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## Best Scores of 2016 – United Kingdom

January 14, 2017

The fifth installment in my annual series of articles looking at the best “under the radar” scores from around the world concentrates on music from films and television from my home country, the United Kingdom. This year’s crop of British beauties includes a lovely animation score from a respected veteran, an exciting drama score from an increasingly impressive talent, and several outstanding scores for television.

### RIPPER STREET, SEASON 4-5 – Dominik Scherrer



Ripper Street is a British TV series set in Whitechapel in the East End of London in 1889, six months after the infamous Jack the Ripper murders finally ended. H Division is the police precinct tasked with keeping order, but tensions are understandably high, as each new murder elicits fear that the Ripper may be back. The show stars Matthew Macfadyen as commander of H Division Edmund Reid, Jerome Flynn as Reid’s right-hand man Bennet Drake, and Adam Rothenberg as former US Army surgeon and Pinkerton agent Homer Jackson, who is H Division’s expert in the new field of forensics. It ran for four years beginning in 2012, with the first three seasons airing on the BBC, and the last two (essentially one season split in half) both premiering on Amazon in 2016.

The score for all five seasons of Ripper Street is by the Swiss-born British composer Dominik Scherrer, who over the past few years has established himself as one of the UK’s top TV composers. Scherrer’s score is very much rooted in the familiar sound that has come to define Victorian London in recent years, and which also

informed Hans Zimmer's Sherlock Holmes and David Arnold's Sherlock TV scores, being a mass of spiky strings and de-tuned pianos, with slightly off-kilter rhythmic ideas that seem to allude to a long-forgotten type of English or Irish folk music. Where Scherrer's score differs is in the way he takes that now well-established sound and turns it into something fresh and exciting. In addition to the standard orchestral complement, Scherrer often uses the pianos and solo fiddles to lead the thematic lines, while simultaneously augmenting his palette with an array of plucked metallic sounds ranging from guitars to harps, to what sounds like a sampled harpsichord, and even some subtle synth textures. The main theme, given its most prominent outing in the sixth cue, subtly runs through much of the rest of the score, allowing it to retain a sense of thematic consistency without overloading the viewer with ad nauseam restatements.

The action sequences, in cues like "A New Police Station," "Policing," and the thunderous "End Montage," are fun and exciting, with energetic fiddle solos dancing atop sprightly, vigorous string and piano rhythms. To counterbalance this, there is also a great deal of pathos running through the score, from the tragedy of "Childlessness," and the brooding darkness of "Reid Returns to Whitechapel," to the mournful cello chords and virtuoso violin writing of "Reid Led to Shine," and the soulful hummed vocals in "The Dove Brothers." Clearly, as Scherrer's music shows, the East End of London in the 1890s could be a brutal place to live if you were poor. However, where Scherrer's score really excels is in the moments of high emotion: the dramatic urgency and bitterness of "Susan Hanged," the searing tragedy of "Killing Leonard," the longing and regret of "Burying Robin." The solo violin performances that anchor several of these cues are stunningly realized. Best of all is the longest cue on the album, "Nathaniel's Execution/Dove to Prison," which makes wonderful use of funereal liturgical chanting from a male voice choir. An album containing music from seasons 1 through 3 of Ripper Street was released by Silva Screen Records in 2015, and is excellent. This promo contains music from 2016's Season 4 and Season 5, and is not yet available for public purchase; hopefully, someone at Silva will rectify this in the near future to provide a comprehensive overview of everything Scherrer contributed to this fun, popular show.

*Track Listing: 1. Jackson Wakes Up (1:13), 2. A New Police Station (2:51), 3. Childlessness (1:14), 4. Policing (0:52), 5. Reid Returns to Whitechapel (1:12), 6. Amazon Titles Series Four (0:57), 7. Killing Teague (1:12), 8. Susan Hanged (3:27), 9. Hackman (1:53), 10. End Montage (1:41), 11. Drake (2:08), 12. Reid Led to Shine (2:30), 13. The Dove Brothers (1:02), 14. Killing Leonard (1:18), 15. The Past Catches Up (0:37), 16. I Hate You (1:51), 17. Burying Robin (1:56), 18. Look Upon Him (3:03), 19. Nathaniel Gone (1:54), 20. Nathaniel's Execution/Dove to Prison (4:00), 21. Time Has Passed (0:52), 22. Jackson is Dead (2:18). Promo, 40 minutes 10 seconds.*