

THE SOUND OF film

M U S I C

EVERY YEAR THE Academy Awards put Hollywood in the spotlight, randomly bestowing special recognition on this or that movie. But where would those films be without the music that accompanies them? With that in mind, we decided to put Oscar—and his choices for Best Original

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

Score—on the spot. We collected every CD from Academy Award-winning films we could lay our hands on—from last year's winner *Aladdin* to one of the very first, 1936's *Anthony Adverse*—and put each under close scrutiny. Are Oscar's ears really golden? Or simply lead?

ALADDIN (1992)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

WALT DISNEY 60846-2

Performance ★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

A witty romp with Robin Williams proving a capable comic singer and Brad Kane an especially appealing hero. Alan Menken's score, however, is merely competent during the action scenes. And points must be taken off for the now-obligatory pop single tacked on at the end. Collectors should search out early pressings for the original "Arabian Nights" opener. Its line describing a land "Where they cut off your ear/If they don't like your face" has since been altered in deference to Arab American sensibilities.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1991)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

WALT DISNEY 60618-2

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

A pinnacle in the collaboration between composer Alan Menken and lyricist Howard Ashman. Along with the showstoppers ("Be Our Guest" and "Gaston"), *Beauty and the Beast* features "Belle," a yearning number about the need to break free; "Something There," a sweet tune about the stirrings of love; and a handful of other equally good numbers. Menken's darkly romantic writing for strings during the climax is especially memorable.

DANCES WITH WOLVES (1990)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

EPIC ASSOCIATED ZK 46982

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

A mournful, hushed masterpiece from John Barry. Even during a percussion-heavy battle scene like "Pawnee Attack," the music somehow maintains an air of resignation. It's the sound of a people fading away. Achingly good.

THE LITTLE MERMAID (1989)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

WALT DISNEY CD-018

Performance ★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

Not nearly as good as you might remember. Quite a few songs are perfunctory, and Ariel's signature tune, "Part of Your World," is just a rough draft for "Belle" in *Beauty and the Beast*. The highlights belong to Sebastian the Crab, who high-kicks it through "Under the Sea" and the infectious, reggae-tinged "Kiss the Girl." The instrumental passages simply mimic the on-screen action rather than commenting or expanding on it. Alan Menken quickly proved himself capable of much more.

MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR (1988)

Dave Grusin: Migration

GRP GRD-952

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

Polite jazz tunes ably performed by Dave Grusin with an assist from Branford Marsalis, Omar Hakim, and others. (Hugh Masekela lights up the two tracks he solos on.) The 10-minute suite from *The Milagro Beanfield War* ventures south of the border for inspiration. It's quite charming. "Pistolero," with its charging rhythms and formal air, manages to capture the whimsical but deadly serious nature of the story better than the movie itself.

THE LAST EMPEROR (1987)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

VIRGIN 86029-2

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

An unusual mix here, with Ryuichi Sakamoto contributing to nine tracks, David Byrne to five, Cong Su to one, and a handful of miscellaneous pieces by others. Sakamoto's work is typical-

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ly florid in its engaging way. But Byrne's music, including "Main Title Theme," is exceptional: Spare, elegant, and inventively orchestrated, it makes you long to hear more from him. The music is grouped by composer rather than chronological, and suffers for it.

'ROUND MIDNIGHT (1986) Motion Picture Soundtrack

COLUMBIA CK 40464

Performance ★★★★
Sound Quality ★★★★

The performances in this marvelous homage to jazz were recorded live, giving the movie and its soundtrack a charged, exciting feel. Herbie Hancock shepherded an all-star lineup including Bobby McFerrin, Ron Carter, and Dexter Gordon through standards like "Body and Soul" and a few sterling originals. The highlights are endless, but one might single out the title track and Chet Baker's sublime vocals on "Fair Weather."

OUT OF AFRICA (1985) Music from the Motion Picture

MCA MCAD-6158

Performance ★★
Sound Quality ★★★★

A quiet, nondescript score from John Barry that worked well enough in the movie yet has no strong identity of its own. "Have You Got a Story for Me?" contains a particularly banal solo for piano, and "Flying Over Africa" and even "Main Title (I Had a Farm in Africa)" fade quickly from memory. Mozart, however, rose to the occasion by providing a fine *Concerto in A for Clarinet*.

A PASSAGE TO INDIA (1984)

Lean by Jarre—Maurice Jarre's Musical Tribute to David Lean

MILAN 74321 10131-2

Performance ★★
Sound Quality ★★★★

A recording of four suites from Maurice Jarre's scores for director David Lean, as well as an overture and a minor tune Jarre wrote for Lean's wedding. Acting as conductor, Jarre tends to emphasize the bombastic aspects of his music. The suite from *A Passage to India* is a rather droll sendup of tourists out to have an "adventure." But the cue from the incident in the caves is shorn of its power, and, overall, the music from *Ryan's Daughter*, *Doctor Zhivago*, and the rest tend to cancel one another out in this setting.

THE RIGHT STUFF (1983) *The Right Stuff/North and South—Original Scores*

VARESE SARABANDE VCD 47250

Performance ★★★★
Sound Quality ★★★★

No one ever accused composer Bill Conti of shying away from a grandiose statement.

On *The Right Stuff* his natural inclinations met the perfect material. The result is sweeping, heart-pounding music that charges along with gleeful abandon, so cocky and sure of itself you can't help but grin. "Breaking the Sound Barrier" (which nearly does) and "Yeager's Triumph" are especially noteworthy. Perhaps because the material was less interesting, *North and South* is less inspired, though certainly not meeker.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (1982) Music from the Motion Picture

MCA MCAD-31073

Performance ★★★★
Sound Quality ★★★★

Steven Spielberg used special effects to make E.T. walk and talk, but he needed John Williams' soaring music to make the creature come alive. Like every other element of Spielberg's fable, the score is touched by a sense of wonder. From the sweet lyricism of "E.T. and Me" to the sweeping resolution of the 15 minute final track "Adventure on Earth," this is grand stuff.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE (1981) Vangelis—*Chariots of Fire*

POLYDOR 800 020-2

Performance ★★★★
Sound Quality ★★★★

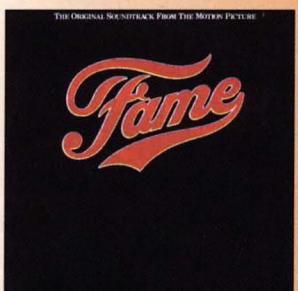
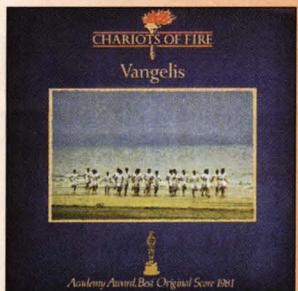
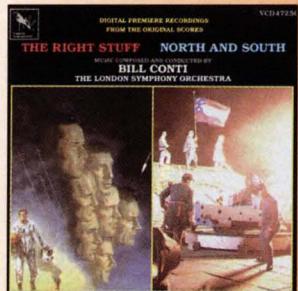
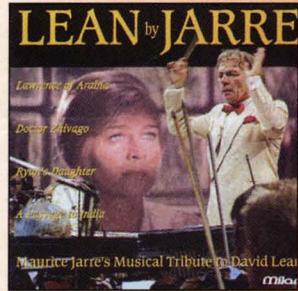
Synthesizer fiend Vangelis seemed a strange choice to score a period piece about two very different runners at the 1924 Olympics. But his distinctive, modern music quietly emphasized the universal nature of their struggles with the need to compete and win. And, of course, the track lifted from the title sequence proved a massive worldwide hit. The 20-minute closer "Chariots of Fire" meanders a bit, but the rest is top-notch, with "Abraham's Theme" especially noteworthy for capturing the desperate, lonely excitement of a runner during a race. The following year, Vangelis would reach perfection with his brilliant work on *Blade Runner*.

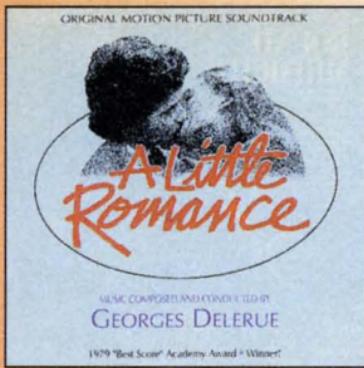
FAME (1980) Soundtrack from the Motion Picture

POLYDOR 800 034-2

Performance ★★
Sound Quality ★★

Irene Cara has the best moments here. "Fame" sounds a little goofy now ("Remember! Remember! Remember! Remember!") chant the background singers), but it's still fun, and "Out Here on My Own" is so much better than the rest that it seems to come from a different world. The other tracks—such as "Hot Lunch Jam," "Dogs in the Yard," and the truly awful finale "I Sing the Body Electric"—sound exactly like the sort of thing high school students with nascent talent would toss off in an afternoon. Appropriate, perhaps, but not very enjoyable.





A LITTLE ROMANCE (1979)

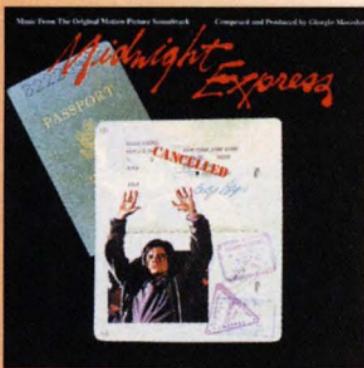
Motion Picture Soundtrack

VARESE SARABANDE VSD-5367

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

The great Georges Delerue seems caught up in the blush of first love in this breezy score. Drawing upon Vivaldi for several themes, he strikes just the right tone of benevolence and breathless excitement. The solo piano in "The Birthday Party" and the lovely waltz of "Julius Edmond Santorin" are especially memorable, but it's all a delight, as is the movie.



MIDNIGHT EXPRESS (1978)

Music from the Motion Picture

CASABLANCA 824 206-2

Performance ★

Sound Quality ★★

Vangelis he ain't. Giorgio Moroder has a decent riff or two buried in "Chase" and some nicely atmospheric touches in "Cacaphoney." But this is plodding stuff, the sort of electronic

noodling that gives synthesizers a bad name. Two songs—"Theme from *Midnight Express*" with Chris Bennett and "*Istanbul Blues*" with David Castle—are just painful.

STAR WARS (1977)

Star Wars Trilogy—

Original Soundtrack Anthology

20TH CENTURY FOX 07822-11012-2

Performance ★★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★★

Everything one could hope for in a boxed set. The sound quality is uniformly excellent, the scores for the individual movies are more complete than ever, the CDs are properly sequenced with miscellaneous cues appearing on a fourth disc, and the booklet is lavishly detailed. The music, of course, is a landmark achievement; John Williams almost singlehandedly reawakened public interest in traditional movie music. George Lucas once said he knew *Star Wars* would succeed when Darth Vader first appeared and audiences began to boo, rather than laugh as he feared. The truth is that he should have known as soon as Williams turned in

his score: No one could write a theme as grand and stirring as the "Main Title" unless the movie that followed would deliver in spades.

THE OMEN (1976)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

WARESE SARABANDE VSD-5281

Performance ★★

Sound Quality ★★★

A story about parents whose adopted son turns out to be the anti-Christ hardly calls for restraint. But even by horror standards, this Jerry Goldsmith score is a bit overwrought with strings flailing about and ominous choral arrangements at every turn. Effective, in a sledgehammer sort of way—even quiet-seeming tracks are guaranteed to explode into mayhem or at least contain some whispering voices to keep the audience from relaxing. A good example of Oscar honoring a talented composer at the wrong time.

JAWS (1975)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

MCA MCAD-1660

Performance ★★★

Sound Quality ★★★

This gripping "Main Title" theme has rightly entered the popular consciousness and kept more than a few people out of the water. There are some lighter moments such as "Promenade (Tourists on the Menu)" and heroic passages like "Preparing the Cage." But John Williams is much more forceful and convincing when the hunt is on. Whether that hunt involves the Great White tracking down humans or humans tracking down the Great White seems not to matter: He's gleeful either way.

THE GODFATHER PART II (1974)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

MCA MCAD-10232

Performance ★★★

Sound Quality ★★★

Fellini favorite Nino Rota graced Francis Ford Coppola's sequel with more powerful but lonely music. Rota's old world tunes are weighted down by a deep melancholia, even during domestic scenes. It's brilliant and memorable, just like his work on *The Godfather*. But the CD contains only about 20 minutes of his work—the rest is incidental music by Carmine Coppola and some Italian songs. Surely more could be gleaned from a movie more than three hours long.

THE WAY WE WERE (1973)

Original Soundtrack

COLUMBIA CK 57381

Performance ★

Sound Quality ★★★★

Barbra Streisand is luminous on the title track, but that song is available elsewhere. The rest is nondescript big band takes on standards

like "In the Mood" and syrupy Marvin Hamlisch variations on the central theme. Streisand reappears briefly when "The Way We Were" is reprised in the finale. It's hardly worth the wait.

LIMELIGHT (1972)

Charlie!—Music from the Classic Films of Charlie Chaplin

SILVA AMERICA SSD 1021

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

Complete scores are always preferable to compilations such as this. But so little of Chaplin's music is available on CD and this is so well done that it seems churlish to quibble. There's a suite from *Modern Times*, several tracks from *Monsieur Verdoux* and *A King in New York*, and individual cuts from other films. *Limelight* is represented by "Eternally," a brashly sentimental tune of the sort that Chaplin had a gift for. (This CD doesn't reproduce the scores. The works are newly orchestrated treatments and sometimes drift far afield from the source.)

LOVE STORY (1970)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

MCA MCAD-27017

Performance ★

Sound Quality ★★★

Composer Francis Lai struck gold—and apparently exhausted his musical imagination—with "Theme From Love Story," an overripe number repeated endlessly on piano, harpsichord, and strings. There are two very bad tracks in which a singer wordlessly vocalizes over strumming guitars, with "Snow Frolic" edging out "I Love You, Phil" for the silliness award. And "Skating in Central Park" sounds unnervingly nondescript. If you seem to recall a piece or two that wasn't nearly that bad, it's probably the Mozart or Bach thrown in for good measure.

BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID (1969)

Music from the Film

A & M CD 3159

Performance ★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

This Burt Bacharach CD comes in at under 30 minutes and sounds appropriately thin. "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" is pleasant, and other tracks such as "The Sundance Kid" do have a mild tunefulness, but that's the total of nice things to say about the disc.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE (1967)

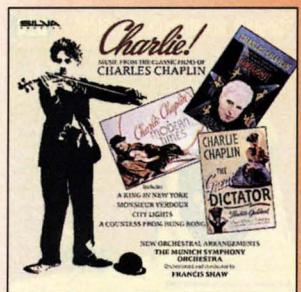
Original Soundtrack

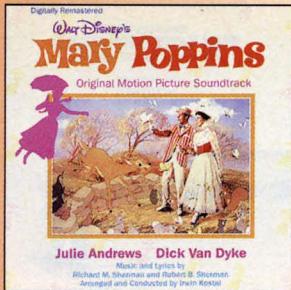
MCA MCAD-10662

Performance ★

Sound Quality ★★★

Thoroughly mediocre, actually, and as worthless as a musical with Julie Andrews and Carol





Channing can be. Two new numbers written for the film—the title track and “The Tapioca”—are without interest. And everyone sounds a bit distracted.

DOCTOR ZHIVAGO (1965)

Original MGM Soundtrack

CBS SPECIAL PRODUCTS AK 45437

Performance ★★

Sound Quality ★★



Far from the best work of David Lean or Maurice Jarre, naturally *Doctor Zhivago* became one of their biggest hits. “Lara’s Theme” is repeated over and over to no great effect and the gloomy male chorus in “Revolution” and elsewhere sounds muddy and unconvincing. Even the use of ethnic instruments sounds merely like an accent, rather than an organic part of the score as it does on Jarre’s *Lawrence of Arabia* and *The Man Who Would Be King*.

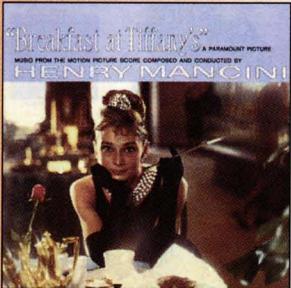
MARY POPPINS (1964)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

WALT DISNEY 60842-2

Performance ★★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★



Aspoonful of Sugar,” “Chim Chim Cher-ee,” and “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.” They’re all well-known and Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke perform them with a witty self-awareness. None of this is surprising. What is surprising is the high quality of the other tunes. “Sister Suffragette” and “Fidelity Fiduciary Bank” are clever little gems, with “The Perfect Nanny” not far behind. The movie may be dated, but the songs, virtually all of them, are timeless.

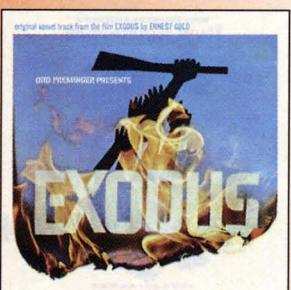
LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (1962)

Original Soundtrack

VARESE SARABANDE VSD-5263

Performance ★★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★★



Here is Maurice Jarre in all his glory, combining synthesizers and unusual instruments like the darbuka with a full orchestra to give himself access to an ever-widening palette. With it, Jarre manages to convey the inner struggle of Lawrence, a struggle never fully articulated in the movie’s action. Thoughtful, intelligent, but above all dynamic and exciting, the score is a complete triumph.

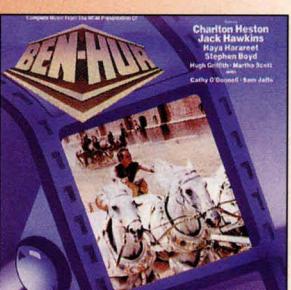
BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S (1961)

Music from the Motion Picture Score

RCA 2362-2-R

Performance ★★★

Sound Quality ★★★



While not nearly as epochal as his work on *Peter Gunn* several years earlier, Henry Mancini’s jazz stylings have a finger-snapping, hep cat quality that can’t be denied. Even the dated use of background singers adds to the charm. “Moon River” stands alone, of course, though it would be given far more definite treatment elsewhere.



EXODUS (1960)
Original Soundtrack

RCA 1058-2-R

Performance ★★

Sound Quality ★

This isn’t a review of the score for *Exodus*. It’s a review of the music presented on this CD which, incidentally, serves as a paradigm for a botched job. Individual cuts are clearly truncated, almost stopping in mid note at several points. Why? The movie was about three-and-a-half hours long, so there certainly was no shortage of cues. The sound also is terrible: thin, harsh, and accompanied by a loud hiss. Composer Ernest Gold might well have composed a good or even great piece. From this disc, it’s impossible to tell.

BEN-HUR (1959)

Complete Music from the Film

SONY SPECIAL PRODUCTS AK 47021

Performance ★★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★★

As sprawling achievement by Miklos Rozsa that quotes liberally from his entire career, summing up and crowning it in one dramatic act. Since he was a great composer and reportedly had an astonishing 18 months to work on the music, one would expect no less. Singling out individual cuts, however distinctive, would be misleading: *Ben-Hur* is a singular work in the grand tradition, building upon and commenting on itself to achieve its emotional power.

THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA (1958)

Original Soundtrack

SONY SRCS 7077

Performance ★★

Sound Quality ★★★★★

The disc features some nice, quiet moments and lovely writing for strings by Dimitri Tiomkin, but the overall effect is uncompelling. This is just a score and, like the movie, it’s all surface—competently done but never piercing to the heart of the matter.

THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI (1957)

Original Soundtrack

SONY SRCS 7072

Performance ★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

When the Academy Award went to composer Malcolm Arnold, the people who honored him were probably whistling the “Colonel Bogey” march, the one melody everyone who saw the movie remembers. However, it was written by Kenneth J. Alford (who also contributed a fine march to *Lawrence of Arabia*) and performed by Mitch Miller and His Orchestra. Arnold, who composed and conducted the rest, did a merely serviceable job on the music and—one presumes—quietly took home the Oscar before anyone could change his or her mind.



AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS (1956)

Music from the Soundtrack

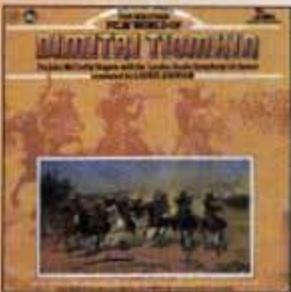
MCA MCAD-31134

Performance ★

Sound Quality ★★★



Relentlessly cheerful and banal. Listening to it, you feel as if you've been put on hold by some particularly demonic operator. Or perhaps you're at an amusement park and your ride is stalled and soon a comforting voice will come over the loudspeaker and provide information. Or maybe you're listening to a commercial ("Fly United!" "Smoke Lucky Strikes!") or stuck in an elevator or doing anything but listening to music. Victor Young's central theme did, however, provide the basis for a good ballad ("Around the World") essayed by Frank Sinatra and others.



HIGH NOON (1952)

Western Film World of Dimitri Tiomkin

UNICORN-KANCHANA UKCD2011

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★★



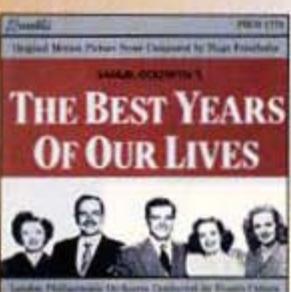
A PLACE IN THE SUN (1951) SUNSET BOULEVARD (1950)

*Sunset Boulevard—Classic Film Scores
of Franz Waxman*

RCA VICTOR 0708-2-RG

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★



Like many of the composers of the golden era of movie music, Franz Waxman had the opportunity to explore many different genres. From the landmark music he wrote for *The Bride of Frankenstein* to the refreshing work on the costume adventure *Prince Valiant*, Waxman revealed an unflagging taste for experimentation and high drama. *A Place in the Sun* is featured in an extended suite more than eight minutes long with some memorable writing for strings and a keening alto saxophone. Waxman's masterful work on *Sunset Boulevard*, the cynical tale of an aging movie queen, is excerpted in a near eight minute suite. Along with "Main Title," "Norma Desmond," and "The Studio Stroll," it contains the mockingly triumphant sounds of "The Comeback: Norma as Salome." This cruel, grand finale—in which Desmond is being taken away for questioning in the murder of her gigolo but believes she is acting in a new film—echoes the melodramatic style of the movies she once appeared in. Chilling.



THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES (1946)

Motion Picture Score

PREAMBLE PRCD 1779

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★

This was only Hugo Friedhofer's second major score, but it's a model of refined taste and subtle orchestration. One particular highlight of this study of soldiers returning from World War II is "The Citation; Graveyard & Bombers." One character, sitting in the shell of a plane at a junk yard, relives the terrible battle that's been haunting his dreams. Others might have merely highlighted the tortured psyche of the hero; Friedhofer reenacts the battle musically with brief staccato bursts of sound. We face the reality—however indirectly—of what he went through.

SPELLBOUND (1945)

A History of Hitchcock—Dial M For Murder

SILVA AMERICA SSD 1030

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

Hitchcock employed top-notch composers for a string of movies that focused on intrigue and suspense. So this compilation from 12 different scores hangs together quite well. Miklos Rozsa's *Spellbound* is featured in a 10-minute concerto for orchestra adapted by him. It contains the central love theme as well as the music used during the dream sequence—a Salvador Dali-designed scene that was daringly modern at the time, but hopelessly dated now. Happily, the score holds up better.

NOW, VOYAGER (1942)

Classic Film Scores for Bette Davis

RCA 0183-2-RG

Performance ★★★★

Sound Quality ★★★★

It's an interesting premise: A great actor will inspire composers to new heights and, through the power of his or her personality, perhaps even draw out similar work from a variety of different artists. Hence an album of movie music devoted to a star. Whether there is a "Bette Davis sound" hardly matters. But the music does. Much of it comes from the venerable Max Steiner, including *Now, Voyager*. It's a brief cut limning the bittersweet love theme with florid conviction.

PINOCCHIO (1940)

Motion Picture Soundtrack

WALT DISNEY 60845-2

Performance ★★

Sound Quality ★★★

This admirably complete presentation can boast of the perennial standard "When You Wish You Upon a Star" and little else. After the eerie intro to "The Blue Fairy" and the genuinely moving "Desolation Theme," there simply isn't much to dwell upon.

WIZARD OF OZ (1939)

Original Cast Album

CBS SPECIAL PRODUCTS AK 45356

Performance ★★★★☆

Sound Quality ★★★★

Including dialogue on a soundtrack generally is a terrible idea, but every rule has its exception. Here, so much dialogue is included that it turns this CD into a virtual radio play. As such, it is a complete success. Even someone unfamiliar with the story—if there is someone—would have no trouble following the basic plot. And the songs are among the most engaging ever written directly for the screen.

ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD (1938)

Motion Picture Score

VARESE SARABANDE VCD 47202

Performance ★★★★☆

Sound Quality ★★★★☆

By drawing so well upon the operatic use of motifs for individual characters, Erich Wolfgang Korngold helped shape the art of movie music. In the process, he created classics that few would ever equal. *Robin Hood's* signature trumpet melody and the other central themes are brilliantly reconfigured in scene after scene of endless, wonderful action. Korngold achieved the ultimate goal of a composer: His music stands triumphantly on its own, but it's impossible to imagine the movie with any other accompaniment.

ANTHONY ADVERSE (1936)

Motion Picture Score

VARESE SARABANDE VSD-5285

Performance ★★★★☆

Sound Quality ★★★★☆

Since few people have actually seen the movie it was written for, this is an excellent chance to hear a thoughtful, intelligent score unencumbered by a film's images. Korngold's work has all the traditional attributes of movie music: brief melodic ideas that are repeated and varied, abrupt swings in tempo that pass as quickly as they arrive, and an unabashed love of drama. The charms of a score are idiosyncratic, to be sure, but no less valid for it.

ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING SCORES NOT AVAILABLE ON CD

Summer of '42 (1971), *The Lion in Winter* (1968), *Born Free* (1966), *Tom Jones* (1963), *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), *The High and the Mighty* (1954), *Lili* (1953), *The Heiress* (1949), *The Red Shoes* (1948), *A Double Life* (1947), *Since You Went Away* (1944), *The Song of Bernadette* (1943), *All That Money Can Buy* (1941), *One Hundred Men and a Girl* (1937), *The Informer* (1935), *One Night of Love* (1934)

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