

The Spider

Nordic Noir. Long before the incredible popularity of Steig Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy (*The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played With Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*), readers had already discovered first the pleasures of the Swedish crime novels of Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahloo's Martin Beck series, which began in the mid-1960s, but later the brilliant work of novelists like Hakan Nesser (the Van Veeteren series) and most especially Henning Mankell's incredible series of Wallander novels. But with the Larsson books, suddenly a new genre was born, and suddenly all kinds of new Scandinavian authors were appearing, with darker stories filled with mystery and gloom and atmosphere to spare.

The movies and TV came calling, too, with a series of Martin Beck films, then a first series of Wallander films, followed by the well-known second series starring Krister Henriksson, one of the best detective series ever made and one whose popularity keeps growing as each new cable station starts airing the show. It was so popular, in fact, that it spawned a British version starring Kenneth Branagh. Then there were the three *Millennium* films and the American version of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*. And then came the incredible *The Killing* (*Forbrydelsen*) from Denmark (starring the amazing Sofie Gråbol), which was a sensational hit, again spawning a not nearly as effective American version. Soon after came *The Bridge* (*Bron*) a Danish/Swedish production starring Sofia Helin, and again the Americans

couldn't wait to make their own second-hand version.

There were other stylish series, too, especially the political show *Borgen*, which was a huge hit here in the United States and in Britain. And more and more of these shows are making their way to us via DVD and cable showings. Which brings us to the wonderful Danish miniseries, *The Spider* (*Edderkopen*) from 2000.

Set in post World War II Copenhagen, with the country still recovering from the end of Nazi occupation, with gangsters, corruption, and the black market everywhere. Into this world is thrust young, idealistic reporter Bjarne Madsen (Jacob Sedergren), who will continually have his idealism tested throughout the series' six episodes. It's a large, tangled spider's web of intrigue, deceit, honor, love, corruption and family, played out against an atmosphere thick with wonderful period detail in the settings and costumes. The acting by everyone is superb. Produced on a relatively lavish budget, *The Spider* marked the 75th anniversary of DR (The Danish Broadcasting Corporation). The show was a huge hit in Denmark and was shown in more than twenty countries – and it's finally had a DVD release, which has enabled a whole new audience to discover its myriad pleasures. And high among those pleasures would have to be the score by Søren Hyldgaard.

Beginning with the mesmerizing main title music, which draws you immediately into a musical spider's web, the score is so mul-

tilayered, varied and rich in its thematic material, it almost plays like a noir tone poem. Hyldgaard is that rare thing in film music today, a composer who is not afraid of melody, and his melodies in *The Spider* are sublime and unforgettable. His music is part of the fabric of the series and propels us from episode to episode, tying together all the various plots and subplots. The music is beautifully played by the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra.

Hyldgaard, born in Copenhagen in 1962, began scoring films and TV in 1990. He's also well known for a series of successful New Age albums. It was inevitable that a composer of his talent would be discovered by Hollywood, and indeed he was – his first film here was *Red*, starring Brian Cox, which featured a fantastic score. Hyldgaard seems comfortable in just about any genre, and he really seems to understand the true art of film scoring. We are thrilled to bring his stunning score to *The Spider* to CD. There was an earlier CD release in Denmark, which quickly went out of print – that CD was about forty-four minutes duration. This CD runs close to seventy-nine minutes and is complete save for some repeated themes and cues. It's a major score with occasional echoes of Herrmann, Goldsmith and John Barry, but somehow remaining its own unique musical landscape. This CD was mastered from the composer's complete score tapes.

— Bruce Kimmel