

The Snows of Kilimanjaro

The movies, both on the big screen and television, have had an endless fascination with the works of Ernest Hemingway. There have been multiple versions of *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Killers*, *To Have and Have Not*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*, both here and abroad, as well as films adapted from *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Adventures of a Young Man*, *The Macomber Affair*, *My Old Man* (the film version of which is entitled *Under My Skin*), *The Sun Also Rises*, *Islands in the Stream*, and *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. Of those, Twentieth Century Fox was responsible for *Under My Skin*, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man*. Obviously studio head Daryl F. Zanuck was very taken with Mr. Hemingway's writing.

In 1952, Twentieth Century Fox memorably brought Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* to the screen in a lavish production directed by Henry King, with a screenplay by Casey Robinson (who'd adapted Hemingway's *The Macomber Affair* for the screen in 1947), starring a stellar cast including Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, and Susan Hayward, along with Hildegard Knef, Leo G. Carroll, and Torin Thatcher. The beautiful cinematography was by Oscar-winner Leon Shamroy.

Hemingway considered *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* one of his best short stories. It was originally published in *Esquire* magazine in 1936 and subsequently in *The Fifth Column* and the *First Forty-Nine Stories* in 1938. The story concerns the memories of Harry Street (Peck), a disillusioned writer who is on safari in Africa and is dying from a severely infected wound from a thorn prick.

With stunning location photography in Nairobi, Kenya, Cairo, Egypt and the French Riviera, the film was a Technicolor dazzler. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* called the cinematography "magnificent and exciting" and added "the overall production in wonderful color is full of brilliant detail and surprise and the mood of nostalgia and wistful sadness that is built up in the story has its spell." The film was one of Fox's biggest hits, earning huge grosses. It was nominated for two Academy Awards – one for Best Cinematography, Color and one for Best Art Direction, Color.

There could not have been a better choice for composer than Bernard Herrmann, who gave the film his completely unique sound and sense of drama. Herrmann had already written many scores for Fox films, including *Jane Eyre*, *Hangover Square*, *Anna and the King of Siam*, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, and

5 Fingers, and subsequent to *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* he would continue to compose brilliant scores for the studio, including *White Witch Doctor*, *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*, *King of the Khyber Rifles*, *Garden of Evil*, *The Egyptian* (with Alfred Newman), *Prince of Players*, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, *A Hatful of Rain*, *Blue Denim*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and *Tender Is the Night*.

In his score for *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, Herrmann captures all moods of the story, from nostalgia to sadness to joy to romance. His work is breathtaking, beginning with the "Overture" in which Herrmann presents in his words, "the turmoil of the leading character." The music is achingly beautiful, most especially in the sublime "The Memory Waltz." As always with Herrmann, his orchestral colors are uniquely his own (as are his orchestrations), and even though with most Herrmann scores you can easily say it's one of his best, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* is right up there with his greatest.

The Snows of Kilimanjaro was previously released as part of the Bernard Herrmann at Fox box on Varese Sarabande. This is the scores' first standalone release.

— Bruce Klmmel