

Breaking Away

Breaking Away (1979) is, you should pardon the expression, a break-away film, as far ahead of its coming-of-age-movie cohorts as it's possible to be. Even as it delves into material that has provided fodder for countless similarly themed films before and since, it stands beautifully alone thanks to its genuine humor (with nary a joke based on embarrassing physical processes in sight), marvelously quirky and detailed characters, solid sense of place, and an overall meticulous specificity—for all of which credit must go to Steve Tesich's warm, wise, often hilarious Oscar®-winning screenplay, and to the sympathetic direction of Peter Yates (*Bullitt*), stepping away from his fast-paced action-film comfort zone to find new depths as an artist.

This is also a deeply American film, set in the small university town of Bloomington, Indiana. Once, this verdant place with its meandering rivers, sun-dappled woods, and long straight roads had a thriving stone-quarrying industry; now, it's suggested, no one's building to last and the quarries have shut down, the monumental pits from which the stone was once hewn serving only as rather magnificent swimming holes, and former "cutters"—the quarry laborers—either struggling to make ends meet in other businesses or simply gone away. The working-class kids of the cutters have no jobs waiting for them when they graduate from high school; for most of them, college isn't an option; as one of the group we get to know says, "What the hell do you get to do when you're 19?"

Part of what they do is envy the University of Indiana students: kids with money and privilege and possibility. *Breaking Away* is that rare thing in American movies: a look at our deeply embedded, home-grown class system. It's never didactic about it, but this film acknowledges the great American secret: that there are class differences here, and they hurt. Entitled frat boys with nice clothes and perfect skin/teeth do drive around in their own Mercedes cars, looking askance at scrawny "townies"—the cutters—with very little sympathy; the character played here by Hart Bochner could be a rough sketch for Mitt Romney.

Fascinatingly, it seems to have taken a pair of outsiders like Yates and Tesich to make the point. Yates was a native of Aldershot, England, an upper-crust student at the Charterhouse School, and a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Tesich was born in the former Yugoslavia, emigrating with his family to the town of East Chicago, Indiana when he was just 14, and attending IU Bloomington; there, in 1962, he participated in the celebrated

"Little 500" bicycle race, watching in awe as teammate Dave Blase rode 139 of 200 laps and was the victory rider crossing the finish line for his team. This place, this event, and this young man formed the basis for Tesich's screenplay for *Breaking Away*, which centers on Dave (the marvelous Dennis Christopher), a cutter who's mad for cycling, and whose youthful enthusiasm sweeps up everyone near and dear to him: his irritable, resistant father (the inimitable Paul Dooley), a former cutter barely getting by as a car salesman; his deeply sympathetic mother (Barbara Barrie, absolutely incandescent in her understanding); and his lifelong pals, Mike (Dennis Quaid), Cyril (Daniel Stern), and Moocher (Jackie Earle Haley)...

Breaking Away was an odd, eccentric, gorgeously human little film that, even as its riveting specificity set it apart from the run of Hollywood films, somehow found an audience. It is, most assuredly, a "feel-good" movie—but its good feelings are earned by virtue of careful attention to detail, scrupulous consideration of the quirks of human behavior, and an invigorating presentation of a particular time and place. It is, in short, an affectionate, intelligent look at real-life mid-America: perhaps the last, tragically, of the kind of films classically made by the likes of Frank Capra and John Ford—and, in a darker vein, by Jean Renoir and Fritz Lang and Otto Preminger. An all-American beauty, in fact, significantly gifted to us by passionate immigrants. In this weird and wonderful country, has it not been ever thus?

— Julie Kirgo

(adapted from the liner notes for the Twilight Time Blu-ray release of *Breaking Away*)

The Music

Peter Yates temp-tracked *Breaking Away* with classical music, so he obviously had that in his head as he and his editor were working on the film. When he brought Patrick Williams on board, Williams saw the film with the temp track and told Yates that if that was what he wanted that it was okay with him and Williams would just adapt that music. But Yates, instead, told him to do his thing and perhaps adapt some of the classical bits but also write an original score around it. And that is what Williams did, creating some wonderful dramatic cues in the process.

After the film previewed, Yates told Williams that there was a "problem" with the music, but he was vague about what that problem actually was. Williams was finally told that someone's wife had said the original scoring cues seemed too serious for the movie. And so, with Lionel

Newman, Williams replaced the majority of his original cues with the classical music he'd adapted (with the exception of a couple of original up-tempo source cues) and convened for a second recording session to record more of his adaptations, and that was that. In the end the score was comprised mostly of music by Gioacchino Rossini, Felix Mendelssohn and Friedrich von Flotow.

The film was an instant hit with critics and audiences and everyone loved the way the classical adaptations functioned in the film. After the heartbreak of having to replace his original dramatic cues (and it's always a heartbreak when this happens in movies), the irony was, of course, that Williams received an Oscar nomination for Best Music – Original Score and Its Adaptation or Best Adaptation Score.

For this world premiere CD release, we give you all of the classical pieces that Williams adapted (and adapted superbly), as well as his original score cues, both used (the source cues) and unused. For listening purposes, we've taken the liberty of inserting a handful of Williams' unused cues into the score presentation, because they work so beautifully there. The rest are included in the bonus section. Williams is thrilled that his original cues will finally be heard.

Patrick Williams has had a long and varied career as a film composer, as an arranger, and as a recording artist. He's still going strong – composing new works, appearing with his band, releasing CDs and making beautiful music. We've been pleased to release his scores for *Cuba* and *Butch and Sundance: The Early Years*, and we are even more pleased to finally release the wonderful score and adaptation of *Breaking Away*.

— Bruce Kimmel