

Document Citation

Title	The pleasure garden
Author(s)	David Stewart Hull John Gillett
Source	<i>Dartmouth Film Society</i>
Date	
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The lodger: a story of the London fog, Hitchcock, Alfred, 1927 The pleasure garden, Hitchcock, Alfred, 1927

Dartmouth Film Society Film Notes

ALFRED HITCHCOCK SILENT FILM DOUBLE BILL

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Great Britain-Germany (1925)

Patsy Brand	Virginia Valli	Hamilton	George Snell
Jill Cheyne	Carmelita Geraghty	Prince Ivan	C. Falkenburg
Levet	Miles Mander	Mr. Sidey	F. Martini
Hugh Fielding	John Stuart	Mrs. Sidey	Florence Helmingier
The Native Girl	Nita Naldi		

Script by Eliot Stannard from the novel of the same name by Oliver Sandys. Photographed by Baron Ventimiglia. Assistant director, Alma Reville. Produced by Michael Balcon for Gainsborough-Emelka Studios (Munich). Released in America October 31, 1926, by Aywon Independent Distributors.

Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK

"THE PLEASURE GARDEN was just an assignment, but again there was the American influence. Balcon came out to Munich, where I had shot it, to see the first cut. He hadn't seen the rushes or anything. And his first remark was, 'Well, it doesn't look like a continental picture. It looks like an American picture.' The cameraman, although he was Italian, had worked with American directors and was very conscious of American techniques. I think the headline in the Daily Express on THE PLEASURE GARDEN was 'Young Man with a Master Mind.' That was the first picture."

Alfred Hitchcock

It is always interesting to compare a contemporary review with a revival of a film, in this case, forty years later. The Bioscope critic in March 1926 praised THE PLEASURE GARDEN as a "powerful and interesting story...this has been well adapted to the screen, and admirable acting and masterly production all combine to make this a film of outstanding merit. The story is clearly and logically constructed, the sub-titling is concise and to the point, and the dramatic interest is held to the last minute. The scenes during Patsy's honeymoon on Lake Como, photographed by Baron Ventimiglia, present enchanting pictures and assist the dramatic appeal of the story. As Alfred Hitchcock's first production, this promises well for future efforts."

An unusually accurate prophecy, in fact. The Bioscope critic had probably reviewed a dozen similar British films of the middle '20's but had recognized (perhaps accidentally) that this one had a degree of confidence and sharpness missing from many of the others. The main trouble with the film is that the material (noveletish romance between two young actresses, a handsome hero and a dissipated Empire builder) does not allow for anything but the most straightforward treatment. Hitchcock makes the most of the early scenes of theatrical and boarding house life, only to be defeated (not surprisingly) by the later twists of the plot with its conventional portrait of adultery and alcoholism "out East." This is not Hitchcock's country, in fact, and there is little evidence of his subsequent development in this competent, small-scale melodrama. Connoisseurs may, however, detect a trace of the Master's later style in the brief murder scene at the picture's climax--here, atmospheric lighting and sharp cutting are used to a good effect. Visually, the film benefits from Baron Ventimiglia's evocative photography notably, as the Bioscope points out, in the Lake Como episodes. The only version available appears to be slightly shorter than the original release print.

Hitchcock's success with his first film resulted in Balcon rewarding the twenty-five year old director with a contract for four further pictures.

John Gillett
(British Film Institute)

THE LODGER
Great Britain (1926)

Mr. Sleuth
Robert Bunting
Ellen

Ivor Novello
Arthur Chesney
Marie Ault

Miss Daisy
Joe Chandler

June
Malcolm Keen

Scenario by Alfred Hitchcock and Eliot Stannard, based on the book of the same name by Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes. Photographed by Baron Ventigmilia. Designed by C. Wilfred Arnold and Bertram Evans. Edited and titles designed by Ivor Montagu. Assistant director, Alma Reville. Produced by Michael Balcon for Gainsborough Productions. Released in America in 1928 by Amer-Anglo Corporation.

Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK

It is generally agreed that THE LODGER was the first really "Hitchcockian" film, and the best of his silent works. The only available print, in the Museum of Modern Art collection, leaves much to be desired, but most of the film is there, with only a few scenes missing. There is a splice at the moment the director's name appears, but be assured this is Hitchcock's film.

THE LODGER is a very curious work, based on a thriller by Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes which has been filmed at least three times. It is, of course, a variation on the Jack-the-Ripper story, and has a truly remarkable number of red-herrings strewn about its erratic course. A rather freakish decision was made by the studio to cast the popular matinee idol-author-composer Ivor Novello in the leading role. This resulted in a problem which Hitchcock had to face again with the casting of Cary Grant in SUSPICION: how can anyone so popular be cast as a murderer? In any case, Novello, looking somewhat like an effeminate Dracula in his first appearance, added a note of unintentional hilarity to the film which was most unwelcome.

If THE PLEASURE GARDEN was influenced by America, THE LODGER is very German in its techniques. As Hitchcock admitted, "You have to remember that a year before, I was working on the Ufa lot in Berlin --I worked there for many months, at the same time as Jannings was making THE LAST LAUGH with Murnau. And I was able to absorb a lot of the methods and style."

Hitchcock also tells how the scenes of Novello pacing back and forth were achieved. "I had a floor made of one-inch thick plate-glass, about six feet square. This was the visual substitution for sound, you see. Just as much as the set I had built for when the lodger went out late at night--almost to the ceiling of the studio, showing four flights of stairs and a handrail. And all you see is a hand going down. That was, of course, from the point of view of the mother listening. Today we would substitute sound for that. Although I think that the handrail shot would be worthy of today in addition to the sound."

This was also the first film in which Hitchcock appeared. He can be seen for a second or two in the foreground at a desk in the newspaper office scene but it is extremely hard to spot him. He admits that he appeared in the scene because there were not enough extras on the set and someone had to fill in.

The film is interesting for its introduction of certain ideas which will appear in his later work. The flashing sign at the start of the film was to be an important element in BLACKMAIL (1929). The shot down the stairway was to be used again and again, culminating in its most important use in VERTIGO (1958). And the shots of June wiggling her toes in the bathtub, the knocking on the bathroom door and so forth all point to PSYCHO (1960).

On December 2, 1926, Hitchcock married his assistant directress and script girl, Alma Reville. Their only child, Patricia, appears in several of the American films.

David Stewart Hull

THE SILENT FILMS OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK: THE PLEASURE GARDEN (1925); THE MOUNTAIN EAGLE (1926); THE LODGER (1926); DOWNHILL (1927); EASY VIRTUE (1927); THE RING (1927); THE FARMER'S WIFE (1928); CHAMPAGNE (1928); THE MANXMAN (1929). Previous to this, Hitchcock had worked in various capacities on seven films, even directing certain scenes, but he does not consider any film his own until THE PLEASURE GARDEN.

The piano scores for our showings are provided by Mrs. Hazel Carlson, whose fine work will be familiar to our members from past seasons.

The Hitchcock series continues with THE 39 STEPS on October 30th (Saturday) at 10:30 pm and October 31st (Sunday) at 4:00. This is the first of Hitchcock's films to attract major attention in America and it still remains one of his most satisfying films.