

# The Buffalo Film Seminars

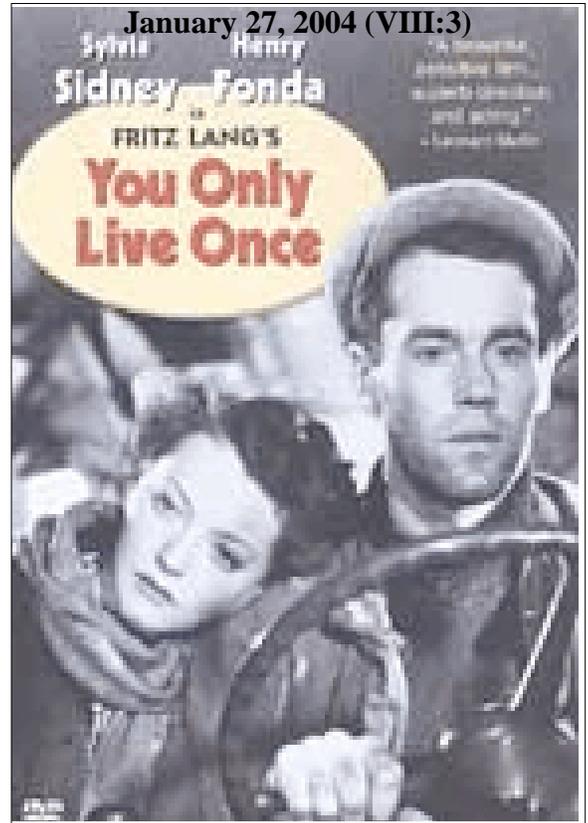


**YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE** (1937) 86 min

Directed by Fritz Lang  
Writing credits C. Graham Baker and Gene Towne  
Produced by Walter Wanger  
Cinematography by Leon Shamroy  
Film Editing by Daniel Mandell

Sylvia Sidney....Joan Graham  
Henry Fonda....Eddie Taylor

Barton MacLane....Stephen Whitney  
Jean Dixon....Bonnie Graham  
William Gargan....Father Dolan  
Jerome Cowan....Doctor Hill  
Charles 'Chic' Sale....Ethan  
Margaret Hamilton....Hester  
Warren Hymer....Bugsy  
Guinn 'Big Boy' Williams....Roger  
John Wray....Warden  
Walter De Palma....Monk  
Ward Bond....Guard  
Jack Carson....Gas Station Attendant



**FRITZ LANG** (5 December 1890, Vienna, Austria—2 August 1976, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles) directed 47 films, from *Halbblut* (*Half-caste*) in 1919 to *Die Tausend Augen des Dr. Mabuse* (*The Thousand Eye of Dr. Mabuse*) in 1960. Some of the others were *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (1956), *The Big Heat* (1953), *Clash by Night* (1952), *Rancho Notorious* (1952), *Cloak and Dagger* (1946), *Scarlet Street* (1945), *The Woman in the Window* (1944), *Ministry of Fear* (1944), *Western Union* (1941), *The Return of Frank James* (1940), *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (*The Crimes of Dr. Mabuse*, *Dr. Mabuse's Testament*, *The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse*, 1933), *M* (1931), *Metropolis* (1927), *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (*Dr. Mabuse, King of Crime*, *Dr. Mabuse: The Gambler*, *Inferno* 1922) and *Harakiri* (*Madame Butterfly* 1919). He appears in a number of interesting interview films, among them Jean-Luc Godard's *Cinéma de notre temps: Le dinosaure et le bébé, dialogue en huit parties entre Fritz Lang et Jean-Luc Godard* (1967). And he plays a movie director making a film in Godard's classic, *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*, 1963). The BFI site has the 1962 National Film Theatre interview with Lang on line at <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/lang/interview.html>. Michael Grost's excellent critical bio of him is on line at <http://members.aol.com/MG4273/lang.htm>. There's a good deal of Lang material on line at the British Film Institute web site: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/lang/>.

**HENRY FONDA** (1905-1982) received an Academy Award best actor nomination in 1941 for his portrayal of Tom Joad in *Grapes of Wrath*, but it would be 40 years before he got an Oscar. In 1981 the Academy gave him an Honorary Academy Award, the prize the Academy sometimes gives when it worries that a major actor is going to die without ever having gotten up on that stage. The citation read: "The consummate actor, in recognition of his brilliant accomplishments and enduring contribution to the art of motion pictures." They needn't have worried: he received the award for best actor the following year for his work in *On Golden Pond*. Some of his other films are *Jesse James* 1939, *Young Mr. Lincoln* 1939, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *The Ox-Bow Incident* 1943, *My Darling Clementine* 1946, *Fort Apache* 1948, *Mister Roberts* 1955, *War and Peace* 1956, *12 Angry Men* 1957, *Warlock* 1959, *The Longest Day* 1962, *Advise and Consent* 1962, *Fail-Safe* 1964, and *Il Cera una volta il West/Once Upon a Time There Was a West* 1969 and *Il mio nome nessuno/My Name is Nobody* 1973.

**SYLVIA SIDNEY** (8 August 1910, The Bronx, New York—1 July 1999 New York, New York, throat cancer) acted in 65 films, the last of which was *Mars Attacks!* (1996). Some of the others are *Beetlejuice* (1988), *Hammett* (1982), *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1936),

and *Confessions of a Co-Ed* (1931). She played Lillian "Mama" Calson" in the "WKRP in Cincinnati" tv series and Sister Mary Joel #1 on "Ryan's Hope."

**LEON SHAMROY** (16 July 1901, New York, New York—7 July 1974, Los Angeles) shot 118 films. He was won best cinematography Oscar for *Cleopatra* (1963) and received 17 other best cinematographer nominations: *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965), *The Cardinal* (1963), *Porgy and Bess* (1959), *South Pacific* (1958), *The King and I* (1956), *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), *The Egyptian* (1954), *The Robe* (1953), *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (1952), *David and Bathsheba* (1951), *Prince of Foxes* (1949), *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), *Wilson* (1944), *The Black Swan* (1942), *Ten Gentlemen from West Point* (1942), *Down Argentine Way* (1940), and *The Young in Heart* (1938).

**from "Fritz Lang" in *Who the Devil Made It Conversations with Legendary Film Directors*. Peter Bogdanovich. Ballantine, NY, 1997**

As a creator of nightmares, Lang had few peers; his world—in Nazi Europe, contemporary America and Germany, or eighteenth-century England (*Moonfleet*)—is one of shadows and night: ominous, haunting, filled with foreboding and violence, anxiety and death. For Lang, as with Hawks in a very different way, it's not so much the outcome that matters in the struggle against fate; it's the fight itself. The tears he elicits for the damned—the couple in *You Only Live Once*, the whore in *Man Hunt*, the moll in *The Big Heat* and even, finally, the child-murderer in *M*—come from the depths of his personality; these people have, as he put it, "all my heart."

Our lives go so much faster than the lives of our parents. My parents went twice a month to see a play and then they discussed it with friends—it was an event; they absorbed two stories about human beings. But when you are used—as I was in 1912-14—to seeing a film every day or even twice a day, you are absorbing so much more—so many facts, so many stories about life. And we don't live slowly anymore and times goes much faster.

When I was in Paris, living in Montmartre as a painter, I was interested in film because of the movement...here was something great, a new medium, something which I usually call "the art of the century."

*Are you especially satisfied with You Only Live Once [1937]?*

More yes than no. It's a little "constructed," isn't it? I liked doing it. Look, if you are honest with yourself, when you finish a picture even the best one is so far below what you really wanted to do, so far below the vision you had, that it's very easy to criticize.

*Were the priest's words at the end—"You're free, Eddie, the gates are open"—meant as an ironic note or as the truth?*

As the truth. You may laugh, but don't forget, I was born a Catholic. Perhaps I'm not a good Catholic according to the Church—but Catholic education, and probably any education which has to do with ethics, never leaves you. And I think it was the truth for those people—the doors *are* open now—it was not ironic.

*Fury, You Only Live Once and You and Me have been called films of social protest, but aren't they more concerned with man against his destiny, as is most of your work?*

Yes, I think that is the main characteristic, the main theme

Francois Truffaut identified Lang's "favorite theme" as "moral solitude, a man alone, conducting a struggle against a semi-hostile, semi-indifferent universe"—an apt summary of *Ministry of Fear* (1944).

"No other director," wrote David Thomson, "convinces us that the melodramatic threat of extinction in the crime movie is the metaphor of a much greater danger...Lang's films begin in top gear and then advance into higher ratios unknown to other directors.

that runs through all my pictures—this fight against destiny, against fate. I once wrote in an introduction to a book that the fight is important—not the result of it, but the revolution itself. Sometimes, maybe, with a strong will, you can change fate, but there is no guarantee that you can. If you just sit still, however, and say, "Well, I cannot do anything—" bang! At least you have to fight against it.

**From Scott Hammen, *Film Notes* (J.R. Speed Art Museum 1979)**

Work on the film was apparently a nightmare for Fonda though; he found Lang's authoritarian control over the production oppressive. Though a perfectionist himself, he found that quality unseemly in a director and complained about Lang's obsessive and meticulous attention to detail.

Yet whatever antagonism flared between actor and director, the film was a triumph for them both. Lang's skill at portraying innocent figures trapped by a tragic destiny combined perfectly with Fonda's growing ability to project a quality of tenderness turned to desperation. With the power of Lang's lighting and staging, Fonda's unique American anguish at justice denied has a burning intensity. Both men's careers emerged from the film immeasurably enhanced.

**from *World Film Directors Vol.1*. Ed. John Wakeman. The H.W. Wilson Co., New York, 1987 entry by Philip Kemp**

Lang always deprecated references to his films as "expressionist," maintaining that he never restricted himself by conforming to a single artistic fashion. Nonetheless, expressionism—the visual distortion and stylization of reality to express psychological states and heighten emotional response—undeniably influences many of Lang's films, if never to the extremes of Wiene's *Caligari*, with its contorted, aggressively two-dimensional sets.

"Every serious picture that depicts people today," Lang once remarked, "should be a kind of documentary of its time."

From the mid-1920s until 1933, Lang was recognized as the greatest director in Germany, and perhaps in Europe. By the time he arrived in the States, he was no more than one of the many distinguished European refugees; by 1950, he had become just another directorial hack and politically dubious at that.

...Lang regained his status as one of cinema's greatest artists. Pauline Kael rated him with Eisenstein, Gance, Griffith, and Welles as one "whose prodigious failures make other people's successes look puny."

**from *Fritz Lang. His Life and Work. Photographs and Documents*. Edited by Roif Aurich, Wolfgang Jacobsen & Cornelius Schnauber. Jovis. 2001. Berlin**

Lang himself often expressed the idea that two aspects [artistic & personal] converging in one person still had to be viewed separately. His discretion and the legends he invented about himself make it all the more essential to proceed from his biography, to step back a bit from the personage of the film director so as to obtain a 'complete' view of Fritz Lang. From

there we can focus on the various periods of contemporary history: the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the Weimar Republic,

His on-screen commitment in the fight against Nazi Germany was a known fact. Unknown until now was how intensively Lang interceded personally for his colleagues in exile—for example for Kurt Pinthus, Hans Sahl, Egon Erwin Kisch, and Berthold Brecht—or how Lang cultivated contacts with both left-wing and conservative German exiles. His chief concern was to strengthen resistance against Nazi Germany.

No matter how we evaluate his nostalgic and conservative political attitude in Germany during the 1920s and early 1930s, exile appears to have altered Fritz Lang. And this change suggests itself not only in his anti-Nazi activities. Many years later he did not fail to express his indignation at the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy; and he also felt compelled to make sarcastic comments about the conservative Governor of California, Ronald Reagan.

He wrote that he was finished with Germany: “I’m unable to rid my mind or heart of the Hitler era.”

[Born Vienna on December 5, 1890 Baptized ‘Friedrich Christian Anton Lang’ December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1890. His godfather was Christian Cabos, purveyor to the Austro-Hungarian imperial court. Parents agreed at ceremony to raise the child as a Catholic. In 1900 his mother Pauline Schlesinger Lang converted from Judaism to Catholicism at the rectory of a town near Salzburg.

Stayed in Paris 1913-14, took painting courses, left in July 1914 as anti-German sentiment rose after the murder of Jean Jaurès—a socialist who had worked toward French-German rapprochement. Lang joined the army on January 12, 1915, voluntarily enlisted. Russian front, reconnaissance, bravery citations. Wounded in trench warfare, shrapnel splinter probably in eye, declared unfit for troop duties 5/18.]

On May 15, 1924 the ‘Conference for Cinema Reform’ was opened at the ‘Urania,’ Vienna’s adult education center. The conference saw film as ‘a great cultural feat and a first-rate medium of popular entertainment.’

The former head of the Film Department of the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, Robert Volz, spoke out in favor of film censorship. Lubitsch’s *Die Flamme* was shown as was Lang’s *Die Nibelungen*. Lang attacked what preceding speakers had said “bringing forth very bold and biting views. . .and indulging in tales of his own personal difficulties with the film industry and censorship.

Lang spoke very clearly and loudly against the very existence of film censorship, saying he did not believe a people,

to whom the state had documented its belief in its political maturity by giving it the right to vote needs a guardian just because some claim it is not mature enough to know what might be good or bad for it. The situation is unacceptable, for example, when a censorship board objects to a poster for the *Nibelungen* film because Siegfried is shown skewered by a spear, while a poster for *Blaubart*, the circus pantomime, can

the early Hitler era, emigration, remigration.

be seen on an advertising pillar, and shows skulls, naked women and blood merging in a lovely still life. I have nothing against the state introducing restrictions for youths, it’s fine with me, but it should not dictate for adults the kind of relaxation, regeneration and fortification their nerves need.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I have arrived at the point of departure for the artistic development of a film drama. People who have experienced something as ghastly as a world war, people who are busy working and dealing with life have different views from those snobbish commentators who just go along with events, who sit in their club armchairs—not that I have anything against club armchairs—and try to force their artistic outlook on their fellow beings, while their own highest moments probably amount to the helpless stammerings of a bundle of nerves numbed by cocaine. The working person, is, thank God, too healthy not to feel a longing in his blood, the recurrent longing for the primeval ideal of humankind, for the vigorous man, the virginal girl and the virtuous woman. Proceeding from these components, this is where regenerating our people’s strength starts and along with it film dramas. . . .And please, do not condemn the sensationalist films of earlier years, for they made the rational development of the film drama possible; we saw the errors of this genre and based on them learned new forms of this novel art. . . .

We have learned that films have different laws than the theater and that film drama has merely something superficially in common with drama on the stage; we also learned that film has different laws than novels and novellas: it was a new art form, and this fact was tremendously important for those who were involved with all their hearts in the artistic development of film. For all art, but for film in particular, the most important law is that a person must be profoundly moved and obsessed with his own work.

And against this background, Lang finished his talk in a fashion which could hardly have astonished his audience. He cried out two words to them, two words “that during the two years it took to produce the *Nibelungen* my colleagues and I had constantly envisioned, two words which I rediscovered at the premiere of the *Nibelungen* about ten days ago in London, that were in German on the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales: ‘Ich dien’ (‘I serve’).”

## Upcoming Film Events:

### Frankenstein

"Saturday Matinee" Frankenstein Film Festival

All screenings followed by discussions led by Bruce Jackson, West Room, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Lafayette Square. Refreshments provided.

Saturday, February 7 *Frankenstein* (1931 original) directed by James Whale film,  
with Boris Karloff  
Saturday, February 14 *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) directed by James Whale,  
with Boris Karloff  
Saturday, February 21 *Young Frankenstein* (1994) directed by Mel Brooks  
(Part of the exhibition "Frankenstein: Penetrating the Secrets of Nature." For more info,  
go to <http://buffalolib.org/events/frankenstein/events.asp>)

**8<sup>th</sup> Annual International Women's Film Festival (UB Institute for Research and Education on Women & Gender)**

Thursdays, February 5 – March 11, 2004 at the Market Arcade Film & Arts Center. All shows begin at 7 p.m. Tickets: \$7.50 general/ \$5.50 students with ID/ \$5 seniors & Hallwalls members

February 5 *The Fourth Dimension* (USA 2001, 87 min), with introduction by director Trinh T. Minh-Ha, who will be introduced by Diane Christian  
February 12 *Chaos* (France 2002, 109 min), dir. Coline Serrau. FREE SCREENING  
February 19 *Marion Bridge* (Canada 2003, 90 min), dir. Wiebke von Carolsfeld  
February 26 *September 11 / 11'09'01* (France 2002, 134 min), 11 international directors  
March 4 *May Lady* (Iran 1998, 88 min), dir. Rakhshan Bani-Etemad  
March 11 *Amy's Orgasm* (USA 2001, 94 min), with introduction by director Julie Davis

**Coming up in Buffalo Film Seminars VIII:**

February 3 Preston Sturges, *The Lady Eve*, 1941  
February 10 Michael Curtiz: *Casablanca*, 1941  
February 17 William A. Bellman, *The Ox Bow Incident*, 1943  
February 24 Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, *The Life & Death of Colonel Blimp*, 1943  
March 2 John Houston, *The Asphalt Jungle*, 1950  
March 9 Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, *Singin' in the Rain* 1952  
March 23 Fred Zinnemann, *From Here to Eternity*, 1953  
March 30 Akira Kurosawa, *Kumonosu jo/Throne of Blood*, 1957  
April 6 Luchino Visconti, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco and his Brothers*, 1960  
April 13 François Truffaut, *Jules et Jim/Jules and Jim*, 1961  
April 20 Sergio Leone, *C'era una volta in America/Once Upon a Time in America*, 1984

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To be placed on the Buffalo Film Seminars email list: [addtolist@buffalo](mailto:addtolist@buffalo.edu)