

## Soundtracks From Another Planet

# HIGHER GROUND

**N**O MOVIE GENRE FREES THE COMPOSER'S imagination quite as readily as science fiction. Grand statements abound, to the extent that a modest sci-fi score is about as common as a low-key opera. Here are just a few classic examples, offering everything from Wagnerian might to cheeky sambas . . .

**ALEX NORTH'S 2001:** Possibly the greatest score *not* in a movie, this was reportedly commissioned by Stanley Kubrick to appease the studio, though he never intended to use it. In the finished film, of course, he used a selection of classical pieces – including Johann Strauss's *The Blue Danube* and Richard Strauss's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* – to brilliant effect. Now, 25 years later, we can finally hear North's work. From the dramatic organ flourish in the *Main Title* to the charming waltz of *Space Station Docking* (where Kubrick used *The Blue Danube*), it is certainly worth the wait.

**STAR WARS TRILOGY:** An exceptionally impressive four-CD set that does right by

the John Williams triptych: one CD for each film, a fourth for miscellaneous cues, and a lavishly illustrated booklet with track-by-track commentary.

**PLANET OF THE APES:** An early landmark for composer Jerry Goldsmith, this jagged, inventive music is, naturally, reminiscent of his style on TV's *The Twilight Zone* and contains a justly famous cue – *The Hunt* – that incorporates a ram's horn.

**THE ALIEN TRILOGY:** Few other film series have given birth to such diverse and satisfying movie music. The original *Alien*, by Jerry Goldsmith, is genuinely unnerving; *Aliens*, by James Horner, is foreboding whenever it isn't plunging headlong into the fray; and *Alien<sup>3</sup>*, by Elliot Goldenthal, combines a clever but creepy musical signature for the nasty creatures with a contemplative, vaguely religious tone that befits the movie's thematic concerns.

MICHAEL GLITZ