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Film Subjects	The true story of Jesse James, Ray, Nicholas, 1957 Run for cover, Ray, Nicholas, 1955 Party girl, Ray, Nicholas, 1958 Born to be bad, Ray, Nicholas, 1950 Flying leathernecks, Ray, Nicholas, 1951 Knock on any door, Ray, Nicholas, 1949 A woman's secret, Ray, Nicholas, 1949 The savage innocents, Ray, Nicholas, 1960 The lusty men, Ray, Nicholas, 1952 I'm a stranger here myself, Helpern, David, 1974

In a lonely place, Ray, Nicholas, 1950
King of kings, Ray, Nicholas, 1961
Wind across the Everglades, Ray, Nicholas, 1958
They live by night, Ray, Nicholas, 1949
Rebel without a cause, Ray, Nicholas, 1955
Bigger than life, Ray, Nicholas, 1956
We can't go home again, Ray, Nicholas, 1973
Hot blood, Ray, Nicholas, 1956
High green wall, Ray, Nicholas, 1954
55 days at Peking, Ray, Nicholas, 1963
Bitter victory, Ray, Nicholas, 1957
Lightning over water, Ray, Nicholas, 1979
Der Amerikanische freund (The American friend), Wenders, Wim,
1977
Johnny Guitar, Ray, Nicholas, 1954
On dangerous ground, Ray, Nicholas, 1951

Godard made the famous pronouncement, "*Le cinéma, c'est Nicholas Ray*," in his 1957 review of *BITTER VICTORY*, claiming that Ray alone was capable of remaking the cinema. This, the first complete retrospective of Ray's work in North America in well over a decade, brings together many new, rare, restored, studio, and archival prints of Ray's films, every one imported especially for its screening here. There will be no better opportunity to put Godard's assertion to the test.

In some of the most beautiful, personal, and distinctive films made in Hollywood, and then in a series of increasingly difficult independent productions, Ray redefined commercial cinema. Even when constrained by studio edicts and economics, the restive Ray produced films that were daringly impulsive, individual, sometimes rawly autobiographical, reflecting his profound understanding of and estrangement from the ethos of postwar America. From the brooding romanticism of his directorial debut *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* and emotional violence of *IN A LONELY PLACE* and *ON DANGEROUS GROUND*, through the CinemaScope expressionism of *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* and *BIGGER THAN LIFE* and the epic spectacle of *55 DAYS AT PEKING* and *KING OF KINGS*, Ray transformed his love of the forlorn, vulnerable, and misfit, his identification with the abject innocent and angry outsider into a vision adverse to the coercive optimism and desperate conformity of the fifties. Poetic, pessimistic, high strung, and humanist, Ray's films are set in a lonely place and on dangerous ground – the wounded psyches of often solitary nomads, strangers who keep looking for a home in a world to which they "have not been properly introduced."

Lean and laconic in black Levis, black T-shirt or turtleneck, black cowboy boots, black eye patch, and shock of white hair, Ray ended his days as an emaciated icon, as restless and rebellious as he had been throughout his career. Depleted from decades of struggles with producers and studios, of alcohol and drug abuse and then terminal cancer, Ray no doubt identified with the futile determination of Sisyphus in the Camus book he regularly assigned to his film students in the seventies. Just as Camus insisted that "one must imagine Sisyphus happy" in his absurd, never-ending effort with the rolling rock, Ray retained his resilience by continuing to do the one thing he knew how: making films. Faced with death, he turned the camera on his own dying to make one last movie, Wim Wenders' *LIGHTNING OVER WATER*. Having closely identified with most of his protagonists, particularly the ravaged, rage-filled Dixon Steele of *IN A LONELY PLACE*, Ray had no one left to incarnate at the end of his career but himself: a filmmaker seized with ideas, dozens of projects unrealized as he drifts into the final darkness.

– James Quandt

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Cinematheque Ontario Winter 2003

NICHOLAS RAY **A to Z**

Architecture

Ray began his career studying architecture under Frank Lloyd Wright, and often observed that his compositional sense and predilection for the horizontal, most manifest in his mastery of CinemaScope (see below), derived from his time with Wright. Ray's acute sense of locale and command of landscape are remarkable, but his use of domestic settings to convey emotional states and his attention to the expressive potential of decor make him (with Sirk) the supreme fifties formalist of interior space. (Like Sirk, Ray can give a set of curtains or a window lattice semiotic splendour.) The "no exit" claustrophobia of *IN A LONELY PLACE*, for instance, is evoked by its enclosed setting, an LA apartment complex that is part sanctuary for lost souls, part courtyard of the damned. (That Ray modeled it on his own apartment suggests how self-referential – and perhaps self-loathing – the film is.) Even the comparatively impersonal *BORN TO BE BAD* places great emphasis on setting, and in such masterpieces as *JOHNNY GUITAR* and *BIGGER THAN LIFE*, domestic architecture is freighted with symbolic value. See *Staircases*, below. (Other A citations might include anguish or alienation, the defining characteristics of most Ray protagonists, or addiction and alcoholism, which hastened Ray's decline.)

Bogart

It is a commonplace that Humphrey Bogart gives one of his greatest performances as Dixon Steele, a bitter, burned-out screenwriter (and Ray alter-ego), in *IN A LONELY PLACE*. Indeed, Ray's cinema is full of career-topping or iconic performances: Robert Mitchum in *THE LUSTY MEN*, James Mason in *BIGGER THAN LIFE*, Richard Burton in *BITTER VICTORY*, James Dean in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*. Critics consider Charlton Heston's work in *55 DAYS IN PEKING* and Christopher Plummer's in *WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES* among their finest, and the frequent observation that Ray allotted few great roles to women is belied by the memorable acting of Gloria Grahame in *IN A LONELY PLACE*, Susan Hayward in *THE LUSTY MEN*, Joan Crawford and Mercedes McCambridge in *JOHNNY GUITAR*, and Ida Lupino in *ON DANGEROUS GROUND*. Ray had superb instincts in casting, and often elicited hitherto hidden qualities in actors – serenity in James Cagney (*RUN FOR COVER*), for example, or cold calculation in Joan Fontaine (*BORN TO BE BAD*).

CinemaScope/Colour

Like Kon Ichikawa in Japanese cinema, Ray was the American master of two formal elements synonymous with fifties cinema: CinemaScope and colour. "What Welles was to deep focus, Ray was to CinemaScope," Robin Wood has written, and few deployed the sprawling horizontal as artfully and intuitively as Ray, whether to constrain and constrict his characters, in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* and *BIGGER THAN LIFE*, to impart a jumpy tension to the hot house environs of *HOT BLOOD* and *PARTY GIRL*, or to emphasize the blank, Melvillian whiteness of landscape in *BITTER VICTORY* (desert) and *THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS* (arctic). *JOHNNY GUITAR* was originally conceived as a Scope film, which would only have intensified the film's strangeness.

Similarly, though his moody work in black and white sets unimpeachable standards with its attention to gradations of grey, Ray's use of colour was inimitable. Rarely realistic and often consigned symbolic or purely compositional value, colour in Ray is highly coded. Think of James Dean's red windbreaker, pulsing like an ensign of pain, or Joan Crawford's mockery of a white gown – bridal, virginal, feminine, all false – in *JOHNNY GUITAR*. Like Ichikawa, Ray experimented with monotoes and primaries (in *BIGGER THAN LIFE*, where a cavalcade of parked cabs suddenly blares bright yellow through the everyday grey of Ed Avery's self-described "dull" life); and organized whole worlds of feeling around changes in the colour of clothing (in *HOT BLOOD*, *REBEL*, and, particularly, in the crimson-and-gold universe of *PARTY GIRL*). If Ray's films have many passages of technical crudity – the matte shots in *THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS*, the inserts and back projections in *PARTY GIRL*, etc. – they are also filled with startling invention: the topsy turvy subjective shots in *REBEL*, *HOT BLOOD*, and *WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES*, the fatalistic helicopter shot that opens *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT*, the interlaced tracking shots of the Sermon on the Mount in *KING OF KINGS*.

Debility

Long before semiotics of the somatic became a field in critical theory, physical debility was a common shorthand for novelists and filmmakers. In Ray, limping and blindness are repeated symbolic motifs: Tommy Farrell's lagging leg in *PARTY GIRL* and Davey Bishop's in *RUN FOR COVER* are indications of moral frailty, while the blindness of Ida Lupino in *ON DANGEROUS GROUND* or the black balladeer in *THE TRUE STORY OF JESSE JAMES* is ironic: both characters see more clearly than the sighted who surround them.

Eisenschitz

Film historian Bernard Eisenschitz's biography of Ray, skillfully translated by Tom Milne, remains the single most important book on the director. Its evocative title, *Nicholas Ray: An American Journey*, implies that Ray's life embodied key political and social changes in postwar America: the leftist populism of the thirties and forties, the disenchantment of the conformist fifties, the revolt and chaos of the sixties. An alternative citation is Victor Erice, the Spanish director of *DREAM OF LIGHT*, who co-wrote a book about Ray, and claimed that the analysis of parent-child relationships in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* was a formative influence on his own *SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE*. "Ray's art manages," Erice writes, "to make us experience, all of a sudden, that part of the absurd that lies beneath some of our most banal everyday acts."

Fuller

Ray has been compared to many directors – Kazan, Losey, Penn, Godard, Curtiz, Vigo, Welles, even (most recently) Altman – but the filmmaker with whom he is most frequently bracketed is Samuel Fuller, subject of a comprehensive Cinematheque retrospective in 1998. Ray's and Fuller's careers mirrored each other in many ways, which Godard acknowledged when he dedicated his *MADE IN USA* to "Nick and Samuel, who taught me respect for image and sound." Mavericks first lionized by French and British critics – especially the *Cahiers du cinéma* board of Godard, Rohmer, Rivette, and Truffaut – both directors retreated to Europe to make films after Hollywood became inimical to their unorthodox ways. (Each enjoyed the support of important producers, but often suffered studio interference, including re-edits, re-titling, and meddled endings; the compromised nature of many of Ray's films made them articles of faith for the burgeoning auteurs.) At the end of their careers, both Fuller and Ray were deified by Wim Wenders, who employed their self-styled personas – Fuller's cigar-chomping mug and Ray's wasting grace – in his *THE AMERICAN FRIEND*, and their aged debility in *THE END OF VIOLENCE* (Fuller) and *LIGHTNING OVER WATER* (Ray). In his recently published memoir, *A Third Face*, Fuller pays heartfelt tribute to Ray, recalling how Ray wrote a eulogy for Jean Renoir's funeral even as he lay exhausted on his own death bed. Fuller calls him "a helluva director, a lion of a man."

THE CINEMA IS NICHOLAS RAY

Fuller was as partial to Scope and colour as Ray, and also liked to experiment with widescreen con- striction, striking textures, and artificial palettes. Each made a delirious Freudian western, presided over by a legendary tough actress (FORTY GUNS with Barbara Stanwyck and JOHNNY GUITAR with Joan Crawford, respectively), and both made films about Jesse James that reflected their own idiosyncratic vision of outlaws and America. Fuller's characters, with names like Griff, Buff, Candy and Moe, are mostly outcasts, misfits, or low-lives, curdled by hate or exiled from life, while Ray's have American folk monikers like Cottonmouth, Bowie, and Keechie, or emblematic ones (Dixon Steele, Laurel Grey, Emma Small, Vienna), and long to belong and be loved in ways Fuller's rarely do. As much as both directors shared a critical, even hostile, attitude toward their nation, which they saw as paranoid, racist, conformist, and close-minded, and tonally tended to the over- wrought or baroque, they were very different in background and style. Fuller's tin type expression- ism, nativist politics, and pulpy hyperbole derived from his experience as writer and photo "composi- tor" in the Weegee world of New York tabloids, while Ray's roots were in left wing theatre and, as already mentioned, architecture. Even at their most high strung or hysterical, Ray's films have none of the lurid macho craziness of Fuller's. In compari- son, they can seem delicate, ethereal.

Gloria Grahame

G could just as easily go to Godard, who champi- oned Ray's films as critic and included numerous homages to them in his own, including a central quotation of PARTY GIRL in HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA, but there were few greater actresses than Gloria Grahame, whom Ray met on the set of A WOMAN'S SECRET, married, and then turned the strain of their divorce into the bitter subtext of IN A LONELY PLACE. Grahame's bruised fragility was never more moving than in that film.

Hands

As Robin Wood has noted, "If there is a single recurrent image that seems to express the whole spirit of Ray's art, it is probably that of hands reaching out to touch – from the close-up of the hand of the blind Ida Lupino stretching down to meet the outstretched hand of Robert Ryan at the end of ON DANGEROUS GROUND . . . to the hand of Christ reaching down through the prison bars to touch that of John the Baptist (Ryan again) as he strains upwards, via the magical moment in REBEL where James Dean stretches out his hand to Natalie Wood on the world's edge after the chicken-run." Other H candidates include Howard Hughes, the right-wing film producer, and John Houseman, the left-wing theatre and radio pro- ducer, both of whom were important to Ray's early career, or homosexuality, which many critics have discerned as a motif or subtext in several of Ray's films. (Fereydon Hoveyda, for instance, wondered in 1960 if Rico's attachment to Farrelly in PARTY GIRL is not homosexual.) That Ray's films often "bend gender" – full of soft or tender men (Plato most markedly) and tough women (Vienna, about whom a bartender says he has "never seen a woman who was more like a man") – adds fuel to the speculation as does news of an unrealized project, HEROIC LOVE, which was to star James Dean and to include sexual allegiances among a group of men in a small western town after the Second World War. Frank Lloyd Wright dismissed Ray as "a faggot," and John Houseman writes in his autobiography: "Reared in Wisconsin in a household dominated by women, [Ray] was a potential homosexual with a deep, passionate and constant need for female love in his life."

"I'm a Stranger Here Myself"

The most famous line in Ray's cinema, uttered by Johnny Guitar, and an epigram that expresses many things: Ray's alienation from Hollywood, from the optimism, McCarthyist paranoia, and politics of postwar America; and of the eternal nomadism and existential solitude of many of his characters. Strangers to themselves, they cannot help but be strangers to others.

Jukebox

Fascinated with folkways, with ethnography and "exotic" or "alien" cultures, Ray researched the cultures of American gypsies, 19th-century Florida

bayou towns, and Arctic aboriginals, and portrayed each with liberal empathy. Counterposed to the "authenticity" of these cultures are, variously, Christianity, capitalism, colonialism – the corrup- tion of Natural Man by civilization symbolized in THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS by the rock 'n' roll blaring jukebox. (Was this the source of the juke- box motif in Wim Wenders' early cinema, which represented the omnipotence of American culture in postwar Germany?) A J footnote: Jim Jarmusch "unofficially" dedicated his first film, PERMA- NENT VACATION, to Ray, acknowledging his great debt to Ray's tutelage.

Kienzle

Raymond Nicholas Kienzle, Ray's "high German" father who settled in La Crosse, Wisconsin and whose authoritarian manner, alco- holism, love of literature and music, heart prob- lems and early death all formed the man Ray became. "A boy needs his father at certain times of his life," Ray wrote in his autobiography, "so he can kick him in the shins, so he can fight for the love of his mother. The boy misbehaves at one point, runs away at another, while his father remains constant, a gauge against which the boy can measure himself. Take that away and the spine is lost." The Freudian theme of fathers and sons (RUN FOR COVER, REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, BIGGER THAN LIFE), of imperilled, broken, and forged families and the search for home and security that define Ray's cinema can (no doubt reductively) be ascribed to his own and his siblings' fraught relationships with their faulty patriarch. Another K important in Ray's life is Elia Kazan, friend and mentor, for whom Ray was assistant director on A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN, and whose films are often com- pared to Ray's for their similar themes and use of CinemaScope (EAST OF EDEN with REBEL, both starring James Dean, for example).

Losey

Joseph Losey, two years senior to Ray at school in La Crosse, Wisconsin, with whom he shared a kind of midwestern reticence. (Losey was articu- late, though; Ray brooded and faltered.) Similar to Ray in his leftist sympathies and initial involve- ment with political theatre, Losey began his film- making career with the anti-McCarthyist fable THE BOY WITH GREEN HAIR, in which Ray immediately noted Robert Ryan, whom he later cast in FLYING LEATHERNECKS and, most memorably, ON DANGEROUS GROUND. Losey was the first director to turn down the cold war film I MARRIED A COMMUNIST, which, he learned, became the acid test for "establishing who was not 'a red': you offered I MARRIED A COMMUNIST to anybody you thought was a Communist, and if they turned it down, they were." Howard Hughes eventually offered the film to Ray, who was then contractually bound to it. Why Ray was left untouched by the McCarthy witch hunts, while Losey was blacklisted in 1951, escaping to Europe to continue his career, is a bit of a mystery. Both Ray and Losey claim that it was Hughes who protected Ray, despite the pro- ducer's right wing ideology.

Music

Ray's first ambition was to be an orchestra conduc- tor, and music of all kinds – folk, jazz, blues, clas- sical – influenced his work. Ray spent years immersed in the folk art of America, teaching the- atre to, as he described them, "people who had no theatre background whatsoever: South Dakota Indians, the Mississippi shrimp fishermen, the Pennsylvania and West Virginia miners, the share- croppers and tenant-farmers of the Carolinas and Arkansas. I always used to take a Presto recording machine, at that time a very bulky instrument – it used two sorts of needle, steel for recording, cactus for playback. I collected as much of the native material as I could and then transferred it to the Library of Congress." Ray's passionate attachment to indigenous music brought him into contact with such figures as Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie, and it is easy to detect the results of his research, not just in the ethnographic density of such films as WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES, but also in the ballad-like structure of THE TRUE STORY OF JESSE JAMES, the forlorn nocturne of THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, and the spoken "folk" *liebestod* of JOHNNY GUITAR. (He hoped Elvis Presley would play his Jesse James, but had to make due with Robert Wagner.) Ray worked with such com- posers as Bernard Herrmann (ON DANGEROUS

GROUND) and George Antheil (KNOCK ON ANY DOOR), and wanted Shostakovich to write the score for BITTER VICTORY. (The haunting music was instead written by Maurice Le Roux.) From the song "Your Red Wagon," whose name supplied the original title for THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, to the cacophony of the competing nation- al anthems in the opening sequence of 55 DAYS AT PEKING, music plays so central a role in Ray's oeuvre that several critics have wondered why he never made a musical. Originally intended as such, HOT BLOOD "comes closer than any of Ray's other movies to the musical that he always dreamed of making: there's a defiant dance on the street per- formed by Cornel Wilde, a dynamic whip dance between Wilde and Jane Russell that's even more kinetic, and a Gypsy chorus that figures in other parts" (Jonathan Rosenbaum).

Noir

The term *noir* has become so diffuse and overused that it has all but lost any meaning. Nevertheless, critics count Ray's IN A LONELY PLACE and ON DANGEROUS GROUND as classics of the genre, and THEY LIVE BY NIGHT certainly has its noir qualities. Some have even claimed that JOHNNY GUITAR is a *noir* western, but there the slippage begins.

Odets

Clifford Odets, leftist playwright and scriptwriter famous for the florid populist poetry that he forged into "dialogue." Ray was unable to afford his serv- ices, but often turned to Odets for advice on scripts, secretly recording Odets' analysis of BIGGER THAN LIFE, for instance. (The playwright sug- gested making Mrs. Avery driven and socially ambitious, representative of the lost idealism of the American middle class.) Bernard Eisenschitz argues that Ray may have modeled Ed Avery's character – vain, paranoid, arrogant – on Odets, and reports that the playwright supplied James Dean's famous line at the end of REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE. "Odets enjoyed an almost legendary prestige," Eisenschitz writes. "To Dean, for example, meeting him was like meeting Ibsen or Shaw. He was also the man who best presented what Ray thought of as the betrayal of his generation, the generation of the 'Red Thirties': the man who, to everyone's sur- prise, turned friendly witness and named names for the House Un-American Activities Committee . . ."

Porn

Ray contributed to an omnibus porn film called WET DREAMS, coordinated, edited, and shot by Canadian Max Fischer in Holland in 1974. Ray's sequence, entitled "The Janitor," stars the director in a dual role as a tyrannical preacher who has sex with his daughter, and as a janitor in a film studio. "It is a personal film from the word go" (Bernard Eisenschitz).

Quinn

Anthony Quinn, cast as Inuit hunter Inuk in THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS, immortalized by Bob Dylan as "Quinn the Eskimo." Determined that the Arctic landscape was to be the "star" of the film, Ray ran into problems with the intractable Quinn, who even forced the director to shoot some scenes his way. "When the rushes were screened in the evening," Ray said, "Quinn had to concede the logic of my view."

RKO

The modest Hollywood studio, later bought by Howard Hughes, for which Ray made many of his early films: THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, A WOMAN'S SECRET; BORN TO BE BAD, ON DANGEROUS GROUND, FLYING LEATHER- NECKS, and THE LUSTY MEN. When RKO tampered with other directors' films, Ray some- times stepped in to shoot sequences: Cromwell's THE RACKET, Von Sternberg's MACAO, Erskine's ANDROCLES AND THE LION.

Staircases

Staircases seem synonymous with family dramas, especially those about declining clans; think of THE LITTLE FOXES, THE MAGNIFICENT AMBER- SONS, WRITTEN ON THE WIND. Ray's cinema, attuned to the emotional meaning of architecture, is studded with staircases, used both compositionally – the verticals clenched in tension against the Scope frame in BIGGER THAN LIFE, for example – and symbolically, as a division between two realms (in JOHNNY GUITAR and, again, BIGGER). As Robin

Wood notes, staircases are also "a place of transit (and Ray's protagonists are always in a state of transit)."

Theatre

Ray's early career was in New York's proletarian or agit-prop theatre scene. He joined a radical group later known as the Theatre of Action, which derived its anti-bourgeois methods from many sources, including Soviet film montage. He also worked for the U. S. Government's Resettlement Administration, travelling across the country dur- ing the Depression to organize drama groups among rural workers. Theatre, particularly Method acting, continued to fascinate and shape Ray, and in his last years teaching film he often assigned *The Vakhtangov School of Stage Art and Stanislavsky Directs*.

Un-American

The House Un-American Activities Committee, instrument of the anti-Communist witch hunts and a constant threat to Ray in his early career; see entries for Losey and Odets.

Violence

"I kill the living, and save the dead," Richard Burton's anguished, absurdist statement in BIT- TER VICTORY sums up the pessimism and rage of Ray's world. Racked by masochism, guilt, infe- riority, driven by compulsion and isolation, his characters often explode into violence. The coiled fury and self-loathing of Robert Ryan in ON DANGEROUS GROUND and Humphrey Bogart in IN A LONELY PLACE, the cortisone-fueled monstrousness of James Mason in BIGGER THAN LIFE, the thwarted contortion of Lee J. Cobb in PARTY GIRL: Ray's parade of insecure, angry men reads as both private psychodrama and social critique. (His women could be fearsome, too: Mercedes McCambridge's Emma Small spits her maledictions like a Gatling gun made flesh.)

Welles

Orson Welles' involvement with leftist politics in the stage and radio world of the forties, and his association with John Houseman and Federal Theatre, all suggest a parallel with Ray, and Ray's first film, THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, bears many affinities with Welles, including its meticulous attention to sound and acoustical design, and the use of actor Howard Da Silva, from Welles' play *The Cradle Will Rock*, as Chickamaw. Welles did the uncredited narration for KING OF KINGS.

X-ray

Like the smashed mirror that reflects Ed Avery's dashed sanity in BIGGER THAN LIFE, the X- rays that show his insides serve a symbolic func- tion. Science (and we) can see his inner most self, but he remains an enigma, his madness impene- trable.

Youth

"I only want to make pictures with kids, young people," Ray said after REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE. From the young innocents of his first film, THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, to the more world- wise but no less tender students in WE CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN twenty-five years later, Ray's films express sympathy and insight for the young and the restless, with their cosmic fatalism, Holden Caulfield-like hatred of pretense, and sense of fugitive love. Jean-Pierre Coursodon has suggested that Ray's cinema is therefore prey to adolescent sentimentality, but surely IN A LONE- LY PLACE, ON DANGEROUS GROUND, and PARTY GIRL are among the most mature films ever made in Hollywood.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

A favourite book at the end of Ray's life which he assigned to his film students. Ray probably saw in Robert M. Pirsig's pop-philosophical "Inquiry into Values" his own concerns with the roles of myth and authenticity in an often false America.

A to Z

WINTER

GUIDE

27



THEY LIVE BY NIGHT

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1948 96 minutes
Cast: Farley Granger, Cathy O'Donnell

Ray's first feature must count as one of the most impressive and affecting directorial debuts in all cinema, and certainly one of the most influential – its tale of young lovers on the lam finds an echo in everything from *PIERROT LE FOU* to *BONNIE AND CLYDE*, *BADLANDS*, and *Altman's THIEVES LIKE US* (a virtual remake). The opening commentary tells us that "this boy and this girl were never properly introduced to the world we live in," and indeed young fugitives Bowie and Keechie seem doomed by their very innocence. The two misfits look for someone they can trust and a place they can call home as they flee across the deep south of Depression America, over dusty back roads from one tacky, cramped cabin to another, always under cover of dark. (Keechie wishes she could see the land "in daylight.") The fugitives long for nothing more than a semblance of security, but are betrayed by an adult world rife with cynicism and greed. With its stunning opening helicopter shot (reportedly the first in any movie) dispassionately surveying the escape of three convicts, its mood of romantic fatalism, and its nocturnal expressionism – all tense, tight compositions and stylized lighting – tempered by documentary-like naturalism, *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* enjoys a reputation as "a key film noir of the 40s" (Dave Kehr, *Chicago Reader*). But its tone is more that of a tender, forlorn ballad, and the two young leads, supernal and heartbreaking in their awkwardness and naive belief in love transcendent, will make you weep. "Ray has been quoted as saying that he considered *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* a near-perfect film and that, were he given the opportunity, he would change very little in it. One could hardly quarrel with this view" (Jean-Pierre Coursodon).

Friday, February 7 6:30 p.m.

RECENTLY STRUCK 35MM PRINT!

JOHNNY GUITAR

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1954 110 minutes
Cast: Joan Crawford, Sterling Hayden

Truffaut called *JOHNNY GUITAR* a "hallucinatory" western, and you may feel you have popped one too many peyotes as you stare into the Trucolor delirium of this gorgeous Freudian, Wagnerian, Sophoclean, Marxist, anti-McCarthyist, feminist, gender- and genre-bending classic. Even if some of its strangeness was not of Ray's making – Crawford, for instance, decided on her own to "masculinize" her character to usurp the star male role – the director can take full credit for the beauty that attends the bizarre and the baroque. Crawford, beyond butch in jut jaw and lean jeans, is saloon owner Vienna. Her ex-lover Johnny Guitar (stolid Sterling) arrives from the past to protect her from the lynching locals who object to her plans for modernizing the town. The struggle, however, is less about land than about love; her arch-nemesis Emma Small (Mercedes McCambridge, hell-fire in a dress) is fixated on Dancin' Kid, who has eyes only for Vienna. When Emma and Vienna, the virago and the valkyrie, finally have their duel in the sun, the vehemence with which Crawford and McCambridge do battle suggests they are carrying whole stagecoaches of extra-filmic baggage. (McCambridge was married to a man whom Crawford had recently dated.) Despite the occasional camp histrionics, *JOHNNY GUITAR* is shot through with Ray's dark romanticism, and the dreamlike *liebestod* between Johnny and Vienna has often been invoked or quoted in other films, including Godard's *LE PETIT SOLDAT* and *JLG/JLG*. Everything in *GUITAR* – clothes, colours, locales – seems heavily coded (watch what happens to Vienna's white dress and to Emma's black-veiled hat) to serve the sexual and political allegory. "Ray's most bizarre film, and probably his most personal" (Andrew Sarris).

Saturday, February 8 4:00 p.m.

RARE PRINT! FLYING LEATHERNECKS

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1951 102 minutes
Cast: John Wayne, Robert Ryan

A rare Ray in a preservation print from 3-strip Technicolor elements. Made as the Cold War was escalating, *FLYING LEATHERNECKS* pitted the liberal sensibilities of its director and star Robert Ryan against the right-wing jingoism of John Wayne (who ended every political argument on set by barking, "you're all full of shit!"). Hollywood professionalism prevailed, and the result could hardly be more exciting. Griffin, the captain of a squadron of Marine fighters in the battle of Guadalcanal, is determined that his men not be expendable. Martinet major Kirby feels otherwise. The struggle between the two gnarly antagonists is set against lush landscapes (California standing in for the Solomon Islands) and astonishing documentary footage of aerial combat. With its asides about psychiatry, allusions to Donne's poetry, blazing, realistic battle scenes, and its sense of defeat (rather than heroics), *FLYING LEATHERNECKS* may seem Ray all the way despite its conventional scenario, which was cobbled from many sources.

Saturday, February 8 6:30 p.m.

RARE PRINT! BORN TO BE BAD

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1950 94 minutes
Cast: Joan Fontaine, Robert Ryan

Christabel Caine's mock-Biblical name tells us she may be Satan's sister. Cast against type, Joan Fontaine plays the scheming bitch with a smirk that suggests the men she manipulates should be happy to be duped by such a blonde hottie. Ward of her Aunt Clara, Christabel swishes in from the sticks to her chic San Francisco digs, and promptly steals millionaire Curtis Carey from her affianced cousin. Just when it seems everybody in Frisco must have a name that begins with "C," novelist Nick Bradley (Robert Ryan) enters the scene to snatch Christabel's ice-cold heart. Nick represents art and authenticity to Christabel's intrigue and artifice, and she is soon torn between her luxe life and his hardscrabble virility. Able to her Caine, Nick is clearly a match for Christabel's every connivance. Will Christabel be crucified? Ray seems an unlikely director for this sardonic melodrama with its LAURA-like touches, but he loads it with enough mean sheen – the dresses and decor are deluxe – to make it immensely enjoyable. Carol Burnett parodied the film in her celebrated skit, "Raised to be Rotten." "Rigorously unsentimental . . . beautifully staged and photographed . . . with a nice comic tartness" (James Harvey).

Tuesday, February 11 6:30 p.m.



ARCHIVAL PRINT! A WOMAN'S SECRET

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1949 84 minutes
Cast: Maureen O'Hara, Mervyn Douglas

Drawing on *CITIZEN KANE* and prefiguring *ALL ABOUT EVE*, Herman J. Mankiewicz's script for *A WOMAN'S SECRET* spins a twisty tale, told in a series of overlapping, sometimes contradictory flashbacks so that the past becomes a shifting chimera of unreliable accounts. Starchily named New York entertainer Marion Washburn (Maureen O'Hara), having lost her singing voice, takes on a young protégée from small-town California and learns to regret it. Sarah Caldwell, whose stage name is Estrellita, proves to be less starchy than unstable, especially around men and Lugers. Ray loathed everything about the project except Gloria Grahame, who plays Sarah with fierce fragility; he met the glorious Grahame on set and later married her. But he managed to bring crackling cynicism to the studio gloss, and George Diskant's crisp black-and-white camerawork maintains its *noir* elegance even as the rampant flashbacks suddenly wind up in a narratively unlikely and blatantly artificial Algiers. 35mm archival print courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C..

Thursday, February 13 6:30 p.m.

RESTORED 35MM PRINT! IN A LONELY PLACE

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1950 94 minutes
Cast: Humphrey Bogart, Gloria Grahame

"I was born when she kissed me. I died when she left me. I lived a few weeks while she loved me." Brooding and unbearably tender, Ray's masterpiece turns Hollywood into the loneliest place on earth. Bogart gives one of his greatest performances as Dixon Steele, a bitter, burned-out screenwriter accused of murdering a hat-check girl. Gloria Grahame exudes tough vulnerability as Laurel Grey, the girl next door who gives him a false alibi, has her faith in his innocence shaken when she witnesses his homicidal rage, and begins to fear she could be his next victim. Ray builds the film's bleak tale of suspicion around an enclosed setting, an LA apartment complex that is part sanctuary for lost souls, part courtyard of the damned. Bogart seethes with such pent-up malevolence and self-hatred that his helplessness in the face of Grahame's growing distrust takes on a haunting ambiguity. The recent restoration by Sony Pictures Entertainment gives the film, already one of Ray's most classical and contained, unnerving allure. "Few films, regardless of their dubious ties to film noir, are as expertly executed, concise and profound as Nicholas Ray's *IN A LONELY PLACE*. . . . Much like Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, *IN A LONELY PLACE* rivals Herzog's *AGUIRRE*, Bresson's *PICKPOCKET*, and Tarkovsky's *STALKER* as the definitive cinematic, existentialist primer" (Ed Gonzalez, *Slant Magazine*). Restored print courtesy of Sony Pictures Entertainment.

Thursday, February 13 8:15 p.m.

(note early start time)

Saturday, February 15 4:30 p.m.

RARE PRINT! THE LUSTY MEN

Director: Nicholas Ray • USA 1952 112 minutes • Cast: Robert Mitchum, Susan Hayward

"A masterpiece by Nicholas Ray – perhaps the most melancholy and reflective of his films" (Dave Kehr, *Chicago Reader*), *THE LUSTY MEN* ranks high in the Ray pantheon. Though the original posters for the film proclaimed, "Make a buck, spend it fast. Meet a dame, kiss her quick!" the film's title and pulpy promotion belie its forlorn tone. As James Harvey writes in his appreciation of the film, *THE LUSTY MEN* is "probably the most *simply* beautiful of all [Ray's] movies. The feelings of loss and loneliness, of displacement and yearning, seem as pure and glowing as Lee Garmes's remarkable black-and-white photography." Prefiguring the world-wise and weary Matt Dow in *RUN FOR COVER*, Robert Mitchum gives a magnificent performance as Jeff, an aging bronco buster who hitches up with an ambitious young rodeo rider (Arthur Kennedy) and his wife (Susan Hayward, never finer) in a last ditch attempt to find a place for himself in the world. Everyone seems to have a favourite epiphany from this film – Wim Wenders, David Thomson, and others have noted theirs – but the atmosphere of dust, drift, and desperation, is also elegiac and abject.

Friday, February 14 6:30 p.m.

RESTORED 35MM PRINT! KNOCK ON ANY DOOR

Director: Nicholas Ray • USA 1949 100 minutes • Cast: Humphrey Bogart, John Derek

We are pleased to present the UCLA Film and Television Archive's recent restoration of Ray's hard-hitting courtroom drama, which in many ways is a precursor of *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*. "Live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse" is the motto of pretty boy Nick Romano who faces the electric chair for the murder of a policeman. A crusading lawyer (Bogart) methodically probes Nick's history to prove he is innocent. (He narrates in flashback, a device Ray wanted to avoid after the corkscrew structure of *A WOMAN'S SECRET*.) A childhood in the slums, a descent into delinquency, and a brief moment of happiness with a woman that ended in tragedy: these, Bogart argues, made Nick into a petty criminal, but not a cop killer. Ray characteristically is less interested in the mechanics of the courtroom genre, and more in the anguish of his lonely, broken characters. John Derek, who later played Davey in *RUN FOR COVER*, is memorable as the baby-faced manipulator Nick; many critics have found his narcissism so utter, they seem to want to strap him into the chair themselves. "Hard hitting . . . tautly crafted, and repeatedly stabbed through with Ray's impulsive generosity and anguish towards his characters" (*Time Out*).

Friday, February 14 8:45 p.m.



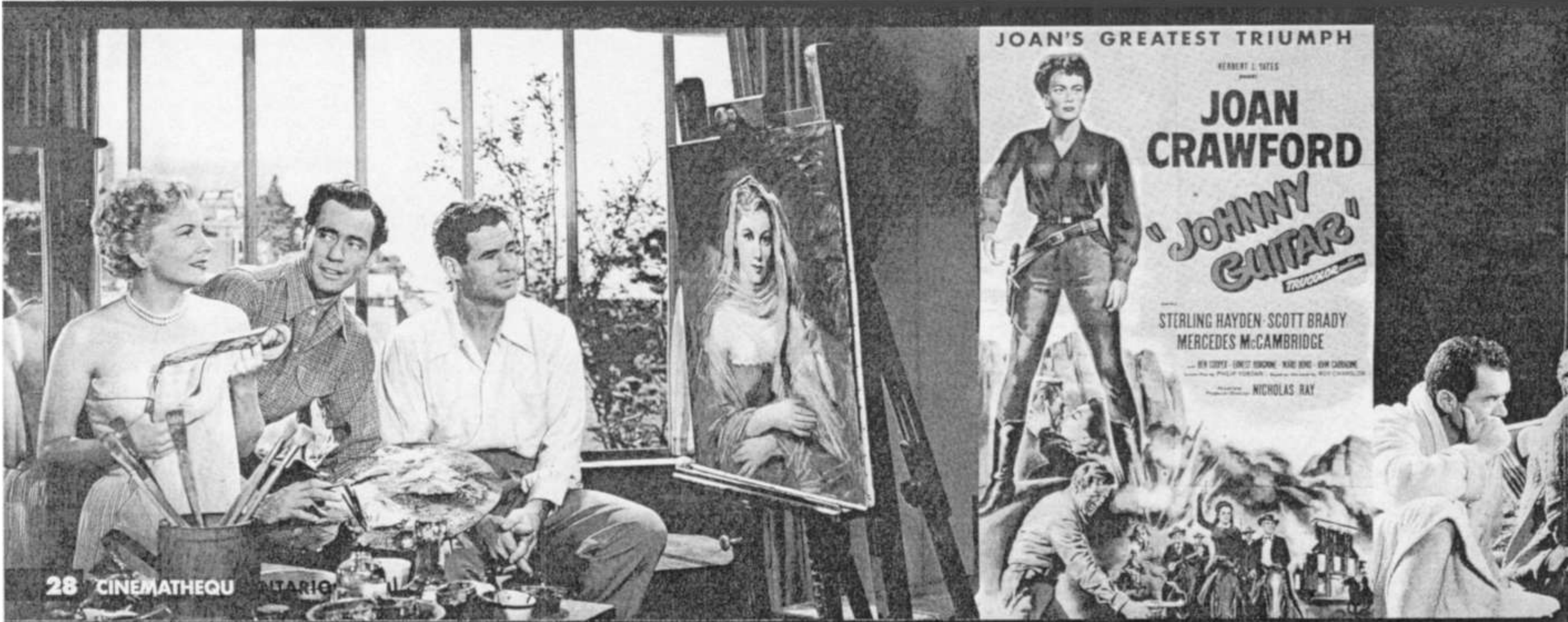
ON DANGEROUS GROUND

Director: Nicholas Ray • USA 1951 82 minutes
Cast: Robert Ryan, Ida Lupino

Perhaps the purest expression of Ray's belief in the transformative power of love and a classic of its genre, *ON DANGEROUS GROUND* is among his most beautiful and moving works. Written by A. I. Bezzerides of *KISS ME DEADLY* fame, the film opens in the harsh urban world of *noir*, Bernard Herrmann's score flaying nerves as Robert Ryan's coiled cop takes to the mean streets as a semi-psychotic avenging angel. "Why do you make me do it?" the tormented Ryan screams at the latest lowlife he pummels within an inch of his life. Exiled to wintry upstate, Ryan finds himself in the midst of a rural revenge drama, with local vigilantes after the killer of a young girl. His investigation leads him to the home of a blind woman (Ida Lupino) who is harbouring her mentally disturbed brother from the mob. In this lonely place with its snowy fields and glowering winter skies, Ryan learns that all humanity is not hateful, and that a pure heart can still heal. (It is hard to say what is more stirring: Ryan's forsaken aloneness or Lupino's isolate vulnerability.) The daring stylistic and tonal contrasts between the film's two halves, and the theme of the difference between moral and physical sight, intensify the film's tragic irony. In the end, all ground seems dangerous.

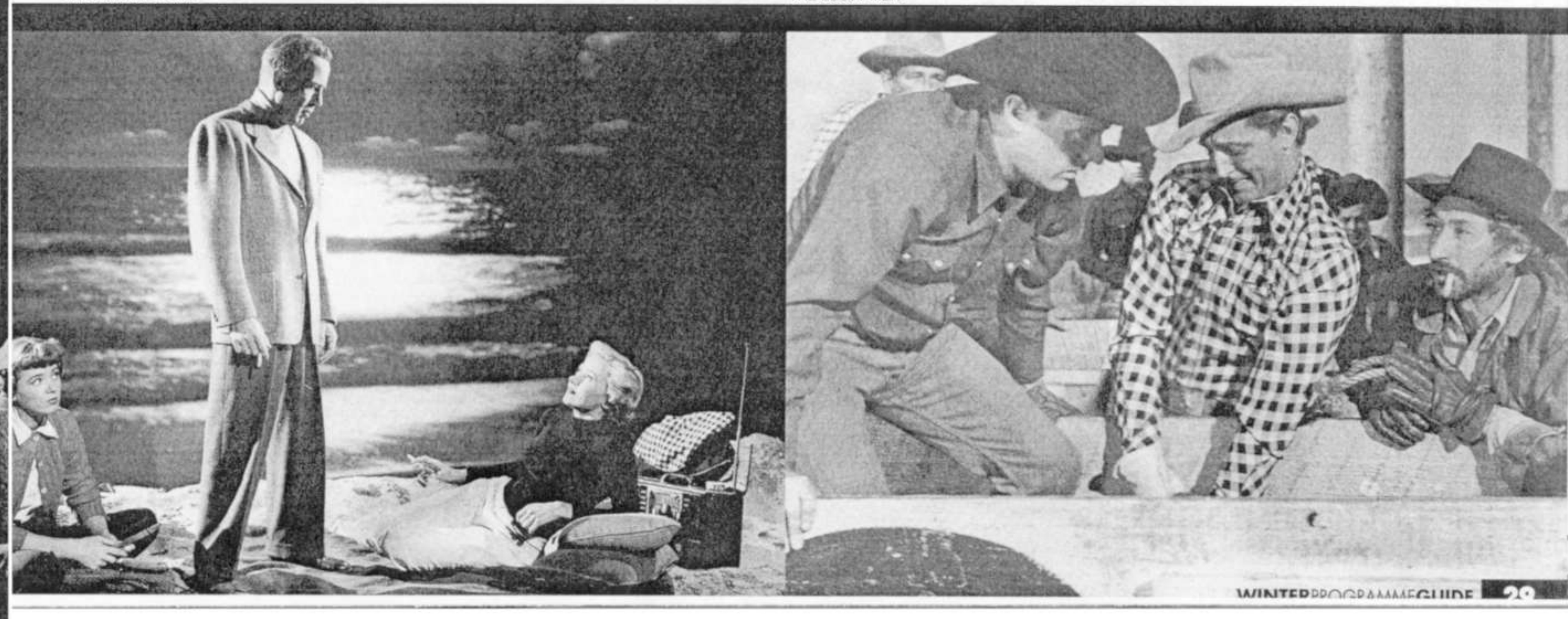
Saturday, February 15 6:30 p.m.

BORN TO BE BAD



JOHNNY GUITAR

IN A LONELY PLACE



THE LUSTY MEN



NEW SCOPE PRINT! BIGGER THAN LIFE

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1956 95 minutes
Cast: James Mason, Barbara Rush

"Perhaps Ray's greatest film" (Geoff Andrew), **BIGGER THAN LIFE** is a central work of fifties cinema, a magnificent melodrama that towers alongside Sirk's, Minnelli's, and Ophuls' of the same period. Eric Rohmer wrote in his review: "The true subject of **BIGGER THAN LIFE** is perhaps neither medicine nor madness but life, everyday life, this uneventful life whose story can be told only by a story as extraordinary as this one." James Mason gives a performance of racking accuracy as a school teacher whose gentle patience and liberal aspirations as father, husband, and instructor suddenly turn into malevolent, even murderous psychosis. The American Dream, which he and his family seem to embody, becomes a nightmare as the side effects of a cortisone treatment make Mason a monster. Driven by delusions of grandeur, he declares that "God was wrong" and turns into a black-clad holy avenger, ready to sacrifice his own son. (The film is full of Biblical imagery of death and redemption.) **BIGGER THAN LIFE** has been inexhaustibly analyzed as a "text" about patriarchy and the family, institutional authority and domestic paranoia, about the pretense of social and economic stability in fifties America, but its formal beauty is also indelible. It masterfully employs both the CinemaScope frame, whose horizontal sprawl is used here to constrain, and expressionistic colour – bold flurries of primaries or patterning against monochrome backgrounds – to convey the simultaneous entrapment and entropy of the seemingly secure world of home, store, and school. (This is the film that prompted Robin Wood to declare, "What Welles was to deep focus, Ray was to CinemaScope.") Whether the ending affirms the institutions the film appears to critique, or whether it reveals them as tenuous and oppressive, is just one of many points of debate about **BIGGER THAN LIFE**, which Godard chose as one of the ten best American films of the sound era. "Ray's most powerful film, and in some respects his most important" (Jonathan Rosenbaum). This new print comes to us courtesy of 20th Century Fox.

Sunday, February 16 1:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 20 6:30 p.m.

FREE SCREENING!

RARE RAY! HIGH GREEN WALL

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1954 26 minutes
Cast: Joseph Cotten, Thomas Gomez

A television film made for "General Electric Theater," **HIGH GREEN WALL** was "directed by Ray with full mastery of his medium" (Bernard Eisenschitz). Based on the Evelyn Waugh short story, "The Man Who Liked Dickens," the teleplay focuses, as many of Ray's films do, on the struggle between two dissimilar men: Henty (Joseph Cotten) and McMaster (Thomas Gomez). When Henty collapses in the jungle, he is saved by the Dickens-loving and quite mad McMaster, who has fled civilization. Imprisoned within the jungle's "high green wall," the two play out a cat-and-mouse game involving daily readings of Dickens' novels. "A work of cruelty and despair [that] foreshadows the climate of madness in which the characters become immersed, which was to mark the next phase in Ray's work, especially if one remembers that those next films were **BIGGER THAN LIFE**, **BITTER VICTORY**, and **WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES**" (A. P. Vascencelos).

followed by

I'M A STRANGER HERE MYSELF: A PORTRAIT OF NICHOLAS RAY

Director: David Helfern Jr.
USA 1974 60 minutes
With: Nicholas Ray, Natalie Wood

The title of this illuminating documentary, written by critic Myron Meisel, is taken from the famous line uttered in **JOHNNY GUITAR**. Including clips from five of his films, **I'M A STRANGER HERE MYSELF** traverses Ray's life and career from his involvement in left-wing theatre in New York during the thirties to his long stint in Hollywood and his final years as teacher and mentor. Ray weighs in about the creative process, film critics, and actors, and François Truffaut, John Houseman, and Natalie Wood offer their appraisals of his work. In the context of this retrospective, the film is especially invaluable in placing Ray's work in a historical and political context.

Sunday, February 16 3:00 p.m.

Patrons please note:
this is a free, non-ticketed event.
Seating on a first come, first-served basis

NICK



REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

Director: Nicholas Ray • USA 1955 111 minutes
Cast: James Dean, Natalie Wood

"You're tearing me apart!" howls James Dean as troubled teen Jim Stark, his red windbreaker, soon to be a death shroud, pulsating like an ensign of pain in the CinemaScope frame. Dean tears *us* apart in this, Ray's most famous film, as the blonde embodiment of alienated post-war American youth, and as a walking *memento mori* – he soon was to "make the face of Heaven so fine" after dying in a car crash. The beautiful, doomed Dean plays a boozing, brawling bad boy whose tender soul is revealed in the very first scene, when he covers up a wind-up toy monkey abandoned in the gutter. Contemptuous of his middle-class parents – a domineering mother and meek, well-meaning father (Jim Backus in an apron) – Jim creates his own family, "with the emotionally injured Judy (Natalie Wood) and rich kid Plato (Sal Mineo), a neurotic who shoots puppies on his birthday and keeps a photo of Alan Ladd in his school locker. With its feverish sense of fifties youth culture (hoods and "chicken runs") and sexual confusion, its Gothic interludes (the deserted mansion, literally out of **SUNSET BOULEVARD**), Aristotelean unity of time (less than twenty-four hours), and romantic sense of cosmic fate (the "burst of gas and fire" in the famous planetarium sequence), **REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE** was, as the cliché has it, an instant classic. Though it is now treasured more for its iconic and formal richness (the use of colour and Scope still astonishes), its sociological and semiotic density, **REBEL** remains the original and greatest statement about the anger and alienation that fill the gulf between parent and child, adult and adolescent. "Dean's finest film . . . still the best of the youth movies" (*Time Out*).

Tuesday, February 18 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 22 2:00 p.m.

(part of the Saturday Movie Matinee Series)

RUN FOR COVER

Director: Nicholas Ray • USA 1955 93 minutes
Cast: James Cagney, John Derek

James Cagney attempted to revive his waning career in **RUN FOR COVER**, and Ray elicited from him a hitherto hidden serenity and solitude to balance the actor's trademark brashness and intensity. Ray's VistaVision western explores the relationship between aging drifter Matt Dow (Cagney), fresh out of prison and determined to go straight, and his "surrogate son," orphan Dave; Bishop. The gun wound and subsequent impairment Davey suffers early in the film become a mark both of Matt's guilt and of Davey's moral flaw. When the two men accidentally become embroiled in a train robbery, their Oedipal struggle turns deadly. Ray's sense of locale is typically vivid, from the world of Swedish immigrant farmers to the actual native ruins (in Aztec, New Mexico) which give the final confrontation its fateful geometry. Much prized by French critics including Jacques Rivette, **RUN FOR COVER** ends with a classic lay utterance, three words that come as a kind of bitter benediction. A strangely gentle, even poignant western, and Ray's sensitive handling of actors and his exact compositional sense are as much in evidence as ever" (Geoff Andrew, *Time Out*).

Thursday, February 20 8:30 p.m.
(note early start time)

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

NEW SCOPE PRINT!

HOT BLOOD

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1956 85 minutes
Cast: Jane Russell, Cornel Wilde

A recently struck Scope print of Ray's wild gypsy drama – "definitely one of the more intriguing and neglected of Ray's second-degree efforts" (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*) – which combines the director's fascination with the folkloric and his sympathy for outcasts with the bold formal and compositional possibilities of widescreen and colour. Originally intended as a musical, **HOT BLOOD** indeed "comes closer than any of Ray's other movies to the musical that he always dreamed of making: there's a defiant dance on the street performed by Cornel Wilde, a dynamic whip dance between Wilde and Jane Russell that's even more kinetic, and a Gypsy chorus that figures in other parts" (Rosenbaum). A vast amount of sociological research about American gypsy culture went into the script, and Ray obviously intended the film as a kind of ethnographic portrait of an "alien" culture, much as he would in **WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES** and **THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS**. But authenticity was displaced by Hollywood spectacle, and the film is a hot and gaudy plunge into the passions of an "exotic" clan of gypsies, tramps, and thieves. Jane Russell is dark, flashing, and breasty as the hot-blooded Annie Caldash who is locked into an arranged marriage to a man from a rival tribe of gypsies (Cornel Wilde). Ray's sense of freedom is everywhere apparent: a subjective shot suddenly turns the Scope image upside down, splashes of brassy colour pump up the palette, and realism keeps giving way to mid-fifties artifice. No wonder "the future filmmakers of the *Nouvelle Vague* made no mistake – and no extravagant interpretations – in recognizing it as an example of the kind of cinema they wanted to create. "After **REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE**, Ray gives us his cause for living with this intelligent, devil-may-care film, bursting with health and life," wrote François Truffaut in *Arts*" (Bernard Eisenschitz).

Saturday, February 22 4:15 p.m.

NEW SCOPE PRINT!

PARTY GIRL

Director: Nicholas Ray • USA 1958 99 minutes • Cast: Robert Taylor, Cyd Charisse

A smashing Scope print of a true cult film, beloved by *nouvelle vague* directors and French critics who saw it as the supreme statement of Ray's belief in the redemptive power of love. (Fereydon Hoveyda's essay on **PARTY GIRL** is a classic of fifties *Cahiers du cinéma* rapture: "A brilliant film . . . There are torrents of inventiveness. Every sequence is a cascade of ideas. . . . It should be clear that I think **PARTY GIRL** is Ray's most interesting film to date.") Set in Chicago during Prohibition, **PARTY GIRL** employs a gaudy *mise en scène* to capture the violence of the time and the torment of the relationship between syndicate lawyer Robert Taylor and showgirl Cyd Charisse, an Oklahoma chorine who wants to be a big city model but ends up a gangland moll. (Charisse's celebrated gams provide crazy tension with the horizontals of the Scope image, and contrast symbolically with Taylor's hobbled leg.) Contorted with contempt, Lee J. Cobb rages as mob boss Rico Angelo, shooting up a photo of Jean Harlow in his baroque upholstered office, but his power ultimately proves impotent against the force of love. The film's atmosphere of bitter self-recognition (Charisse comments that both she and the lawyer are prostitutes), spangled spectacle, and acid-splashed violence is powerful, but Ray ensures the possibility of regeneration, most markedly in the Sirk-like healing of Taylor's affliction. "Ray's most beautiful film" (Joel Magny).

Sunday, March 2 1:00 p.m.

NEW 35MM PRINT!

THE TRUE STORY OF JESSE JAMES

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1957 93 minutes
Cast: Robert Wagner, Jeffrey Hunter

Increasingly among Ray's most admired films, though it was once seen as too histrionic and elaborate for its folk ballad approach, **THE TRUE STORY OF JESSE JAMES** opens with the James Gang's famous botched bank raid in Northfield, Minnesota in 1876. As a posse tracks down the James brothers, the film sets out to tell their "true story," which, in classic Ray fashion, shows Jesse turning outlaw as a reaction to the humiliation of Southern farmers in the aftermath of the Civil War. A romantic and rebel, leading a double life, Jesse is another of Ray's hurt heroes – confused, conflicted, contradictory – and Ray clearly sees him and his cohort as kin of the troubled teens in **REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE**: "THE TRUE STORY OF JESSE JAMES is a film about displaced youth following a way," he said. (Ray originally wanted Elvis Presley to play Jesse.) Superbly shot in CinemaScope with a sweeping, dynamic sense of space and enclosure, and punctuated by sad ballads delivered by a blind wandering minstrel, **JESSE JAMES** remakes a myth in very personal terms. This new 35mm print comes to us courtesy of 20th Century Fox.

Thursday, February 27 6:30 p.m.





NEW 35MM PRINT! WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES

Director: Nicholas Ray • USA 1958 93 minutes • Cast: Christopher Plummer, Burl Ives

We are grateful to Warner Bros. Toronto for having made a new print of this amazing film – “one of the touchstones of Ray’s work,” according to authority Bernard Eisenschitz – for the Ray retrospective. Once seen as a fabulous calamity, *WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES* is now frequently counted among the high points of Ray’s career. For instance, Serge Daney and Jonathan Rosenbaum have both claimed that the film is far superior to *APOCALYPSE NOW* in its portrayal of the struggle between a Willard-like Christopher Plummer, in one of his first film appearances, as an idealistic teacher, and a Kurtz-like Burl Ives, a thuggish plug of a man called Cottonmouth who is the spiritual leader of a gang of poachers who kill rare birds for their plumage in turn-of-the-century Florida. Ray daringly employs the western genre to deliver a powerful, prescient ecological protest, his interest in folkways and indigenous cultures giving the film a pungent sense of authenticity. “*WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES* succeeds where *APOCALYPSE* fails because Ray, a much greater director, finds substance as well as common cause in both his characters. . . . Some people might be scandalized by Daney’s preference (and mine) because they’ve never heard of Ray’s film. They can’t go trundling off to the video store expecting to find it and decide for themselves . . .” (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*).

Tuesday, March 4 6:30 p.m.

RARE SCREENING! TORONTO PREMIERE! WE CAN’T GO HOME AGAIN

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1973 90 minutes
Cast: Nicholas Ray, Tom Farrell

A rare print imported from Europe of a legendary film, made by Ray and a group of students at Harpur College, New York State University. A sense of desperate experimentation combined with naked self-revelation – both no doubt fuelled by Ray’s feeling of impending death – make *WE CAN’T GO HOME AGAIN* a crucial document in both the director’s filmography and in the history of American independent cinema. Subtitled “A Film by Us,” though its original title was *THE GUN UNDER MY PILLOW*, the film takes its cue from the Thomas Wolfe novel *You Can’t Go Home Again*. From the post-sixties terrain of American sexual and political unrest, the film fashions a vast, exasperating fresco of psychodrama, paranoia, and protest, recorded in various formats (35mm, 16mm, 8mm), mixing glimpses of such counterculture icons as Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden, Allen Ginsburg, and Abbie Hoffman with scenes of Ray and his students debating, shooting the film, and going to extraordinary lengths to finish it. (One young woman offers to prostitute herself for the necessary funds.) Increasingly seen as a prophetic work – its form predicts some of Godard’s experimentation with the fragmented image and the split-screen narratives of Mike Figgis – the film was greeted by some critics (mostly French) at the Cannes Film Festival as Ray’s most personal and revealing film since *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, and dismissed by others as chaotic and indulgent. Jonathan Rosenbaum aptly describes *WE CAN’T GO HOME AGAIN* as “cinema at the end of its tether.” Eminent film historian Shigehiko Hasumi recently selected this as a “lost classic” of international cinema.

Friday, March 7 6:30 p.m.



LIGHTNING OVER WATER

Directors: Wim Wenders, Nicholas Ray
USA 1980 91 minutes
With: Nicholas Ray, Wim Wenders

Wim Wenders collaborated with his “American friend” and mentor Nicholas Ray on this portrait of Ray’s final days. Suffering from terminal cancer, leonine but withering, Ray was determined not to die defeated and Wenders agreed to help him “bring himself altogether” by co-directing *LIGHTNING OVER WATER* (which in another version was called *NICK’S MOVIE*). Whether you see the resulting film as affectionate or voyeuristic, poignant or exploitative, or all of those things alternately or simultaneously, there is no denying its power. *LIGHTNING* includes sequences from the film Ray envisioned as his last, sequences in a Soho loft with friends and family, a lecture at Vassar College, and famous scenes from some of his films, including *THE LUSTY MEN* (whose influence is apparent in Wenders’ *PARIS, TEXAS*). Ray’s determination, humour, and sheer orneriness enliven a film that makes painfully literal Cocteau’s famous dictum that cinema is “death at work.” “Like Nick Ray, the film is grim and beautiful – skin and bones on celluloid, dignified by the sinew of courageous eloquence that was Ray’s to the last” (New York Film Festival).

Friday, March 7 8:30 p.m.
(note early start time)

THE AMERICAN FRIEND

(DER AMERIKANISCHE FREUND)
Director: Wim Wenders
Germany/France 1977 127 minutes
Cast: Dennis Hopper, Bruno Ganz

The first Toronto screening in over a decade of this key work of the New German Cinema. Based on Patricia Highsmith’s thriller *Ripley’s Game*, *THE AMERICAN FRIEND* is moody and atmospheric; Wenders rarely exhibited such tonal, compositional, and narrative control again. Zimmerman, a quiet Hamburg craftsman (Bruno Ganz) who discovers he is dying from a blood disease, encounters Ripley, “the American friend,” (Dennis Hopper) who offers him a deal: Ripley will ensure that Zimmerman’s wife and child are financially supported if he kills a European gangster. Shuttling between Hamburg, Paris, and New York, the film accumulates existential as well as conventional mystery; issues of identity and authenticity, of art forgery and restoration, of American violence and European tradition, coalesce into an image of a world of few frontiers, few borders, and even fewer scruples. The swindlers, imposters, and hangers-on who populate this shadowy world are all played by directors: Sam Fuller, Jean Eustache, Gerard Blain, Peter Lilienthal, Daniel Schmid, and, indelible in an eyepatch, Nicholas Ray. “The best-acted, the most beautifully photographed, the most exciting and entertaining work of the New German Cinema” (David Denby, *New York*).

Tuesday, March 4 8:30 p.m.
(note early start time)





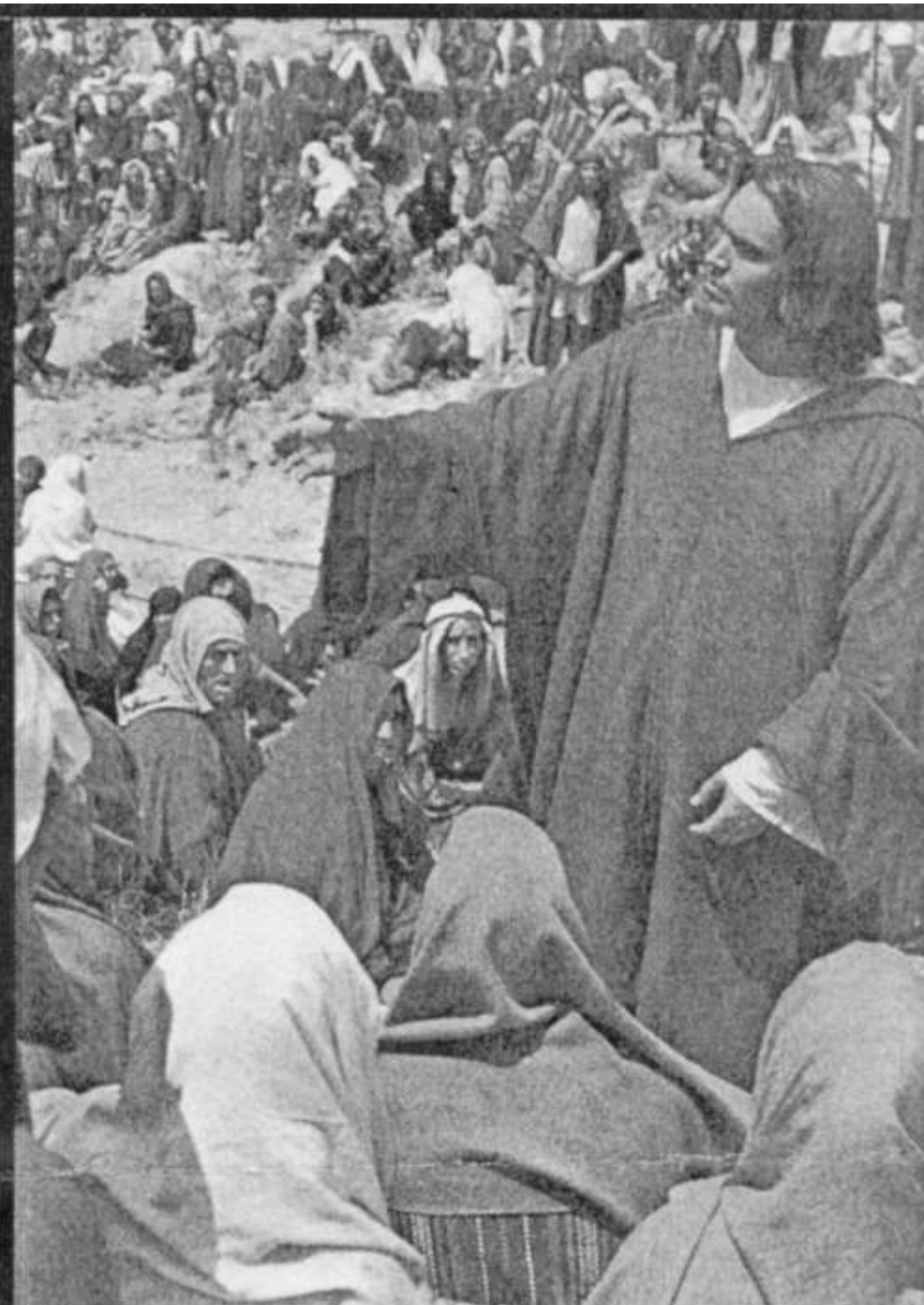
55 DAYS AT PEKING

RARE 35MM PRINT! 55 DAYS AT PEKING

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA/Spain 1962 154 minutes
Cast: Charlton Heston, Ava Gardner

Ray's second blockbuster shot in Spain for producer Charles Bronston has the starriest cast of any of his films, headlined by Charlton Heston, David Niven, and Ava Gardner. (Ray himself makes a cameo as the wheelchair bound American ambassador.) Major Matt Lewis (Heston) heads a multinational army sent to Peking during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 to save a group of sequestered diplomats from rampaging anti-Christian nationalists. Inside the besieged compound, running low on food and water, is a group of dignitaries, including the skittish British ambassador (David Niven) and the haughty Russian baroness (Ava Gardner). (The attraction she has for Major Matt is an early version of *détente*.) "Troubled" is hardly the word for the chaotic shoot that Ray decamped from, leaving the remainder of the film to be directed by Andrew Marton. (Parts of the vast set constructed outside of Madrid were never seen, much less used.) 55 DAYS AT PEKING is surprisingly cogent and stylish, given its rocky history; in a celebrated analysis, V. F. Perkins scrutinizes the way in which Ray directs against the script in a key sequence to establish "a counterpoint of harsh irony," thereby avoiding sentimentality. "A magnificent failure . . . full of delicious moments as Ray's camera cranes and swoops around his protagonists, almost taking us back to the nervous grandeur of JOHNNY GUITAR" (*Time Out*).

Saturday, March 8 5:00 p.m.



KING OF KINGS

KING OF KINGS

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA 1961 168 minutes
Cast: Jeffrey Hunter, Robert Ryan

KING OF KINGS surprised critics as a profound, affecting story of Christ – personal, moving, even idiosyncratic, with many singular Ray touches. (Some have noted that the Saviour's red cloak recalls James Dean's windbreaker in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, etc.) Made in Spain for producer Charles Bronston and seemingly destined to be an anonymous super-production, full of widescreen spectacle and little feeling, KING OF KINGS is instead a simple, deeply felt, and intelligent epic. Reflecting Ray's liberal politics, it focuses less on a Sunday school rendition of the passion of Christ than on the Judean revolt against Roman oppression, and makes marked parallels between the Romans and Nazis. Ray was determined to avoid the visual traditions and clichés of "the greatest story ever told," presenting it as if it were happening "before us for the first time." Among his most striking and original sequences is The Sermon on the Mount, where complicated tracking shots bring great dramatic rhythm and intimacy to the question-and-answer between Jesus and the crowd. An obvious influence on Martin Scorsese's *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*, KING OF KINGS is "an intelligent, imaginative movie . . . Ray's simple but elegant visuals . . . achieve a stirring dramatic power" (Geoff Andrew, *Time Out*).

Sunday, March 9 1:00 p.m.

THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS

Director: Nicholas Ray
Italy/UK/France 1960 107 minutes
Cast: Anthony Quinn, Yoko Tani

Andrew Sarris placed *THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS* on the same ten best list of the year as *BREATHLESS* (and Ray's *KING OF KINGS*), and Godard placed it above Mizoguchi's *SANSHO THE BAILIFF*, Hitchcock's *PSYCHO*, and Truffaut's *SHOOT THE PIANO PLAYER* on his own annual ten best. A decisive break with Hollywood, *THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS* is set in the Canadian Arctic, where Ray did extensive ethnographic research for his tale of Inuk (Anthony Quinn, immortalized as "Quinn the Eskimo" by Bob Dylan), an aboriginal who becomes a fugitive from the law when he kills a priest for refusing his wife's sexual favours (a native custom). Peter O'Toole is one of the two Mounties who pursue Inuk across the tundra; though it was his film debut, he had his name removed from the credits when he discovered his voice would be dubbed. (This was the least of the film's many misfortunes; a great deal of precious footage painstakingly shot in the Arctic was lost in a plane crash.) Capitalism and Christianity seem in cahoots against Natural Man in Ray's widescreen allegory, which has long been impossible to see in North America. "Rare, remarkable, and distinctively 'Ray'" (National Film Theatre, London). "One of Ray's most powerful films about honour and alien folkways, and the icy landscapes are hauntingly beautiful" (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*).

Tuesday, March 11 8:45 p.m.

NEW RESTORED FULL-LENGTH PRINT! BITTER VICTORY

Director: Nicholas Ray
USA/France 1957 103 minutes
Cast: Richard Burton, Curt Jurgens

We are pleased to present the full-length restoration (by Sony Pictures Entertainment) of the film that prompted Godard to make his famous pronouncement: "*Le cinéma, c'est Nicholas Ray*." Godard selected the film as the best of its year, but because it was severely re-edited twice after failing at the box office (losing twenty minutes and narrative coherence in the process), *BITTER VICTORY* took a long time to achieve its current stature as the "buried treasure" of Ray's oeuvre. "Above all, it's such a terrific movie," James Harvey writes in his chapter-long appreciation of *BITTER VICTORY* in *Movie Love in the Fifties*, claiming that it was Ray's last great film: "The fluency and brilliance of the filmmaking, the easy rich expressiveness of even its smallest details, the power and profundity of its high points – it all could almost persuade you while you're under its spell, that Nicholas Ray was the cinema." Set in the Libyan desert during World War II, the film pivots on the conflict between two British officers, the cynical Captain Leith (Richard Burton) and the cowardly Major Brand (Curt [then called Curt] Jurgens). Jealous of the affair Leith had with his wife (Ruth Roman in a role designed for Moira Shearer), Brand attempts to have the captain killed, thereby setting in motion a series of disasters that lead to his own "bitter victory." Though the original posters shrieked "30 Fighting 'Desert Rats' Invade Africa's Fortress!" and the film does create immense excitement out of the campaign against the Nazis, it is essentially a psychological chamber drama played out against the vast void of the desert. (The black-and-white Scope cinematography and haunting score have mesmeric power.) Leith's famous observation, "I kill the living and save the dead," captures the film's anti-heroic sense of futility and humiliation, its "almost Orwellian trenchancy" (Harvey).

Tuesday, March 11 6:30 p.m.

