

Who's Got the Action?

Once upon a time, the frothy and fizzy comedy was a staple of Hollywood – and these films, with nothing much on their minds other than providing an audience with lots of laughs and a good time, popped up weekly, year after year. Dean Martin did a number of them for Paramount, and in 1962 it was *Who's Got the Action?*, based on a 1960 novel by Alexander Rose. Martin was completely at home and at ease in this kind of film and his star power made every one of them a delight. And if he weren't enough, add to the mix gorgeous Lana Turner and such brilliant comic actors as Eddie Albert, Paul Ford, John McGiver, Nita Talbot, and, most especially, Walter Matthau, and you have a recipe for a raucously funny romp.

With a screenplay by Jack Rose (a Paramount veteran with such films as *Road to Rio*, *Living It Up*, *The Seven Little Foys*, *Beau James*, *Houseboat*, *The Five Pennies* and others to his credit), and direction by Daniel Mann (*Come Back*, *Little Sheba*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *I'll Cry Tomorrow*, *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, *Hot Spell*, *BUTterfield 8*, *Our Man Flint*, among many others), *Who's Got the Action?* is a comedy of errors about a man who suffers from a gambling addiction. The various machinations of his wife and friends backfire completely, and gambling bets that are supposed to lose, win. Suddenly, everyone wants a piece of the action, from judges to gangsters. There's not much more to it than that, and by the end, as is always the case with these films, a happy ending prevails. All complications

are sorted out and everyone presumably lives happily ever after, including the gangster. It's all fast, fun, and highly entertaining. How can you not like a film that has a female character named Saturday Knight and a gangster named Tony Gagoots?

But no frothy and fizzy comedy can succeed without a frothy and fizzy score, and *Who's Got the Action?* has a great one by a man who truly understood how to score a frothy and fizzy comedy – George Duning. Duning, born in 1908, began his film music journey in the early 1940s, working uncredited on a number of films. His first credited score was for *Johnny O'Clock*, and from that point on Duning became one of Hollywood's most prolific composers. He turned out one score after another at Columbia Studios, where he was on staff. His classics included *Salome*, *From Here to Eternity*, *Tight Spot*, *The Man From Laramie*, *Picnic*, *Full of Life*, *Nightfall*, *The Eddy Duchin Story*, *3:10 to Yuma*, *Cowboy, Bell, Book, and Candle*, *Strangers When We Meet* – to name but a few. In the 1960s he worked for other studios; for Paramount he wrote one of his greatest scores, *The World of Suzie Wong*. Eventually he moved into television, doing many classic shows – none more classic than Paramount's *Star Trek*, for which he composed three of the series' best scores.

Duning wrote instantly memorable themes and *Who's Got the Action?* is full of them. It's a light, fun, quirky score that has a little bit of everything, including some classic Duning romantic

music. Duning's main theme uses a five-note motif that matches the syllables of "Who's Got the Action?" and it sets the tone for the rest of the score, appearing in many variations. We also get a little flamenco (played by the great Laurindo Almeida), sexy saxophone for Saturday Knight, some Japanese source music, a little Duning Dixieland, the kind of music you want to fall in love to ("Empty Spaces"), a little horse racing music, cool jazz, and music for a happy ending. It's a delight from start to finish.

This is the world premiere release for *Who's Got the Action?* The score is presented as it is heard in the film. We had mostly stereo tracks, but five of the film's twenty cues existed in mono only. Nonetheless, we felt that presenting them in order was the best way. As a bonus, we include a demo version of the title tune with lyrics by Jack Brooks, and a couple of classical cues used as source music. It's always a treat to bring more George Duning to CD. He was a wonderful composer whose work is always fresh and melodic – what great film music is all about.

— Bruce Kimmel