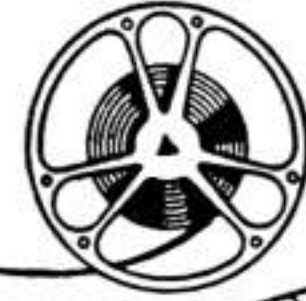


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INTRUDER IN THE DUST (1949)

Lucas Beauchamp	Juano Hernandez
The Lawyer	David Bryan
His nephew	Claude Jarman, Jr.
The spinster	Elizabeth Patterson
and Porter Hall	

Based on the novel by William Faulkner Screenplay by Ben Maddow
Edited by Robert Kern Music by Alfred Deutch
Directed and Produced by Clarence Brown

An M-G-M production

The end of the 1940's and the beginning of the fifties brought a short revival of the "problem film" saga from the Hollywood studios, including such notable pictures as CROSSFIRE, BOOMERANG, GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT, WHISTLE AT ETON FALLS, and STORM CENTER. While this revival had little of the bitterness of the social protest of the Warner Brothers films of a decade earlier, there was still plenty of criticism of some of the less savoury sides of American society: big-time crime, anti-Semitism, labor relations and even book burning.

Nevertheless, it was a risky gamble to produce such a film as INTRUDER IN THE DUST. In the first place, any piece of entertainment dealing seriously with the Negro presents enormous problems. The story of this particular film guaranteed that it would be box-office poison in the South, and no matter how tasteful the treatment, there would be charges of bias and unfairness on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. However, to his everlasting credit, Dore Shary decided to risk making the film at M-G-M, and taking a further chance, cast relatively unknown actors in the leading roles.

However, the great artistic merit of the film lies in its fidelity to the original Faulkner novel, which was originally published in 1948. The dialogue is reproduced almost word for word from the book, a rare example of this type of screen writing.

To make the story even more real, it was filmed on location in Oxford, Mississippi, the setting of the original novel as well as Faulkner's part-time home. No studio sets or professional extras could possibly match the decadence, suspicion, and clammy feeling of hysteria which comes across from the use of this real Southern town.

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The end result is one of the great message films of our time, but it is held firmly under control by the director, Clarence Brown, about as unlikely a choice for this project as could be imagined. (His career is always linked with some of the biggest M-G-M sentimental literary adaptations of the late thirties, including ANNA KARENINA with Garbo and AH WILDERNESS.) Never is a single point belabored: when the Negro is saved from the lynch mob by the force of justice, there is no hand-kissing or "Thank-you, Massa'" dialogue. It is merely the just ending that should come about if legality and saneness are to prevail in any city or town in the United States. It is an object lesson in the way in which the mob with its unstable emotions can take charge of a situation (as we have already seen in FURY), but the true greatness of the film is the way in which it shows how the little man can help to make justice run its rightful course in a confused and frightening situation.

David Stewart Hull