



KIDNAPPED is an August, 2013 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pa.

Australia 1986 Co-Producers: Roz Phillips and Tim Brooke Hunt color feature animation drama 49 minutes Burbank Films

12 of a possible 20 points

*** of a possible *****

*indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance

Points

Film Director: Geoff Collins of Studio 2

0 Film Editors: Peter Jennings and Caroline Neave

1 Camera: Gary Page and Tanya Viskich

2 Lighting

1 Screenplay: Leonard Lee adapted from the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson

1 Animators: Warwick Gilbert (Animation Director), Jamil Ahmad, Sue Beak, Patrick Burns, Bun Heang Ung, Greg Ingram, Vic Johnson, Peter Jones, Dwayne Labbe, Cynthia Leech, Neil McCann, Paul Maron, Wally Micati, Astrid Nordheim, Michael Stapleton, Maria Szemenyei and Jean Tych

1 Layouts: Glen Lovett (Supervisor), Yosh Barry, Joanne Beresford, David Cook, Neil Graham, Steve Lyons and John Martin
Background Layouts: David Skinner, Yaroslav Horak

2 Music: Mark Isaacs* and Tom Price*

1 Sound:

2 Voices Cast: Matthew Fargher (David Balfour), Tom Burlinson (Alan Breck), Scott Higgins (Ebenezer Balfour)

1 Creativity

12 total points

One hundred years before release of this animation, author Robert Louis Stevenson completed a tale of avuncular malice, avarice and murderous sadism. Sound modern? Integrating actual historical persons with fictional characters, the Scottish native created a suspenseful fictional narrative set in the period of Stewart clan resistance to English authority following the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden. It is hinged on the murder of a Campbell clan chief in 1752, an actual crime which even today is still considered an open police case. Almost certainly the man accused and hung was innocent and not even present at the location of the shooting. Stevenson fused this sensational miscarriage of justice with an autobiographical account of a teenager sold into slavery by a relative and transported to a Carolina plantation where he endured a miserable existence for seven years before ultimately returning to Great Britain and penning a book about his dreadful colonial experiences.

Ever since its publication in 1886, the Stevenson novel has attracted a massive readership due both to its immersion in historical detail, though biased and intermittently misleading, if not downright erroneous, and an overpowering atmosphere of malevolence, avarice, arrogance and betrayal. Scottish patriotism is extolled, while English belligerence and superciliousness is not only castigated, but even demonized through equation with the detestably reprehensible conduct of such professed Whigs as a sadistic tax collector identified in the book as The Red Fox and Captain Hoseason, a kind of bush league Captain Bligh and spiritual ancestor to Jack London's Wolf Larsen. While the moral codes of David Balfour and Alan Breck allow for considerable bloodshed and opportunistic prevarication, they appear almost saintly in comparison with extortionist Campbell and the Covenant's skipper. Nor is misanthropic, monstrously greedy Ebenezer, who attempts to lead nephew David into fatal ascent of a

broken and incomplete stone stairway in order to eliminate a rival claimant to fraudulently obtained inheritance, any model of adult integrity. Villains are clearly identified and anyone foiling them immediately becomes a champion of justice.

Realizing this, Burbank Films duplicate outsize personalities populating the source book, endowing them with matching viciousness, heroism and formidability in combat. Equally colorful are character voices, with the Scottish rebels being particularly notable for their burred and quaint speech. Lighting effects make extensive, highly atmospheric use of shadows, supplying enough menacing gloom in scenes set at decaying Shaws to earn the prized Gothic designation. Period details of Scottish croft and castle interiors appear to have been thoroughly researched and executed. Fashions of the era seem equally authentic in their screen representations.

Little time is wasted by the filmmakers in moving us from David's placid existence in a Lowlands village to the dangerous precinct of Ebenezer's decaying castle. Arriving at a dilapidated destination just as the sun is setting, the Balfour youth makes two further mistakes. Telling the full truth about his expected financial windfall and trusting Uncle to act in the capacity of a guardian are foolish actions which nearly prove fatal. Barely surviving to see another sunrise, David quickly blunders again, permitting his kinsman to postpone a trip to the lawyer charged with handling the Balfour estate until after a private conference with confederate Captain Hoseason, whose brig, completely misnamed COVENANT, is shortly to leave on an Atlantic crossing to the Carolinas. Ebenezer intends his nephew to leave with her, paying the eminently bribable master of the ship to insure he does. A Lowland landlubber unaccustomed to maritime shanghaiing trickery, the younger Balfour consents to a tour of the vessel. Hardly does he set foot on deck before his nemesis departs in a skiff. Awareness sets in too late as a blow on the rear of his head leads immediately to unconsciousness. Once again, the story's hero misjudges character, falling afoul of a corrupt, mercenary seaman with no qualms about abusing both crew and paying passengers.

Animation on this dvd follows Stevenson's storyline fairly closely, accurately reporting, though not showing, the brutal beating death of cabin boy Ransome at the hands of a probably drunken Shuan, Covenant's rescue of a shipwrecked Alan Brent, Hoseason's plot to overpower his guest and turn him in to Crown officials, a lethal assault on the captain's cabin by fifteen crew members which Brent and young Balfour repel triumphantly, subsequent grounding and smashup of the Covenant on Torran Rocks, and the furtive escape of a Stuart Jacobite and his surprising Whig sympathizer comrade into the wilds of hostile Campbell territory. Arduously stealing into Stuart lands, David witnesses the death of notorious Campbell clan chief "Red Fox" in Appin, shot from forest cover by an unknown sniper. Blaming the nearest available Royalist, Alan Brent, he tries vainly to distance himself, deeming that Scottish renegade a common murderer hiding behind counterfeit patriotism.

Disguises, doubts and quarrels ensue. But Alan and David are never truly enemies. Will either reach safety? Watch the final portion of the motion picture and find out for yourself.

Mark Isaacs and Tom Price craft a rollicking, charged and lively music score, amply freighted with Celtic drama. In fact, sound and lighting crews deliver exemplary artistry, which is not true for an editing staff imprisoned by what appear to be commercial breaks designed for televised showings.

Suitable for family viewing, despite an abundance of violence neither unduly graphic nor irrelevant to times and locations, KIDNAPPED is most appropriate for viewers old enough to comprehend historical settings and regional animosities. Recommended for older children ages 10 and up and adults.