

John Steinbeck's "The Wayward Bus" | The Enemy Below

THE WAYWARD BUS

John Steinbeck and the movies seemed made for each other. He was blessed to have major directors bring his works to the screen – such greats as John Ford (*The Grapes of Wrath*), Elia Kazan (*Viva Zapata* and *East of Eden*), Alfred Hitchcock (*Lifeboat*), Lewis Milestone (*Of Mice and Men* and *The Red Pony*), and Victor Fleming (*Tortilla Flat*). It was a homecoming of sorts for *The Wayward Bus* – Twentieth Century Fox had already done Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Lifeboat*, and *Viva Zapata*, and *The Wayward Bus*, whose journey to the screen was indeed wayward, ended up at Fox after having floated around elsewhere for several years.

The novel, written a decade earlier in 1947, had its rights bought by producer/director George Stevens. But, as sometimes happens, the property just languished before it was finally made at Fox in 1957. The screenplay was by Ivan Moffett, and the director went to a surprising choice – Victor Vicas, who was virtually unknown in most of the world and completely unknown in the United States. Vicas made only two films in the United States and didn't have much of a career after that, but his work on *The Wayward Bus* is really terrific. The story of how Vicas came to be hired is an amusing one, and is recounted by Julie Kirgo in her excellent liner notes for the Blu-ray release, which is highly recommended.

Top-billed was Joan Collins as an insecure, hard-drinking, jealous wife, with Rick Jason as her husband, the driver of the titular wayward bus. But it's really an ensemble picture. Hot off her screen success in *The Girl Can't Help It*, Jayne Mansfield turns in a wonderful and touching performance as a stag party gal, and Dan Dailey is also affecting as a salesman who takes an interest in her. Also terrific are Betty Lou Keim and Dolores Michaels – Keim playing an unhappy waitress getting away from her humdrum job, and Michaels as a young woman trying to break free of her strict parents. Shot in gorgeous black-and-white Cinemascope by Charles G. Clarke, the film looks great.

THE ENEMY BELOW

Also released by Fox in 1957 was the tense and exciting war picture, *The Enemy Below*. Directed by Dick Powell, *The Enemy Below* is the story of two boats – an American destroyer and a German U-boat. These types of WWII films were a staple of 1950s cinema,

but *The Enemy Below* is one of the best, as it presents both sides of the picture – hero and villain – not in black-and-white terms, but with some depth. Robert Mitchum and Curt Jurgens turn in excellent performances as the two captains engaged in a deadly battle of wits. Powell keeps the film moving along, and the large supporting cast is filled with such terrific actors as Theodore Bikel, Frank Albertson, David Hedison (billed as Al Hedison), and two up-and-comers, Doug McClure (his first screen role) and someone named Clint Eastwood. The taut screenplay was by Wendell Mayes (*The Spirit of St. Louis*, *Anatomy of a Murder*, *Advise and Consent*, *In Harm's Way*, *Von Ryan's Express*, *Hotel*, *The Poseidon Adventure*, and *Death Wish* to name a few), based on the novel by D.A. Rayner, and the film was beautifully shot by Harold Rosson in color and Cinemascope.

Interestingly, the *Star Trek* episode, "Balance of Terror," is closely based on this story, and the TV version of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* used the film as basis for the episode, "Killers from the Deep" – not only that, but it used actual footage from *The Enemy Below* in the episode and, of course, the TV series' star, David Hedison, had also appeared in the film.

The Wayward Bus and *The Enemy Below*, while polar opposites as films, did share something vital between them – two very different but superb musical scores by Leigh Harline.

Harline was born in 1907, the youngest of thirteen children. Harline began his film work at Walt Disney Studios, where he scored a slew of Disney cartoons (*Silly Symphonies*, *Mickey Mouse*). In 1937, Harline, Frank Churchill, and Paul J. Smith did the music for Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and the three received an Oscar nomination for their score. Three years later, Harline, Paul J. Smith, and Ned Washington were nominated for best score and best song ("When You Wish Upon a Star") for their work on *Pinocchio*. This time they won. Harline would go on to receive five other Oscar nominations during his long career. After Disney, he began scoring an amazing number of films, including *Pride of the Yankees* (Oscar nomination), *Johnny Angel*, *Road to Utopia*, *Crack-Up*, *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, *The Boy With the Green Hair*, *They Live By Night*, *His Kind of Woman* – Harline could do anything – musicals, dramas, noir, comedy – he was skilled, understood what a movie score was supposed to do, and had a

wonderful gift of melody.

In the early 1950s, Harline came to Fox, and there he continued to turn out one great score after another, including *Vicki*, *Broken Lance*, *Black Widow*, *House of Bamboo*, *The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing*, *Good Morning, Miss Dove*, *The Bottom of the Bottle*, *23 Paces to Baker Street*, *No Down Payment*, and many others. In the 1960s, he did several films for M-G-M, and received another Oscar nomination for his work on *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*. Harline passed away in December of 1969.

Harline's score for *The Wayward Bus* is filled with the longing and yearning of its characters. You can feel it immediately in the film's main title music, and it continues in each successive cue – it really gets under the skin of the characters and drama, and it's filled with plaintive melodies and colors. The music for *The Enemy Below* is thrilling and memorable. Harline's scoring choices are interesting – he lets long dialogue sequences play without music, while scoring the action sequences, with his themes clearly defining the American and German boats and their maneuvers. Once the climactic battle begins, Harline lets his music go pretty much non-stop, and it's simply exhilarating battle music, the kind no one seems to know how to write anymore.

Considering the breadth of his film scores and the sheer volume of them, it's more than a little shocking that Harline isn't more known than he is. He was one of the greats and his scores are all eclectic and perfectly suited to the films they grace, and he is right up there with the best of them.

This is the world premiere release of *The Wayward Bus*, in stereo and sounding wonderful, thanks to the usual tender loving care of Nick Redman's team. We present the complete score as it appears in the film. *The Enemy Below* was previously released on Intrada (as a standalone score, which quickly sold out). We've remastered it for this release, presenting every note of Harline's score, but omitting the bonus tracks from the Intrada CD, which consisted of a few German drinking songs and some radar blips.

— Bruce Kimmel