

The Museum of Modern Art

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HAL B. WALLIS: FILM PRODUCER NINE WEEK MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVE

At a time when the film director is in the limelight, The Museum of Modern Art is shifting attention to the important though sometimes overlooked role of producer with the presentation of HAL B. WALLIS: FILM PRODUCER.

The nine-week Wallis retrospective, which opens November 18 with "The Dawn Patrol" and concludes January 12 with Wallis' latest film "Red Sky at Morning," includes 43 films selected from 400 Wallis productions made over the last four decades. Five hundred invited guests will attend a reception for Mr. Wallis the night before the opening of the retrospective.

Among the well-known films to be shown in the series, assembled by Adrienne Mancina, Associate Curator of the Department of Film, are: "Little Caesar," "I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang," "Gold Diggers of 1933," "The Story of Louis Pasteur," "The Maltese Falcon," "Casablanca," "Yankee Doodle Dandy," and "Jezebel," all films well received in their time and all representative of different genres. For Wallis, honored by the British Film Institute last year, recipient of no less than two Irving Thalberg Awards and 32 Academy Awards, is basically considered a master-of-all-genres. He functioned in the most productive years of the American cinema, when a producer, having accepted the challenge of an unknown type of film, moved into a newer and still more challenging area.

Over the years Wallis has devoted his talents to socially relevant themes, westerns, biographies, historical films, musicals, and gangster pictures. He has also collaborated with some of America's most distinguished film directors: William Dieterle, William Wyler, Michael Curtiz, Edmund Goulding, Busby Berkeley, Raoul Walsh, John Huston and Howard Hawks.

"Gun Fight at OK Corral," relating the classic gun battle in Tombstone, Arizona,

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is typical of Western mythology. "They Died with Their Boots On," with General Custer portrayed by Errol Flynn, also falls into this category as does "True Grit," a frontier fable, and a still-to-be-released Wallis film, "Red Sky at Morning."

In the area of adventure Wallis gained fame for "Captain Blood," known for its duel scene with Basil Rathbone. This film made Errol Flynn, as a swashbuckling pirate, a full-fledged star. The picture, however, does not have the following of "Casablanca," with the fabled Humphrey Bogart opposite Ingrid Bergman and the two arch villains Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet. "Casablanca" has become what is called a cult film.

Neither the western nor adventure film established the reputation of Wallis to the extent of his gangster epic "Little Caesar," with Edward G. Robinson in a megalomaniacal rise to power. The picture featured a speed, vigor, violence and gunplay that was startling, though typical of its time.

With "I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang," directed by Mervyn Le Roy, Wallis concentrated on a topical problem as brutal and realistic as gangsterism. Le Roy had also directed "Little Caesar," and later moved on to more frivolous matters like "Gold Diggers of 1933," designed to distract depression audiences. Busby Berkeley was responsible for the kaleidoscopic chorus effects and musical numbers with Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, Ginger Rogers and Joan Blondell.

Perhaps the most unique film in Wallis' career is his version of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with "the most extraordinary cast that ever ill met by moonlight for bucolic reveries, among them James Cagney, Mickey Rooney, Joe E. Brown, Hugh Herbert, Olivia de Havilland and Dick Powell." Mr. Wallis has said the single most important thing in motion picture making is the casting.

Biography seems to have been Hal Wallis' forte, if one considers the number of such films he has produced, like "Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet," dealing with the then publicly taboo subject of syphilis. Paul Muni played the famous doctor.

In "Sergeant York," it was Gary Cooper who portrayed the pacifist hero, and though

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exceedingly popular then, the picture now owes its importance to "its complex religious theme and extraordinary visual qualities that make it one of the most stylistically interesting of Howard Hawks' films."

In the biographical genre, Wallis also produced "The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex," starring Bette Davis as a middle-aged woman in love with a younger man; "Becket," with Richard Burton and Peter O'Toole; and "Anne of the Thousand Days," an adaptation from the play by Maxwell Anderson. "Juarez" represents still another biography in the Wallis dossier.

Hal Brent Wallis started to work at 14 as an office boy in a real estate firm. An avid reader and night student, he later became a salesman and graduated to a theater manager. In the latter capacity he attracted attention and moved on to assistant publicist, then head of studio publicity at Warner Brothers. He is said to have coined the famous phrase "the Lubitsch Touch" and among other publicity feats he publicized "The Jazz Singer."

Later as studio manager, production executive and then head of studio production, he had ample opportunity to exercise his imagination and initiative. He introduced Bogart, Flynn, Edward G. Robinson, Olivia de Havilland, Burt Lancaster and, not to be forgotten, Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin.

In the opinion of Wallis, popularity and aesthetics are not antithetical. As a result he has combined box office with prestige and his pictures, while successful, have reflected personal taste and judgment. "You can't make a picture by a computer," says Mr. Wallis. "A good picture is a good picture, no matter what generation makes it, and conversely a bad picture is bad, regardless of the vintage."

The program follows:

Wednesday, November 18

2:00, 5:30 THE DAWN PATROL (FLIGHT COMMANDER). 1930. Written and directed by Howard Hawks. With Richard Barthelmess, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. 95 min.

Thursday, November 19

2:00, 5:30, 8:00 LITTLE CAESAR. 1930. Directed by Mervyn Le Roy. With Edward G. Robinson, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. 77 min.

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Friday, November 20

2:00, 5:30 THE MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM. 1933. Directed by Michael Curtiz. With Lionel Atwill, Fay Wray, Glenda Farrell. 75 min.

Saturday, November 21

3:00, 5:30 I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG. 1932. Directed by Mervyn Le Roy. With Paul Muni, Glenda Farrell. 85 min.

Sunday, November 22

2:00, 5:30 FOOTLIGHT PARADE. 1933. Directed by Lloyd Baron. Musical numbers staged by Busby Berkeley. With James Cagney, Joan Blondell, Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell. 102 min.

Monday, November 23

1:30 I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG. (see November 21)

Wednesday, November 25

2:00, 5:30 THE WORLD CHANGES. 1933. Directed by Mervyn Le Roy. With Paul Muni, Mary Astor. 90 min.

Thursday, November 26

2:00 only GOLD DIGGERS OF 1933. 1933. Directed by Mervyn Le Roy. Musical numbers staged by Busby Berkeley. With Warren William, Joan Blondell, Ruby Keeler. 96 min.

Friday, November 27

2:00, 5:30 ANTHONY ADVERSE. 1936. Directed by Mervyn Le Roy. With Fredric March, Olivia de Havilland. 139 minutes.

Saturday, November 28

3:00, 5:30 THE STORY OF LOUIS PASTEUR. 1936. Directed by William Dieterle. With Paul Muni, Josephine Hutchinson, Anita Louise. 85 min.

Sunday, November 29

2:00, 5:30 CAPTAIN BLOOD. 1935. Directed by Michael Curtiz. With Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Lionel Atwill. 119 min.

Monday, November 30

1:30 THE STORY OF LOUIS PASTEUR. (see November 28)

Wednesday, December 2

2:00, 5:30 A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. 1935. Directed by Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle. With James Cagney, Joe E. Brown, Dick Powell, Olivia de Havilland. 132 min.

Thursday, December 3

2:00, 5:30 DAWN PATROL. 1938. Directed by Edmund Goulding. With Errol Flynn, David Niven, Basil Rathbone, Donald Crisp. 103 min.

Friday, December 4

2:00, 5:30 SLIM. 1937. Directed by Ray Enright. With Pat O'Brien, Henry Fonda, Margaret Lindsay. 86 min.

Saturday, December 5

3:00, 5:30 THE LETTER. 1940. Directed by William Wyler. With Bette Davis, Herbert Marshall, James Stephenson. 95 min.

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Sunday, December 6

2:00, 5:30 THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD. 1938. Directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley. With Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Claude Rains, Basil Rathbone. 104 min.

Monday, December 7

1:30 THE LETTER. (see December 5)

Wednesday, December 9

2:00, 5:30 JEZEBEL. 1938. Directed by William Wyler. With Bette Davis, Henry Fonda. 100 min.

Thursday, December 10

2:00, 5:30 A SLIGHT CASE OF MURDER. 1938. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. With Edward G. Robinson, Jane Bryan. 85 min.

8:00 THE ROARING TWENTIES. 1939. Directed by Raoul Walsh. With James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart. 106 min.

Friday, December 11

2:00, 5:30 THEY MADE ME A CRIMINAL. 1939. Directed by Busby Berkeley. With John Garfield, Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall. 92 min.

Saturday, December 12

3:00, 5:30 HIGH SIERRA. 1941. Directed by Raoul Walsh. With Humphrey Bogart, Ida Lupino. 100 min.

Sunday, December 13

2:00, 5:30 THE SEA HAWK. 1940. Directed by Michael Curtiz. With Errol Flynn, Brenda Marshall, Claude Rains. 127 min.

Monday, December 14

1:30 HIGH SIERRA. (see December 12)

Wednesday, December 16

2:00, 5:30 JUAREZ. 1939. Directed by William Dieterle. With Paul Muni, Bette Davis, Claude Rains, John Garfield. 125 min.

Thursday, December 17

2:00, 5:30 THE MALTESE FALCON. 1941. Directed by John Huston. With Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Peter Lorre. 100 min.

8:00 THE STRAWBERRY BLONDE. 1941. Directed by Raoul Walsh. With James Cagney, Olivia de Havilland, Rita Hayworth. 98 min.

Friday, December 18

2:00, 5:30 THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT. 1940. Directed by Raoul Walsh. With George Raft, Ann Sheridan, Ida Lupino, Humphrey Bogart. 93 min.

Saturday, December 19

3:00, 5:30 DR. EHRLICH'S MAGIC BULLET. 1940. Directed by William Dieterle. With Edward G. Robinson, Ruth Gordon, Otto Kruger. 103 min.

Sunday, December 20

2:00, 5:30 NOW, VOYAGER. 1942. Directed by Irving Rapper. With Bette Davis, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains. 117 min.

Monday, December 21

1:30 THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT. (see December 18)

Wednesday, December 23

2:00, 5:30 SERGEANT YORK. 1941. Directed by Howard Hawks. With Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan, Joan Leslie. 134 min.

Thursday, December 24

2:00 only BECKET. 1964. Directed by Peter Glenville. With Richard Burton, Peter O'Toole, John Gielgud. 148 min.

Saturday, December 26

3:00, 5:30 SEPTEMBER AFFAIR. 1950. Directed by William Dieterle. With Joan Fontaine, Joseph Cotten. 91 min.

Sunday, December 27

2:00, 5:30 ROPE OF SAND. 1949. Directed by William Dieterle. With Burt Lancaster, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains. 104 min.

Monday, December 28

1:30 ROPE OF SAND. (see December 27)

Tuesday, December 29

5:30 SEPTEMBER AFFAIR. (see December 26)

Wednesday, December 30

2:00, 5:30 YANKEE DOODLE DANDY. 1942. Directed by Michael Curtiz. With James Cagney, Joan Leslie, Walter Huston. 126 min.

Thursday, December 31

2:00 only THE SONS OF KATIE ELDER. 1965. Directed by Henry Hathaway. With John Wayne, Dean Martin, Martha Hyer. 122 min.

Friday, January 1

2:00, 5:30 THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS. 1946. Directed by Lewis Milestone. With Barbara Stanwyck, Van Heflin, Lizabeth Scott. 116 min.

Saturday, January 2

3:00, 5:30 LAST TRAIN FROM GUN HILL. 1959. Directed by John Sturges. With Kirk Douglas, Anthony Quinn, Carolyn Jones. 94 min.

Sunday, January 3

2:00, 5:30 GUNFIGHT AT THE O.K. CORRAL. 1957. Directed by John Sturges. With Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, Rhonda Fleming. 122 min.

Monday, January 4

1:30 LAST TRAIN FROM GUN HILL. (see January 2)

Wednesday, January 6

2:00, 5:30 DARK CITY. 1950. Directed by William Dieterle. With Charlton Heston, Lizabeth Scott. 97 min.

Thursday, January 7

2:00, 5:30 THE ROSE TATTOO. 1955. Directed by Daniel Mann. With Anna Magnani, Burt Lancaster. 117 min.

8:00 RED MOUNTAIN. 1951. Directed by William Dieterle. With Alan Ladd, Lizabeth Scott, Arthur Kennedy. 84 min.

Friday, January 8

2:00, 5:30 KING CREOLE. 1958. Directed by Michael Curtiz. With Elvis Presley, Carolyn Jones, Walter Matthau. 116 min.

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Saturday, January 9

3:00, 5:30 TRUE GRIT. 1969. Directed by Henry Hathaway. With John Wayne, Glen Campbell, Kim Darby. 128 min.

Sunday, January 10

2:00, 5:30 ANNE OF THE THOUSAND DAYS. 1969. Directed by Charles Jarrott. With Richard Burton, Genevieve Bujold, Irene Papas. 145 min.

Monday, January 11

1:30 CASABLANCA. 1942. Directed by Michael Curtiz. With Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Paul Henreid. 99 min.

Tuesday, January 12

5:30 RED SKY AT MORNING. 1970. Directed by James Goldstone. With Richard Thomas, Claire Bloom, Richard Crenna, Catherine Burns, Desi Arnaz, Jr. 130 min.

Additional information available from Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296 (7501).