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SCORING

MOVIES HAVE ALWAYS PROVIDED welcome relief from holiday shopping—as well as some welcome gift ideas. Here's a run-down of scores and soundtracks worth wrapping up and passing along.

The Music of Disney: A Legacy in Song (Walt Disney) is a lavish three-CD set that gathers together memorable songs from Disney films, TV shows, and theme parks. The packaging is clever, the liner notes are informative, and the tunes—"When You Wish Upon a Star," "Zip-A-Dee-Do-Dah," "Under the Sea"—are familiar in the best sense of the word. Special treats include the fiercely melodic "Main Street Electrical Parade," a rare demo of "Pretty Irish Girl" with vocals by Sean Connery (!), and the irresistible option of skipping past "It's a Small World (After All)."

Agent 007 receives the deluxe treatment with **The Best of James Bond 30th Anniversary Limited Edition** (EMI). The memorable and thrilling John Barry theme can still set your heart racing, and the featured pop songs have proved surprisingly durable. Paul McCartney & Wings offer up the wonderfully melodramatic "Live and Let Die," Carly Simon assures James that "Nobody Does It Better," and Shirley Bassey vamps her way through "Goldfinger." Like the films themselves, the Bond songs are all slightly over-the-top, tongue-in-cheek, and quite entertaining. Besides, where else can you find an instrumental called "Pussy Galore's Flying Circus"?

Spike Lee's movies are always a good bet to provide exciting music, and **Malcolm X** (40 Acres and a Mule Musicworks/Columbia) doesn't disappoint. The Terence Blanchard score is majestic and mournful, with a grandeur befitting a film of epic scope. Just as the movie depicts the life of the civil rights leader, Blanchard traces the origins of jazz, quoting from the sweaty intensity of gin joints, the sadness of the blues, and the bedrock rhythms of the church music where it all began.

Two new musicals also promise to have great soundtracks: **Aladdin** (Walt Disney) and **The Muppet Christmas Carol** (Jim Henson). The former features songs by Alan Menken and the late, lamented Howard Ashman (as well as Tim Rice); the latter, songs by Paul Williams. Look for Robin Williams, as the genie in Aladdin's lamp, singing "Friend Like Me." Buy these for the kids, but don't be surprised if you listen to them yourself when no one else is around.

The **Glengarry Glen Ross** album (Elektra) showcases such top-notch jazz artists as David Sanborn, Wayne Shorter, Shirley Horn, and Jimmy Scott. Always amiable and occasionally inspired (as on Horn's "You'd Better Go Now"), this is a well-chosen, very mainstream package, just right for your favorite stressed-out baby boomer.

On a much tougher note, the antigang drama **South Central** (Hollywood BASIC) offers an excellent urban/rap compilation. It uses the movie's time span from the late '70s to the present to cherry-pick such noteworthy songs as Vaughan Mason's "Bounce, Rock, Skate, Roll" and Cameo's "Flirt," along with new releases from Boo-Yaa T.R.I.B.E. and others.

Finally, perhaps the best score of the year: **The Player**, by Thomas Newman (Varese Sarabande). This edgy, memorable release captures the nervous energy of Robert Altman's movie, as well as the seductive allure of Hollywood. Also keep an eye out for **Bram Stoker's Dracula** and **The Bodyguard**, which features six new tunes sung by star Whitney Houston.

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