

## SOURCECAST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH PHIL WEINSTEIN

**Skul: I also had one other question that I'm interested in. I've always been fascinated with film scores, and I believe it was Adam Berry who did the scoring for the Balto films. What was it like to direct him in making the films' scores?**

PW: Adam is a really talented composer. We would watch animatic scenes that I had mocked up with temp score. I think we both really like 'big' movie scores, big orchestra, sweeping emotionally moving scores. During the days I was working on the Balto films, all I would listen to all day was film scores in pre-production, I'm a big fan of all movie music even to this day, I listen to CINEMIX on iTunes. When it came to the music I had a pretty good sense of the moments I wanted to hit. But Adam took it way beyond what I ever could have imagined. He came up with the whole Indian/Inuit themes, using special instruments to create the sounds for Balto II, and then creating a really masterful big score for Balto III.

The moment he scored for Aleu when she tells Balto she isn't going home is especially powerful. I listen to that cue to this day on my iPod all the time. He really deserves a lot of credit for making those movie feel big.

**Skul: I agree, the scores for the Balto sequels are tremendous. May I ask, do you think there could ever be a time when they are released to the public, even through iTunes, etc?**

PW: Just like the films themselves, the franchise is owned by Universal, I really wish they would consider releasing, but I don't know that they would ever find it on their radar.

**Skul: It's a pity. I believe a few people on Animation Source found a way to snag the scores, through recording the background tracks of the film that doesn't include the voices or most of the sound effects. It sounds great, but it's just not the same.**

PW: Yeah, I agree. I can tell you from a personal note. We traveled to Seattle, Washington to score Balto 2, it was recorded in Chapel called Bastyr Chapel, the place does a lot of movie scores because of the exceptional acoustics in the space. It is a real Chapel, so one of the bonuses of that session is that I could sit in the room with the orchestra while they played. Normally we are isolated in a separate room. It was unbelievable to hear it live.

**Skul: Yeah, I've seen behind-the-scenes clips of directors in isolated rooms, so that must have been a REAL treat.**

PW: Yeah, the idea that the studio was even willing to spend the money for a real orchestra (as opposed to digital) was great. Wouldn't be done today on that kind of budget. Many of my friends that worked on that music marked that as a moment in time, almost the end of an era for orchestral score...at least for direct to video releases. I feel very lucky to have been there to watch Adam do his magic.

**Skul: I love music. I have grown up with it, and my favorite music pieces of all time are those belonging to film scores; I rank the Balto music among my most favorite, both Adam Berry's and James Horner's. I can only imagine how it must be to be sitting and listening to it being played right there in front of you. I view movie scores as just as part of the final product as the editing, video, and audio: without it, the film is nothing.**

PW: Absolutely true. Many people do not understand the value of it. And I agree on the Balto music. It was really amazing to be there.

**Skul: On a slightly-different subject, Mark Hamill played Niju in Balto II. Did you ever catch yourself thinking, "Oh my gosh, I'm directing Luke Skywalker"?**

PW: Yeah, it was a little bit of an out of body experience. My dad took me to see the original Star Wars when I was just a little boy. So it was very strange. I was a big fan of the Rocky films, and had the same weird feeling working with Apollo Creed...

**Skul: You've worked with Luke Skywalker and Samwise Gamgie. I think you should consider yourself VERY lucky.**

PW: Hah, yeah true...

**Skul: Were there any other voice actors/actresses (or even crew members) that you found surreal to be working with?**

PW: Yeah, David Carradine was the bad guy in Kill Bill, but before that...Kung Fu, James Woods on the Hercules Series, Merv Griffin, and Jerry Stiller, Ben Stiller's dad.

**Skul: Out of curiosity, are there some characters you feel were less-than-satisfying, either major or minor, on the films you worked on?**

PW: Not really, the only thing I can think of, in terms of direction would have been the character of Stella in Balto III. I wasn't in favor of making the character sort of May West style. Nothing against Jean Smart, she is an awesome actress, but I originally thought the character of Stella would not be a bawdy burlesque type of character. I always saw her relationship sort of like George Costanzas mom and dad in the Seinfeld series. If you remember them, they had a cantankerous relationship, and she was nothing to look at.

So to me the idea was that not that Stella was a sexy character, but she was sexy to Boris. They could have had a relationship like an old Jewish couple. And in some ways that kind of bickering—you see more like true love instead of just the superficial sexy goose type. They are meant for each other. To me, that would've been quite funny.

Skul: **I DO like the part near the end, where Boris was yelling "STELLLLA!"**

PW: Yup, that was intentional.

Skul: **Any other references to other media that you "hid" in the films?**

PW: Well, technically, the writer did that one. I can't really think of any off hand. Not that I'm holding out or anything, just nothing comes to mind at the moment.

Skul: **Were you the one who chose a writer, or was that the job of your higher-ups?**

PW: Higher-ups.

Skul: **With your previous experience as a storyboard artist, did you end up doing some of that for these films?**

PW: Yes, quite a bit. I storyboarded the opening song for Balto III, the camera flying thru the letters Alaska sequence in B3, the opening for Balto 2, animated the post cards sequence for B3, Kodi rescues his dad...

Skul: **You got the fun ones!**

PW: The little gag with the fish under water when we first meet Boris in B3. I worked quite a bit of "Who you Really Are" in B2 and "Taking You Home" - did a lot of work there. Oh, I boarded the water rapids sequence. That was Balto 2?

Skul: **Balto 3, with Muk, Luk and Stella.**

PW: Yes. And all of the flying visual at the end of B3.

Skul: **Oh, that reminds me of two new questions: Were you allowed to keep something from the film for your own personal collection? And what do you personally think happened to Aleu after Balto 2?**

PW: No, I wasn't allowed to keep anything personally except my own copy of the script, which had lots of notes and sketches. I have some digital copies of things like the color script - but all of the original work is property of Universal, in storage somewhere.

What I really want to see is a Balto 4, Steele returns, out for revenge on Balto for ruining him, and Aleu returns to the rescue. There is something about "A daughter returns to save her father." There is something about the archetype - to me rings true. So I don't know what happened to her, but I would love to see her come back. She saves her dad, but know the dynamic is changed, because Kodi has become the Alpha, and now the sister could potentially threaten that relationship. All of those pieces seem like a good launching point for a fourth movie

**Skul: I believe you said earlier that the "official" pairing of the dogs from Balto 3 are Ralph and Dusty. What are your thoughts on people who have paired Dusty with Kodi instead?**

PW: I don't know, I hear a lot of people making a fuss over possible romances one way or another, but quite honestly, there was never any subtext. There was one scene, I believe Ralph kind of chases off towards Dusty. And if that's the scene, that is the launching point. I remember that scene

**Skul: Yeah, and right before that Dusty gave Ralph a friendly nuzzle.**

PW: Because I added it, only as a motivation to get the other characters, to run off screen. Only in the sense of trying to make the moment feel "real" - but I think people have extrapolated much more from a little storyboard insert. It wasn't in the script.

**Skul: I guess people are just vehement on seeing some sort of romance between the characters.**

PW: Yeah, I can understand, but honestly, on those kind of productions we are moving so quickly there is not time to over analyze secondary characters, I mean it would be great and add a lot of depth, but there's only so much time. I think feature films have a certain luxury of time. They can rethink scenes many times over.

**Skul: Thanks for the answers!**

PW: You're welcome!