

## THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GREAT FILMS WITH BRUCE JACKSON & DIANE CHRISTIAN  
PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO AND THE MARKET ARCADE FILM AND ARTS  
CENTER

### APRIL 30, 2002 (V/14) SOME LIKE IT HOT 1959

**BILLY WILDER** (Samuel Wilder, 22 June 1906, Sucha, Austria-Hungary —27 March 2002, Beverly Hills, pneumonia) wrote more than 60 screenplays and directed 24. Some of the films he wrote and directed are *Irma a Douce* 1963, *The Apartment* 1960, *Some Like it Hot* 1959, *The Spirit of St. Louis* 1957, *Witness for the Prosecution* 1957, *The Seven Year Itch* 1955, *Sunset Boulevard* 1950, *The Lost Weekend* 1945, and *Double Indemnity* 1944. He was nominated for 21 Oscars and won 7 of them, as well as the Academy's Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award (1988), the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award (1986), and nearly every other international major award given to directors. He was a newspaper reporter in Vienna, continued that trade in Berlin before starting as a screenwriter in 1929. He left Germany when Hitler came to power in 1933. He first went to Paris, then the US, though he knew no English. Before partnering with I.A. Diamond he wrote screenplays with Charles Brackett (*Double Indemnity*, *Ninotchka*, *The Lost Weekend*). For more on him visit [www.geocities.com/hollywood/cinema/1012/wilder.html](http://www.geocities.com/hollywood/cinema/1012/wilder.html). Or see Cameron Crowe's *Conversations with Wilder* (Knopf 1999). **Some Wilder quotes:**

—"I have discussed this with my doctor and my psychiatrist and they tell me I'm too old and too rich to go through this again." (after directing Marilyn Monroe for the second time in *Some Like it Hot*)

—"Some pictures play wonderfully to a room of eight people. I don't go for that. I go for the masses. I go for the end effect."

—"Anyone who doesn't believe in miracles isn't a realist."

—"My English is a mixture between Arnold Schwarzenegger and Archbishop Tutu."

—"A bad play folds and is forgotten, but in pictures we don't bury our dead. When you think it's out of your system, your daughter sees it on television and says, My father is an idiot."

—Louis B. Mayer (After screening Wilder's *Sunset Blvd*): "How dare this young man bite the hand that feeds him?" Wilder: "Mr. Mayer: I am Mr. Wilder, and go fuck yourself."

—(Having seen Dr Freud's therapy couch): "It was a very tiny little thing. All his theories were based on the analysis of very short people!"

**CHARLES LANG** (27 March 1902, Bluff, Utah—3 April 1998, Santa Monica, California, pneumonia) shot almost 150 films, from *The Night Patrol* 1926 to *40 Carats* 1973. Some of the others: *Cactus Flower* 1969, *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* 1969, *Charade* 1963, *One-Eyed Jacks* 1961, *The Magnificent Seven* 1960, *Separate Tables* 1958, *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* 1957, *Sabrina* 1954, *Ace in the Hole* 1951, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* 1947 and *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* 1935. He was nominated for best cinematography Oscars 18 times and won once, for *A Farewell to Arms* 1932.

**MARILYN MONROE** (Norma Jean Mortensen, 1 June 1926, Los Angeles—5 August 1962, Los Angeles, drug overdose) is an icon. There have been other movie stars who have achieved iconic status (e.g. Garbo, Eastwood, Cooper), but Monroe transcends them all. She had her first of seven bit parts in *Dangerous Years* 1947. The seventh was in John Huston's *Asphalt Jungle* 1950, and that led to a key supporting role in *All About Eve* later the same year. She got good press for those two films, but they were followed by 11 more minor parts in minor films. In 1949, she had posed nude for a calendar; that photograph surfaced in 1953 as Hugh Hefner's first *Playboy* centerfold. That year was also the beginning of an eight-year period in which she would make ten films, seven of them good and five of them classics: *Niagara*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *How to Marry a Millionaire*, all in 1953; *There's No Business Like Show Business* 1954; *The Seven Year Itch* 1955; *Bus Stop* 1956, *The Prince and the Showgirl* 1957, *Some Like it Hot* 1959, *Let's Make Love* 1960 and *The Misfits* 1961. In that decade she married and divorced baseball legend Joe DiMaggio (who wanted her to quit work and be a good wife) and playwright Arthur Miller (who wrote *The Misfits* for her). She offered to convert to Catholicism when she married DiMaggio but was turned down because she was divorced; instead, DiMaggio got excommunicated for marrying her, an action that was reversed by the 1962 Ecumenical Council. She converted to Judaism when she married Miller. She left 75% of her \$1.6 million estate to her acting coach, Lee Strasberg, and the rest to her psychiatrist. The licensing of Marilyn's name and likeness, handled world-wide reportedly nets the Monroe estate about \$2 million a year. Hugh Hefner bought the burial vault next to hers. The platinum blonde, like the name, was a Hollywood construct: she was born a brunette, and had her name legally changed to Marilyn Monroe in New York in February 1956.

**JACK LEMMON** (John Uhler Lemmon III, 8 February 1925, Newton, Massachusetts—27 June 2001, Los Angeles, cancer), the son of a donut manufacturer, went to Phillips Andover Academy, then Harvard, where he was president of Hasty Pudding. He won Oscars as best supporting actor for *Mr. Roberts* 1955 and best actor for *Save the Tiger* 1973. He received best actor nominations for *Missing* 1982, *Tribute* 1980, *The China Syndrome* 1979, *Days of Wine and Roses* 1962, *The Apartment* 1960, and *Some Like It Hot*. In 1988 he received the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award. Through much of his career he was best known for playing a hapless character in comedies, but in his later years he showed great skill on the darker side. Some of his other 90 films were "Tuesdays with Morrie" 1999 TV, "Inherit the Wind" 1999 TV, "12 Angry Men" 1997 TV, *Short Cuts* 1993, *Glengarry Glen Ross* 1992, *JFK* 1991, *The Odd Couple* 1968, *Irma la Douce* 1963, and *Cowboy* 1958.

**TONY CURTIS** (Bernard Schwartz, 3 June 1925, The Bronx) did a lot of tv in the 80's and 90's, often playing himself or what was little more than a parody of himself. He's one of those actors who appeared in a lot of films, more than 100, but whose reputation rests on only a few of them and several of those are in the order of "Oh, how interesting that Tony Curtis is doing that." Some of his films are : *The Boston Strangler* 1968, *The Great Impostor* 1960, *Spartacus*, 1960, *Operation Petticoat*, 1959, *Some Like It Hot*, 1959, *The Defiant Ones*, 1958, and *Kings Go Forth*, 1958 and *Sweet Smell of Success* 1957. He also had small parts in *Francis the Talking Mule*, 1950, *Winchester '73*, 1950, *I was a Shoplifter* 1950, *City Across the River*, 1949, and *How to Smuggle a Hernia Across the Border*, 1949. Really. He was a notorious Hollywood skirt-chaser and is often quoted with lines like "I ran

Some Like It Hot (1959, 120 minutes)

Directed & produced by Billy Wilder  
Written by I.A.L. Diamond and Billy Wilder  
Cinematography by Charles Lang  
Film Editing by Arthur P. Schmidt  
Costume Design by Orry-Kelly

Marilyn Monroe.... Sugar Kane  
Tony Curtis.... Joe (Josephine)/Junior  
Jack Lemmon.... Jerry (Daphne)  
George Raft.... Spats Colombo  
Pat O'Brien.... Mulligan  
Joe E. Brown.... Osgood Fielding III  
Nehemiah Persoff.... Bonaparte  
Joan Shawlee.... Sweet Sue  
Billy Gray .... Sig Poliakoff  
George E. Stone .... Toothpick Charlie  
Dave Barry .... Beinstock  
Mike Mazurki.... Spats' Henchman  
Harry Wilson ... Spats' Henchman  
Beverly Hills.... Dolores  
Barbara Drew.... Nellie  
Edward G. Robinson Jr.... Johnny Paradise

Selected for National Film Registry  
Oscar for best costume design. Nominations for Best Actor in a Leading Role (Lemmon), art direction, b&w cinematography, director, screenplay.

around with a lump in my pants, chased all the girls. This is what I reflected on the screen. There wasn't anything deeper or less deep than that," and "What's the secret to a long and happy life? Young women's saliva!"

**GEORGE RAFT** (George Ranft, 27 September 1895, New York City—24 November 1980, Los Angeles) was a terrific dancer who grew up in New York's Hell's Kitchen. He usually played gangsters and other tough guys, starting as the coin-tossing henchman in *Scarface* 1932. He had some real-life gangster pals – Owney Madden and Bugsy Siegal among them – which in the early years seems to have added to his professional mystique, but later on became a liability. He was married to and separated from Grace Mulrooney from 1923 to 1970. He is famous in film circles for lousy career choices—he turned down two of the roles that made Humphrey Bogart famous: "Mad Dog" Earle in *High Sierra* and Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*. Joe Mantegna plays him in *Bugsy* 1991. In many of his later films, he played parodies of the gangsters he played in his early films. His role in *Some Like it Hot* is somewhere between the two. Some of his other films: *Ocean's Eleven* 1960, *A Bullet for Joey* 1955, *Loan Shark* 1952, *Red Light* 1949, *Johnny Allegro* 1949, *Mr. Ace* 1946, *Johnny Angel* 1945, *They Drive by Night* 1940, *Invisible Stripes* 1939, *Each Dawn I Die* 1939, *The Glass Key* 1935, and *Pick-up* 1933.

### from World Film Directors V. I. Ed. John Wakeman. H.H. Wilson Co. 1987

In those years after the First World War, young writers working in the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire gravitated naturally to the cultural ferment of Berlin, and Wilder made his way there at the age of twenty. For a time he worked as a crime reporter on *Nachtausgabe* (and/or as a film and drama critic; accounts vary). Many colorful stories are told (mostly by Wilder himself about this part of his life: it is said that he fell in love with a dancer, neglected his work, lost his job, and became a dancing partner for "lonely ladies," and a gigolo. He spent his time on the fringes of Berlin café society, met some young filmmakers and tried his hand as a scenarist.

The first picture made from a Wilder script was *Menschen am Sonntag* (*People on Sunday*, 1929), directed by another young hopeful, Robert Siodmak. [Other collaborators included Edgar Ulmer, Fred Zinneman and Eugen Schüfftan] "It was about young people having a good time in Berlin, and it was talked about a lot," Wilder says. "It represented a good way to make pictures: no unions, no bureaucracy, no studio, shot silent on cheap stock: we just 'did it.' As a result of its success, we all got jobs at UFA, the huge German studios. . . . I'd write two, three, four pictures a month. I accumulated about a hundred silent picture assignments, and then, in 1929, when sound came in, I did scores more." They included Gerhard Lamprecht's version of *Emil and the Detectives* and vehicles for many of the German stars of the period.

Wilder had an eye on Hollywood but left Germany faster than he had intended when Hitler came to power in 1933: "It seemed the wise thing for a Jew to do." Stopping over for a time in Paris, Wilder (in collaboration with Alexander Esway) directed his first film, *Mauvaise Graine* (*Bad Blood*, 1933). A fast-paced movie about young auto thieves, it was made on a shoestring and featured Danielle Darrieux, then seventeen. Soon after, Wilder sold a story to Columbia and this paid his way, via Mexico, to California. Wilder arrived in Hollywood speaking almost no English and shared a room and "a can of soup a day" with Peter Lorre.

After two hard years, Wilder became a writer for Paramount. He had no great success, however, until in 1936 the producer Arthur Hornblow asked him to collaborate with Charles Brackett on a script, *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* for Ernst Lubitsch. Brackett was a novelist and a *New Yorker* drama critic, an urbane man from an old New England family. In spite of the radical differences between the two men, they formed a highly effective writing team, with Brackett selecting and polishing the most promising of Wilder's "prodigious stream of ideas." Among the excellent entertainments they wrote for Paramount directors in the late 1930s and early 1940s were *Midnight* and *Hold Back the Dawn* for Mitchell Leisen, *Ball of Fire* for Howard Hawks, and Lubitsch's *Ninotchka*.

Wilder was infuriated by directorial misinterpretations of his scripts and frequently bounced onto the set to say so. Eventually Paramount gave him a chance to show how it should be done. His first American film as director was *The Major and the Minor* (1942), about a disenchanting career girl stranded in New York who masquerades as a twelve-year-old because she lacks the adult train fare back to Iowa. Ginger Rogers (then 30) played the heroine, Ray

Milland, the military-school officer she falls in love with, and the result was universally enjoyed as "an enchanting film farce." Wilder followed this very successful debut with *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943), a fairly ludicrous war thriller, which cast Erich von Stroheim as Field Marshal Rommel. Wilder, who was awed by the inventiveness of Stroheim's performance, says, "he influenced me greatly as a director: I always think of my style as a curious cross between Lubitsch and Stroheim."

William Chandler, not Brackett, was Wilder's coauthor on *Double Indemnity* (1944), based on the novella by James Cain. This brilliant film noir starred Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray as lovers who plan the "accidental" death of Standwyck's husband, and Edward G. Robinson as the cold-blooded insurance agent who investigates the claim. *Double Indemnity* (which the Hays Office condemned as "a blueprint for murder") is a film of great originality, not least in Wilder's decision to begin the film with MacMurray's Dictaphone confession. Wilder has "always felt that surprise is not as effective as suspense. By identifying the criminals right off the bat—and identifying ourselves with them—we can concentrate on what follows—their efforts to escape, the net closing, closing."

A cruel and haunting picture, *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) was a controversial, world-wide success, regarded by many as the best film ever made about Hollywood and by others as a treacherous calumny.

*Sunset Boulevard*, which brought Wilder and Brackett Oscars for best story and best screenplay, was the last film they wrote together – "sometimes match and striking surface wear out," Wilder explained. His next picture was one of the blackest ever to come out of a commercial studio, *Ace in the Hole* (1951), also known as *The Big Carnival*.

Completed with great difficulty because of Marilyn Monroe's increasing incapacity for work, *Some Like It Hot* (1959) is widely regarded as one of the cinema's greatest comedies. Gerald Mast, indeed, thinks it's Wilder's best film, "a rich, multilayered confection of parodies and ironies, calling subtly into question conventional notions of masculinity, femininity, sex, love, and violence.

After the delirious pace of *Some Like It Hot*, Wilder achieved an almost equal success with *The Apartment* (1960), a quiet, sad, often bitter comedy about the perennial conflict between love and money.

None of Wilder's subsequent movies has equaled the success and prestige of the best of the films he made between 1950 and 1960, though all have had their admirers and defenders. *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964), admired abroad for its "glorious" bad taste, its ruthless way of poking fun at American greed and hypocrisy, opened in the United States to a storm of abuse. It was called "sordid" and "slimy" and was condemned by the Legion of Decency for leaving adultery unpunished. Deeply hurt, Wilder retired for a time to Europe and, according to Maurice Zolotow, actually considered suicide. The improbably positive ending of the otherwise savage satire that followed, *The Fortune Cookie* (1966), was regarded by some critics as evidence that Wilder had lost his nerve.

The most widely discussed of Wilder's late films was *Fedora* (1978), a sadder and wiser variation on the theme of *Sunset Boulevard*. . . . *Sunset Boulevard* was made when Wilder was at the peak of his success, and it has a confidence and audacity lacking in the later films. Perhaps, as Adrian Turner and Neil Sinyard suggest, *Fedora* is "even richer because of that, the vision of a man who knows the system inside out but who. . . has been increasingly placed in the situation of an outsider looking in. Thus, the tone of the film is extraordinarily ambivalent, constantly pulling between sombreness and romance. . . this ambivalence is thematically of the utmost relevance and importance. . . the whole film is about ghosts, mirror images and doubles—about the pull between truth and illusion, youth and age."

Dutch Detweiler in *Fedora* complains that his Hollywood has gone: "The kids with the beards have taken over, with their zoom lenses and handheld cameras." Wilder himself, though he has been generous in his praise of some of his juniors, is similarly contemptuous of that which he regards as stylistically pretentious and self-conscious in contemporary cinema. His own work is for the most part not visually distinctive, relying more on language than on images to convey his misanthropic vision.

Coming of age in Berlin between the wars, it seemed to Wilder that (as one of his characters says) "People will do anything for money. Except some people. They will do *almost* anything for money." That, as he acknowledges, is the theme of all his pictures, and in the best of them he has expressed it dramatically enough or wittily enough to make it palatable to millions. That he has been concerned to sweeten the bitter pills he hands his audiences displeases some of his recent critics: David Thomson, for example, has called him "a heartless exploiter of public taste who manipulates situation in the name of satire." In fact, what has happened, as Neil Sinyard says, is that "a director previously identified with a cinema of acerbity and risk in a climate of tasteful timidity has come to represent a cinema of temperateness and geniality in a climate of sensationalism and shock."

He lived in a relatively modest apartment crammed with paintings by such artists as Picasso, Klee, Chagall, Dufy, and Rouault.

He is a chain-smoker, and, according to Axel Madsen, his most striking physical trait is restlessness: Walter Reisch similarly says that "speed is absolutely of the essence to him. He cannot do anything slowly." Wilder is a famous wit and sometimes a cruel one; he once remarked that "All that's left on the cutting-room floor when I'm through are cigarette butts, chewing-gum wrappers and tears. A director must be a policeman, a midwife, a psychoanalyst, a sycophant, and a bastard."

**from Philip Kemp's entry in *The St. James Film Directors Encyclopedia*. Ed. Andrew Sarris, Visible Ink, Detroit, 1998.**  
Wilder presents a disillusioned world, one (as Joan Didion put it) "seen at dawn through a hangover, a world of cheap *doubles entendres* and stale smoke. . . the true country of despair."

Themes of impersonation and deception, especially emotional deception, pervade Wilder's work. Frequently, though—all too frequently, perhaps—the counterfeit turns genuine, masquerade love conveniently developing into the real thing. For all his much-vaunted cynicism, Wilder often seems to lose the courage of his own disenchantment, resorting to unconvincing changes of heart to bring about a slick last-reel resolution. Some critics have seen this as blatant opportunism. "Billy Wilder," Andrew Sarris remarked, "is too cynical to believe even his own cynicism." Others have detected a sentimental undertow, one which surfaces in the unexpectedly mellow, almost benign late films like *Avanti!* and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*.

But although, by comparison with a true moral subversive like

Buñuel, Wilder can seem shallow and even facile, the best of his work retains a wit and astringent bite that sets it refreshingly off from the pieties of the Hollywood mainstream. When it comes to black comedy, he ranks at least the equal of his mentor, Lubitsch, whose audacity in wringing laughs out of concentration camps (*To Be or Not To Be*) is matched by Wilder's in pivoting *Some Like It Hot* around the St. Valentine's Day Massacre.

The consistency of Wilder's sardonic vision allows him to operate with assurance across genre boundaries. *Sunset Boulevard*—"full of exactness, cleverness, mastery and pleasure, a gnawing, haunting and ruthless film with a dank smell of corrosive delusion hanging over it," wrote Axel Madsen—has yet to be surpassed among Hollywood-on-Hollywood movies. In its cold fatality, *Double Indemnity* qualifies as archetypal *noir*, yet the same sense of characters trapped helplessly in the rat-runs of their own nature underlies both the erotic farce of *The Seven Year Itch* and the autumnal melancholy of *Sherlock Holmes*. Acclamation, though, falls beyond Wilder's scope: his Lindbergh film, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, is respectful, impersonal, and dull.

**from *On The Verge of Revolt: Women in American Films of the Fifties*. Brandon French, Frederick Ungar NY 1978. Chapter 12 "Androgyny, Anyone? Some Like It Hot (1959)"**

Comedy is the best camouflage. And Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* is a very funny film, in the same way that Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* is funny, with one critical difference. An audience watching *Dr. Strangelove* in 1963 knew it was laughing into the void. The subtitle of Kubrick's film is "How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb." *Some Like It Hot*, on the other hand, has no self-conscious subtitle which says what the audience is laughing off. But if it did, it might be something like "How I Copped Out on the Whole Male Sex and Came to Appreciate Women."

*Some Like It Hot* giggle and guffaws its way from murder, mayhem, terror, treachery, corruption, unemployment, and callous indifference to a haven of sweet safety through the magic of a sex change. But the movie is not ultimately about transsexuality. It's about androgyny, the state of being both male and female.

It is a simpleminded generality that men are killers and women are creators; that the world men make is savage and the world women make is safe. But Wilder's film contends that it's true insofar as men have *made* it true, by repressing their natural psychic androgyny in the name of a pure masculine ideal. The consequence depicted in *Some Like It Hot* is a male world so predatory that the resumption of androgyny becomes a matter of life and death.

*Some Like It Hot* flirts with a whole range of taboo sexual topics: transsexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, transvestism, lesbianism, oral sex (the sweet and fuzzy ends of the lollipop), and impotence. The characters shift from one sort of sexuality to another with the fluidity of a cartoon or a dream, while always maintaining their innocence on the literal (or waking) level.

The film can be perceived in part as a good-natured dream of sexuality as a sliding scale from male to female, from straight to gay, from potent to impotent, on which every human being dances an endlessly variable jig.

This dream is juxtaposed with the nightmare of the gangster world, saturated with the imagery of violence and death: gunfire, screeching tires, sirens, a hearse, a funeral parlor, screams, frenetic jazz, and human slaughter. The title of the film is a reference to jazz and the hot male world from which it emanates. "Oh, well, I guess some like it hot," the millionaire says to Sugar. "I personally prefer classical music."

Spats, a composite of famous movie gangsters from the past, is the center of a hoodlum fraternity which has eschewed sex for violence. Like the protagonist of *Little Caesar* (1930), Spats is obsessed with upward mobility. It is his plan to replace Little Bonaparte, who

“used to be like a rock” but is “getting soft.” Softness is so threatening to Spats and Little Caesar that they have nothing whatsoever to do with women.

Jerry, unlike Joe, is androgynous from the outset of the film, but he doesn't know it. His relationship with Osgood is actually no more than an exaggeration (and an improvement) of his relationship with Joe.

Whether one perceives Jerry as straight or gay. What *Some Like It Hot* affirms is neither heterosexual nor homosexual, nor even female, but rather, the abolition of those absolute poles in favor of an androgynous continuum which each of the three main characters explores in search of a uniquely suitable sexual identity. . . . And all of this harmless sexual exploration is placed in innocent opposition to the fixed obscenity of violence and death that the “pure male” of the film represents.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) appears to be a reversal of that vision. It depicts an androgynous psychopath whose violence derives from his inability to reconcile the male and female aspects of his personality. Norman Bates stabilizes only at the point where Norman-mother becomes entirely mother. But in fact, what underlies the film is the terror of female dominance (a psychiatrist explains that “mother” was the dominant part of Norman's personality and therefore eventually won out) which androgyny might allow.

*Some Like It Hot* and *Psycho* represent in microcosm the opposite poles of cultural feeling about the revolution in sex roles that was fomenting through the fifties and which erupted in the sixties.

**from *Conversations with Wilder*. Cameron Crowe. 1999**

**CC:** It's in several of the extended pieces written about you that you left the university to become a newspaperman.

**BW:** No. I never went. I had the right to go to the university, because I made the final exam in the gymnasium – it's called the *Matura* – and I passed it. And then came a scene with my father, and I just said no,

This is it until Tuesday night, August 27. If you have any great film thoughts over the summer, you can email us: [bruce@buffalo.edu](mailto:bruce@buffalo.edu) and [diane@acsu.buffalo.edu](mailto:diane@acsu.buffalo.edu). You'll find great movies in the Market Arcade's screening room #2 every Sunday at 1:00 p.m. in the MAFAC SUNDAY CLASSICS. For the rest of the schedule, go online to <http://sundayclassics.com>. And don't forget to visit <http://buffaloreport.com> for the latest notes on the area's political mischief...

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I would not go and become a lawyer I just said, “I'm gonna become a newspaperman.” And I did, through a lucky circumstance. I never went to the university. But people go by the old interviews. Which they made up. No, I never went. I got my foot in the door of a newspaper that came out at noon, the noontime newspaper [*Die Stunde*]. Then I started writing about football, and about movies. Little things.

**CC:** It's been theorized that you got part of your sense of humor from trying to make your mother laugh. What about your father?

**BW:** My father was a rather easy laugh. My father had kind of everyday humor. He, for instance, would construct a joke. He would come out of the bathroom and I would say to him, “Dad, you forgot to button your pants” – in those days we had buttons – and he looked at me and said, “I have not. There is a law that you don't know, my son, which says, ‘Where there is a corpse, the window must be open.’”

**CC:** If someone was to look over all your films, what would be the more personal ones? Is there one that stands out to you, the one that really felt closest to your heart?

**BW:** You know, I make a picture, and then I forget about it. I don't have a print, I don't have a cassette. I have a script at the office, in case I would like to look. Which is the best picture I have ever seen? My answer always is *Battleship Potemkin*, by Eisenstein [1925].

**CC:** How about a best picture of yours?

**BW:** I used to say “The next one.” [laughs.] I'm not doing any more.

**CC:** [Pressing] But I wondered if there was one.. You said earlier that if you had made *Schindler's List* it would have been very personal for you. Of the movies that you did make, which one feels the most complete? Which one feels the closest to who you are?

**BW:** The picture that has the fewest faults, obvious faults, would be *The Apartment*. But I like the end result in *Some Like It Hot*. It was a very successful picture. Or maybe, this and *Sunset Boulevard*. It really caught them unaware. Nobody expected a picture like it. And it's very difficult to make a picture in Hollywood about Hollywood. Because they really scrutinize you.