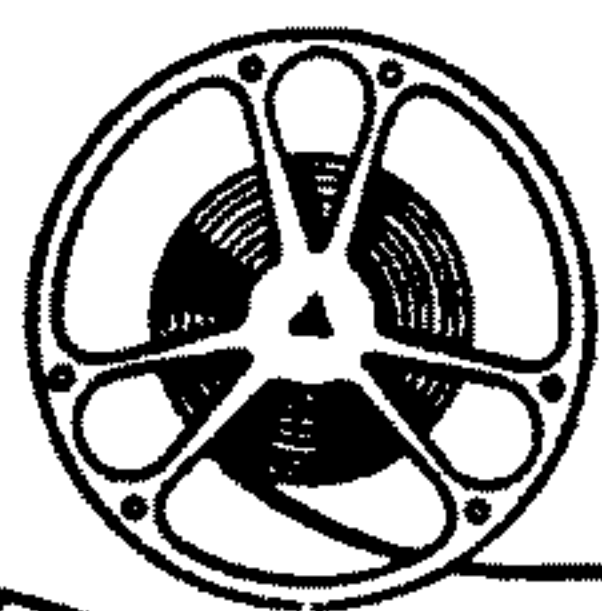
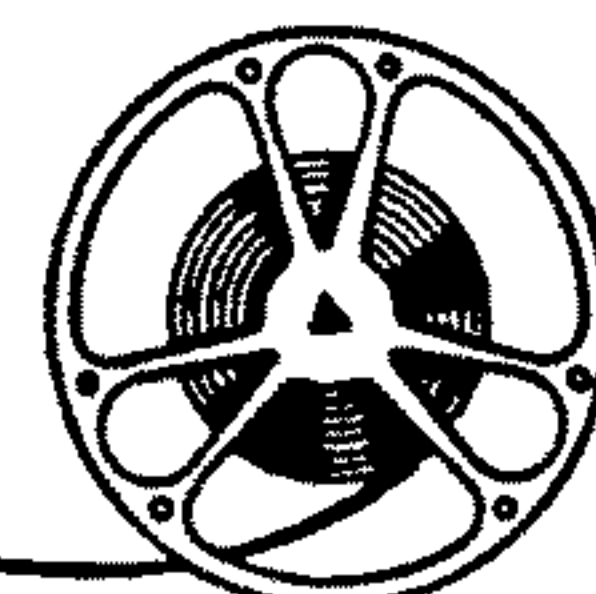


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Dartmouth Daily Film Program



YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE (1937)

Joan Graham	Sylvia Sidney	Hester	Margaret Hamilton
Eddie Taylor	Henry Fonda	Rogers	Guinn Williams
Stephen Whitney	Barton McLane	Dr. Hill	Jerome Cowan
Bonnie Graham	Jean Dixon	Warden	John Wray
Father Dolan	William Gargan	District Attorney	Jonathan Hale
Muggsy	Warren Hymer	Guard	Ward Bond
Ethan	"Chick" Sale		

Based on a story by Gene Towne and Graham Baker. Photographed by Leon Shamroy. Directed by Fritz Lang and produced by Walter Wanger for United Artists.

During the year we have had a chance to examine several of the American films of Fritz Lang, including FURY (1936) and SCARLET STREET (1945). We would like to have shown YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE in proper chronological order, but this proved impossible due to booking difficulties. However, it is a film that holds its own with the best of its genre in any period.

Essentially, YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE is more of a director's film than FURY, which immediately preceeded it. Again it is a story of the "wrong man" but this time the roots of the tragedy are within the self and not in society. This is not necessarily the way Lang planned the film. An interviewer wrote "Mr. Lang tried to get into it what he called social implications that were ultimately overruled, showing how the boy drifted into crime and because of bad influences and unfavorable environment -- instead, the picture opens as the boy emerges from the prison, a stranger to the audience."

YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE is a film noir in the strongest sense of that term, cold, brutal, and nasty; uncompromising enough to afford a thoroughly unpleasant ending. Despite occasional sentimentality, it is a tragic and bitterly true picture of one man's flight from fate. There is little condescending to the audience, and the film was accused of alienating the spectator at the time of its release. Perhaps it can be better appreciated today when this type of style is more generally accepted.

As One critic observed, the camera is by turns subjective and objective, and it is seldom still during the entire picture. The sound is particularly brilliant, as is the careful lighting. On the subject of camera technique (perhaps carried to a slightly ridiculous extreme) Lang inserts a scene in which Sylvia Sidney runs toward the camera with tears streaming down her eyes. When this passage was finished, Lang took a glass slide of the tears, and had the shot printed with the tear-stained slide in front of the camera lens. The result is interesting but whether it has any meaning at all is up to the spectator to decide.

As Lewis Jacobs wrote, "A picture which in other hands would have degenerated into a raucous melodrama, Lang turned into an absorbing, tense and tragic social document."

David Stewart Hull