

TOPKAPI ... WHERE THE JEWELS ARE

In 1956, Jules Dassin, an American filmmaker who'd already made some terrific films such as the noir classics *Brute Force*, *The Naked City*, *Thieves' Highway*, and *Night And The City*, directed a film that became an instant classic – the French crime drama *Rififi*. The centerpiece of the movie was an incredible and wordless thirty-minute robbery sequence – that scene and the film itself created a prototype of a whole new genre of film and spawned countless imitations. *Rififi* became a worldwide sensation. So, how did an American filmmaker come to make a classic French film? Sadly, the answer is that Dassin, like some other working writers and directors of that era, was a victim of the blacklist and could not work in the United States. So, he and others who suffered the ignominy and stupidity of the blacklist were forced to find work elsewhere, and Dassin moved his family to France, where the opportunity arose for him to write and direct *Rififi*. For his work on *Rififi* he received the Cannes Film Festival award for Best Director. It was a bitter-sweet win, of course, for despite the award and the acclaim, he still could not work in his own country.

In 1960, Dassin delivered another worldwide hit, this time the comedy *Never On Sunday*, starring Melina Mercouri. That film not only got rave reviews everywhere, it also got Dassin an Oscar nomination for Best Director. *Never On Sunday* was just one of those happy happenstances when script, actors, and director are all in the right place at the right time with the right film. And part of what made *Never On Sunday* such a big hit was its delectable score and title song by Greek composer Manos Hadjidakis. The song won an Oscar and was recorded by many of the well-known singers of the day.

In 1964, Dassin scored with another *Rififi*-type caper film called *Topkapi* (based on *The Light Of Day* by Eric Ambler), only this time instead of a gritty black-and-white caper film, he made a comedy caper film, with a bigger budget and eye-popping color. Dassin once again gave the leading role to Melina Mercouri (whom Dassin would marry just a couple of years later), and it

also featured a stellar cast including Maximilian Schell, Peter Ustinov, Robert Morley, and Akim Tamiroff. As in *Rififi*, Dassin created a very long and wordless robbery scene and once again it was an edge-of-your-seat sequence that was amazingly directed, shot, and edited. The film itself was a complete delight, a hit, and garnered Ustinov a well-deserved Academy Award.

As with *Never On Sunday*, Dassin turned to Manos Hadjidakis to provide the score, and Hadjidakis delivered the goods – a score filled with wonderful melodies and orchestral colors that matched perfectly the bright candy-colored images on the screen. It's one of those scores that just makes you smile and one that keeps the movie flying along at a wonderful clip as we follow a rag-tag group out to steal the emerald-encrusted dagger of Sultan Mehmed at the Topkapi museum in Istanbul.

Manos Hadjidakis was born on October 23, 1925. At the age of four he began piano lessons, and also learned to play the violin and accordion. In the 1940s, he began working as a composer for Karolos Koun's Art Theatre. There, he composed incidental music for many American plays receiving their Greek premieres, including *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Death Of A Salesman*. During that time, he was also writing classical pieces, and began writing for the cinema, providing scores for such Greek films as *Stella*, *The Rapist*, and *The River*.

In 1959, he began a collaboration with Greek singer Nana Mouskouri that resulted in both acclaim and awards for both. And then, as noted, in 1960 he was hired by Jules Dassin to score *Never On Sunday*. After *Topkapi*, Hadjidakis came to the United States to do the score for *Illya Darling*, a Broadway musical version of *Never On Sunday*. After that, he continued to do film scores, including a brilliant one for the Silvio Narazzano film, *Blue*. His songs were recorded by the likes of Nat King Cole, Brenda Lee, Harry Belafonte, and Johnny Mathis. He also continued to write classical works and works for the ballet and theatre.

Interestingly, when Nino Rota died, ending one of the longest director/composer relationships in history (probably the longest), Fellini turned to Hadjidakis to write the score for his next film. Hadjidakis declined due to other commitments, but recommended his student, Nicola Piovani (whom

he'd met in 1970 – at which time they began a long teacher-student relationship). Hadjidakis continued composing and conducting up until his death in 1994.

In preparing this CD release of *Topkapi*, we uncovered not only the album masters, but also copies of the original 15ips session tapes. Since the sound on the album master was not as good as what was on the session tapes, we decided to use the latter. And since they contained a good deal more music than was on the original LP, we also decided to put the score in as close to film order as possible (for the best listening experience) – cues that were edited or truncated for the LP are here heard as they were recorded. There were four cues which did not appear in the film (including the album's opening track!), and we offer them here as bonus tracks. We've taken the liberty of giving new titles to the selections on the CD so that they actually match what's happening in the film – the album titles, while reflective of the film's plot, mostly have nothing to do with the music that accompanies those titles. For example, on the LP there's a cue called "Museum Roof" – in the film all of the rooftop scenes have no music whatsoever. Well, you get the idea. Finally, for those wondering why this release is in mono when there was a stereo LP, we have the same situation that happened with the UA LP release of John Addison's score for *Tom Jones* (which we issued on Kritzerland) – even though the LP said stereo, the album was, in fact, mono, just as the stereo version of *Tom Jones* had been.

Topkapi's score, like the film, is infectious fun and a total delight. We were going to put on a twenty-minute track of silence called "The Robbery," but we thought better of it (insert smiley face here). Besides who needs silence when you have the glorious music of Manos Hadjidakis?

— Bruce Kimmel