

The Rains of Ranchipur | Seven Cities of Gold | The Blue Angel

Hugo Friedhofer could do anything. From noirs, to romance, to fantasy, to drama, to lighter fare, he simply was one of the greatest film composers in history. His work for Twentieth Century Fox was especially impressive and from the mid-1950s to the end of that decade he would deliver one incredible score after another in just about every genre. In 1955 alone he wrote an astonishing five scores, including *The Rains of Ranchipur* and *Seven Cities of Gold* (the others were *White Feather*, *Violent Saturday*, and *Soldier of Fortune*).

The Rains of Ranchipur began life as a novel called *The Rains Came* by Louis Bromfield. Published in 1937, Fox snapped up the rights and their film version, starring Myrna Loy and Tyrone Power, was released in 1937. Because of its exotic setting, *The Rains Came* was a perfect candidate for the Cinemascope and color treatment, and so in 1955 Fox remade the film, this time as *The Rains of Ranchipur*. Fox assembled a great cast, including Lana Turner, Richard Burton, Fred MacMurray, and Michael Rennie. The director was Jean Negulesco, who'd directed many films for Fox, including *Titanic*, *How to Marry a Millionaire*, *Three Coins in the Fountain*, *Daddy Long Legs*, *Boy on a Dolphin*, to name a few. The screenplay was by Merle Miller, whose only major screenplay credits are *Ranchipur* and *Kings Go Forth*.

In India on business, Lord Esketh and his wife Edwina are invited to Ranchipur by the Marharani. Their marriage is near its end, and Esketh announces that when he returns to England they will divorce. The thoughtless Edwina thinks otherwise, and then she begins to see her former lover, Tom Newsome, now an alcoholic. She also tries to seduce a Hindu doctor, who falls in love with her. From there on, the drama runs high, including seething passions, earthquake, flood, heroics, and self-sacrifice, all beautifully photographed by Milton Krasner. The spectacular earthquake and flood special effects were nominated for an Academy Award. And, of course, there is the score – the stunningly beautiful score by Friedhofer.

Friedhofer's score to *Ranchipur* had only about thirteen minutes of its glorious music previously released, in stereo, due to the deterioration of the original mag tracks – that was really all that could be salvaged. In the meantime, other sources showed up, and while those were mono, it was finally

possible to present almost the entire score complete – all that's missing is about seven minutes of cues that are thematically covered in other cues.

Also from 1955, *Seven Cities of Gold* was yet another colorful Fox Cinemascope film, this one a historical adventure film starring Anthony Quinn, Richard Egan and Michael Rennie. Based on the novel, *The Nine Days of Father Serra* by Isabelle Gibson Ziegler, the story is about the Franciscan priest, Father Juniper Serra and the founding of the first missions in California. The film's tagline basically said it all: "This is the story of the making... and the forging... of California... when men chose gold or God... the sword of the Cross." Roy D. Webb directed the film, which had a screenplay by Richard L. Breen, and beautiful photography by Lucien Ballard. Once again, Hugo Friedhofer provided a score that perfectly captured the drama, the characters, and the flavor of the film. Spanish rhythms, grand themes, and fantastic orchestral colors are the order of the day. It's great film scoring done by a master. *Seven Cities of Gold* was previously released on Varese Sarabande and has been out of print for some time. For this release, Mike Matessino has completely remixed the score and found two short unreleased cues – the resulting sound is spectacular in that incredible Fox stereo.

Four years later, Fox remade Josef von Sternberg's classic film, *The Blue Angel*. The director, Edward Dmytryk stated in his autobiography, "It was a film none of us had to be ashamed of, but the rule still holds – never remake a classic, even a minor one." That certainly proved prophetic in terms of the film's critical reception, which was poor, but the fact is the film is shockingly both underrated and unknown. It has never been released on video and one can only hope that situation is rectified, because the film really stands on its own as a worthy redo. Obviously it's not the Dietrich/von Sternberg film – this time *The Blue Angel* got the Cinemascope and color treatment, and Dmytryk's direction is terrific. But it's the cast that makes it work so well, with Curt Jurgens turning in a fantastic performance as the aging professor who becomes enamored and obsessed with a cabaret singer. And May Britt is surprisingly effective and it's a shame she didn't really do more. Britt had a very short screen career; she was discovered by producer Carlo

Ponti, made a few films in Italy (including King Vidor's film of *War and Peace*) and, in the late 1950s, she was put under contract to Fox. Her first two films there were *The Young Lions* and *The Hunters*, with *The Blue Angel* following those. The following year she made *Murder, Inc.*, but her biggest notoriety came not from a film but when she married singer Sammy Davis, Jr. She retired briefly, but when she and Davis divorced in 1968 she began doing television, appearing in guest roles on shows like *The Danny Thomas Show* and *Mission: Impossible*. She continued to work sporadically up until 1988 when she retired again.

The film has a few musical numbers, and includes the great song, "Falling in Love Again" by Frederick Holl-ander with English lyrics by Sammy Lerner (from the original film of *The Blue Angel*). Friedhofer's actual score is brief (eighteen minutes) and we've included all of it. Naturally, he interpolates "Falling in Love Again," but there's also classic Friedhofer scoring and it's just his usual great work. This is the film score's world premiere release.

So, three scores by Hugo Friedhofer. No track-by-track analysis – just bask in the glow of one of film music's greatest composers at the peak of his considerable powers.

— Bruce Kimmel

Technical Note: As Twentieth Century Fox continues mining its extensive vaults, classic music elements have materialized unexpectedly and in unlikely places. The discovery of monaural reels seemingly made for the composer himself have made it possible to present about 90% of Hugo Friedhofer's score for *The Rains of Ranchipur* for the first time. Supplementing this archival presentation are the previously released surviving stereo elements taken from 6-track 35mm mag. Disc 2's *Seven Cities of Gold* (with two additional cues) and the previously unreleased score from *The Blue Angel* complete this noteworthy collection of three of the composer's major projects for the studio, all newly mixed and mastered.

— Mike Matessino