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tells the story to the cuckolded husband himself. But before it comes to a duel, it turns out that a deaf uncle has bought an identical hat as a wedding present, and so everything ends well. The two basic comical situations in the film are the opening scene in the forest and the adventures of the uncle who is deaf as a post.

As a result of Clair's efforts, a shallow comedy is transformed on the screen into a parody of a vaudeville, delightful in its rhythm and lightness of touch (note the famous quadrille of the lanciers), but also full of biting anti-bourgeois satire. There are visible influences of Surrealism, of which Clair's famous short Entr'acte (1924) was the fullest expression. The success of the film was enormous and not only in France but abroad; Clair acquired the leading position in the film world that was to be his for thirty years. Hardly any film director has enjoyed as much.

UNDERWORLD Josef von Sternberg

Script: Robert N. Lee and Charles Furthman, based on a project by Ben Hecht. Photography: Bert Glennon. Cast: George Bancroft ("Bull" Weed), Evelyn Brent ("Feathers" McCoy), Clive Brook ("Rolls Royce"), Larry Semon ("Slippy" Lewis), Fred Kohler (Buck Mulligan), Helen Lynch (His girl), Jerry Mandy (Paloma).

Famous Players-Lasky/Paramount, U.S.A. 8 reels, 7643 ft.

Underworld was an impressive start to a series of American gangster films, and a turning point in the career of Josef von Sternberg. Viennese by origin, and having for eleven years patiently climbed the steps of a film career in Hollywood, Sternberg made his debut with Salvation Hunters (1925)--in his own opinion the only sincere work of art in his entire career, and the only one which bears his directional credo. Experimental, semi-amateur and produced for next to nothing, this symbolic drama was influenced by the German Kammer-spiel and attracted critical attention by its interesting formal aspect. Sternberg seemed to be on the way to success and was given the direction of further films. But his interests were not understood; Sternberg took on inappropriate scripts and as a result his following two films (one was taken over by another director) were failures.

It was only Hecht's scenario for Underworld which allowed Sternberg to display the fullness of his talent. Bull Weed, a tough but generous and sentimental gangster, kills a rival and is imprisoned. Feathers, his girlfriend and Rolls Royce, his drunken lawyer protégé, try to organize his escape, but the plan misfires. Thinking he was betrayed, Bull escapes all the same. When his friends join him the police mount a siege. Seeing that they are in love and

that they are still loyal to him, Bull understands and tells them to go away before he dies from police bullets. Underworld is at once a sensational picture, faultlessly composed and finely told and an intelligent psychological sketch, containing convincing portraits of the underworld protagonists. The motif of a criminal besieged by the police was to appear again and again in the cinema (Marcel Carné).

Sternberg was not interested in action as such, as were the directors of crime films before him; neither did he follow the sociological causes of crime as would be done by the "gangster series" proper that started with Little Caesar. He was primarily a psychologist. The cinema of passions, the cinema of problems and moral dilemmas is in Underworld also the cinema of formal brilliance and great visual power. The formal aspect was, as a matter of fact, the most important to the director: Sternberg created "moving paintings," excellently handled the composition of the photography and its Expressionist chiaroscuro, used significant details which increase suggestiveness and build up the atmosphere of the film's interiors, and expertly distributed the elements of stability and motion in the frame. Many shots are striking: the fluorescent fogs, the sun's rays which steal into the dusty flat where Bull barricades himself from the police; the white feathers in shabby, dusty rooms give the story a touch of desperate poetry.

Sternberg was an able student of Griffith in narrative style, and added a talent for brief, incisive storytelling to the list of achievements of the American school of film editing (note the succinct description of the raid on the jeweler's shop). But he could not free his films of pollution from melodrama: in Underworld this fault disappeared in the rapid flow of the story, but in a few years it would reappear and cause Sternberg's downfall.

BED AND SOFA (Tretya Meshchanskaya) [Three Sharing] Abram Room

Script: Victor Shklovsky and Room. Photography: Grigori Gibyer. Cast: Nikolai Batalov (Kolya, the husband), Ludmila Semyonova (Ludmila, the wife), Vladimir Fogel (Volodya, the friend), L. Yureniev, E. Sokolova.

Sovkino, U.S.S.R. 6644 ft.

A marital triangle: a theme which nearly always leads to the banal in cinema. But not in this case. Room's film is very strongly set in the reality of the Moscow of the 20's and is original from the point of view of the plot and the psychology. In addition it is a faithful mirror of the customs and thought of the times. A husband

goes on a trip and leaves his wife in the charge of a friend. The friend takes her to the movies, for an aeroplane trip and finally becomes her lover. The husband returns, learns what has happened and resigns himself to sleeping on the sofa while the lover shares the marital bed with his wife. The two men team up in bullying the girl. She becomes pregnant but they both deny responsibility. So, having declined an abortion, she leaves them both.

Bed and Sofa touches problems which coincide with Women's Liberation, discussions on abortion and woman's role in society. The film was scripted by Shklovsky, the distinguished Russian literary critic, and its plot is said to have been based on details of the private life of the great revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. Great merit lies in the method of execution: the small room in which the story develops copies an average big-city living room during the housing shortage, and the street scenes are authentic. Bed and Sofa is a reminder that the hidden camera method was not introduced by the Nouvelle Vague in the 50's, but by the Soviet documentary and later feature film, and in the silent period. In the real scenery the people are also real, and the observation of reactions and attitudes is intimate, penetrating and excellent.

Room, who had made himself known the previous year with Death Bay (1926), related the surprising adventures of his protagonists in a tone half-serious, half-satirical; already the original title of the film (meaning "Third Bourgeois Street") was a joke. This ambivalence of the mood of the film corresponded very well with the peculiar conglomerate of customs and behavior in a society then in the process of creation, a society whose social relationships had so recently been overturned.

THE LOVE OF JEANNE NEY (Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney) Georg
Wilhelm Pabst

Script: Ladislaus Vajda and Rudolf Leonhardt, based on the novel by Ilya Ehrenburg. Photography: Fritz Arno Wagner and Walter Robert Lach. Cast: Edith Jeanne (Jeanne Ney), Brigitte Helm (Young blind girl), Hertha von Walther (Coach), Uno Henning (Andreas), Fritz Rasp (Kalibiev), Wladimir Sokoloff (Bolshevik friend).

UFA, Germany. 6 reels, 8671 ft.

After the brutally realistic The Joyless Street, Pabst made an excursion into the realm of psychoanalytical drama. Secrets of a Soul (1926) was a feature-film lecture on the theories of Freud, in which the director had a lively interest. Yet it is not a remarkable achievement; the film is formally original (visually it is based on