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Robert Wise

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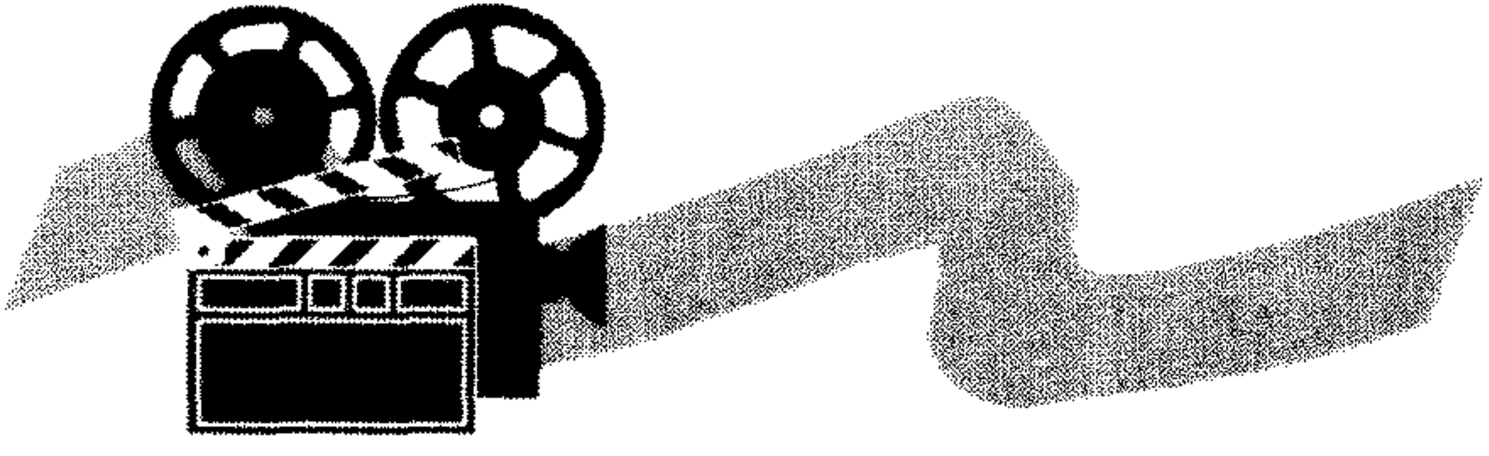
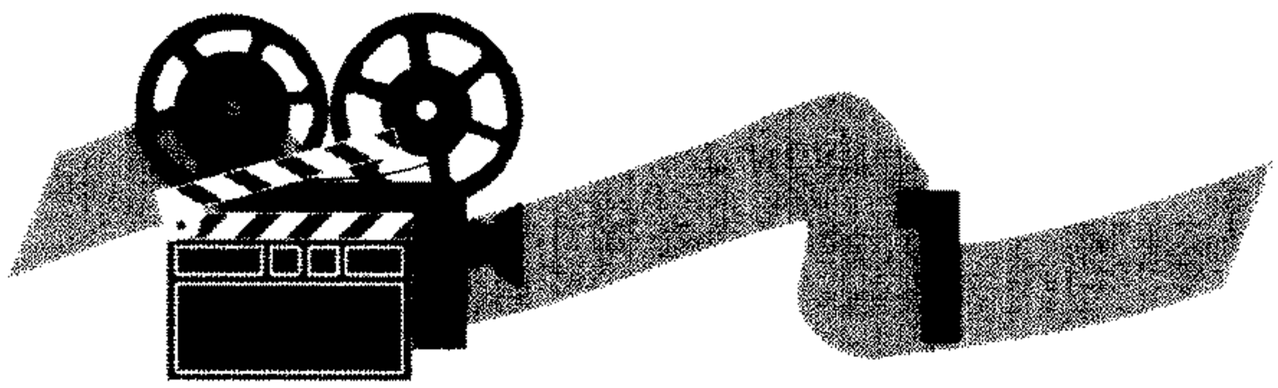


The Directors—— Take One



The Films of Robert Wise

Robert Wise was born on September 10, 1914, in Winchester, Indiana. The youngest of three brothers, he moved to Los Angeles at the age of nineteen and began working at RKO Pictures at a job his brother was able to obtain for him.

Wise entered the directorial ranks after an apprenticeship as a film editor. He is credited with editing twelve features, but his most famous editorial assignment was for Orson Welles on *Citizen Kane*, considered by many to be the greatest film of all time. He went on to edit another Welles film, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, and also directed some additional scenes for that movie while Welles was away on an assignment in Brazil.

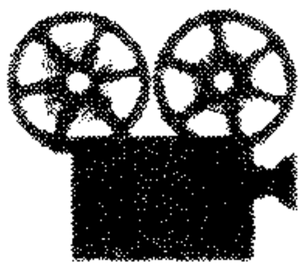
Wise's pictures have garnered sixty-seven Academy Award nominations and nineteen Oscars. Wise himself has been nominated seven times and has won four Oscars. He became a double Oscar winner twice, as both Best Director and producer of the year's Best Picture, for two films that have become recognized as all-time classics—*West Side Story* (co-directed with Jerome Robbins) and *The Sound of Music*.

Reams of copy has been written about this man who is held in high esteem in the industry and considered one of Hollywood's most prolific directors. He is known as one of the nicest men in Hollywood, a well-deserved title. He tirelessly gives of his time to the industry and to young filmmakers. His involvement in the Directors Guild of America, American Film Institute, National Council on the Arts, Motion Picture Country House and Hospital, USC School of Film and Television, Museum of Modern Art (New York), National Education Film Festival (Oakland), and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is well documented.

NOTE: Robert Wise was the first director to be interviewed for this series. For that the author of this book will be forever grateful.

He was probably the most expeditious, one of the most efficient directors ever. He didn't shoot a lot of extra film, and he didn't protect himself with a lot of other shots. He knew exactly what he was doing and he did it with expedience and efficiency and with great harmony on the set.

Robert Mitchum—Actor



The Conversation

I came out to Hollywood in August of 1933 and started working at RKO Studios the next month and have not stopped working in the business since—more than sixty years now. I didn't know what was going to happen to me when I came out. I had no idea of how far my future would go and now that I look back I don't know where the more than sixty years have gone. They seem to have just vanished.

I grew up in Indiana in a little town of about twelve thousand people and I used to go to the movies. We had three movie houses and I would go as often as I had the money for it. I was a Depression dropout from college. I managed to get one year in at Franklin College near Indianapolis on a scholarship. I just eked through. It was the height of the Depression, everything was terrible and my dad's business was on the rocks. I couldn't get a job in Franklin. That turned out to be a fortunate thing for me because my older brother Dave, who was seven years older, had come out here to Los Angeles in the late 1920s. He had kind of wanderlust and started working at RKO Studios as a labor guy. By the summer of 1933 he had worked his way up to the accounting office, which was his field. It was decided by my family that if I couldn't go back to college I should join Dave and he'd help me get a job and I'd earn my living.

Los Angeles Beckons

He got me an appointment with the head of the film-editing department at RKO, who had happened to say that, well, he could use a young eager kid. I was not quite nineteen. I worked in the film-shipping department, carrying films up to the projection room for the executives to look at, and that was my first job in the business.

I went around that lot just watching and looking at the stages—eyes that

big, you know. I went by one of the office buildings and outside there was a rather stocky, little, chunky man in white ducks and white shirt and very heavy glasses talking to a couple of women who were in pantaloons and skirts and parasols, and it was fascinating. This man was talking very animatedly to them. I walked by, kind of hanging around, watching this scene, and later on I described it to somebody and they said, "Well, that must have been George Cukor, the director, talking to Katharine Hepburn and Joan Bennett. They're making *Little Women*." Many years later I told George that he was the very first live movie director I ever saw.

After I got out of the shipping room, P.K. Wood, who was the head of sound effects editing, spotted me and thought maybe I had some possibilities and asked for me to be put in his department to become a sound effects editor. I went out on a couple pictures doing that. Then I became a music editor and I thought that was fine. But after a couple of years I looked around and I saw there were men there that had been doing that for twenty or twenty-five years, and I realized that was a dead end and I didn't want to stop there. I went to my boss, Jimmy Wilkinson, and asked to be put over on the picture side so I could become an assistant film editor. I got put with a fine master editor who let me move ahead just as fast as I could. On the last three films I worked on with him I was doing so much of the work that he insisted I share credit with him. So I got credit on *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *5th Avenue Girl*, and *The Castles*.

Back then the editing rooms were fairly simple, with benches all around and an old-fashioned Moviola—I'm going back to 1934 or 1935 now—which sat on a kind of wooden stand with the picture head on one side and the sound on the other. You'd attach them together, and your picture ran up one side on the little viewer of the Moviola and your soundtrack was running on the other side. Over on the bench you'd have your rewinds and your slate machines that you could synchronize your picture and your track with. You would mark the film and cut it. Those were the days before tape came in, so you'd get a whole reel clipped together, then go down to the end of a hall and splice them by hand on this hot splicer.

I worked as assistant editor on one film that George Stevens directed, but I didn't have a lot of direct contact with him in those days. But I learned from him. I learned the importance of the director, how vital he was, what his job was, but it took me a little while to get that all sorted out. George Steven Sr., Willie Wyler, John Ford, Howard Hawks, and people like that were all my idols in terms of directors. I looked up to them constantly and repeatedly and saw their films time and time again.

Curse of the Cat People (1944)

Simone Simon; Kent Smith; Jane Randolph; Ann Carter; Eve March; Julia Dean; Elizabeth Russell; Erford Gage; Sir Lancelot.

I had been wanting a chance to direct. Those were the days when studios were making a lot of B pictures, low-budget pictures with short scripts. I was editing a small B picture called *Curse of the Cat People*. The director got terribly behind schedule and they couldn't seem to speed him up. He had used up the whole schedule and only shot half of the script. I got a call on a Saturday to go meet the executive producer. He said he wanted me to take over on Monday morning. So that was it. I took over on Monday morning.

It happened then that another director, Dick Wallace, heard that I had gotten my break. He was shooting on the lot. He took time out between his sets to congratulate me and wish me well. I'll never forget one thing he said to me. "Bobby," he said, "I only have one bit of advice to give you. If a scene seems a trifle slow on the set, it'll be twice as slow in the projection room." And boy, was he ever right. I've tried to remember that all through my career. Sometimes I forget and kick myself in the fanny.

Now, the truth is I showed a little bit of hesitancy about taking that first film for this reason: I was scheduled to go back that very night and work with the director that I was replacing while he did some special effects. I felt awkward about working with him that night knowing I was going to take over on Monday morning. So when I showed this bit of hesitation, the executive producer said to me, "Bob, he's not going to be there Monday morning directing that film. Somebody else is going to be there doing it. Now, it could be you or somebody else, but he's not going to be there. So what will it be?" And I said I'd be there, and that's how I got to direct my first picture.

Wise meets Welles

Let me tell you how *Citizen Kane* came about. I had just finished editing a film called *My Favorite Wife*, so I was between pictures. I got a call from my boss, Jim Wilkinson, and he said, "Listen Bob, you know that Orson Welles fellow? Well, he thought he'd make this picture and he got the front office to let him go ahead and shoot two or three test scenes. Well, he's done three of them and they realize he's actually shooting this picture, so they give him the green light to go ahead and make the film, and he wants another editor."

They had given Orson an old-time hack editor to work with because he was supposedly just shooting tests. So I went down to see him. He was in the midst of shooting the scene at the beach in the tent. During a break in the shooting he came out to meet me, so the first time I ever saw Orson was as old man Kane. We chatted for a few minutes, and evidently he liked the cut of my jib and I had a decent enough record of editing jobs, so when I got back to Hollywood my boss called and said, "You got it, kid." Of course I was thrilled. I thought it would be a very rare episode in my life, and it was.

Orson had come out to Hollywood with the most extraordinary contract that had ever been seen up until that time. It gave him complete power over his production in every way imaginable. I guess there was a little resentment around town by the established people—directors, producers, and others—who hadn't had that kind of carte blanche in their contracts. So I think a lot of them were kind of looking for him to stumble and not make it. But I don't think Orson was concerned or aware of it because he had such complete concentration on *Kane*. That became his whole life and I don't think he cared about the rest. I seriously doubt that Orson had as complete concentration on any of his other films than he did on *Kane*. When we did *The Magnificent Ambersons* a year or so later, there were other distractions.

Kane's death scene has been discussed many times over the years. The nurse comes through the door, and Kane appears to be dead, so the question has come up many times: Who was in the room to hear him say "Rosebud?" I don't know whether that was done deliberately by Orson, just to muddle things or make people wonder about it or look for it or what. I don't know. But we've accepted over the years that somebody was around in some way to hear. We just bought into it.

More Tales of Welles

Orson was extraordinary in many ways. He was also an extremist. Let me say right now that he was as close to being a genius as anybody I've met in the business. He was absolutely brilliant, but maddening at times. He would do something outrageous and you'd want to tell him to shove it and walk off. Then he'd have an idea that was so brilliant that your mouth fell open and you wouldn't walk. He was very exciting and very stimulating to work with. But, as I say, he was an extremist.

I finally got him to do some looping on the end of *Kane*, but he resisted it for weeks. I don't know why he was afraid of it. I almost had to literally push him through the door of the dubbing room, put the earphones on him, and get ready to go. Once he did it, he was brilliant at it, of course,

because of all his previous radio experience. But from that point on, the soundtrack, as far as dialogue on the set goes, didn't mean anything to him. If he was doing a scene in *Ambersons* and an airplane went over and ruined a good take, he'd say, "We'll loop it later."

Orson had done a radio show of *The Magnificent Ambersons* a year or so before and it was brilliant. When I heard that he was going to do a movie out of it I was delighted, because I thought it would show another side of Orson. Unfortunately, it ran into some problems. He was doing a *Lady Esther* radio show, and all of his Sundays were spent on that because we were shooting six days a week on *Ambersons*. We were weeks away from finishing shooting when the war started, and Orson was approached by our government to go down to Brazil and make a picture with Brazilians as part of our good neighbor policy, to keep the South American countries on our side in the war. Orson jumped at that. But we went on filming *Ambersons*.

Suddenly he got a wild idea that he wanted to make another picture before he finished *Ambersons*. I think he owed RKO another film. He had a script called *Journey into Fear*. He put that into the works. Then he put Delores del Rio, who was his girlfriend at the time, in the female lead, and then he decided that the only person to play the Turkish gentleman was he himself. So Orson was directing *Ambersons* during the day and acting all night in *Journey into Fear*. He would come in during the screening of *Ambersons* rushes and he would be groggy. I think he kept himself alive on all kinds of drugs and amphetamines. When we finished shooting he had to go to Washington for a briefing on the Brazil film, and I had not finished editing with him yet. Then I took reels of film down to Miami where he was scheduled to take off for South America. We spent three days and nights in a studio down there doing all this work and then he took off for South America. I literally took him right down to the dock to catch his flying boat over to Rio. He took off and I didn't see him again for many years.

I went back and finished up the film. I was scheduled to take a print down to show to Orson in Rio but they put an embargo on any civilians flying down there so we sent him a print. After he saw it we had long phone conversations about what he liked and didn't like. Unfortunately, I've lost it along the way, but he later sent me a thirty-seven page cable that suggested more changes and improvements. We did as many of those as we could as long as they made any sense to us. By now the studio was getting a little nervous. They had a lot of money in this picture and they were determined to have a sneak preview. They held the preview but the audience just didn't like the picture at all. They walked out in droves. They laughed in the

wrong places. It was a disaster. So we started the whole process of editing all over again and held another preview that was a little better. Then we did more cutting and had to shoot an added scene, which I directed because I had a little experience. Finally, on the fourth preview, with forty-five minutes to an hour cut out of it, we had a preview down at Long Beach and the audience sat for it and they didn't laugh and they didn't walk out.

Our paths didn't cross again until 1953, in London of all places. I was there making tests of talent for *Helen of Troy.* He was working on another stage as an actor. I went over and we had a nice reunion. He was very warm and very happy to see me. We chatted for a few minutes, then he was called to the set and I went back to my stage. He told me he would come by to see me on my set. When he came by I was involved in a big scene and he couldn't wait. I didn't see him again for ten years.

Preparing to Direct a Film

I was very nervous about taking over on *Curse of the Cat People.* I was glad I didn't have weeks to work up to that. I got to the studio at 4:30 in the morning with my little viewer finder. I had to go into this empty stage and find the lights so I could see what I was doing. I would use my finder and start making notes about how I wanted to cover the scene and how I wanted to stage it. I continued to do that for many years and then later on I got into storyboarding. But the more preparation you do before you start to shoot, the better your picture is going to be, because the expensive time, the pressure time, is when you're shooting. And if you are prepared you have much more time to spend with your actors. You get better scenes and better results than if you haven't prepared enough. There are two important words—participation and communication—that I always tell the students when I go out to the universities.

Blood on the Moon (*1948*)

Robert Mitchum; Barbara Bel Geddes; Robert Preston; Walter Brennan; Phyllis Thaxter; Frank Faylen; Tom Tully; Charles McGraw; Clifton Young; Tom Tyler; George Cooper; Tom Keene; Bud Osborne; Zon Murray; Robert Bray.

An editor friend of mine actually found a script sitting on a shelf at RKO and brought it to me and said, "Gee, I think this has got possibilities. I don't know why it's on the shelf." I got an okay from the front office to spend a minimum amount of money for a writer. We got a writer and she developed

the script and it was called *Blood on the Moon*. So we sent it up to the front office and they liked it. The idea was that my friend would be the producer and I would be the director. Then a couple of agents came in and tried to undo me. They wanted to sell another director along with a star as a package deal. But the head of the studio turned them down flat and let us do it.

Actually, the people that tried to do me in were from my own agency. After I got the assignment to finish up *Curse of the Cat People*, I was signed to a standard seven-year contract with RKO. I was then approached by this big agency that offered to represent me. They said, "We won't take any commission from you until we better your contract." I said fine. Well, it was men from this very agency that were trying to sell another director. My own people were undercutting me. I found this out from a friend. They were trying to sell another guy who was getting seventy-five thousand dollars a picture, which meant they would get more in commissions. I, on the other hand, was getting peanuts and their commissions would have been much smaller if I directed the picture. That's the way it worked sometimes. Fortunately, it did not happen that time and I went on to direct *Blood on the Moon*.

In that film we had a fight scene in a bar between Bob Mitchum and Bob Preston, who was the heavy in the piece. I wanted to have a fight that was not full of all the marvelous stuntmen in town crashing through tables and out windows and all. I wanted a real fight to the death between these two men, which meant it had to be much closer, much tighter, much more vicious, in a tight spot. I had a lot of trouble with the stuntmen. They wanted to break it wide open. But instead I had Mitchum and Preston do the fight themselves. If people see the film, they'll see a real fight almost to the death, with guys down on the floor punching each other, trying to strangle each other, do each other in, and being, when they finished, absolutely exhausted. When Mitchum finally won he could barely get up on his feet. He was all out of breath and worn out from this struggle. I've had many people tell me they think it's one of the most effective fight scenes of that nature they have ever seen. But that was my concept going in.

Moguls, Moguls, and More Moguls

I've had some knock-down-drag-out fights with some studio bosses in my time, one in particular with Darryl Zanuck. Darryl, by the way, was somebody I had tremendous respect for. He was a fine producer and fine filmmaker.

I like to shoot a lot of coverage when I can. As a former editor, I know how marvelous it is to have a lot of coverage. In this one picture I had a particular scene around a table. Table scenes are always very challenging for di-

rectors. I had planned it very carefully, with certain kinds of setups, and I knew just how I wanted it to go. Well, Darryl saw the rushes and he wrote me a very strong note saying that this had to stop. He said, "I saw that breakfast table scene and it's over-covered and it must stop or I'm going to have to take some action," which meant take me off the picture. So I sat down and wrote a memo to him and outlined exactly how I planned it, what the different angles were for, why it wasn't over-covered, and how I was using them and never heard another thing from him. That calmed him down.

Besides a certain crudeness attributed to some of them, the men who ran the early studios loved films. They had grown up with films. They may not have expressed it in the most delicate of terms, but I think that's one of the differences between them and the current studio heads. I don't know many of those running the studios now. I don't know how many of them have that pure love for film running through their veins that I think Louis B. Mayer, Harry Cohn, and Jack Warner had.

I had an opportunity to go out to Jack Warner's house once, to run a first cut of a film I had done over there. He had a lovely projection room lined with bound scripts of films he'd had done. I walked along and looked at some of those titles and I was reminded of what a marvelous series of films they had made. I was taken aback.

But as I said, those men loved movies. I remember when I was at Fox under contract—not an exclusive contract—and I was given a script by Zanuck that Bob Baxter was going to produce. I read the script and I thought it was all right but I didn't think it was anything exceptional or unusual and I didn't really have too much enthusiasm for it. So I told Mr. Baxter that I really didn't feel that I wanted to do it. I got a call from Zanuck, and of course I knew what it was going to be about. Zanuck said, "I understand you don't like the script." I said, "Well, it's not that I don't like it, I don't think it's anything special. I think it's going to take a lot of time, energy, and money and I'd like to do something more stimulating." He said, "Well, Bob, I've been in this business a long time." He said, "I think, if you get one picture out of three or four that you're really excited about, you're gonna be very lucky." He said, "I have a whole program of pictures that I have to make for the studio. I have to fill that distribution and I really would like you to make this picture." And I said, "Well, as long as you know how I feel about it, I will do it and give it everything I can."

That's pretty much gone now. I'm talking back in the days when the studios had big contract lists and each of them was making fifty or sixty films a year. The studios had a great sense of continuity and had actors and writ-

ers and directors and all under contract. But as you know, it has all changed. The studios don't have people under contract now, so almost anybody, unless he just wants any kind of a job, has a choice. If the studio comes to you now with a project, you either like it or don't like it, say yes or say no. The last studio contract I had was with MGM. I had done *Executive Suite*, which came out in 1953. Then I went abroad to do *Helen of Troy* for Warner Bros. *Executive Suite* came out, was successful, so MGM wanted to sign me. I signed a straight three-year contract. I got out of that contract before I finally finished it. I had to give them another picture and that's the last contract I've had. All my other pictures were individual deals. All things that I chose to do—nothing I had to do.

The Set-Up (*1949*)

Robert Ryan; Audrey Totter; George Tobias; Alan Baxter; Wallace Ford; Percy Helton; Hal Baylor; Darryl Hickman; Kenny O'Morrison; James Edwards; David Clarke; Phillip Pine; Edwin Max.

I had finished *Blood on the Moon* and the head of the studio called me up to his office. He said, "I've got a script here, and I think this might be something that you'd be interested in." He threw it across to me and it was *The Set-Up*. I went away to read it right away and absolutely flipped out. I loved it. I called him immediately and said, "I want to be on this." Robert Ryan was set as the lead, but we had a little delay because Ryan was doing a picture at some other studio as a loan-out. So we had time to do our pre-production planning. Then Howard Hughes bought the studio and immediately put everything on hold—stopped everything we were doing on *The Set-Up*—and I was put on layoff. Our contracts included a period of time that they could put you on layoff and not use you. All I wanted to do was to get back in the studio and get that picture going. The whole lot was going to pieces because there was no production, so since we were further along, easier to get into production, they just gave us a green light to go ahead.

This was not a story of Madison Square Garden and the Championship Bout, but a small tank town arena with third-rate fighters some place back in Pennsylvania. I wanted to capture the feeling of that. So I had them find me an old, run-down, fight arena down in Long Beach, and I would go down there on fight night. I would get down there before anybody was there. I'd watch the fighters come in and I would watch the handlers come in and watch their attitudes, make notes of their wardrobe. I spent a whole night in

the dressing room watching how the fighters comported themselves and how they went out into the fight and how they came back, having won, maybe, or having been knocked out. I spent the whole evening there soaking up as much detail about the atmosphere, the ambiance, the feeling of that place as I could. I went down the next night and stayed out in the front watching the fighters and the handlers. I studied all of that and made my notes.

It's the first time we worked with a zoom lens and storyboards. We'd have a sketch of the set and a layout, a plan. We did that on the whole show except for the fights. You don't do the fights that way because those are rehearsed anyway, and choreographed before you shoot, and then you just shoot it with a lot of cameras.

The Day the Earth Stood Still *(1951)*

Michael Rennie; Patricia Neal; Hugh Marlowe; Sam Jaffe; Billy Gray; Francis Bavier; Lock Martin; Drew Pearson; Frank Conroy; Carleton Young; Fay Roope; Edith Evanson; Robert Osterloh; Tyler McVey; James Seay.

While I was under contract with Twentieth Century Fox, I got a call from Darryl Zanuck one day and he said, "I want you to go see a producer named Julian Blaustein, I think he has a script you might find interesting." So I went down to meet Blaustein, whom I had never met, and he handed me the script of *The Day the Earth Stood Still.* He told me briefly what it was about. I went away and read the script and loved it. I loved what it was about. I loved what it had to say in its approach against war. I thought it was something I very much wanted to do.

There were some people that were surprised that a picture with that kind of content would be made under Zanuck, because he had been a big Army man. I think he was a colonel or a general in the war and very pro-military. I simply have to say he was a filmmaker above everything else. He loved the script and the completed film. He thought it was a fine piece of work and no problem at all.

The one place that we did have a little problem was getting any kind of help from the Defense Department. We needed those troops and the jeeps and a few tanks. To get anything like that from the Defense Department you have to submit the script. They read the script and we got turned down. They didn't go for that message and didn't want any kind of indictment of what we might be doing militarily. But we had an ace up our sleeve. Fox had a representative in Washington who knew his way around, so we went

over to the National Guard and they didn't seem to have any problem with it. So all the troops and equipment we shot at our Washington location was not real Army but National Guard.

The same thing happened years later on *The Andromeda Strain*. We needed a helicopter, a few jeeps, and things like that. We knew we could always rent those if necessary, but if we could get help from the Air Force and Army it would save us forty or fifty thousand dollars. It was an anti-biological warfare piece and they didn't approve, so we didn't get the equipment.

For the lead in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* we all had in mind the fine English character actor Claude Raines. He was a brilliant, marvelous actor and we always felt he was the man. But unfortunately, or fortunately, as it turned out, he was tied up with a play in New York. Darryl Zanuck said, "Hey, I've just come back from London, and while I was over there I saw a young man on the stage that I was very impressed with. He hasn't been seen on film here, but I thought he had such potential I signed him to a contract and I think you should take a look at him." It turned out his name was Michael Rennie and he was just absolutely perfect for us. Here was a young man who had never been seen on the screen before so he was fresh and new and he had kind of a tall, sensitive look, and all in all I think it was one of those things where we just lucked out.

There was never any question that I would shoot the film in black and white. This was the early 1950s and some color was being shot, but very sparsely because it was more expensive and they still were using the big, cumbersome, three-strip color then. So there was never any question. I intended it to be black and white right from the beginning.

Executive Suite (1954)

William Holden; June Allyson; Barbara Stanwyck; Fredric March; Walter Pidgeon; Shelley Winters; Paul Douglas; Louis Calhern; Dean Jagger; Nina Foch; Tim Considine; William Phipps; Lucille Knoch; Edgar Stehli; Mary Adams.

John Houseman, a good friend and dear, marvelous, creative man, was the producer of the film. He had been a partner with Orson Welles in Mercury Theater. He came to visit the *Kane* set a couple of times in New York and that's how I met him. I hadn't seen him much over the years, but all of a sudden, out of the blue, I got a call from my agent that John Houseman wanted to talk to me about directing *Executive Suite*. He remembered my work with Orson and had seen some of my subsequent work as a director.

John was very creative and very sensitive of script, of writing, of casting—just every detail of filmmaking. He was always very involved in his productions without trying to over-push the director or look over his shoulder or second guess him or anything like that. He was just very supportive.

Doing *Executive Suite* in black and white, as well as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, was very deliberate. I wanted to have a strong sense of reality, believability, and credibility in it. So from the beginning we didn't think about anything but black and white. This is before color television came in, where the need to have a color negative for television was not as strong as it became later.

We had William Holden, June Allyson, Barbara Stanwyck, Paul Douglas, and Fredric March. I was delighted to have Fred for this part. It was a very rich part. Fred was a fine actor but he had just come out in the film before ours was due to go, in which he was kind of criticized for being overboard too much. So I knew that this part he was going to play for us was very susceptible to an over-rich performance. My feeling was the less he did the better. Before we met I had only talked to him on the phone. I was wondering to myself how he was going to approach the level of his performance. He said to me, "You know Bob, when I first read the script I thought of all the wonderful, marvelous pieces of business I could do with this character." Well, my heart sank. Then he said, "You know, I read it again and I changed my mind. I think that the least I do with the character, the more effective it will be." I said, "Freddie, I could lean over and kiss you because that's exactly what I wanted to tell you." He said, "You know all the actors tend to get carried away and go." He said, "If you find me getting overboard or too much of anything, just come up and whisper in my ear, 'too much,' and I'll bring it down."

Helen of Troy (*1956*)

Rossana Podestà; Jacques Sernas; Cedric Hardwicke; Stanley Baker; Niall MacGinnis; Nora Swinburne; Robert Douglas; Torin Thatcher; Harry Andrews; Janette Scott; Ronald Lewis; Brigitte Bardot; Eduardo Ciannelli; Marc Lawrence; Maxwell Reed.

I had directed a film or two for Warner Bros. with my free time from Twentieth. I got a call out of the blue from Jack Warner saying he had this film, this spectacle, that is being done in Rome, and would I be interested in taking a look at it. That kind of intrigued me because Cinemascope was be-

coming popular and I had never done a picture in Cinemascope color. I thought maybe it was time I got into that sort of genre, and that's what compelled me to take it. It was fascinating to do.

I spent almost a year in Rome working on it. It was not an easy film. It was a difficult film and we had some problems on it. But I think it came out quite well. It was not the most popular film I've ever made although, interestingly enough, some of the younger directors like it. Martin Scorsese and Oliver Stone told me on different occasions that the film had a great influence on them. Marty liked it so much that he had Warner Bros. make a brand new 35mm print, which he donated to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. I felt good about that.

Tribute to a Bad Man (*1956*)

James Cagney; Don Dubbins; Stephen McNally; Irene Papas; Vic Morrow; James Griffith; Onslow Stevens; James Ball; Jeanette Nolan; Chubby Johnson; Royal Dano; Lee Van Cleef; Peter Chong.

I was still fairly young as a director then, and Spencer Tracy was such a legendary character and actor that I was a little nervous when I walked into that first meeting. Sam Zimbalist was the producer and we met in his office and talked about the script. Tracy was committed and was very enthusiastic about the film, and we talked at some length about the script. At that point we only had the first two acts. Michael Blankfort was writing and he was working on the third act and we all seemed to like it.

It was a story about horses, and the producer thought we should set it someplace with a marvelous scenic background, maybe up high in the mountains with a lot of green rather than the usual sort of western horse country. I agreed with that right away, and Tracy and I left very high on the prospects of the film.

But the next morning he called me from New York and said, "Do you think we should really do this? Do you really like the script that much? Should we do this or not?" I didn't know what to make of that.

We finally found marvelous locations about nine thousand feet up on the west side of the Rockies with great snow-covered mountains in the background and beautiful green meadows. Tracy had developed a little cyst on his cheek and was very worried about it. He tended to be a bit of a hypochondriac and he felt he should have it tested and taken care of before coming up to the location. I went on ahead with the rest of the troupe while

he stayed down below. I started to shoot the film with the other cast members and I shot everything I could without Tracy. He finally showed up one day and I went to see him at the motor lodge motel where we were staying. He had a little patch on his cheek where this cyst had been removed. He pulled the tape off to show it to me and was almost in tears, saying, "Do you think this is going be all right? Am I going be okay?" He seemed really concerned about it.

He didn't have to work the first day or two because we wanted him to get acclimated to the climate, but he came up to visit our set. The next day he did a couple of scenes and I let him go early because I didn't want to push him too much. Right away he began to complain about the altitude and shortness of breath. About the third morning, while we were rehearsing, he said several times, "I don't know whether I can really make this show. I don't know whether I can complete this. This is tough up here in this altitude. Bob, I can't do the show."

Well, by this time I'd just about had it so I said, "Thank you very much." We just closed the troupe down and went down to the motel and I called the studio and I told them what the situation was. I said, "I don't think we'll ever get him through this show. We'll just be spinning our wheels. Do we replace him or what?" A couple of hours later the studio called back and said, "Okay, he's out of the picture. We'll try to get you Clark Gable."

I went over to see Tracy and to tell him this. He said, "That's the end, my career is finished. I'll never work again." Needless to say, he was distraught. No one had ever done this to him before. He had complained on other pictures but they had never pulled him out of one before and he just hadn't expected them to do it this time. I think what he had in mind was that we would get another location down five thousand feet and restart in a few months. Something like that, I don't know. That's just my conjecture. But as angry as I was at him, with this scene he was playing about this being the end of his career, I was almost sorry for him. It was very touching. And of course it wasn't the end of his career, it was just the end of him on that picture.

Jimmy Cagney read it and said he would do it but he couldn't do it for a couple of months. So we had to wrap it up and go down the hill and go back to the studio to wait for Jimmy. During the interim Bob Francis, who was a rising young leading man then and a principle in our picture, was taking flying lessons and got killed. So they had to recast that part also. That meant that I had to go back up into the mountains and redo his scenes with a new actor.

Somebody Up There Likes Me (1956)

Paul Newman; Pier Angeli; Everett Sloane; Eileen Heckart; Sal Mineo; Harold Stone; Joseph Buloff; Sammy White; Arch Johnson; Robert P. Lieb; Theodore Newton.

This was only Paul Newman's second feature. His first was a costume piece called *The Silver Chalice* for Warner Bros. I met with him and I thought he just seemed right, and I also was familiar with his work on the stage in New York. So Paul was signed for the part.

One of the better things we had in addition to Ernie Lehman's fine script was that we had a chance to spend a lot of time with the middleweight fighter Rocky Graziano, whose story we were telling. Paul and I and Rocky went around the Lower East Side of New York City where Rocky grew up and saw his haunts and met his buddies. He also got us a lot of stills of the period, and a lot of the clothes Paul wore in the film came from Rocky. Also, Rocky had done a *Look* magazine interview on tape. We were able to get that so Paul could listen to Rocky and get the cadence of his delivery. We decided early on that whatever Paul could do honestly that accurately portrayed Rocky, he would do it. If anything were false, then he wouldn't do it. So Paul studied Rocky and I think he came off with a brilliant performance—really good and a real characterization.

I had a scene that took place on the Lower East Side's rooftops and I couldn't do that at the studio. I needed a few extra gang members, hoodlum kind of types. So I was interviewing in the office of MGM in New York and in came this character with a little straight cap on his head, all kind of cocky, and it was Steve McQueen. I was somehow just taken by his whole attitude and his look and so I put him in the scene. Somehow I got him established in such a way in the scene in New York that I had to bring him out to the coast to do another added little scene with Paul and Sal Mineo. So I did the one little scene with him and that was it until we worked together years later in *The Sand Pebbles*.

I cast Robert Loggia, too. He played a cheap gangster. He was just getting started back then. We're talking about 1956, or something like that. I liked him very much when I met him and I thought he did a very, very good job for us. He eventually came out to Hollywood from New York. I've been so pleased to see how his career has grown over the years.

He and Steve had that chemistry for the screen, and of course Paul had

it also. That's something that you can't study, you can't learn. I don't mean to say that actors shouldn't learn technique. They should study acting, but some have and some don't have that gene, that chemistry, that connects with that silver screen. And as I say, it's nothing you can study, you either have it or you don't have it. Bogart had it in spades and could hold the screen no matter what. I wish I knew what it was. I wish we could give somebody a shot for it. I can't define it. It's something in the genes.

Run Silent, Run Deep (*1958*)

Clark Gable; Burt Lancaster; Jack Warden; Brad Dexter; Don Rickles; Nick Cravat; Joe Maross; Mary LaRoche; Eddie Foy III; Rudy Bond; H.M. Wynant.

I went down to San Diego to see one of the World War II subs that was a museum. When I first stepped in it, I was absolutely amazed at the small size of it. You're kind of cramped, tight, close, and I was determined to get that on the screen. Up to this time, most films made about submarines were opened up a little. The interiors were a little bit wider for the convenience of working. I said to my art directors, "I want you to go down to that real sub, photograph and measure it, and then you give me every set the same size of that submarine." I wanted the actors to feel the pressure of living in that kind of condensed atmosphere. I think that helped contribute quite a lot to all the performances.

I Want to Live! (*1958*)

Susan Hayward; Simon Oakland; Virginia Vincent; Theodore Bikel; Wesley Lau; Philip Coolidge; Lou Krugman; James Philbrook; Bartlett Robinson; Gage Clarke; Joe De Santis; John Marley; Raymond Bailey; Alice Backes; Gertrude Flynn.

This was a real life story about Barbara Graham, who was convicted, along with a couple of men, of being involved in beating an old lady to death. She was sentenced to death and was the last woman, I believe, to go to the gas chamber in California. This was back about 1956. Walter Ranger was the producer and I called him and said, "Well, Walter, people seem to like horror stories, and this is a real-life horror story if I have ever read one, so let's do it."

Once we decided to do it I went up to San Quentin. Once again, in my determination to do things as they actually are, I wanted to see an execution. I wanted to know what it was like. I wanted to know everything about

it because I didn't want critics to be able to say that's some Hollywood writer/director's version of what it's like to go to the gas chamber. So I went to the warden and I explained to him why I wanted to see an actual execution. He said, "Well, Mr. Wise, I know where you're coming from. Capital punishment is the law of the State of California and I think it's well for the citizens to know what it's like. I'll let you do it."

He called me a couple of weeks later and said, "If you'll come over here early Friday morning we will have an execution going on." So I went. Once you are in there it's divided. One side of the chamber has windows all around it and the witnesses are outside. Inside would be the warden and the doctor with the stethoscope. I was inside with the warden. I didn't know if I would be able to watch it all or whether I'd get sick or have to turn away. Fortunately, it turned out to be very quiet and a very unemotional scene. The victim was a young black man who had been convicted of murder a couple of years before and had run out of appeals. There were no hysterics, no emotion. It was very solemn, very quiet, and I found I was able to stand there with the warden and watch the whole thing. But it's awful.

When I did the film, with Susan Hayward playing the part, once she got the fumes in there, you could see that she started to go. I had her hands strapped down and she did some twitches and then I cut away. But in actuality, during the real execution I saw, that boy twisted and turned and struggled for about seven or eight minutes before he was pronounced dead. It's just ghastly to see.

Susan Hayward was just marvelous in the role. She had such sympathy and empathy for that character. Not because of the criminal thing, but because Susan's marriage at that time was very rocky and there was a lot of press. Barbara Graham had a lot of problems with the press in her trial. So I think right from the beginning, Susan had a lot of empathy, a lot of feeling for Barbara, particularly her problems with the press.

West Side Story (1961)

Natalie Wood; Richard Beymer; Russ Tamblyn; Rita Moreno; George Chakiris; Simon Oakland; Ned Glass; William Bramley; Tucker Smith; Tony Mordente; David Winters; Eliot Feld; Bert Michaels; David Bean; Robert Banas.

I originally accepted the job as both the director and producer on *West Side Story*. Then I was approached by Harold Mirisch, whose company was presenting the film for United Artists. He said, "Hey, what would you think

about having a co-director?" I said, "No way. That can't be. It's silly." He said, "Well, Jerome Robbins, who directed and choreographed the New York show as well as the national company, feels that unless he can be more involved in the picture he doesn't want to come out and do the choreography." I said, "I don't think that makes any sense. Why don't you let him direct it?" He said, "No, no, this is a big picture and he's never done a film." I said, "Well, that doesn't make any sense to me. Forget it."

I went home that night and almost literally took my director's hat off and put on my producer's hat and said to myself, "What's the best thing for this picture?" And I decided that if there were any way to work with Robbins that would be best. I knew that I could always get some of his dance assistants to come out and reproduce what was done on the stage, but I knew that Jerry, being as brilliant as he was, would find the adaptation and changes needed to put it on the screen. So I went back and said, "Okay, I'll consider pursuing this."

This started a series of talks between Jerry and myself. We decided that he would be in charge of the musical numbers, both to direct and edit. I would be there to help him on those, and I would direct the book and he would be there to give me his suggestions, and that's the way we did the film.

The difference in the two mediums—film and stage—is that on the stage you're not quite into reality. Once you are removed from reality people can go from dialogue into song without you feeling a little twinge of embarrassment. Film is a very real medium and it doesn't take kindly to stylization or ultra-theatrical things or poetic things.

Our challenge was how to take the highly stylized dancing and the highly theatrical moments, like the meeting of the boy and the girl in the gym, and the poetic moments, like the fire escape number, and translate those into the realism of the screen in a way that would be acceptable. And that's what we spent months and months working out before we started shooting.

I insisted that we had to open the picture in New York on the streets. There was no way I could try to do that in Hollywood. I had a battle with the studio because that was going to cost a lot more money, but I said that's the only way we could do it.

I didn't want to do that same old shot of New York from across the river. I had to deliver it in a fashion that would help people accept the dancing in the streets very early in the film. So I got to wondering what it would look like straight down from a helicopter. We rented one of those old New York Airways choppers and went and looked at that marvelous city from the sky. The shot gives you a look at a real New York, but in an abstract way.

I felt that helped put the audience in a frame of mind to accept these kids dancing on the real streets just a few minutes later.

We had shot about 60 percent of the film and the front office got very concerned that we were getting farther and farther behind schedule and over budget, and they decided that the co-direction was the problem. I tried to convince them that I didn't think that was the case, but they prevailed and they said, "Jerry's got to go." It was a very touchy and difficult time. Fortunately for me, Jerry had rehearsed all the other dance numbers and his rehearsal people stayed on the film to help me do those numbers. So I was able to photograph what he had rehearsed and get it on the screen successfully. Later, when I got the picture cut, I asked Jerry to come out and look at it with us, and he did and he seemed to like it very much. He had some very cogent suggestions about how things might be improved here and there. I believe that, despite the problems, Jerry was very happy with the film. I received two Academy Awards, one for co-directing—and Jerry got one for his co-directing—and one for producing the best picture of the year.

Two for the Seesaw (1962)

Robert Mitchum; Shirley MacLaine; Edmon Ryan;
Elisabeth Fraser; Eddie Firestone; Billy Gray.

That's about the only incidence of any major picture I did where the cast was already set. But I loved the script. Isabelle Leonard wrote it and it was a lovely, lovely script. Of course, a marvelous play had been done first. I went with the cast that had been already selected. I liked Shirley MacLaine particularly. I thought Bob Mitchum was a little off somehow. I always felt he was a little more at home in a kind of rougher role. But I was very pleased with the job he turned in. I thought it was very believable, very real, and people reacted well to it.

One of the biggest difficulties I had on that picture was working with Shirley and Bob. Not in the scenes but in getting them into the scenes. They just liked each other very much and they sparked each other, and they kidded each other, and they told jokes and ribbed each other, and were constantly telling jokes. The two of them were truly funny. They were breaking us all up, the crew as well as myself. Sometimes it would take as much as ten minutes to calm them down and get them onto the set to do a scene.

Finally one day I got the crew back from lunch and I lectured them. I said, "Now listen gang, we've got to stop being such a good audience for

these two or we'll never get this picture done. I'm as guilty as you are, so let's not be such a good audience for them. Let's settle down so I can get this picture done." But I loved working with both of them.

Cast Right and Your Job Will be Easier

Let me say that I think any director with any honesty will admit that 80 percent of his or her job in getting a performance from an actor is having the right actor in the right part. You have to have a meeting of minds about how you see the character in relation to the script and the other characters, so that you know that you and the actor are in accord with the interpretation that's going to come out. Then it's simply a matter of day-to-day working and rehearsing and trying things and experimenting to improve and extend and expand as much as you can on that basic performance.

I don't like cold readings. I rarely ever have them, even in small parts. I like to have the actor take the scene away, whatever it is, and work on it for a little while, and then come back and read it for me. I don't think you really can judge what an actor can do in a cold reading. Occasionally you're in a tight spot and in a hurry and something comes up and you have to have a cold reading, but I don't think they're really helpful to either the director or the actor.

The Value of Preproduction

Preproduction—I can never get enough of it. You plan everything possible. You need to have everything set and ready—your sets and, of course, the casting. But all the details—the props, the wardrobe, everything that goes into making a picture—you want to have all prepared and ready when you start to shoot, because that's the expensive time. That's when everybody's on the payroll, what with the actors' expensive salaries and all. So you want to have everything ready to go and not have any holdups because you failed to prepare yourself. Don't ever skimp on preproduction.

The Sound of Music (1965)

Julie Andrews; Christopher Plummer; Eleanor Parker; Richard Haydn; Peggy Wood; Charmian Carr; Heather Menzies; Nicholas Hammond; Duane Chase; Angela Cartwright; Debbie Turner; Kym Karath; Anna Lee; Portia Nelson; Ben Wright.

When I started to prepare for *Sand Pebbles* I had to go to Taiwan and Hong Kong to look for locations. Early on it became very, very apparent that this film was going to take a long time to put together. We went to Taiwan to

shoot because I couldn't go to mainland China. We weren't allowed there because it was under Communist rule. I looked at my schedule said, "Gee, this is going to be a year before I can start really getting this thing underway. I really think I ought to do another picture in between if I can." So I let it be known that I was interested in maybe doing another film before I did *Sand Pebbles.* That's when I was asked if I would be interested in doing *The Sound of Music.* And that's how I got into that.

Before we talk about *The Sound of Music*, there's a story I want to tell about McQueen. When all this was happening we didn't have a cast yet for *Sand Pebbles*. When I first sent a list of people up to the front office for casting ideas for *Sand Pebbles,* I had six or eight people on that list. One of them was Steve McQueen, but he was way down on the list. Twentieth Century Fox thought he was good, but he didn't have a big enough name to carry the picture at that time, so we forgot about him. Time goes on, and I've done *Sound of Music,* and we come back to *Sand Pebbles* and about a year and a half has gone by. In the meantime, Steve had a successful TV series and had starred in *The Great Escape*. So when we started talking casting again he was up at the top of the list.

I had not seen *The Sound of Music,* but I knew about it. Ernie Lehman, who did the screenplay for me on *West Side Story,* had done a first draft script on it, and so it was sent over to me and I read it and loved it and thought it was just marvelous. Then I got a record of the score of the show and heard all of those marvelous songs of Rodgers and Hammerstein and I thought, "Well, this is for me." There wasn't any question in my mind. Willie Wyler had actually been on it for a while, working with Ernie on that first script. But he got into some kind of dispute with the studio about his interpretation of it, and they took him off or he left. So it became free just about that time and that's when I took it on.

I'm always asked about that opening shot. Interestingly enough, I read Ernie's script and he had described this aerial shot in the script. I called him and I said, "I love your script, but we can't do that."

I felt people would say we were swiping from ourselves, copying the opening helicopter shot from *West Side Story.* I thought we'd be accused of plagiarizing ourselves. He said, "Okay, fine. I can't think of a better opening. If you can find a better opening, fine." I couldn't find a better opening, so that's what I shot.

From the beginning we always thought about Julie Andrews as being ideal for our show, but there was some question about whether she was photogenic because she hadn't been seen on the screen before. She had al-

ready shot *Mary Poppins* at Disney but it hadn't been released yet, so we got permission from the producer to go over there and to see some of their film. The minute she came on the screen there was no question in our minds that we had found our lady. She was marvelous in it. She's a tremendous talent, has great range, but she seemed to be most popular, unfortunately for her career, with things like *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*. She is a marvelous lady, a great talent, marvelous to work with, a perfectionist, couldn't work too hard to get it better and better and better, and yet with a great sense of humor and a lot of fun.

I always felt that the part of the captain was kind of dull, kind of stock. I had seen Chris Plummer on the stage in New York a couple of times and was impressed with his qualities and abilities as an actor. I wanted Chris because I knew he'd add a kind of edge and color and a bit of darkness to the role. I had to fly to London to convince him to do it because he didn't think it was his kind of thing. He finally accepted and I think he was a big, big asset to the film.

Some of the critics didn't like the picture all that well. You learn to survive these things, you know, but they still hurt. Even Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* came down on us, saying it was too sweet, too sticky. I think that we did cut down considerably on what I thought was excessive saccharin sweetness from the stage show. But there was a story to tell, a certain kind of story, and that was what we had to do. With all due respect to some critics, we did get fine reviews in other places. The *LA Times* here gave us a smashing review and I think the most telling fact is that it's lasted now over twenty-five years. Everyplace I go in the world, people are delighted to hear that I did *The Sound of Music*. It was the highest grossing picture of all time. Now, of course, it's way down the list since the big blockbusters have come along.

The Sand Pebbles (1966)

Steve McQueen; Richard Attenborough; Richard Crenna; Candice Bergen; Emmanuelle Arsan; Mako; Larry Gates; Charles Robinson; Simon Oakland; Ford Rainey; Joe Turkel; Gavin MacLeod; Joe Di Reda; Richard Loo; Barney Phillips.

Logistically, *The Sand Pebbles* was a difficult film to do. I had trouble getting into Taiwan to shoot, and then, when we finally did, we had all kinds of weather problems. It was stormy, rainy weather, winds changing from one way to another. I had this ship and I'd shoot part of a sequence and have the smoke coming out of the stacks going one way, and we'd go down the

next day to finish the sequence and the wind's blowing the other way, which meant I had to change my day's work right away. We used to go out on our locations with six different shooting calls. If the weather was sunny and good, we'd do these scenes. If it were overcast, we'd do these scenes. If it were a little misty, we'd do these scenes. If the wind were blowing right to left, we'd do these scenes and if it were blowing the other way, we'd do these scenes. We had to keep adjusting all the time.

I love the story and the way it caught the period and the fascinating characters, and I also liked what it had to say. I felt maybe it was time that we were all reminded, the American public particularly, of the phrase "Yankee Go Home" that people thought started in World War II. Of course, we were not the only ones in China that ran the gunboats. The French, the English, and the Germans did, too. All the major powers really kind of ran China in those days until the revolution. In the film, the character that Steve played goes through a change. He goes from the man who called the Chinese soapheads to a man who was very much in sympathy with them. In the end he wanted to stay there in China.

This was Candice Bergen's second picture. She had done a picture called *The Group* and I think she was only about nineteen when she did that. She was only twenty, twenty-one, when she did my film. We had a marvelous time working together. I'm so pleased at the great success she enjoyed in films after that, and of course with her renowned TV show *Murphy Brown*.

I mentioned earlier that when you want to do something with the military you have to go to the government with your script. Fortunately we didn't need anything on this picture from the Defense Department because this was a period piece; they couldn't provide the gunboat, they couldn't provide uniforms or anything. They didn't have anything that we wanted. I'm sure if we had had to go to them for anything they would have probably disapproved of the script. When we got to Taiwan to begin shooting I did go to see our ambassador there and tell him of our project and what it was about, just so he would be aware of what we were doing there. But there were no consequences.

There is one other important element about the film that I really want to mention and that is McQueen himself. Working with Steve was a rare experience. I had met him before getting started on the film. I never worked with an actor, a star, that knew as well what worked on the screen for himself. Steve knew what worked for Steve McQueen on that screen. For instance, he might be in a rehearsal and he would say, "I think maybe I can

get that over without that line and with just a reaction." Every so often something would come along where McQueen's knowledge of himself really helped the scene and paid off.

Why He Decided to Produce His Own Films

I've been asked many times why at a certain point in my career I became a producer as well as a director. I did that primarily to bring much more continuity to my pictures. When I was directing for the major studios, when I was under contract, I would make a picture, then go on to another picture. The next thing I would hear about my last picture was when I would read an ad in the paper that it would be playing at the Pantages Theater the next day or the next week. I had no say about how it was released or distributed or anything to do with the advertising or how it was sold. So I decided that I'd like to be a producer as well. I could be in at the very beginning, in the writing stage, developing the script and following the film all the way through production. When I finished postproduction I was able to follow through on how it was distributed and how it was sold and what the advertising would be like. Now, I couldn't dictate that and I didn't want to. But I wanted to be consulted about it. I wanted to have some voice in what happened to my pictures after I made them. Becoming my own producer allowed me to do that.

Do It By Suggestion

When I read the book *The Haunting of Hill House*, it was full of suspense. I wanted to do this film very badly. I've had many people tell me that I made the scariest picture they had ever seen, but they say, "You didn't show anything—how'd you do it?" It's all by suggestion and little bits and pieces of things that might have something behind them, that might be scary, and it does work on people. It works very effectively on them.

I think this obviously stems from my training with producer Val Lewton. I just think it's more fun, somehow, to accomplish the sense of concern, fear, and terror in an audience without having to hit them in the face with it. You don't have to use all those optical devices and special effects and make up things that we can do. Do it by suggestion. Leave something to the imagination.

I much prefer the more subtle approach, which I think is more terrifying than all the gore you see now. The greatest fear that people have is the fear of the unknown, so I much prefer that to horror films that are done with all the special effects and the monsters and the gore. I think that's too easy.

Star (1968)

Julie Andrews; Richard Crenna; Michael Craig; Daniel Massey; Robert Reed; Bruce Forsyth; Beryl Reid; John Collin; Alan Oppenheimer; Richard Karlan; Lynley Laurence; Garrett Lewis; Elizabeth St. Clair; Jenny Agutter; Anthony Eisley.

Well, when Twentieth Century Fox signed Julie Andrews for *The Sound of Music*, they signed her for two pictures. After working with her on *The Sound of Music*, I very much wanted to do another film with her. We were looking around for something and my story editor, Max Lamb, came in one day and suggested she would be a great Gertrude Lawrence, who was, of course, a very famous stage, film, and musical star. And that's how it all started, as a vehicle to star Julie for the second commitment to Fox.

We were so surprised when it did not do all that well, because when we previewed it in the Midwest we received as good a preview as we had on *The Sound of Music*. It seemed like we had another solid hit. We opened in London at the Dominion Theater where *The Sound of Music* had played for four years. I remember the London paper saying, "There goes the Dominion Theater again to Julie Andrews for another four years." But, boy, it just didn't work. I think part of it was that it was out of its time.

I've seen the picture within the last year and a half, one time in New York at a movie house and once in San Jose with an audience. The audience absolutely adored it and ate it up. They just loved every moment of it. I think it's got some marvelous work in it. Julie's performance is some of the best work she's done, just some extraordinary and stylish musical numbers that Michael Kidd choreographed. I think it's too fine a picture to be just languishing on a shelf in a vault someplace so I'm trying to get Twentieth Century Fox at least to put it out on cassette and video disc so it can be seen by people. It's too good to be sitting there.

The Andromeda Strain (1971)

Arthur Hill; David Wayne; James Olson; Kate Reid; Paula Kelly; George Mitchell; Ramon Bieri; Kermit Murdock; Richard O'Brien; Eric Christmas; Peter Hobbs; Mark Jenkins; Peter Helm; Joe Di Reda; Carl Reindel.

I got a call from Universal. They had optioned a new book and if I was interested they would go ahead and purchase it for me. It turned out to be

Michael Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain.* That fit right into what I was looking for. It was today, it was modern, although it was classified as science fiction. It really was more science fact than fiction. I was delighted because that brought me into today's world of technology.

I was fascinated by the whole story and the explanation of what might have come back in this capsule that had been shot up into space. It was, in a sense, an indictment of biological warfare, and it was that underlying note that appealed to me very much. So it was going to be an interesting and fascinating and very intense and suspenseful science-fiction film. But the film was also going to have something important to say about the area of biological warfare and chemical warfare and nuclear warfare.

The Hindenburg (1975)

George C. Scott; Anne Bancroft; William Atherton;
Roy Thinnes; Gig Young; Burgess Meredith; Charles Durning;
Richard A. Dysart; Robert Clary; Rene Auberjonois; Peter Donat;
Alan Oppenheimer; Katherine Helmond; Joanna Cook Moore; Stephen Elliott.

I was still at Universal, and they had a project called *The Hindenburg* that was not going along very well in the scripting stage. They said, "It's not going very well, so would you be interested in it?" Anybody that was alive back then remembers that terrible, terrible crash. I was caught up by the whole mystery of what that might have been about, what it cost in human lives, and, very frankly, about the romance of flying on one of those big dirigibles—the idea of getting on one of those big airships and taking two and a half days to fly from New Jersey to Frankfurt. They had those big lounges and if it were a nice day they'd have the windows open. They might be flying at one thousand feet above the ground and hear a train whistle down below. They could hear dogs bark, see buoys on the ocean, and they served marvelous food and had lovely small but high-quality accommodations, and I just got caught up with the romance of that.

My biggest problem was could I make it work, could we make the blimp real. As a matter of fact, before I accepted the assignment I had a meeting with Al Whitlock, who was a matte painting specialist at Universal. I said, "Al, can we do this? Can we show that giant aircraft outside the hangar in Frankfurt? Can we get her up in the air? Can we fly it across the ocean? Can we take it around by New York? Can we bring it into its hangar in New Jersey? Can we do that successfully?" And he said, "Yeah," and he started to

talk about how we could do it with a miniature and this, that, and the other. Then I went back and said I would do it, but I wanted to clear it with him.

Some of the final explosion looked like it was dangerous to the actors, but it really wasn't. We had only one where it might have been chancy, and that was when the ship burned. We had men up in the nose cone and we had that covered with about thirteen cameras because it was one of those fire scenes that if we hadn't gotten in one take, there would be no second take. Stuntmen acted as crewmembers and they were well protected with the clothes that they had on. We spent a whole day just planning, timing, and doing dry runs without setting anything off to be sure that the timing was going to be right before we ever shot it.

It's really the director's responsibility for whatever happens in a scene, I think. You have to rehearse an action scene that has any kind of danger to it very carefully. You have to rehearse it and rehearse it, time and time and time again, to be sure that everybody on the set understands exactly how it's going to go. In the end, the director has to take responsibility for that.

Anyway, on *The Hindenburg* nobody got hurt. We lost a couple of cameras but we got great footage.

Star Trek, The Motion Picture (1979)

William Shatner; Leonard Nimoy; DeForest Kelley; James Doohan; George Takei; Majel Barrett; Walter Koenig; Nichelle Nichols; Persis Khambatta; Stephen Collins; Grace Lee Whitney; Mark Lenard; Billy Van Zandt; Roger Aaron Brown; Gary Faga.

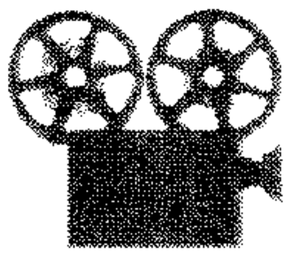
After I finished *Audrey Rose* with Anthony Hopkins and Marsha Mason, I got a call from Michael Eisner at Paramount asking if I would be interested in doing a feature of *Star Trek*. I had never gotten caught up in the TV series so I didn't know too much about it, but I knew of its popularity. But what intrigued me about it was that I had done two science-fiction films before: *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *Andromeda Strain*. They were both earthbound, and I thought maybe it was time I got up in the heavens, and that's what hooked me into going into it.

I went in and talked to them and said, "Frankly, I'll have to see some of the episodes because I'm not familiar with the series." They got ten or twelve of what they considered to be some of their best episodes and I ran them over a period of a couple of weeks. I thought five or six were excellent, a couple okay, and a couple I thought were pretty bad. But I was hooked by the idea of doing something up in the skies and I took it on.

It was not one of my happiest experiences. Working with Bill Shatner and Leonard Nimoy and all the other cast members was fine. We got along wonderfully well. They were a great gang. But we were rewriting the script all the way through. When we finally started to shoot, for contractual reasons we only had the first draft. We were rewriting until the very last day of shooting and that's never a very successful way of doing it. We kept rewriting and there were so many tugs and pulls between Gene Roddenberry, the producer, and my own views of it. And the actors had strong views about certain aspects of the thing so it was almost kind of a pulling back and forth in a tug to finally get this thing done. That is just not a good way to make a movie.

His Parting Words

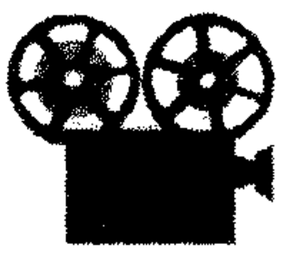
Since I've started directing I've always been looking for that perfect story and that perfect script. If I am to be remembered at all as a director I would hope it is for my taste in films. There might be some critics who won't agree with that. But I've tried to be somewhat choosy in what I've done and tried not to do anything that one would call really out-and-out distasteful or objectionable.



Director Filmography

The Magnificent Ambersons (1942, uncredited)
Curse of the Cat People (1944)
Mademoiselle Fifi (1944)
The Body Snatcher (1945)
A Game of Death (1945)
Criminal Court (1946)
Born to Kill (1947)
Mystery in Mexico (1948)
Blood on the Moon (1948)
The Set-Up (1949)
Two Flags West (1950)
Three Secrets (1950)
The House on Telegraph Hill (1951)

The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Something for the Birds (1952)
The Captive City (1952)
So Big (1953)
Destination Gobi (1953)
The Desert Rats (1953)
Executive Suite (1954)
Tribute to a Bad Man (1956)
Somebody Up There Likes Me (1956)
Helen of Troy (1956)
Until They Sail (1957)
This Could Be the Night (1957)
I Want to Live! (1958)
Run Silent, Run Deep (1958)
Odds Against Tomorrow (1959)
West Side Story (1961)
Two for the Seesaw (1962)
The Haunting (1963)
The Sound of Music (1965)
The Sand Pebbles (1966)
Star! (1968)
The Andromeda Strain (1971)
Two People (1973)
The Hindenburg (1975)
Audrey Rose (1977)
Star Trek: The Motion Picture (1979)
Rooftops (1989)



Awards

Academy Awards, USA

Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award, 1967
The Sand Pebbles, Best Picture, 1967 (nominated)
The Sound of Music, Best Director, 1966

The Sound of Music, Best Picture, 1966
West Side Story, Best Director (with Jerome Robbins), 1962
West Side Story, Best Picture, 1962
I Want to Live!, Best Director (nominated), 1959
Citizen Kane, Best Film Editing (nominated), 1942

American Cinema Editors, USA
Filmmaker of the Year Award, 1967

American Film Institute
Life Achievement Award, 1998

American Society of Cinematographers, USA
Board of Governors Award, 1997

Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards
Lifetime Achievement Award, 1998

Directors Guild of America
D.W. Griffith Award, 1988
DGA Award, Outstanding Directorial Achievement in a Motion Picture for *The Sound of Music*, 1966
DGA Award, Outstanding Directorial Achievement in a Motion Picture for *West Side Story* (with Jerome Robbins), 1962

Golden Globes, USA
The Sand Pebbles, Best Motion Picture Director (nominated), 1966
The Sound of Music, Best Motion Picture Director (nominated), 1965

Istanbul International Film Festival
Lifetime Achievement Award, 1996

Temecula Valley International Film Festival
Lifetime Achievement Award, 1996