ON THE WATERFRONT
(1954, 108 minutes, Columbia)

Director Elia Kazan
Writer Budd Schulberg
based on Malcolm Johnson’s articles
Producer Sam Spiegel
Music Leonard Bernstein
Cinematography Boris Kaufman
Editor Gene Milford
Art Direction Richard Day

Marlon Brando Terry Malloy
Karl Malden Father Barry
Lee J. Cobb Johnny Friendly
Rod Steiger Charley Malloy
Pat Henning K. O. Dugan
Leif Erickson Glover
James Westerfield Big Mac

Tony Galento Truck
Eva Marie Saint Edie Doyle
Martin Balsam Gillette
Fred Gwynne Slim
Pat Hingle Bartender
Nehemiah Persoff Cab Driver
Johnny Seven Longshoreman

On the Waterfront was nominated for 10 Academy Awards and won 8 of them: Best Picture, Best Actor (Brando), Best Supporting Actress (Saint), Best Director (Kazan), Best Story & Screenplay (Schulberg), Best Editing (Gene Milford), Best Cinematography – Black & White (Boris Kaufman), and Best Art Direction – Black & White (Richard Day). It very well might have won a ninth for Best Actor had not three of the persons in the category — Malden, Cobb, and Steiger — all been in the same film and therefore competing against one another (the award went to Edmond O’Brian for his performance in The Barefoot Contessa). Leonard Bernstein received a nomination for Best Music; that award went to Dmitri Tiomkin for “The High and the Mighty.”

Had Elia Kazan (Elia Kazanjoglous, 7 September 1909, Istanbul, Turkey) never come to Hollywood he would be known now as one of America’s great stage directors. As it is, he’s in the books as a great stage director, a great film director, and a great snitch: he volunteered to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1952 to inform on the political leanings of former friends. The memory of that was so bitter that many Academy members sat on their hands when he received the Academy’s lifetime achievement award in 1999. Some of his films are The Last Tycoon 1976, The Arrangement 1969 (based on his semi-autobiographical novel), America, America 1963 (based on his semi-autobiographical novel), Splendor in the Grass 1961, A Face in the Crowd 1957, Baby Doll 1956, East of Eden 1955, Viva Zapata! 1952, A Streetcar Named Desire 1951, Gentleman’s Agreement 1947 (for which he won his first Best Director award from the Academy), and A Tree Grows in Brooklyn 1945.

Marlon Brando (3 April 1924, Omaha, Nebraska) is a great actor who takes risks. The result is some of the most memorable and some of the silliest screen performances in memory, among them The Island of Dr. Moreau 1966, Don Juan DeMarco 1995, The Freshman 1990 (in which he imitated himself as Don Corleone), The Formula 1980, Apocalypse Now 1980, Superman 1978, The Missouri Breaks 1976 (in which he dressed in drag and recited Kaddish to a horse), Last Tango in Paris 1972 (pass the butter), The Godfather 1972, Candy 1968, The Chase 1966, Mutiny on the Bounty 1962, The Young Lions 1958, Sazoukara 1957, Guys and Dolls 1955, The Wild One 1954, Julius Caesar 1953, Viva Zapata! 1952, Streetcar Named Desire 1951, and The Men 1950. He directed one film One-Eyed Jacks 1961. Brando won two Oscars: his first for On the Waterfront, the second for The Godfather. He sent a woman who identified herself as Sacheen Littlefeather to decline the second Oscar (her real name was Maria Cruz and she wasn’t the Indian she said she was). Brando was also awarded the Razzie for Worst Supporting Actor for his performance as Willy Loman in Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman, directed by Elia Kazan. For five years he played Judge Henry Garth in the tv series, “The Virginian” (1962-66). Some of his films are The Exorcist 1973, The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing 1973, Our Man Flint 1965,


Lee J. Cobb (Leo Jacoby, 8 December 1911, New York City – 11 February 1976) acted in about 80 films, but his acting reputation by his 1947 performance as Willy Loman in Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman, directed by Elia Kazan. For five years he played Judge Henry Garth in the tv series, “The Virginian” (1962-66). Some of his films are The Exorcist 1973, The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing 1973, Our Man Flint 1965,

This was the first and probably most memorable film role for Eva Marie Saint (4 July 1924, Newark, New Jersey). She also acted in *Exodus* 1960, *North by Northwest* 1959, *Raintree County* 1957, and *A Hatful of Rain* 1957.

Elia Kazan wasn’t the only member of this film crew to testify before the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities. Writer Budd Schulberg testified and so did Lee J. Cobb. Cobb has first refused to appear at all, then changed his mind in 1953. He named 20 people as formed Communists. His rationale: “The HUAC did a deal with me. I was pretty much worn down. I had no money. I couldn’t borrow. I had the expenses of taking care of the children. Why am I subjecting my loved ones to this? If it’s worth dying for, and I am just as idealistic as the next fellow. But I decided it wasn’t worth dying for, and if this gesture was the way of getting out of the penitentiary I’d do it. I had to be employable again.”

“During the thirties, several members of the Group Theatre, including Gadg [Kazan’s nickname—he loved gadgets], joined the Communist party—largely, I suppose, because of an idealistic belief that it offered a progressive approach to ending the Depression and the increasing economic inequity in the county, confronted racial injustice and stood up to fascism. Many, including Gadg, soon became disenchanted with the party, but they were appealing targets during the hysteria of the McCarthy era.

“The House Un-American Activities Committee was headed by J. Parnell Thomas, a righteous pillar of our political community who later was sent to jail for fraud. The other members of the committee were much more concerned with exploiting the public’s fascination with Hollywood and with generating publicity for themselves than with anything else. They subpoenaed Gadg, and his testimony has wounded him to this day. Not only did he admit that he had been a Communist, but he identified all the other members of the Group Theatre who had also been Communists. Many of his oldest friends were furious, called the testimony an act of betrayal and refused to speak to him or work with him again."

“...I was reluctant to take part [in this film] because I was conflicted about what Gadg had done and knew some of the people who had been deeply hurt. It was especially stupid because most of the people named were no longer Communists. Innocent people were also blacklisted, including me, although I never had a political affiliation of any kind. It was simply because I had signed a petition to protest the lynching of a black man in the South. My sister Jocelyn, who’d appeared in *Mister Roberts* on Broadway and became a very successful actress, was also blacklisted because her married name was Asinof and there was another J. Asinof. In those days, stepping off the sidewalk with your left foot first was grounds for suspicion that you were a member of the Communist party. To this day I believe that we missed the establishment of fascism in this country by a hair....

"I finally decided to do the film, but what I didn’t realize then was that *On the Waterfront* was really a metaphorical argument by Gadg and Budd Schulberg: they made the film to justify finking on their friends. Evidently, as Terry Malloy I represented the spirit of the brave, courageous man who defied evil. Neither Gadg nor Budd Schulberg ever had second thoughts about testifying before that committee.’ Marlon Brando, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Random House 1994, 193-195

HUAC’s Hollywood investigation began in 1947. Ten writers refused to testify and went to jail for terms of 6 to 12 months. They were: Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, Albert Maltz, Adrian Scott, Samuel Ornitz,, Dalton Trumbo, Edward Dmytryk, Ring Lardner Jr., John Howard Lawson and Alvah Bessie.

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