Music
Cameron Allan

Additional Music
Glen Muirhead  Keyboards
Nathan Waks  Violincello
Romano Crivici  Violin
Spencer Lee  Music Engineering
Sydney Welsh Choir, directed by Margaret Hughes

"I Need You More"
Performed by Paul Hester
Written by Paul Hester & John Clifforth
Courtesy of Regular Music
Paul Hester's performance courtesy of Capitol Records

"Lakmé"
Written by Léo Delibes

"Once in a Lifetime"
Performed by David Argue & Rebecca Barnard
Written by Greg Ham & Toots Wostry

"Drop Dead Tango"
Written by Glen Muirhead & Cameron Allan

"Log Fire"
Written by Ken Campbell, Glen Muirhead & Cameron Allan

"Nature of the Beast"
Performed by Collin James Hay
Written by Colin James Hay & Jeremy Alsop
Courtesy of CBS Records & FBK Songs

Composer Cameron Allan:

Cameron Allan wrote the score for Pandemonium around the same time as he was working on The Umbrella Woman.

Allan made his screen composing debut for director Jim Sharman at the age of 19, composing the score for Sharman's second feature film Summer of Secrets. He received another leg up when Peter Sculthorpe couldn't do a gig for a show on the ABC, Ten Australians - About Art, and suggested Allan for
the job, provided he could do the music in a week.

Allan went on to work on television shows for the ABC and commercial television, for feature films such as The Umbrella Woman and Hayden Keenan’s Pandemonium, the rarely seen telemovie Call Me Mr. Brown, and Susan Lambert and Sarah Gibson's documentary Landslides.

Allan was born in Melbourne but moved to Sydney and went to Meadowbank Boys High School. On the second go, he was accepted into the Conservatorium of Music. Along the way, Cameron had also spent time in the National Youth Orchestra and the Gladesville RSL Junior Brass Band.

Cameron began doing theatre work, and toured Australia with Carl Vine as part of the Australian Young Composers group.

Allan then made a career change, and formed a partnership with Martin Fabinyi called Regular Records.

His pop music credits included producing Mutants of Modern Disco by Captain Goodvibes, and producing Mental as Anything, including hits such as The Nips are getting bigger and If You Leave Me Can I Come To.

Other bands included The Sports and a win in 1982 of a Best Australian Producer award for working on Icehouse with Iva Davies and his band Flowers.

Taken in total, Allan's work constitutes a rarely acknowledged but remarkable contribution to Australian popular music.

Allan eventually shifted to LA to live and work. He was at one time in a relationship with Patrice Newell, a model, before she formed a relationship with producer, broadcaster and columnist Phillip Adams.

For his film scores, Allan worked in a range of styles, usually favouring relatively sparse elements, often with an Asian or an exotic modern tinge. He contributed a typically distinctive and jaunty score to Emoh Ruo, with a range of stylistic references ranging from Australian 80s pop to Morricone, but for The Umbrella Woman, he shifted more towards a haunting, haunted tonal range, albeit still relying on exotic elements, rather than say, a traditional orchestration featuring strings. For Pandemonium, he offered a mix of typically quirky sounds and a compilation of pop songs.

Composer Felicity Foxx did a short one page interview with Allan for the May 1988 issue 69 edition of Cinema Papers. There is a later interview with him
here (up at time of writing August 2015), which doesn’t mention Pandemonium.

The Cinema Papers’ interview does mention the film directly, and the rest of the interview is also interesting, as Allan reveals some of his thoughts regarding his compositional activities and strategies:

**Foxx:** Why do you work in film?

**Allan:** Initially it was because I wanted to be a composer and writing for film seemed like the best way I could develop as a writer. The only real alternative is concert music. I got involved in that when I was still at high school but stopped pursuing it fairly quickly.

**Foxx:** Don’t you find it frustrating as a film composer, having been a concert writer, that you no longer have an entirely free rein to compose exactly what you like?

**Allan:** You’ve got much more freedom, much more.

**Foxx:** But there’s a director, there’s an image …

**Allan:** Sure, I have to be at the service of a director to some extent, but I can write for whichever instruments I want. With a commissioned work, I am obliged to stick to the limited concert ensembles that are already set up.

**Foxx:** But in many ways a film score is just another sort of commission, isn’t it? Lengthwise, moodwise, financially, it’s dictated.

**Allan:** It doesn’t really make a difference. There are limitations in every area of art. The limitations in film scoring I just see as the practical side of the score. It’s just like writing a piece with a number of movements. And the big difference in being a composer for film, rather than working on a film in any other capacity, is that at the end of it all, the film score exists independently. And working in film frees me from having to use ensembles I don’t want to use, which means I can do what I’m more interested in - use the studio as a means of creating music instead.

**Foxx:** I can’t believe you’ve never been frustrated with a scene you have to score.

**Allan:** Sure I’ve been frustrated, but generally there are tricks you can pull to get you there.
Foxx: But as an artist it must annoy you that it becomes a matter of ‘getting there’, rather than doing something really fantastic. Who’s going to know it was you who made a bad scene work anyway?

Allan: Music never saves a bad scene. If you do it for yourself, you can be happy. The artistic satisfaction comes from seeing it; your music, the direction, the film, as a whole.

Foxx: So film scoring for you was more a necessitated choice of career than a natural one?

Allan: Absolutely. But film is also the only real art form of the century and I find that very attractive too. It’s the latest modern form of expression to involve many, many crafts. I can’t think of anything quite like it since the enormous European cathedrals they built.

Foxx: When you decided to move into film, how did it happen for you?

Allan: Peter Sculthorpe recommended me for a job he couldn’t do. That was a series for the ABC directed by Stafford Garner and I’ve been working with him ever since.

Foxx: And what do you know see as the composer’s role on film?

Allan: To try to make something that adds to the individuality of the film.

Foxx: To do that, what factors do you have take into account? You must be analysing more than just visuals.

Allan: Oh yes, you’re concerning yourself with plot, characters, every nuance.

Foxx: What were you particularly conscious of when you wrote the score to The Umbrella Woman?

Allan: Everything I wrote for that film was taking the main character’s state of mind strongly into account. I think that was generally reflected in the darkness of the score. It’s a fairly pessimistic film really. That’s why it was such a challenge to work on. I got a very good reaction from the score too, in a purely musical sense. We released a 45-minute soundtrack LP with Virgin Records.

Foxx: Speaking of soundtrack releases, how do you view the hit song in film soundtracks?

Allan: I hate it. Don’t get me wrong, I really like pop songs. I’ve spent many
years producing them. But when you put a pop song with a picture it simplifies everything. You shouldn’t need to explain pictures with a song. The lyrics and individuality of the song draw too much attention to themselves. The audience should be free to interpret the ending of a film how they like, without it being written all through the end song. Certain lyrics with certain scenes can be very satisfying though.

Foxx: Is there a type of picture you prefer to score?

Allan: I don’t relate terribly well to domestic-type comedies, sitcoms. I actually prefer the art-film style.

Foxx: You’ve just finished working on Pandemonium. Tell us about that score.

Allan: The score is really only consistent with the film’s structure. The music was worked on reel by reel, so that each reel has its own flavour. The director, Haydn Keenan, was very interested in bringing a mixture of elements into the score and in using a whole variety of musicians. So we had Nathan Waks, who is a member of the Sydney String Quartet, playing extrapolations on Bach. Then we used the Sydney Welsh choir - 30 voices - because Haydn wanted a choir. That was a completely different sound. Then there was some of the dark forties old-style underscoring; we’ve used sixties and seventies classic police movie music to accompany scenes with secret agents. There’s every possible type of sound in there.

Foxx: It sounds rather like a cartoon with flashes of sound coming from everywhere, pushing it along at a really fast pace.

Allan: There is that flavour to it, yes. We tried everything. We even had one statement of the main theme played on bagpipes. Haydn wanted them and I love their sound. The theme became amazingly creepy, they changed it so much.

Foxx: The Australian film industry has been analysed from so many angles. What is it like for a composer working on films in this country?

Allan: Well, I think for anybody who works on the post-production side of Australian films, low post-production budgets are a big frustration. It means that nobody gets a chance to make a film that is entirely bullet-proof and complete. Also there can be a big feeling of waning interest on some films as they enter music stage. I can appreciate that the novelty there is at shoot stage has worn off to a large degree, but films here are telescoped to their detriment in post-production in a way which doesn’t happen in other countries.
Foxx: Where ideally would you work then?

Allan: In Europe. It’s a question of balancing up lifestyle and what the country can offer you as far as work goes. I like places with beautiful paintings to look at. And in Europe they have a whole history of culture and storytelling behind them that we just don’t have here. More than anything, I thing (sic, think) it’s important to surround myself with the sort of art I want to be creating, because I do see myself as an artist.

(Below: Cameron Allan)

Allan died in 2013 and his former partner, Martin Fabinyi, published a tribute and obituary to him in The Sydney Morning Herald on 19th July 2013, with the header Composer was a restless intellect:

Cameron Allan and I formed Regular Records in 1978 to finance a movie called The Lipstick Killers. We had the title, but no script and no money. Each day we’d meet in Sweethearts Cafe in Kings Cross, talk through our script ideas and ways to raise finance.
We could see that independent Australian music was happening, so we thought, let's start a record company. A couple of hits and we would have enough money for a film. We approached some friends, a band of art students who had a Monday night gig playing on a pool table at the Unicorn Hotel on Oxford Street, and asked them if they wanted to be on our new label - Regular Records - so-called because we thought of ourselves as "regular guys".

We woke up the next morning having signed Mental as Anything - never mind that we had no experience in the record business.

This didn't faze Cameron. He was obsessively optimistic once he committed to a project. A friend at EMI gave us some time to record the band while Cameron simultaneously learnt how to work the equipment; we found a pressing plant via the Yellow Pages, and released 1500 copies of a "Triple A-side" EP of Mental as Anything Plays at Your Party. It wasn't long before the track The Nips Are Getting Bigger got picked up by 2JJ and became an independent hit.

Regular's second signing was Flowers - at that time one of the hottest bands on the burgeoning pub circuit. They made it a condition of signing that Cameron produce, and their debut album, Icehouse, which was later adopted as their name, became another hit. It also won Cameron the Countdown award for best producer, then the gold standard.

Cameron did not seem like an obvious choice for a pop music producer, given that he was a classical trained musician. However, he was completely consumed with the purity of sound, and obsessively curious about technology. When we re-released The Nips Are Getting Bigger he spent months back in the studio just working on the bass line. He was ever the perfectionist, determined to get what he thought were the ideal sounds.

Cameron Allan was born on July 9, 1955, and went to Meadowbank Boys High School. He played in the National Youth Orchestra and the Gladesville RSL Junior Brass Band before going on to the Conservatorium School of Music, where he studied composition.

He toured as part of the Australian Young Composers group, along with Carl Vine. His first musical commission came from Peter Sculthorpe for a piece for the ABC.

While studying he was introduced to the music of Stockhausen, John Cage and Steve Reich. While Cameron had a great understanding of such refined modernist music, for him there was no distinction between popular culture and
high art. He was as knowledgeable about Glenn Gould as he was about Phil Spector, as enthusiastic about Kurosawa as he was about Toy Story.

Composing film scores was a natural way to combine his passions for film, sounds and fascination with technology. His first two films were Jim Sharman’s the Summer of Secrets and The Night the Prowler. During the 1980s, he became a prolific composer of film scores, including Phillip Noyce’s Heatwave as well as Ken Cameron’s The Umbrella Woman, which was nominated for an Australian Film Institute award.

In the late 1980s, Cameron moved to Los Angeles. He composed scores for many TV shows and movies, including Kojak, the series The Equaliser starring Edward Woodward, and produced music with Michael Nyman on the Oscar-nominated film The End of the Affair.

His restless intellect made him an inveterate traveller and a great collector of what most thought was forgotten ephemera, ranging from vintage recording microphones to airstream caravans. But most of all he collected people. Each of his trips or objects came with a story, and more often than not a new friend, including luminaries such as Werner Herzog among others.

It was not surprising that his work began to reflect his wide-ranging interests. In the 1990s Cameron began working in documentaries. He co-produced a documentary about Samoan gangs in Los Angeles called My Crazy Life, directed by the French filmmaker Jean Pierre Gorin. Together with his second wife, science writer Margaret Wertheim, they produced and directed a film called It's Jim’s World … We Just Live in It about the life and work of outsider physicist James Carter. The film is included in the exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London, called The Alternative Guide to the Universe.

In the past decade he worked with long-time collaborator Charlie Clouser from Nine Inch Nails as a composer on the TV series Las Vegas, and as a music editor on the first Saw film. I remember him calling me and telling me about this obscure, low budget film that was going to be a massive hit. He was like that, always keen to share his latest passion with his friends, whatever the time zone he was calling from. It was hard to resist Cameron’s enthusiasms and he had me so worked up about Saw that I even bid for the movie’s local distribution rights without having seen it.

In more recent years, he worked in the not-for-profit sector at the Annenberg Foundation as a consultant advising on philanthropic strategies and initiatives in the arts and social services.

Cameron Allan is survived by his brother Richard.
The original is available [here](#), and included several photos of Allan.

(Below: Cameron Allan young and old)