

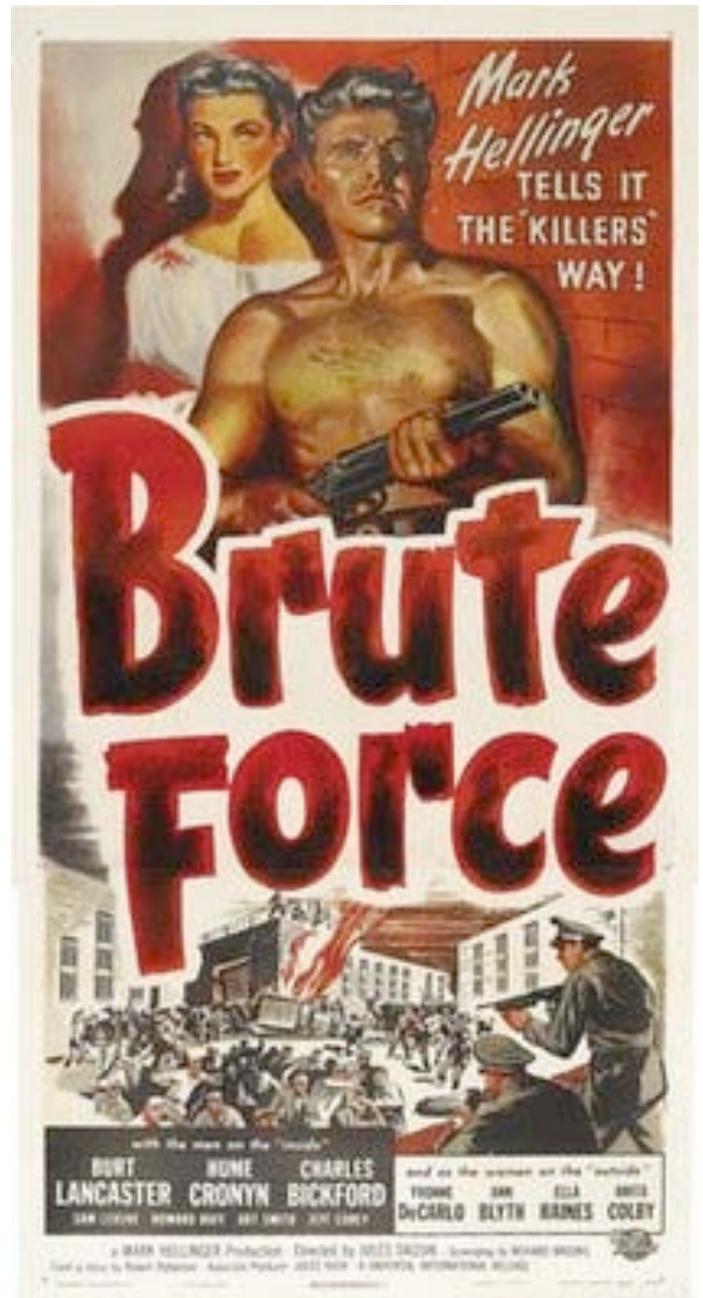
Directed by Jules Dassin
Written by Richard Brooks
Produced by Mark Hellinger
Cinematography by William H. Daniels
Film Editing by Edward Curtiss

Burt Lancaster... Joe Collins
Hume Cronyn... Capt. Munsey
Charles Bickford... Gallagher
Yvonne De Carlo... Gina Ferrara
Ann Blyth... Ruth
Ella Raines... Cora Lister
Anita Colby... Flossie
Sam Levene... Louie Miller #7033
Jeff Corey... 'Freshman' Stack
Roman Bohnen... Warden A.J. Barnes
Sir Lancelot... Calypso
Jay C. Flippen... Hodges
Howard Duff... Robert 'Soldier' Becker
Art Smith... Dr. Walters
Whit Bissell... Tom Lister

JULES DASSIN (18 December 1911, Middletown, Connecticut—31 March 2008, Athens, Greece, complications from flu) directed 25 films, the last of which was *Circle of Two* (1980). Some of the others were *Topkapi* (1964), *Phaedra* (1962), *Celui qui doit mourir/He Who Must Die* (1957), *Du rififi chez les homes/Rififi* (1955), *Night and the City* (1950), *Thieves' Highway* (1949), *The Naked City* (1948), *Brute Force* (1947), *The Canterville Ghost* (1944), *Nazi Agent* (1942) and *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1941

RICHARD BROOKS (18 May 1912, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—11 March 1992, Beverly Hills, California, congestive heart failure) wrote 36 screenplays and directed 24 films. Some of the films he wrote and directed were *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (1977), *In Cold Blood* (1967), *The Professionals* (1966), *Lord Jim* (1965), *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1962), *Elmer Gantry* (1960), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), *The Brothers Karamazov* (1958), *Something of Value* (1957), and *Blackboard Jungle* (1955

WILLIAM H. DANIELS (1 December 1901, Cleveland, Ohio—14 June 1970, Los Angeles) is one of the great cinematographers, but he is best known for his exquisite lighting of Greta Garbo, with whom he made 20 films, one of them (*Anna Christie*) twice (1930



and 1931). He was nominated for three best cinematography Oscars (*How the West Was Won* 1962, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* 1958, and *Anna Christie*) and won one (*Naked City* 1948). He shot 164 films, the last of which was *Move* (1970). Some of the others were *Marlowe* (1969), *In Like Flint* (1967), *Von Ryan's Express* (1965), *The Prize* (1963), *All the Fine Young Cannibals* (1960), *Ocean's Eleven* (1960), *Can-Can* (1960), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), *Strategic Air Command* (1955), *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954), *Winchester '73* (1950), *The Canterville Ghost* (1944), *Keeper of the Flame* (1942), *For Me and My Gal* (1942), *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), *Ninotchka* (1939), *Rose-Marie* (1936), *Anna Karenina* (1935), *Queen Christina* (1933), *Rasputin and the Empress* (1932), *Grand Hotel* (1932), *Mata Hari* (1931), *Susan Lenox <Her Fall and Rise>* (1931), *Queen Kelly* (1929), *The Kiss* (1929), *Bringing Up Father* (1928), *Flesh and the Devil* (1926), *The Merry Widow* (1925), *Greed* (1924), and *Foolish Wives* (1922).

BURT LANCASTER (2 November 1913, NYC—20 October 1994, Century City, California, heart attack) was nominated for three Oscars (*Atlantic City*, 1980, *Birdman of Alcatraz* 1962, *From Here to Eternity* 1953) and won one (*Elmer Gantry* 1960). Some of his other 86 films were *Field of Dreams* (1989), *Zulu Dawn* (1979), *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1977), *Twilight's Last Gleaming* (1977), *The Cassandra Crossing* (1976), *Victory at Entebbe* (1976—as Shimon Peres), *Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson* (1976), *Ulzana's Raid* (1972), *Valdez Is Coming* (1971), *Airport* (1970), *The Gypsy Moths* (1969), *Castle Keep* (1969), *The Swimmer* (1968), *The Professionals* (1966), *The Hallelujah Trail* (1965), *The Train* (1964), *Seven Days in May* (1964), *Il Gattopardo/The Leopard* (1963), *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), *The Unforgiven* (1960), *Separate Tables* (1958), *Run Silent Run Deep* (1958), *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *The Rainmaker* (1956), *Trapeze* (1956), *The Rose Tattoo* (1955), *Apache* (1954), *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1952), *Jim Thorpe—All-American* (1951), *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1948), *All My Sons* (1948), *Brute Force* (1947), *The Killers* (1946).



HUME CRONYN (July 1911, London, Ontario—15 June 2003, Fairfield, Connecticut, prostate cancer) had a long career in film and on the stage, often appearing with his wife, Jessica Tandy. Some of his 85 theatrical and tv films and series in which he appeared were: "A Separate Peace" (2004), "12 Angry Men" (1997), *Marvin's Room* (1996), *The Pelican Brief* (1993), *Cocoon* (1985), *The World According to Garp* (1982), *The Parallax View* (1974), *The Arrangement* (1969), *Hamlet* (1964), "Naked City" James Fallon (1 episode, 1961), "Hallmark Hall of Fame," "Alfred Hitchcock Presents," "General Electric Theater," "Studio One," "Omnibus," *Brute Force* (1947), *The Beginning or the End* (1947—as Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), *Lifeboat* (1944), *Phantom of the Opera* (1943) and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943)

CHARLES BICKFORD (1 January 1891, Cambridge, Massachusetts—9 November 1967, Los Angeles, blood infection) appeared in 108 theatrical and television films and television series, some of which were "The Virginian," "The Dick Powell Show," *Days of Wine and Roses* (1962), "Dr. Kildare," "General Electric Theater," "Playhouse 90," "Hallmark Hall of Fame," *The Big Country* (1958), "Wagon Train," *The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell* (1955), *Prince of Players* (1955), "Schlitz Playhouse of Stars," *A Star Is Born* (1954), *Jim Thorpe -- All-American* (1951), *Johnny Belinda* (1948), *The Babe Ruth Story* (1948), *Brute Force* (1947), *The Farmer's Daughter* (1947), *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *Wing and a Prayer* (1944), *The Song of Bernadette* (1943), *Tarzan's New York Adventure* (1942), *Of Mice and Men* (1939), *Mutiny in the Big House* (1939), *Gangs of New York* (1938), *The Plainsman* (1936), *Pride of the Marines* (1936), *Little Miss Marker* (1934), *White Woman* (1933), *The Squaw Man* (1931), *Anna Christie* (1930) and *South Sea Rose* (1929).

YVONNE DE CARLO (1 September 1922, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada—8 January 2007, Woodland Hills, California)

appeared in 122 films, tv films and tv series, the last of which was "The Barefoot Executive," a made-for-tv movie (1995). She also appeared in "Tales from the Crypt," "Dream On," *American Gothic* (1988), "Murder, She Wrote," *Liar's Moon* (1982), *The Man with Bogart's Face* (1980), "Fantasy Island," "Roots," *Blazing Stewardesses* (1975), "The Virginian," "The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.," "The Munsters," "Death Valley Days," "Bonanza," "Playhouse 90," *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *The Captain's Paradise* (1953), *The Desert Hawk* (1950), *Calamity Jane and Sam Bass* (1949), *Casbah* (1948), *Slave Girl* (1947), *Brute Force* (1947), *Salome Where She Danced* (1945), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), *This Gun for Hire* (1942), and *I Look at You* (1941).

ANN BLYTH (16 August 1928, Mount Kisco, New York) was in 46 films and tv series. Her best screen role was probably the awful daughter in *Mildred Pierce* (1945) for which she received a Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination. Some of her other performances were in "Murder, She Wrote," "Quincy M.E.," "Kraft Suspense Theatre," "Burke's Law," "The Twilight Zone," "Wagon Train," *The Helen Morgan Story* (1957), *The Buster Keaton Story* (1957), *Kismet* (1955), *The Student Prince* (1954), *Rose Marie* (1954), *One Minute to Zero* (1952), *The Great Caruso* (1951), *Red Canyon* (1949), *Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid* (1948), *Another Part of the Forest* (1948), *Brute Force* (1947), *Bowery to Broadway* (1944), *Babes on Swing Street* (1944), *The Merry Monahans* (1944) and *Chip Off the Old Block* (1944).

SIR LANCELOT (24 March 1902, Cumuto, Trinidad, West Indies—12 March 2001, Anaheim, California) appeared in 11 films and 1 tv show ("The Andy Griffith Show, 1967). He was credited in *The Buccaneer* (1958), *Brute Force* (1947), *The Curse of the Cat People* (1944), *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943) and *Happy Go Lucky* (1943). He was uncredited in *Zombies on Broadway* (1945), *Eve Knew Her Apples* (1945), *To Have and Have Not* (1944), *The Ghost Ship* (1943) and *Two Yanks in Trinidad* (1942)

HOWARD DUFF (24 November 1913, Bremerton, Washington—8 July 1990, Santa Barbara, California, heart attack) was perhaps best known for his portrayal of Sam Spade in the long-running radio series. He appeared in a several films after his first screen appearance in *Brute Force* (1947), but most of his work was in tv, where he appeared in scores of dramatic series from the 1950s until his death. Some of his appearances were in *Too Much Sun* (1991), "The Golden Girls," "Knots Landing," "Simon & Simon," "War and Remembrance," "Magnum, P.I." "Dallas," *No Way Out* (1987), "Murder, She Wrote," "St. Elsewhere," "The Love Boat," "Charlie's Angels," *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), "Lou Grant," *A Wedding* (1978), "The Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew Mysteries," "Police Story," "The Rockford Files," "The Streets of San Francisco," "Kung Fu," "The Mod Squad," "The Virginian," "Batman," "I Spy," "The Twilight Zone," "Bonanza," "Lux Video Theatre," *Roar of the Crowd* (1953), *The Lady from Texas* (1951), *Calamity Jane and Sam Bass* (1949), *Red Canyon* (1949), *All My Sons* (1948), and *The Naked City* (1948).

WHIT BISSELL (25 October 1909, NYC—5 March 1996, Woodland Hills, Los Angeles, California, Parkinson's disease) is a well-known character actor with appearances in nearly 300 films,

made-for-tv films and tv series. His last appearance was in a 1971 episode of "Falcon Crest"; his first was in *The Sea Hawk* (1940). Some of the others were "Hart to Hart," "The Incredible Hulk," "Quincy M.E.," "The Bionic Woman," "Matt Helm," "McCloud," *Soylent Green* (1973), *Airport* (1970), "Star Trek," "Hogan's Heroes," "Lassie," "Perry Mason," "The Virginian," *Spencer's Mountain* (1963), "Have Gun - Will Travel," *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) (uncredited), *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), "Bonanza," "Maverick," *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), *The Time Machine* (1960), "The Untouchables," *Warlock* (1959), *The Defiant Ones* (1958), *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957), *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *The Desperate Hours* (1955), *The Caine Mutiny* (1954), *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), *Riot in Cell Block 11* (1954), *Tales of Robin Hood* (1951), *Anna Lucasta* (1949), *Canon City* (1948), *Another Part of the Forest* (1948), *Brute Force* (1947), *Destination Tokyo* (1943) and *The Sea Hawk* (1940).

Jules Dassin

from *World Film Directors, Vol. I*. Ed. John Wakeman. H.W. Wilson Company, NY, 1987.

American director, scenarist, and producer, Jules Dassin was born Julius Dassin in Middletown, Connecticut. He was one of the eight children of Samuel Dassin, a barber, and the former Berthe Vogel, both Russian Jewish immigrants. The family moved to New York City when Dassin was still a small child and settled in Harlem. "We were so poor it was ridiculous," he said. "At that time Harlem wasn't entirely black. There were about three or four minority groups living in the ghetto, at each other's throats all the time: Jewish, Negro, Irish, and some Italian, divided among themselves and taking out their wrath and their poverty upon each other. I was conscious of this, and of the daily problem of eating. And it was cold...it was always so cold."

Dassin was educated at Morris High School in the Bronx. It is clear that he was already interested in the theatre and show business—a passion apparently inherited from his grandfather, who dabbled in local productions while working as a village wigmaker in Russia. Upon graduating he spent two years traveling through Europe to study theatre while supporting himself with odd jobs. His "most beautiful memory" of this vast tour was "a King Lear heard in Yiddish in Moscow, from the mouth of Michoels, an actor who was almost a dwarf but who was thirty feet tall dramatically." Returning to New York in 1936, he learned Yiddish in order to act with the Yiddish theatre companies that flourished at the time. He also joined the Artef Players, a Jewish socialist collective, and appeared in their productions of *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1937) and *Clinton Street* (1939). In 1937 he played the lead in *Revolt of the Beavers*, a Marxist musical for children staged by the WPA Federal Theater Project. For five summers during this period Dassin worked as an entertainment director of a Jewish camp in the Catskills, where, among other things, he engaged the young campers in productions of Shakespeare. At this time he was briefly a member of the Communist party but, according to his own account, left it in 1939.



By 1940, Dassin was writing for Kate Smith's radio show and adapting literary classics for fifteen-minute radio broadcasts. His adaptation of Gogol's story "the Overcoat" drew the attention of producer Martin Gabel, who then gave him his first assignment as a director with *Medicine Show*, a plea for socialized medicine staged as a "living newspaper." John Mason Brown wrote that the piece was "directed with uncommon felicity," and although it was not particularly successful, it brought Dassin to the attention of RKO talent scouts.

In 1941 he was invited to Hollywood by RKO as an apprentice director. For six months he did nothing but "sit and observe" the shooting of Alfred Hitchcock's *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* and Garson Kanin's *They Knew What They Wanted*, receiving \$200 a week for the privilege. Not surprisingly, he learned most from Hitchcock, though he felt greater rapport with Kanin. Hitchcock liked "to amuse himself at the expense of innocents. He would never print a take without shouting in my direction, 'Is that all right for you?'"—and I would blush and hide. But he invited me to lunch very often and with great patience and kindness he would draw all over the tablecloth the different technical details he was explaining to me."

At the end of this well-paid period of high quality instruction, Dassin was unaccountably fired by RKO. He hung around Hollywood for six months, looking for work, and was about to give up "when an extraordinary circumstance presented itself. I still don't know why...but suddenly I was on the MGM lot and everybody seemed to think I was a nephew of Louis B. Mayer." Dassin had never met Louis B. Mayer but, offered a chance to show his paces as a director, saw no reason to argue and made three short films—one each about Arthur Rubenstein and Pablo Casals, and an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Tell-Tale Heart."

Directing the latter, Dassin says, "was a blind experience...I didn't know what the hell I was doing." He was not yet on the MGM payroll and would not be until the film had been seen and approved. But "it was the racetrack season...Three months went by and nobody saw it and I was *starving*." But Dassin's extraordinary luck held: one day the movie theatre next to the MGM lot lost a newsreel and, to fill out the program, borrowed a print of *The Tell-Tale Heart*." It was an immediate success, was widely released, and won a number of prizes.

Dassin's *Tell-Tale Heart*, starring Joseph Schildkraut, is regarded by some critics as the best of several screen versions of the story. Gordon Gow, in his two-part article about Dassin in *Films and Filming* (February and March 1970) called it "a small masterpiece of accelerating tension: emphasis upon the dead eye which seemed to stare at the non-hero and drive him madder and madder until he made it dead for real—and then was assaulted by the throbbing heart in his head, the pulse of conscience."

Dassin was promptly given a seven-year contract by MGM and promoted to feature director. He was put to work on a string of routine comedies (*The Affairs of Martha*, *Young Ideas*) and war films (*Nazi Agent*, in which Conrad Veidt played a Nazi consul and also his twin brother, and *Reunion*, with Joan Crawford and John Wayne as heroes of the French Resistance). The latter was a popular success, and so was *The Canterville Ghost*, an amiable if rather ponderous comedy based on the story by Oscar Wilde but updated to World War II. Robert Young

leads the platoon of American Rangers quartered at Canterville Castle, Margaret O'Brien if the six-year-old Lady Jessica, and Charles Laughton is the ghost. Dissatisfied with MGM's scenario, Dassin sought to revise it, but had run into resistance from the studio. In hopes of getting out of his contract, he staged a one-man strike for fourteen months, but MGM refused to give in. When Dassin was finally forced to resume work, he quickly turned out the sentimental comedy *A Letter for Evie* (1945), about a correspondence between a soldier and a girl who have never met, and *Two Smart People* (1946), in which Lucille Ball and John Hodiak star as government bond thieves.

At that point Dassin left MGM and joined the producer-scenarist Mark Hellinger at Universal. It was this partnership that led to Dassin's first feature of real quality, *Brute Force* (1947).

Scripted by another Hellinger protégé, Richard Brooks, and photographed by William Daniels, it is set in a jail ruled by a sadistic chief guard (Hume Cronyn) who carries out his beatings to the music of Wagner. The audience's sympathy is with the prisoners, led by Burt Lancaster. In spite of cuts imposed by Universal, *Brute Force* remains an extremely violent film, the brutality of the guards breeding such simmering hatred among the inmates that their bloody vengeance in the climactic attempted break-out seems inevitable. Even critics who were shocked by the film were impressed by its grim realism and unremitting pace—one called it "harrowingly exciting," and there was much praise for the performances Dassin had extracted from Lancaster and Hume Cronyn.

Dassin's next picture, *Naked City* (1948), was the last produced by Mark Hellinger, who recorded the narration but died of a heart attack just after the shooting began. Set in New York City, it opens in the early hours of a summer morning. We watch the city come slowly to life, streetcleaners and milkmen going about their business, and then a cleaning woman finds her young employer murdered. A police lieutenant (Barry Fitzgerald) and his assistant (Don Taylor) go to work on the case, using neither deductive genius nor violence, but simply plodding around the hot streets asking questions until, little by little, the truth begins to emerge.

The real star of the film, as French critic Georges Sadoul remarked at the time, is the city itself, lovingly photographed with a concealed camera by William Daniels. *Naked City* was not the first Hollywood thriller to be shot on location, and in the documentary style, but it was the first movie made in this way to become a major hit. However, *Naked City*, which had been coscripted by Albert Maltz, one of the Hollywood Ten, had also been censored by the studio in the final edit: "I wouldn't say that they cut it," Dassin told *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1955, "but they tore the heart out of the film." He walked out of the New York premiere to protest the studio's interference, but the film itself was a tremendous success, warmly and almost universally praised for its authenticity and pace, its detailed sketches of minor characters, and its "vivid and realistic portrayal of ordinary American people...going about their daily life." It inspired a long-running television series and, more important, overcame the

studios' resistance to location shooting, ending the reign of the studio-made *film noir* and launching the vogue for semi-documentary thrillers.

How much credit for *Brute Force* and *Naked City* belongs to Dassin, how much to Mark Hellinger, is not clear. Certainly Dassin's next two thrillers, made for other producers, were inferior, but this may also have reflected his growing contempt for the movie industry. The better of the two was *Thieves' Highway* (20th Century-Fox, 1949). Richard Conte stars as a World War II vet who invests everything he has in a truck and a load of early-season apples and sets off on the two-day journey to San Francisco. He has two aims—to get his apples to market and to avenge his father, who has been robbed and maimed by a produce racketeer (Lee J. Cobb). The film is a

violent and exciting account of his journey but lacks the warmth and humanity of *Naked City*.

By this time Dassin was feeling the pressures of the blacklist. "There was a studio head who had the courage to buy the rights to an Albert Maltz novel, *The Journey of Simon McIver*, for me. He had no doubts about the scandal that would create....I spoke on the radio...I fought back....Then the studio head told me. "Beat it. Get yourself to London fast. There's a film to make there." That's how I made *Night and the City*." Based on Gerald Kersh's novel about wrestling racketeers,

Night and the City (1950) starred Gene Tierney and Richard Widmark; it met with little enthusiasm in England (although it was well received in France) and became a film that Dassin "has chosen to forget." He spent the rest of the year in Europe, writing plays, scenarios, and short stories.

It was not the failure of *Night and the City* that ended Dassin's Hollywood career, but the fact that in 1952 Edward Dmytryk and Frank Tuttle named him as a Communist in testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. With the studios closed to him, Dassin made one 16mm documentary for the "Meet the Masters" series on great musicians, then turned to Broadway (where he had staged two productions in 1948), starting work on the unsuccessful revue *Two's Company* (1952), starring Bette Davis in her first song-and-dance role. He was still at work on the revue when he was subpoenaed by the committee to testify, on those grounds securing a postponement. According to Dassin, he was eventually informed that his testimony had been "postponed indefinitely." This did not alter the fact that he was unemployable in the United States, and in 1953 he set off for France with his wife (the former Beatrice Launer) and their three children.

Things were at first not much better in Europe. Dassin had been invited to France to direct a Fernandel comedy called *Public Enemy No. One*; he was fired two days before shooting was to begin, apparently because the female lead, Zsa-Zsa Gabor, had questioned Dassin's alleged Communist ties, and when the producer started making inquiries in the United States, it became clear that American distributors would blacklist the movie if Dassin's name appeared on the credits. He wrote some plays and some poetry and got into debt, but said that his years on the blacklist were not wasted: "I had time to think and feel. I began



those years as a technician. I came out of them an artist.” And in the end Dassin found a French producer willing to back a low-budget movie based on an Auguste le Breton thriller. The result was *Du Rififi chez les hommes* (*Rififi*, 1955).

Rififi is the prototypical caper movie, showing how a well-characterized and likable gang of jewel thieves execute a carefully planned robbery, thus attracting the attention of a ruthless syndicate. Photographed by Philippe Agostini and with music by Georges Auric, the film stars Jean Servais, Carl Möhner, and Robert Manuel. Dassin himself collaborated on the script and appears (under the pseudonym Perlo Vita) as a dapper safecracker with a weakness for women.

One critic found *Rififi* inferior to *The Asphalt Jungle* in that “its relationships are not so densely structured and it lacks the formal economy of the Huston picture. But it is still an intensely exciting film, and the long sequence of the robbery, with the criminals silently engrossed in the carrying out of their meticulously detailed plan, is masterly. The recognizable pattern of natural reactions to a normal working day creates a wonderful irony in view of the nature of the work....It is this absorbed dedication in the plan’s brilliant detail which creates such a strong sense of personal involvement.” Virginia Graham agreed that the half-hour robbery sequence, which is entirely without dialogue or music, “builds up so potent an atmosphere of excitement that it becomes difficult to breathe.” Others were reminded of the documentary technique of *Naked City* by the film’s view of what Gavin Lambert called “a grey, busy, ordinary Paris, full of anonymous figures hurrying along streets nearly always glistening with rain.”

Rififi brought Dassin the prize as best director at Cannes and became the most profitable French film ever made up to that time; it is also said to have inspired several imitative robberies. Dassin has said that making the picture was very difficult because he was still learning French: “I sometimes ask myself whether so much of the film was silent because of my own lack of French.” However, Gordon Gow has pointed out that the “silent” robbery, though devoid of dialogue and music, was in fact “alive with a cunning orchestration of small sounds—falling plaster and so forth—denoting danger for the thieves.” (And in fact the atmosphere of tense apprehension has already been established in a preceding sequence by Auric’s brilliant score, with its suggestion of hammers tapping and burglar alarms shrilling.)

At the 1956 Cannes Festival, Dassin met the Greek actress Melina Mercouri, who had just made her movie debut in Cacoyannis’ *Stella*. She became Dassin’s companion, his star, and in due course his wife. With the help of her father, a member of the Greek parliament, Dassin made his next film on the island of Crete. *Celui qui doit mourir* (*He Who Must Die*, 1956) was adapted by Dassin and Ben Barzman from Nikos Kazantzakis’ novel *The Greek Passion*. It is set in 1921 in a Greek village under Turkish rule. One day the village is approached by a horde of emaciated refugees from a rebel village that has been burned by the Turks. The local priest Grigoris (Fernand Ledoux) refuses

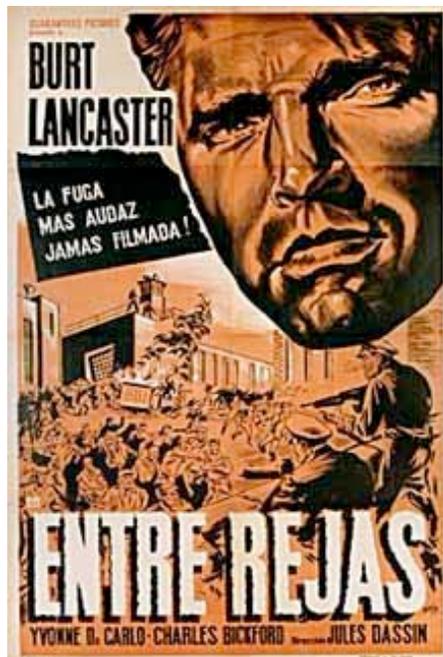
assistance for fear of angering the Turks, so the refugees camp on the hillside, there to starve. Slowly and almost unconsciously, the townspeople who have been chosen for parts in the annual village Passion Play begin to enact their roles in real life. Manolios (Pierre Vanneck), the timid, stuttering shepherd who has been chosen to play Christ, decides to smuggle food to the refugees. He is joined by some of his “disciples” and by the whore Katerina (Melina Mercouri)—Mary Magdalen in the play. The situation rapidly gets out of hand, both Greek and Turkish authorities become alarmed, and Manolios is eventually murdered in the church by the man cast as Judas in the play. But his death inflames the little town and inspires the people to rebellion: the film (unlike the book) ends with refugees and villagers massed behind homemade barricades, awaiting the onslaught of the Turkish army.

The film has political as well as religious implications, and at least one American hate group alleged that it was an “anti-Christian filthy film” filled with Communist and Jewish propaganda. But Isabel Quigly found *Celui qui doit mourir* “a brave film and an exciting one, intellectually as well as emotionally,” and for Bosley Crowther it was “one of the most powerful films of recent years...one that should shock, excite and foment a lot of thinking about humanity.”...

Where the Hot Wind Blows (1958), based on Roger Vailland’s Goncourt novel *La Loi*, about the injustices wrought by obsolete laws in the Italian south, was made with an international cast that included Melina Mercouri, Gina Lollobrigida, Marcello Mastroianni, Yves Montand, and Pierre Brasseur. Lollobrigida and Mastroianni were foisted onto Dassin at the last moment by a producer who would have lost his backing without them. Dassin had to write them into what he thinks was originally “the best screenplay I’d ever written” or let down the actors and crew he had just assembled. The result, as he says, was “a mess...just sheer nightmare.”

Returning to Greece, Dassin and Mercouri set up their own production company (Melinafilm) to make what became the most famous of Dassin’s pictures, *Pote Tin Kyriaki* (*Never on Sunday*, 1959), scripted and produced by himself, and made on a minuscule budget of \$150,000. It was to save money that Dassin cast himself in a lead role as Homer Thrace, an idealistic American in love with the glory that was Greece. In the Athens port of Piraeus he encounters Ilya (Mercouri), a prostitute who is nevertheless her own woman—she goes to bed only with men she likes, for whatever they can pay, and never, never works on Sunday. The film is an account of Homer’s fortunately unsuccessful attempt to improve and educate this exuberantly loving and carefree child of nature.

Time’s reviewer wrote that “Dassin’s satire is obviously directed at the United States, but his touch is light and his affection for the object of his satire unmistakable.”...*Never on Sunday* established the mercurial Mercouri as an international star, its bouzouki theme tune by Manos Hadjidakis became a major hit, and the title (of film and song) passed into many of the world’s languages. The development of the Greek film industry that followed has been attributed to this vast international success.



Jacques Natteau, Dassin's photographer on *Celui qui doit mourir* and *Never on Sunday*, excelled himself in Dassin's modernized version of *Phaedra*, which has Mercouri as the libidinous wife of a shipping tycoon (Raf Vallone), in love with her stepson (Anthony Perkins). Full of decorative scenes of international high life, it seemed to most critics a well-meaning but rather foolish and forgettable movie (though several admired the impressionistic lighting of a passionate love scene in which the couple seem literally to be on fire).

There was better press for *Topkapi* (1964), based on an Eric Ambler novel about an eccentric gang of jewel thieves and how they go about stealing an unstealable treasure from the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. Combining a witty script, extravagant color photography (Dassin's first), and equally extravagant playing by Peter Ustinov, Robert Morley, Mercouri, and Akim Tamiroff, it also cheerfully parodies the famous caper in *Rififi* without surrendering suspense. Less successful were the next two films, a rather pretentious adaptation of Marguerite Duras' novel *10:30 p.m. Summer*, with Mercouri as an alcoholic losing her husband (Peter Finch) to a younger woman (Romy Schneider), followed by *Survival 1967* (1968), a pro-Israeli documentary about the Arab-Israeli war made in collaboration with Irwin Shaw.

By this time it had become possible for Dassin to work again in the United States. He had done so in 1962, staging an unsuccessful play called *Isle of Children*, and five years later he and Mercouri returned with their triumphantly successful musical version of *Never on Sunday*. They were still in New York with *Ilya Darling* when, in April 1967, a junta of senior army officers turned Greece into a police state. Mercouri and her husband were both intensely political people and, Dassin said, "we decided to give our lives to Greece, which seemed more important than anything else." They threw themselves wholeheartedly into propaganda and fund-raising work against the new regime, with such effect that the Colonels stripped Mercouri of her citizenship and confiscated her Greek properties. There were reported threats on her life.

Dassin's hatred of repression is visible, in a different context, in *Uptight* (1968). This was based on Liam O'Flaherty's novel of the Irish Troubles, *The Informer*, which had already inspired two films, but which is here, in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination, translated into a drama of the black liberation movement. Dassin wrote the screenplay in collaboration with Julian Mayfield, who also plays the tormented informer Tank, and with Ruby Dee, who appears as Tank's girlfriend. A number of other parts were taken by residents of Cleveland's black ghetto, where the film was shot. The result was admired for its attempt to deal honestly with the conflict between black militants and moderates, but found sadly old-fashioned in its dialogue and clumsy in execution.

Melina Mercouri starred again in *La Promesse de l'aube* (*Promise at Dawn*, 1970), playing the indomitable mother in this adaptation of Romain Gary's autobiographical novel, set in Russia, Poland, and France. Despite various production difficulties—Polish authorities refused permission to shoot in Krakow, and Dassin broke both his legs in a fall at the French studio—the film was well received.

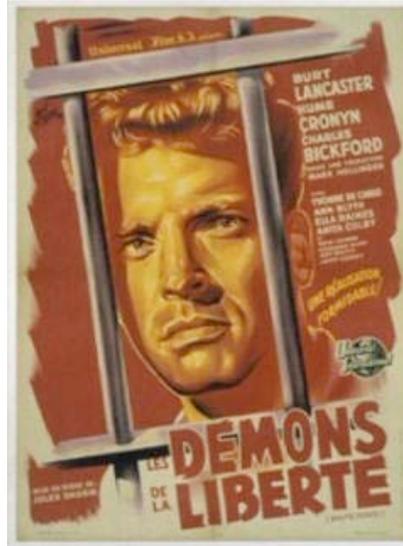
Around this time, Dassin and Mercouri were formally charged, along with fifty-five others, with conspiring against the Greek junta, and Dassin was summoned to stand trial in Athens (which he did not do). Three years later, following the massacre by the Greek colonels of fifteen students at Athens Polytechnic University in November 1973, Dassin undertook *The Rehearsal* (1974), a powerful reenactment of the event presented in the form of a play rehearsal. Mercouri produced the film on a minimal budget, and a number of international theatre celebrities participated without charge, among them Laurence Olivier, Maximilian Schell, Arthur Miller, and Lillian Hellman. A few days before *The Rehearsal* was to premiere in New York the colonels were ousted from power, and the film was never released commercially.

With the fall of the junta, Dassin and Mercouri were able to return to Greece, where they divided their time between theatre and filmmaking. After staging Brecht and Weill's *Threepenny Opera* in Greek in 1975, they began working on *A Dream of Passion*, inspired by Mercouri's theatre performance in *Medea*. The film stars Mercouri as a fading actress, in Greece to play Medea, who, as a publicity stunt, visits a pathetic American woman (Ellen Burstyn) jailed for infanticide. A complex relationship develops between the two women. "Finally," wrote Richard Schickel, "the modern Medea's story gets told, the play opens, and the picture ends, leaving the audience no wiser...unless, of course, one is interested in some 'personal statements' about the state of the movie

business, contemporary issues, and the star and director themselves that they manage to tuck in along the way. It perhaps need not be added that these are of a piece with the rest of *A Dream of Passion*—awkward, pretentious, and empty."

A Dream of Passion had its admirers, however, and so did Dassin's last film, *Circle of Two* (1980), shot in Toronto and New York, with Richard Burton as a blocked artist unblocked by his wintry fling with a teen-aged girl (Tatum O'Neal). But here again the general response was dismissive—Paul Taylor called it "an utterly redundant romance" incorporating "the sad spectacle of the veteran Dassin attempting to pass judgment on a film culture that has evidently passed him by." According to Dassin, neither the scenario nor the two stars were of his own choosing, and after this unhappy experience, he concentrated on directing plays in Greece and on writing a novel....

Dassin was divorced from Beatrice Launer in 1962 and married Melina Mercouri in 1966. His daughters Julie and Richelle are both actresses, and his son Joe Dassin was a popular singer until his death of a heart attack at the age of forty-two. Hearing the news of Joe's death, Dassin himself suffered a heart attack....Summing up his long career, Siclier and Levy write, "Realist poet if there is one, he views the world with a lucid eye that never lacks tenderness....Dassin wouldn't know how to define himself within one film genre....His talent manages to unfold equally well in the detective story (*La Cité sans voiles*), the biography (*Promesse de l'aube*), the epic fresco (*Celui qui doit mourir*), or the humorous parable (*Never on Sunday*)....Dassin's art has one merit above all: sincerity. if it is necessary to single out one word that defines the whole of his development and his work, that would be it."



Michael Sragow: Jules Dassin: The early years (Salon.com)
Aug. 24, 2000

... When it comes to his most famous and influential American movie, "The Naked City," he likes mostly its look and its texture - he says that otherwise the guts were cut right out of it. This Gotham-set police melodrama used real locales to create a juicy ambiance. As James Agee wrote about the New York of this movie (in an uncollected review in *Time*), "evil things go on there, but by and large the city is bursting with energy, grandeur, sunlight, human variety and an eager journalistic glamor."

According to Dassin, Garbo's great cinematographer William Daniels, who shot "Brute Force" and "The Naked City," was an alcoholic banned from studio work until Dassin approached him "clandestine" and asked: "Is there any reason you cannot make a film?" Dassin recalls that this celebrated craftsman, whose credits included "Greed," took a long time to answer: "I witnessed a marvelous thing of a guy reviewing himself. Then he replied there was no reason. [Producer Mark] Hellinger had him followed, but he never took another drink. Billy won an Oscar for shooting 'The Naked City.'"

Dassin did his final cut of that film in Los Angeles, and went back to New York to direct a play. But the former Broadway columnist Hellinger, who died a month later, from, Dassin says, "loving brandy too much," gave in to Universal and had the film re-edited. Juxtapositions of poverty and glitz, and of middle-class coziness and homelessness, fell to the cutting room floor. Seeing the butchered piece for the first time at the New York premiere, Dassin "walked off in tears."



"Jules Dassin": Tim Palleine, The Guardian, April 2 2008

Jules Dassin, the film director, screenwriter and actor, who has died in Athens aged 96, claimed that after the screening of his film *He Who Must Die* at Cannes in 1957, Jean Cocteau, who was on the jury, fainted with admiration, exclaiming: "To think this beautiful film was made by a Frenchman." Dassin added laconically: "They set the record straight after they brought him round."

For the key fact about Dassin, his name notwithstanding, is that he was American, born and raised, a native of Connecticut, and the work on which his reputation rests, such films as *Brute Force* (1947) and *The Naked City* (1948), is essentially American

in tone. In the eyes of some, however, he was un-American: it was being named as a communist before a 1949 hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee (Huac) that led him into European exile.

Dassin was fascinated with the theatre, and, after a variety of foreign travels, he worked in the 1930s as an actor with New York's Yiddish Theatre and with the leftwing Group Theatre. He also wrote scripts for radio, and on the strength of this went to Hollywood. He was an assistant director at RKO, then directed several routine pictures for MGM. It was at Universal, under the aegis of the enterprising producer Mark Hellinger, that he made *Brute Force*, his first personal work. Set in a state penitentiary, and climaxing in an abortive breakout, the film featured the young Burt Lancaster and contained a memorably chilling portrayal by Hume Cronyn of the sadistic chief officer. Considered violent in its day, the film communicates a true sense of desperation. The populist, democratic impulse that is submerged in *Brute Force* is allowed to surface in his subsequent collaboration with Hellinger, *The Naked City*. An experiment in American neo-realism, filmed almost entirely on the streets of New York with an unfamiliar cast, the film is in outline a thriller about a police manhunt. But it elaborates this material to highly original effect, creating a vivid portrait of big city life.

Thieves' Highway (1949), a melodrama about the trucking industry and racketeering within it, is conventional by comparison, but still displays its director's keen response to milieu, this time the market district of San Francisco. This film was made for Fox, who then, temporarily to forestall the effect of his being named before Huac, sent Dassin to England to make a thriller of a different sort, *Night and the City* (1950). This film inverts the dynamics of *Thieves' Highway*: the protagonist (Richard Widmark) is a small-time crook engaged in an ever more frantic pursuit of the chance to strike it rich, and the depiction of nocturnal London is nightmarishly stylised. The drama ends on the banks of the Thames in a grey dawn.

Dassin's own prospects, given that he had been placed on Hollywood's anti-communist blacklist, were less than bright. He did not work again until 1955, when in France he directed *Rififi*, a tale of dishonour among thieves, centred on an audaciously detailed jewel robbery, its long heist sequence without music or dialogue. Though the script is superficial, the film gains from the skill with which the action is staged on the streets of Paris, and its great commercial success established Dassin in Europe.

He Who Must Die represented a new departure. Based on Nicos Kazantzakis's *Christ Recrucified*, it takes place in a Turkish-occupied Greek village in 1921, and contrives to be a political morality tale in which the villagers' passion play merges with reality. Intermittently powerful, the film cannot ultimately escape from literary conceit, and in this sense it foreshadows much of Dassin's subsequent work. It also introduced him to the Greek actor Melina Mercouri, with whom his life was from then on to be linked. The couple were married from 1966 until Mercouri's death in 1994.

Throughout the 1980s, Mercouri was the Greek minister of culture and fought for the return of the Elgin Marbles. Dassin's collaboration with her began with the modest Greek-made comedy *Never On Sunday* (1960), a commercial hit due in particular to its popular theme tune. Dassin (who had played small roles in *Thieves' Highway* and *Rififi*) played opposite Mercouri, lending the enterprise something of the air of a superior home movie. But reaching for neo-classical resonance in such works as *Phaedra* (1962) or *A Dream of Passion* (1978), which sought

modern parallels with Medea, resulted in works overblown to the point of embarrassment.

However, in lighter vein, the caper movie *Topkapi* (1964) intermittently revived memories of Dassin's early skill with its consummate use of Istanbul locations and in the staging of another complex jewel robbery. And, in 1968, Dassin was able to direct again in the US. The result was *Up Tight*, a melodrama set in the black ghetto of Cleveland. The script is a transposition of Liam O'Flaherty's *The Informer*, which does not locate altogether happily to its new surroundings. With his masterly cameraman Boris Kaufman, Dassin managed to lend the story a dimension of tragedy.

Dassin's film-making career ended anti-climactically with the Canadian-made *Circle of Two* (1980). But if his later work described a downward curve, his earlier achievements remain. He will be remembered as a master of the craft of location filming. How much of a master is nicely illustrated by an anecdote from Marvin Wald, one of the writers of *The Naked City*. He recalled attending a preview and commenting to the director on the effectiveness of a shot during the climax on the Williamsburg bridge, in which a high-angle view looks down past the fugitive murderer to a spread of tennis matches in progress on courts far below. It was, Wald suggested, quite a stroke of luck that the tennis players should have been there at the right time. At this, Dassin snorted. "Lucky?" he said. "Those tennis players were all extras. I put 'em there."

**from the notes to the 2007 Criterion dvd *Brute Force*:
"Screws and Proles" by Michael Atkinson**

Jules Dassin's *Brute Force* (1947) has a particular edge—not only is it arguably the meatiest and most resonant prison film ever made in this country, but it also exudes a startling degree of metaphoric frisson. For one thing, it draws explicit parallels to the Nazi encampment experience, making it one of the first Hollywood films to explore, even by proxy, those fresh wounds (preceded, as far as I know, only by Gregory Ratoff's Constance Bennett vehicle *Paris Underground*). From the storm-battered credits overture (surely one of the most atmospheric openings of the forties) to the vision of the prison's gun towers and giant front gates, the long black raincoats of the guards, and the concept of Hume Cronyn's nebbishy, fake-cultured, torture-happy Nietzschean captain, Dassin's nasty, intimate film fairly shivers with fascist portents. It's indicative that, singularly among prison film characters, the cons we meet (escape plotter Burt Lancaster, romantic Whit Bissell, centrist gang leader Charles Bickford, urbane playboy John Hoyt, manly martyr Howard Duff, huddled as if in a tribal tent) are all morally righteous men with large hearts, either guilty of a harmless crime, of thievery in the name of love, or not guilty of anything we're told about at all. Their bonded, self-sacrificial brotherhood plays more like the dynamic between grunts in a POS camp, where the staff screws are always the only enemy.

It's a master noir trope: if the postwar American landscape is a luckless, angst-laden war zone, then prisons are where our captured proletariat—the soldiers of the class war—are locked up. Wax existentialist all you want (the discussion often echoes how *Cahiers du Cinéma* critic Luc Moullet defined Edgar G. Ulmer's career theme: "The great loneliness of man without God": or, as Tom Neal's schmuck-hero laments in Ulmer's *Detour*, "Whichever way you turn, Fate sticks out a foot to trip you"), but eventually the veneer of metaphysics dissolves, and the genre's secret radical politics emerges like an underpainting. The

lower-middle-class civilian has no genuine antagonist outside of the system, the prerigged establishment designed to either exploit, enslave, or exile him. The American dream as such is a tissue of propaganda, a lie invented for crowd control. ...

An urban animal of the lower classes, Dassin made the first prison film not really about criminal justice at all but about social power, which is noir's secret fuel, and maybe why it has lasted. Other favorite genres (westerns, musicals, costume dramas) have mostly been exercises in naïveté—noir is for the meat eaters among us, the emotional discussion American film culture has had with its audience about why modern socioeconomic structures fail the majority of citizens. For Dassin, this one time, it was more than a discussion—it was a manning of the ramparts.

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 Oct 7 Károly Makk **LOVE (SZERELEM)** 1971
 Oct 14 Francis Ford Coppola **THE CONVERSATION** 1974
 Oct 21 Lina Wertmüller **SEVEN BEAUTIES (PASQUALINO SETTEBELLEZZE)** 1975
 Oct 28 Elia Kazan **A FACE IN THE CROWD** 1957
 Nov 4 Krzysztof Kieslowski **BLIND CHANCE (PRZYPADK)** 1981
 Nov 11 Wim Wenders **PARIS, TEXAS** 1984
 Nov 18 Wong Kar-Wai **IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE (FA YEUNG NIN WA)** 2000
 Nov 25 Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck **THE LIVES OF OTHERS (DAS LEBEN DER ANDEREN)** 2006
 Dec 2 Stanley Kubrick **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** 1968

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