

Let's face it – it was hard to get away from secret agents and spy books and films in the 1960s. Why? Oh, a little phenomenon called James Bond. When *Dr. No* was released in 1962, no one could have expected what would ultimately happen, the Bond mania that would sweep the world. *From Russia, With Love* and especially *Goldfinger* would cement the Bond craze then, now, and most likely forever. Suddenly the world was rife with Bond wannabes, in books and films and TV. Whether serious or spoofy, barely a month went by without some new secret agent novel or movie or TV show coming your way. To my mind, the best of the new breed of Bonds was Len Deighton's "unnamed hero" books, which began with *The Ipcress File* in 1962. Deighton went on to write several others in the series, such as *Horse Under Water*, *Funeral In Berlin*, *Billion Dollar Brain*, and several others. For a film producer looking to cash in on the Bond craze, the Deighton books were a natural, and so it came to be that *The Ipcress File* was bought for the movies and bought by none other than Bond producer Harry Saltzman.

Released in 1965, *The Ipcress File* was a rousing success, and a great vehicle for Michael Caine, who played (perfectly) the unnamed hero who was now christened Harry Palmer. It also didn't hurt to have the Bond composer, John Barry, doing its score. But the film was sort of the antithesis of the Bondian spy yarn. The subsequent film, *Funeral In Berlin*, was not quite the success that *Ipcress* had been, but was still entertaining, even though it really had an entirely different feel to it than the previous film, including a score not by Barry but by Konrad Elfers. By the time of *Billion Dollar Brain* (the book came out in 1966 and the film a year later), the secret agent craze, save for Bond, was on the wane. *Billion Dollar Brain* came and went quickly, but developed a cult following over the years, mostly because its director was the soon-to-be enfant terrible of cinema, Ken Russell. By Russell standards, *Brain* is relatively subdued, but there's something about it that is really fun and weird (with a great cast, including Karl Malden, Ed Begley, Oscar Homolka, Guy Doleman, and the beautiful Françoise Dorléac), and, for me, it's a film I really never tire of watching.

A lot of that is due to the fantastic score of Richard Rodney Bennett. By 1967, Bennett was already one of my favorite film composers, solely due to his brilliant score to *Far From The Madding Crowd*, which is all I'd heard at that point. But the minute that incredible main title music for *Brain* started I knew he was going to be in my pantheon of greats. And from that point on, both in discovering his earlier scores for films like *The Mark*, *The Nanny*, *Billy Liar*, and his work subsequent to *Brain*, he never disappointed. In the 1970s he wrote some of my all-time favorite film scores – *Lady Caroline Lamb*, *Murder On The Orient Express*, and most especially *Yanks*, one of the most heartbreakingly beautiful and underrated scores ever. He continues to write terrifically and he also is well known and loved in the world of cabaret.

My first connection to him was issuing his soundtrack to *Enchanted April* on my first label, Bay Cities. I personally put together the sequencing (the cues were all very short and I combined several and figured out a nice playing order), and was very pleased to find that he was very pleased. On that CD I also licensed from Capitol two tracks – one from *Lady Caroline Lamb* and one from *Murder On The Orient Express* – both quite lengthy. Then, about seven years later, when I was doing theater music CDs for Varese Sarabande, I found myself in the studio producing a Rodgers and Hart CD with a singer called Mary Cleere Haran. I'd actually waffled about doing it until I was told that her musical director/pianist was Richard Rodney Bennett. Once that information was imparted, we were in the studio about three weeks later. He was the nicest man – a real gentleman – and we got along very well. I told him repeatedly how much I loved his film scores, and we even toyed with the idea of doing an album of his film stuff, which, sadly never happened.

*Billion Dollar Brain* is one of Bennett's most interesting scores, especially in its orchestration, which features brass, up to three pianos, a lot of percussion and the Ondes Martenot. I don't believe a film composer today could get away with anything quite so unique and audacious, orchestration-wise. Bennett himself orchestrated and the score was conducted by Marcus Dods. Even though the album presentation was out of

film sequence, we've left it as is because it's a terrific listen.

1982's *The Final Option* (called *Who Dares Wins* in the UK), was a topical political thriller produced by Euan Lloyd. It starred Lewis Collins (very Bond-like, and apparently in the running as a post-Roger Moore Bond), Judy Davis, Ingrid Pitt, Richard Widmark, Edward Woodward, Robert Webber and a lot of other good actors. The film has some exciting and taut action set pieces, main titles by Bond guy Maurice Binder (as does *Billion Dollar Brain*), and a rousing and wonderful score by Roy Budd.

Roy Budd had already written several great scores for some 1970s films, ranging from classics like *Get Carter*, to films like

*Fear Is The Key*, *Catlow*, *Paper Tiger*, *The Carey Treatment*, *The Stone Killer*, *The Black Windmill*, *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, *The Wild Geese* (and its sequel), *The Sea Wolves* and many others. His score for *The Final Option* is a great deal of fun and keeps the film moving right along. Sadly, Roy Budd passed away in 1993 at the age of 47. He was a composer who could do practically anything, and his scores are always perfect for the movies they accompany, whether moody crime dramas, action thrillers, military adventure, or fantasy.

*Billion Dollar Brain* and *The Final Option* were previously released on CD as part of a very expensive box set called *The MGM Soundtrack Treasury*, a limited edition set that sold out immediately. So, we're pleased to bring these two scores back for a stand-alone CD release, newly remastered, and sounding swell.

— Bruce Kimmel