

A DRY WHITE SEASON

Made in 1989, *A Dry White Season*, a searing indictment of South Africa under apartheid, was a superb, riveting film that audiences simply did not want to see, despite excellent reviews. Perhaps it was because South Africa was still in the final throes of apartheid and the film was just too uncomfortable to watch. Sometimes people need distance and one suspects that if the film had come out even a decade later it would have probably been more successful. As it is, over the years people have discovered it and been truly affected by its portrayal of racial turmoil in a country divided and the way the film was able to put the politics of apartheid in meaningful human terms.

Set in 1976 around the time of the Soweto riots, the film was adapted from a novel by Andre Brink (the only book in Afrikaans to be banned in South Africa), and directed by Euzhan Palcy, who was the first black female director ever hired to direct a major studio film (MGM). Palcy had made the critically acclaimed feature *Sugar Cane Alley*, which was highly thought of by other filmmakers. She co-wrote *A Dry White Season* with Colin Welland. The film was shot on a fairly tight budget of nine million dollars, an amazing figure when you consider the cast involved – Donald Sutherland, Janet Suzman, Susan Sarandon, and, coming out of retirement because he was so moved by the project, Marlon Brando, who worked for scale. The supporting performances are equally stellar, including Zakes Mokae, Winston Ntshona and Jurgen Prochnow. Palcy's direction was praised and she was invited to meet Nelson Mandela after he saw a screening and was very impressed with the film.

Sutherland plays a South African school-teacher named Ben Du Toit. When his gardener Gordon's young son is arrested and killed by the corrupt secret police, and then Gordon, too, is tortured and killed, Sutherland becomes involved in trying to set

things straight. He hires a lawyer, Ian Mackenzie (Brando), a human rights attorney who knows the case is hopeless but who takes it on anyway. The case is dismissed, more people die, Du Toit is threatened, he is abetted in his political awakening by a reporter (Susan Sarandon), has his garage bombed, and has his wife and daughter turn against him. Only his young son knows that what Du Toit is trying to do is right. Eventually, gathering affidavits from many people, he is able to outwit the secret police and have the documents delivered to a newspaper, but in the end it does no real good. And Du Toit pays the ultimate price for standing up for human rights and equality.

The performances are superb – it's truly sad that Sutherland, who gives the performance of his career, was not nominated for an Academy Award. Marlon Brando is unforgettable as the attorney – he has only two scenes but gives a brilliant performance for which he received an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor (the film's only nomination). Thanks to DVD and cable, new audiences have been able to discover this important and terrific film. Its reputation keeps growing with each passing year.

Adding immeasurably to the project is Dave Grusin's score. Grusin proved to be the perfect choice, and in a career filled with great scores (*The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter*, *Heaven Can Wait*, *Tootsie*, *The Goonies*, *On Golden Pond*, *The Milagro Beanfield War*, *Three Days Of The Condor*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *Murder By Death*, and on and on), *A Dry White Season* is one of his best – moody, haunting, tension-filled, and extremely moving – like the film, it really gets under your skin.

The score as used in the film is quite short, about twenty-eight minutes. The film also uses traditional African music. Some cues went unused, some were truncated, but for

this first ever release of the score, we used only score cues and those cues are as they were originally written and recorded. The film order worked beautifully in terms of dramatic and musical flow. We've included two bonus tracks – alternate versions of two cues, which bring the musical presentation to a very satisfying conclusion.

Dave Grusin is one of those composers who can do everything. And he has – from dramatic film scoring to his great work in television (*It Takes A Thief*, *Maude*, *Good Times*, *Baretta*, *The Name Of The Game*, *Columbo*, etc.), to wonderful light comedy scores, as well as his jazz and arranging/conducting projects for such incredible people as Quincy Jones, Paul Simon, Sergio Mendes, Al Jarreau, Patti Austin, Billy Joel and many others. He is a multiple Grammy Award-winner, a multiple Academy Award nominee (he won the Oscar for *The Milagro Beanfield War*). Now in his mid-70s, he's still the coolest guy in any room, and he's still going strong.

This first ever release for *A Dry White Season* was taken from the three-track half-inch mixdowns housed in the vaults at MGM. They were in perfect condition. There was previously only a promotional cassette made for the music branch of the Academy – that cassette only had music as used in the final film, and had erratic volume levels and some sound effects as well. It is a pleasure to finally put out the entire score in pristine sound.

— Bruce Kimmel