

The Molly Maguires

It all looked good for *The Molly Maguires*, a big-budget (\$11 million) drama from Paramount Pictures, with powerhouse stars, Sean Connery, Richard Harris, and Samantha Eggar, a terrific director, Martin Ritt (*Hud*, *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* and many others), and the screenwriter of *Fail Safe* and John Frankenheimer's *The Train*, the great Walter Bernstein. How could it fail?

The Molly Maguires takes place in the Pennsylvania coal country in 1876 and is loosely based on the true story of a small band of Irish coal miners/terrorists called The Molly Maguires, who, tired of abusive mine owners and low pay, fight back the only way they know how – by destroying equipment and mine shafts, beatings, and even murder. Sean Connery played the leader of the Mollys, Jack Kehoe, Richard Harris played the Pinkerton detective James McParlan who's asked to infiltrate the terrorists, and Samantha Eggar plays local girl Mary Raines, who falls in love with McParlan.

It was a beautifully made film; gritty, extremely realistic, with great performances and stunning photography by the legendary James Wong Howe. There was only one thing wrong and it could be summed up in two little words: *Easy Rider*. That film had come out while *The Molly Maguires* was shooting and it had instantly changed everything in Hollywood. Suddenly the studios saw that a small, low-budget film could score big and they all were trying to jump on the counterculture bandwagon and make films that would appeal to the youth market and get Hollywood into a new era, the New Hollywood as it was being dubbed.

The Molly Maguires was the antithesis of the New Hollywood – it was a superb film made by classic Hollywood film-

makers, and it was not what audiences wanted. The film tanked at the box-office and received both good and tepid reviews. But you know what's funny? You look at those counterculture youth pictures today and, for the most part, they are horribly dated, occasionally laughable, and frequently unwatchable. Whereas time has been kind – more than kind – to beautifully made films like *The Molly Maguires*. Viewed away from the era in which it was made, the film is a timeless and terrific movie.

Henry Mancini always thought *The Molly Maguires* one of his finest scores. When I reissued the original album on my then-label Bay Cities, he called and was so grateful we were doing it, and you could just hear in his voice the love he had for it. Mancini had this to say about his score when he talked to the author of the Bay Cities liner notes, writer Jon Burlingame: “The challenge was to get beyond the clichés that are commonly used for this kind of music. When the Molly Maguires set out on a mission, I wanted something melodic but dramatic. That was my spin on Irish music. And the ballad, ‘The Hills of Yesterday,’ is very simple. That was a hard one to come by – I didn't want to do a ‘Rosie O'Grady’ or a ‘Mother Machree.’”

For the orchestration, Mancini used such non-traditional instruments as the Irish harp, a button accordion, a penny-whistle, and an ocarina. Even the fiddle that's used to play Mancini's source music for the pub was tuned differently to give it a more folk-like sound.

The score is filled with Mancini's lush melodies and expert scoring. Whether depicting an early morning at the mines (the astonishing opening cue), or the terrorist activities, or the blossoming love between Eggar and Harris, Mancini's score is right up there with his greatest, including such masterpieces

as *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Charade*, *Days of Wine and Roses*, *Hatari!*, *Two For The Road*, and many others.

The Molly Maguires was originally issued on LP, and made its CD debut on Bay Cities in the early 1990s. For this new release, we had access to the original multi-track tapes stored in the Paramount vault. The LP and subsequent CD release presented about thirty-two minutes of score. We are thrilled to present the entire score as recorded by Mancini, newly mixed in superb sound, and which features several cues that were left off the original album.

When *The Molly Maguires* had its first preview, the reaction was not good. It was decided to replace the film's original score, which had been composed by Charles Strouse. While Strouse was most known for his Broadway musicals, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *It's A Bird, It's A Plane, It's Superman*, *All American* and *Golden Boy*, he'd also written the score to the hugely popular film *Bonnie and Clyde* as well as *The Night They Raided Minsky's*. Score replacements happened then and still happen now. It's a fact of life. Sometimes a score just isn't working for the film, even though the music itself might be excellent. And that's what happened here – Strouse's score just wasn't working with the film.

When we pulled the tapes for *The Molly Maguires*, we were delighted to find that the tapes for Strouse's score were there. Of course we wanted to include it on our new CD because it's of historical interest and importance. The music is very interesting, and it's fascinating to hear Strouse's completely opposite approach to the one Mancini would ultimately take. There is some truly lovely music here. Mr. Strouse was delighted that his long-lost score could be included, and so were we.

— Bruce Kimmel