

# “THE PROGRESS OF MAN IS THE PROGRESS OF STEEL”

It's rare when an industrial film is so well done and entertaining and informative that it has a life outside of the purpose for which it was created. However, such was the case with *Rhapsody Of Steel*, a twenty-two minute animated short film, a sort of child's history of steel from the first meteor hitting earth to modern times (circa 1959) and the first manned space rocket. United States Steel hired John Sutherland to create the short. At the time, Sutherland was a well known and respected maker of animated industrial films. The film, budgeted at \$300,000, turned out so well, in fact, that it was shown as an added attraction at thousands of US movie theaters in 1959.

Sutherland had started out with Walt Disney, working as an assistant director (he also voiced the adult Bambi in *Bambi*), and then in 1944 opened his own studio, John Sutherland Productions, and began making short films for various corporations, often employing top animators. For *Rhapsody Of Steel*, both Eyvind Earle and Maurice Noble (Duck Dodgers) worked on the film and the animation design is very much in keeping with Earle's work on another 1959 animated classic, Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*. For the narration, Gary Merrill was engaged. Time Magazine, in reviewing the film, said “Sutherland proves a slick entertainer” and “the picture's pace is brisk, its tricks of animation are better than cute.”

Told in storybook-like fashion, we get a précis of the entire history of steel, told with captivating imagery in gorgeous, saturated Technicolor hues, with non-stop music by the great Dimitri Tiomkin. Tiomkin was a real coup for Sutherland – he'd already won Oscars for *High Noon* and *The High and the Mighty*, and would, the same year as *Rhapsody Of Steel*, win yet another for *The Old Man and the Sea*. His music for *Rhapsody Of Steel* is propulsive and energetic, capturing the essence of the progress of steel through the ages. It's exciting, dramatic, and compelling music and doesn't let up for the full running time of the film. Playing the score was the marvelous Pittsburgh Symphony, which was only appropriate since United States Steel was headquartered in Pittsburgh. Tiomkin conducted and the result is a virtuoso performance by the orchestra and a thrilling listening experience.

Dimitri Tiomkin was born on May 10, 1894. His love of music came from his mother, who was a piano and music teacher. After attending St. Petersburg Conservatory, Tiomkin became a virtuoso pianist, playing in Russian concert halls, and then became a pianist for silent films in St. Petersburg movie houses. Eventually he ended up in Hollywood and quickly became a working Hollywood composer, scoring film after film, working with most of the great directors, and creating a dazzling array of great scores for such film classics as *Lost Horizon*, *Duel In The Sun*, *Red River*, *High Noon*, *Strangers On A Train*, *I Confess*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, *Portrait of Jennie*, *The Thing from Another World*, *The High and the Mighty*, *Dial 'M' For Murder*, *Giant*, *Friendly Persuasion*, *Gunfight At The O.K. Corral*, *Rio Bravo*, *The Unforgiven*, *The Alamo*, *The Sundowners*, *The Guns Of Navarone* – well, you get the idea, and it's only the tip of the iceberg, score-wise. It's pretty well acknowledged that Tiomkin was the first film composer to become famous for writing the title song to a film as well as its score, with his great title song to *High*

*Noon* (“Do Not Forsake Me, Oh My Darling”), one of the most recorded title songs in film history. In 1954's Oscar ceremony, Tiomkin got the biggest laugh of the evening, when, upon winning the Oscar for *The High and the Mighty*, he smilingly thanked Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, Strauss, and Rimsky-Korsakov. Tiomkin even appeared to hilarious effect on TV's *The Jack Benny Program*. He passed away in 1979, leaving behind an amazing legacy of film music.

Originally released as a promotional LP for customers and friends of United States Steel (a beautiful die-cut gatefold LP with pictures and storybook), the LP instantly became a collector's item and has remained so in the ensuing years. One side of the LP contained Tiomkin's score in one long track, while side two had both score and Gary Merrill's narration, also in one long track. For the CD release, we've left the music continuous as it was, but have added four track IDs for easier accessing of the different sections of the score, and we've done the same with the narrated version. The album was mastered from tape sources – the sound is mono (but great mono), as it was recorded.

— Bruce Kimmel