

Nowhere Boy Notes

Notes on the Soundtrack

We were drawn to the soundtrack for 'Nowhere Boy' when we saw how good the film was. Sounds obvious, but it all begins and ends there. Selling a soundtrack off the back of a hit film gives you no guarantees of a hit record, but selling one off the back of a poor film is near impossible. The film captures the late fifties perfectly, and contains beautifully crafted performances from a talented British cast.

What I liked about the music Ian, and his team put together for the film is that it has a very definite sense of time & place. From a commercial point of view it also has coherence, and feels like a complete album that people will (hopefully) want to own, rather than just a series of random tracks that might be downloaded individually. The goal is get the cinema-goer to leave the auditorium wanting to own the music, and also to sell the album as the perfect entry point into Fifties Rock & Roll.

Nowhere Boy is a domestic story, but one that has music at its heart. We see John slowly learning to play the banjo and the guitar, and then go on to form The Quarrymen. It's a fascinating glimpse into the beginning of The Beatles' story, and it's told in a fresh and vibrant way. We see the band's first tentative steps towards live performance, and then see them record their debut 7". The soundtrack has original songs from the era by artists such as Elvis, Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Jerry Lee Lewis – all these amazing records that were making their way across the Atlantic, that sounded so much more exciting and 'dangerous' than the rather staid British music scene. The album also has the 'Nowhere Boys' songs that were performed and recorded especially for the film. Aaron Johnson, who stars as John Lennon actually sings and plays on the tracks, alongside session musicians who made the new tracks sound as authentic as possible (and recorded in mono!) These 'new' tracks give us something unique for the album, as it will be the only place to hear them.

It feels like the stars are in alignment for this project. It comes off the back of a major new push for The Beatles, with the re-masters and the Rock Band game, and also coincides with celebrations for what would have been the 75th birthday of Elvis in January 2010. My job is to leverage those angles, and to get people to join the dots between the film, and the album.

The album is 2CDs (or a 36 track download) 'Side 1' is the original soundtrack, so all the major music cues from the film. 'Side 2' is presented as 'music inspired by' – and is some of the songs John was listening to during that period. We did this so that the package is compelling, but also to add context to the soundtrack. For many people (under 60) seeing the film, these songs may be unfamiliar. We love the idea that this album may be a jumping off point - where people go on to discover more about this incredible period in music.

Enjoy the film (and the album!)

Haydn Williams

Sony Music UK

A Word From The Man Behind The Soundtrack

I was the music supervisor on the film *Nowhere Boy*. I got involved in this film at script stage where I was asked to assess the music written into the script and to give it a creative and financial overview.

When we entered the pre-production stage, the music was fundamental to a number of scenes. These are where actors would perform songs to pre-recorded tracks - which I had a music producer and musicians record prior to the film shooting.

These tunes were chosen primarily by the scriptwriter based on factual information about the songs The Quarrymen played at the time. However, costs and approvals mean that certain songs had to be changed and so tracks like *That's Alright Mama*, & *Movin'* and *Groovin'* which ended up in the film were replacements that I suggested.

The trick with the pre-recorded tracks was to have our band look like they were playing them live. Our actors learnt to play all their musical parts to perfection and our lead actor sings all the songs himself to a pre-recorded version. I brought on a music tutor who taught Aaron how to play guitar, harmonica and to sing the songs all within three months. The end results I think are great.

So then to the 'source' tracks, those being the commercial recordings. Again, some were chosen by the writer at script stage, but more for creative reasons than financial ones these got changed and so some of the songs were replaced by me. *Wild One* by Jerry Lee Lewis I pitched for one scene, but then ended up on the opening titles of the film. Elvis's version of *Shake Rattle & Roll* I chose as it was an early recording and slightly less well known, but sounded great even compared to Bill Haley's classic version. *I Put A Spell on You* was suggested by me to the director and then written into the script. The use is not based on fact, but you would not know that from the film.

So it was a collaborative affair with the writer, the director, my music producer, the film producers and myself. People all have their opinions but the goal is the same - finding the right music from the right time frame and always bearing in mind budgets and approvals have to be met. Ultimately this was one of those rare British films where music was budgeted very well. So I had the money to choose some truly great music from the world of rock 'n' roll when John Lennon was growing up.

As a lot of this music was generated from the USA, it therefore carries a higher premium, but I managed to negotiate good deals and hence you will hear some big tunes on the film, which normally one could not afford on UK movies.

Finally, a deal was struck with Sony Records to release a soundtrack album which will feature the music from the film and other songs from the time that John and Julia listened to as well as songs The Quarrymen and The Beatles went on to cover. So it is 'music inspired by' in the true sense of the meaning.

Ian Neil

Soundtrack Supervisor, *Nowhere Boy*