

The Buffalo Film Seminars

Angelika 8 Theater

3/29/2000

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 Kaufmann), 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'Brien 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, *Sayonara* 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 in *Island of Dr. Moreau*. He was nominated for that same award for *Christopher Columbus* and *The Formula*.

KARL MALDEN (Mladen Sekulovic, 22 March 1914, Gary, Indiana) is best known to tv-watchers for his work in "Streets of San Francisco" with Michael Douglas (1972-77). He appeared in more than 60 films, among them *Patton* 1970, *The Cincinnati Kid* 1965, *Cheyenne Autumn* 1964, *The Birdman of Alcatraz* 1962, *One-Eyed Jacks* 1961, *Baby Doll* 1956, *Ruby Gentry* 1952, *A Streetcar Named Desire* 1951, *The Gunfighter* 1950, *Kiss of Death* 1947, *Boomerang!* 1947, *13 Rue Madeleine* 1946, and *They Knew What They Wanted* 1940.

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,

Green Mansions 1959, *The Brothers Karamazov* 1958, *12 Angry Men* 1957, *Boomerang!* 1947.

ROD STEIGER (14 April 1925, Westhampton, New York) turned down the title role in *Patton* because he didn't want to act in a movie glorifying war. Some of the 111 movies he did act in are *The Hurricane* 1999, *Livers Ain't Cheap* 1997, *Mars Attacks!* 1996, *The Ballad of the Sad Café* 1991, *Lucky Luciano* 1974, *Mussolini: Ultimo atto* 1974, *A Fistful of Dynamite* 1971, *Happy Birthday, Wanda June* 1971, *Waterloo* 1970, *In the Heat of the Night* 1967 (for which he won an Academy Award), *Doctor Zhivago* 1965, *The Loved One* 1965, *The Pawnbroker* 1965, *Al Capone* 1959, *Across the Bridge* 1957, *The Harder They Fall* 1956. He also played the voice of Captain Tenille in "The Simpsons" (1989).

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 Un-American 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 former 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 country, 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.

—to receive the Angelika Film Center's weekly film summaries and screening times, send an email to ldamelio@compuserve.com with your email address

—for cast and crew info on almost any film: imdb.com/search.html or allmovie.com

—for information on major American films, including detailed plot summaries: www.filmsite.org

—email Bruce Jackson: bjackson@buffalo.edu

—email Diane Christian: engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu

—for the series schedule, links and updates: www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~bjackson/movies.html

—to get on the listserv for the class send an email to listserv@listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu with this line & nothing else as the message: sub greatmovies-list Firstname Lastname

THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS ARE PRESENTED BY THE CITY OF BUFFALO, THE ANGELIKA THEATERS
& THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO.