

Ordeal By Innocence

In the 1970s and 1980s, there were several big-screen all-star adaptations of Agatha Christie's books, starting with the huge success of *Murder On The Orient Express*, followed by *Death On The Nile*, *The Mirror Crack'd*, and *Evil Under The Sun*. 1985's *Ordeal By Innocence* was at the tail end of that particular cycle and from then on most of the Christie adaptations would be for television, with the exception of *Appointment With Death* and yet another remake of *Ten Little Indians*. *Ordeal By Innocence* was based on Christie's 1958 book and is one of her darker tales – it was also one of her favorites of that period.

The story concerns a young man who is convicted of killing his mother, a crime he insists he didn't commit. He is hung for the crime. Two years later, Dr. Arthur Calgary, returning after an Antarctic expedition, shows up at the family's home with the young man's address book. He is shocked when he hears that the young man committed the murder because the young man was with Calgary (who'd picked him up hitchhiking) at the time of the murder – therefore Calgary could have proven the young man's innocence by corroborating his alibi. Is there a killer among the family? Is it an Agatha Christie story? More interested in the psychology of innocence than a standard whodunit, the killer is uncovered, but no one in this story is completely innocent.

The film version, made by Cannon, assembled a top-notch cast including Donald Sutherland, Faye Dunaway, Christopher Plummer, Sarah Miles, Ian McShane, and Diana Quick. In the director's chair was Desmond Davis, who'd made the quirky 1960s films, *Girl With Green Eyes* and *Smashing Time*, as well as the 1981 version of *Clash Of*

The Titans. Engaged to write the score was the wonderful Italian composer, Pino Donaggio, who by that time had made a huge name for himself turning out superior scores for such films as *Don't Look Now*, *Carrie*, *Dressed To Kill*, *The Fan*, *Blow Out*, *Body Double*, and many others.

Donaggio provided his usual lush, beautiful, suspenseful music, the kind he was so adept at, and his score was fantastic. All should have been well in Christieland, but after Donaggio turned in his score, the film went through a major revision, with a lot of re-editing and some re-shoots. Because of all the work the film required rescoring, but Donaggio was already working on another project.

And here the tale gets as worthy as a Christie novel. To replace the score, they turned not to a well-known film composer or even a not-well-known film composer – they turned to jazz legend Dave Brubeck. According to Brubeck's manager, Russell Gloyd, it was Donald Sutherland's idea to approach Brubeck. When asked how long he would have to score the film, he was told two weeks. He said no. It was then decided that they would use existing Brubeck music, and that he'd record it anew for the film. Brubeck's music is terrific on its own – classic Brubeck all the way. Unfortunately, it is mostly at odds with the visuals and feel of the film. The movie was a box-office and critical non-starter, although the cast was praised in many reviews, such as the *LA Times*, which said "The cast is enjoyable, especially Sutherland." And that was that.

Watching the film, you can see how Donaggio's score would have accompanied director Davis' tracking shots and fog-shrouded skies and black-and-white

flashbacks, and how it would have given them the atmosphere they now lack, and how it would have given the film an almost haunting quality to counteract the goodly amount of long dialogue scenes.

And if you turn off the sound of the film and play Donaggio's music against certain scenes, you can see it would have been a whole different movie – that's always the importance of great movie music. And one can take the position that the film might have had a different fate with the Donaggio score. Or not. It's really hard to know. What we do know is that the score is top-of-the-line Donaggio. At times reminiscent of his work for De Palma, it's all swirling strings and lush melodies and tension-filled passages, all very symphonic. No one did or does this sort of thing better than Donaggio.

There was a short seventeen-minute suite used on a Pino Donaggio compilation, but this is the world premiere release of the entire score – every note written for the film, along with a suite of alternate cues. For anyone who loves Donaggio or who loves classic film scoring, this CD will, I hope, be very pleasing.

This CD was assembled and mastered from the first generation two-track mixed music masters direct from Italy and the sound is phenomenal. So here, at long last, is the complete lost score to *Ordeal By Innocence*.

— Bruce Kimmel