

The Buccaneer

Some directors were as big or bigger than the films they made – Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Orson Welles – and certainly high on that list would be the name Cecil B. DeMille. It's a name that was born for the movies. It conjures up a larger-than-life personality, a flamboyant showman – which DeMille certainly was in spades. He began as an actor in theater, then graduated to writing and directing for the stage. He directed his first film, *The Squaw Man*, in 1914. He became legendary in the 1920s with two epic films, *The Ten Commandments* and *The King of Kings*. He successfully made the transition to sound and in 1938 he filmed *The Buccaneer* for Paramount Pictures. Based on the tale of Jean Lafitte and the Battle of New Orleans, it starred Fredric March, Akim Tamiroff, Walter Brennan, Beulah Bondi and newcomer Anthony Quinn.

Flash forward twenty years. DeMille had had his greatest success by remaking *The Ten Commandments* for Paramount in 1956, and so he decided that his next film for the studio where he'd toiled for so many years would be a remake of *The Buccaneer*. As with *The Ten Commandments*, this time it would be in Technicolor and VistaVision. But by 1958, having prepared the film, DeMille's health was failing, so he asked Anthony Quinn to direct (Quinn was his son-in-law at the time) and longtime friend and associate Henry Wilcoxon to produce. Although DeMille took no credit on the film, he appears in a brief prologue.

A great cast was assembled, including Yul Brynner, Charles Boyer and Claire Bloom. Charlton Heston appeared as Andrew Jackson, a role he'd played a few years earlier in *The President's Lady*. The large supporting cast included Inger Steverns, Henry Hull, E.G. Marshall, Lorne Greene, Ted de Corsia and Douglas Dumbrille (who'd appeared in the 1938 version). Because Quinn was a first-time director (and only time – *The Buccaneer* is his sole directorial effort), DeMille gave him the crème de la crème behind the scenes. This included the great cameraman Loyal Griggs (*Shane*, *White Christmas*, *The Ten Commandments*), ace editor Archie Marshak (*This Gun for Hire*, *The Glass Key*, *Ministry of Fear*, *One-Eyed Jacks*) and Academy Award-winning costume designer Edith Head.

The result was a handsome, colorful, historical costume epic with impressive battle sequences. The film featured witty dialogue; great sets, costumes, makeup; interesting American history and some good old-fashioned pirates – all looking and feeling very much like the real Cecil B. DeMille deal. Yul Brynner is a wonderful Jean Lafitte, and the rest of the large cast, especially Boyer and Heston, turn in wonderful performances. Critics were cool to the film and it didn't light up the box office, but it managed to snag one Oscar nomination (for Best Costumes). Indeed, the film holds up very well today, is very entertaining, looks incredible and has an absolutely stunning score by Elmer Bernstein.

Bernstein had, of course, done the score for DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* so he was a natural for *The Buccaneer*. He delivered a beauty of a score, filled with big and bold music and classic Bernstein themes. The "Main Title" begins with a wonderful Bernstein fanfare leading into a glorious and heroic theme, more fanfares, and then an exquisitely beautiful theme followed by more fanfares – it's everything you'd want in a main title from a time when composers really knew how to set the tone of the film in its first minutes. The rest of his marvelous score is loaded with drama, romance and intrigue, all in the unique and colorful Bernstein style.

The Buccaneer was originally released on LP by Columbia Records and that LP program has had several CD releases over the years, all out of print. This is the first release of the complete score, taken from the three-track session scoring masters and the original 15 IPS three-track album master, all freshly transferred and sounding wonderful in full-bodied stereo. In addition to the complete dramatic score, we also present all of Bernstein's source music cues, a couple of alternates, and some Bernstein piano demos.

— Bruce Kimmel