

A Man and a Woman

Is there a person anywhere in the world who was around in the 1960s and 1970s who could not instantly recognize the theme from *A Man and a Woman*? Doubtful, unless you were living under a rock in a cave in Siberia, and even then you'd probably have heard it. In fact, it became one of the most beloved movie themes ever written almost instantly. It was the right theme from the right film at the right time. Upon its release in 1966, *A Man and a Woman* became a sensation everywhere it played. It became the film to see for anyone who considered that they had a romantic bone in his or her body. The soundtrack recording was as popular as the film, so popular, in fact, that a second soundtrack album was released with the lyrics in English (sung by the same singers as the original French). The film was fresh, unique, and beguiling, and so was its score by Francis Lai. It was the perfect marriage of image and music.

Claude Lelouch had been kicking around for a few years to no success whatsoever. In reviewing Lelouch's first film, *Le Propre de l'Homme*, *Cahiers du Cinema* said, "Claude Lelouch, remember this name well, because you will not hear it again." Oops. Beginning with *A Man and a Woman*, Lelouch would become a wildly prolific filmmaker – at this point in time he's made over fifty films and he's still going strong. His work is always idiosyncratic, and unmistakably Lelouch. *A Man and a Woman* was

a very influential film, and there were many imitators who followed suit, none achieving anywhere near the success of what they were imitating. It wasn't only other movies it inspired – it was commercials, other film scores, print ads, etc.

The movie is simple and direct, stylish (in both black-and-white and color), haunting, beautiful, romantic, touching, and it's almost impossible not to be caught up in its spell. It's basically the story of two people whose spouses have died. They meet at their children's school and begin a romance. What Lelouch does with that simple story is, of course, the film. Anouk Aimee and Jean-Louis Trintignant are perfect as two people trying to come together.

The huge success of the film resulted in several Oscar nominations, including Best Foreign Language Film, Best Writing, Story and Screenplay – Written Directly for the Screen, Best Actress, and Best Director. It would win for Best Foreign Language film and for its screenplay. Shockingly, the score by Francis Lai was not even nominated, and neither were any of its songs, but it was a very strong year for film music – the nominated scores that year were *Born Free* (which won), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *The Bible*, *Hawaii*, and *The Sand Pebbles*, all excellent scores. But Francis Lai's score is right up there with them and it has endured as a classic since the day it was issued.

A Man and a Woman was only Lai's third film score, but it put him on the map and he has not stopped working since, and that includes scoring close to thirty films for director Lelouch. Just a few short years later, in 1970, Lai would win the Oscar for Best Score for *Love Story*. His music for *A Man and a Woman* speaks for itself – the melodies are stunningly beautiful. Part and parcel of the score are the wonderful vocals of Pierre Barouh and Nicole Croisille, along with Barouh's lyrics. The score and songs have been loved by lovers all over the world and with good reason – this is simply some of the most romantic and heartfelt music ever.

A Man and a Woman was originally issued on a United Artists LP. There have been three previous CD issues of the French version – two imports from Europe and a stateside release by DRG. However, all three were issued from sources many generations away from the original album masters, and, shockingly, all three were in mono. We are pleased to finally present the first authentic presentation of *A Man and a Woman* on CD – in stereo from the original album masters housed in the MGM vaults. It's such a pleasure to hear the score as it was meant to be heard.

— Bruce Kimmel