

Classical restraint as a result. That is a matter of personal taste; this Mozart works both ways. The string playing is just what one would expect of three-quarters of the Guarneris: rich in tone, and mutually supportive. **E.C.**

**MICHAEL NESMITH**  
Live at the Palais; The Wichita Train  
Whistle Sings (*Pacific Arts*)

After listening to the cheering, screaming audience at this performance in Victoria, Australia last year, one wonders why we aren't hearing more about—or from—Nesmith back here. He was recording country-rock back before there was a name for it, and has written songs that have been done to death by others; without "Different Drum," where would Linda Ronstadt be right now? (Still in the pigpen?). The "Live" album is basically a collection of Nesmith's greatest hits, or at least his best-known numbers with the exception of "Drum," which isn't here. "Joanne," "Silver Moon," and "Some of Shelly's Blues" are, though, plus a rocking version of "Nadine" that ranks among the best covers of Chuck Berry material ever. The backup group includes drummer John Ware, who worked with Nesmith before joining Emmylou Harris' Hot Band; bassist David MacKay; pianist James Trumbo; and Al Perkins, who simply sizzles on electric 6-string and steel guitar. Sound quality is a bit strange, with the room's echo captured all too well on tape

and Nesmith's voice sounding a bit distant: this is why most acts heavily overdub on so-called live albums. It's to Nesmith's credit that he kept that to a minimum (he explains where and why in the liner notes), but the sound might be a bit disconcerting at first. The performances more than compensate.

In 1967, Nesmith and arranger Shorty Rogers collaborated on an instrumental album fusing big-band jazz and country styles, with strings, horns, and soloists including guitarist James Burton, steel guitarist Red Rhodes, and banjoist Doug Dillard. It's still ahead of its time, and available for the first time in ten years. **Del Porter**

**ORIGINAL CAST**

The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas  
(*MCA*)

This album gives you a taste of why the Broadway musical tale of tail on the trail is such a hit. Carol Hall's songs, like the raucous "24 Fans," the wistful "The Bus from Amarillo," and the hard-bitten but hopeful "No Lies," are often delightful. The recorded performances are exuberant and contagious, radiating a joy that makes the sexual goings-on seem just as nice and normal as the barn-building scene in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*.

But what, exactly, is going on here? Aha! Funny you should ask! Nobody's telling—at least, not the record company. The double-

fold album, "generously" housing just one disc, has no plot synopsis, no lyric sheet, and no accounting of who sings what. Who is doing that marvelous wailing on "24 Hours of Loving?" Gol-lee, fellas, leaving that stuff out shore is dumb.

Anyhow, we can't all get to New York to see the play, but since it's "presented" by Universal Pictures, there'll be a movie of this 'un as sure as the sun sets in the West. Meanwhile, enjoy the record. **A.F.**

**MIKLOS ROZSA**

"The Thief of Bagdad";

**ELMER BERNSTEIN**

"To Kill a Mockingbird." Elmer Bernstein conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. (*Warner Bros.*)

Film scores are an incidental art form, or a craft perhaps, like pottery or weaving. They may be beautiful, or exciting, or anything else, but first and foremost, they are meant for practical use, to heighten the mood on screen.

Stripped of the moving pictures they are meant to accompany—pictures which either make one forget they are listening to music at all, or too conscious of the self-effacing accompaniment—too many film scores end up as so much musical doodling.

There are exceptions and exceptional composers such as Bernard Herrman, Erich Korngold and Bronislaw Kaper, but the

significance of the creator is probably indicated by the Schwann catalog, which lists films by title but doesn't credit the composer at all.

Such anonymity is the film composer's lot, and that may be one reason so many of them adopted musical disguises. The Bernstein of "Mockingbird" is Aaron Copland, The Rozsa of "Thief" is Delius or Griffes.

It is all too predictable. Copland first wrote "folksy" American music for films. Bernstein signs to write (quickly, no doubt) music for a "folksy" picture. The result: derivative Copland.

One can just imagine the producer of *The Thief of Bagdad* telling Rozsa, an accomplished concert hall veteran, "I got this Arabian nights picture due out in six weeks. Write me something exotic, a little belly dance music, and make it good." So Rozsa gives Alexander Korda what Korda and the audience expect, pockets the check, and goes back to writing the "serious" music which orchestras won't play because he is, after all, a film composer. Well, the family has to eat.

Not all film music is weak, or ersatz. Bernstein himself produced at least one extraordinary score, *The Man with the Golden Arm*. Rozsa did *Spellbound* and *Julius Caesar*, to name two that come to mind easily.

But these two efforts are not of that high musical standard. They remain recordings, well performed to be sure, for film or nostalgia buffs. **E.C.**

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