

Invasion USA | Tormented

“IT WILL SCARE THE PANTS OFF YOU!”

So exclaimed Hedda Hopper on *Invasion USA*'s lurid poster. One imagined a lot of people running around without their pants had the film actually delivered what Hedda promised. What the film *did* deliver was one of the most deliciously and deliriously wacky and weird movies ever. The film is actually indescribable – it exists in a whole other movie universe.

Made in 1952, when the Commie scare was in full bloom, the film is a nightmare (literally) vision of WHAT COULD HAPPEN HERE. In a New York City bar, a man named Mr. Ohman (get it) sips brandy from an oversized brandy glass. He gets into a discussion with the various upscale patrons of the bar about the bad International news. This slice of humanity includes a TV newscaster, a pretty society lady, a congressman, a rancher, and a California industrialist. These nice folks don't want to know from bad news – oh, they're aware of big, bad communism and its evils, they enjoy their material wealth but also want lower taxes and see no need for the industrial support of government. On the TV, the bad news suddenly turns worse. THE ENEMY IS ATTACKING. And soon these disparate bar patrons will be facing that enemy.

They leave, each doing what they can to now fight The Enemy, but it is too little too late. Naturally, as all this is happening, the TV newscaster and the pretty society lady fall hard for each other. In the midst of his ardor, he explains, “War or no war, people have to eat and drink... and make love.” Meanwhile The Enemy is bombing everything, making leering glances at women (!) and gunning down anyone in their path without so much as a hello. I will not spoil the ending for you.

The cast was a little bit of B-movie heaven – Gerald Mohr as the newscaster, gorgeous Peggie Castle as the pretty society lady, and Dan O'Herlihy as Mr. Ohman (get it). The film also has the distinction of having both TV Lois Lanes in the same movie – Phyllis Coates and Noel Neill. Even William Schallert makes a brief, uncredited appearance.

The producer was Albert Zugsmith and the director was Alfred E. Green. Green had directed a lot of films by that point, including the huge hit, *The Jolson Story*. *Invasion USA* was shot in seven days on a budget of \$127,000. In a twist of fate more shocking than anything in the film itself, it grossed close to a million dollars.

Naturally, the perfect person to score the film was Albert Glasser and he delivered exactly what was expected of him and which no other composer could have delivered in quite the same way – a blaring, driving, crazy-quilt of a score, with screaming, dissonant brass – at times it's like somebody threw some musical notes in the air, let them land on the score paper however they may, and then recorded it immediately. But it's all of a piece with the film and one simply cannot imagine a more perfect score for the movie.

A TERRIFYING STORY OF SUPERNATURAL PASSION!

Eight years later would come another delicious and delirious, weird and wacky movie called *Tormented*, made by the wonderful Bert I. Gordon. The story of a jazz pianist who is about to marry his current sweetheart, only to be visited by his nasty ex-girlfriend who threatens him with blackmail that will end his relationship. The ex-girlfriend falls to her death but is soon back as a ghost, Tormenting the poor pianist to distraction, her disembodied head showing up at the most awkward of moments. It all goes downhill from there for the pianist, and the young sister of his fiancé is placed in mortal danger but is thankfully saved at the last moment.

The cast included Richard Carlson as the pianist, Juli Reding as the ex-girlfriend, Lugene Sanders as the fiancé, and the adorable Susan Gordon (Bert's daughter) as the young sister. Also making an appearance is Joe Turkel, who did several films for Gordon and who would ultimately give his most memorable performance as bartender Lloyd in the Stanley Kubrick film, *The Shining*.

Gordon's usual composer, Albert

Glasser, was back making the music. Since the film is about a jazz pianist, Glasser naturally wrote a jazzy score – but this is not your normal jazz, this is **TORMENTED** jazz – jagged and crazy and somehow perfectly capturing the visuals of the film. Glasser was a one-off – there has never been and probably never will be anyone quite like him. He loved making music, loved composing for films, and he was, by all accounts, a friendly, warm person. Later in his life, he'd get fan mail from people and he'd always respond, with long letters and would send people cassettes of his music at the drop of a hat. He'd even written a very long autobiography, which, sadly, has never seen the light of day. I have a copy of the manuscript and his stories of his life in the film business are colorful and frequently hilarious.

The two scores were mastered from Mr. Glasser's personal tapes. While there are occasional sound issues, including some distortion that was inherent in the original recordings, our wonderful mastering engineer, James Nelson, has done Herculean work to make the two scores sound as good as they're ever going to.

This CD is dedicated to the memory of the wonderful Susan Gordon, who sadly passed away in December 2011. I had a huge crush on her after seeing her in *The Five Pennies* and that crush never went away. When we met in December of 2001, it was like finding a soul mate. We became extremely close. She edited my first three books (and was the clear inspiration for one of the characters), she appeared on my CD *Jeepers Creepers: Great Songs from the Horror Films* (singing “You're a Dolly” from her first film, *Attack of the Puppet People*), and whenever she was in LA or whenever I was in New York, we saw each other. We spoke often (but not often enough) and she was the dearest soul. RIP, dear Nasus.

— Bruce Kimmel