

Film Score Blogs by Bill Wrobel
Friday, October 1, 2004 at 6:54 pm [Blog # 3]

Today I went in my two-week rental car to UCLA Music Library Special Collections for my third research visit recently (I visited last Friday and also Monday this week). Parking structure 2 at Hilgard & Westholme was packed, not accepting new cars (until noon) when I arrived right at 9:55 am, and even Lot 3 north of there was full. So I had to temporarily do street parking at the meter very near the Music Library. The meter only takes quarters and it gives only 8 minutes per quarter! Luckily I had enough quarters to fill the two-hour capacity on the meter.

I immediately walked to B-425 at the Special Collections Reading Room in Schoenberg Hall (Music Library) practically right across the street from Parking structure 2. The Rozsa score (*Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*) was waiting for me. I managed to only work on the first two cues last Monday (since I spent most of the day on Malcolm Arnold, etc). Today I managed to work (hand-copy) on portions of cue # 3 ("The Front Page) thru cue # 22 ("Peace Offering"). No other researcher visited so I was able to have the one lone table to myself, and even that table had some archival material at one edge!

Probably the most interesting and even (potentially) amusing discovery today with this score was "The Swede" cue. That's the scene in Chapter 5 on the dvd when Rigby (Steve Martin) visits the Swede (Burt Lancaster) in that famous scene from I believe "The Killers." Well, Burt lethargic on the bed, so Steve Martin says he needs a cup of Steve's famous java coffee. So he goes into the kitchen and endlessly pours the coffee slowly into a pan. There is no music in that specific scene with the coffee. However, according to the score I researched today, Rozsa actually did score it! Bars 23 thru 56 were therefore deleted (probably at the Director's insistence). Rozsa scored a rather serious underscore that would most certainly deadpan the funny scene—that is, make it funnier, I think. I am reminded of the movie AIRPLANE and Leslie Nielsen (as Dr. Rumack) being deadpan amidst the funny circumstances. The music here in DEAD MEN would be in effect the Leslie Nielsen of the scene!

The music in Bar 23 (:34 point on the score) has for 8 bars the bassoon and contra-bassoon. CB play the same, and so do the celli (as bowed tremolo half notes for the VC). They play small octave E to Eb half notes to (Bar 24) D to Db to (Bar 25) C to C# to (Bar 26) D to D# all legato returning to the same pattern in the next four bars. Violins and violas play the melody line playing (after a quarter rest) small octave and Line 1 E to F# quarter notes up to C down to A tenuto 8th notes up to (next bar) E half note tied to dotted quarter note up to G 8th down to (Bar 25) Eb rinforzando whole note tied to dotted quarter note next bar (etc). It's not "dramatic" music per se—more lightly suspenseful (for example, the bowed trem celli), and partially neutral. But I think it shows a terrific comedic sense of Rozsa writing such music. It's a delightful contrast. That is, it goes contrary to the scene and doesn't mickey-mouse it. So opposites do attract in this case.

In Bar 40 (1:05 point on the score), the same melody line is played (by violoncello and cello) but whole notes are held (tied) across bars while violins and harp play, after a quarter rest, repeat quarter note figures of Ab up to octave higher Ab back down to Ab. I think the music here is more intensified or accentuated with a dragging out effect—just as the scene is dragging off with the never-ending java pouring!

Anyway, I really enjoyed my research day there today. B-425 is not anywhere as strict and restrictive as some research locations. Tim there is, as the students there may say, “way cool.” I think Warner Bros. Archives means well but I think they are getting a wee bit over-vigilant or unnecessarily strict these days. Now they have a policy where they don’t even want you to have an eraser at the desk to correct your own mistakes! Of course a researcher has to wear gloves there (the only archives/studio I’ve been to that required that). And most times they simply give you one folder at a time instead of the whole box. That can be problematical especially when the documents and cues are out of order. When Leith was there years ago, it wasn’t anywhere as strict. But at least you get to see the actual autograph scores. That’s enormously helpful. At the Herrmann archives at UCSB for the last few years at least, they will not allow you to see or handle the actual autograph scores if a microfilm is available instead. And dealing with microfilm is a tremendous inconvenience and time-consuming and hard on these older eyes of mine! This applies to all or most of the feature films and CBS stuff. Fortunately I already worked on those over the years, and so when I visit there now (usually once or twice a year) I have pulled the obscure non-microfilmed scores. If I am allowed in Universal Studios once at least in my lifetime to study Herrmann television scores, I’ll wear a spacesuit with disinfectant sprayed all over it if they want me to!

I hope to return to UCLA again next week. Probably the best day will be Thursday. That might be good because there’s a lady researching there that day named Dora (I believe) who has pulled material from the Herrmann collection, and it might be interesting speaking with a fellow Herrmann researcher. I am already scheduled to go to USC Film & Television Library on Tuesday. Ned is pulling some cores for me, including what he has of Tiomkin’s *The High & the Mighty* and also Newman’s *The Greatest Story Ever Told* in full score (I hope). Also, as I may’ve mentioned below (the other day), I’m pulling *The Rifleman* music from the Chuck Connors Collection. If there’s a lot of material on Tuesday, I’ll continue the research on Wednesday. Monday I’ll remain home and busy on things. Next weekend my wife and I will be free to go places (provided I extend my two-week National Car rental Thursday night for three more days!). I may try to see composer John M. and obtain some of his scores for a later film score rundown.

I’ll need to pop in my *Greatest Story Ever Told* dvd on Sunday or Monday and make an audiocassette of the music for my research on Tuesday. Perhaps I’ll go to DVD Planet and buy a RIFLEMAN dvd.

Well, I think this will do it for today’s post on my new blog! I promised my new Webmaster (or is it “web mistress”? Or simply “web designer”), Sarah, that I would send the blog file before her vacation soon. I am curious how she will change the look of the

Film Score Rundowns site! I gave her full creative space to do her thing in that area. I will now thank her in advance for her espressivo work!

Matt Gear was the long-time web designer who is now becoming quite busy with many projects. In fact, he actually created this Internet site back in January 1999. He saw my rudimentary “rundowns” on Filmus-L starting back in mid-1998 thru December and felt that they should be placed in one collection. Then I started to add new ones, and expanding on them, becoming far more detailed. So I am indebted to Matt for his creative and pioneering idea, and also for all his hard work!

With the change of web designer/site maintainer, I thought I would also add this blog feature. As given, it will not necessarily be a daily posting event! This week is fruitful because I am on vacation and can do a lot of film music research. Perhaps (not sure yet) I will have Sarah update the blog entry on the site, oh, every two weeks, say. I will simply accumulate entries that will be collectively posted every other week perhaps. This may change to even a weekly thing or even a monthly one! Not sure. Let’s see how this spontaneous venture goes! Spontaneity knows its own order (a Seth quote).

I spent an hour or so last week trying to find (thru Google) other film music blogs. So far I have not had luck. If readers know of any, e-mail me. And, once again, if readers have general or specific questions and comments, you can e-mail me:

film scorerundowns@pavenet.net

...and I’ll see if I can answer them on the blog site. I will not use your full name unless you want me to.

Good night! [8:51 pm]
