

Career

James Lee was an actor who never quite got the breaks he needed to become successful, so he turned to writing. His play about the hard-knock life of an actor, *Career*, opened in 1957 to rave reviews off-Broadway, where it had a yearlong run. The rights to the play were snapped up by Paramount Pictures and in 1959 Paramount brought *Career* to the screen with a terrific cast including Dean Martin, Anthony Franciosa, Shirley MacLaine, Carolyn Jones, Joan Blackman, and Robert Middle-ton. The film was directed by Joseph Anthony, who was a successful theater director and an expert at turning plays into films – prior to *Career* he'd already done two for Paramount: *The Rainmaker* and *The Matchmaker*.

Career follows idealistic and hungry young actor Sam Lawson (Anthony Franciosa), who leaves his hometown girlfriend in Lansing, Michigan, so he can go to New York to seek fame as an actor. But like so many who make that pilgrimage, he can't seem to get any kind of a break. He meets Maury Novak (Dean Martin), a director who is trying to run a theater in the pit of Greenwich Village, a grass roots theater that does liberal plays considered by some to be subversive. (Novak eventually finds success in Hollywood as a director, until his association with his old theater causes him to be blacklisted.) Along the way, Lawson's girl, Barbara (Joan Blackman), comes to New York and they marry. Novak is involved with Sharon Kensington (Shirley MacLaine), the alcoholic daughter of a big New York producer (Robert Middle-ton).

Through the ups and downs (mostly downs) of trying to eke out a career, Lawson loses his wife. His agent (Car-

olyn Jones) keeps trying to get him employed, but despite a year touring in a play, nothing happens for him. On the eve of a job, he gets called up by the Army Reserves and has to go to Korea. When he gets back he finds some work and is about to be signed for a TV gig when he, too, suffers from the blacklist thanks to his involvement in the old Greenwich Village theater. He becomes a waiter and things continue to look bleak until Novak calls him to do a new play off-Broadway. Reluctantly, Lawson agrees; the play is a smash and moves to Broadway, and Lawson finally finds his success and his career. Just before he goes on stage, his agent asks him, "Was it worth it?" He pauses and gives his answer: "Yes, it was worth it."

Thanks to writer Lee's years trying to make it as an actor, there is a lot of verisimilitude in the film. Franciosa gives a searing and brilliant performance as Lawson – it's almost painful to watch as his character gets beaten down again and again. Martin is terrific in his dramatic role; charming one minute, nasty the next. MacLaine is also terrific as the alcoholic producer's daughter who has caused the downfall of many a man – there's a running gag that the last guy she was with became a hairdresser. Carolyn Jones is heartbreaking as the agent, and Joan Blackman is fetching and touching as Franciosa's wife, who can't take the kind of life that goes along with being married to a struggling actor.

The film was a success with audiences and critics, and received three Academy Award nominations – Best Art Direction (Hal Pereira, Walter H. Tyler, Samuel M. Comer, Arthur Krams), Best Cinematography (Joseph LaShelle), and Best Costume Design (Edith Head). But the film shines in every department,

none more so than with its dynamic score by Franz Waxman.

From the exciting opening chords that lead directly into the big city theme, the score is absolutely thrilling. It is the kind of dramatic scoring that Waxman did so brilliantly. He gets inside the drama and the characters – the yearning, the hunger, the nastiness, the competitiveness, the romance, the first taste of success, the bitter taste of failure after failure – it's brilliant music from start to finish. By the time of *Career*, Waxman's own career was filled with masterpiece after masterpiece – the 1950s alone brought forth *Sunset Blvd.*, *My Cousin Rachel*, *A Place in the Sun*, *Prince Valiant*, *Demetrius and the Gladiators*, *Rear Window*, *The Silver Chalice*, *Mister Roberts*, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, *Sayonara*, *Peyton Place*, and *The Nun's Story* – to name just a few. During his long and distinguished career, he was nominated for twelve Oscars and took home the prize twice, for *Sunset Blvd.* and *A Place in the Sun*. He had a unique musical voice and will forever hold a high place in the pantheon of great film composers.

Waxman's score for *Career* is presented here complete and in stereo from the original session tapes housed in the Paramount vaults. We've included several bonus cues that appear in the film, including the source music song "(Love Is a) Career" by Sammy Cahn and James Van Heusen, and a little dance music cue composed by Gus Levene.

It's always thrilling to be able to bring an unreleased Franz Waxman score to CD, especially one as dynamic and beautiful as *Career*.

— Bruce Kimmel