

# Very Very Special Special Edition of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

## FANTASMAGORICAL!

What's really fantasmagorical is that the man who gave the world its most well known spy, the one and only James Bond, also gave the world its most delightful magical car, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (a classic Ian Fleming title if ever there was one). Fleming wrote the children's book for his son, Caspar. It was published in the UK in 1964 by Fleming's usual Bond publisher Jonathan Cape. The book came in three short, separate volumes and had illustrations by John Burningham. Random House picked it up for publication in the US, combining its three volumes into one. Four years later, Albert R. Broccoli, co-producer of the Bond films, produced a lavish musical film version, starring Dick Van Dyke as inventor Caractacus Potts, Sally Ann Howes as Truly Scrumptious (the part was originally offered to Julie Andrews, who turned it down because she felt it was too close to *Mary Poppins*), and a host of fine character actors – Lionel Jeffries, Benny Hill, Gert Frobe (Goldfinger himself), Robert Helpmann, Anna Quayle, Desmond Llewelyn (another Bond regular, Q), along with Adrian Hall and Heather Ripley as Caractacus' children, Jeremy and Jemima.

The screenplay was by another wonderful, fanciful author, Roald Dahl (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *James and the Giant Peach*), and Ken Hughes (with additional dialogue by Richard Maibaum). Hughes also directed the film. It was, for its time, very big budget (over ten million dollars), shot in 70mm by cameraman Christopher Challis, with great production design by Bond regular Ken Adam. The energetic choreography was by Marc Breau and Dee Dee Wood, who'd done the same for *Mary Poppins*. And for the film's most important element, its score, the tuneful, incredibly catchy songs were by the team of Richard M. Sherman and Robert B. Sherman, also of *Mary Poppins* fame, with all the musical elements brought together by the brilliant Irwin Kostal. With all that talent in front of and behind the camera, how could the film be anything but a smash hit?

Except it wasn't. Despite having all those elements, the era of the big budget super-musical was coming to an end. The 1960s had several blockbuster musical films, including *West Side Story*, *Mary Poppins*, and *The Sound Of Music* and the latter had already become one of the largest gross-

ing films in history. But then came *Camelot*, *Sweet Charity*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *The Happiest Millionaire* (by the Sherman Brothers), *Hello, Dolly!*, *Star!*, *Doctor Dolittle*, *Darling Lili*, *Song Of Norway* – well, you get the idea. Audience tastes were changing drastically, and the era of the road show musical extravaganza was almost at an end – it would struggle into the 1970s when *Lost Horizon* would just about put the final nail in the coffin.

But, as sometimes happens, time has a way of righting wrongs and that's what happened here – children who saw and were enamored of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* kept their memories of the film alive until TV and then home video brought it to new generations. And since tastes of audiences don't really matter with home video, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* found its audience and became a beloved classic – had it come out five years before it did, it would have become a beloved classic right then and there.

The film garnered mixed reviews, but Renata Adler, writing in the *New York Times*, wrote "...a fast, dense, friendly children's musical" and called the screenplay "remarkably good." The film was nominated for only one Oscar – the title song. But to show just how popular that magical car is – the original *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* motorcar from the film sold at auction for \$805,000.

The film's popularity grew so much that in 2002 a stage version opened in London at the London Palladium. The score had the film songs plus some additional songs also written by the Sherman Brothers. It became a very big success, running three years, after which it came to Broadway, where it did not fare quite as well, although it did garner five Tony nominations. The show toured the UK for several years.

While *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* is a most magical car, the most magical thing in the film is, in fact, not the car but the songs by the Sherman Brothers. Richard M. and Robert B. had been writing for years at Disney, where they'd given the world one delightfully catchy song after another and then delivered their brilliant song score for *Mary Poppins*. They had a habit of being able to write a tune that was instantly hummable, tunes you simply could not get out of your head (if I said the words "It's A Small World" right now, you'd instantly be singing it, so recognizable is its tune). And so it was with

their songs for *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. The title song is one of those can't get it out of your head things that they did so effortlessly, but the film is awash in great, tuneful songs, including "Truly Scrumptious," "Toot Sweets," "Me Ol' Bamboo," and the haunting "Hushabye Mountain" one of their most stunningly beautiful creations. They don't write 'em like that anymore, and that is not a good thing.

The Sherman Brothers have done it all – from iconic rock-and-roll ("You're Sixteen, You're Beautiful, and You're Mine"), to their hugely popular "It's A Small World," and their song scores for *Mary Poppins*, *The Jungle Book*, *The Happiest Millionaire* and others, as well as Broadway with *Over Here*. And, of course, *Mary Poppins* is still playing on Broadway at the time of this writing. In fact, I'm quite certain there is a Sherman Brothers song being played or sung somewhere in the world at just about any given moment.

*Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* was originally released on LP on United Artists Records (the film was distributed by UA). As was usual back then, songs were truncated, the mixes were occasionally weird, and no underscore was used. There have been two previous CD releases – one on Ryko, who added dialogue snippets throughout the album, and then on Varese Sarabande (who omitted the dialogue snippets but basically used the Ryko master). For our Very Very Special Special edition, we went back to the first generation album master – there was, of course, no way to change the mix or the generous amount of reverb used, but our masterful mastering engineer, James Nelson, has worked as much magic as humanly possible to optimize the sound present on those original album masters. We've also included the film's "Entr'Acte," the original "Main Title" (much longer than the album version – presented here with sound effects, which are actually fun and sort of go with the music), and the film mix of the "Exit Music." Following that, we give you the complete Song and Picture Book album, released concurrently with the soundtrack, and which features Richard M. Sherman himself singing, along with other vocalists, all conducted by Leroy Holmes. On CD 2, we're very pleased to present all the film's demo recordings by Richard Sherman. Finally, we had access to all of the playback tracks used during filming. These were all in mono and not that great sounding,

but we've included several of them because they were material not included on the original album. These include another version of the title song (with quite a long instrumental), an instrumental called "The Hungarian Anthem," an instrumental of the "Chu-Chi Face" waltz, and a bit of the "Doll On A Music Box" not included on the original LP. Again, the sound on the playback tapes had distortion and not optimal sound, and mixes that were prepared specifically to be lip-synched to on set. But we thought they were of enough historical importance to include them.

## MEETING RICHARD M. SHERMAN

One day in the late 1990s, I was sitting in my office at Varese Sarabande (where I was running my own division of the company, mostly doing Broadway musical albums – cast recordings, singers, concept albums, a little jazz, and the occasional film music original recording) when the phone rang. It was a gal I'd met recently, a fan of my albums – she worked at Borders and told me that Richard Sherman had come in and bought an album I'd produced of *Cinderella* – telling the story using songs from all different musical versions of the tale, including Disney, a Brit musical, the Rodgers and Hammerstein version and others, and, of course, several great songs from the Sherman Brothers' *The Slipper and the Rose*. Well, he came back raving about the album, its production, its singers, and its arrangements (which I'd done along with musical director Todd Ellison). He wanted to meet me. Say what? I was so thrilled I couldn't even contain myself because I'd fallen in love with the Sherman Brothers back in 1961, when I'd lost my heart to Hayley Mills and Hayley Mills in *The Parent Trap*, which had songs by the Sherman Brothers – songs which I was absolutely nutty about, so nutty that I snuck a portable tape recorder into the Vogue Theater in Hollywood (in the days when portable battery-operated reel-to-reel tape recorders were quite rare) so I could play the songs over and over and over again – "Let's Get Together," the title song, and the gorgeous "For Now, For Always."

And so, Richard Sherman showed up at the office and I met one of the warmest, most genuine, wonderful men it's ever been my pleasure to spend time with. We got along beautifully – he was so complimentary about the album and especially what we'd done with the Sherman Brothers material, and I suppose I gushed about how much I loved their music and lyrics – hell, I proba-

bly drooled for all I know. Over the next couple of years we stayed in touch and I got the idea that I wanted to do a Sherman Brothers album, using my stellar array of musical theater singers. From the time I thought of it, to the time when I did it, my work at Varese had come to an end, and I'd started a new label of my own. About a year into that new label, we were in the studio recording. Richard was there, of course, and so happy with what he was hearing. I'd had a great time doing the arrangements (again with Todd Ellison), and we had great singers, some of whom recorded in LA and some in NY. We had a great orchestra and the whole thing was just one of the most pleasurable sessions I've ever had.

Unfortunately, for reasons that I don't really need to go into, the people with whom I'd gone into business and I came to a parting of the ways. The Sherman Brothers Album hadn't been mixed yet and I offered to finish it for free, just to make sure it was good. But, it was not to be, and the "person" who did finish it was completely inept – in fact, he left half the orchestra tracks out of the mix. The mind boggles. But even though that didn't come to a happy conclusion, my friendship with Richard endured. And everything was put to rights when we did a live evening of the album and its arrangements at one of our Kritzerland monthly concerts we do here in LA. And I have to say that the Sherman Brothers evening was the best-attended show we've done – in fact, it was packed to the rafters and the room could not hold one more person. It was actually the first time I'd ever seen people turned away at this particular club.

Why? Because everyone loves the Sherman Brothers. It's really as simple as that. There was a whole contingent of folks from Disney, and Richard and his beautiful wife Elizabeth were there – the icing on the cake was when Richard got up and played and sang "Feed The Birds." It was a magical night and one I'll never forget.

And so, here are the enduring classic songs from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, by the enduring and classic Sherman Brothers.

— Bruce Kimmel

## A NOTE FROM RICHARD M. SHERMAN

It all began with an act of love on the part of Ian Fleming. He wrote a little book about a magical flying car for his young son. This book, along with the entire 007 James Bond catalog, was purchased by mega-producer Cubby Broccoli, who had produced a string of hit James Bond films and wanted to continue the franchise. The little book *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* had nothing to do with James Bond, but it intrigued Cubby Broccoli. He saw great possibilities in the basic premise. He asked famed writer Roald Dahl to broaden and flesh out the narrative, and what emerged from Roald's fertile brain is what the world now knows and loves.

Fresh from the success of *Mary Poppins*, my brother Bob and I were invited to join the team and create words and music to musicalize the script. To say it was a joy and inspiration to write the song-score for this film would be a vast understatement. Not only were we inspired by the characters and situations, we were also inspired by the wonderful people we were working with all through the process.

I'll never forget the night I first demonstrated a few of the songs Bob and I had completed. Cubby and his wife Dana were at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. We hunted and hunted all around the hotel to find a piano. Finally, in a vast abandoned ballroom, under a black cloth, was a Steinway. I played the title song, "Hushabye Mountain," "Truly Scrumptious" (I love that name), and "Lovely, Lonely Man." When I was through they both had tears in their eyes they were so happy. That night we really forged a bond that has lasted through the decades. Dana and Cubby are both gone now, but two of their children, Barbara and Michael, continue to produce fabulous 007 films, and, in 2002, they produced (with Dana before her passing) the spectacular stage adaptation of *CCBB*, for which Bob and I added several new songs and additional lyrics. The show broke all existing records in its over four-year run at the London Palladium alone. It was always a labor of love with us, just as it was with Ian Fleming. You might say the Shermans, the Broccolis, and Ian Fleming formed a very special Bond.