

*Romantic Comedy* opened on November 8, 1979 at the Ethel Barrymore Theater on Broadway, starring Anthony Perkins and Mia Farrow. It had a very healthy run of 396 performances and was the kind of, well, romantic comedy that's become an endangered species, both on Broadway and film. Written by Bernard Slade, who, a few years earlier, had made his Broadway debut in the way all playwrights can only dream of, with the smash hit, *Same Time, Next Year*. Critics raved about that play and Slade was an overnight sensation. Well, not exactly. Slade carefully kept out of his bio any reference to his myriad TV credits, which included writing for *Bewitched* and *The Flying Nun*, as well as creating the hit TV shows *The Partridge Family* and *Bridget Loves Bernie*. It was a wise move on his part, for had he listed them the reviews might just have been very different for his fledgling playwrighting effort and Broadway debut, since most critics of the time looked down on TV sitcoms with disdain.

In 1983, The Mirisch Corporation brought *Romantic Comedy* to the screen, directed by Arthur Hiller, starring Dudley Moore and Mary Steenburgen. Slade did the screenplay and managed to open up the show a little to feature Manhattan as a supporting player. The story is classic romantic comedy – Jason Carmichael hasn't written a hit play since he and his partner split up. On the day of his wedding, in comes Phoebe Craddock, a quirky, funny, and endearing writer, who becomes his new writing partner. Through hits and flops, through marriages and divorces, the two flirt with their own romantic comedy – the closest of friends, the nearest of lovers and finally finding their happy ending. Moore and Steenburgen are terrific as the collaborators in everything but their own romantic comedy.

Reviews were mostly fine, with Roger Ebert especially enjoying the film for what it was.

“Not a whole heck of a lot happens in ‘Romantic Comedy’ but it happens so charmingly, and with such quick spirit and wit, that it's enough. This is the kind of movie Hollywood used to make to exploit the sheer charm of its great stars – performers like Cary Grant or Katherine Hepburn, who were so wonderful to watch that all you had to do was find something for them to say. The stars this time are Dudley Moore and Mary Steenburgen. Together, they have the sort of chemistry that might make any dialog work, and certainly works in Bernard Slade's story about a couple of playwrights who collaborate for years and years before they find the courage to finally come right out and kiss each other.”

Grosses were mild, but, thanks to cable and home video, the film has worn well over the years and is an absolute delight these days, when Hollywood simply has no idea how to make a simple, straightforward film like this.

For the score, director Hiller turned to award-winning composer Marvin Hamlisch and it was a perfect match of composer and film. Hamlisch basically came up with one theme for the film and then finds the most beautiful ways to present it – whether up tempo or slow, mournful or romantic, it's a great theme and while not many composers could make that approach work, Hamlisch does it with nary a false note. The music is used in two ways – for bridging scenes and montages as we follow the trajectory of Jason and Phoebe's successes and partnership, and to underscore scenes between the two of them.

As frequently happens in film, the music was sometimes re-edited in different ways from how Hamlisch

recorded it, and several cues were repeated, while a couple went unused. For this CD, we tried to be true to the way the music was used in the film, as well as true to the way it was recorded. For example, the first two cues on the CD are edited as they were in the film because they play beautifully like that. Everything thereafter is pretty much as it was recorded. There are a few source music cues in the film and we've included them as bonus tracks at the end because we felt that they'd interrupt the flow of the score to include them where they occur in the film (you can barely hear them at all, actually). One of them is a beautiful Hamlisch arrangement of the *Fame* song “Out Here On My Own,” while another is the classic torch song “Don't Blame Me,” which Phoebe plays for inspiration while writing one of the plays with Jason. Of course, the song's unheard lyric says exactly what she's feeling (“Don't blame me, for falling in love with you – I'm under your spell, but how can I help it, don't blame me”).

For this CD, we used the original three-track session masters housed in the MGM vaults. While we would love to have included the song “Maybe” that plays over the end credits (sung by Peabo Bryson and Roberta Flack – and credited to Hamlisch, Carole Bayer Sager, and Burt Bacharach), it wasn't available to us. Happily, Hamlisch recorded an instrumental of the theme, which is what we've used to close out the CD. It's always a pleasure to bring more Marvin Hamlisch to CD – the world needs more Hamlisch and more romantic comedy.

— Bruce Kimmel