

Summer and Smoke

Tennessee Williams was already a legend when *Summer and Smoke* premiered on Broadway on October 6, 1948, thanks to the huge success of his play *The Glass Menagerie* and, more importantly, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which had opened the year before *Summer and Smoke* and become a sensation with critics and audiences and catapulted Williams into the playwriting firmament. *Summer and Smoke* failed to ignite the same kind of heat as *Streetcar* and closed after only 102 performances at the Music Box Theatre. However, the play was revived a mere four years later, this time off-Broadway at the then-new Circle In The Square Theater, directed by Jose Quintero and starring Geraldine Page. That production was a big success for Page and Quintero and the play. Nine years later, *Summer and Smoke* was brought to the screen by Paramount Pictures, with Geraldine Page recreating her stage success as the spinster Alma Winemiller. Peter Glenville directed the film from a screenplay by James Poe and Meade Roberts. Starring opposite Page was Laurence Harvey, along with a wonderful supporting cast that included Rita Moreno, Una Merkel, John McIntire, Thomas Gomez, Pamela Tiffin, and Earl Holliman.

Briefly, *Summer and Smoke*, set in Glorious Hill, Mississippi in 1916, is the story of Alma Winemiller, a lonely, unmarried minister's daughter who leads a dull existence giving voice lessons and leading bible studies, and her almost sexual awakening with a handsome doctor – a free-wheeling, reckless playboy who grew up next door and was Alma's first crush and who's recently returned to town. As always with Williams, there are buried passions, unrequited love, longing and loneliness, and, of course, nothing quite turns out the way the characters would like.

Peter Glenville was a very underrated film director who split his time between films and stage. He directed his first Broadway show in 1949, Terence Rattigan's *The Browning Version*. He also directed Rattigan's *Separate Tables* and *The Prisoner*, which also became his debut as a film director. Other films include *Me and the Colonel*, starring Danny Kaye, *Term of Trial*, starring Laurence Olivier, *Becket* (which he'd directed for the stage, as well – for his work on the film he received an Academy Award nomi-

nation as Best Director), *Hotel Paradiso*, and *The Comedians*, starring Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, and Alec Guinness. He only made seven films (he was supposed to direct the screen version of *Man of la Mancha* but left due to creative differences), but all seven are really excellent. His work on *Summer and Smoke* is wonderful, both in getting great performances from his actors, and in his beautifully shot widescreen images.

The film received some excellent reviews and Page's brilliant performance was universally praised – she was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Actress category. Una Merkel received a Best Supporting Actress nomination for her performance as Page's dotty mother, and the film also picked up nominations for Best Art Direction – Best Set Decoration (Hal Pereira, Walter H. Tyler, Sam Comer, and Arthur Krams) and another for Elmer Bernstein's incredible score.

Elmer Bernstein had begun scoring films in the early 1950s and by the time of *Summer and Smoke* had already written an amazing number of great scores, including *The Ten Commandments*, *The Man With the Golden Arm*, *Sweet Smell of Success*, *Some Came Running*, *The Rat Race*, *The Magnificent Seven*, to name just a few from that era. In 1961 alone, he scored *The Comancheros*, *The Young Doctors*, *By Love Possessed*, and *Summer and Smoke*.

Summer and Smoke is one of Bernstein's greatest scores in a career that is jam-packed with great scores like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Birdman of Alcatraz*, *Walk on the Wild Side*, *The Great Escape*, *Love With the Proper Stranger*, *Airplane!*, *Ghostbusters*, and so many others that one could fill an entire booklet just naming them. Bernstein captures every emotion, every subtext, every character – the loneliness, the longing, the yearning, the repression – it's a textbook example of great film scoring. His main theme is one of his most haunting and beautiful – a swirling, sinuous, delirious melody that recurs throughout the score. Right from the get-go, Bernstein establishes the mood of the story and its characters in the film's "Prologue," which leads directly into the "Prelude," the film's main title music. There are wonderful variations on that main theme, along with secondary themes that are equally gorgeous. There's also some Glorious Hill band music, some guitar music

(played by the great Laurindo Almeida), all of it evoking a different time, place, and world – a world belonging to one of the great poets of American drama – Tennessee Williams. And a world perfectly captured by Elmer Bernstein's timeless music.

Summer and Smoke was originally released on an RCA Victor soundtrack LP. That LP contained approximately thirty-six minutes of music, including some heavily edited versions of cues. For this first-ever release of the complete score, we had access to two rolls of 1/2" three-track masters that were sent by Paramount to RCA Victor. The masters were used to assemble the LP, but happily contained all of the cues that were not used on the album. In those days, to assemble the LP they simply edited the three-track masters – thankfully, all the edited out bits were kept and put at the end of the reels. It was simply a matter of putting them all back where they belonged to make the cues once again complete. For reference, we also had the complete scoring sessions archived on 35mm protection mag in the Paramount vaults. The LP program was released on CD by RCA Spain, taken from a sub-master, so this is not only the first release of the complete *Summer and Smoke*, it is the first time it is being released from those original, superb-sounding three-track tapes.

We have put the score in film order, which is how it plays best. Because all the Glorious Hill band music is used in short versions throughout one sequence in the film, we decided to include those other tracks in the bonus section, as it did not make for a good listening experience to have them all lumped together in a row. Additionally, we have included a source cue and the original LP edited cues in the bonus section.

It's hard to imagine what a fresh, invigorating, unique, and exciting voice Elmer Bernstein was back then – there was no one like him then, and there is no one like him now.

— Bruce Kimmel