

Document Citation

Title	Ecstasy
Author(s)	
Source	<i>San Francisco International Film Festival</i>
Date	1999
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Extase (Ecstasy), Machatý, Gustav, 1933

SPIFT 199



Ecstasy

Extase

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1933, 87 min.

DIR Gustav Machaty **SCR** Machaty, Frantisek Horley **CAM** Jan Stallich **ED** Antonin Zelenka **CAST** Hedy Kiesler, Aribert Mog

GUSTAV MACHATY TRIBUTE

Archival print courtesy of the Czech National Film Archive, Prague

A landmark in the history of the erotic film, the once scandalous *Ecstasy* was condemned by the Vatican and banned for many years by U.S. and British censors. Leading lady Hedy Kiesler appeared in the nude in it; later, snapped up by Hollywood, she duly reappeared at MGM as Hedy Lamarr, clad to the gills by Adrian. The simple story is a triangle tale about a young bride, her impotent corpse-like middle-aged husband and the virile young engineer with whom she has a sexual tryst. It's a film that depends heavily on visual style; it's directed with great assurance and invention by Machaty, who was clearly influenced by the editing techniques of Eisenstein. Lamarr's famed nude swimming scene and birthday-suited dash through the woods now seem less arousing than Jan Stallich's dazzling closeups of her face, or the shots of her alone in the night smoking a cigarette, features sculpted with a thin rim of light (so much of *Ecstasy* is filled with shadows, it could be a horror movie). Though the theme is the positive power of sexuality and its kinship to nature, this dreamy tale never seems to be taking place in the real world.

Elliott Stein

Gustav Machaty (b. Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1901–d. Munich, Germany, 1963) *See Filmography on page 111.*

