

In 1953, British author Ian Fleming created one of the most enduring cinematic characters with the publication of his first 007 novel, *Casino Royale*. The book became an instant hit all over the world, prompting producer Gregory Ratoff to pay the author \$1000 and have his novel adapted into a one-hour black-and-white television special. Thirteen years later, producer Charles K. Feldman (of *What's New Pussycat?* fame) reimagined Fleming's story as a large-scale, star-studded spy spoof inspired by the Bond mania that swept across the world in the 1960s. The wild adventure became a cult classic in the ensuing decades, a colorful addendum to the history of the 007 legacy if you will.

The episodic tale begins at the home of well-mannered gentleman Sir James Bond (David Niven), who has officially retired from the Secret Service. When he is visited by a concerned M (John Huston), Sir James is initially reluctant to return to active duty, but he is forced to take over Mi6 when his former superior dies in an accident. While visiting his widow (Deborah Kerr) in the Scottish highlands, the agent learns about a secret conspiracy involving SMERSH and is quick with an idea to strike back. By assigning the code name 007 to every single Mi6 operative, he easily confuses the enemy and starts to build his own attack line. Apart from the seductive agent Cooper (played by Terence Cooper), Bond recruits his own daughter, Mata Bond (Joanna Pettet) to travel to East Berlin and investigate an undercover SMERSH headquarters.

In the episode that retains the original idea of Fleming's novel, Sir James Bond decides to bankrupt powerful SMERSH operative Le Chiffre (Orson Welles) at a casino. Since a man of Sir James' stature isn't gambling, the new head of Mi6 gives Vesper Lynd (Ursula Andress) the task to seduce and recruit baccarat expert Evelyn Tremble (Peter Sellers) for the mission. Although he is also given the codename James Bond, Tremble's inexperience in world-class espionage gets him kidnapped, but neither him nor Sir James Bond can not defeat the ultimate foe, the agent's neurotic nephew, Jimmy (Woody Allen). By assuming the identity of the evil Dr. Noah, Jimmy Bond's minority complex leads him to construct a biological weapon that will make him an alpha male. This somehow all culminates in a large-scale fight at the eponymous Casino Royale, where even the smallest cameo roles are played by actors such as Peter O'Toole, Jean-Paul Belmondo or *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* star David McCallum.

Feldman spared no expense with *Casino Royale*; his \$12,000,000 project utilized no less than five talented directors, each of whom was responsible for a specific part of the episodic storyline. John Huston (who also appeared as the leader of Mi6) directed the opening scenes at Sir James' home and the agent's further exploits in Scotland. Robert Parrish and Joseph McGrath divided up the scenes building on the Fleming material, including the romance of Vesper and Evelyn as well as the card game with Le Chiffre. Stuntman/actor Richard Talmadge oversaw the climatic casino fight the same way he handled the kart-

ing sequence of *What's New Pussycat?* the year prior. Director Val Guest oversaw the assembly of the material shot by different units and created the final version of the picture with as much cohesion as possible from such a vividly colorful anthology.

One person who immensely helped tie the whole thing together was Burt Bacharach, who provided one of the most popular and universally applauded features of *Casino Royale*: its musical score. Hired on the strength of his music for *What's New Pussycat?*, the composer was expected to bring the same kind of cheek to Feldman's latest picture, offering a colorful kaleidoscope that went on to define the Swingin' Sixties without referencing the typical musical spy vernacular. In fact, Bacharach's approach is much closer to the Henry Mancini/Blake Edwards song scores such as *The Pink Panther* or *The Party*, which may explain the soundtrack's extraordinary success on its own. The score was nominated for a Grammy and "The Look of Love" received an Oscar nod, but it lost out to "Talk to the Animals" from Leslie Bricusse's *Doctor Dolittle*.

The album starts with the "Casino Royale Theme", recorded by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass. This material pops up in several cues and does wonders to create a unity between the wildly uneven episodes. Bacharach's other memorable composition is the song "The Look of Love", used for the romance of Evelyn Tremble and Vesper Lynd. The lyrics were performed by Dusty Springfield, who recorded her part separately from the main session, thus lending the song an intimate quality that counterpoints the treacherous romance of Ms. Lynd. The rest of the score offers wildly divergent cues from the mocking chase music of "Little French Boy" through the melodramatic romance of "Agent Mimi" and the oriental seduction of "Sir James' Trip To Find Mata" to the bagpipe insanity of "Le Chiffre's Torture of the Mind."

But the material available on this CD is only the tip of the iceberg for Bacharach's comic genius. In addition to the already mentioned themes, he also planned a more playful love song entitled "Let the Love Come Through" which didn't make it into the picture, though its instrumental version can be heard in "Money Penny Goes For Broke", "First Stop Berlin" and "Hi There Miss Goodthings". Another Bacharach composition that didn't make the final cut is the mad-cap instrumental "Bond Street", which the composer himself re-recorded for his 1967 album *Reach Out* – the central idea of this theme survives in "Home James, Don't Spare The Horses." Hal David also provided lyrics for a couple of other musical sequences, including "Dream On James, You're Winning", covering Evelyn Tremble's psychedelic dream about breaking the bank and conquering Vesper with the money he made.

Apart from being a fun listen, there is another reason *Casino Royale* has become a cult soundtrack. Based on the recommendation of Absolute Sound editor Harry Pearson, the original stereo LP has been widely regarded as one of the best sounding records of all time and is considered to be the perfect litmus test for an audiophile's hi-fi equipment.

— Gergely Hubai

A NOTE ABOUT THIS CD

The soundtrack LP to *Casino Royale* has always been thought of as one of the great audiophile recordings – whatever alchemy happened with the album master and the pressing, it was just a phenomenal-sounding record for its time. So, it was very exciting when the news first came that *Casino Royale* was coming to CD back in 1990. But everyone who bought that release expecting a repeat of that audiophile listening experience was severely disappointed. Some knew something was amiss, others just figured that somehow the CD medium was to blame. The former turned out to be the truth – something was amiss. In an article in the *New York Times*, Tom Null, who supervised the release, was, at first dismissive, when he said: "Varese Sarabande didn't send out copies of the CD for review because the preconceived, closed minds of audiophiles made it a foregone lost battle." Not quite. Later in the article he finally admits that he'd heard the rumor that Varese Sarabande damaged the master tapes, which he attributed to a loss of iron oxide that is inevitable when rewinding analog tapes. Not quite. Since I was around when it happened, I heard the entire story, rather than the disingenuous one told to the press – the tape was damaged and iron oxide was lost (and not in a minor way) because the tape was simply rewound too fast – it was a mistake, plain and simple. In those days the knowledge about certain analog tapes needing to be baked was not so widespread, and in rewinding the tape at a much-too-fast speed, that tape suffered damage and can therefore never sound the way it did. It's really that simple. These things happen, regrettable as it might be.

So, why do yet a third CD release from that same tape? Well, I had a little something different in mind, and I'm hoping people will enjoy what we've done and understand the reasons for doing it. We decided to a) put the album in as close to film order as possible, then, b) include a couple of cues we were able to get from the DVD that were clean (no dialogue or effects), and, c) include the film's end-title vocal (again taken from the DVD, since only the album master exists, at least as far as our search went). It's a really fun listen in the original sequence and fun to have the little bit of additional music – plus, we were able to clean up numerous dropouts and other anomalies that have plagued the prior CD releases – in fact, this new and very careful and loving remastering by James Nelson is, we think, as good as this is ever going to sound.

But the real reason I wanted to do this third CD release was to try and do a pure transfer of that original LP, just so people could have it as a bonus. I had several pristine copies of the LP (as well as one that was still sealed), and so we did just that – a flat transfer of the LP, with no additional processing or EQ work – the LP with its original sound – no, not from the tape (not possible anymore) but from the next closest source – the vinyl itself. We leave it to others to judge whether the sound of that LP holds up for today's listeners – we just thought it would be a really fun bonus version for this CD.

And so, here's Burt Bacharach's classic score to *Casino Royale* – hopefully sounding better, with a few bits of extra music, and two versions of the score – one from tape, and in close to film order, and a direct, flat transfer of that original brilliant LP.

—Bruce Kimmel