



HOWARD HAWKS. 30 May 1896, Goshen, Indiana—26 December 1977 (aftermath of falling over his dog). Began as an actor in silents, producer for nearly all his films. From *Leonard Maltin's Film Encyclopedia*: "It would not be imprudent to label Hawks the greatest American director who is not a household name. Yet his films continue to enchant audiences everywhere and but for a very few exceptions (Ford, Welles, Hitchcock), his is the name most often cited by modern filmmakers as an influence. His visual style is clean, uncluttered, almost invisible; and unlike many directors who preferred to work in one or two genres, Hawks did them all. His best films celebrate "the group": professionals bound together by camaraderie and their work, to whom the ultimate compliment is "you're good." Another reason Hawks' films seem so fresh is that the women are just as smart, tough, and fast-talking as the men, sometimes more so; indeed, he staged scenes with dialogue that always sounded natural and real. This was immediately apparent in his first sound film, *The Dawn Patrol* (1930), in which the actors "talked," rather than emoting in the then normal style of early talkies, and in *Scarface* (1932), the most ferocious of that era's gangster films. Hawks defined the then-new subgenre of screwball comedy with his frenetic *Twentieth Century* (1934), which made Carole Lombard a star. Later in the decade he helmed three masterpieces with Cary Grant: the definitive screwball comedy, *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), the mail-pilot adventure *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), and the breathless "Front Page" remake *His Girl Friday* (1940). In 1944 he launched the film career of 19-year-old Lauren Bacall and teamed her with Humphrey Bogart in *To Have and Have Not*. When romance erupted, he quickly cast them in the even more successful *The Big Sleep* (not released till 1946). *Red River* (1948) was his first Western and first film with John Wayne; it also was the debut of young Montgomery Clift. He gave Marilyn Monroe two key early roles in *Monkey Business* (1952) and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953, featuring her legendary "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" number), and in 1959 made what some consider his finest film, *Rio Bravo* which encapsulated virtually all his themes and moods."

BEN HECHT 28 Feb 1894 NYC-18 April 1964, NYC (thrombosis). From *Leonard Maltin's Film Encyclopedia*: "One of the most prolific and accomplished screenwriters in Hollywood history was a man who claimed to hate Hollywood and all it stood for. But the cynical mercenary in him could not resist the lure of "easy money." Hecht was raised in Racine, Wisconsin, and as a young man moved to Chicago, where he became a reporter and, eventually, a short-story writer and novelist. He traveled in literary circles that eventually landed him in New York, where he met young movie mogul David O. Selznick; the two were to be lifelong friends and frequent collaborators (although Hecht's contributions to Selznick's films, such as his intertitles for *Gone With the Wind* often went uncredited).

A now-famous telegram from friend and fellow scribe Herman Mankiewicz promising Hecht that "your only competition is idiots"-summoned him to Hollywood, where he scripted Josef von Sternberg's classic gangster story, *Underworld* (1927), and won an Oscar for his work at the very first Academy Awards presentation. Hecht worked very quickly (he claimed in his autobiography that he completed most of his scripts in two



SCARFACE: THE SHAME OF A NATION (1932, 93 min. Caddo & United Artists) National Film Registry 1994

Paul Muni.... Tony Camonte
Ann Dvorak.... Cesca Camonte
Karen Morley.... Poppy
Osgood Perkins.... John 'Johnny' Lovo
C. Henry Gordon.... Inspector Ben Guarino
George Raft.... Guino Rinaldo
Vince Barnett.... Angelo
Boris Karloff.... Gaffney
Purnell Pratt.... Mr. Garston, Publisher
Tully Marshall.... Managing Editor
Inez Palange.... Tony's Mother
Edwin Maxwell.... Chief of Detectives
Francis Ford.... Prison Guard (Alternate Ending) (uncredited)
Howard Hawks.... Man on Bed
Dennis O'Keefe.... Dance Extra

Directed by Howard Hawks (Richard Rosson, co-director)

Writing credits Armitage

Trail (novel), Ben

Hecht (screenplay), Fred

Pasley (adaptation, uncredited),

W.R. Burnett (dialogue), Howard

Hawks (uncredited)

Produced by Howard Hawks &

Howard Hughes (uncredited)

Cinematography by Lee Garmes and

I. W. O'Connell

weeks), and the credits piled up. His most famous work was the semiautobiographical stage comedy "The Front Page," which he wrote with frequent collaborator Charles MacArthur; it was first translated to film in 1931 and three times since, most notably as Howard Hawks' *His Girl Friday* in 1940. Hecht and MacArthur indulged their "artistic" sides by writing, directing, and producing a handful of unusual, serious films that qualify mainly as oddities: *Crime Without Passion* (1934), *The Scoundrel* (1935, specially crafted as a starring vehicle for their friend and fellow playwright, Noël Coward; the screenplay won an Oscar), *Once in a Blue Moon* (1935), *Soak the Rich* (1936), and *Angels Over Broadway* (1940), most of which were directed more by cinematographer Lee Garmes than by the writing duo. Although Hecht wrote scripts for just about every genre, his sharp wit and native cynicism made him a natural for the frantic screwball comedies of the 1930s and 1940s, which he helped define with *Twentieth Century* (1934). Hecht's other screenplays and screen stories, written alone or in collaboration, include *Scarface* (1932), *Turn Back the Clock*, *Design for Living* (both 1933), *Viva Villa!*, *Upperworld* (both 1934), *Barbary Coast* (1935), *Nothing Sacred* (1937), *Gunga Din*, *Wuthering Heights*, *It's a Wonderful World* (all 1939), *Comrade X* (1940), *Lydia* (1941), *Tales of Manhattan*, *The Black Swan* (both 1942), *Spellbound* (1945), *Notorious* (1946), *Kiss of Death*, *Ride the Pink Horse* (both 1947), *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1950), *Monkey Business* (1952), *Ulysses* (1955), *Miracle in the Rain* (1956, adapted from his own novel), *Legend of the Lost*, *A Farewell to Arms* (both 1957), and *Circus World* (1964).

PAUL MUNI (Meshilem Meier Weisenfreund) 22 September 1895 Lemberg, Austria-Hungary [now Lviv, Ukraine]—25 August 1967 Montecito, California, USA. (heart problems) received Oscar nominations for his first (*The Valiant*, 1929) and last (*The Last Angry Man*, 1959) screen appearances. Began in Yiddish theatre in NYC. Some of his other films: *Angel on My Shoulder* (1946), *Commandos Strike at Dawn* (1942), *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937, Oscar nomination), *The Good Earth* (1937), *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (1935, Oscar), and *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932, Oscar nominatio). In 1955 he won a Tony for his portrayal of Clarence Darrow in the Broadway play *Inherit the Wind*, a role played by Spencer Tracy in the screen adaptation.

GEORGE RAFT 26 September 1895 NYC—24 November 1980 (leukemia) was in about 70 films, usually as a tough or bad guy. His coin-flipping role in *Scarface* made him a star. Some of his better-known films are *Some Like It Hot* (1959), *Nocturne* (1946), *Johnny Angel* (1945), *They Drive by Night* (1940), *Each Dawn I Die* (1939), and *The Glass Key* (1935).

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BORIS KARLOFF 23 November 1877 London, England-2February 1969, Sussex, England (emphysema). A appeared in about 170 films, beginning with a bit part in *The Dumb Girl of Portici* in 1916. His career was pretty much cast in concrete with his 70th film role as the monster in *Frankenstein*. He had some regular roles after that, but more and more he played monsters, mummies, mad doctors and revenants—characters with names like Professor Morland, Dr. Maniac, Gravelle, Mord, Voltan, Dr. Scarabus and, most often, The Monster. His last film was *El Coleccionista de cadáveres* (1970)—variously translated as *Children of Blood*, *The Corpse Collectors*, *Death Comes from the Dark*, and *The Shrinking Corpse*.

from *Who The Devil Made It Conversations with Legendary Film Directors*. Peter Bogdanovich. Ballantine NY 1997

Where did the story for Scarface come from?

Hughes had a story about two brothers. One was a cop and one was a gangster. Same old story you've heard a few hundred times, and he wanted me to do it. I got an idea and I asked Ben Hecht, "Would you do a picture?" Ben said, "What?" and I said, "A gangster picture." He said, "You don't want to do that," and I said, "Well, Ben, this is a little different. This is the Borgia family in Chicago today, and Tony Camonte is Caesar Borgia." And he said, "We'll start tomorrow morning." We took eleven days to write the story and dialog. And then we showed it to Hughes and he kind of grinned and said "This is quite a story. Where's the brother?" "Well, Howard," I said, "you can't just use that story all over again." He said, "What are you going to do about casting it?" "I don't know, we can't get anybody. All the good actors and actresses are under contract and the studios won't loan them out. I think I'd better go to New York." He said, "OK. Let me know."

So I went back and found Paul Muni at the Jewish theatre downtown around 29th Street; Osgood Perkins I saw in a *It also stayed away from the moralizing qualities of pictures like Public Enemy [1931; William Wellman] or Little Caesar [1930; Mervyn LeRoy].*

Except for that one sequence which was put in for the censors, in which all the mayors of the towns were talking. . .

That looked as though it were shot by someone else.

play, doing the lead in a love story; George Raft I saw at a prizefight; Ann Dvorak was a chorus girl down at Metro-Goldwyn, making forty a week, and I got her out of her contract because a vice-president at Metro-Goldwyn liked me; Karen Morley went around with some fellow I knew, and I thought she was attractive. Boris Karloff had just been in *The Criminal Code*. He said, "I don't care how small it is—I'm going to have a part." He thought I was good for him. Little Vince Barnett had been hiring out as a waiter—insulting people at the Coconut Grove. So we just collected actors and went into a little dust-covered studio and opened it up. We were an entity unto ourselves and we made a picture. The whole thing was a challenge and a lot of fun. Then it turned out very well and became a kind of legend.

Well, it is about violence.

And it was much more violent than any other picture that had been made to that time.

It was. It was made as a sop for the censors. When Hughes asked me about it, I said, "It can't hurt the picture. Everybody will know it wasn't part of the picture." The censors wrote it; somebody shot it. I didn't come around for it. I didn't want to have anything to do with it. There were a few things that had to be done to get by the censors. We did a completely different ending for Muni's death. In some states he had to be hanged, And we no longer had Muni, so we had to do it with feet, trapdoor, rope, hangman and music. They didn't like the other

ending.

You mean, where Muni gets shot and falls in the gutter and you show that big neon sign flashing, "The World is Yours."

They said it was a little too heroic. They wanted to see him punished by law.

But he's killed by the police.

They wanted him to meet his end by the law.

Didn't they also make you add that subtitle "Shame of a Nation"?

Oh, sure. This battle went on for well over a year.

The incest theme was rather daring, and you were quite clear about it.

We were influenced a good deal by the incestuous story of the Borgias—but the censors misunderstood our intention and objected to it because *they* thought the relationship between brother and sister was too beautiful to be attributed to a gangster! But the funny thing about making that key scene between them—I rehearsed it again and again, I was shaking my head, and Lee Garmes said, "What's the matter?" and I said, "Lee, something's wrong. You shouldn't be able to see faces when you hear lines like that." He said, "Can you wait ten minutes?" He sent for a pair of curtains that had a pronounced pattern so the light barely came through. He turned out all the front light and just shot it in backlight. Made a really good scene out of it. So if you're ever stuck and get into a scene you don't think should be exposed to people—shoot it so they can't be seen too well. It can cure an awful lot of evils.

At the end the sister says, "Why didn't you shoot me?" And he answers something like "You are me—I'm you—it's always been that way." You give the impression that even though he's obviously not going to live to get out of that room, he feels OK because she's there with him.

Yeah, he felt *strong* with her, through the relationship between them. Every time we had a scene between those two we would start to analyze the relationship, and we came up with some

from World Film Directors, John Wakeman, ed., H.W. Wilson Co NY 1987 (entry by Gerald Mast)

Of the Fox silents, only *Fig Leaves* (1926) and *A Girl in Every Port* (1928) survive. The former is a comedy of gender, tracing domestic warfare from Adam and Eve to their modern descendants. *A Girl in Every Port* is "a love story between two men," in Hawks' words—two brawling sailor buddies who fall for the woman. The motif of two friends who share the same love would recur in many Hawks sound films, particularly in the 1930s (*Tiger Shark*, *Today We Live*, *Barbary Coast*, *The Road to Glory*). The motif of two wandering pals, enjoying the sexual benefits of travel, returns with a gender reversal in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, with Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell playing the two traveling buddies. More than anything else, *A Girl in Every Port* declared male friendship one of Hawks' primary concerns. With the end of his Fox contract in 1929, Hawks would never again dign a long-term contract with a single studio.

It was the coming of synchronized sound that allowed Hawks

rather wild guesses as to what it was, not just as to what the effect would be on the scene. One was the strength he got out of her and, as he said, how alone he was after she'd died in his arms. That was a normal thing—at least it was to Ben and me.

You weren't trying to condemn the characters or moralize about whether they were good or bad. In fact, the end is touching.

In doing the final scene, Muni, like any smart person, was conscious of the fact that he'd given quite a performance and that he stood to be a pretty big man because of the picture. When he was going to end up lying in the street with his head in what the horse had left there, he was going to play the scene very dramatically. He came downstairs and was yellow like an actor being yellow, not playing it for honesty. I talked to him about it, and he did it the same way. So I went over and started a game of poker, and he began to get more and more fidgety. Finally, he came over and said, "When are we going to do the scene?" and I said, "Whenever you decide to do it the way it should be done." About five minutes later he came over and said, "OK. I'll do it." And he really played the devil out of it, you know.

How did Raft's coin flipping originate?

There were two or three killings in Chicago where, in the fist of the victim, they found a nickel. That was a mark of contempt. When we cast Raft in this picture, a coin seemed to be a good thing to use as a mark for the man. It was his first picture and it also helped him fill things in. It became his trademark.

If you had to pick your own favorites, which would you say they were?

I think *Scarface* is the favorite, because we got no help from anybody—we were outlawed. I mean, we couldn't even come into a studio, so we opened our own studio. We couldn't borrow anybody—we had to find actors on our own. Some used different names so they wouldn't be blacklisted at the studios, because the studios didn't *want* independent pictures then. That one was done under the greatest difficulties and it was a tough job, but even with all of that we made a good picture.

to become so independent a film stylist. *The Dawn Patrol* (1930) was a remarkable early sound film in many respects. Its pacifism mirrored the reaction against the First World War in a period that produced such antiwar films as *What Price Glory?*, *The Big Parade*, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The flying sequences in *The Dawn Patrol* were as photographically brilliant as they were aeronautically accurate. Flying and filming had never before been so beautifully mated, and Hawks flavorful dialogue sounded as if it were uttered by human beings, not orating actors. The affected, stilted diction that marred so many early talkies was entirely absent. Dialogue in Hawks' films would always suggest the feel and flavor of spontaneous conversation rather than scripted lines—he in fact not only permitted his players to improvise but deliberately hired players who would and could.

Scarface (1930-1932) brought this spontaneous quality from the wartime skies to the urban streets. *Scarface* remains

simultaneously one of the most brutal and most funny of gangster films—“as vehement, vitriolic, and passionate a work as has been made about Prohibition,” in the opinion of Manny Farber. When Tony Camonte lets go with his new machine gun into a rack of pool cues, or the O’Hara gang shoots a restaurant to smithereens, they are murderous children having “fun,” one of the most important words in Hawks’ critical lexicon. Hawks’ antihero Tony, a fanciful portrait of Al Capone sketched by Paul Muni, is not only a spiteful kid; he also nurses an unarticulated and repressed sexual attraction to his own sister and guns down their best friend (George Raft) who invades this Freudian turf. Hawks’ recurrent piece of physical business for Raft—the obsessive flipping of a coin—has survived ever after as the quintessential gangster’s tic. It introduced the familiar Hawks method of deflecting psychological revelation from explicit dialogue to the subtle handling of physical objects. As John Belton notes, “Hawks’ characterization is rooted in the physical.

Scarface also introduced Hawks to two important professional associates: Howard Hughes, who produced the film and would weave through Hawks’ entire career as either ally or enemy; and Ben Hecht, the hard-drinking, wise-cracking writer who, like Hawks, wanted to make films that were “fun.” Hecht and Hawks were kindred cynics who would work together for twenty years. Hughes, however, had his own war to win. A lifetime foe of film industry censorship boards, Hughes resisted attempts to soften *Scarface*. He finally relented, not by toning down its brutal humor but by inserting a drab lecture on the social responsibility of voters. He also concluded the film with the fallen mobster’s whining cowardice, to take the glamor out of his defiance. But Hughes was so enraged at being pressured into these emendations that he withdrew the film from circulation for four decades. Only his death returned it to American audiences.

Hawks traveled to other studios and genres in the 1930s. [prison movie, auto racing, sea]

Hawks returned to wartime professionals in *Today We Live* (1933) and *The Road to Glory* (1936). The former was adapted from “Turn About,” a story by William Faulkner, and began Hawks’ personal and professional association with the writer. Like Hawks, Faulkner loved flying and, like Hawks, had lost a brother in an air crash. Both men also liked drinking and storytelling. Hawks and Faulkner would drink, fly, and tell stories together over the next twenty years. *Today We Live*, made at MGM, began another Hawks pattern—walking off the set when studio bosses interfered with his filming.

Perhaps Hawks’ most interesting genre films in the **from Public Enemies Public Heroes Screening the Gangster from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil. Jonathan Munby U Chicago Chicago & London 1999**

The early 1930s gangster film was singled out for censorship. . . . Significantly, it is the cultural historian rather than the film studies scholar who has highlighted the more seditious features of Hollywood’s gangster. Situating the gangster film in the context of the Depression, Richard Pells, for example, For what made *Little Caesar*, *Public Enemy*, and *Scarface* so different from anything that had come before was that their protagonists spoke in ethnic urban vernacular voices.

Edward G. Robinson (*Little Caesar*), James Cagney (*Public Enemy*), and Paul Muni (*Scarface*) were stars of a stock entirely different from what had come before. Most obviously, they were *not* Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Edwin G. Robinson’s real name was Emmanuel

1930s were screwball comedies. Hawks was a master of a genre that has come to represent one of the period’s most revealing reflections of American aspirations. As the philosopher Stanley Cavell argued, the screwball comedy enacts the “myth of modern marriage,” the basis of our culture’s idea of happiness. While Hawks always added comic touches to serious stories—from *Scarface* in 1930 to *El Dorado* in 1967—the pure comedy provided much broader comic possibilities.

[*Bringing Up Baby* first of his 4 Grant comedies]

Respected inside the industry as one of Hollywood’s sturdiest directors of top stars in taut stories, Hawks acquired little fame outside it until the rise of the *auteur* theory in France, England, and America between 1953 and 1962. To some extent, it was the *auteur* theory that made Hawks a household name and Hawks that made *auteur* theory a household idea. In their campaign against both European “art films” and solemn adaptations of literary classics, articulators of the *auteur* view—François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Peter Wollen, V.S. Perkins, Ian Cameron, Andrew Sarris, John Belton, William Paul—looked for studio directors of genre films whose work displayed both a consistent cinematic style and consistent narrative motifs.

Hawks was the model of such a director. He spent fifteen years in interviews denying any serious artistic aspiration, claiming that all he wanted to do was tell a story. But a Hawks story had an unmistakable look, feel, and focus. His style, though never obtrusive, had always been built on certain basic elements: a careful attention to the basic qualities of light (the lamps that always hang in a Hawks frame); the counter-point of on-frame action and off-frame sound; the improvisationally casual sound of Hawks’ conversation; the reluctance of characters to articulate their inner feelings, and the transference of emotional material from dialogue to physical objects; symmetrically balanced frames that produce a dialectic between opposite halves of the frame. So too, Hawks’ films, no matter what the genre, handled consistent plot motifs: a small band of professionals committed to doing their jobs as well as they could; pairs of friends who were also lovers and opponents; reversal of conventional gender expectations about manly men and womanly women. Dressed as routine Hollywood genre pictures, Hawks’ films were psychological studies of people in action, simultaneously trying to be true to themselves and faithful to the group. In his classic conflict of love and honor, Hawks was the American movie descendant of Corneille.

interprets the gangster as “a parody of the American Dream. . . a psychopathic Horatio Alger. . . a reproach to both the principles of the market place and the reigning values of American life.”

Goldberg, and Paul Muni’s real name was Friedrich Muni Meyer Weisenfreund. Both were New York Lower East Side immigrant Jews who had gained their formative theatrical experiences on the Yiddish stage. James Cagney was also a city boy from the Lower East Side (of Irish Catholic stock) who had honed his performance skills on the vaudeville stage, and who prided himself on having learned Yiddish to survive in the ghetto street culture. The collusion of real and cinematic identity had everything to do with the refinement of the

gangster as an “authentic” American type.

Fears about Hollywood’s contributions to the general breakdown of social mores that had been spawned in the 1920s took on even more intensity in the aftermath of the Crash. More significantly, if this fear was directed at issues of sex and nudity during the 1920s, it found a new target in the glorification of lawlessness in 1930. Here was the most obvious sign of Hollywood’s capacity to facilitate social degeneration. Furthermore, to valorize gangsterdom and bootlegging in the context of the early Depression years could only intensify such objections.

To temper things, Hollywood introduced a form of self-censorship that suited, ultimately, its own interests. The gangster film disclaimer was the most obvious example of this. The rhetoric of civic responsibility comes to form a frame narrative, as it were, which attempts to impose a preferred reading on the rest of the text. Such an imposition, however, had to compete with a range of other meanings, including precisely a rejection of moral and civic norms.

To the extent that it is clearly based on the exploits of Al Capone (even including the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre), we might call *Scarface* an attempt at documentary expressionism. But rather than pretend to execute an environmentalist (disinterested, objectivist, and historical realist) representation of the world of the criminal “other” (like *Public Enemy*), *Scarface* declares itself as a deliberately subjective and allegorical view of gangsterdom.

Like *Little Caesar*, *Scarface*’s narrative is structured around a rise and fall motif. The mythology of capitalist opportunity and success is given distinctly public marking in the form of a travel company’s neon billboard towering above the urban landscape that announces “The World is Yours.”

Just as Rico in *Little Caesar* is ascetic and intensely jealous of Olga (his partner’s lover) and just as Tommy Powers in *Public Enemy* cannot make love to Gwen (Jean Harlow), Tony also cannot fit into the heterosexual economy. *Scarface*, building on its predecessors, takes the problem of the gangster’s sexuality to a new level of intensity through the suggestion of incest. Tony makes the wrong object choice in falling for his own sister, Cesca (Ann Dvorak). Insanely jealous of the love his partner Guido (George Raft) feels for her, Tony kills him.

Scarface’s producers came under pressure to add a scene featuring a moral diatribe by a press representative and moral custodians against the gangster. It was hoped this would help temper the movie’s encouragement of sympathy for such criminals. *Scarface* was prohibited from release until censors’ demands were met. The theme of incest was problematic enough, but worse still the film seemed to condone Tony’s behavior. The film simply glorified the gangster and offered no moral lesson. Structurally, this arose, as I have argued, from the problem of having a decentered hero as the primary figure for audience identification. . . . After protracted argument producer Howard Hughes gave way to the intervention, which involved not only adding scenes but cutting a major (and violent) action sequence. What resulted, however, was not a successful (re)moralization of the plot.

The ending of *Scarface* features our protagonist suddenly turning yellow, which is entirely out of character with Tony’s general portrayal as someone cool in the face of fire.

Sound’s introduction to the gangster film was an essential element in lending sanction to the perspective of the ethnic cultural “other” on the American screen. The contentious meaning of these early 1930s gangster films was contingent not only on the time they appeared (on the back of the Wall Street Crash and in the last years of Prohibition) and the medium in which they appeared (the mass cinema), but on the irony of how sound helped expose the cultural prejudice involved in their own censure by civic and moral pressure groups.

Join us next week, Tuesday September 16, for Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen

(Howard Hawks refused to participate in the shooting of censored scenes)

© Sullivan in Cecilie Gibbon's *Parzan and his Mate*

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