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The thirty-nine steps, Hitchcock, Alfred, 1935

Murder!, Hitchcock, Alfred, 1930

Alfred Hitchcock



BLACKMAIL

(1929) Great Britain

B & W 85 Minutes

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

With Anny Ondra and Sara

Allgood.

Blackmail was the first sound film by the master of suspense. Apparently influenced by the German expressionists, Hitchcock weaves a fascinating story around a police detective and his girlfriend. After a quarrel, the girl gets picked up by an artist who tries to rape her. She kills him in self defense and her boyfriend is assigned to the case. All the evidence points to her, so a blackmailer attempts to exploit the difficult situation. A classic chase scene in the British Museum sets the pace for the film's immortal climax. **Blackmail** is regarded as a terribly important film in Hitchcock's cinematic development.

DIAL M FOR MURDER

(1954) U.S.A.

Color 105 Minutes

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

With Ray Milland, Grace Kelley, and Robert Cummings.

Dial M For Murder, based upon a stage play, is among Hitchcock's most complicated murder mysteries. When Grace Kelley kills the man her husband had hired to assassinate her, the clever husband concocts a cast of premeditated murder around the event and convinces Scotland Yard that his wife is guilty of homicide. Hitchcock, interested in every device the screen has to offer, originally filmed this one in 3-D. Although prints now available are two dimensional, all the pure Hitchcock excitement remains.

“Best Actress of the year (Grace Kelly).” — NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW



FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

(1940) U.S.A.

B & W 82 Minutes

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

With Joel McCrea and Laraine Day.

Foreign Correspondent was Hitchcock's second feature in Hollywood and one of his few films that dealt with current events of the time. The film follows an American newspaper man (Joel McCrea) who is sent over to Europe in 1939 to assess the threatened outbreak of a world conflict. He meets an elderly Dutch diplomat who is carrying a secret treaty agreement back to Holland. When the Nazis kidnap the Dutch diplomat, the hero goes to Holland to try and locate him. Two thematic levels arise out of **Foreign Correspondent**. The most obvious is the suspenseful international chase led by the New York correspondent. The second is the clear message calling for an end to the American isolationism taking place during that period. Containing the famous sequence in which an assassin escapes through a field of bobbing umbrellas, **Foreign Correspondent** is without question one of Hitchcock's more lively films.

“Still arguably the director's best American Film.” — CHARLES HIGHAM and JOEL GREENBERG, HOLLYWOOD IN THE FORTIES

Hitchcock, Alfred (con't)



MURDER

(1930) Great Britain
B & W 102 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Herbert Marshall.

Taken from a novel by Clemence Dane, **Murder** was one of the few "who-done-it" pictures that Hitchcock would ever make. It concerns the difficulty of a skeptical juror (Herbert Marshall) to discover the truth about a murder and prove the girl on trial innocent of the charges brought against her. With its homosexual undertones, the film concludes with the murderer, dressed as a transvestite, confessing in the center ring at a circus. **Murder** was a critical early film for Hitchcock and its success was strengthened by Herbert Marshall's excellent acting in his first talking part.

JAMAICA INN

(1939) U.S.A.
B & W 98 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Charles Laughton and Maureen O'Hara.

Adapted from the novel by Daphne du Maurier and produced by Charles Laughton, **Jamaica Inn** was Hitchcock's last British feature before going to Hollywood. Set in 1820, **Jamaica Inn** concerns a young Irish girl who, while visiting her aunt and uncle in Cornwall, England, witnesses the questionable activities of the local shipping merchants, including her uncle. Considered a who-dun-it, this film was slightly marred by the heavy handiness of producer Charles Laughton who restricted Hitchcock's influence.

THE LADY VANISHES

(1938) Great Britain
B & W 101 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Sir Michael Redgrave and Margaret Lockwood.

Despite its classic melodramatic style, **The Lady Vanishes** is easily one of Hitchcock's funniest films to date. In fact, the first twenty minutes of the film is filled with tight, witty, British humor. But the film is less a comedy than a thriller. An English girl on a train discovers that her lady compartment companion has vanished. Unknowingly, she questions members of a spy ring concerning the woman's whereabouts. This web of intelligence espionage turns the train into madness as we witness yet another classic Hitchcock suspense story.

"Devilishly clever" — NEW YORK TIMES

"Magnificent" — N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE

THE LODGER

(1927) Great Britain
B & W 65 Minutes
Silent
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Ivor Novello.

This is the picture that Hitchcock himself called the "first true Hitchcock film". Influenced by his period in Germany, **The Lodger** reveals the initial formation of the suspense style that would later immortalize Hitchcock worldwide. Based on the famous novel by Belloc Lowndes, **The Lodger** presents the story of a family that rents a room to a mysterious stranger at the time Jack the Ripper was terrorizing London. As the film progresses, it seems certain that this man is in fact the killer. Here, Hitchcock introduces a theme which he would continue to use extensively throughout his career: a man accused of a crime of which he is innocent. Fascinating visual techniques coupled with extreme suspense make **The Lodger**, the first Hitchcock classic.



THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH

(1935) Great Britain
B & W 90 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Peter Lorre, Leslie Banks, and Edna Best.

The Man Who Knew Too Much is a tightly woven film which has a liberal portion of Hitchcock humor and a larger amount of suspense. Although he was given a little budget, Hitchcock knew the technical tricks to get around it. The plot concerns a British family on vacation in Switzerland. They are told by a dying secret agent of a plot to assassinate a diplomat in London. To insure the families silence, the assassins, a band of spies, kidnap the couple's little girl. From that point on, it's a tale of pursuit against time as the couple seeks to rescue their child and prevent the assassination, a classic sequence set in Albert Hall. As the first British film to star Peter Lorre (leader of the spies), **The Man Who Knew Too Much** is a breathless adventure considered to be way ahead of its time.

Hitchcock, Alfred (con't)



THE 39 STEPS

(1935) Great Britain
B & W 80 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll.

Adapted from the John Buchan novel of the same name, **The 39 Steps** is the thriller which first thrust the British director into the American spotlight. This film is considered a prototype Hitchcock film. The plot — an innocent man hunted by both the police and an enemy spy ring while handcuffed to a woman who believes him to be a murderer — is similar to many Hitchcock would construct throughout his career. In the quest for the meaning of the enigmatic clue of the “39 Steps”, Richard Hannay (Robert Donat) follows a trail of information from London to Scotland and back again in the hopes of proving his innocence. Although full of humor, irony, and romance, this film is an extremely satisfying and complex mystery, easily one of Hitchcock’s best.

“He (Hitchcock) uses his camera the way a painter uses his brush.” — NEW YORK TIMES

“Raises your hair and keeps it on end.” — NEW YORK POST

NOTORIOUS

(1946) U.S.A.
B & W 101 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman.

Set near the end of World War II, **Notorious** is a curious love story entangled inside a plot of international espionage. Cary Grant plays a G-man who recruits the playful daughter of a convicted Nazi agent to win the heart of another Nazi, who was once a friend of her father. The objective is for her to gain his trust so she can discover where the Nazi’s are keeping their potentially dangerous uranium. Despite his love for her, Grant remains stoic towards Bergman. After her marriage to the Nazi which Grant encourages, Bergman is discovered and slowly poisoned by her husband. Easily one of Hitchcock’s more notable films, **Notorious** is one of the all time great combinations of romance and suspense.

“This is truly my favorite Hitchcock picture . . .” — FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT, HITCHCOCK



REBECCA

(1940) U.S.A.
B & W 115 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Sir Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine.

Originally intending to do a film about the Titanic, Hitchcock was informed upon his arrival in Hollywood that his first American film would be **Rebecca**, and not a seafaring adventure at all. Since his major interest at the time was to experiment working in America, Hitchcock did not protest. Winning an Oscar for the Best Picture of the Year, **Rebecca** centers around the futile attempt by the second wife of landowner Maxim de Winter to fill the shoes of the first wife, who dies mysteriously. Like **Under Capricorn**, Mrs. de Winter (Joan Fontaine) is almost driven to suicide by this intangible psychological burden.

“ . . . an altogether brilliant film, haunting, suspenseful, handsome and handsomely played.” — NEW YORK TIMES

SABOTAGE

(1936) Great Britain
B & W 80 Minutes
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
With Sylvia Sydney and Oscar Homolka.

Interesting enough, **Sabotage** was one of the few films Hitchcock ever made which had direct political undertones. In fact, the film is very clearly “anti-nazi”. Based on Joseph Conrad’s novel, “Secret Agent”, Hitchcock portrays in film the total lack of compassion of saboteurs and the senseless loss of human life and property attributed to fulfilling idealistic ideologies. Oscar Homolka and Sylvia Sydney star in this classic British mid-thirties thriller. Homolka portrays Vertoc, whose sabotage activities are disguised by his occupation as a film theater manager. **Sabotage** contains the famous scene in which Homolka has a young boy carry a bomb through the streets of London, and the knife killing of Homolka by Sydney (without dialogue) after the boy is killed. A stunning film, **Sabotage** was banned in Brazil for its graphic portrayal of terroristic techniques.

UNDER CAPRICORN

(1949) U.S.A.

Color 117 Minutes

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

With Ingrid Bergman and Joseph Cotton.

As Hitchcock's second Technicolor production and second independently produced feature, **Under Capricorn** is composed of fluid camera work and heavy psychological undertones. Set in Australia in the early 19th century, the film unfolds the horror and pathos of a genteel woman (Ingrid Bergman) driven to the abyss of alcoholism by a heartless husband in an intolerant age of ignorance. This Hitchcock film is neither a suspense film nor a thriller, yet many critics consider it to be one of his most personal films.

"Hitchcock, to my way of thinking, outranks the rest . . . he is the most complete filmmaker of all . . . I feel it's high time Hitchcock was granted the leading position he deserves . . . Many of his admirers regard **Under Capricorn** as his best work . . . the casting is perfect and the acting is first rate." — FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT, HITCHCOCK

