

We at Kritzerland are hoping that all our wonderful customers are having a very merry holiday season. 2010 has been an amazing year here at Kritzerland, filled with releases that I could never have imagined would happen. I'm blessed to have great relationships with the people from whom I license titles – they have been wonderful and supportive over these last few years, and as we cultivate new relationships we hope those will bring even more terrific titles.

And so we end 2010 with two wonderful releases – the first-ever CD release of Dusan Radic's grand, adventure-filled score to the film *Genghis Khan* – it's a title I've been hoping to do for ages and this was the year and month it finally happened. The other score has been a personal favorite since the day it hit record stores – Burt Bacharach's amazing *Casino Royale*. Whatever one may think of the wacky film itself, Bacharach's score is a constant delight and fun in a way that soundtracks simply aren't anymore. Every track is a gem. Which brings me to our CD, which I'd like to tell you about.

Audiophiles are funny folks – they really think they know everything there is to know about sound, equipment, and all things audio. I've known several throughout the years and I enjoy hearing them wax enthusiastic about this or that, or rail to the high heavens about some horrible audio infraction, but I don't really take any of it very seriously. Why? Because everyone hears things differently. What is audiophile to an audiophile may be ho-hum to someone else, and what may blow someone else away may be ho-hum to the audiophile and never the twain shall meet.

Thanks to a mention in *The Absolute Sound*, *Casino Royale* has always been thought of as one of the great audiophile demonstration LPs ever – that's the audiophile party line. These things, of course, tend to become legend. The one thing I personally know is that it was a great-sounding LP – that I knew from the first listen. It was mixed very hot, the ride cymbal sounded incredible, and the horns and strings, well, it was just a terrific album. Was it perfect? Of course not – what is? But, to this day audiophiles will tell you that it's the grooviest. So, I felt we had our work cut out for us with this third CD release of *Casino Royale*. Certainly, the last two releases on Varese Sarabande weren't much to my liking. The reasons for that were explained, somewhat disingenuously, by Tom

Null, who was then part of Varese and who supervised the release. It was long rumored that Varese had damaged the album master tape, and in a *New York Times* interview, Tom acknowledged it, sort of, by saying iron oxide is always lost when rewinding tapes. This, of course, did not really address the issue of what really happened, and iron oxide is not always lost when tapes are rewound or played carefully, hence master tapes from fifty years ago are still in stellar condition.

No, what happened that fateful day is that Tom's engineer rewound the tape too quickly and that was that – much of the iron oxide was stripped from the tape. Of course, this affects the sound, how couldn't it? The tape should probably have been baked, but they didn't know that much about it back in 1990. They did manage to get a transfer done and the CD was released. How do I know what really happened? Because I had been working with Tom and his engineer prior to the accident and he called me and told me about it. While people liked having the album on CD, most people knew it didn't sound great and that it should have. But, it was never going to be possible to have that wonderful LP sound again – or was it?

Varese reissued the CD some years later with a different cover – why is anyone's guess, since it basically sounded the same with the same problems. Then, back in 1999, a company called Classic Records did their own reissue – on vinyl, on 45s, and on DVD-A. Just what that release *was* was an enigma, frankly. It carries no copyright information that credits the rights' holders, which is, I must say, rather odd and a big, red flag. It was clearly made using the Varese CD, with some cleanup attempted and not very well done. And even though it says 24/192 on it, if the source you're using isn't great to start with, it's just numbers.

So, I was determined to make this a very special release. Those who know me know that I do not do things by half-measures. I'm a perfectionist, but also a realist, and will simply do the best that can be done, which is, after all, all anyone can do. The first decision I made was that I wanted to do a flat transfer of the LP – I had several pristine copies, which I sent to James Nelson, our mastering engineer. I will state here that no one anywhere can do a better LP transfer than James – it's really that simple. So, I knew that we'd come out with the LP sound

with no EQ work or any kind of processing and sounding like it was from the original pre-damaged album master tape. And then, using that damaged tape, we would do a presentation in film order, using all the technology we have to do one simple thing: Make it sound as good as it's ever sounded on CD, and try to match that original LP sound as closely as possible, while making it sparkle and shine dynamically. What James found was a lot of dropouts – and he managed to fix them for the first time – that helped dramatically and the result was beyond my wildest imaginings. I sat here like a little kid, listening to it. He managed to alleviate many of the problems caused by the damage done and I cannot imagine this ever sounding better.

The revelation, however, was doing the LP transfer – he found the same dropouts on the LP, which means they were always there on the master tape. We've left the LP exactly as it was, warts and all, so you now have that exact sound – and while it sounds fantastic on this CD (I can pretty much assure you we could have told people it was from tape and no one would have questioned it – that's how good the transfer is), for my ears, the film order presentation sounds even better. But, we leave it to each individual listener, whether audiophile or not, to make their own judgment.

As you'll see, we were able to include three things that were not on the original LP: One, the long sought after end titles as they're heard in the film, with the vocal by Mike Redway. The other two short cues we were able to pull from the DVD (as was the vocal end title) – The Indian Temple, which is really fun, and which we included in the film order presentation, and a little Keystone Kops six-second piano thing. We actually tried inserting it into the actual cue where it occurs, but it was too weird and jarring, so we included it as a fun bonus track.

We're looking forward to 2011 and I can only tell you we've got some wonderful titles coming – both soundtrack and cast album reissues. Have a Merry Merry and a Happy Happy and we'll see you all in 2011.

— Bruce Kimmel