

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6

7 P.M. • HUMANITIES

QUADRANGLE

ALICE CINEMA

THE THIRD MAN

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



In 1999, a British Film Institute poll of over 1,000 people in British film and television named *THE THIRD MAN* as the greatest British film of all time. As Michael Wilmington has written, “*THE THIRD MAN* is one of those rare films that captured its audience immediately and was regarded as a classic almost from its first release. It marks one of those unusual conjunctions of script, director, subject, cast and setting—and, of course, music—in which everything works.” Lucy Sante has commented that it “is one of that handful of motion pictures...that have become archetypes—not merely a movie that would go on to influence myriad other movies but a construct that would lodge itself deep in the unconscious of an enormous number of people.”



THE THIRD MAN originated in early 1948 when Hungarian-British producer Alexander Korda hired novelist Graham Greene to write a screenplay centered on post-war Vienna. Visits to the city acquainted Greene with the extensive devastation, the uneasy “Four Powers” occupation amid an emerging Cold War, the flourishing black market, and two locations that became central: the great Prater wheel and the labyrinthine sewer system. Greene wrote a novella simultaneously with the script; despite some major differences, both are morally ambiguous mystery-thrillers about corruption, guilt, and betrayal. To direct, Korda chose Carol Reed, whose career had begun in 1935, and who had recently achieved renown for the film noir *ODD MAN OUT* (1947) and *THE FALLEN IDOL* (1948, written by Greene). Hollywood producer David O. Selznick contributed financing in exchange for the U.S. distribution rights and the casting of his contract stars Joseph Cotten (Holly) and Alida Valli (Anna). For Harry Lime, Selznick wanted Noël Coward and objected to Orson Welles, whom he considered “box office poison,” but Reed prevailed, which was most fortunate: Welles’s role is small, but he steals his scenes—and makes one of cinema’s grandest entrances. Welles also wrote Lime’s legendary cuckoo clock speech: a 22-second lesson in brilliant dialogue and charismatic performance.

Filming began on location in late October, 1948, almost around the clock to finish before snow season, with three units (day, night, and sewers) all supervised by Reed. When Welles saw the sewers, he said that he couldn’t work under such conditions. Reed used stand-ins (including Assistant Director Guy Hamilton, who would direct *GOLDFINGER* and three other James Bond films) for some shots and then, for shots in which Welles had to appear, built a partial replica of the sewers—along with some exteriors—in Shepperton Studios near London. Imaginary and real blend seamlessly, thanks to Reed’s and cinematographer Robert Krasker’s unifying noir style: chiaroscuro lighting, deep focus compositions, long shadows, and oblique angles, all giving the city, in Michael Wilmington’s words, “a patina of nightmare.”

Near the start of production, Reed visited a Vienna wine bistro, where an obscure zither player, Anton Karas, performed for tips. Reed determined to incorporate the zither within an orchestral score. But when he assembled the rough cut in 1949, he decided (against Selznick’s objections) to make the zither the score’s sole instrument. The zither—jaunty, jarring, poignant, at times evocative of Johann Strauss II—is so crucial that an image of its strings, playing what became known as “The Third Man Theme” or “The Harry Lime Theme,” appears under the opening credits. Karas’s recording became a big hit, selling 500,000 copies in 1949 and ranking #1 on the U.S. charts for 11 weeks in 1950.

THE THIRD MAN opened in London on September 1, 1949, to very enthusiastic reviews, and in that same month received the Grand Prix at Cannes. But for its U.S. release, on February 2, 1950, Selznick cut 11 out of the 104 minutes, deleting moments where Holly is inebriated or clumsy, and changing the opening narration from that of a jaded black marketeer (spoken by Carol Reed) to first-person by Holly. These revisions elevated Holly, whom Selznick had always wanted to be more heroic. The Yale Film Archive is proud to present the complete and more nuanced original version.

DIRECTED BY **CAROL REED**

SCREENPLAY BY **GRAHAM GREENE**

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **ROBERT KRASKER**

MUSIC BY **ANTON KARAS**

PRODUCED BY **ALEXANDER KORDA AND
DAVID O. SELZNICK**

(1949) 104 MINS.

STARRING **JOSEPH COTTEN, ALIDA VALLI,
ORSON WELLES, AND TREVOR HOWARD**

DID YOU KNOW: ONE OF VIENNA’S POPULAR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IS THE THIRD MAN MUSEUM, WHICH OPENED IN 2005. ITS 3,000 EXHIBITS INCLUDE ORIGINAL SCREENPLAYS, CAMERAS USED FOR THE PRODUCTION, KARAS’S ZITHER, AND LITTLE HANSEL’S CAP.

NEXT UP: THIS **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8**, THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE AND FILMS AT THE WHITNEY PRESENT A VERY SPECIAL EVENT. LEGENDARY DIRECTOR MICHAEL ROEMER AND ACTRESS BROOKE ADAMS JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL SCREENING OF **VENGEANCE IS MINE** (1984) AT 1PM, FOLLOWED BY A Q&A WITH CRITIC BILGE EBIRI. THEN, AT 4PM, WE SCREEN ROEMER’S COMIC MASTERPIECE **THE PLOT AGAINST HARRY**. BOTH FILMS IN NEW 35MM PRINTS!