

# Leave Her to Heaven ~ Take Care of My Little Girl

What becomes a psychopath most? Well, in the case of *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), it wasn't moody black-and-white, it was ravishing Technicolor and the radiant Gene Tierney. But can Technicolor and film noir walk hand in hand? In *Leave Her to Heaven* the answer is a resounding yes.

Based on the successful novel by Ben Ames Williams, Twentieth Century-Fox gave *Leave Her to Heaven* the class treatment all the way down the line. The director was John Stahl, who was an expert at glossy melodrama, having directed *Imitation of Life* and *Magnificent Obsession* (both remade decades later by that other master of glossy melodrama, Douglas Sirk), and, just the year before, *The Keys of the Kingdom* for Fox.

The screenplay was by Jo Swerling, who'd worked on *Gone With the Wind*, *The Westerner*, *Blood and Sand*, *The Pride of the Yankees*, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Lifeboat*. Photography was by the great Leon Shamroy, a Fox regular who'd started working for the studio in the late 1930s, and who'd already photographed such films as *State Fair*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Greenwich Village*, *Wilson*, *The Black Swan*, *Stormy Weather*, *Down Argentine Way* and others, and who would go on to photograph such Fox classics as *Forever Amber*, *Prince of Foxes*, *Twelve O'Clock High*, *David and Bathsheba*, *The Robe*, *The Egyptian*, *There's No Business Like Show Business*, *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing*, *The King and I*, *South Pacific*, *North to Alaska*, *Cleopatra*, *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, *Planet of the Apes*, and that's not even scratching the surface – surely one of the longest studio/cameraman relationships in the history of the cinema.

Add to all that a perfect cast, including Gene Tierney, Cornell Wilde, Jeanne Crain, Vincent Price, Darryl Hickman, and character actors Chill Wills, Ray Collins, Gene Lockhart, and Reed Hadley and you had the recipe for success. And what a success it was – audiences flocked to the film and it was Fox's highest grossing film of the 1940s.

Author Richard Harland (Cornell Wilde) meets the stunningly beautiful Ellen Berent (Gene Tierney) while on a train. These two strangers on a train fall in love, she with him because he reminds her of her recently dead father, with whom she was very close, and he with her because, well, who wouldn't fall in love with someone that beautiful. Complicating things just a little is the fact that Ellen is already engaged to prosecutor Russell Quinton (Vincent Price), but she simply jilts him and marries Richard. Slowly but surely it becomes apparent that Ellen is pathologically jealous of anything or anyone her husband takes too much interest in. And then things start happening. Harland's disabled younger brother (Daryl Hickman), who he loves and is very protective of, goes out boating on the lake with Ellen – there he “accidentally” drowns while Ellen looks on. Later, pregnant Ellen “accidentally” trips and falls down a flight of stairs, killing her and Richard's unborn son. Richard begins to think that Ellen was responsible and she finally confesses to him that she was. He leaves. She decides to kill herself and in the process frame her adopted sister, Ruth (Jeanne Crain), because Richard is fond of her. There is a trial, an outcome, and eventually a happy ending for Richard and Ruth.

Gene Tierney creates one of the greatest femme fatales ever put on screen. For her performance she was nominated for an Oscar for Best Actress (she lost to Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce*). The film received rave reviews for all concerned and, in addition to Miss Tierney's nomination, received three other Oscar nominations: Best Art Direction – Interior Design - Color, Best Sound, Recording, and Best Cinematography – Color. Leon Shamroy took home the prize for his stunning work on the film.

Over the years, *Leave Her to Heaven's* reputation has only continued to grow. Martin Scorsese has said it's one of his all-time favorite movies. Critic Lou Lumenick, film critic for the *New York Post*, talking about the film for its restored showing in 2009 at the Film Forum in New York, said “John M. Stahl's masterful *Leave Her to Heaven* sounds like a contradiction in terms – a film noir in eye-popping Technicolor, with its most chilling scene taking place not in a dimly lit back

alley but on a lake in Maine. But make no mistake – the gorgeous Gene Tierney's homicidally jealous Ellen Berent is the fatest of femmes in this gorgeously restored classic.”

And, of course, what helps make the *Leave Her to Heaven* the classic it is is yet another great score from Alfred Newman. It's short, but what's there is choice Newman, beginning with the three ominous tympani hits leading into a classic Newman main title, and then his beautiful underscore at just the right moments. Half of what great film scoring is about is where, when and how to use music and no one was better at understanding that than Alfred Newman.

The previous release of *Leave Her to Heaven* on FSM presented only about twelve minutes of the score – here we present it complete and in improved sound from first generation elements.

Because of the brevity of *Leave Her to Heaven*, we've paired it with the never-before-released Newman score to the Fox film *Take Care of My Little Girl*. While the two films couldn't be further apart, they do share a few similarities – Jeanne Crain appears in both, and one cue from *Leave Her to Heaven* ended up in *Take Care of My Little Girl* and we present that cue as the bridge between both scores. The 1951 Technicolor film was directed by Jean Negulesco, with a screenplay by Julius J. Epstein and Philip G. Epstein (from the novel by Peggy Goodin), and starred Jeanne Crain, Dale Robertson, Mitzi Gaynor, Jean Peters, and Jeffrey Hunter. The film garnered some controversy due to its criticism of college sororities, with several college sororities protesting the film. They stopped doing so when they realized the publicity was actually helping rather than hurting the film. We're thrilled to present a new to CD Newman score, and it's another Newman treasure unearthed.

— Bruce Kimmel