

FILM SCORE BLOGS [Blog # 22]
Tuesday, August 2, 2005 at 6:46 pm

Today happens to be my day off. Today also just happens to be the release date of the two-disc dvd set of *The High & the Mighty*. Great timing! Before my wife had to go to work (be at work at noon), she drove me to Tower Records. I figured they would have the customary Tuesday/release day (even week) sale and not have to pay the \$19.99 suggested retail price (maybe even \$14.99). I was wrong. They wanted \$19.99. I mildly complained to the counter girl who double-checked the price on the computer and mumbled to my wife about corporate/business greed! I didn't storm out but I did say in front of the gal that I would buy the dvd elsewhere for a better price. Of course I really wanted to get the dvd today and I would grudgingly buy it at that manufacturer's price if there were no better price close by.

Luckily I was able to go to a very nearby Barnes & Noble and buy what was apparently the only copy they had that I spotted in a box behind the counter for \$16.99. With tax, that came to \$18.39. I bought it with satisfaction, although I realized that I could've purchased it on the Internet for as low as \$13.56 (no tax & no shipping fee) from Deep Discount. Overstock.com offered it at \$12.79 plus \$1.40 shipping. Steph & I then ate at the nearby Indian lunch buffet, shopped at Ralphs, and drove home. She then quickly rode her new red mountain bike to work (an Iron Horse "Outlaw" bike that I bought for her last Friday evening at Sportsmart because her old bike was stolen at work). I, on the other hand, stayed at home and started to watch Disc Two of *High & the Mighty*.

First I watched the 18:40 segment, "The Music & World of Dimitri Tiomkin." It was okay, nicely done, but I would've preferred a far more in depth discussion on the actual score/music for this particular film. As given in another blog, it would've been excellent if a running commentary of the score were offered. Patrick Russ (Symphonic Director), Richard Kaufman (Conductor), Jonathan Burlingame ("Film Historian"), Christopher Young (composer) offered comments in this featurette. I never saw Young before, so it was interesting seeing him. Seems to be a likeable kind of fella. I've seen Burlingame before in person long ago and also in a few other dvds (forgot which but I'll check). Here he's sporting a goatee and moustache combination. He offered interesting background details (who whistled the tune, orchestra/business details, etc) but I would've preferred an expert on the actual written score offering a commentary analysis. I suggested so to the producer but the bait wasn't taken, unfortunately. Kaufman is qualified but I noticed he didn't offer detailed insights on the written score after listening to his general comments. At the 14:21 point, he talks about the score while the screen shows a few pages of four-staves sketches of a Tiomkin cue displaying the *High & the Mighty* theme in *pp* level. I'm not sure what cue it is since the Reel/Part wasn't shown but it may be Reel 11/2 (not sure as I now write, so it's probably a different cue). Kaufman *does* say, "I've had the great opportunity to see the original scores. It's always kind of like peeking into someone's window to look at a composer's original scores because you realize that their hand was on that paper, their eyes were looking at that paper, and their hearts & their minds were working at that moment to take that blank page, look at a visual, and then say 'Okay, this is what music needs to do to support it.' It's absolutely fascinating." That's it! As it is, the featurette is a fine "general consumption" piece, and I congratulate the producer, but I would've liked a far more laser-like focus. Make it longer

than eighteen minutes if you want to be comprehensive and delve into Tiomkin's general history, but the greatest focus should be on this specific score. I did like the few snippets of the actual recording session audio, but it was rather hard to hear clearly.

The "Stories From the Set" featurette was very interesting, and also "The Batjac Story" (although the latter's overview had only partial and peripheral relevance to this specific movie). Karen Sharpe looks great today—pretty sharp! William Campbell got heavier and older but still has that sharp mind (and tongue!) and mischievous eyes! Pedro Gonzales-Gonzales is a lot older but still retains that fresh vibrancy of personality. Doe Avedon doesn't look too recognizable these days (for example, a brunette now instead of a blonde). A 1995 interview with Robert Stack on the movie was interesting. I did not know that Wayne had originally promised Bob Cummings that role in the movie as the Captain, but Stack managed to convince Wellman that he was right for the part. I also did not know that originally Spencer Tracy was cast for the role of co-pilot Dan (the role John Wayne himself finally agreed to take).

My wife and I actually liked most the peripherally relevant but most entertaining special feature, "Flying In The Fifties." It was an enjoyable Time Machine trip back to Fifties airplane travel, creatively done. It was nice having Tiomkin's music playing in the background. I also liked the stylized graphic renditions of scenes from the movie at the various different segments of this featurette.

Disc One of course supplies the feature itself, and also an Intro by Leonard Maltin (nicely produced at night next to an old-style plane). There's also a feature-length commentary by Maltin, William Wellman Jr., Karen Sharpe, Pedro Gonzales-Gonzales, and Vincent Longo. I did not completely listen to the commentary yet but will background listen as I write this blog. Too bad the producers couldn't (or didn't) offer an isolated track, as was done marvelously in the *North By Northwest* dvd.

I'll probably never do a rundown on the score since the full orchestrated score is not available (that I'm aware of) and I don't have time to laboriously reconstruct it from the parts (of the cues available as such). The sketches and Conductor scores are inadequate for such purposes. The sketches are particular useless if you desire consistent legibility! As given in the previous blog, I worked on the Conductor pages but did not have time for a large chunk of the movie towards the last third or so.

Now: The "Main Title" starts in the dvd in Chapter 1 at :19. It sounds terrific and quite clear and dynamic on the dvd. Maltin comments here that he likes a big opening and how Tiomkin's music certainly gives him that. Later comments are how his music "elevates" the movie ("lifts" it up!)—an appropriate thing to do in an airplane movie! I always wondered how Herrmann would've scored this film (and if he accepted the assignment). The same applies for Max Steiner, but especially Herrmann. Tiomkin was a perfect fit of course but still I wonder how Herrmann would've approached it (especially the Main title). In some scenes (example, Reel 9/1 when the luggage/excess weight was collected and thrown out), I think Herrmann would've done a better job than Tiomkin. As I stated in the previous blog, I felt that Tiomkin over-scored in that cue/scene. It sounds great (!) but it doesn't really fit the low-action movement scene.

Right now as I write I've come to the commentary by Wellman Jr. in Chapter 2 at :21 on Douglas Fowley, the ticket taker at the start of the movie. I didn't recognize him at first but I wondered out loud to my wife last week on AMC where I saw him before, and especially his distinctive voice. Well, it finally came to me that he played the old man

sheriff in that wonderful *The Virginian* episode that Herrmann scored, “Show Me A Hero” (11/17/65). I believed he played the sheriff in the series, Bat Masterson, but I’ll check. He also was in an episode of *Perry Mason* we saw last week, playing a theatre agent who always said when talking to Mason, “Perry, baby!”

Reel 1/2A-2A after the Main title was not used in the movie (nor I believe was it ever recorded). Nor was Reel 2/Pt 1 (cue #36116) ever used. It features a solo violin playing *ppp* in Bar 1 Line 2 C# up to F# 8th notes (crossbeam connected) to E down to Line 1 A 8ths (crossbeam connected) to B up to Line 2 D 8ths to (Bar 2) C# down to E 8ths to F# to G# 8ths (I believe) to E quarter note. Low strings play Great octave A dotted half note, etc. Curiously, Bar 1 is indicated to start at “5:53” at that part of the movie (whatever that section is) and ends at “8:34.” The cue is 57 bars in length.

Reel 2/2 is the scene on the tarmac where the dad talks to his boy, Tobie. Woodwinds are trem Line 1 B half note tied to a non-trem half note. Etc. The cue is 15 bars, 1:06 duration.

Reel 3/1 is the first playing of the next famous theme of the movie, the Plane Theme (or Plane-In-Flight Theme). The preliminary runway music (Bars 1-9) was deleted in the movie (probably too loud sound effects). The music starts in Bar 10 (Chapter 4 at 6:22). I reconstructed or reassembled Bars 1, 9, and 10 thru 17. It’s a lot of work for my tired right hand! Bar 28 is located in Chapter 5 at :09.

Reel 3/2 is located in Chapter 5 starting at 1:45. This is the first “vibration” scene. Probably it could’ve been titled, “First Vibration.” Violins (etc) are bowed trem on Line 2 B whole note tied to next two bars *ppp*. Tiomkin writes “murmuring (soft as possible)”. Chimes (?) and horns sound small octave C whole note tied to Bar 2. The fags and bass clarinets and pos and tuba play Great octave C#/G#/A/small octave C# whole notes tied to next bar (repeated in Bars 3-4). The harp is rising to falling gliss. In Bar 5, the alto flute/marimba/violins play bowed trem effect on Line 1 D-Eb-F-Gb quarter notes to (Bar 6) A dotted half note trem to F quarter note trem to (Bar 7) Ab dotted half note trem to F quarter note trem. Piccolo (etc) play *lento* in Bar 5 Line 4 C half note (harmonics for some violins) to B half note to (Bar 6) A whole note to (Bar 7) Ab whole note. Etc.

Reel 4/1 cue is located in Chapter 5 starting at 5:43, marked “Polynesian” in C time, *pp*.

Reel 4/2 is located in Chapter 5 starting at 6:24. This is the scene when Paul Kelly abruptly smears his on-going painting of the two natives. The xylophone, piano, novachord, strings, horns, English horn play middle C#/D#/F#/A/Line 2 C/D sforzando 8th notes (followed by an 8th and quarter rest) to another such dissonant 8th chords. Etc.

Reel 4/3 is located Chapter 5 starting at 8:33. More of this Paul Kelly scene. In bar 9 (start of Chapter 6), we come to the Plane Theme *Grandioso majestico* in the key signature of three sharps.

Reel 5/1 in 4/4 time is located in Chapter 6 starting at 2:58. This is the scene where Stack is talking with the forlorn Jan Sterling (the blonde actress famous in this movie for taking off her make-off in a later scene). The cue shifts in Bar 18 *tempo di valse* (4;28) in _ time when Claire Trevor flirts with David Brian. Violins play Line 2 C# dotted quarter note to B 8th to A-G# 8ths up to (Bar 19) Line 2 F# half note to E quarter note, etc.

Reel 6/1 is located in Chapter 7 starting at 2:32. This is what can be called the “Second Vibration” scene/cue. The strings are harmonics and gliss, and the vibe is “rubbing.” Bar 6 (2:53) is *Grandioso* playing the Plane Theme fortissimo.

Reel 6/2 (Chapter 8 at 4:48) starts the Rossini quotations.

Reel 7/1 continues and overlaps this Rossini sequence. It’s located in Chapter 8 starting at 6:28 in 2/4 time in the key signature of one sharp. The alto sax sequence is located in 6:52 Bar 27 followed in response by the comical solo trombone. It is written *tempo di blues*.

Reel 7/2 starts Chapter 8 at 7:44, written *Cuban Style* in 2/4 time in the key sig of three flats. This is the Wilsons scene chasing after the Josephs.

Reel 7/3 is located Chapter 9 at 2:12. It is marked “Mexico” but becomes *Grandioso* quickly in Bar 3, switching to the “Tobey Theme” *pp* in Bar 7 (16 seconds into the cue).

Reel 7/4-8/1 is located Chapter 9 at 4:12. This is “The Shaking” scene where soon Dan goes to the tail section to check out if anything is wrong there. Bar 20 is at 5:12. the machinery effect music starting in Bar 27 (5:27) is very nice with the xylophone and marimba especially, then Bar 36 (5:45).

Reel 8/2 is located Chapter 10 at 4:25. It can be called “The Fire” scene. *Grandioso* in 2/4 time.

Reel 9/1 is located Chapter 11 at 7:52. This is the scene I talked about when Wayne and the passengers start to form a line and collect luggage and other items to soon throw out of the plane. 2/4 time. Strings play *rinforzando* small octave and Line 1 C to Bb 16ths to C 8th tied to quarter note to (Bar 2) Bb-Ab-Bb-C 16ths to Db dotted 8th to Eb 16th. Etc.

Reel 9/2 is *Lento, molto espressivo* but I didn’t catch the starting point yet on the dvd.

Reel 11/2 is located at the start of Chapter 13. *Very Slow, Dolcissimo* in 4/4 time. Here Robert Newton comforts Mrs. Joseph.

Reel 18/2 (“Giubilo”) starts Chapter 21.

Time for bed! Bill (10:29 pm).

MONDAY, AUGUST 8, 2005 at 5:12 :

I read the very brief R.I.P. late last week on Talking Herrmann and also the Film Score Monthly Discussion Board of Rick Victor. I met him at least a few times at a film music soiree in someone’s home. One such soiree was on Feb 11, 1996. I have an audio cassette of 90 minutes of it and I believe Rick was in that one (I’ll check). He’s in the undated soiree tape I’m listening to at this moment. It’s very sad to hear of his passing. He was younger than I but I do not have his birth data. My wife reminded me that I did indeed ask him for his birth information but he was unwilling to give it. Another compact disc film music producer there also refused to reveal his birth data! Rick was involved especially with the 20th century Fox series (“The Classic Series” and others). *Anna & the King of Siam* cd was produced by Nick Redman and Rick Victor. He wasn’t involved in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (according to the cd booklet). Too bad because it was rather inferior in quality and scope (compared to what it *could* have been). Rick was the “Project Consultant” of *Garden of Evil/King of Khyber Rifles* (Bernard Herrmann at Fox, Volume 2). He wasn’t involved with the first volume (*Tender Is The Night/A Hatful of*

Rain). He was the “Technical Consultant” for *The Robe*. That applied also to *The Day the Earth Stood Still* cd. Etc.

Rick was a very personable, handsome fellow, rather low-keyed, but *really* into film music technicalities. I believed he worked at Fox (hence his involvement with the Fox series). He died of cancer. I don’t know if it was lung cancer (I don’t remember if he was a smoker) but sadly also Peter Jennings of ABC died last evening (from lung cancer). As a side note, Edgar Cayce in trance stated unequivocally:

“...those who would eat two to three almonds each day need never fear cancer. Those who would take a peanut oil rub each week need never fear arthritis.” 2828-3.

Of course that doesn’t means smoking every day or otherwise abusing your body with the ingesting of toxins but taking almonds every day hoping to cancel the bad habits!

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