

POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE

“THEY’RE BACK ...”

In 1982, Steven Spielberg gave the movie world a one-two punch – *Poltergeist*, which he co-wrote and produced, and a little movie called *E.T.*, which he directed. Both films had approximately the same budget, about \$10.5 million, which was low compared to the then-average film budget. Just sticking with Spielberg, his recent films of that era had cost \$19 million (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*), \$32 million (*1941*) and \$18 million (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*). But the smaller budgets made no impact at all on the quality of either *Poltergeist* or *E.T.* – both were beautifully produced films that looked great and didn’t feel like the product of a lower budget in any way. The films came out a week apart and both were huge hits, with *E.T.*, of course, becoming one of the biggest moneymakers of all-time. *Poltergeist* grossed approximately \$76 million and was the eighth highest-grossing film of 1982.

Poltergeist delighted audiences and critics – it was the best kind of horror film: a carnival fun ride, a rollercoaster that could have you laughing out loud one minute and screaming in terror the next, all with a shiver-inducing *Twilight Zone* kind of creepiness. It was the kind of film where patrons immediately called all their friends and dragged them to see it so they could watch their friends squirming with suspense and having the living daylight scared out of them. While Tobe Hooper has the directing credit, Spielberg’s handprints are on every frame of the film.

Since sequels were becoming the norm and were big business, it was not much of a surprise when *Poltergeist II: The Other Side* went before the cameras – the only surprise was that it took four years to do so. The intentions were perfect: Bring back the lovable and endearing Freling family and the actors who played them (Craig T. Nelson, Jobeth Williams, Oliver Robins and Heather O’Rourke – the actress who played daughter Dana, Dominique Dunne, had been tragically murdered after filming *Poltergeist* and rather than recast, the character was left out of the sequel), bring back Zelda Rubinstein as the psychic, and come up with a story that would have the same qualities as the first film without feeling like it was just hitting the same beats. In the director’s chair this time was Brian Gibson, and the writers were Michael Grais and Mark Victor who, with Spielberg, had written the original *Poltergeist*.

Poltergeist II: The Other Side begins a year after the first film, the Frelings having relocated to Phoenix, Arizona, where they’re living with

Diane Freling’s mother, Grandma Jess (played by the wonderful Geraldine Fitzgerald). All is peaceful and calm – but obviously not for long. There is a shaman (Will Sampson) who knows bad things are coming, and a dead, rather insane preacher named Kane (Julian Beck), who is determined to get Carol Anne and wreak havoc. The rest, as they say, is the tale and in case there are those who haven’t seen it, the tale shall not be told here.

But the film was beset with a major problem during the filming – the actor playing the key role of Kane, Julian Beck, passed away before filming was completed. He’d already shot a considerable amount of footage and it probably wasn’t in any way feasible to recast and reshoot all that footage. So H R Giger, the man who created the alien in *Alien* was brought on board to create a “beast” version of the Kane character that Beck was playing – scenes were rewritten, everything was adjusted and filming continued. A few of Julian Beck’s lines had to be looped by another actor during post-production. The running time of the film, which is about eighty-three minutes without the end credits, shows that a lot of what was probably meant to be on the screen before Beck passed away had to be scuttled and rethought quickly.

While the film wasn’t the success of its predecessor, it did make money and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects. Its success insured another sequel would come along, which it did two years later. The reviews were middling at the time because there was disappointment (as there usually is with sequels of any kind) that it didn’t live up to the first film. But viewed years later without that baggage, the film does have its pleasures, with wonderful performances by the leads, and a truly one-off and incredibly creepy performance by Julian Beck, the kind of performance that induces nightmares. The film looks terrific and the effects are fun and well done. But what takes the film to a whole other level is the same thing that took *Poltergeist* to a whole other level – the magnificent score by Jerry Goldsmith.

Goldsmith, by this point in his career, was already firmly established as a film composer legend, having written one brilliant score after another for the past two decades. He’d been nominated for Oscars any number of times, won for *The Omen*, and was just about the most sought after composer in Hollywood. His score for *Poltergeist* had been nominated for an Academy Award (losing to the other Spielberg film, *E.T.*). But rather than rehash that score, he chose to just use the “Carol Anne” theme along with a handful of other thematic

material from the first film, but mostly composing new material.

Goldsmith uses his usual orchestral forces with some electronics and choir mixed in to good effect. The “Carol Anne” theme occurs every now and then and is, of course, one of the most memorable and beautiful themes he ever wrote. The music for *Poltergeist II: The Other Side* is ethereal, majestic, suspenseful, heart pounding, and tender. It is also its own distinct thing – it’s not *Poltergeist* because the film is not just a rehash of the first film.

There have been three previous releases of Jerry Goldsmith’s score on CD. The first from Varese Sarabande was quite short, as was the fashion back when it was released. The second issue came from Intrada, and that added several new cues. The third, once again from Varese Sarabande, added even more material, but still was not complete. Missing in action were a handful of short but excellent cues. Also, as was the style, several cues were put together using crossfades, which is a choice. What a crossfade does however is kind of mask the outgoing cue’s final notes as the incoming cue makes its presence known.

For this first time ever complete release of *Poltergeist II: The Other Side*, we have gone back to the original three-track mixdowns. All cues are present and accounted for. We’ve left some of the combined cues the way they were but have eliminated the cross fades so that each cue is note complete. Furthermore, we have some bonus tracks – two cues that were on the previous CDs with choir, as they were recorded, were played in the film without the choir and we’ve included those film versions. Also, the cue “Late Call” had a toy phone sound effect on the first release, that wasn’t included on the second, but was on the third – we include it in our bonus section, just for completeness sake. Finally, we’ve also included just the choir track for one selection so you can clearly hear what they’re singing.

It is a pleasure to release this wonderful Goldsmith score from one of his most fertile periods, complete and in beautiful sound. There was no one like Jerry Goldsmith – he was a film music force like no other. He could do anything – romance, comedy, drama, horror, sci-fi, thriller, mystery – his music has made great films greater and mediocre films tolerable. He understood film music and its purpose as well as any film composer who ever lived.

— Bruce Kimmel