

## Document Citation

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19th NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL -- 1981

LIGHTNING OVER WATER -- West Germany/ Sweden -- 1980    Rotterdam Festival  
1981

Running Time:    91 minutes

Gray City Films

Saturday, September 26 at 3:00 pm

Monday, September 28 at 9:30 pm

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Directors:	Nicholas Ray and Wim Wenders
Producer:	Chris Sievernich
Executive Producer:	Renee Gundelach
Production Companies:	Road Movies Filmproduktion GmbH (Berlin)/Viking Film (Stockholm) Wim Wenders Pro- duktion (Berlin)
Photography:	Ed Lachman and Martin Schaefer
Editor:	Peter Przygodda
Sound:	Martin Mueller, Maryte Kavaliauskas & Gary Steele
Music:	Ronee Blakley
Video:	Tom Farrell

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Cast: (as themselves)

Gerry Bamman	Ed Lachman
Ronee Blakley	Martin Mueller
Pierre Cottrell	Craig Nelson
Stefan Czapsky	Nicholas Ray
Mitch Dubin	Susan Ray
Tom Farrell	Timothy Ray
Becky Johnston	Martin Schaefer
Tom Kaufman	Chris Sievernich
Maryte Kavaliauskas	Wim Wenders
Pat Kirck	

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Nicholas Ray had worked and played a full life as a noted Hollywood director (THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE) and serious hell-raiser. By the mid-70's he was fighting a losing battle against cancer. In 1979, his last year, Ray collaborated with Wim Wenders (THE AMERICAN FRIEND) on a film -- this film -- that documents Ray's decline and examines the motives of friendship, generosity and artistic cannibalism that kept the project going. Like Nick Ray, LIGHTNING OVER WATER is grim and beautiful -- skin and bones on celluloid, dignified by the sinew of courageous eloquence that was Ray's to the last.

## NICHOLAS RAY

### A Biography

Nicholas Ray and Wim Wenders met in New York City during the filming of Wenders' "The American Friend." Knowing that he was dying of cancer, Ray agreed to make a film with Wenders in the spring of 1979 in what he hoped would be an effort to "center" himself before he died. The film, "Lightning Over Water," was completed shortly after his death on June 16, 1979.

Raymond Nicholas Kienzle was born on August 7, 1911 in Galesville, Wisconsin, and spent the first years of his life on the banks of the Mississippi where his father owned a cement factory. At 16 years old, Ray won a scholarship to the University of Chicago because of a number of radio plays he had written. At the university he studied drama and architecture.

In 1932, Ray went to New York, where he met and began living with Jean Evans, a writer from California. It was through her that he joined the Taliesin Fellowship, founded by Frank Lloyd Wright in Green Springs, Wisconsin. After a disagreement with Wright, Ray went to Mexico for a few months. He then returned to New York, where he joined a left-wing theatre group later known as the Theatre of Action. Ray was tremendously influenced by the Theatre of Action, especially with the uses of improvisation under Elia Kazan's direction.

In 1936, Ray married Jean Evans. A year later their son, Tony, was born.

Shortly after this, Ray took a job with the Resettlement Administration (later renamed the Farm Security Administration), noted for its photographic coverage of rural America by Dorothea



Lange and Ben Shahn. Ray went into the backwoods of America's South, organizing and teaching improvisational drama groups designed to help people express their problems in theatrical terms. It was in the process of this work that Ray became knowledgeable about folk music, recording Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Josh White.

When his work ended for the agency, Ray returned to New York to produce and direct a radio show on folk music. Rejected from active duty during World War II because of a rheumatic heart, Ray was hired by John Houseman to be in charge of a radio folk music program for the Office of War Information (The Voice of America).

In 1944, Ray went to Hollywood in the wake of Kazan, who had been hired to direct "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn." Though Ray didn't receive any credit for working on the production, he got experience and a chance to direct a short feature for the government ("Tuesday in November") with John Houseman.

In the autumn of 1946, Ray returned to New York with Houseman and directed a TV drama ("Sorry, Wrong Number"), and then assisted Houseman in a Broadway musical, "Lute Song," with Mary Martin and Yul Brynner. When the play opened, both Houseman and Ray returned to Los Angeles to purchase the rights to a novel, "Thieves Like Us," and Ray worked on a treatment of the book.

Because of problems at RKO, the project was abandoned and Ray returned to New York to work with Houseman on Broadway's first integrated show, "Beggar's Holiday," with music by Duke Ellington.

When Dore Schary was appointed head of production at RKO, Houseman convinced him to hire Ray to direct "Thieves Like Us"

(which was released in 1949 as "They Live By Night"). Schary allowed Ray to direct his second feature, and it was during the making of "A Woman's Secret," that Ray met and married Gloria Graham. They had a son a year later, Timothy.

Major changes began taking place at RKO, as Howard Hughes acquired more and more control. Hughes curtailed Schary's liberal hiring practices, but by this time Ray was on loan to Humphrey Bogart's independent production company, and was little affected by the studio's changes.

Ray returned to RKO to direct "Born to Be Bad," and Hughes ordered some scenes reshot. Still, the relationship between the men was good, which probably afforded Ray some protection during the McCarthy era.

Ray's final film for RKO was "The Lusty Men," which went into production before the script was completed at producer Jerry Wald's insistence, and much of the film was either written the night before shooting or improvised on the set. From this point on, Ray went from studio to studio seeking independence within the Hollywood system.

During the strenuous shooting of "Wind Across the Everglades," Ray's health deteriorated and he drank heavily. He was barred from the last stages of shooting, and while others finished the film he took on his last Hollywood movie, "Party Girl."

In 1958, Ray married Betty Utey, a dancer, and they had two daughters, Julie and Nikka. He moved to Europe with plans for opening a film school, but instead embarked on two productions with Samuel Bronston, "King of Kings" and "Fifty-Five Days at Peking."

Both had to be finished by second unit directors when Ray collapsed.

After severing relationships with Bronston, Ray opened a night club and restaurant in Madrid. He traveled extensively throughout Europe, working on various film projects though none ever seemed to materialize.

In 1968, Ray returned to Chicago and tried to film the Democratic National Convention. Disillusioned when he lost his backers for the project, he retreated to an upstate New York university (Harpur College) where he taught a filmmaking course. He and his students made an experimental film called "We Can't Go Home Again," which examines the powerful changes of the sixties and Ray's role as a filmmaker. This was the last film completed before Ray returned to New York City to live and teach and meet Wim Wenders, as well as act in "The American Friend."



NICHOLAS RAY

A Filmography

1948	THEY LIVE BY NIGHT
1948	A WOMAN'S SECRET
1949	KNOCK ON ANY DOOR
1950	IN A LONELY PLACE
1950	BORN TO BE BAD
1951	THE FLYING LEATHERNECKS
1952	ON DANGEROUS GROUND
1952	THE LUSTY MEN
1954	JOHNNY GUITAR
1955	RUN FOR COVER
1955	REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE
1956	HOT BLOOD
1956	BIGGER THAN LIFE
1957	THE TRUE STORY OF JESSE JAMES
1957	BITTER VICTORY
1958	WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES
1958	PARTY GIRL
1960	THE SAVAGE INNOCENTS
1961	KING OF KINGS
1963	55 DAYS AT PEKING
1973	WE CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN
1979	LIGHTNING OVER WATER

## WIM WENDERS

### A Biography

"Lightning Over Water" marks the fourth appearance of a Wim Wenders' film at the New York Film Festival. He was introduced to festival audiences at the 12th New York Film Festival with "Alice in the Cities" (1974), followed by "Kings of the Road" (1976) and "The American Friend," which was shown at the 15th New York Film Festival.

Wim Wenders was born in Duesseldorf in 1946. He studied medicine and philosophy in Germany for two years and then went to Paris to study painting and printmaking. From 1967 to 1970 he attended the Academy for Film and Television in Munich where he studied filmmaking. During his time at school, Wenders also worked as a film critic for "Filmkritik" and "Suddeutschen Zeitung."

In 1967, Wenders made his first short film, "Schauplatze," and completed several more shorts before directing his first feature, "Summer in the City," in 1970. Wenders' second feature, "The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick," played at the New Directors/New Films Series in 1972, and earned Wenders favorable critical attention.

In 1977, Wenders moved to California to direct "Hammett," a Francis Ford Coppola production soon to be completed. It was during the spring of 1979 that he worked with Nicholas Ray on "Lightning Over Water," between Ray's repeated hospitalizations and Wenders' preproduction work on "Hammett."

At present, Wenders is working on his newest film, "The State of Things," which was shot on location in Portugal and Los Angeles and is being edited in New York where Wenders currently makes his home.



WIM WENDERS  
A Filmography

1971 SUMMER IN THE CITY  
1972 THE GOALIE'S ANXIETY AT THE PENALTY KICK  
1973 THE SCARLET LETTER  
1974 ALICE IN THE STREETS  
1974 FROM THE CROCODILE FAMILY  
1975 WRONG MOVE  
1976 KINGS OF THE ROAD  
1977 THE AMERICAN FRIEND  
1980 LIGHTNING OVER WATER  
1980 HAMMETT (work in progress)  
1981 THE STATE OF THINGS

In Preparation:

THE SHADOW (1982)  
PERSON TO PERSON (1982)  
BILBAO (1983)