

Overlord | The Disappearance | Hustle

Sometimes it's just the luck of the draw. *Little Malcolm*, director Stuart Cooper's first feature, came out and disappeared and has only recently, thanks to a Blu-ray release, been rediscovered and enjoyed by old and new fans. Then came *Overlord* (1975), which should have been the launch pad for a major directorial career. Instead, it had a minor release and disappeared until it was, at long last, resurrected years later and rightfully became the classic it always was. *Overlord* had a fan in none other than Stanley Kubrick, who declared the only way it could be improved was to make it twice as long (it could be argued that it was an influence on certain aspects of *Full Metal Jacket*).

The Disappearance (1977) also disappeared, especially in the United States, where it was mangled into awfulness by its crass distributor, who completely re-edited the film and changed its score. It, too, was resurrected years later and has recently and astonishingly found its way to Blu-ray, courtesy of Twilight Time. And *Hustle* aka *A Sordid Affair* (2000), was made for TV and seen by only those who happen to catch it. In between these three films, Cooper was constantly busy, doing TV (several mini-series, including *A.D.*, *The Long Hot Summer*, *Mario Puzo's The Fortunate Pilgrim*), but he just never got the brass ring that he should have.

His films are uniquely his and don't feel like anyone else's, none more so than *Overlord*, which seamlessly and brilliantly blends historical footage of World War II from the Imperial War Museum with newly-shot footage that matches perfectly, telling the story of one soldier's life from his being called up to his taking part in D-Day. Cooper also has an impeccable sense of music, which is obvious if you've seen any of his films. Two of the scores in our Cooper triple bill are by Paul Glass, another person who should have been a major player in Hollywood film music. But, like Cooper, Glass is not easy to put in a little box and categorize, and that's always difficult for Hollywood.

By the time of *Overlord*, Glass had pretty much had it with Hollywood. He'd begun his film music career in 1957 and scored his first mainstream film, *Lady in a Cage*, in 1964. He followed that with a master-

piece of film scoring for Otto Preminger's *Bunny Lake is Missing*. While that didn't lead to producers and directors knocking at his door, during that time he was also very busy writing his serious music. There were a few other films, and then he had some success in television, especially with some very striking scores for *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*. He also met Stuart Cooper, who hired him to compose the music for his short film, *A Test of Violence*.

Overlord is a film music masterpiece – a melancholy, elegiac and at times dissonant tone poem that is exquisite and hugely moving. The score's main theme is hauntingly beautiful and is used throughout the film to great effect. There are other themes that weave in and out, each creating a perfect musical landscape to go along with Cooper's visual landscape. It is an astonishing piece of work and we're thrilled to finally give it its world premiere release, on the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

Hustle, a sexy made for TV neo-noir thriller (shot in Toronto), reunited Cooper and Glass. The film has the usual neo-noir components – a sexy babe (martial arts star Bobbie Phillips), double crosses, multiple identities, cons – well, you get the idea. This was a completely different kind of score for Glass – bluesy, sultry and dripping with eroticism. It has a beauty of a main theme, but, like most Glass scores, also has moments of dissonance and off-kilter writing.

The Disappearance, the tale of a hit man for an international assassination agency whose wife has disappeared, has a score by Robert Farnon, a wonderful film composer, and also conductor and composer of light music. He began scoring films in the late 1940s, working on such movies as *Captain Horatio Hornblower*, *Circle of Danger*, *It's a Wonderful World*, *Expresso Bongo*, *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw*, *The Road to Hong Kong*, *The Truth About Spring*, *Shalako*, as well as the classic TV show, *The Prisoner*. For *The Disappearance*, Farnon uses the Ravel *Piano Concerto in G major* as the basis for his score, but there's also original Farnon music, too – it's all of a piece and compliments the film perfectly.

Overlord and *Hustle* were transferred

from Paul Glass's personal tapes, which we got in the nick of time – they transferred perfectly but as soon as they came off the machine they were literally falling apart. Both scores are in beautiful stereo sound. Sadly, no one, including the Farnon estate, was able to locate any original scoring tapes for *The Disappearance*, so for those cues we used the up-and-down music tracks, but thanks to James Nelson, it all sounds fine.

If you've never seen a Stuart Cooper film, you owe it to yourself to buy the Criterion Blu-ray of *Overlord* and the Twilight Time Blu-ray of *The Disappearance*.

— Bruce Kimmel

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I met Paul Glass in London in 1969. I was editing *A Test of Violence*, a documentary about Spanish painter Juan Genoves that was being financed by Universal Films. I needed a composer and was introduced to Paul by an artist friend. At the time I think Paul was working on one of his orchestral pieces. His film credits of course preceded him, not to mention the beautiful score he composed for *Bunny Lake is Missing*. *A Test of Violence* went on to win many awards including the Gold Medal at the Moscow Film Festival, the Silver Medal at Venice and the CIDALC GANDHI Peace Award.

In 1974 we began collaboration on my feature film *Overlord*, which I was making under the auspices of the Imperial War Museum. *Overlord* is a black and white film that seamlessly integrates archive footage into a story about a young British soldier, who is called-up, trained and sees his first action on D-Day. Unlike the score for *A Test of Violence*, Paul's composition for *Overlord* is thematic and melodic. Vaughn Williams' "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis" was our inspiration. Paul's score is quite brilliant and commented on by everyone who sees the film. *Overlord* won the Berlin Film Festival and the International Evangelical Award for the film's homage to the Unknown Soldier and has become a classic.

— Stuart Cooper