

Victor Young at Paramount, Volume II

Victor Young could do anything – whatever the genre of film, be it adventure, five-hankie soap opera, romance, mystery and noir, comedy – his musical palette was distinct and his melodic sense of film scoring seemingly knew no bounds. He knew when to underscore and when not to, he knew how to occasionally interpolate popular songs of the day (many written by him), and he knew how music needed to work to aid the storytelling of the film, something that is not nearly as simple as it sounds. Throughout his career, he wrote some of the most memorable film scores of all time and most of them were written during his long association with Paramount Pictures.

Continuing our journey through Victor Young at Paramount, volume two offers some truly wonderful scores, all of them seeing the light of day for the first time. They are a diverse gathering that beautifully illustrates how he could write for any kind of story.

THE PROUD AND PROFANE

Our leadoff score is to the 1956 Perlberg-Seaton war film, *The Proud and Profane*. Adapted from the novel *The Magnificent Bastards* by Lucy Herson Crockett, the film was directed and written by George Seaton, whose distinguished film career included such wonderful films as *The Miracle on 34th Street*, *The Country Girl*, *Teacher's Pet*, *The Pleasure of His Company*, *The Counterfeit Traitor*, *36 Hours* and *Airport*. The starry cast included William Holden, Deborah Kerr and Thelma Ritter. *The Proud and Profane* was nominated for two Academy Awards – Best Art Direction – Set Direction, Black-and-White and Best Costume Design, Black-and-White.

Young wrote a memorable and beautiful main theme for the drama, which weaves in and out of the score in many

guises. The “Main Title” is classic Young, starting with a grand flourish, segueing directly into his main theme and then directly into a great Young march. Those were the days when composers were really given the chance to get a film off to a great start with their music, something of a lost art in today's moviemaking world. There's a bit of source music – some original, some standards – that Young uses exceptionally well.

FOREVER FEMALE

Next up is the 1953 film *Forever Female*, starring Ginger Rogers, William Holden, Paul Douglas and Pat Crowley. It was based on the J.M. Barrie play *Rosalind*, and the screenplay was by Julius J. Epstein and Philip G. Epstein, who happened to also pen a little movie called *Casablanca*. The director was Irving Rapper (*Now Voyager*). The comedy centers around an *All About Eve*-like situation of an older star still trying to play way too young and all the complications that come with it. The cast seems to be having a grand time and the film has its delights, especially some of the choice lines delivered by Paul Douglas.

This time it's Victor Young in full-out sparkling mode, beginning with a lilting and lovely waltz that then morphs into some fun big-city music. The score is like a glass of champagne – bubbly, effervescent and sophisticated. Young really captures the allure of the theater in his richly varied music. There are the usual source cues sprinkled throughout and they add immeasurably to the overall effect of the score.

LITTLE BOY LOST

Also from 1953 we have another George Seaton film, *Little Boy Lost*, a drama starring Bing Crosby, based on the novel by Marghanita Laski. The film is woefully unknown, which is a shame. It's a compelling film about a World

War II correspondent whose French wife was killed by the Nazis, returning to France after the war to try and find his son.

Little Boy Lost has a superb Victor Young score, one that's not very well known, but is right up there with his best. Originally there were only three surviving cues from this brilliant score, but in a last-minute bit of serendipity, almost all of it was found and so it's a real treat to be able to present just about everything from this Victor Young classic. The score has everything that made Victor Young one of the greats.

MY FAVORITE SPY

We close our second volume of Victor Young scores with *My Favorite Spy*, a 1951 Bob Hope comedy, directed by Norman Z. McLeod (who also directed the Marx Brothers' *Horse Feathers* and *Monkey Business*). It's business as usual for Hope, as a burlesque comic recruited to pose as an international spy to recover some microfilm in Tangier. Beautiful Hedy Lamarr is along for the ride, as are character actors Frank Faylen, Mike Mazurki, Francis L. Sullivan, Arnold Moss and Morris Ankrum. Young's music suits the film perfectly, underscoring the comedy and intrigue with panache and a grand sense of fun. Nobody did it better.

— Bruce Kimmel