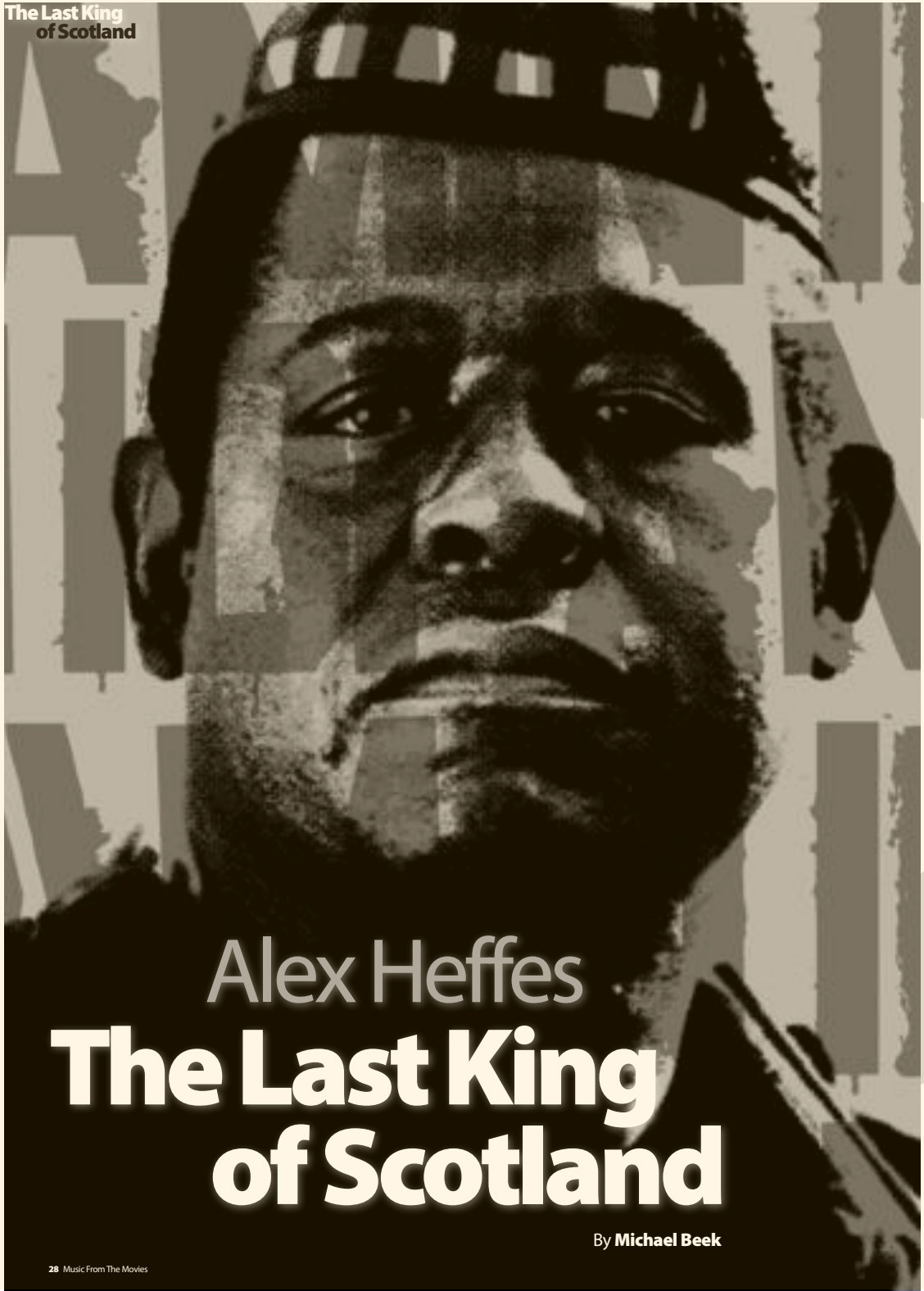


Alex Heffes
The Last King of Scotland

By **Michael Beek**

Notes from Uganda

In 1971 Uganda found itself in the grip of a coup and under the control of a General, Idi Amin. Amin was the saviour of a nation and the father of a people, he was the man who had fought his way from poor beginnings to become the head of state; he was in many eyes a hero.

Throughout the 1970s Amin wooed his people and the world; he made big promises and vowed to make Uganda a sparkling jewel in the African crown, a country that did things. This Xanadu was short lived however, and 300,000 Ugandans died before the world actually realised it had been played for a fool. Beneath that broad smile, buffoonish exterior and everyman demeanour was an evil and ruthless heart. Idi Amin was a dictator with a powerful grip on a suffocating regime.

The Last King Of Scotland is a riveting thriller of the highest proportions and filmmaker Kevin McDonald recreates, with exacting detail, 1970s Kampala, where a young doctor (James McAvoy) becomes friends with a great dictator (Forest Whitaker). Nicholas, like everyone else, is enraptured by this seemingly humble leader and succumbs to his performance, realising far too late that it's all been a charade and finds himself entangled in a web of lies and entrenched in a bear pit of blood.

Composer Alex Heffes has quickly become one of the brightest talents in British film music, following impressive works such as *Touching The Void, Dear Frankie, The Parole Officer* and *Vet Hard*, scores that are, in equal measure, robust, full of impact and appropriately tailored to their subject. The quest to create a musical identity for *The Last King Of Scotland* was, as the composer reveals in the following account, an unforgettable voyage of musical discovery…

Part One A Real Musical Adventure

By Alex Heffes

Kevin Macdonald first mentioned *The Last King Of Scotland* to me some time in 2004, telling me he thought it would make a great film and asking if I had read the book. Well, I hadn't, but I was certainly aware that Giles Foden had won the Whitbread First Novel Award in 1998 with his novel about Uganda under the regime of Idi Amin. I had known Kevin for some time by then, having first worked for him on his Oscar-winning film *One Day In September* and then on *Touching The Void*, so I knew that if this was something he was interested in it would be an amazing project.

By the time we finally came to work on it early in 2005 he and I had worked together on 8 or 9 projects, which is a privileged position for a composer to be in. A rapport built up over some years makes for a truly collaborative and rewarding experience.

We started talking about the music well before the shooting started, in fact before the film was even cast. We both felt that music could play a really important role in portraying Uganda in the 1970s and Kevin wanted to confound the audience's expectation of a film set in Africa. We decided that the African tracks in the film should reflect the spirit of modernism in Uganda at the time - basically, it should be funky.

The script called for a lot of musicians to appear on-screen at various moments, and we soon decided

that I would need to go out to Uganda to record and produce much of this material, as there is very little authentically Ugandan music available on CD. Kevin also thought it would be useful for me to have experienced Uganda first hand when it came to writing the score, and he was definitely right.

I flew to Kampala in the early summer of 2005, some weeks before shooting was planned to start. Uganda is a fantastically green country, incredibly beautiful and unspoiled. The production had been there for some time, scouting locations and doing local casting. Kevin had already made some musical connections, starting with finding a choir that would appear in one scene. In real life, Amin had a preoccupation with Scotland (hence the title of the picture). One scene called for a Ugandan choir to be singing something Scottish outside the parliament building, so while in the UK I'd made an arrangement of 'By The Banks of Loch Lomond', which I'd sent over to Kampala. Kevin had heard the Nyzonza Singers in a local show and asked if they would appear in the film. After seeing their show (which was great) I went to meet their choirmaster, well-known Ugandan composer, Mr Wassanyi Serukanya. He agreed they would be able to learn the piece, but was worried they wouldn't have anywhere to rehearse as the theatre had a new production starting immediately. In the end I rehearsed the choir in the prop store, which in reality was a corrugated iron shed full of old theatre props. It was a bit of a squeeze (with the basses sitting on old oil drums) and incredibly hot, but like troopers the choir were really committed and worked hard. In fact, I asked a couple of the men if they played the drums and got them to beat along some rhythms on the oil drums. This seemed to work well so we found them some proper floor drums and in the final recording we added the Ugandan xylophone (the amadinda) and some other Ugandan percussion. I also got the choir dancing during our rehearsals, which at first they thought hilarious, but they seemed to really enjoy. This gave the strange meeting-of-two-worlds sound that Kevin was looking for!

There was a scene in the script that called for a song to be sung in a nightclub. We decided this should be something familiar from the 1970s. Kevin finally decided on the Kris Kristofferson song 'Me and Bobby McGee'. Angela Kalule is a well-known figure in Kampala as a singer and presenter of a phone-in radio

just saying, "Lets try something." I'm very much from the "let's try something" school. We did it a little bit with the orchestra here; there were certain effects that I wanted to leave aleatoric and slightly open-ended, but I've found the way to do that is to give them very good hints on the page and say what you want to do but leave a few blanks so they don't get daunted by it, because people really can clam up. So it was a joy when Richard came over and we sat down at the piano, put the tape on, I played the piano, he sung and we just did some songs together which was great.

Were you conscious of not wanting to create a stereotypical Hollywood 'African' score?

Yeah. I wanted to get over the fact that Kampala in the 1970s was actually quite groovy and quite hip. There was a lot of international cross-over going on and whatever one would say about Amin, and there are plenty of terrible things one would say, a lot of people still say that he put Uganda on the map and I think there's still a very strong sense of national pride that he did that. They've got a very complicated split personality approach to him; I mean about 300,000 Ugandans died under his regime and yet still people have got some good things to say about him. So I wanted to show that sense of hip and international currency that was in Kampala, which was really one of the positive things Amin was trying to do. We didn't want it to be stereotypical sort of tribal music, the sort that would make people see Africa as just mud huts and nothing else. With the score the temptation would be to parody traditional African music too much. I think we felt because we'd covered a lot of ground with the songs I'd recorded out there it would give me a bit of leeway to make a distinction between the score and the songs and be quite bold in saying we don't mind when an orchestra comes in, but just try do it with a flavour, so that it's able to use the Ugandan Xylophone, a lot of the percussion and the West African harp, which we used for Amin's theme, and the voices, so give it a flavour without it sounding too much like a travelogue. You know, people know very quickly when it sounds cod-African; really what I've tried to do is be myself but I've tried to reflect a lot of the influences that I experienced first hand on the ground, rather than doing just generic African sounding stuff.

There's also a distinction between the score and the songs, with the score being very dark in places. That seemed like a conscious decision?

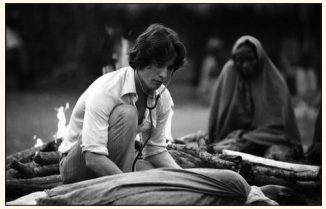
Yeah, what I wanted to do was get a progression through the film - when you see the film you'll see that it starts off very lightly. The film is really about how one can be sucked into the charismatic persona of a great dictator and how we can all, as an audience, be sucked in. We're taken into it because Forest (Whitaker) gives such an amazing performance, you really empathise with him, you really think he's doing something great and it's not till late on in the film, when the real truth is revealed, how everything has become distorted, how he's had to resort to torture and massacre. So the music does the same thing, it starts off very naively and the score gets darker and darker harmonically, and also orchestration wise. The same thing happens with the picture, the actual picture starts off very saturated and yellow and by the end it's very dark and grainy and I wanted to do the same with the score. So hopefully over the course of the film, and in the album as well, I've tried to tell the arc of that story through the choices of tracks, but the score was really about trying to tease out those elements of Forest and James' performance, to tease out first of all the feel good factor at the beginning to really draw the audience into believing him so that they almost feel ashamed when it comes to the end that they were taken in by it. If we were able to see behind Nicholas' back what was going on, we wouldn't feel so compromised ourselves and that's what makes it really powerful at the end, a very complicated feeling psychologically. Kevin wanted the music at the end of the film to try and reflect this complex psychology and he wanted the music to read what was really going through their minds. It's all very well when you've got a straight cut and dried heroic piece but this one, where the heroes are not heroes and the villains are sometimes villains and sometimes not, it's a complicated one so the music has to weave a very fine line between all those things.

I think the album, like you say, does work in that way – the ending's almost uplifting in many ways…

It is uplifting but with a tinge of something and much like the film, I think one isn't supposed to go away knowing exactly what to think about it. I think the British Colonial experience throughout the world is something we all still have a complicated relationship with. I think there's good and bad to take out of that and I don't think we've ever really resolved exactly what we did about it and that's one of the themes of the film really, so a tricky one for the musical psychology point of view… I always like a challenge (laughs).

As you say you've worked with Kevin MacDonald several times now and you say in your notes that a rapport has been built. What do you think is the secret of a good composer/director partnership?

Well probably, foremost, Kevin is a very good director and when you're working with really excellent material it makes my job so much easier. It's very hard to remember a really bad film that's got an outstandingly good score, not because it's a bad composer, but as a composer you're reacting to what you're seeing and my job is to emotionally react to what I see, so that's sort of obvious but true, but he really knows how to tell a story really well. The other thing I think personally with Kevin is that he's very good with people, he knows when to listen to people, sit back and take them in and go away and think about it and then tell you the direction he wants you to go. Sometimes directors get overwhelmed at the music stage; lots of directors, like Kevin, don't necessarily have a musical background. He's really good at not getting bogged down in terminology, he tells me what he wants to do story-wise and lets me have a go at doing that and if it's not right he'll not tell me what to do, but he'll tell me what's missing from what he was hoping. It's very fulfilling to work with someone like that who cuts you a bit of slack and who doesn't throw up their hands in horror if you want to try something a bit wacky



So in terms of the orchestra, it's what 70 odd pieces? Is that the largest you've worked with?

I had to argue my case for a long time to actually get such a big orchestra, but Kevin was adamant that we needed to have scope and we needed to have the ability to go big at the end of the film. So it's one of the larger orchestras I've used; when I started off writing many years ago, I was orchestrating and ghost writing for a composer and I was doing a lot of feature films, a lot of American films, so I thought a seventy piece orchestra at Air (Studios) was standard. As far as I was concerned everyone else had that so I'd write something for that and when I started doing movies on my own, the horrible truth hit home that actually a lot of the time you're given a lot smaller budget to work with and to have to find ways around that was a bit of a shock. But actually I'm really grateful, having been through that, because I learned how to write for big orchestras, but I've also learned how to work with much smaller groups and ended up doing very small British films like *Late Night Shopping*. *Touching The Void* had a fair size orchestra, but much smaller than this, but for *Parole Officer* we had probably a similar size and parodied how rubbish the actors were on screen by making the music really big and overblown. I did a very small budget documentary film this year called *The Bridge,* which is all about the Golden Gate Bridge and the phenomenon of people jumping off of it. It's been quite controversial in the States because there is footage of people jumping. So that was a very low budget and the director was very keen to try and capture something of the place, so I actually used sounds of the cabling on the bridge itself, sampled it and made lots of metallic sounds, and dulcimer and electric guitar with paper clips and all sorts of things. So although it was very small scale I had to find interesting ways around doing it and it threw up an interesting score, so it can work to your advantage.

Talking of interesting instruments, you used a break-drum from an old transit van in this score?

(Laughs) Towards the end of the film it turns into a story of personal betrayal for both of them and there are some very nasty scenes. I wont give it away, but it's quite shocking and Kevin wanted me to find something musical for these images and to be honest I really struggled to find anything musically as horrible. Torture is a nasty thing, and there's only so far you can go with music to try and portray that and the most horrible sound I could come up with on the reveal of this was whacking an old transit van's break-drum with a spanner. It was good fun… I've probably used everything but the kitchen sink and probably should've used a kitchen sink. There's a very disturbing scene in a morgue, which is a very dark scene in which Nicholas sort of goes into the belly of the beast if you like, and I wanted to create a soundscape that wasn't orchestral. Anyway I was looking for various sounds and my wife's got a back machine at home - it's like a massager - and the motor was going on it and it started making a real horrible grinding noise. So I just stuck the microphone over it, recorded it and slowed it down; it's got this nasty grinding rhythm to it. So I wasn't scared of just trying out a few wacky things here and there, but that's what's great about Kevin, you can say, 'Listen I've had this idea, I've just recorded this machine and it sounds really great, what do you think?" I might not do that with every director, but it makes for a bit of interest.

If you had approached this film in the traditional way, i.e. being presented with the final cut, would your music have been markedly different do you think?

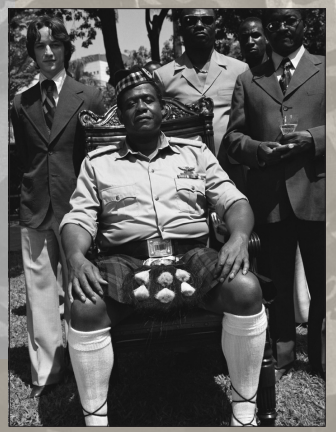
I think I would've tried to have done it differently, but inevitably I wouldn't have had all of the rich experiences and influences and I'm sure I wouldn't have been sent down the same course. Meeting a lot of people in Uganda and getting an insight into what they think about their history, and about Amin as well, made a big difference and I think that gave me the courage to be more upbeat in places as well and not to make it all heavy. Life waits on and it was a heady time for a lot of people, although it was a terrible time for a lot of people as well. People of a certain generation in this country will still remember Amin as a joke and as a buffoon, because he did such a good turn in front of the cameras, entertaining journalists and that's the trick he pulled. And your taken in by that just as western governments were, or western powers... and in a way that's been the overriding memory of him and some people have found this film quite shocking because they hadn't realised the scale of the tragedy in Uganda, they remember Amin as that larger than life character and that's the clever thing that Forest does with it, he gives you a really multifaceted performance, sort of what we tried to do with the music.

Did you at any time think about bringing in any 'Scottish' sounds to the score, with Amin's obsession with Scotland in mind?

I had started with the intention of doing that, but I couldn't make it sit without it being too overt. Bagpipes are quite a difficult instrument to control as well, they are literally classed as a weapon of war still I think and you'll know why if you've stood next to one when it's playing, it's pretty scary stuff; so actually I ended up not going down that route. You'll hear there is a bit of a backwards bagpipe in the film but it's used more as a sound effect as Amin's madness encroaches.

Listening back to some of your scores, I was struck by how different they all are. Is versatility important to you?

My job is to emotionally react to something and bring out the most emotion and the most excitement and that's just what I try and do and I try and treat everything as if it's a million dollar score. I've had a very varied background, I mean I've done everything from orchestrating scores for Elton John, through to being commissioned by the Sultan of Oman to go out and write a piece for his symphony orchestra; I've worked in India, I've worked with people in Bollywood, I've edited the Grove Dictionary of Women Composers, I've driven a van – I used to deliver cakes here and there, all sorts of different things. It's all that sort of strange jigsaw of background, which hopefully makes you into an interesting character, and you have things to draw on. I did what I thought was a fuddy-duddy degree at Oxford, writing five-part fugues and I spent a year studying medieval music and spent two years studying the Indonesian Gamelan… I wasn't really sure that it was any use whatsoever and thought I'd wasted my time and now it's amazing, all this stuff creeps into your mind and crops up and it's tremendously useful, but in a subliminal way. That's what I like about film music; it's always different. I am conscious of not repeating myself and constantly trying to push the boundaries, which is why I've ended up doing lots of different sounding things.



So do you think over time we'll know what the Alex Heffes sound is?

I think so, I *can* see a thread there… I think it's a melodic thread. My background really is writing for orchestras, although I have done a lot of jazz. I don't find it a problem, crossing genres; to me music is music is music and it's just like speaking in a different accent, all you need to do is get a bit of vocabulary and someone will understand what you're saying. But yes I think the thread is a melodic one and I still think audiences like strong melody; that said *Last King Of Scotland* was a tough one because I didn't want to make the character of Amin too heroic. I didn't want to give him too strong a tune, I didn't want to simplify the matter, so he's got a motif and Nicholas has a motif and they come together at the end and they sort of get intertwined, it's a little more subtle. I think I would say I'm interested in not being scared to be emotional, without making it too gushing. There's something about the mysterious chemistry of music and film that has an extraordinary effect on the audience and it's very gratifying for me to see an audience taking on the same emotions when they're watching it, listening to the music back, to what I've experienced trying to make the music. It's almost like they're hearing an externalised version of what I was feeling and it's really uncanny when it works. It doesn't always happen, but when all the material is right, that's when it's really exciting for me, and that's what my thread is, that's what I try and do to people, just take them on the same emotional journey and whatever the thread is, that's up to you to find out musically. Hopefully the thread is that they all sound good! (Laughs).

So in terms of this movie, what are your lasting impressions, what are you most proud of?

I think I'm most proud of being involved from beginning to end with pretty much all the music for the film. We did have an excellent music supervisor, Andy Newland, who found some of the tracks for the film, but I'm just really proud to have gone out to Uganda, found the bands we wanted to film and recorded them, come back, done the score, put the album together, produced the album and I can really hold it in my hand and say, "That is what I did," and it's not a chance one often gets as a movie composer.

So what's next for you now, what are you working on?

Well I've just done an HBO/BBC thing called *Tsunami*; it's a two-part drama, which is really terrific and really strong. It was very hard work as it was like doing two feature films, but in the time frame of one. We were up at Abbey Road with the orchestra and ten days later I was back recording part two, having written practically an entire film – which was tough but fantastic. I'm doing another documentary film with Kevin MacDonald at the moment, which is really fascinating. It's about Klaus Barbie, who was an SS officer and a wanted war criminal after the war but who was clandestinely hired by the CIA and British Secret Services to teach them interrogation techniques. He was then spirited out of Europe by various fascist elements and the Vatican and he set up a new life in South America and created mayhem there for twenty years until the 1980s when he was recaptured and put on trial. It's absolutely fascinating and there's some stunning archive footage. Kevin's gone to Peru and interviewed some really amazing people, so that's very interesting and musically I'm just trying to pick up on the eccentricities of his character; he was obviously very into the Nazi ideal and the Nazi ideal of music as well, so we're picking up on Nazi marching music and how that might cross with South American music, which makes for strange bedfellows. It's sort of interesting, *A Tin Drum* meets *Flight Of The Condor* or something, I'm not quite sure (laughs) I haven't put any panpipes in it I have to say. ■



show (she's known as 'the Angel of the Morning'). As soon as I met her I knew she would be fantastic for the part. She has an amazing voice and persona to go with it. We rehearsed a few times together at my hotel. At first she was quite reserved and sung the song exactly as she'd heard Janis Joplin doing it on tape. I tried to loosen things up by suggesting she drop the American accent she'd learned from the tape and just sing it like she was telling a story. I'd noticed that Ugandans are very animated and use lots of gestures when they talk, so I suggested she did exactly that when she sung the song. It was an amazing transformation. As the refrain of the song mentions 'freedom', I suggested to her that we use the Luganda word for freedom – 'Edeembe'. This seemed to have a particular resonance with the instantly why when I saw them perform it at Club Obligato one hot night – the crowd went crazy. There was not a soul who didn't jump up to dance! Moses insisted that I came to join the band one evening at the Kampala casino, which I did, playing keyboards in a few numbers along with them and Angela Kalule. It turns out Moses is a big jazz fan. I never imagined I'd end up in Kampala Casino playing 'Autumn Leaves' – what a great job I have!

There are still many people who remember the dark years of the early 1970s, although many are still uneasy about discussing that time. We tracked down a man by the name of John Olima. John had been sent by Amin to Scotland to learn the bagpipes (Amin had served in the King's African Rifles where he'd heard

subject of the film. She thought this was hilarious, but we used the refrain of edeembe with the backing singers also, and it works nicely! We recorded the song in an old meatpacking factory in the middle of the night, which definitely had a vibe. Again, we wanted the sound of Uganda and the west colliding, so I mixed in some Ugandan instruments with the country and western line-up of the original. I'm really fond of the final result.

One of the other (many) highlights was recording two songs with Uganda's longest running band, 'Afrigo'. Their leader, Moses Matovu, had formed the band over 30 years ago and they were a personal favourite of Amin himself. Moses is a wonderfully serene and generous man and it was a joy to sit in with the band and work with them recording these songs. 'Afrigo Battuse' is their theme tune, and I understood the pipes). I spent an afternoon with John talking about this experience and running through some pipe music we needed for the choir scene. I was treated to yet another surreal and wonderful moment when John started up his pipes outside the swimming pool. All the school children from the nearby class came running out to see what on earth could be making that noise! Not something you'd expect to hear in central Africa.

During my stay, the cast members began to arrive. Everyone was thrilled that Forest Whitaker had been cast as Idi. A formidable actor, and also a trained singer, Forest had to appear singing at one point. I'd found an accordion tutor for him in LA to rehearse the scene where Idi performs at a party. He does have an incredible deep voice and was made for the role. James McAvoy and Kerry Washington also turned up at this time. We all ended up going to see a local cultural show by the Enderi Dance Troupe. This turned out to be a fantastic display of local song and dance and I was really struck by one song, in which the lead singer balanced 10 or so clay pots on her head while singing and dancing. Kevin had already seen this show and we both agreed it would be great to use this music somewhere in the film. So we arranged to record some pieces outdoors in the amphitheatre they performed in. The late afternoon was incredibly hot, although 'Betty' the singer (I never learned if that was her real name or not) seemed totally un-phased by the scorching sun. As they struck up the 'Pot Song' there was a great spontaneous cheering from a neighbouring field where some (unknown) group activity was going on. We ended up using this track over the archive footage of jubilant crowds at the end the movie. You can hear this crowd cheering if you listen carefully. Most people will think it's a sound effect to go with the pictures, but it's just one of those happy coincidences that we caught this live on the recording.

I had many other happy experiences in my short time in Uganda. Perhaps one of the best was meeting Richard Kawesa (or just Kawesa as he prefers). Kawesa is well known on the music scene in Kampala. I heard him performing one of his songs at a party in Kampala and was struck with his incredible voice. When it came to writing the score, I remembered this voice and was keen to incorporate it in some way to the movie. He came to London for a couple of weeks and we worked on some textures and ideas that I could later use in the film (you can hear him on the end credits and in various places through the movie).

Once the film had been shot I was able to watch a 'rough cut' with Kevin and editor Justine Wright back in London. Before the film was even completely assembled we started experimenting with small bits of score to get a feel for what would be needed. To be involved so closely at this stage is quite unusual, but in this case allowed for the music to integrate with the edit in a really organic way. It soon became apparent that the second half of the picture would be quite full of music as there are many action and suspense sequences. The finale, depicting the hostage episode at Entebbe airport, needed especially to be fully scored to give a sense of scale and tension. We decided that an orchestral score would make a good contrast from the real African music in the film. I did use some African elements though in the final score. We needed a 'theme' for Amin so I used a West African harp or nyatiti, accompanied by strings. The Ugandan xylophone or amadinda also features within the orchestra in some of the action sequences, along with much African percussion such as chekeres and flutes (all played by experts in the field.)

There's about an hour of score aside from all the songs on the movie. That's a lot of music to get on





paper in quite a short period of time (about 8 weeks in all). We tried to take care not to overwhelm the film with music when it wasn't needed, in order to give the maximum impact for the bigger moments.

The final score was recorded in March 2006 at Air Lyndhurst in London. The hall at Air is a tremendous room, I've recorded many times there and it's always an exciting event. I always conduct my own scores. This way I can make adjustments to the music from the podium as we go along, elongating some parts, trimming others and fine-tuning orchestration. It also keeps the players connected with what I want from them, having the composer stood up in front of them, plus it's just great fun conducting an orchestra (especially when you've been locked away in a room for two months writing music). In all we spent two full days at Air, recording orchestra during the day and drum overdubs at night as well as some electric guitar and drum kit parts for other songs in the film.

The Last King Of Scotland was a gift for a composer really; it's got a bit of everything in it. It's a real musical adventure, which about sums up the whole experience for me!

Part Two Reflections On A Journey

Late in 2006, prior to *The Last King Of Scotland's* January 2007 release, I sat down with the genial composer in the commissary at BAFTA's London headquarters. We talked at length about making movie music and I sat enraptured as Alex reflected candidly on the incredible journey that took him to the other side of the world and the dark side of a charismatic 'king'…

Alex this really has been quite a voyage for you.

It's been an adventure, it's always an adventure, but this one was literally an adventure from beginning to end. I didn't quite know what was going to happen when I went out to Uganda, and sort of part of the fun of it was just going and seeing what was gonna happen.

And it's quite unusual for a composer to be involved in a movie so early on.

Yeah it is unusual, I think because I've worked with Kevin MacDonald for quite a few years now it's much easier when you know someone and you've got a bit of a shorthand; Kevin is really interested in talking to me really early on about what he wants to do. Being a documentarian he likes to make things really authentic, even though this isn't a documentary it's a drama; he wanted it to be filmed in Uganda with as many of the real people as he could find on the ground, and he wanted the music to reflect that as well. So we just went and it was a real adventure, literally, just driving around finding people, ending up in the middle of the night in the back streets of Kampala.

Was it a daunting prospect, approaching this project?

If I'd known how complicated it was going to be at the beginning I probably would've been daunted, but a certain amount of naïve optimism probably helped. No one's actually made a film in Uganda since the early 1950s, I think *The African Queen* was the last thing shot there, so just in terms of actually getting anything done there, there's no one who knows how it's done. So that was one of the most difficult things, getting around and getting people to turn up on time. When we were trying to audition singers we had a contact who found us some good local people and we said, "Turn up on such or such a day." One girl turned up three days late and she just came into the office and said, "Here I am shall we do it now?" Once you got your head round it, it was all right, but things work differently there, so that was one of the main challenges.

What about language, was that a problem?

No, I mean everyone speaks fantastic English. I think because the English were the colonial power there, like in so many parts of the world, the language has sort of stayed and people have phenomenal language skills. I've worked in India and most people speak at least three, four, five languages and perfect English, so it puts us to shame really! But everyone was just so helpful in Uganda and terrifically excited and proud to be involved and really proud to be able to put their country in the spotlight. I made some really good friends and met some amazing musicians; the thing that struck me in Uganda is that everyone is sort of just really musical, people are really uninhibited about singing or playing so it's very much part of the culture, so it wasn't difficult to find lots of talented people let me tell you.

Do you think you'll be able to work with them again?

I hope so. I've been doing a project with one singer called Richard Kawesa who I met out there and he came over here to do some tracks for the film. He performs on the end credits. We've also been working on a project together, so yeah I hope that will carry on.

What was it about his voice that struck you?

He's just got this phenomenal deep voice, but it's his character that comes across. It's this thing where people are very uninhibited and they sing like they talk, so it has enormous amounts of character and he just sounded like himself, but singing. Also I worked with Richard on experimenting, on improvising various things; some of my background comes from jazz and doing improvised things. Sometimes it's hard in this country with orchestral musicians to work in that way without music, because musicians here are trained in a very specific way to recreate what's on the page, which is an incredible skill, but sometimes they feel very inhibited by not having anything and you