from the idea. I do hope for a comeback, but that will probably only happen if the internet has finally devoured itself. Nevertheless, I believe that a certain small market for CDs will remain. There are still those who feel that paying money for mp3s or streaming rights is terribly abstract and more something of a last resort in case no other alternative presents itself. I guess we'll see how it goes.

JEREMY [SIX STRINGS]: Is there talk of a score release for your work on "CENTAUR" and if so what can you tell us about this project?

ANDRE MATTHIAS: I have prepared an album and will do everything I can to see it released once the film opens. This score is very close to my heart. The movie reunited me with Aktan Arym Kubat and it was the first time that I was presented with a movie which was completely temptracked with my own music, in this case exclusively with music from THE LIGHT THIEF. No surprise there. That was daunting in a very different way, because I was very much afraid that I had to copy myself, but again Aktan calmed me and assured me that nobody expected me to copy anything, so I was relieved to still have the freedom to create something new. Still, one can't say that I wasn't influenced by the temp track as it worked pretty well. The music for "CENTAUR" is in a way a cousin to "THE LIGHT THIEF" but much sadder and more mystical. I'm really happy with how it turned out and how the music works with the movie. I feel very close to the film. Thankfully people tell me that the music not that close to "THE LIGHT THIEF" after all, so I look forward to how both film and score will be received.



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