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Dartmouth Film Society

DIAL M FOR MURDER (1954)

Tony Wendice
Margot Wendice
Mark
Inspector Hubbard

Ray Milland
Grace Kelly
Robert Cummings
John Williams

Lesgate
Storyteller
Pearson

Anthony Dawson
Leo Britt
Patrick Allen

Script by Frederick Knott, from his play of the same name. Photographed in Warner-color (and originally 3-D) by Robert Burks. Edited by Rudy Fehr. Art direction by Edward Carrere. Music by Dimitri Tiomkin Distributed by Warner Brothers.

Produced and directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK

With today's program, we resume our Alfred Hitchcock retrospective, which this term will include DIAL M FOR MURDER (1954), TO CATCH A THIEF (1955), THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY (1955), THE WRONG MAN (1957), VERTIGO (1958) and MARNIE (1964). In addition, the Nugget will play NORTH BY NORTHWEST (1959) which is currently in general re-release.

With STRANGERS ON A TRAIN (1951), the last film shown on our winter series, Hitchcock moved to Warner Brothers for the first of what many critics regard as his mature-period movies. The most important consequence of the new studio was his use of the cameraman Robert Burks, who has shot all of his subsequent films except PSYCHO, moving with the director to Paramount and Universal.

Following STRANGERS ON A TRAIN, Hitchcock made I CONFESS (1952), one of his most sensuously beautiful films, photographed in Quebec, and in some ways giving hints of VERTIGO in style and treatment. While it was not a great critical or public success, it is a more important film than one would gather from merely reading about it. Unfortunately, it is unavailable at the present time.

Upon its completion, Hitchcock began work on DIAL M FOR MURDER, another filmed stage play in direct line from JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK and ROPE. Instead of trying to "open up" the play by adding scenes which could not be shown on a stage, Hitchcock kept to the letter of the original work, with only a few very small additions of little consequence. The novelty of the film was its use of 3-D, but by the time the film was completed the craze was over and the film was not released in this process. Apparently Hitchcock made very little use of the spectacular opportunities of 3-D, the only time being the attempted murder of Margot in which the heroine stabbed her attacker from the middle of the audience. Outside of this one scene, it is virtually impossible to pick out any other 3-D effects.

The strength of the film lies in its excellent cast, Frederick Knott's good script from his own play, burks' fluid photography and of course Hitchcock's fine direction. It was the first of Grace Kelly's three films with Hitchcock, and she gives one of her best performances. Ray Milland is a suave villain and Robert Cummings is less objectionable than usual. The director also makes one of his most unusual and humorous personal appearances.

DIAL M FOR MURDER is in no way an important film, but it is a most enjoyable entertainment in Hitchcockian suspense.

David Stewart Hull

Our next film is Sidney Lumet's LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, adapted from the Eugene O'Neill play. It is shown Tuesday, April 19 at 3 pm and 8:30 pm. Please note that the afternoon showing begins an hour earlier than usual due to the great length of the film, which is being shown in its original, uncut version.

And on Friday, April 22, the Film Society presents a tribute to three French directors, comprised of a short color film biography of Abel Gance; Jean Vigo's surrealist fantasy ZERO DE CONDUITE (1933); and Jean Renoir's lyrical PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE (1938). The program is presented at 4 pm and 8:30 pm.