



SUPERMAN-THE MOVIE: EXTENDED CUT THE MUSIC MYSTERY

An exclusive analysis for CapedWonder™.com by Jim Bowers and Bill Williams

NOTE FROM JIM BOWERS, EDITOR, CAPEDWONDER™.COM:

Hi Fans!

Before you begin reading this article, please know that I am thrilled with this new release from the Warner Archive Collection. It is absolutely wonderful to finally be able to enjoy so many fun TV cut scenes in widescreen! I HIGHLY recommend adding this essential home video release to your personal collection; do it soon so the Warner Bros. folks will know that there is still a great deal of interest in vintage films. The release is only on Blu-ray format (for now at least), and only available for purchase on-line Yes! We DO Believe A Man Can Fly!

Thanks!

Jim

It goes without saying that one of John Williams' most epic and influential film scores of all time is his score for the first "Superman" film. To this day it remains as iconic as the film itself. From the Ruby-Spears animated series to "Seinfeld" to "Smallville" and its reappearance in "Superman Returns", its status in popular culture continues to resonate. Danny Elfman has also said that it will appear in the forthcoming "Justice League" film.

When word was released in September 2017 that Warner Home Video announced plans to release a new two-disc Blu-ray of "Superman" as part of the Warner Archive Collection, fans around the world rejoiced with excitement at the news that the 188-minute extended version of the film - a slightly shorter version of which was first broadcast on ABC-TV on February 7 & 8, 1982 - would be part of the release. Fans and film collectors alike have scrambled to acquire a copy of the new Blu-ray release, "Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut" (which also features the film's 2000 Special Edition or "Director's Cut"), in high-definition and widescreen format through online retailers.

But the new release does not come without its share of differences. In addition to improved grain structure, new color correction, and an alternate and previously unreleased version of one sequence, one of the most notable differences comes early in the film - specifically, during the opening credits. Up until this point, all previous versions of the film - whether theatrical, TV broadcast, VHS, Betamax, CED, VCD, laserdisc, DVD, and Blu-ray - have used the same version of the main title music theme during the opening credits. Now, with this new "Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut" Blu-ray release, the music has been revised and edited for the first time ever. To make a long story short, the version of the main theme

that is heard in "Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut" during the end credits is now also heard at the start of the film as well.

In order to understand the change in the music, we must go back to the 2-CD soundtrack set from Rhino Records and Film Score Monthly's 8-CD box set "Superman: The Music: 1978-1988", released in 2000 and 2008, respectively.

The 2000 Rhino Records release was a reconstruction of tracks from the original soundtrack release, several unreleased tracks, and numerous bits and pieces of score from different film reels. The end result, while successful, was one of varying degrees of sound quality, as it was believed that the original scoring sessions were lost forever. Among the expanded tracks was a reconstruction of the main title theme as heard in the film. At the end of the CD, we were treated to the first release of the film's end credit music, a cue which was more sweeping and exciting than the one heard at the start.

Eight years later, Film Score Monthly released "Superman - The Music: 1978-1988," which contains the complete scores of all four films and the 1988 Ruby-Spears animated series. All of the scores were sourced from the best masters available and mixed to high-quality standards. But this time around, what is most notable about the soundtrack is that the "Prelude and Main Title" at the start of the score is what was originally recorded in 1978 and intended for the start of the film. At the end of the score, the version of the end title that is used on the soundtrack is the same as what appears on the original 1978 soundtrack album.

As Mike Matessino points out in a 2008 interview on the John Williams Fan Network website (<http://jwfan.com/?p=4039>), the cues were swapped for the final film mix. For the opening titles, the "Prelude" was combined with the cue recorded for the end credits, with a key shift upward and edits to cover the length of the title sequence. For the end of the film, the cue intended for the main titles was used instead, combined with an edited version of the "Love Theme" to cover the lengthy end credits sequence. For nearly 40 years this has been how the film has been presented in all versions. Granted, it seems confusing at first, but when you reference the liner notes from the Film Score Monthly release, it becomes clearer.

With this new "Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut" release, the most obvious change occurs with the opening of the film. The majority of the film is in mono sound, representing the original television broadcasts. However, the prelude and opening titles are in stereo and use the film's original intended "Main Title" performance in place of the altered "End Title March" music. Left alone, this "Main Title" recording perfectly syncs with the onscreen credits, but instead, the performance has been edited to match the timings of the edited and pitch adjusted "End Title March". This leads to some obvious awkward hiccups and some equally awkward edits, most notably at the 3:08 mark before Terence Stamp's credit appears on screen and at the 4:16 mark after John Williams' credit appears and the "space sparkler" travels diagonally across the screen. During the transition to the Love Theme, we hear some brief, yet obvious hiccups and bleeds in the music because of crossfades. Another awkward edit occurs once the writers' credits appear, at the 4:30 mark, as the score reverts to the "End Title March" music and continues to the 4:49 mark, before returning to the intended "Main Title" for the rest of the credits. To a trained ear familiar with every nuance of the John Williams score, the edits are quite obvious.

The audio people for "Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut" partially restored what was originally intended for the film, creating an all-new music edit for the opening titles of the film, one which was never intended by the composer or the filmmakers.

For reference, here are the timings for this new composite opening main title for "Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut," which used the Rhino Records release; as such, we have retained the titles listed on the Rhino release below. As noted above, what the Rhino Records release calls the "End Title March" is really the intended "Main Title" and vice versa:

- 0:18 - 2:01 - Prelude and Main Title March

- 2:01 - 4:30 - Finale and End Title March
 - Edits at: 2:09, 2:16, 2:20, 2:27, 2:41, 2:43, 2:50, 2:51, 2:56, 2:59, 3:02, 3:06, 3:08, 3:24, 3:38, 3:43, 3:48, 3:54, 3:56, 4:06, 4:14, 4:15, 4:16, 4:24
- 4:30 - 4:49 - Prelude and Main Title March
 - Edit at 4:39
- 4:49 - 5:20 - Finale and End Title March

This music alteration in “Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut” didn’t have to be done. Here are some alternatives that the audio people could have chosen from for the opening titles music:

1. Do nothing and keep the sound mono.
2. Pull the audio from the 1978 Dolby Stereo master, which not only has stereo music, but also stereo sound effects. (The opening titles of “Superman: The Movie - Extended Cut” has stereo music and mono sound effects.)
3. Use the isolated score track made in 2000 for the Special Edition DVD, which has the “Prelude” in stereo (see below) but handles the “End Title March” properly.
4. Go back to the intended version of the “Main Title” as composed by John Williams and never before featured on any version of the film.

Furthermore, the “Prelude” heard during the opening titles is presented in stereo in “Superman: The Movie - Extended Cut”. The original 1978 sound mix presents the “Prelude” in mono, which then turns into stereo at the “A Richard Donner Film” title card. More stereo music is heard after the titles for the opening of the following cue, “The Planet Krypton”. Once that fades out (around 6:43), music for the remainder of “Superman: The Movie - Extended Cut” - until the final scene - is presented monophonically.

Around 2:59:45, the finale and end titles are presented with stereo music from the 2000 Rhino Records release. Similar crossfade “glitches” as heard in the earlier main title can be heard at various points in the “Love Theme” portion of the end titles (at 3:04:21, 3:05:53, 3:07:13, and 3:07:30). These are not present in any prior version of the film.

We greatly appreciate this new version of “Superman: The Movie - Extended Cut” for all of its awe and splendor for fans to enjoy. And with this release, there is the hope that we will one day see the extended versions of the Superman sequels released in a similar fashion.

Stay Tuned this fall for a CapedWonder-exclusive interview with the Warner Bros. Studios colorist who mastered “Superman-The Movie: Extended Cut” for Blu-ray!

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