



## MARK ISHAM

### *'In Her Shoes'*

Fox

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**C**urtis (Hanson) is a very precise director, and by that I mean he tends to look at a lot of details in the making of his motion pictures. So, by the time I had entered the process, they already had a very effective cut of the film going and a temp score in it. Curtis got very specific right away and talked a lot about thematic structure — getting close to not only themes for characters but the themes for various emotions and events. This is a story of not only uncovering mysteries of the past — things that happen in the past for this particular family — but also the relationships between the sisters and what happens to Cameron Diaz's character, Maggie.

"The score is more emotional than comedic. The comedy aspect of the scoring simply relied basically on finding the right theme, the right theme that had the right sort of light touch, which is a challenge. I think any director will tell you that to take on a movie that one moment you should be laughing, and the next moment you should be crying — this is a difficult task. It has to be handled with the utmost care and precision. Curtis is a master of this. He was very aware that the music can't oversell either of these emotions because if you push too hard on either one of them while you're going back and forth between genres, I think an audience starts to feel manipulated, and you don't want that. You want the audience to genuinely be with you and feel what they're supposed to be feeling. So, the comedy was handled by getting the right emotional theme, and I got to admit it took a while.

"There's a moment where Maggie, who's basically had a

problem learning her whole life, is taken under the wing of a retired college professor in the nursing home where she works. He teaches her to read, and there's a beautiful moment (when) he challenges her to read this particular poem, and she does. She then actually interprets the literary qualities of it directly to her own family. It's a big winning experience because she's always been considered the stupid girl, the girl that only looks good and can't think. It's just one of those great poetic Curtis Hanson-type moments. This had to be handled with care with a quiet tone.

"Instrumentation that had the feeling of being big and loud and substantial just wasn't right. Consequently, it became an orchestration question as to what instruments could sit there and have an emotional impact but not take up a great deal of space. I wanted to keep the score organic. So, I put together a very small ensemble. I used marimbas, piano, harp, some acoustic guitar, electric bass, there are some drums, but no one instrument ever really overshadows the other.

"The instrumentation was an experiment right down to the very end. The one thing that did become clearer and clearer, which is an orchestration issue, was that this score — except for just a few brief moments — needed to be very quiet. It was amusing at some points (when) I found that I had to restructure my mixing console to allow for these incredibly quiet volumes. In fact, (when) we got to the end of the writing phase, I found that I couldn't actually record instruments that were playing this quietly."

— Ada Guerin