

The Berlin Affair

In 1974, director Liliana Cavani made the extremely controversial film *The Night Porter*, which divided critics and audiences all over the world. A decade later, she was back with *The Berlin Affair* (based on the novel *The Buddhist Cross* by Junichiro Tanazaki), which, while not as controversial as *The Night Porter*, still explored hotbed topics of sexuality and homosexuality, race, jealousy, torment, deception, betrayal, all set in 1938 Berlin and involving a Nazi official, his wife, the daughter of the Japanese Ambassador, an art teacher, all of whose lives intertwine in ultimately destructive ways.

Louise von Hollendorf, the wife of a German official, is taking lessons at the art institute, where she meets Mitsuko, the daughter of the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin. The two develop a friendship, which then turns into something more. "One moment we were laughing, the next we were making love," she recounts as she tells her story. Eventually Louise's husband finds out, is jealous, but eventually he, too, is seduced by Mitsuko, and all become involved in a labyrinthine plot that, of course, ends in tragedy for most concerned. The cast was excellent, with German actress Gudrun Landgrebe elegant and beautiful as Louise, Kevin McNally as her husband, and alluring Mio Takaki as the object of many people's desires. The film was beautifully photographed by Dante

Spinotti, who would go on to photograph *Manhunter*, *Crimes Of The Heart*, *The Last Of The Mohicans*, *LA Confidential*, and many others. Capturing the seething passions, eroticism, intrigue, and atmosphere, Pino Donaggio's score is as much a leading player in the film as any of its characters.

Donaggio had been scoring films for over a decade, starting with Nicholas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* (1973), and continuing with his work for Brian De Palma (*Carrie*, *Dressed To Kill*, *Body Double*, *Blow Out* and others) as well as cult classics like *Tourist Trap*, *The Howling*, *Piranha*, *Tex*, *Hercules*, as well as providing quite a few scores for Cannon Films, of which *The Berlin Affair* was one. But even before scoring his first film, Donaggio had already entered the record books with his hit song, "You Don't Have To Say You Love Me," recorded by Dusty Springfield and Elvis Presley, and which, according to some sources, sold eighty million records as well as making the Rolling Stone list of the 500 Greatest Songs Ever Written.

The score for *The Berlin Affair* is Donaggio at the top of his game. With its sinuous, swirling, hypnotic melodies capturing all the underlying complexities of the characters and the story, the music is like a symphonic fever dream in the film, and a wonderful and completely satisfying listening experience

away from the film. In fact, the music is mixed quite low in the film, and many cues are truncated, so it's especially lovely to hear them complete and in gorgeous sound.

The Berlin Affair was issued on LP, but this is its world premiere CD release. The LP presented about thirty-nine minutes of the score, included a title song, and several source/pastiche cues. We present all those, plus all the cues not used on the album, and they are many. The CD was mastered from the original Italian two-track mixed score tapes housed in the MGM vaults – they were in pristine condition and the recording is absolutely stunning.

Thankfully, over the last decade there have been quite a few releases of Pino Donaggio scores (this is the third for Kritzerland – the complete *Carrie* and *Ordeal By Innocence* preceded this release) – his is a unique voice and his mastery of orchestral color and melody and his understanding of how music works with image is remarkable. So, sit back and enjoy *The Berlin Affair*, a true musical affair of the heart and one of the most stunning Donaggio scores ever.

— Bruce Kimmel