The Many Hats of Robert Altman: A Life in Cinema

Daub, Peggy; Gomis, Melissa; Hallman, Phil

http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/110220
Working with Composers

John Williams, the prolific American film composer who wrote memorable scores for films like *Star Wars* and *Jaws*, worked with Altman on *Images* (1972) and *The Long Goodbye* (1973). His score for *Images*, matching the film's psychological tone, was nominated for an Oscar. The Archive contains items that show many behind-the-scenes agreements and working documents that were part of the complex world of creating films.

*Images* (1972), Altman's first and only attempt at a musical, was riddled with drama throughout its production. Harry Nilsson, the composer who wrote the featured songs, didn't expect Altman's changeability with the score and left the island of Malta halfway through filming. Altman trusted Nilsson to finish the production and claimed to get on with him terrifically despite the disagreement. In the end the dispute was settled, and all of Nilsson's songs are featured in the final film.

*Popeye* (1980), Altman's first and only attempt at a musical, was riddled with drama throughout its production. Harry Nilsson, the composer who wrote the featured songs, didn't expect Altman's changeability with the score and left the island of Malta halfway through filming. Altman trusted Nilsson to finish the production and claimed to get on with him terrifically despite the disagreement. In the end the dispute was settled, and all of Nilsson's songs are featured in the final film.

*Background Image - Manuscript score of John Williams's "The Long Goodbye," inscribed "For Bob. " The many reappearances of the song in the film are arranged differently to reflect the mood and characters on screen at the time.*

*Typed letter from Bertram Fields to Paramount Pictures, November 25, 1980. This letter revoking the studio's rights to use Nilsson's songs in *Popeye* was received about 11 days before the film opened on December 6, 1980.*

*Background Image - Manuscript score of John Williams's "The Long Goodbye," inscribed "For Bob. " The many reappearances of the song in the film are arranged differently to reflect the mood and characters on screen at the time.*