

Document Citation

Title	Clash by night
Author(s)	Dane Wilsonne
Source	<i>Kit Parker Films</i>
Date	1979
Type	distributor materials
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Clash by night, Lang, Fritz, 1952

CLASH BY NIGHT

(U.S. 1952) 109 minutes \$25.00

Directed by Fritz Lang - Screenplay by Alfred Hayes, from the play by Clifford Odets - Cinematography by Nicholas Musuraca - Edited by George Amy - Music by Roy Webb - Orchestrations and Conducting by Constantine Bakelinkoff - Produced by Harriet Parsons - A Jerry Wald/Norman Krasna Production for RKO Radio Pictures Release. Players: Paul Douglas, Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Ryan, Marilyn Monroe, Keith Andes, J. Carroll Naish, Silvio Minciotti.

As picturesque shots of the fishing fleet coming into port are intermingled with montages of swooping gulls and happy seals waiting for a hand-out and the sun catches the Monterey waters, one thinks, *this can't be a Fritz Lang picture*. There is so much beauty so much light—the screen is illumined with the interplay of sparkling waves and silvery fish and shiny-headed seals and then—we follow the fish up a movable belt and we are deep in the bowels of a fish cannery, and the film murks over. Yes, it's a Fritz Lang picture all right. Now we recognize it.

And, incongruity of incongruity, in the depths of the smelly, fish factory, happily chopping off fish heads as though heck wouldn't have them, we find Marilyn Monroe—impeccable goddess of lost loves of all our yesterdays, cutting off fish heads f'gawdsake! We begin to think the film is going to turn out to be a UCLA film students' leg pull!

Then Barbara Stanwyck, yesteryear's *Stella Dallas* and this year's non-stop grump, snarls into a pub and belts down a straight shot and the film turns into *Anna Christie*.

Then Paul Douglas starts courting Stanwyck and the film turns into *Min and Bill*—then we meet Robert Ryan in a hot projection booth and he delivers his opening line, while watching a lovely young soprano through the Crown, port-hole glass, “. . . she's too perfect; they ought to cut her up a little; I'd like to cut her up a little . . .” and we think, Omigod! *It's Monterey's answer to Jack-the-Ripper: Sam-the-Slasher*.

If you think I'm saying Fritz Lang doesn't juggle this strange, mis-matched cast and disconcerting story well, I'm not. I don't think anybody *but* Fritz Lang could have pulled this film off—there are too many things that couldn't mesh—but he has a Germanic way of

meshing things neatly, even if he has to send out for a larger hammer. It's a good film and a disturbing one (well, the film editor loses track of the baby for about four reels and the clash is actually not by night but at about 8:30 in the morning—but this is minor carping: the baby was a bore anyway, and when you're clashing with Barbara Stanwyck who looks at one's watch?)

And that opening footage that threw me? It turns out that Fritz Lang photographed it himself on an advance scouting trip to Monterey to pick locations. Later, he mentioned that he turned on a television set to admire his “home movie” footage, and it had been chopped-off the television version. To the end of his days, he always advised film students not to waste their time looking at television (of course, he also said to get out of dark projection rooms and out into the forest, but that's another story). —GDW

DANE WILSON