

The Counterfeit Traitor

1939 was, for many people, the best year for movies ever. For me it was 1962. The films that came out that year were trend-setting, astonishing – and there were so many of them that have since become classics that it is truly mind-boggling. Here's a sampling of 1962's output: *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Birdman of Alcatraz*, *Cape Fear*, *David and Lisa*, *Days of Wine and Roses*, *Experiment in Terror*, *Dr. No* (which would begin the astonishing James Bond series), *Gypsy*, *The Music Man*, *Hatari!*, *How The West Was Won*, *Lolita*, *Lonely Are The Brave*, *The Longest Day*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *Ride the High Country*, *Taras Bulba*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Two for the Seesaw*, *Orson Welles' The Trial*, *Two Weeks in Another Town*, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and that's just the tip of the iceberg and doesn't include many classic foreign films of that year (*Sundays and Cybele*, *L'Eclisse*, *Sanjuro*), and one of the biggest cult films ever, *Carnival of Souls*. These films had scores by the likes of Elmer Bernstein, Bernard Herrmann, Franz Waxman, Alfred Newman, Henry Mancini, Laurence Rosenthal, Maurice Jarre, Jerry Goldsmith, André Previn, David Raksin and on and on.

One of the most forgotten and best films of that year was Perlberg-Seaton's production of the Paramount picture *The Counterfeit Traitor*. The film was a sobering, gripping, exciting, touching espionage thriller and at the top of its class, as espionage thrillers go. Starring William Holden and Lilli Palmer, along with a host of wonderful overseas character actors (including Academy Award-winner Hugh Griffith), and some great location photography, *The Counterfeit Traitor* was written and directed by George Seaton (from the novel by Alexander Klein – based on a true story). Seaton had, by that time, turned in many terrific films, including *Miracle on 34th Street*, *The Country Girl*, and *Teacher's Pet*, among others, and would go on to direct the huge hit, *Airport*.

The Counterfeit Traitor recounts the true story of Eric Erickson (Holden), an American-born citizen living in neutral Sweden during World War II, who is neutral enough to be profiting from

working with both the Germans and the Allies. He is blackmailed into working for the Allies as a spy – this he reluctantly agrees to because the Allies (represented by the caustic Griffith) have him in a bind. He is to supply information on German oil refineries, and part of the ruse is that he will appear on a blacklist of the Allies. To keep up the ruse, he alienates his wife (who leaves him) and his Jewish friends. He is to work with another agent, the beautiful Marianna (Lilli Palmer) – in time, they eventually develop a more intimate relationship. The film is filled with memorable scenes – an endlessly suspicious Nazi youth who would turn in anyone to keep his uniform; Ericson's public humiliation of his closest Jewish friend, and the gut-wrenching sequence when Erickson is forced to watch from a prison cell while the Gestapo kill Marianna, his tortured screams to her are unheard through the prison window glass. It is one of the most powerful scenes from any espionage thriller, and it's one of the great moments of Holden's great career.

But the film simply got lost in that year's incredible shuffle, as did many other great films – only later would some of them be rediscovered and achieve classic status – and *The Counterfeit Traitor* is indeed a classic. The film received no Academy Award nominations, which was a shame, especially given the heartfelt and stellar work by Holden and Palmer. The Paramount production values were top-notch in every department, most especially in the costumes of Edith Head and the photography of Jean Bourgoïn, the great French cameraman who'd photographed Welles' *Mr. Arkadin*, Tati's *Mon Oncle*, as well as *Black Orpheus* and his other 1962 film, *The Longest Day*. And, of course, it didn't hurt that *The Counterfeit Traitor* was blessed with a brilliant score by one of the greatest film composers who ever lived – Alfred Newman.

Newman, born in 1901, had spent most of his film music career at Twentieth-Century Fox, where he wrote many amazing scores, including such classics as *The Mark of Zorro*, *The Keys of the Kingdom*, *The Song of Bernadette*, *Leave Her to Heaven*, *Captain from Castile*, *All About Eve*, *The Robe*, *A Man Called Peter*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and hundreds of others, as well as his films for other studios – *Gunga Din*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *The Prisoner of*

Zenda, *Wuthering Heights* – and the list could go on for another few pages. His first film for Paramount was the 1961 comedy *The Pleasure of His Company*. He only wrote two scores in 1962, but they were both masterpieces and very different – *How The West Was Won* and *The Counterfeit Traitor*.

The score for *The Counterfeit Traitor* is classic Newman all the way, with its propulsive main title, his various suspense and dramatic cues, and one of his most memorable love themes ever – the theme for Marianna. That gorgeous theme weaves itself in and out of many cues in the score. It first presents itself as background music, then becomes more prominent in each successive cue in which it occurs. It can be simple and beautiful and evocative of the growing relationship between Holden and Palmer, or it can be courageous as Palmer tries to instill her sense of right and wrong in Holden, or heart-breaking and tragic when dealing with her demise and Holden's memories of her. For those who've never seen the film, Newman's score will be a revelation – one of the great scores of the 1960s and of Newman's career.

Seen today, *The Counterfeit Traitor*, with its themes of loyalty, betrayal, honor, courage, and love has lost none of its power – it remains a taut and riveting film and one that is continually being rediscovered by new generations. And it is a treat to finally bring Newman's great score to CD for the first time.

This CD was mastered from the original three-track Paramount master tapes housed in the Paramount vaults. While ninety percent of the cues were in excellent condition, less than a handful had very minor damage, and we felt that it was historically important to include them, even so.

— Bruce Kimmel