

# A BRIDGE TOO FAR

*A Bridge Too Far*, Richard Attenborough's 1977 epic 22 million dollar film adapted from the 1974 book by Cornelius Ryan, tells the story of Operation Market Garden, the failed Allied attempt to break through German lines and take several bridges at a time when the Germans were on the retreat. Joseph E. Levine financed the entire film by himself, selling off distribution rights as filming continued – by the time the film was finished it was already four million dollars into the black, a pretty amazing feat.

Levine assembled a stellar creative team – in addition to Attenborough, screenwriter William Goldman was hired to adapt Ryan's book. Goldman began his writing career as a novelist but achieved his greatest successes as a screenwriter, most notably of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All The President's Men*, *Harper*, *The Stepford Wives*, *Misery*, *Marathon Man*, *Magic*, *The Princess Bride* (the latter three all adapted from his novels), and many others. The cinematographer was Geoffrey Unsworth (*2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Cabaret*, *Murder On The Orient Express*, *Superman*, *Tess*), and even the second unit had impressive credits – the second aerial cameraman was the brilliant Jack Cardiff, and the second unit was directed by Sidney Hayers (director of *Circus of Horrors*, *Burn*, *Witch*, *Burn*, and a lot of *The Avengers* episodes).

But as stellar as the creative team was, it was the all-star cast that was truly amazing – Dirk Bogarde, James Caan, Laurence Olivier, Ryan O'Neal, Robert Redford, Sean Connery, Michael Caine, Edward Fox, Anthony Hopkins, Gene Hackman, Hardy Kruger, Maximilian Schell, Liv Ullman, along with a lot of well-known British and German character actors.

The film, which runs just under three hours, received mixed notices, and did reasonably good business, but audiences of the day just weren't that interested in three-hour WWII films anymore.

But every penny of that 22 million dollar budget is on the screen, and thanks to the literate screenplay by Goldman, and the excellent performances by the large cast, Attenborough created a compelling film that holds up beautifully all these years later. For such a huge and impressive production, *A Bridge Too Far* received no Academy Award nominations whatsoever (it was the year of *Annie Hall*), but did receive several BAFTA nominations including Best Film and Best Director – it took home several wins – co-star Edward Fox, cameraman Geoffrey Unsworth, Best Sound, and one for the film's musical score by John Addison.

By the time of *A Bridge Too Far*, John Addison had written several classic film scores (*Tom Jones*, *The Loved One*, *Sleuth*, *Torn Curtain*, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Start the Revolution Without Me*, *The Seven-Percent Solution*), and had been nominated twice for Academy Awards, winning for *Tom Jones*. When Addison found out that Richard Attenborough was going to make *A Bridge Too Far*, he called Attenborough and said he desperately wanted to do the music for the film, as he had a very personal connection to it – as a young soldier he'd served with the XXX Corps, the tank division that was at the heart of Operation Market Garden.

And Addison delivered the goods, composing one of his greatest scores, with a rousing, tuneful march at its center, stirring action music, and some stunning dramatic cues. Talking about a few of the musical cues, Addison said, "I tried to invest into the music accompanying the huge air armada crossing from England to Holland some sense of weight and power. The principal melody was carried by brass instruments such as trombones and I think that while one obviously had the aircraft engines sound, the music did create this element of strength and power in the way that music can. Earlier in the film the

march music was often quite optimistic and upbeat. And it was later on, when things started to go wrong, that one felt more of the irony of the loss of life and various tragic elements about a battle that did not succeed as had been hoped. One of the final images left on the screen after the retreat, capture or death of the remaining Allied forces is of a small child marching along proudly with his toy rifle over his shoulder – to the sounds of the once cheerful XXX Corps march. This, perhaps, is Richard Attenborough's final comment."

In Attenborough's liner notes for the original LP release of the score, he said of Addison, "I shall never forget the occasion when, at Joe Levine's invitation, he saw the actual film. At the end he was obviously greatly moved. 'One works because one must,' he said, 'but sometimes the work is what you want with all your being and this, for me, is one of those occasions. If I can't write something wonderful for this film, then I should give up.' When Joe Levine and I sat in the small music room of John's Los Angeles home and listened to him playing the score on his piano for the first time, we were both on the verge of tears. He had, indeed, written some truly wonderful music."

*A Bridge Too Far* was originally released on a United Artists LP. In 1999, Ryko issued it on CD, which subsequently went out of print – it has been out of print for years now and is a much-requested title, which is why we decided to reissue it. The original LP masters were used for the CD, and we've remastered it for this CD release.

John Addison passed away in December of 1998, leaving behind a legacy of great film and concert music. He was a master of his craft and a unique voice in film scoring. He is much missed.

— Bruce Kimmel