

# Heaven Can Wait and Racing with the Moon

Once upon a time there was a play by Harry Segall called *Heaven Can Wait*, written in 1938 and not produced on Broadway. Nevertheless, the film rights were bought and the resulting 1941 film, retitled *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, was a hit. This was followed by a 1943 Ernst Lubitsch film called *Heaven Can Wait* that had nothing to do with Mr. Segall, his play or *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*. Then came *Down to Earth* (1947), starring Rita Hayworth, which was a sort of sequel to *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, bringing back the characters played by Edward Everett Horton and James Gleason, but not the central characters. That same year, the Segall play finally made it to Broadway but under a different title, *Wonderful Journey* – a production that ran only nine performances. Flash forward to 1978 – Paramount Pictures and Warren Beatty remake *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* but change the title back to Segall's original title, *Heaven Can Wait*. Two years later comes *Xanadu*, starring Olivia Newton-John, which was a sort of remake of *Down to Earth*, the sequel to *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*. Now jump to 2001 when Segall's *Heaven Can Wait* is remade again, this time as *Down to Earth*, starring Chris Rock – and having nothing to do with *Down to Earth*, the sort of sequel to *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*.

*Heaven Can Wait*, the 1978 version, received glowing reviews and was a huge hit for Paramount, Beatty, and all involved. Beatty, in addition to starring as football player Joe Pendleton (whose life ends unexpectedly and by mistake when he's involved in an accident he shouldn't have been involved in) co-directed (with Buck Henry, who plays The Escort, the person responsible for the mistaken accident) and co-wrote the screenplay (with Elaine May). An absolutely first-rate, perfect cast was assembled – in addition to Beatty and Buck Henry, the film also starred Julie Christie, Charles Grodin, Dyan Cannon, Jack Warden, Joseph Maher, and James Mason as Mr. Jordan. As great as Mason is in the part, it is fun to play the “what if” game and imagine the person Mr. Beatty courted for the role but who ultimately wouldn't come out of retirement to do it – Cary Grant.

Beatty and Elaine May's screenplay did everything a great script should – made you care about the lead characters, made you howl with laughter at the farcical elements, and then touched you as the film's simple-yet-emotional final scene played out. Everything about the film's direction, script, cast, photography, music and design – even its iconic poster – was perfect. At Academy Awards time, *Heaven Can Wait* received nine Oscar nominations, including Best Picture, Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium, Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Actor (Beatty), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Warden), Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Cannon), Best Art Direction-Set Decoration, and a Best Music, Original Score nomination for the

film's composer, Dave Grusin. For a comedy to receive nine nominations was amazing – but it was, as usual, the year's dramas (they included *The Deer Hunter* and *Coming Home*) that took most of the prizes that year, and *Heaven Can Wait* ended up with only one win: for Best Art Direction-Set Decoration (Paul Sylbert, Edwin O'Donovan and George Gaines).

One of the key elements of the film that makes it work so well is Dave Grusin's score. Composers and directors have to decide how much music any film should have. What is the right amount for it to do its job? Sometimes the answer changes as the film goes through the editing process. The composer and director will spot the film, deciding on where music should go; then the composer writes for those sequences and records the cues. But at that point, things can and sometimes do change and the director may want more or may want less. In the case of *Heaven Can Wait*, Grusin wrote a short score – Beatty clearly didn't want the film loaded with music from start to finish. Since Beatty's character, Joe Pendleton, plays the soprano saxophone in the film, it was natural for Grusin to make that the key instrument of his score. In the end, there were only about fifteen minutes of original Grusin music used, but what music it is! It's a testament to what Grusin wrote that it seems like there's much more music in the film than there actually is. His main theme, the jaunty and captivating “Heaven Walk,” is one of Grusin's most memorable melodies – it's used throughout and every time it appears it's like having an old friend say hello. And then there is the gorgeous, simple, but hugely touching music for the romance of the Beatty and Christie characters, Joe Pendleton and Betty Logan.

This is the world premiere release for *Heaven Can Wait*. In addition to what ended up in the film, we present the unused cues as well as some alternates as bonus tracks. This release was mixed from the original multi-track tapes housed in the Paramount vaults.

Six years later, Paramount made *Racing With the Moon*, a film directed by actor Richard Benjamin, who'd had a huge critical and audience success two years earlier with his first film, *My Favorite Year*. The cast featured three actors who had made their screen debuts not too long before this film, and who were all on the cusp of stardom – Sean Penn, Elizabeth McGovern and Nicholas Cage, each of whom gives an incredibly appealing performance. *Racing With the Moon* was the first produced screenplay for writer Steve Kloves, who'd go on to write the screenplays for *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, *Wonder Boys*, and all the *Harry Potter* films except for *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

The story was simple – two friends who are about to start serving in the military during World War II have some things to learn about life before they leave, and learn they do. Penn meets McGovern and falls in love with her, and Cage has to deal with a girl he got in “trouble.” The film never overplays its hand, keeping things moving along towards its sweet and touching conclusion. Vincent Canby's review in *The New York Times* summed it all up in its first paragraph: “*Racing With the Moon*, directed by Richard Benjamin from an original screenplay by a fine new writer named Steve Kloves, is an exceptionally appealing movie about subjects you may think you've already had enough of – growing up, first love and the shouldering of arms and other responsibilities. However, *Racing With the Moon* demonstrates such intelligence and wit that the result is an unexpected pleasure.”

As with *Heaven Can Wait*, the score was by Dave Grusin and it's a beauty. Its tender themes glow with an incandescent beauty – one is period-flavored, while the other is more timeless in feel. Those themes alternate throughout the score, along with an infectious “Moon Boogie” and “Mendocino Station.” In addition to Grusin's stunning work, there are several big-band 1940s source music cues that are very much a part of the fabric of the film; those cues were arranged and conducted by the amazing Billy May.

A soundtrack LP prepared at the time of the film's release was never issued. This is the score's world premiere release, and it includes the complete Grusin score, along with all the big band source music cues, all taken from the original stereo session tapes housed in the Paramount vaults.

Dave Grusin was and is a unique voice in film music. He has written a large number of iconic and brilliant scores, including *Divorce*, *American Style*, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *The Yakuza*, *Three Days of the Condor*, *Murder by Death*, *Bobby Deerfield*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *The Champ*, *And Justice for All*, *My Bodyguard*, *Absence of Malice*, *On Golden Pond*, *Tootsie*, *The Goonies*, *The Milagro Beanfield War*, *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, *The Firm*, *Hope Floats*, and that's only scratching the surface of his incredible output. He's been nominated for eight Academy Awards and won the prize for *The Milagro Beanfield War*. He is also a multiple Grammy Award nominee and winner, not only for his soundtracks, but also his arrangements for singers and many jazz albums on his label GRP Records.

*Heaven Can Wait* and *Racing With the Moon* – two never-before-released Dave Grusin scores. Heaven indeed.

— Bruce Kimmel