

**“There is a time to laugh
and a time not to laugh,
and this is not one of them.”**

Inspector Jacques Clouseau made his first appearance in Blake Edwards’ 1963 film *The Pink Panther* and from his first scene became a screen immortal, mostly thanks to the inspired performance of Peter Sellers as the inept and intrepid Clouseau. Mangling English, mispronouncing words, and wreaking havoc wherever he goes, Clouseau was the unexpected standout in *Panther* and it was no surprise when Edwards and Sellers re-teamed to bring him back to the screen the following year in *A Shot In The Dark* (based on a play in which the Clouseau character doesn’t exist at all). In that film, Clouseau took center stage, and the Edwards/Sellers antics were even wilder and crazier and audiences flocked to the film. And then Clouseau disappeared. When he finally resurfaced in 1968 in *Inspector Clouseau*, it was without Peter Sellers and Blake Edwards and audiences were confused and confounded to find that a different actor had assumed the role. And that actor was the gifted Alan Arkin.

Arkin had already turned in some terrific performances on film, including *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* (for which he received an Oscar nomination for Best Actor), *Wait Until Dark*, and in the same year as *Inspector Clouseau*, *The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter*, for which he received his second Oscar nomination for Best Actor. But audiences just weren’t interested in a Clouseau picture without Peter Sellers, and the film disappeared from screens quickly. Sellers and Edwards would both return to Clouseau and the Pink Panther in 1975’s *Return Of The Pink Panther* (interestingly, the co-writers of the film were the writers of *Inspector Clouseau*) and from then until Sellers’ death they kept the franchise alive. Edwards continued to try and keep it alive without Sellers, to little avail. But you can’t keep Jacques Clouseau down – he just keeps coming back, most recently in the guise of Steve Martin.

The reasons for the switch in personnel for *Inspector Clouseau* seem to be that Edwards and Sellers were busy making *The Party*. When The Mirisch Company wanted to go ahead with the *Clouseau* film, the two of them declined to participate. Taking over for Blake Edwards was Bud Yorkin. Yorkin had cut his teeth in television, working on such classic shows as *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, *An Evening With Fred Astaire*, *The Jack Benny Hour*, *General Electric Theater* and many others. He made his film directorial debut with Neil Simon’s *Come Blow Your Horn*. Subsequently, he directed *Never Too Late* and *Divorce, American Style*, the latter film a healthy box-office and critical hit. With partner Norman Lear, Yorkin had some of the most successful and influential shows in TV history, including *All In The Family*, *Maude*, and *Sanford and Son*.

Both *The Pink Panther* and *A Shot In The Dark* had memorable scores by Henry Mancini, but he, like Edwards and Sellers, was in absentia for *Inspector Clouseau*, as he, too, was working on *The Party*. Yorkin chose English composer Ken Thorne to provide the score. Thorne began working in film in 1948, but he came to prominence in the 1960s, working on several films for director Richard Lester, including *Help*, *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* (writing incidental music and adapting the Stephen Sondheim score and winning an Oscar in the bargain), and *How I Won The War*. After *Clouseau*, Thorne would continue to be Lester’s main composer, writing scores *The Bed Sitting Room*, *Juggernaut*, *Superman II* and *III* (adapting themes of John Williams as well as providing original music), and *Royal Flash*, as well as scores for *Head*, *Hannie Caulder*, *Arabian Adventure*, *The House Where Evil Dwells*, *Lassiter*, and many others.

His approach to *Inspector Clouseau* was a little different from Henry Mancini and the result is really quite wonderful. It opens with an incredibly catchy main theme and that theme occurs throughout the film, along with several other catchy themes, including a couple of Bond-like cues and a ravishingly beautiful love theme. Given his work on the Beatles films, there’s even a Beatles-like song, “Why Don’t You Go?” Comedy scoring is surprisingly difficult to pull

off, and it’s eluded many composers, but Thorne, like Mancini, gets it just right.

The film itself has always been the bastard child of the *Pink Panther* series obviously due to the fact that Edwards and Sellers were not involved. But with the release of the Steve Martin films, that sort of changed everything and *Inspector Clouseau* was finally welcomed into the family and was included in 2008’s DVD release of the *Ultimate Pink Panther Collection*. The fact is, the film has many pleasures and is certainly better than some of the others in which Sellers did not appear. Arkin makes quite a good Clouseau, the location shooting is lovely, and Yorkin moves the whole thing along at a steady clip, aided and abetted by Thorne’s delightful score. Hearing the score after all these years is a major re-discovery – especially that main theme, which I guarantee you will be stuck in your head for weeks!

— Bruce Kimmel