

1962 was an extraordinary year for film. From epics like *Lawrence Of Arabia* to smaller, beautiful, and touching films like *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the year was filled with films of every kind and the scores for that particular year were an amazing lot by just about every great composer of the day. Newer composers like Maurice Jarre (the winner of that year's Oscar) intermingled with more seasoned young composers like Elmer Bernstein, Henry Mancini, and Andre Previn, who mingled with other young up-and-comers like Jerry Goldsmith and David Amram and Laurence Rosenthal, who mingled with the Golden Age composers who were still very active, like Franz Waxman, Max Steiner, Miklos Rozsa, Bronislau Kaper, and Ernest Gold. It was a heady year for film and film music. Certain films like *The Manchurian Candidate* were pushing envelopes that had never been pushed, and another of that year's films that pushed the envelope really hard was the Stanley Kramer production, *Pressure Point*. Kramer was noted for bringing very difficult subject matter to the screen and doing so unflinchingly, and for 1962 *Pressure Point* was extremely difficult subject matter and the resultant film was extremely unflinching in its horrifying portrayal of bigotry and hatred and childhood trauma.

The film, based on a true case history recounted in the book *The Fifty-Minute Hour* by Robert Lindner, begins in the present day when a prison psychiatrist (played by a young Peter Falk) comes to his boss (played by Sidney Poitier) and tells him that he wants off the case he's been handling – he simply cannot deal with it anymore. Poitier sits him down and begins to recount a similarly difficult case back when he was first beginning, in the 1940s during World War II. And that case, told in flashback, is the main body of the film.

Briefly, an inmate, in prison for sedition, is brought to Poitier because he's having nightmares and is unable to sleep. The minute he walks in the room and sees he has to talk to an African-American psychiatrist he begins to laugh. The character (unnamed in the film, as is the psychiatrist) is a bigoted, hateful, American Nazi, who especially hates Jews and negroes. Throughout the film, in bizarre and surrealistic flashbacks, we learn what made him the way he is.

In a brilliant performance, Bobby Darin plays the prisoner with the twisted psyche – had the film been a hit he probably would have been nominated for an Academy Award (he would be the following year, for *Captain Newman, MD*) – happily he was nominated for a Golden Globe. Poitier, who'd been starring in films for a few

years, was still a couple of years away from becoming a bona-fide bankable movie star – his performance opposite Darin is just as brilliant, albeit less showy. His patience and trying to understand and help this monster he's faced with is beautifully conveyed, and when he finally erupts at the end of the film in an incredibly acted, impassioned speech, the audience I saw the film with burst into applause. I saw the film five times during its run and that happened every time. Peter Falk bookends the film and it's great to seem him pre-Columbo. And Barry Gordon, who plays the Darin character as a youngster, is terrific.

The interesting thing about watching the film today is how relevant and timely it still is. Sadly, the hatred and sickness of the Darin character is still with us and just as insidious as ever.

*Pressure Point's* director was Hubert Cornfeld. Cornfeld was a really interesting and talented director who made only a handful of films (including *Plunder Road*, *The Third Voice*, and *The Night Of The Following Day*), but all of them have a unique visual style and tone. In *Pressure Point*, he keeps the main drama, the duologues between Poitier and Darin, simple and straightforward. But the flashback sequences, which show Darin's childhood traumas, are bravura filmmaking – stylized, expressionistic, and scary, almost like an episode of *The Twilight Zone*.

To score the film, Kramer turned to his frequent composing partner, Ernest Gold. Gold had already scored *The Defiant Ones*, *On The Beach*, and *Inherit The Wind*, and would go on to score *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *Ship of Fools*, and *The Secret Of Santa Vittoria* for Kramer, as well as the Kramer-produced John Cassavetes-directed *A Child Is Waiting*.

Gold, a wonderfully melodic composer, took a very different approach to scoring *Pressure Point*. His score is as surreal and weird as the film is – and it's a phenomenal piece of work, breathtaking in its ability to set the mood and especially underscore the sick mind of the Bobby Darin character. In fact, the score, too, would be right at home in an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. It's jazzy, nightmarish, crazy music and in a year distinguished with great scores, it stands tall, even though the film and the score are today almost virtually unknown. Hopefully, this CD will put that to rights, at least as far as the score is concerned.

Ernest Gold began scoring films in 1945 with *The Girl Of The Limberlost*, and in addition to his scores for Kramer productions, he also wrote memorable scores to a whole slew of

films, including *Too Much, Too Soon*, *The Young Philadelphians*, *The Last Sunset*, Sam Peckinpah's *Cross Of Iron* (one of his best), *Fun With Dick and Jane*, *Good Luck*, *Miss Wyckoff*, *The Runner Stumbles*, and *Tom Horn*. In 1960, Gold had a breakout success with his score to Otto Preminger's *Exodus*, for which he won the Academy Award – the soundtrack album to that film had become a million-seller and his *Exodus* theme became one of the most recorded movie themes ever.

Gold passed away in March of 1999. He was a wonderful person – I had brief dealings with him when we recorded a piece of his for one of the Bay Cities *Classical Hollywood* CDs, and he was very supportive and thrilled to know people still cared about his music. I remember telling him that *Pressure Point* was one of my all-time favorite scores and he was delighted to hear it and I only wish he were still with us so I could go hand him this CD.

Bringing this score to CD was a particular treat. First, because I loved the film when I saw it back in 1962 and love it just as much today. Second, because Ernest Gold looms large in my personal pantheon of great film composers. When I began issuing scores from the wonderful vaults of MGM for a lot of United Artists films, one of the first things I asked for was *Pressure Point*. I was told it was available to license (I was *elated*), only to find out there were no tapes (I was *despondent*). Somewhere in the back of my mind I knew that someone had gotten effects from the Gold archives. Many months later, it finally hit me who it was, and I called him and gingerly asked if Gold might have had his own personal copy of *Pressure Point*. And the answer was – yes! (I was *elated*.) I was given a copy and played it immediately, and there it was, that amazing score in really great mono sound, with every note of music from the film. I sat down with the DVD, put the whole thing in film order, gave the cues titles (there were none), and sent it off to my mastering engineer to work his magic.

And so here it is, finally on CD after all these years. For me, another Holy Grail bites the dust and if you want to know why I hate liver simply get the DVD and watch – you'll understand immediately.

— Bruce Kimmel