

THE

Nick Zegarac's

Hollywood

ART

American Hitchcock

VOLUME II



HIT AFTER HIT from THE MOUNTAIN

American Hitchcock

Alfred Hitchcock at Paramount Pictures

“There is nothing to winning, really. That is, if you happen to be blessed with a keen eye, an agile mind, and no scruples whatsoever.”

-Alfred Hitchcock

Alfred Hitchcock’s early American period had yielded a very rich, though in retrospect, uneven spate of movie projects. Some, like **Rebecca** (1940), **Spellbound** (1945) and **Notorious** (1946) had been showcases for all that Hitchcock was capable of under the best of all possible conditions, while others like **Rope** (1947), **The Paradine Case** (1948), and **Under Capricorn** (1949) arguably illustrated that even Hitchcock had his failings and/or limitations - particularly when all the stars were not in perfect alignment.

There is no crime in criticizing Hitchcock for achieving less than perfection. Although his tenure is undeniably one – if not, in fact, *the* – prime example of the Hollywood director as auteur, and certainly few among his contemporaries were as consistent in their output, Hitchcock did have his flops to suffer. Yet, even these were not without at least some artistic merit and, in hindsight gave rise to an extraordinary period – a veritable golden age – producing a string of impeccably crafted megahits beginning in 1953 with a move from Warner Bros. to Paramount Pictures; inaugurated by the release of **Rear Window** (1954). In many ways, **Rear Window** is Hitchcock’s testament picture – an exemplar of his considerable, multifaceted skills and reoccurring themes (sexual frustration, fetishism with food, voyeurism et al) telescopically refined and given their full flourish within a singular project.

Rear Window missed out on being the first of Hitchcock’s movies to be shot in VistaVision; an 8-perf camera negative delivering – as Paramount had advertised – true ‘*motion picture high fidelity*.’ VistaVision would add another layer of depth and clarity to the master’s work. While many of Hitchcock’s contemporaries mildly lamented having to rethink their compositions for the wider aspect ratio (Vincente Minnelli, as example, is famously credited with saying that Cinemascope was only good for shooting “*funeral processions and snakes*”) and a good many foundered during the infancy of the widescreen revolution, producing very static motion pictures, Hitchcock’s keen eye for detail and his meticulous pre-planning seems to have remained unimpeded in transitioning over to the wider format. In fact, his movies only seem to



-----> VISTAVISION

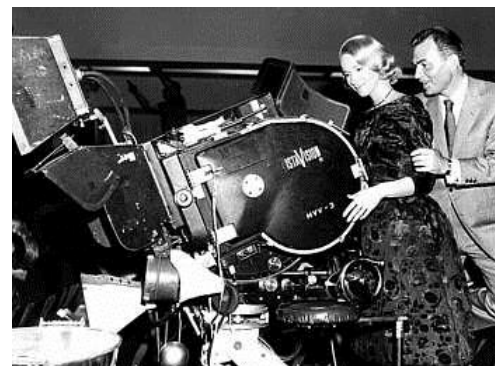
... Is a new system for producing and exhibiting motion pictures which is compatible and workable with any existing standard projection equipment.

-----> VISTAVISION

... Will give to every theatre in the world the finest possible quality picture on the largest possible screen at the lowest possible cost.

-----> VISTAVISION

... Is a technique of optical reduction from a large negative image to the standard release print image. It is this feature that reduces grain, eliminates fuzziness and gains bigger, brighter and better motion pictures.



(Above): early advertising for VistaVision trumpeted its state of the art clarity while underplaying the fact that in its initial form the process could not compete with Cinemascope's four discrete channels of stereophonic sound. VistaVision did offer Perspecta sound – a faux stereo effect – and even ventured into true 6 track stereo for a short featurette; *The Story of A Patriot* (1957). Ultimately, VistaVision in its purest form proved too expensive for most theaters to commit to and Paramount was forced to create reduction prints on standard 35mm film stock to accommodate projectors already in existence. The results were still considerably better than Cinemascope's anamorphic lens, which tended to warp vertical objects near the edges of the frame, but regrettably the 35mm conversion prints in no way replicated Paramount's claim of 'motion picture high fidelity'. John R. Bishop (above the VistaVision logo) is seen posing with a redesigned Mitchell 'elephant ear' VistaVision camera; one of the quietest cameras ever built up until that time. Hitchcock is seen in this publicity still, used to promote the VistaVision process. But this is not the VistaVision camera Hitchcock ultimately used to photograph his movies; rather a very early model, the large mass behind his head concealing Paramount's homemade 'Lazy 8' camera lying on its side with film that ran horizontally rather than vertically past its aperture, exposing nearly twice as much camera negative as conventional 35mm film.

(Above middle): the VistaVision trademark that preceded almost all Paramount movies shot in the process. Paramount was rather territorial about licensing VistaVision to rival studios, although it did allow MGM to shoot two movies in the format; Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) and Sol Siegel's *High Society* (1956). The middle 'V' would appear on the screen first, the other letters expanding to both the right and the left of center, followed by the words 'motion picture', then, 'high-fidelity' stamped out beneath the logo. (Bottom middle): Hitchcock prepares to shoot Doris Day's close up in VistaVision for *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956). Despite the fact that the camera was very quiet, dialogue scenes necessitated placing it in a 'blimp' to muffle its sound. (Right): Grace Kelly on the set of *To Catch A Thief* (1955) shares a moment with Bing Crosby. No stranger to VistaVision, Crosby had actually helped debut the process for Paramount's *White Christmas* (1954) and would appear in two more VistaVision musicals; *Anything Goes* (1956) and the aforementioned *High Society*. James Mason and Eva Marie Saint pose with one of Paramount's Technicolor VistaVision cameras in between takes on MGM's *North By Northwest* (1959). The other great advantage VistaVision had over Cinemascope was that it photographed using superior Technicolor dye transfers, yielding an extraordinary richness of color that Cinemascope's muddier mono-pack color by DeLuxe process quite simply could not compete.

The stature that Hitchcock brought to VistaVision and vice versa cannot be overstated. Arguably, Hitchcock's greatest movies were all photographed using this process. Long after Paramount retired VistaVision, Hitchcock elected to shoot his subsequent movies in its' 1:85.1 aspect ratio; albeit with equipment manufactured by Panavision for *Frenzy* (1972) and *Family Plot* (1976). Interestingly, when VistaVision was being developed Paramount announced that its aspect ratio would be 1:66.1, not 1:85.1.



"You asked for something dramatically different - you got it!"
- L.B. Jeffries (Rear Window)

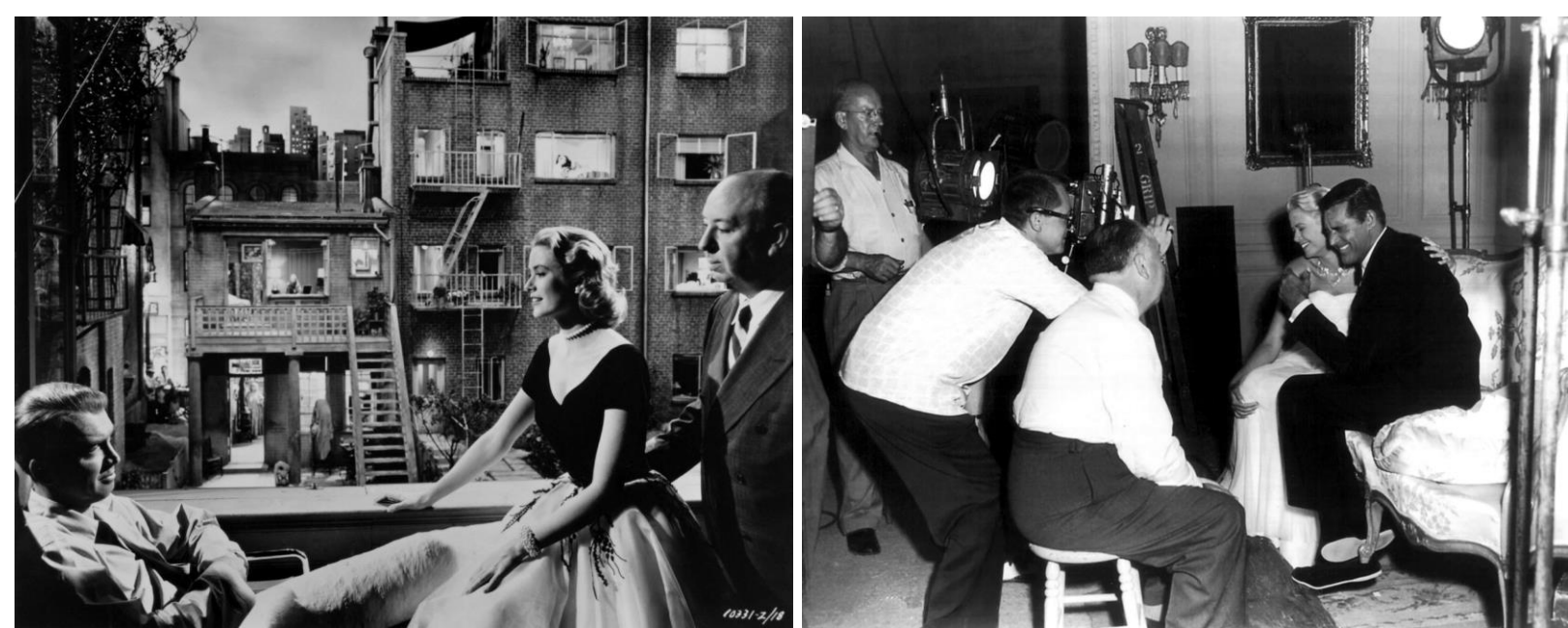


(Previous and this page): **Rear Window** (1954) marked a turning point in Hitchcock's American career; the beginning of an unprecedented streak of mega hits over at Paramount. **Rear Window** missed Paramount's inauguration of VistaVision by mere months and was shot flat and then matted and cropped into a 1:66.1 aspect ratio during projection. Character actress Thelma Ritter played L.B. Jeffries (James Stewart) sharp-shooting physical therapist, Stella. "I'm not an educated woman, Mr. Jeffries," she tells him early on, "But when two people see one another, like one another...they ought'a come together - whom! - like a couple a' taxis on Broadway." When Jeffries still resists her encouragement to pursue Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly), instead asking Stella to make him a sandwich, she adds, "Yes I will. And I'll spread a little common sense on the bread." John Michael Hayes' screenplay gives virtually all of **Rear Window's** comedic moments to Ritter, an actress who specialized in playing street-savvy and sassy/occasionally harried middle-aged matrons; hardly attractive, but loveable just the same and quite often with their hearts in the right place.

Rear Window also featured Wendell Corey as police Det. Lt. Thomas J. Doyle and Jeffries' good friend. "That's a secret private world you're looking into out there," he forewarns after being confronted by his friend's suspicions, "People do a lot of things in private they couldn't possibly explain in public." Doyle will, of course, come to change his mind, particularly after Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr) pushes Jeffries from his second story window into the courtyard below. The best of Hitchcock's American thrillers begin on a light romantic strain, in this case with housebound Jeffries being relentless pursued by fashion model, Lisa Fremont. Theirs, however, is a relationship arguably on the fast track to nowhere at the start of the movie; she unable to comprehend his natural aversion to marriage; he believing that the perfect mate for him is a woman farther removed from the glacial perfection of his current prospect; someone a little more plain, a bit more unencumbered by a slavish desire to fit into the world of high society. Lisa is every man's dream, curiously unbalancing Jeffries' disquieting rejection of her. At one point, Jeffries seems to be rid of Lisa. But as she storms off he inquiries, "But when will I see you again?" to which she sulks, "Oh not for a long time...at least not until tomorrow night!"

Lisa changes her mind, however, and Jeffries - more gradually - his opinion of what makes her tick, particularly after she becomes his 'gal Friday' during his investigation of Thorwald; slipping threatening letters under Lars' front door, digging up a flower bed in the courtyard and shimmying up the fire escape to crawl into an open window inside the Thorwald's apartment; almost being murdered by Lars for her efforts. The sheer chutzpah of Lisa's daredevil approach to the investigation she has come to regard as 'theirs' rather than 'his alone' suddenly excites Jeffries in ways he has thus far not been able to get quite so stimulated over.

In the penultimate moment of **Rear Window** an investigating officer alerts Doyle to a gruesome discovery inside a hat box in Thorwald's bedroom closet. Asked by Doyle if she would like to have a peak at what's inside, Stella curtly replies, "I don't want any part of her," before suddenly realize just how tellingly morose her comment is. Jeffries, now ailing with two broken legs lies asleep in his apartment, Lisa quietly nursing him back to health, but not about to surrender her fascination with the world of high fashion. **Rear Window** is as much about the fundamentally flawed relationship between a commitment-shy male being pursued by the ever-worldly and enterprising female as it is a tale of murder. Kelly and Stewart only did this one movie together, a genuine pity because their on-screen chemistry crackles with excitement.



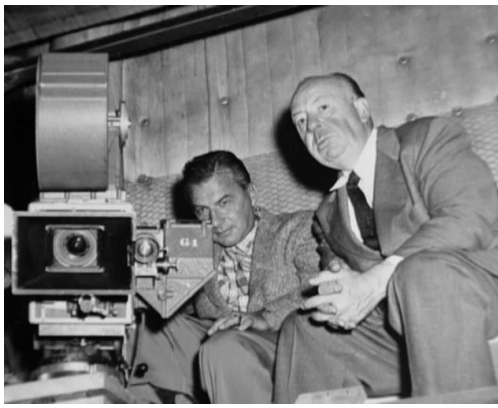
(Above): Hitchcock at work. The master of suspense with two of his favorite leading men: James Stewart (pictured left) and Cary Grant (right), and undeniably his preferred 'cool blonde' – Grace Kelly. Kelly and Grant each appeared in three movies for Hitchcock, Stewart in four. They are seen here on the sets of **Rear Window** (left) and **To Catch A Thief** (1955), the latter Hitchcock's foray into VistaVision. Paramount was particularly keen on having **To Catch A Thief** shot in their patented widescreen process to take advantage of the lush Monte Carlo and Riviera landscapes.

have benefited, perhaps because VistaVision exponentially grew the standard academy ratio of 1:33.1 on all sides, as opposed to Cinemascope, that merely stretched the image to both the left and right of center in a rather feeble early attempt to replicate the curved aperture of Cinerama with varying degrees of success. Cinemascope's undeniably advantage was its four track magnetic stereo soundtrack. The unusually large width of VistaVision's camera negative coupled with its horizontal exposure running through the camera (as opposed to the conventional vertical) only allowed for mono sound.

Rear Window marked a reunion of sorts; bringing Hitchcock together with his favorite 'cool blonde' Grace Kelly and 'every man' James Stewart whom Hitch' had already collaborated with on **Rope** (1948). While **Rope** had not been an ideal experience for either director or star, **Rear Window** would illustrate the symbiotic harmony that had grown between both men in the interim. This would ultimately continue on two more collaborative efforts (1956's **The Man Who Knew Too Much**, and 1958's **Vertigo**) later in the decade. By 1954 Hitchcock had become somewhat entrenched in his preferences for actors and crew, choosing to work with the same people over and over again and thus building up a level of consistency across his repertoire over time. In the 1950s it was still possible to have a stock company at one's disposal, the last gasp of the studio system still well ensconced, though dwindling as studio contracts were increasingly discarded as they came up for renewal. Yet even under the auspices of the studio system Hitchcock's preference for stability – nee, his loyalty to those whom he felt were equally as loyal to him - was rather extreme. As example, when Hitchcock moved from Selznick to Warner Bros. he took his private secretary with him. She would continue in Hitchcock's employ until the very end of his career.

Rear Window is very loosely based on *'It Had to Be Murder'* - a novella by Cornell Woolrich written under the non de plume of William Irish. In casting his screenwriter, Hitchcock chose to work with John Michael Hayes, instructing Hayes to consider the infamous real-life case of murder involving Dr. Hawley Harvey Crippen; a physician who had conspired with his secretary to kill his wife, then attempted a daring Atlantic crossing escape by disguising his mistress as a sailor to avoid prosecution for the crime in England. The good doctor was apprehended, however, when the captain of the vessel he was sailing on noted that Crippen was incredibly chummy with the sailor.

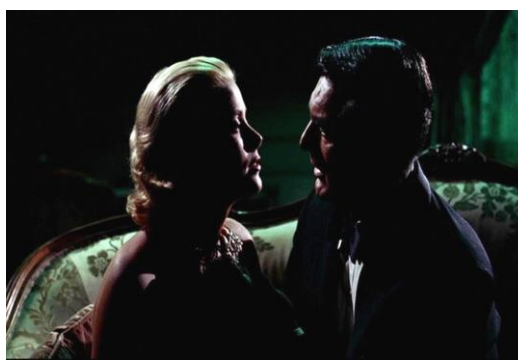
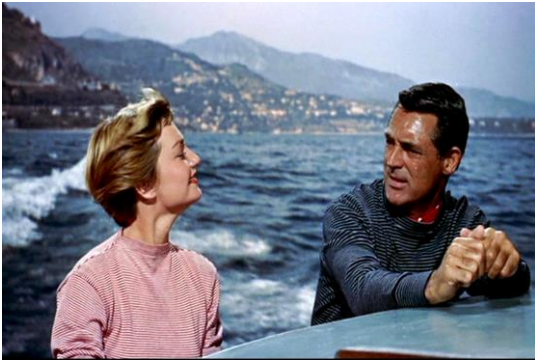
In **Rear Window** James Stewart is L.B Jeffries, a somewhat sexually repressed photo journalist who is laid up with a leg he has broken while on one of his assignments. To pass the time and divert his own mind from his personal failings – chiefly, his aversion to settling down with near perfect fashion model/girlfriend, Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly), Jeffries spies on his neighbors: the voluptuous 'ballet' dancer, Miss Torso (Georgine Darcy), an incurable middle-aged romantic whom Jeffries



(Above): creating a slick and stylish masterpiece. **To Catch A Thief** (1955) is usually regarded as a 'light' Hitchcock thriller, perhaps because its screenplay by John Michael Hayes (seen with Hitchcock, top middle) diverts from the axiom of '*set a thief to catch a thief*' to focus on the seduction of a reformed jewel thief, John Robie (Cary Grant) by American socialite, Francie Stevens (Grace Kelly). The film's sublime amalgam of gorgeous stars enveloped by even more sumptuous surroundings never diffuses the taut aspects of Hitchcock's visual sense of storytelling. We are as engrossed by the movie's subplot – will Kelly's haughty young miss land herself a suave stud? – as we remain captivated by the greater mystery at hand: exactly who is responsible for a rash outbreak of clever heists along the glittering French Riviera? (Top left): cinematographer Robert Burks prepares a studio-bound process shot with Hitchcock at his side. Hitchcock rarely looked through the viewfinder of a camera; having meticulously storyboarded his sequences and engaged in elaborate discussions about the scene to be photographed beforehand. Hitchcock's shoot on **To Catch A Thief** was divided between France and Paramount soundstages. To his credit, and that of production designers Sam Comer and Arthur Krams, we never know which we are looking at on the screen. (Bottom right): Hitchcock looks particularly pleased as principle cast assemble for drinks to mark the beginning of production. Next to Hitchcock are John Williams, Charles Vanel, Grace Kelly, Cary Grant and Brigitte Auber. Vanel's dialogue had to be dubbed by another actor in postproduction because his English was inaudible. If **To Catch A Thief** contains any flaw, then it is this dubbing effort – horrendous in spots with lips not matching to the words issuing from them.

has nicknamed, Miss Lonely Heart (Judith Evelyn), a frustrated composer (Ross Bagdasarian), and, frisky newlyweds (Rand Harper, Havis Davenport). However, Jeffries' attentions soon shift to the spurious comings and goings of one Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr) after Thorwald's wife, Anna (Irene Winston) suddenly vanishes from their apartment in the middle of the night without a trace. At first both Lisa and Jeffries' physical therapist; straight shooter Stella (Thelma Ritter) believe that cabin fever has set in. But then there are the unexplainable bits of business observed through Jeffries' rear window apartment; the midnight rendezvous and Thorwald's sudden desire to pack up Anna's belongings and move them out of the apartment, and finally, the murder of a harmless little dog belonging to one of the other neighbors living in the same complex. These arouse Jeffries' interest in ways that Lisa cannot: that is, until she too becomes involved in his amateur sleuthing and nearly gets herself killed – and later, incarcerated – for her efforts.

The level of economy Hitchcock achieves by confining his action to a single set is not only comparable to similar experiments in **Lifeboat** (1944), **Rope** (1948) and **Dial M for Murder** (1954) but, in **Rear Window's** case achieves a level of visual sophistication bordering on genius. Every pivotal moment takes place from roughly the same limited vantage of L.B. Jeffries' rear window. Yet the action never seems redundant or straining for some new revelation. Part of the reason for this perceivable freshness is Hitchcock's clever maneuvering of his camera within an exceptionally confined space. Far from stifling his camera setups, this limited vantage helps to telescope the audience's perspective, running a parallel to the film's central protagonist. Only once does Hitchcock afford the audience an advantage in a sequence occurring late at night. Jeffries has nodded off to sleep, thus missing the exit of Thorwald and his unidentified mistress, both leaving his apartment together.



"Why did I take up stealing? To live better, to own things I couldn't afford, to acquire this good taste that you now enjoy and which I should be very reluctant to give up."

- John Robie (To Catch A Thief)



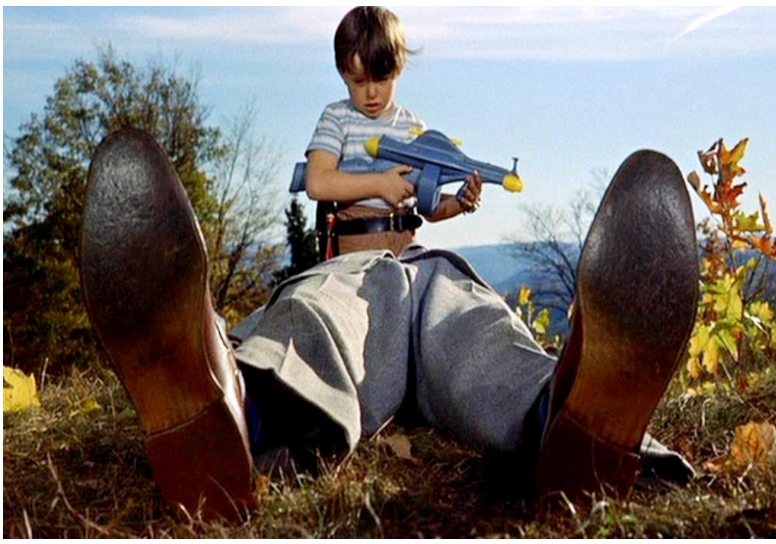
(Previous and above): scenes from a heist. **To Catch A Thief (1955)** begins with a sly premise – what do you get the man who can steal anything? Francie Stevens (Grace Kelly) has set her cap for John Robie (Cary Grant); a retired cat burglar suspected in a new string of thefts along the French Riviera. Robie is an elusive bachelor, one already being pursued by Danielle Fussard (Brigitte Auber) the daughter of a wine steward who happens to be an old thief himself, currently working in a fashionable restaurant and hotel run by Bertani (Charles Vanel). Danielle tempts Robie with an impromptu escape to South America. “*People say it’s a virgin country,*” she tells him. Robie is unconvinced. But is he only interested in Francie to get closer to her mother, Jessie’s (Jessie Royce-Landis) jewels? Generally, Hitchcock’s impressions of middle-aged women are not flattering. But Royce-Landis is one of Hitchcock’s beloved daft matrons, slightly prone to excess and obvious in her desires. Four years later Royce-Landis would play mother again – this time to Cary Grant’s harried ad man, Roger O. Thornhill in **North By Northwest** (1959).

Insurance investigator, H.H. Hughston (John Williams) has agreed to help Robie set a trap for the real cat burglar. Hitchcock shot the night sequences using a green filter instead of the conventional blue; an artistic decision he later regretted, though one that gives the cover of nightfall and eerie sense of unease. The finale to **To Catch A Thief** is an eye-popping showstopper; a lavish costume ball given at the Sanford estate where Robie hopes to entice and apprehend the real cat burglar who is sure to come out for the heist of the century. Robie nabs Danielle – thus, clearing his name before rushing off as quickly as he can back to his hillside retreat. Francie hurries to his side, gaining a confession of Robie’s true feelings toward her before declaring “*So this is where you live...oh, mother will love it up here!*”

Jeffries apartment, courtyard and facing apartment facades were all built as one gigantic three-sided indoor set inside Paramount’s Stage 11; removing the false floor at ground level to create a greater height that allowed for total control of lighting and sound. In fact, the set was lit for four distinct hours of the day; early morning, early afternoon, sunset/twilight time, and finally midnight. Simply by flicking a single switch Hitchcock could effortlessly segue from one hour to the next. Hitchcock was also circumspect in his instructions to composer Franz Waxman for his underscoring of the film. Rather than an actual score, Waxman was instructed to find and recycle musical cues already in existence in Paramount’s sound library.

As such **Rear Window** contains only two original pieces of music – Waxman’s jazzy riff for the main title and the song ‘Lisa’ – presumed to have been written by a struggling composer living in the artist’s loft adjacent Jeffries’ apartment. The song, in various incarnations, is frequently interpolated throughout the story to heighten the sexual friction between Jeffries and Lisa. For the rest, Waxman chose from Paramount’s vast assortment of orchestral goodies, including an old Bing Crosby pop song once sung to Dorothy Lamour – *To See You Is To Love You* – heard in **Rear Window** as played on the radio inside Miss Lonely-Heart’s apartment. Hitchcock captured the ambiance of this cavernous soundstage, its reverb and echo lending verisimilitude to the artifice of this recreated Greenwich Village neighborhood set.

Hitchcock’s next film for Paramount, **To Catch a Thief** (1955) proved a bittersweet occasion. It was to be his last film with his favorite ‘cool’ blonde’, Grace Kelly who had already become engaged to Prince Rainier of Monaco. Kelly and Rainier were frequent house guests of the Hitchcock’s; a friendship that would continue for years after Grace became Her Royal Highness. Kelly’s retirement from the screen at the height of her natural beauty and peek of her acting prowess was indeed a loss to movie goers and more particularly to Hitchcock who struggled with infrequent success to find ‘a Grace Kelly type’ to



(Above): **The Trouble With Harry** (1955) as far as Hitchcock was concerned was that its characters never came across as anything better than a collection of congenial misfits. Much of the story plays very much like screwball comedy and, in retrospect, harks – at least in sentiment - all the way back to Hitchcock’s **Mr. and Mrs. Smith** (1941): Hitchcock’s only absolute foray into romantic/comedy. In retrospect, **The Trouble With Harry** is attempting to straddle too great a chasm between being a light-hearted romantic romp and a minor ‘who done it?’ In the end, it satisfies neither appetite, becoming a baroque rather than brooding cinema masterpiece. (Large insert): Jerry Mathers, as precocious Arnie Rogers discovers Harry on a hillside in Vermont. Mildred Natwick and Edmund Gwenn share a moment in the forest. Given that the two are standing over Harry’s remains, her Ivy Gravely is more concerned with inviting his Capt. Wiles over for a romantic luncheon. Artist Sam (John Forsythe) challenges shop keep, Mrs. Wiggs (Mildred Dunnock) to give him a line of credit. Sam’s abstract finger paintings and sketches are woefully juvenile, but do eventually attract the interests of a wealthy patron – Hitchcock’s own aversion to ‘modern art’ and the people who embrace it giving the audience a minor jab of wicked pleasure. (Bottom, second from left): Sheriff Wiggs (Royal Dano) is perplexed by the mystery as he telephones State authorities. (Bottom right): the coconspirators huddle in the forest, awaiting the authority’s inevitable ‘discovery’ of Harry’s remains.

populate his subsequent thrillers. There is evidence to suggest that Kelly longed to return to the movies as early as 1959. Hitchcock had expressly bought **Marnie** for her to star in and had, in fact, planned to launch into its preproduction immediately following the release of **Psycho** (1960). Kelly, who had superficially agreed to do the project, later declined it, citing ‘royal commitments’ as the reason. Her rejection both infuriated and wounded Hitchcock immensely. Commencing his shoot on **To Catch A Thief** in the south of France, Hitchcock resented the studio’s insistence on extensive location work to take full advantage of VistaVision’s claim in ‘motion picture high fidelity’. Arguably, only Hitchcock would have considered the moneyed decadence of Monaco more of a deterrent rather than a plus.

To Hitchcock’s credit, the matching of locations in France with photographic work done back on soundstages in Hollywood was seamless to the naked eye. John Michael Hayes began his lucrative association with Hitchcock on **To Catch A Thief**; his script amply endowed with plenty of smart repartee and engaging situations to divert attention away from the fact that the film’s focal point is not the apprehension of a jewel thief – as the title suggested - but rather the cleverness with which Grace Kelly’s sultry protagonist will snare herself an attractive, though decidedly confirmed middle-aged bachelor.

To Catch a Thief begins with a round of perilous jewel robberies inside posh hotel suites. The police immediately suspect John Robie (Cary Grant); a one-time jewel thief who fought for the resistance during the war and was pardoned for his earlier crimes. Danielle (Brigitte Auber), the daughter of Foussard (Jean Martinelli) one of Robie’s former accomplices, but currently reduced to menial tasks as a peg-legged wine steward, suggests that John has come out of retirement. This, we later learn is a lie, as Danielle is in fact the real cat burglar, working for her father and Bertani (Charles Vanel); the restaurateur.



(Above): Hitchcock consults independently with co-stars Doris Day and James Stewart on the set of his remake of **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1956). Hitchcock had, for some time, desired to redo his own 1934 British classic, updating its premise and changing its local from the original's alpine-themed Switzerland backdrop to heat-exhaustive Marrakesh. The exotic Middle-Eastern locale presented another challenge for Hitchcock who was informed by his production manager Herbert Colman that his shooting schedule was coming dangerously close to the Muslim holiday of Ramadan during which he would not be allowed to work. Hitchcock would claim that his 1934 movie was made by an amateur, the '56 remake by a seasoned pro. Yet, in reviewing both movies today one can see artistic merit in each befitting Hitchcock's reputation as the undisputed master of suspense. Hitchcock was challenged by Paramount to cast Doris Day in the remake. Day was at the top of her game in 1956, but her forte had been musicals. Worse, at least for Hitchcock, he had been ordered to find a moment in the movie to insert a song for Day to sing. The song, *Que Sera Sera* eventually plays a pivotal role in the film. But the version sung by Day on the million copy best seller Decca recording is never featured in the actual movie – arguably the first tie-in of a tune not indigenous to an actual film score.

From here the story shifts its focus to headstrong wealthy girl-about-town Francie Stevens (Grace Kelly) and her sustained infatuation with Robie. Francie's mother, Jessie (Jessie Royce Landis) is their flirtatious and enterprising matchmaker. With one eye on John, Jessie goads her daughter into a relationship that Francie at first quietly resists, but then decides to pursue, primarily for the fun of exposing what she perceives are Robie's criminal activities to the police. This game of cat and mouse cuts a little bit too close to home, however, during the famed 'fireworks' sequence in the film. Lured to Francie's hotel suite for the show, Robie indulges her flirtations, culminating with his assessment that the jewels Francie is wearing are imitations. "Well, I'm not," she coos back, leading to the consummation of their affair. Hours later Francie barges into Robie's bedroom, bitter and accusing him of having stolen Jessie's jewels.

Robie denies Francie's accusations and decides to set a trap on a subsequent evening for the real cat burglar. The trap is double-baited however and Robie is assaulted, managing his escape but killing Danielle's father in the process. Robie attends Foussard's funeral the next day where Danielle accosts him, shouting 'murderer!' He slaps her face, a seemingly heartless gesture, before being confronted by Francie who confesses her love for him. With Francie, Hughston and Jessie's help Robie sets another trap for the real burglar; convinced that Foussard could not have committed the thefts with his peg-leg. After a lavish costume gala Robie exposes Danielle to be real thief, thus clearing his own name.

Critics of the day were quick to regard **To Catch A Thief** as lightweight, though nevertheless pleasurable entertainment. In truth, the film represents Hitchcock at his most elegant and edgy, with sublime eroticism permeating every frame, but with a decidedly delicious twist. The focus of John Michael Hayes' screenplay is undeniably more on the romance than the suspense and it is interesting to note that in subsequent movies Hitchcock would choose more readily to divorce himself from romance altogether; particularly after the failure of **Vertigo** (1958) – a movie all about obsessive love.

The most readily recalled sequence from **To Catch A Thief** today is Robie's seduction by Francie while fireworks explode outside her hotel window facing the Riviera. Taunting and testing Robie's desire to possess either her or her diamond necklace, Robie resists Francie's advances until the penultimate 'lean' into her couch, signifying the consummation of their affair. This 'lean' was cause for the censors to demand of Hitchcock that he eliminate the sequence entirely, or at the very least severely prune it so as not to obviously suggest the beginnings of a sexual encounter. Hitchcock refused. The censors



(Above): Hitchcock's initial apprehensions over the casting of Doris Day in **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1956) were subverted when Day revealed herself to be a splendid actress. In one of the film's best remembered moments James Stewart's Dr. McKenna reveals to his wife, Jo (Day) that their son, Hank (Christopher Olsen) has been abducted. However, before this revelation the good doctor prescribes a strong sedative to ease her into this moment of shock and disbelief. Day's handling of the scene, emoting equal portions of terror, anxiety, sadness and confusion drew spontaneous applause from the crew and earned Day, Hitchcock's respect. By all accounts the shoot was a pleasant one, the costars getting on famously and everyone enjoying each other's company and contributions on the movie. In later years Hitchcock regretted that this was his only film with Day, citing her as "a very fine actress indeed." Nevertheless, Hitchcock's aversion toward hiring popular singers, simply because of their popularity as singer, was well placed when he reluctantly cast Julie Andrews in **Torn Curtain** (1966) – then lived to regret his decision and others made on the set of its disastrous undertaking.

next made their position known to Paramount's front offices; explicitly outlining where to cut the sequence so that no 'lean' was implied. Paramount quietly took the censor's concerns under advisement then, backed Hitchcock's artistry and released the film with the sequence virtually intact.

Given the flourish of success Hitchcock had sustained during the early fifties within the realm of suspense-laden melodrama his next choice of project **The Trouble With Harry** (1955) seems a curious venture. John Michael Hayes' screenplay is based on a novel by Jack Trevor Story – a decidedly black comedy about a corpse that refuses to stay buried; a similarly themed premise featured in the French new wave spine-tingler, **Diabolique** (1955). However, unlike **Diabolique** the premise for the reappearing body in **The Trouble With Harry** is played strictly for laughs. The trouble with Harry is that he is dead – lying in the pastoral woods of Vermont on a crisp fall afternoon and shortly thereafter encountered by nearly every small town coot within twenty miles, each attempting to bury and then dig up, then re-bury Harry's slowly decomposing remains somewhere in the forest to conceal the suspected crime from the rather humorless, Deputy Sheriff Calvin Wiggs (Royal Dano).

The irony, in retrospect, is derived from the fact that none of the town's folk who suspect they have killed Harry actually has. Unable to recognize each other's innocence, everyone engages in the inevitable cover up. Shirley MacLaine is top cast as Jennifer Rogers, Harry's estranged wife, hardly upset to be led to her late husband's remains by her son, Arnie Rogers (Jerry Mathers) who is the first to discover Harry with his toy cap gun in hand. Capt. Albert Wiles (Edmund Gwenn), out rabbit hunting, suspects he has killed Harry with a stray bullet from his rifle. Amateur criminologist Miss Ivy Gravely (Mildred Natwick) thinks she has accidentally killed Harry by striking him in the head with her boot, while Jenny later confesses to hitting Harry with a bottle and thus believes that she is the murderess. Enter free-spirited artist Sam Marlowe (John Forsythe) who is intrigued, although not terribly upset by the prospect of having a human cadaver stored in Jennifer's bathtub. In fact, as the story plays out we quickly realize that Harry is not its focus of it at all, but rather the gradual evolution of two quirky romances – the first between Jenny and Sam, the second between Ivy and Albert.

Hitchcock's aversion to location shooting was justified on **The Trouble With Harry** when an unexpected frost and early winter storm midway through production wrecked the idyllic fall foliage exquisitely photographed by cinematographer, Robert Burks. Unable to continue in Vermont Hitchcock and company packed up and returned to Paramount with bags and bags of downed leaves collected. These were then meticulously glued onto fake trees inside a recreation of the Vermont location inside a Paramount soundstage. Overall, the illusion is rather seamlessly blended, but in the end, **The Trouble With Harry** was not particularly well received by either the critics or audiences; the characters revealing themselves to be very odd rather than delightfully quirky; their snooping and anxieties far too neurotic to be accepted as merely loveable eccentricities. Given the overall repression of any and all aberrations during the Eisenhower era of middle-class American





(Previous and this page): scenes from a conspiracy. Retired London stage sensation, Jo (Doris Day), her husband, Dr. McKenna (James Stewart) and son, Hank (Christopher Olsen) meet a stranger, Louis Bernard (Daniel Gélin) aboard a tour bus while on holiday in Marrakech. From the beginning Jo suspects Bernard of finagling a deliberate invitation into their midst, a suspicion later confirmed when Bernard, masquerading as an Arab, is mortally stabbed in the streets and confides to Dr. McKenna that an elder statesman is to be murdered in London. The plot thickens when the McKenna's seemingly congenial travelling companions, Lucy (Brenda de Banzie) and Edward Drayton (Bernard Miles) kidnap Hank and vanish without a trace in order to keep the McKenna's from revealing Bernard's dying last words to the authorities. Returning to London without their son, the McKennas are repeatedly threatened by the assassin, Rien (Reggie Nalder) to keep their mouths shut. After misdirection to a local taxidermist's shop, the McKennas arrive at Ambrose Chapel where Drayton is masquerading as a cleric while he, Lucy and Rien plot the assassination of the British Ambassador (Mogens Wieth) at a concert being given at Royal Albert Hall. Interestingly, for this penultimate showdown Doris Day wears a gray suit not unlike the ensemble later designed by Edith Head and worn by Kim Novak in *Vertigo* (1958). Gray is not a blonde's color per say, rather at odds with both Day and Novak's fair complexions. When asked years later about his decision to attire both women in gray, Hitchcock simply shrugged his shoulders, claiming it was meant to be 'unsettling'.

As in Hitchcock's 1934 original the set piece in the remake is the showdown between Rien and Dr. McKenna during the concert. Although longtime Hitchcock collaborator, composer Bernard Herrmann was assigned the task of writing the underscore for the rest of the movie, the Royal Albert Hall sequence features the Storm Cloud Cantata – originally composed by Arthur Benjamin. Herrmann and Hitchcock bickered over this inclusion, Herrmann suggesting to Hitchcock that he could write something 'better.' Hitchcock won the argument. Ironically, as compensation Herrmann was featured in the film as the conductor of the symphonic and choral ensemble, his name also prominently featured on the Royal Albert Hall marquee Jo passes on her way into the theater. During the struggle Rien is tossed over the balcony to his death, the ambassador's life is spared, and the McKennas are reunited with Hank. When *The Man Who Knew Too Much* proved to be a resounding smash hit Hitchcock sent a letter of thanks to Herrmann for his contributions on the film, stating simply, "To Bernard Herrmann...the man who knows so much."

morality circa the 1950s; a blind-sighted and very sanitized utopia steeped in arbitrary faux goodness and light, the characters' in the film and their rather complacent acceptance of both sex and death as mere cogs in the natural lifecycle comes across as neither queer, nor shocking nor overtly perverse as Hitchcock might have hoped. They are merely a collection of very strange ducks all lined up in a row, playing out a very peculiar pantomime indeed.

Hitchcock returned to form with an anomaly in his American tenure; a remake of his own *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), a thriller Hitch' chose to relocate to Marrakech. The 1934 original had been set in Europe. Regardless of this change in locale, the narrative structure of the original was faithfully retained in the revised screenplay by John Michael Hayes. Years later, Hitchcock would muse that his original had been made by an amateur while the remake was crafted by a master. In the remake medical doctor, Ben McKenna (James Stewart) his wife, Jo (Doris Day) and their son Hank (Christopher Olsen) are on holiday in Marrakech where Ben is attending a conference. Jo is a retired star of the London stage and easily recognizable to her fans.

While at a restaurant the McKennas are introduced to Lucy and Edward Drayton (Brenda de Banzie and Bernard Miles) – presumably fans of Jo. The McKennas also meet mysterious Frenchman, Louis Bernard (Daniel Gelin) who offers to act as their cultural liaise. However, when Bernard, disguised as an Arab, is stabbed before Jo and Ben's eyes in the marketplace he manages to confide an ominous secret to Ben before dying; that a high ranking political official is to be assassinated somewhere in London, England. The plot thickens after Ben learns that the Draytons have kidnapped Hank and are holding him hostage to buy his silence until the assassination can take place.

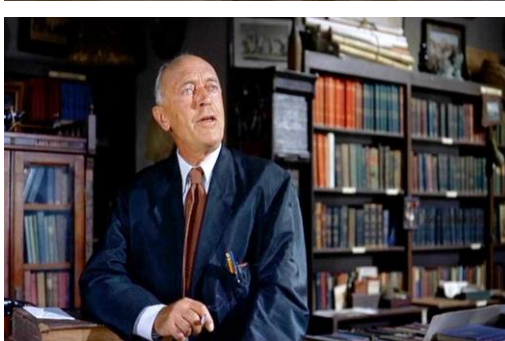


(Above): **The Wrong Man** (1956) is a curious misstep in that it ironically foreshadows the economic approach to story-telling Hitchcock would later employ on the infinitely more successful **Psycho** (1960). **The Wrong Man** is an uneasy amalgam of the police procedural detective story, the film noir crime story, and the romantic melodrama; Maxwell Anderson's screenplay occasionally too prosaic and generally impeding Hitchcock's ability to tell the narrative in pure visual terms. The film co-stars Henry Fonda and Vera Miles. After Grace Kelly's departure from the movies Hitchcock briefly entertained the notion that Miles would become his next iconic 'cool blonde'. In **The Wrong Man** she is a doting and somewhat dowdy housewife requiring medical attention. Hitchcock had wanted to co-star Miles in his next project, **Vertigo** (1958) and had even engaged Paramount's resident costume designer, Edith Head to begin creating the wardrobe for his new heroine. Regrettably, Miles became pregnant in the interim, forcing Hitchcock to recast the role with Kim Novak. It is rumored that Hitchcock never forgave Miles her ill-timing. Although she would return in another Hitchcock classic, **Psycho** (1960), playing a supporting role as Janet Leigh's sleuthing sister, Vera Miles never quite materialized as the next 'cool blonde' of Hitchcock's design.

Hitchcock reportedly did not want to work with Doris Day – assuming that her talents lay in the delivery of a song rather than solid acting. However, Day proved her worth to Hitchcock as a serious actress. Still, to appease her fans Hitchcock was reluctantly 'encouraged' include a song in the film. That song – *Que Sera Sera* became the number one best-selling single in the country and eventually took home the Oscar, despite the fact that the version infrequently interpolated in the film is not the one recorded for Decca.

Hitchcock was to indulge in a bit of makeup trickery for the scene where the McKennas are approached by the mortally wounded Louis Bernard in the market square. Hitchcock had wanted the actor's dark facial makeup used to disguise him to come off as he collapses in Ben's arms, thereby revealing his true identity. Unfortunately, after several failed takes it was discovered that the thick brown foundation quite simply refused to smudge. Eventually, Hitchcock came up with a clever solution – applying flesh-colored make-up to James Stewart's hands instead. As Ben catches Bernard's face between his fingers, the flesh tone on his palms wipes off on the actor, implying the opposite effect. While Hitchcock indulged his creativity elsewhere in the movie, the staging of the Royal Albert Hall sequence set to the suspenseful strains of the Storm Cloud Cantata remains a virtual shot-for-shot recreation of the same sequence in his 1934 original.

Perhaps as a rebuttal to all of the travelogue ultra-gloss entertainment he had been indulging in of late, Hitchcock's next film **The Wrong Man** (1956), a picture he owed Warner Brothers, was a relatively low budget, brooding tale shot in B&W and based on a real-life case of mistaken identity surrounding one Manny Balestrero (Henry Fonda). Manny is a trumpet player at the Stork Club who is wrongfully accused of holding up a local insurance agency after his wife, Rose (Vera Miles) is denied coverage for some much-needed dental surgery. Everyone in the burgled insurance office who testifies against Manny is convinced he is the man who held them at gunpoint and made off with a considerable bankroll. The problem is that Manny is actually innocent. An unusual departure for Hitchcock, who also briefly narrated the prologue, the movie was based on Maxwell Anderson's novelization of Christopher Balestrero's struggle to clear his name. Although remaining relatively faithful to the book (the screenplay also penned by Anderson and Angus McPhail) Hitchcock deliberately omitted textual references readily outlined in the novel in an attempt to maintain tension in the film.





(Previous page and current): **Vertigo** (1958) is perhaps Hitchcock's most sublime and perilous critique of mad obsessive lust. What **Spellbound** (1945) had only hinted at, **Vertigo** delivers. The film is as much Hitchcock's valentine to San Francisco and its surrounding areas, a city he regarded as one of the most affluent and cosmopolitan in the world. Robert Burks' lush cinematography creates a fascinating travelogue of the city by the bay, made even more elusive and haunting by Bernard Herrmann's brooding underscore. **Vertigo** was not a success upon its initial release, perhaps because the audience failed to grasp the logic behind a man entirely consumed by the presumed death of one woman only to resurrect her image anew in seemingly another dead ringer, tragically to lose her under the same set of circumstances. The tale begins with P.I. Scottie Ferguson's (James Stewart) failed attempt at apprehending a criminal on the rooftops. His own near-death experience leaves Scottie with persistent vertigo, his inability to climb even a flight of stairs without getting dizzy effectively ending his career. A reprieve of sort arrives when old college chum Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) contacts Scottie out of the blue to tail his wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak) whom he suspects of being possessed by the specter of a long-since dead and very tragic historical figure, Carlotta Valdez.

The assignment, we later learn, is a ruse. For Gavin, having hired Judy Barton (also Novak) to play the part of his wife for Scottie's benefit, is already plotting to murder his real wife and make the whole thing look like an accident. The plan goes awry however when Scottie, troubled by nightmares over Madeleine's death which he firmly believes he was unable to prevent, suffers a nervous breakdown. Tended to by long-time gal pal, Midge Wood (Barbara Bel Geddes), Scottie marginally recovers from his catatonic state, only to become obsessed after a chance meeting with Judy that eventually leads to an awkward romance. Consumed by the image he has of Madeleine, Scottie re-crafts Judy into the woman he once adored; only to learn much later that Madeleine and Judy are one in the same. Realizing he has been duped, Scottie forces Judy to scale the stairs of the old mission bell tower where she had previously led him astray into thinking Madeleine had committed suicide. Judy confesses, but is startled by the sudden appearance of a nun and falls to her own death, leaving Scottie now to cope with the loss of the same woman twice. Based on Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac novel, *D'Entre Les Morts*, **Vertigo** is one of Hitchcock's bleakest American thrillers; its themes of neurotic/compulsive sexual obsession proving too sophisticated a subject matter for the audience. Today, **Vertigo** is justly regarded as one of Hitchcock's finest movies. At the time, however, it lost money for Paramount.



(Above): In many ways Hitchcock and Cary Grant were kindred spirits. Hitchcock was able to exert and/or graft his own inner demons onto the impeccable and peerless persona that everyone else thinks of as 'Cary Grant' while ever so slightly tweaking Grant to delve more deeply into the darker recesses of the characters he played for him. Grant's persona in any of his four outings for Hitchcock (**Suspicion** 1945, **Notorious** 1946, **To Catch A Thief** 1955, **North By Northwest** 1959) is prone to an intoxicating blend of self-doubt and pity, an almost perverse aversion to women – they always chased Grant instead of the other way around – and a sinister underlay of dark despair: all of it magically wrapped in that outer shell of uber-wit, grace, elegance, charm and sophistication; in short – *Cary Grant*. Independent of each other this duo undeniably had their successes – but nowhere were they more pointedly pitch perfect or justly celebrated than when they worked together as a team. When asked by a reporter to comment on the other, both Hitchcock and Grant said the very same thing: "*There's nobody quite like him.*" Agreed!

Regrettably, Anderson's wordy prose seems to have inadvertently hampered Hitchcock's agility as a cinematic storyteller. There's no spark of Hitchcock's usual brilliance herein, but a remarkably straight forward retelling of the stagecraft with few cinematic embellishments. Perhaps for the first time in his career, Hitchcock is relying more on 'telling' rather than 'showing' the audience elements of the story – Hitchcock's 'pure cinema' relegated to a rather straightforward faux noir crime story that simply fails to enthrall. If Hitchcock's 1950s tenure has a weak spot, it arguably remains, **The Wrong Man**.

The decade would be rounded out by two of the best movies Hitchcock ever made; **Vertigo** (1958) and **North By Northwest** (1959). It is one of Hollywood's great ironies that only the latter film was a critical and box office success at the time of its theatrical release. However, time has proven the artistic merit of both efforts; each clearly belonging in a league of their own. For years, Hitchcock had wanted to make a film set in San Francisco – a city he regarded as one of the most cosmopolitan metropolises in the world. Bad timing, other pending projects, and, Hitchcock's commitment to his own weekly television series **Alfred Hitchcock Presents...** precluded any realization of his dream project until 1956 when the novel *d'Entre les Morts* was brought to his attention. The book was a fascinating character study and critical examination of all-consuming obsessive love tinged on this occasion with elements of the supernatural and an intriguing crime story besides.

In realizing the novel for the screen Hitchcock turned to famed author and playwright, Samuel Taylor and Alex Coppel; the former a master at creating romantic melodrama, the latter an expert constructionist in the penning of mystery/thrillers. For the re-titled **Vertigo**, Hitchcock once again turned to everyman, James Stewart as his central protagonist; cast as retired police detective turned private investigator, Scottie Ferguson. Suffering from bouts of dizziness in high places (hence, the title of the film) after witnessing the death of a fellow officer off the side of a Frisco high rise, Ferguson's career seems at an end. He is brought out of retirement by former college acquaintance, Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) who, in the interim has married well and thus lives a very comfortable lifestyle.

Regrettably, all is not idyllic in this moneyed paradise. It seems that Elster's wife, the cool Madeleine (Kim Novak) is plagued by mysterious blackouts. Elster confides in Scottie that he believes Madeleine is possessed by the spirit of Carlotta Vance – a well-known tragic historical figure who will not rest until she has driven Madeleine to suicide. At first, Scottie refuses to

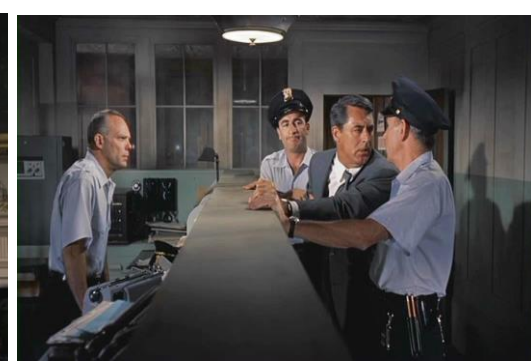


(Above): partners in crime. Much is always made of Hitchcock's allegiances to stars like Cary Grant, James Stewart, Ingrid Bergman and Grace Kelly. But Hitchcock was just as devoted to working with talented individuals over and over again behind the camera; a select group featured in the above stills. (Top left): Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975); who perhaps more than any other composer identified the 'Hitchcock sound' to movie audiences beginning with his memorable score for **The Trouble With Harry**. Born in New York to Russian-Jewish parents, Herrmann began his career as the conductor of CBS's radio orchestra in 1934 and worked closely with Orson Welles on his Mercury Theater broadcasts. From 1955 to 1964, Herrmann wrote almost every score belonging to a Hitchcock picture – the one exception being **To Catch A Thief** (1955). (Top middle): matte artist extraordinaire, Albert Whitlock (1915-1999) whose realistic paintings have graced hundreds of motion pictures from Hollywood's golden age and well beyond. Whitlock's association with Hitchcock dated all the way back to 1934's **The Man Who Knew Too Much** where he used miniatures to extend the European skyline. Whitlock came to America at the behest of Walt Disney who employed his keen artistry on practically every live action movie made at that studio from 1955 to 1966, the year of Walt's death. For Hitchcock, Whitlock's later work included extensive matte glass plates of Bodega Bay for **The Birds** (1963), long shots of ships docked along a wharf in **Marnie** (1964) and some stunning recreations of museum interiors for **Torn Curtain** (1965). Whitlock finally won an Oscar in 1974 for **Earthquake**.

(Top middle right): Franz Waxman (1906-1967); the imminent sound of more than a hundred movie scores at virtually all of the major studios, Waxman's lushly romantic orchestrations on **Rebecca** (1940) earned him a justly deserved Oscar nomination. Waxman wrote music for only one other Hitchcock movie – **Rear Window** (1954); and even then, only its main title and thematic 'Lisa' song interpolated within a score made up primarily of music gleaned from the Paramount sound library. (Bottom left): screenwriter Joseph Stefano (1922-2006) who wrote the memorable screenplay to Hitchcock's **Psycho** (1960). The book by Robert Bloch has virtually nothing to do with the film. As was the case with Hitchcock, he frequently purchased properties for their 'title value' alone. Stefano's rough draft of the film's opener was paid the highest compliment Hitchcock ever afforded a writer. "*Alma loved it,*" Hitch' told Stefano.

After **Psycho** Hitchcock asked Stefano to begin work on **Marnie**. When Grace Kelly pulled out of the project Hitchcock shelved Stefano's outline. Four years later Hitchcock resurrected the project. Inexplicably, he gave the writing chores first to Evan Hunter (who had written **The Birds**), then Jay Presson Allen, whose only writing assignment thus far had been one moderately successful Broadway play. Presson Allen ultimately received sole screenwriting credit on **Marnie**. (Bottom middle): ironing out the kinks with screenwriter Ernest Lehman (1915-2005) on **North By Northwest** (1959). Lehman's career is so prolific it cannot be covered with any degree of respect herein, but he could just as easily write stylish prose for dark dramas (**Sweet Smell of Success** 1954, with Clifford Odettes) as he could adapt big Broadway musicals for the big screen (**West Side Story** 1961, **The Sound of Music** 1965, **Hello Dolly!** 1969). Lehman returned to write Hitchcock's swan song, **Family Plot** (1971) – not particularly either's best effort. (Far right): Robert Burks (1909-1968) was Hitchcock's most frequently employed cinematographer. With the exception of **Psycho** (1960) Burks photographed virtually every Hitchcock movie from 1951 to 1964, winning his one and only Oscar for his lush and lovely visuals on **To Catch a Thief** (1955).

believe this far-fetched tale. Gradually, however, he begins to piece together a premise that does indeed suggest some other worldly explanation for Madeleine's frequent disappearances. After rescuing Madeleine from a failed suicide attempt at Golden Gate Park's Portholes of the Past, Scottie discovers that he has begun to fall deeply in love with Madeleine himself, much to the chagrin of his one-time fiancée, brazier designer Midge Wood (Barbara Bel Geddes). The kicker is that the whole premise thus far is a rouse concocted by Elster and Judy – the woman impersonating Elster's wife for Scottie's benefit in an elaborate scheme to convince Scottie that Madeleine, whom Elster has already murdered, is indeed mad enough to commit suicide. Luring Ferguson to the mission bell tower at Old San Juan Batista – and knowing that Scottie's vertigo will prevent him from catching up to her in time - Judy/Madeleine appears to throw herself off the tower's belfry right before Scottie's eyes. Driven nearly mad and into a catatonic state, Scottie is gradually nursed back to health by Midge, only to accidentally run into Judy on a street in San Francisco for a second time, now a brunette.



"ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS"



(Previous page): **North By Northwest** (1959) is undeniably the epitome of Hitchcock's frequently themed 'wrong man' thrillers – a pure escapist fantasy for which, as Hitchcock himself pointed out to Francois Truffaut, even the title makes no sense. Cary Grant is Roger O. Thornhill, a harried ad man who finds himself the focus of abduction after being mistaken for an FBI agent pursuing international smuggler Philip Van Damme (James Mason). Asked by the sultry Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint) what the 'O.' in Roger's name stands for, he quietly admits, "*Nothing!*" The line is an 'in joke'. Having worked for David O. Selznick at the start of his American tenure, Hitchcock knew that like his fictional hero, the 'O' in Selznick's monogram had been added by Selznick himself for flourish. It too stood for nothing. Eve seduces Roger, but then sends him on a wild goose chase to a remote field in North Dakota where he is nearly run down by a biplane. For the film's climax, MGM recreated, almost full scale, the Presidential busts of Mt. Rushmore inside one of their soundstages. Hitchcock spent nearly two weeks photographing this sequence, immeasurably aided in the final edit by Albert Whitlock's matte paintings of the famed monument's steep decline and nighttime vistas.

(This page): Hitchcock began taking more and more time off between movies, though arguably not for a well-deserved rest, but to concentrate on his weekly anthology TV series, **Alfred Hitchcock Presents** – suspenseful short stories produced by Hitchcock's own Shamley Productions at Universal Studios. In its' original format, the series ran for a half hour on CBS from 1955 to 1962. It was later expanded into **'The Alfred Hitchcock Hour'** from 1963 to 1965. In truth, Hitchcock directed very few of the series episodes, but was involved in script consultations and casting, and of course, in filming his now famous introductions (two featured above) in which he lampooned the public's presupposed assumptions about his own fascination with murder, violence and death. When NBC decided to revive the series in 1985 they used Hitchcock's original introductions, newly colorized, to segue into new stories of the macabre. The revival barely lasted a year.

After an awkward 'cute meet' Judy agrees to allow Scottie to reshape her image back into Madeleine because in her heart she does still harbor feelings toward him and sincerely hopes that once the switch is made Scottie will love her for who she is. But when a pendant that Madeleine once wore to evoke Carlotta Valdez suddenly resurfaces in Judy's jewelry box, Scottie realizes he has been played for the fool. He forces Judy to relive Madeleine's suicide; her confession to Scottie putting an end to his nightmare, only to have it reawakened anew when the sudden appearance of a nun in the bell tower causes Judy to lose her footing and plummet from the tower to her own death.

In many ways **Vertigo** typifies the apex of Hitchcock's cinematic prowess: from Saul Bass' inventive spiraling main title sequence to Hitchcock's extraordinary use of color to evoke the ever-spiraling madness of Scottie's obsessive lust, to his memorable 'nightmare' dream sequence and, finally Hitchcock's forward zoom/reverse track camera trickery devised by Irmin Roberts to invoke Scottie's dizzy spells, **Vertigo** remains an extraordinary feast of Hitchcockian neuroses for those clever enough to appreciate the film's purely visual, as well as its narrative, storytelling.

After the abysmal box office performance of **Vertigo**, Hitchcock's last film of the decade, **North By Northwest** (1959 for MGM) catapulted Hitchcock's reputation back into the cinematic stratosphere with an infectious blend of dark sadism and light humor. Determined to write the 'wrong man' scenario to top all the rest screenwriter Ernest Lehman devised a stylish thriller incorporating nearly every device and machination from the director's illustrious toolbox of goodies, weaving the implausible and the hair-raising into one seamless roller coaster ride brimming with masterful thrills and humorous suspense.

Over the years, rumors have circulated that Hitchcock unintentionally mentioned **North By Northwest** to James Stewart while production was wrapping on **Vertigo**. When Stewart became eager to play the part of Roger Thornhill, Hitchcock was forced to admit that he had Cary Grant in mind all along. However, there are problems with this theory. First, Hitchcock seldom worked far in advance in planning his subsequent projects. In general, but specifically at this point in his career, Hitchcock took his time deciding what would come next. Also, once he was involved on a movie, he committed himself wholly to that project until it was completed. Since **North By Northwest** was neither a pre-sold play nor a movie property already waiting in the wings, but rather one later commissioned from Lehman by Hitchcock, it seems unlikely that the idea came to him well in advance of **Vertigo's** completion. Also, given the solid working relationship between Hitchcock and



(Above): virtually all of the advanced publicity for **Psycho** (1960) contained no reference to the climactic reveal and very few photographs of even Anthony Perkins in the pivotal role as homicidal Norman Bates. It is unclear exactly why Hitchcock chose to leave Paramount after **Vertigo** (1958), briefly freelancing at MGM (**North By Northwest** 1959) before making Universal his home for virtually the rest of the 1960s. Hitchcock still owed Paramount a movie. **Psycho** was made for Paramount, but shot on the back lot and sound stages over at Universal. Lew Wasserman had been Hitchcock's agent for some time. Wasserman, who ran the most lucrative agency in town – MCA – merged his company on an outright purchase of Universal in 1962. Hitchcock had his own private production facilities at Universal, responsible for all of his filmic output from 1963 to 1976. So, in some ways it made perfect sense for Hitchcock to shoot **Psycho** at Universal.

The studio's illustrious past included an unprecedented reign as Hollywood's homegrown house of horrors. Arguably, **Psycho** is not a horror movie, but a quick and dirty B-budgeted melodrama with a few bits of violence added in. Hitchcock shot the film using the same crew who photographed his weekly TV series. But his real genius was the casting of clean-cut Tony Perkins as the killer; described in Bloch's novel as an unprepossessing and paunchy middle-age man. In Perkins, Hitchcock turned the idea of the all-American male on its head. This bode well with Hitchcock's own belief that simply by walking down any street in America one was apt to pass a sadist, a thief or a murderer. Still, the concept was hardly new – except maybe to film. Shakespeare was arguably the first to astute make the assumption that *"he that smiles may smile and still be a villain."*

Stewart, it does not make much sense that Hitchcock would have mentioned **North By Northwest** to his star only to cruelly take the project away from him.

Whatever the reason, **North By Northwest** stars Cary Grant as harried ad man, Roger O. Thornhill. After being mistaken for a secret agent by Phillip Van Damme (James Mason), Roger quickly discovers that he is a sitting duck, rift for multiple assassination attempts by Van Damme's henchmen unless he can get to the bottom of things. Unfortunately, Roger's attempt at contacting UN political analyst, Lester Townsend (Philip Ober) goes horribly awry when one of Van Damme's assassins kills Townsend in the middle of the public lounge while making it appear as though Roger is the killer. Considered a fugitive from justice, Roger next stumbles onto Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint), a mysterious flirt traveling by train and curiously intent on helping Roger elude the authorities. After a rather impromptu affair, Roger slowly comes to mistrust Eve. However, when Eve appears to be working for Van Damme, Roger confronts their motley crew in the open, thereby exposing Eve to a terrible danger. You see, Eve is the double agent that Van Damme has mistaken Roger for.

Hitchcock relied heavily on matte paintings and process photography on **North By Northwest** to sustain a level of purely escapist make-believe. The film's two most memorable set pieces – a biplane assault on Roger along a lonely stretch of North Dakota road – and the scaling of Presidential faces carved into Mount Rushmore were both elaborately staged at MGM inside a soundstage. In the former instance, Grant was placed on a treadmill in the foreground, running for his life while reacting to a process screen of rear projection shot independently and on location. In the latter sequence, MGM's scenic art department crafted an elaborate replica of Rushmore's Presidential visages, relying on equally elaborate matte paintings to capture the steep downward perspective as Eve and Roger appear to be dangling from the jagged precipices. Some surviving studio memos indicate that this final race across Rushmore was recreated out of necessity rather than from

Hitchcock's innate dislike of location shooting. It was only after the National State Park Conservation Authority refused permission for MGM to shoot there that the decision was made to recreate the famed monument on the back lot.

MGM licensed VistaVision for **North By Northwest** after Hitchcock refused to photograph the film in Cinemascope. Although the making of the film proved an enjoyable experience for all concerned, the film also marked the last time Cary Grant worked for Hitchcock. Today, rumors abound as to why these two alumni never reunited for another try – especially since **North By Northwest** was one of Hitchcock's most profitable thrillers. One plausible reason is that Grant had begun to feel as though his days as a leading man were numbered. While the actresses Grant was frequently paired with were increasingly getting younger, Grant himself was already well into his middle age at the time **North By Northwest** went before the cameras. Following its success Grant would reluctantly agree to make only one more thriller: Stanley Donen's faux Hitchcockian spy movie: **Charade** (1963). A page in Grant's playbook had definitely been turned: but so too in Hitchcock's. While the 1950s had seen the master of suspense through a blistering array of iconic masterpieces, the 1960s would prove a very rocky terrain not entirely traversed without considerable backfires and regrets.

the Beginning of the End

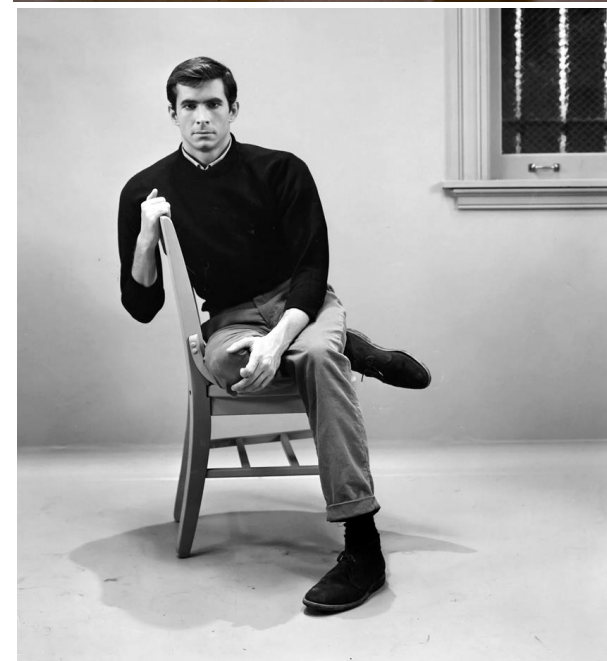
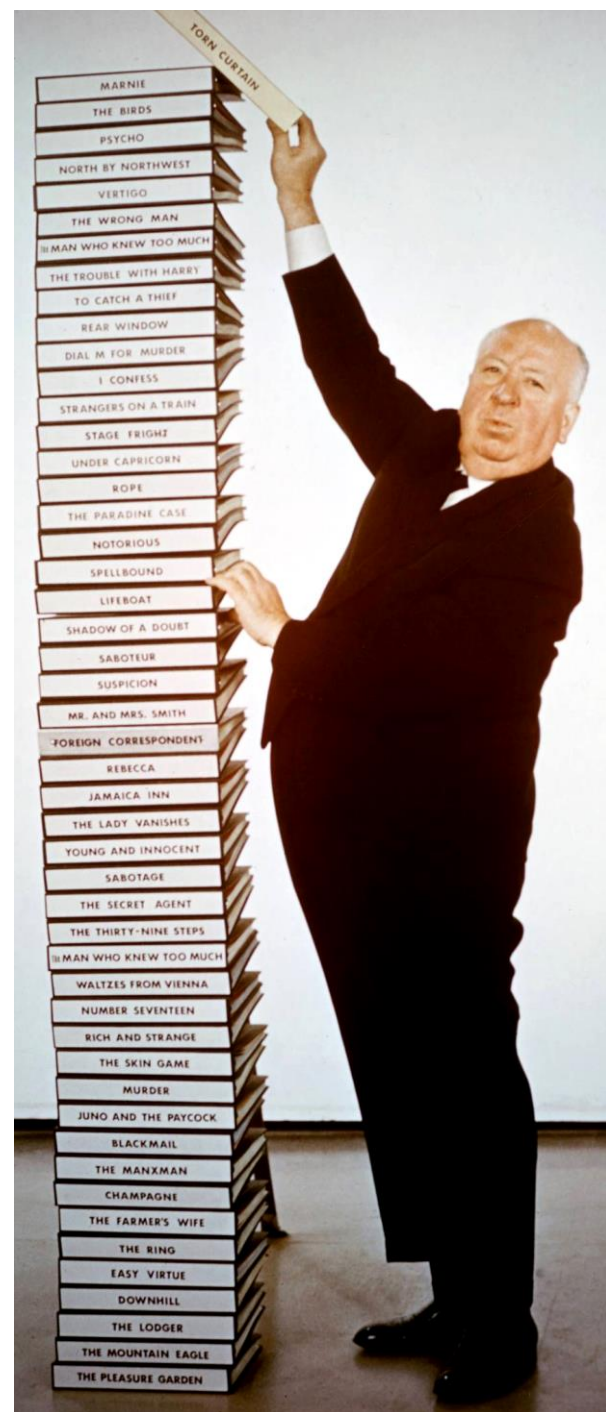
PECKING OUT A LASTING LEGACY IN THE SIXTIES

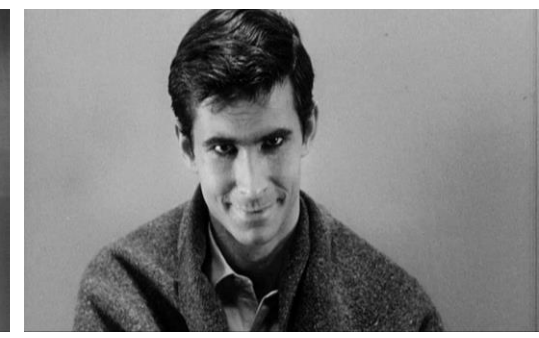
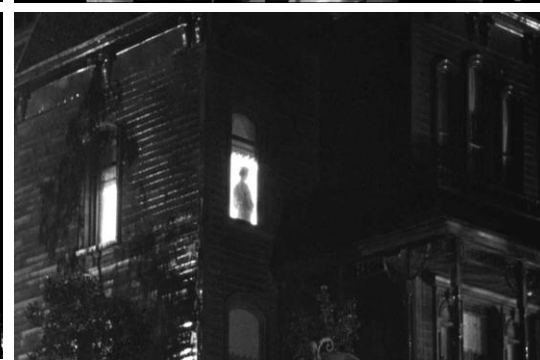
"Blondes make the best victims. They're like virgin snow that shows up the bloody footprints."

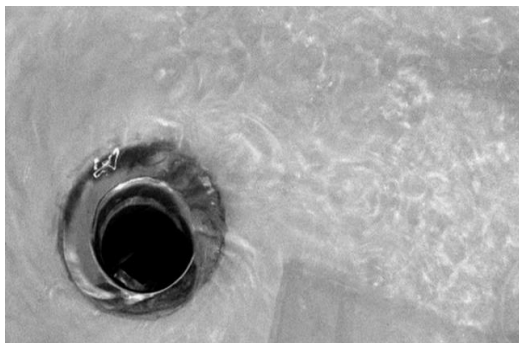
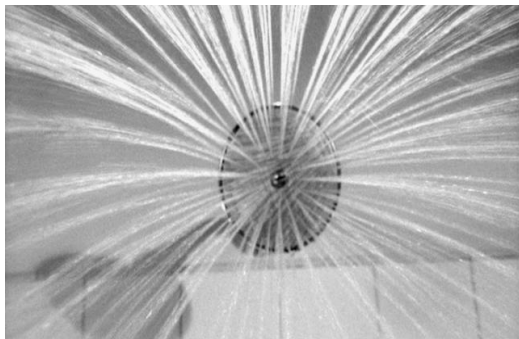
- Alfred Hitchcock

By 1960, Alfred Hitchcock was an international celebrity instantly recognizable around the world. Only part of this notoriety was due to his films. Hitchcock's more palpable iconography came from his weekly appearances as the gris eminence of **Alfred Hitchcock Presents** on CBS. Budgetary restrictions and the fast pace of shooting an anthology television serial would come to serve as a template for Hitchcock's next, and arguably his most enduring cinema masterpiece.

Psycho (1960) is often referenced as the film that matured American cinema into its present state of sublime cynicism. The film is based on a novel by Robert Bloch; a work of fiction that has its roots in a real-life horror story involving Wisconsin farmer, Ed Gein who murdered two of his neighbors. However, when police searched Gein's home, they found furniture, silverware, and even clothing made of human skin and body parts. The official psychiatric evaluation of Gein suggested that he was trying to make a 'suit' of female flesh in order to pretend he was his dead mother.









(Previous page): anatomy of a heinous murder we never actually see. Hitchcock's masterful direction of the montage – ninety independent shots that comprises the slaughter of Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) effectively creates the illusion of unspeakable carnage taking place inside the shower of Cabin #1 at the Bates Motel. In fact, all we ever see are quick edits featuring an ominous knife-wielding figure, a screaming girl, and a nude model subbing in for Leigh during the more explicit flashes of torso and legs. Hitchcock used chocolate syrup for blood and a stage hand relentless stab into the heart of a watermelon to simulate the sound of flesh being slashed apart; all of it assembled to the heart-palpitating strains of Bernard Herrmann's ominous and grating violin strings. Earlier we had seen Marion and her lover, Sam Loomis (John Gavin) passionate locked in each other's arms. They desperately want to marry but can't afford it. In a moment of sheer lunacy, Marion decides to steal \$40,000 she is supposed to deposit in the bank for her boss, driving all day and all night from Phoenix to Fairfax. On the way, Marion has misgivings, further cemented when she meets Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins); the lonely proprietor of a forlorn motel that is off the beaten path. He's a congenial sort. But oh, mother...*mother!!!*

Hitchcock tempts us with the misdirection of a psychotic old crone living in the dark old house behind the motel. Eventually, a private investigator is called in to recover the money. Milton Arbogast (Martin Balsam) doesn't mince words and his snooping leads to yet another murder. Perplexed and frustrated by his sudden disappearance, Marion's sister Lila (Vera Miles) prods Sam to drive her to the Bates' Motel. While Sam preoccupies Norman, Lila makes her way to the basement and an unexpected – and very gruesome – discovery; Mrs. Bates is actually a mummified corpse hidden away. Norman has been dressing in his mother's clothes to, in effect, become his mother in her absence. The penultimate sequence is a lengthy explanation given by Dr. Fred Richman (Simon Oakland) explaining Norman's state of mind and the reason for the brutal unsolved murders. The film concludes with two haunting images – the first, of Norman now immobilized and quietly seated in a prison cell, his mother's voice echoing in his head as he stares directly into the camera, the image of her decaying skull superimposed over Norman's disgustingly proud and leering visage; the final shot – a tow line dredging up Marion's submerged car from the nearby swamp merely hints of a repulsive discovery yet to follow.

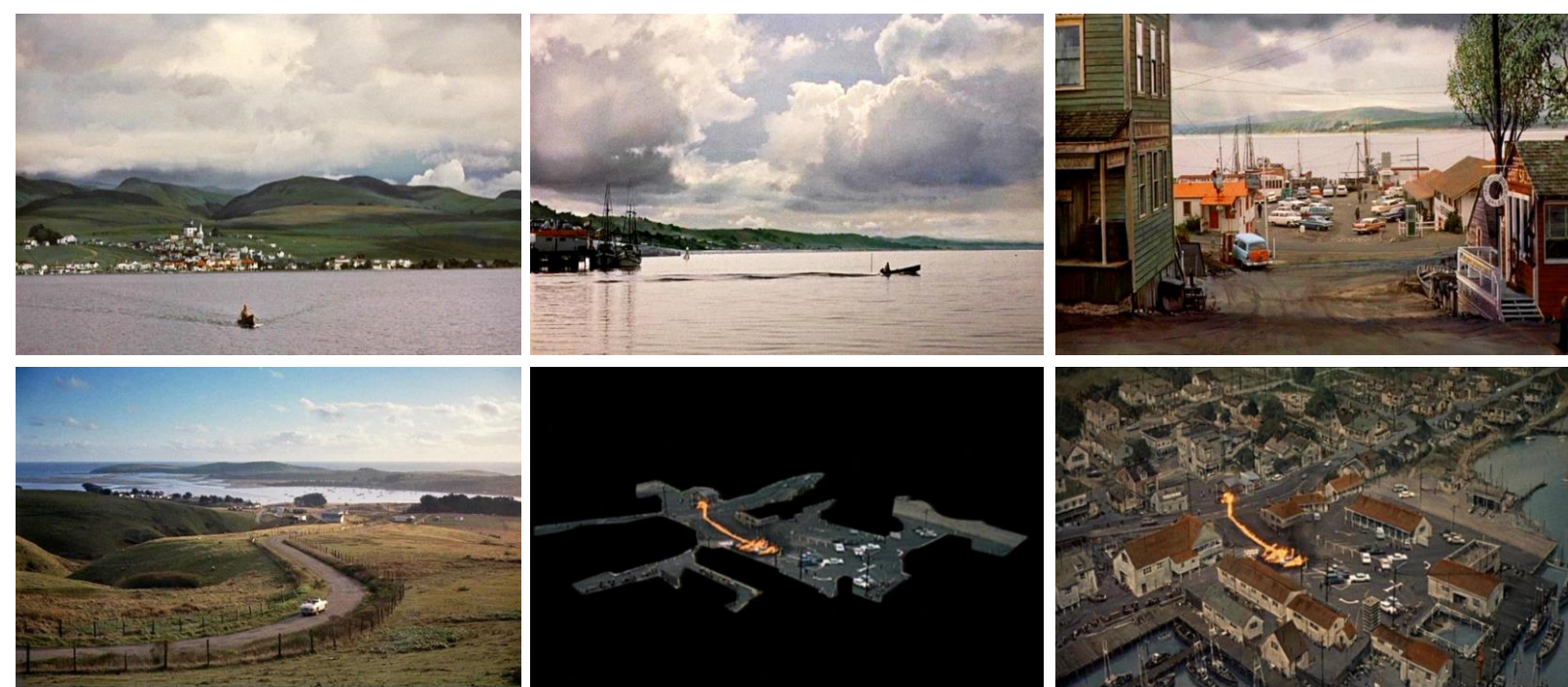
(Above): the darker and lighter side of Anthony Perkins. There are two ways to look at **Psycho's** success. It gave Perkins a 'movie identity'. Until **Psycho** Tony Perkins was a congenial second string all-American leading man, appearing in such high profile movies as **The Matchmaker** (1958) and **On The Beach** (1959). Afterward, the stigma of the raving psychotic seemed to stick to his one-time squeaky clean image. Although Perkins continued to work, his roles were usually marginal; his Bates' Motel alter-ego resurrected in several sequels. (Far right): Hitchcock and Perkins enjoy a laugh on the 'swamp' set. Clearly, it wasn't all blood and guts. Some of it was actually fun and games.

Bloch's novel was a mild sanitation as well as a reconstitution of these facts. It quickly became a runaway best seller. In the book, Norman Bates is a rather pudgy middle-aged recluse – easily identifiable as someone with a darker side. By transplanting the attributes of a serial killer onto the seemingly normal and youthfully handsome Anthony Perkins Hitchcock set a new standard for screen villainy. The stock Hollywood villain had always 'looked mean' or been of a physical stature that the general consensus could regard as 'unattractive'.

Budgeted at a remarkably modest \$800,000, **Psycho** went on to earn forty million in its initial release – a telling sign of where the movie business in general was headed. Joseph Stefano's screenplay carried an immersive underlay of psychoanalysis, perhaps because the writer was also in therapy at the time he wrote the script. For its time, **Psycho** was a disturbing revelation for the middle-class movie goer. In its prime, the Production Code would never have allowed such a grotesque and warped premise to play out on the big screen. And yet Hitchcock was remarkably subdued in his re-envisioning of the subject matter. In Bloch's book, Mary Crane is beheaded during the now justly infamous shower sequence. Involving ninety cuts, a partially nude stand-in, and a melon being slashed to simulate the sound of steel cutting into flesh – Hitchcock assaults the senses with bits and flashes of a brutal homicide, in effect taking murder out of the drawing room and dumping it into the back alley where ostensibly it always belonged. While the Catholic League of Decency decried **Psycho**, audience lined up for







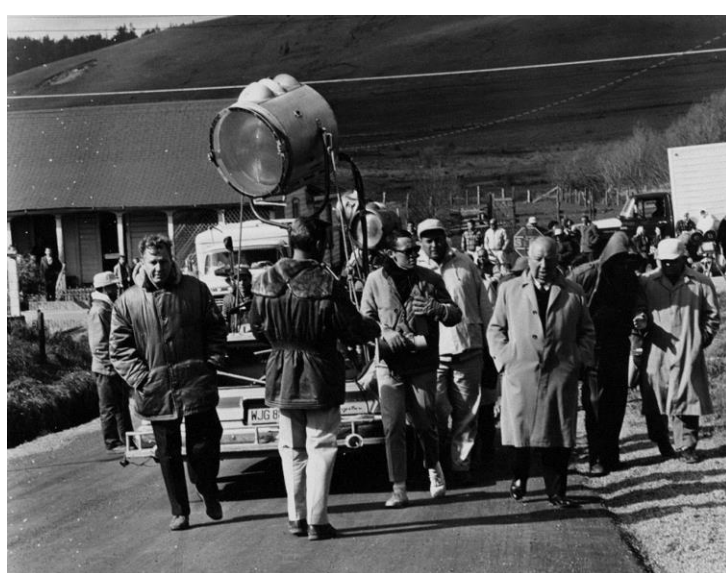
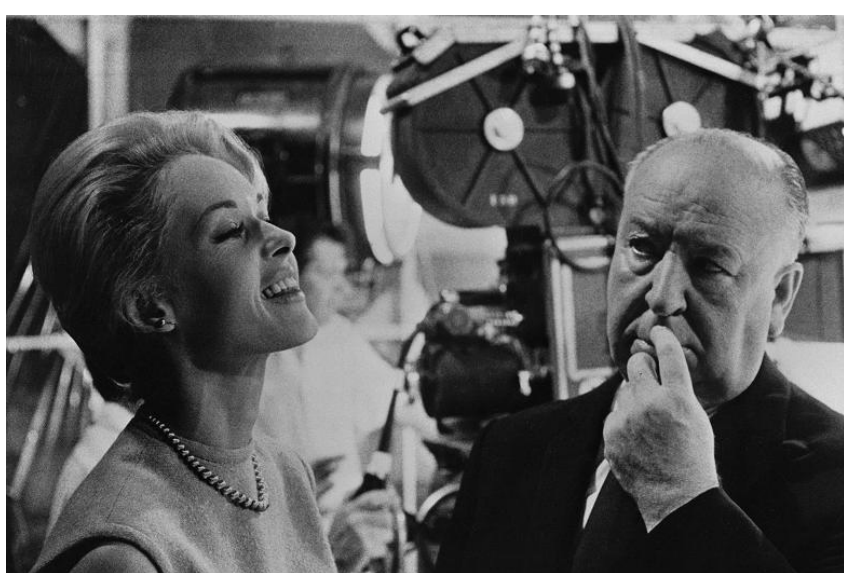
(Previous pages): **The Birds** (1963) is Hitchcock's last undisputed masterpiece. From a technical vantage alone, it is undeniably one of the most impressive movies ever made; its seamless state of the art matte work and revolutionary usage of the cumbersome sodium matte process yielding to Hitchcock's incomparable visual style. Evan Hunter's screenplay sets up the romantic premise between hot shot attorney Mitchell Brenner (Rod Taylor) and reformed gadabout socialite, Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren); the pair's 'cute meet' inside a pet shop straight out of a Preston Sturges' screwball comedy. The mood remains optimistic and palpably romantic with Melanie's arrival to the picturesque hamlet of Bodega Bay – that is, until an errant gull decides to take a swipe at her. From this moment on, **The Birds** begins its slow, but deliberate spiral into mortal peril. Melanie befriends Mitch's younger sister, Cathy (Veronic Cartwright) but her introduction to their mother, Lydia (Jessica Tandy) doesn't go beyond a very frosty reception until almost the end of the movie. Ironically, Melanie's ally is Annie Haywood (Suzanne Pleshette) whom Mitch was romantically involved with back in San Francisco but who was eventually warded off by Lydia. The genius in Hunter's screenplay is that he has so carefully introduced us to each of these main characters that, as the audience, we come to care about what happens to all of them once the impetus of the story has shifted from sassy romance to ominous danger.

(This page): five stunning examples of Albert Whitlock's matte paintings utilized in the movie. (Top left): only Tippi Hedren, the boat and the water are real. The rest is a painting. After Whitlock had completed the art Hitchcock showed it to his assistant, Peggy Robertson. Her casual comment "Oh, it looks like a painting" raised Hitchcock's dander. Testing Robertson Hitchcock added, "Well, of course you know that it's real?" to which Robertson clarified, "Oh, of course...but it's so beautiful it looks just like a painting." Indeed, Whitlock's gorgeous backdrops really set the tone for an idyllic rustic seaside escape; one that will be shattered by the arrival of the birds. Interestingly, the moment when Lydia discovers Dan Fawcett dead in his bedroom, his pecked out eye sockets are also a Whitlock matte, to add depth to the gaping holes. The image at center bottom on this page illustrates how the final effect of a Whitlock matte painting is achieved; the live action footage exposed on a composite blacked out where the painting will go. Whitlock's bird's eye matte was then combined in an optical printer (bottom right) the two images re-photographed together. But this shot also featured another composite; seagulls photographed using the sodium matte process against a plain background, added in for the final spooky touch.

hours to wait and see it. Hitchcock's gimmick, of not allowing anyone to be admitted into the theater after the main titles only helped to heighten the public's fascination.

Immediately following the film's triumphant premiere, Hitchcock took a three year hiatus from making movies. He was far from idle – investing a considerable amount of effort in continuing his television series, before returning to the big screen with what would ultimately prove to be his last great cinematic triumph; **The Birds** (1963). Working from a short story by his favorite author Daphne du Maurier, Hitchcock commissioned screenwriter Evan Hunter to flesh out a narrative that could provide cohesion to du Maruier's rather episodic series of bird attacks. The plot eventually concocted by Hunter concerns the quaint hamlet of Bodega Bay: weekend getaway for hotshot defense attorney Mitchell Brenner (Rod Taylor). While in San Francisco, Mitch tweaks the nose of Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren), a chic though spoiled socialite whose wild past has been expounded in the tabloids. Mitch and Melanie quickly escalate their mutual interest in one another from tempestuous rivalry to smoldering romance; a move quietly abhorred by Lydia (Jessica Tandy), Mitch's mother and even more quietly observed by old flame, Annie Haywood (Suzanne Pleshette). But then, there are the birds – those fine feathery fowl run amuck in town, smashing into buildings, attacking school children, pecking out a farmer's eyes and blowing up the gas station.

From a technical vantage, **The Birds** remains Hitchcock's most ambitiously mounted film, relying heavily on matte photography and the then relatively new sodium process; an invention by Disney SFX specialist Ub Iwerks. Unlike the traditional blue-screen process, the sodium light perfectly isolated foreground action from background details, producing an



(Above left): Hitchcock critically studies Tippi Hedren's makeup and hair in between takes. At one point it looked as though Hedren might become the valiant 1960s successor to Grace Kelly's 1950s 'cool blonde.' Hitchcock had, in fact, taken great pains to groom Hedren for her debut in **The Birds** and she proved every bit equal to the task. A New York model with virtually no acting experience, Hedren's performance in **The Birds** is both affecting and yet sophisticated. She excels in her comic timing, but also proved adept at delving into the emotional center of her character, revealed in the scene on a bluff when Rod Taylor's Mitch ask Melanie about her estranged mother. Finally, Hedren gave an chilling edge to Melanie's near catatonic fear near the end of the movie, her wild-eyed stares and strangely pitched declaration of "No. No! NO!" as she's being led out to the car for the family's daring escape harking all the way back to some repressed childhood anxiety over abandonment, perhaps long thought buried deep within Melanie's uber genteel exterior. (Right): Hitchcock walks the concourse of Bodega Head with his crew, a lonely uphill road leading to the Bodega Bay School house; a pivotal location in the film. Inclement weather and chilly temperatures did not dampened Hitchcock's spirits. Perhaps for the very last time in his career he seemed decidedly in his element – mind, body and soul.

immaculate composite that was virtually undetectable to the naked eye. The process would even matte in translucent sunlight and smoke. While Hitchcock girded his resolve for the most arduous shoot of his entire career his second unit spent days at the city dump photographing thousands of sea gulls circling the skies, to be matted into foreground miniatures and background paintings created by Albert Whitlock. Although Hitchcock did shoot some of *The Birds* at Bodega Head and Bodega Bay, a fair amount of the movie was also photographed on freestanding outdoor sets built and/or slightly redressed on the Universal back lot and, of course, inside netted sets built on sound stages to contain the myriad of birds gathered together by wrangler/trainer Ray Berwick.

Hitchcock had admired Tippi Hedren from a Seago diet product TV commercial. She was young, blonde and statuesque; a New York model with virtually no acting experience. Groomed in the manner of Grace Kelly, Hedren received a lavish wardrobe designed for her by Edith Head prior to principle photography commencing on the film. She was also put through the ringer for extensive screen testing opposite Martin Balsam. In retrospect, Hedren is the last of the memorable Hitchcock blondes; a feat all the more impressive when one considers that Hedren's career began with **The Birds** and, for all intensive purposes ended the following year with **Marnie**.

Initially, filming began with very high spirits; the chemistry between Hedren and co-star Rod Taylor palpably engaging. However, after being told by Hitchcock that for a pivotal scene involving a brutal bird attack inside an upstairs bedroom that most of the work would be achieved with in-camera visual effects added later, Hedren arrived for the shoot to discover that the entire set had been netted with hundreds of live birds. For two whole days, Hedren endured having birds hurled at her by a wrangler, the very real terror that at any moment they might actually peck away at her – perhaps out of frustration – leaving Hedren catatonic and rushed to the hospital from nervous exhaustion. In her absence, Hitchcock photographed a double for cutaways and shots that did not require the camera to see Hedren's face, the actress returning after several days hiatus to complete the shoot.

In retrospect *The Birds* is not only a technical marvel but a very fine and intense 'horror movie' besides – its setup of a cute meet bordering on screwball comedy ominously unraveling into a perilous tale of human survival with no happy ending in sight. The overwhelming box office success of **The Birds** was encouraging to Hitchcock. Perhaps, in Tippi Hedren he had at last found a replacement for the blonde ideal Grace Kelly had once so clearly represented. Alas, Hedren proved to be a one-hit wonder. Hitchcock cast her in **Marnie** (1964) – a Freudian psychological 'sex mystery' where she played a manipulative and



(Above): work in progress. (Top left): Rod Taylor and an unidentified assistant seem genuinely amused by the story Hitchcock is telling. Rod Taylor had begun his movie career as the hunk de jour, little more than token beefcake eye-candy in the early 1950s on television, moving into more of the same in forgettable roles in some very high profile movies like **Giant** (1956) and **Raintree County** (1957). Taylor returned to TV after a very solid showing in the all-star **Separate Tables** (1958) and a thoroughly tepid supporting part in **Ask Any Girl** (1959). Neither role advanced his film career. But Taylor would come into his own in the 1960s; first, as the heroic H.G. Wells in **The Time Machine** (1960), then as the voice of Pongo in Disney's **101 Dalmatians**. After **The Birds** Rod Taylor was very much in demand and he worked steadily throughout the next two decades. His initial meeting with Hitchcock did not go well. Taylor called him 'Alfred' and made the comment that he "*hoped the birds wouldn't dominate the movie.*" But then Taylor began to probe Hitchcock about his own career and the business and artistry of making movies. The two hit it off and Hitchcock later added during a press conference, "*He's a fine actor. We were fortunate.*"

(Top right): delegating responsibility to an unseen grip during the shooting of the penultimate getaway from the Brenner's beleaguered cottage. The ending in the film is not the one Evan Hunter originally scripted. Hunter's more elaborate finale called for the Brenners and Melanie to drive away from the cottage only to discover the entire town decimated by the bird attacks. As the car gains momentum around a bend leading to the main highway, Melanie's convertible is assaulted by a flock of gulls who attempt to peck through her soft retractable roof. Mitch guns the motor and drives off, but when he tries to get some news on the car radio he finds no available channel. Instead, the car comes to the edge of the San Francisco Bay, the family stunned to discover the Golden Gate Bridge absolutely covered with birds. Hitchcock storyboarded this sequence. A few stills exist – though regrettably no film footage – of Melanie and Mitch running through town with dead birds lying all around. The birds were real; dead chickens bought from a local market and dipped in ketchup to simulate blood. But the rest of the sequence was never filmed. Evan Hunter later speculated that this original finale was probably much too expensive and time-consuming to shoot – a pity, indeed.

(Bottom left): Ray Berwick was the bird wrangler on **The Birds**. Although Hitchcock used stuffed birds for many long shots, he interspersed live birds in between these dumb-dumbs. When asked by a precocious Veronica Cartwright if the fake birds would look...well...fake...Hitchcock explained that the human eye is attracted to movement. If several of the birds are seen fluttering their wings the audience will naturally assume all of the birds are real. (Bottom middle): Hitchcock and screenwriter, Evan Hunter appear in good spirits in Bodega Bay, near the school house and Annie Haywood's house. Hunter and Hitchcock got on famously throughout the shoot. However, when Hunter pressed Hitchcock on a particular sequence for the upcoming **Marnie** (1964) he was promptly fired and replaced by Jay Presson Allen. (Bottom right): despite the fact that her character, Annie Haywood, dies during a violent bird attack, Suzanne Pleshette seems to be having a wonderful time taking pictures on location near the docks. Bodega Bay was mostly shot on location, although Hitchcock recreated whole portions of the town on Universal's back lot to extend its main thoroughfare and shops.

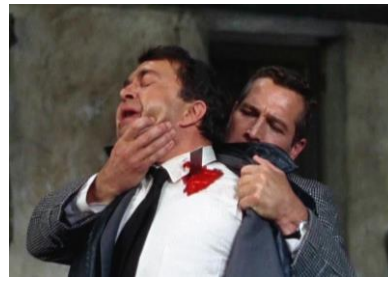




(Previous page and this one): the trouble with **Marnie** (1964) is chiefly that Hitchcock had marketed it as a 'sex mystery.' In the wake of his visual explicitness exhibited in **Psycho** (1960) and the more permissive climate permeating the movie culture in general by the mid-1960s, the marketing campaign for **Marnie** hinted at far more salacious content than was actually in the movie. **Marnie** is clearly Hitchcock's attempt to return to the stylish melodramas he had done in the 1940s and 50s. At one point, Hitchcock even copies a visual moment directly from **Notorious** (1946); the camera mounted on a crane and swooping down from a high angle above a winding staircase until it zooms in on a closed door. Tippi Hedren, who had been so indelible and convincing in **The Birds** (1963) struggled with the part. By her own confirmation she was something of a giddy mess on the first day's shoot opposite co-star Sean Connery who had already established his reputation as a suave leading man in the first James Bond movie, **Dr. No** (1962). The rape scene that occurs on Mark Rutledge (Connery) and Marnie's (Hedren) honeymoon is not terribly convincing; Hitchcock having been pushed to the brink to show a bit more skin, suddenly and inexplicably falling back on more visually reserved techniques to get the point across. He isn't entirely successful, the moment playing more like a very awkward love scene in which Mark caresses Marnie's hair and slowly lowers her to the bed; Hitchcock closing in on an extreme close-up of Mark's lips pressed against Marnie's cheek.

compulsive thief opposite Sean Connery. The character of Marnie is at once devious and sinister, yet tragic, with an underlying current of sexual frigidity. **Marnie** is loosely based on Winston Graham's novel. As early as 1960, Hitchcock had assigned Joseph Stefano to do a rough draft of the screenplay. After Grace Kelly turned the project down, Hitchcock shelved this treatment for nearly four years, resurrecting the project with a new writer, Evan Hunter. But by the time Hitchcock had convinced himself that Tippi Hedren would be ideal for the role he was readily clashing with Hunter over the handling of a scene in which Marnie, having been forced to marry Mark Rutland (Sean Connery) or face imprisonment for stealing from his publishing company's bankroll, is raped on her wedding night by her husband who is unwilling to take 'no' for an answer.

The 'rape' scene generated a creative impasse between Hitchcock and Hunter; the latter arguing that if any sympathy was to remain for the character of Mark Rutledge he could not force himself on his own wife. Hitchcock readily disagreed and promptly fired Hunter in favor of Jay Presson Allen (a novice in the medium, and with only two professional stage writing credits to her name). In her rewrite, Allen altered key sequences that were part of Winston Graham's original novel and Stefano's original treatment; changing the office lover's triangle between two men, Mark and his rival for Marnie's affections – Terry – to the more subversive pseudo-lesbian fascination finally embodied by Lil' Mainwaring (Diane Baker). Allen also removed a key sequence where Marnie seeks professional treatment in the office of a psychoanalyst. Henceforth, the



(Above): **Torn Curtain** (1966) is likely the one movie-making experience that all involved would rather choose to forget. Hitchcock ran into almost daily opposition on the set from Paul Newman who later admitted that he had been difficult though not out of a lack of respect. The film's most memorable sequence remains the murder of communist agent, Hermann Gromek (Wolfgang Kieling) who is choked by Newman's Professor Michael Armstrong, stabbed with a kitchen knife and beaten with a fry pan by a farmer's wife (Carolyn Conwell) before being gassed in an oven. (Far right top): The actual set built for the museum sequence with crew, lights and rigging scattered all around, and the completed effect in the movie (far right bottom) after Albert Whitlock added in his matte painting. (Middle bottom): Julie Andrews is all smiles but Newman and co-star Günter Strack, who plays Professor Manfred look decidedly bored in this posed publicity still for a sequence that does not appear in the final cut. Hitchcock was glad to have this one behind him, more so after the open hostility of the critics had cooled. He would have more of the same to greet his next project – **Topaz** (1969).

responsibility for getting to the crux of Marnie's sexually repressed memories would fall to the character of Mark, her husband – possibly, as a way of redeeming him in the public's eyes after he had already raped his wife.

In retrospect, **Marnie** is a clear, yet vain attempt on Hitchcock's part to revisit themes and issues he had more readily, and to better effect, rounded out in **Spellbound** (1945). Regrettably, **Marnie**'s release was met with open hostility from both audiences and the critics who found it ridiculous, cloying and unconvincing. In hindsight, **Marnie** is not a perfect film. But it is far from the disaster most critics made it out to be. True enough, there is a genuine and very bizarre lack of onscreen chemistry between Tippi Hedren and Sean Connery; an even more curious absence of sexual frustration in Diane Baker's rather tepid approach to the third wheel in Allen's equation. This leaves the central narrative dangling at the mercy of a rather conventional 'who done it?' ever so slightly tweaked into a 'why did she do it?'

Marnie's repressed memories are unlocked in a flashback. As a child she came to her party-girl mother, Bernice's (Louise Latham) defense, bludgeoning a smarmy sailor (Bruce Dern) with a fireplace poker after he attempted to rape Bernice. Yet, upon further consideration these pieces don't quite fit. Marnie is a kleptomaniac, not a sex fiend or nymphomaniac. Her fear of being touched is well-grounded, but it doesn't exactly jive with her tendencies to financially take advantage of men who are interested in her for only one thing. In the final analysis, **Marnie** is a fractured tale, one that Hitchcock might have gotten away with in the mid-1950s with more prominent star power at its helm. In hindsight, promoting **Marnie** as a 'sex mystery' also might have given the audience a false expectation and this perhaps damaged its reputation and box office potency.

Marnie is not about sex but rather the absence of any intimacy in the sexual act itself. Marnie's frigidity and the convoluted logic fueling her kleptomania are not readily apparent upon a first viewing of the film. Allen's screenplay takes far too much time unraveling the bizarre relationship between Marnie and her mother, while wholly disinterested in the more neurotic sexual obsession that lures Mark into marrying Marnie in the first place. Worse for the film, the pendulum of the movie culture had already swung to a more perverse and voyeuristic standard. Coupled with the erosion of the once venerable studio system that had been like an insular cocoon for Hitchcock, **Marnie** lacks the cutting edge of this new counterculture. In hindsight, **Marnie** marks the unofficial end to Hitchcock's American movie-making career. Although Hitchcock continued to make movies well into the decade and beyond, he had irreversibly lost his toe-hold as the *undisputed* master of suspense.



(Above): **Topaz** (1969) is arguably the Hitchcock movie that should never have been made; Leon Uris' top-heavy tome cribbing from the real Cuban Missile Crisis and casting John Vernon (above) as a faux Castro dictator named Rico Parra. French actor Frederick Stafford (pictured top left with Karen Dor) is top billed as Andre Devereaux, the French diplomat at the consulate in Washington but actually working for the Americans to learn Parra's secret plans. Dor is Juanita de Cordoba, the widow of a freedom fighter loyal to Parra. Parra thinks she is his girl. But Dor is actually helping Andre get closer to Parra's master plan. When Parra finds out the truth from two of Juanita's house servants who have been tortured into a confession, he murders her in the foyer of her lavish hacienda. Rather than punctuate the moment with a splatter of blood, Hitchcock uses an overhead shot of Dor slowly buckling at the knee and collapsing onto the tile floor to give us the same effect, her purple dress slowly spreading like a pool of blood all around her; the one instance in an otherwise visually turgid movie where Hitchcock's stylistic flair reveals itself. (Bottom): Hitchcock lays out continuity for the climactic showdown between Andre and Jacque Granville (Michel Piccoli); a duel inside an abandoned soccer stadium that was universally panned by preview audiences as idiotic, forcing Hitchcock to delete it from the final cut and cobble together another ending instead. It didn't help the movie. **Topaz** was a financial disaster for Universal.

the Farewell Years

It is pointless to contemplate why Hitchcock continued to make movies after 1964. Not only was he a very wealthy man, he was in the enviable position of having a seemingly indestructible and still vital reputation and cache within the film industry and with audiences. He could have retired at the top, or at least taken a badly needed pause to reconvene his plans for a subsequent comeback at a later date. Instead, with increasing frequency, Hitchcock chose to dig in his heels, directing a series of thrillers that arguably are among some of the most uninspired offerings not only within his own selected canon of work, but in the annals of movie thrillers in general. The fall was immediate, if unsettling.

Torn Curtain (1966) is probably Hitch's most awkward and woefully miscast American thriller. It improbably stars fresh-faced Julie Andrews tragically miscast as Dr. Sarah Louise Sherman; fiancée to a brilliant lecturer, Professor Michael Armstrong (Paul Newman). The two are in Copenhagen for a conference when Sarah suddenly begins to suspect that Michael is becoming a communist defector. Like Lina's contemplation over her husband's innocence in Hitchcock's **Suspicion** made nearly two decades before it, Sarah's assumptions about Michael in **Torn Curtain** turn out to be



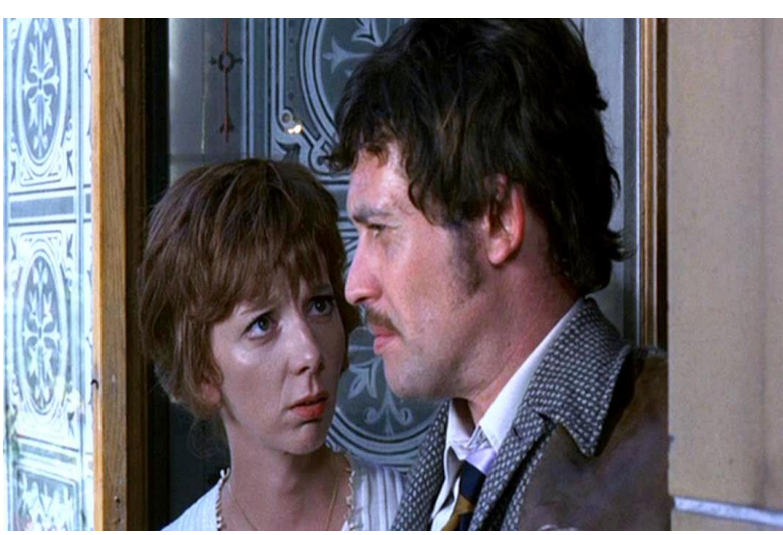


(Above): Barry Foster as sex fiend and necktie murderer Bob Rusk and Barbara Leigh-Hunt as his latest victim, Barbara Blaney in Hitchcock's **Frenzy** (1972). Screenwriter Anthony Schaffer, who based his script on Arthur La Bern's *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square*, balked at the final shot from the staged assault (bottom right); Hunt with her tongue poking out the side of her mouth, finding it obscene. Hitchcock disagreed. Indeed, **Frenzy** is the only Hitchcock movie to rely on some rather gratuitous nudity to elevate its shock value. A body double was used for brief inserts of Barbara's breast and nipple, and later the same model doubled for Anna Massey as Babs Mulligan, the barmaid Richard Blaney (Jon Finch) takes to bed and is later suspected of murdering. **Frenzy** may not be in the same league as **Psycho** (1960) but it definitely had its moments. It also afforded Hitchcock his first film shoot in his native England since 1950's **Stage Fright**. The movie was shot on a shoestring budget. During production Alma Reville (Hitchcock's wife) suffered a heart attack. Hitchcock, who had a pacemaker installed to keep his own ticker shipshape, carried on. The results were a taut and often tantalizing, though slightly perverse tale of betrayal and murder: good stuff that introduced Hitchcock to a whole new generation of fans.

false and misleading – the screenplay by Brian Moore incessantly toying with her *'what if'* scenarios and generally blowing them out of proportion with ironically timed bits of mismanaged comedy and very unhappy accidents.

From the beginning **Torn Curtain** struck a decidedly sour chord for all concerned. After penning a score for the film, a personal disagreement effectively ended Hitchcock's association with long-time music collaborator Bernard Herrmann. His score would eventually be replaced by another written by John Addison whose enduring fame today is probably best recalled for the iconic TV theme to **Murder She Wrote**. Paul Newman was one of Hollywood's hottest stars. But his method actor's approach to the material proved painfully out of sync with Hitchcock's absolute slavishness to camera setups. Frequently Newman clashed with his director over his motivations and even more readily sought to have changes made to his part and other aspects of the shoot along the way.

Worse, the chemistry between Newman and Julie Andrews failed to materialize. Hitchcock, who acknowledged that Andrews had been forced upon him by studio executives who found her enchanting in **Mary Poppins** and **The Sound of Music**, almost immediately tired of making any attempt to mold a plausible dramatic performance from his female star, choosing instead to grumble over the fact that audiences would expect her to spontaneously break into song. Hitchcock had overcome a similar bias toward Doris Day a decade earlier and had been proven wrong about her acting prowess on **The Man Who Knew Too Much**. And Andrews had clearly proven she could handle material outside of the musical/comedy milieu; her expertly crafted performance in **The Americanization of Emily** the year before a brilliant piece of dramatic screen acting. And yet, she remains the weakest link in **Torn Curtain**, somehow unable to truly shake off the stigma of the musical comedy star and embrace the dramatic elements.



(Above): **Frenzy**'s murder of Babs Mulligan (Anna Massey) illustrates just how clever Hitchcock could be. After going to bed with Richard Blaney (Jon Finch), Babs sets out to learn the truth, believing wholeheartedly in Richard's innocence. She is invited by Richard's best friend, Bob Rusk (Barry Foster) up to his apartment for a drink – the last time we see Babs alive. Having already plumbed the audience with the brutal strangulation of Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Hitchcock's camera does not follow Babs and Bob into the apartment, but remains quietly present in the hall, slowly descending the stairs and exiting the building through the open front door at street level; the local foot traffic casually passing to and fro, no one any wiser that a murder has just been committed only a few feet away. This sequence comes with its own payoff a few scenes later. For Bob, having dumped Babs' body in a potato sack inside a truck bound for the market square suddenly discovers that the corpse is still clutching his monogrammed tie pin. Climbing into the back of the truck, Bob wrestles with the body already in rigor mortis, breaking Babs' stiff fingers to retrieve the evidence. The sequence is both harrowing and queerly humorous, Babs rigid feet and hands repeatedly smacking Bob in the face as the truck hits potholes in the road. Bob gets away, but only a few miles down the road Babs' nude body is jostled loose from the open back, falling directly in front of a police car.

What is perhaps even more troubling about **Torn Curtain** is that its screenplay seems desperately struggling for something intelligent to say. More often Hitchcock attempts to muddle the dramatics with preposterous bits of dialogue that string the story along to its inevitable and contrived conclusion. The humorous bits are infrequent and not funny at all, while the dramatic moments utterly lack in suspense. The film's one memorable moment is the murder of Hermann Gromek (Wolfgang Kieling) a double agent working for the Russians who too late realizes Michael's defection is a fraud. Here, Hitchcock illustrates for his audience just how difficult it is to kill a man – particularly when adversaries are evenly matched. Michael attempts to strangle, stab, strike down with a metal skillet, and finally is successful at gassing his assailant in a small cottage in the middle of nowhere.

"When was the last time Hitchcock went to the movies?" Variety carped when **Torn Curtain** was released; an understandable inquiry given the film's unnatural blend of matte shots and indoor set pieces, shot mostly at Universal with

pronounced obviousness. The film was universally panned by the critics. Dated in its cold war premise, its impossibly wrong blend of acting styles and its' even more bizarre amalgam of stylistic special effects, **Torn Curtain** has dated rather badly. The film is neither a product of vintage 60s cinema nor is it a time capsule of cold war tensions but a rather turgid and uninspired melodrama with failed romantic elements clinging to its peripheries.

Following the **Torn Curtain's** disastrous debut Hitchcock departed from making movies for nearly three years before bringing **Topaz** (1969) to the screen. He could just as easily have taken another year off to convalesce. Based on the sprawling best-seller by Leon Uris, **Topaz** is the story of a high-ranking Russian diplomat, Boris Kusenov (Per-Axel Arosenius) who defects to America. After a lengthy prologue in which Kusenov and his family narrowly escape Russian agents in Denmark, the film settles into a rather standard and plodding narrative written by Samuel Taylor; the crux being that Kusenov's defection might actually have been a rouse for him to get closer to American state secrets.

Enter Agent Michael Nordstrom (John Forsythe); a rather benign agent who enlists the aid of his more flamboyant French spy and personal contact, Andre Devereaux (Frederick Stafford) to do a bit of homegrown subversion involving Castro and the Cuban communist resistance. André accepts the assignment. But his wife Nicole (Dany Robin) suspects that part of the allure of it has to do with sultry Cuban communist, Juanita de Cordoba (Karin Dor) the wife of a deceased freedom fighter who is actually a double agent working of the Americans right under her lover, Rico Parra's (John Vernon) nose. The plot is further complicated with the introduction of Andre's son-in-law, Michèle Picard (Claude Jade) who inadvertently uncovers a murder plot – and then nearly becomes part of the body count himself.

With the success of the James Bond film franchise firmly in the back of his mind Hitchcock delves into espionage more deeply than in any of his other films, coming up with his own brand of cloak and dagger.

(Right): Hitchcock's swan song was **Family Plot** (1976). Given that Ernest Lehman had written one of the best Hitchcock's thriller of all time, **North By Northwest** (1959), the real mystery remained just how badly Lehman had mangled the original source material; **The Rainbird Pattern** by Victor Canning. Hitchcock's health was ailing at the time. He relied heavily on his second unit and assistant director to photograph the more strenuous sequences. The top photo features **Family Plot's** original cast: Barbara Harris, Karen Black, Bruce Dern and Roy Thinnes. When William Devane, Hitchcock's first choice for the part of diamond smuggler Arthur Adamson, suddenly became available, Hitchcock rather unceremoniously fired Thinnes, choosing to reshoot only the sequences where Thinnes' face is visible to the camera. Movie buffs ever since have watched **Family Plot** to see if they can spot the scenes where Thinnes is still quite obviously visible, even from the back. (Middle): Bruce Dern found Hitch' in excellent spirits. (Bottom): Hitchcock runs through a scene with Bruce Dern and Barbara Harris.



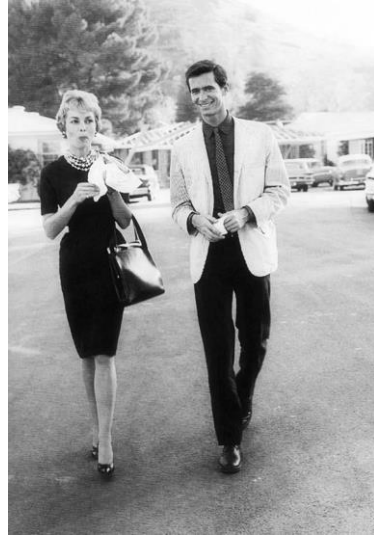


(Top left): all in the family. Julia Rainbird (Cathleen Nesbitt) fears that the sins from her past will remain unresolved unless she can make contact with the spirit of her dead sister to learn the whereabouts of her nephew. One problem: unlike the novel's medium, the film's Madame Blanche (Barbara Harris) is a fraud with virtually no psychic powers. (Top middle): Blanche's heart really isn't in the con, despite the fact that her boyfriend and cabbie, George Lumley (Bruce Dern) desperately wants to quit his day job. (Top right): The final moment in the movie, the sly wink addressing the camera and thereby the audience, was a bit of improvisation cooked up on the spot by Barbara Harris. Hitchcock's usually aversion to any deviation from his script was relaxed on this occasion. Harris had her moment. (Bottom left): George and Blanche are chased by a mysterious driver down a narrow cliff. They manage to escape. The driver of the car is not so lucky. (Bottom middle): Hitchcock poses for the 'official cast' portrait for **Family Plot**, with William Devane featured to Hitchcock's left. (Bottom right): Arthur Adamson (Devane) reveals to his girlfriend Fran (Karen Black) the perfect hiding place for their diamond score; a crystal chandelier.

Sadly, the material seems beyond his grasp; Uris' unwieldy prose too expansive to be given their due. In terms of box office appeal, **Topaz** has an even more insurmountable task to overcome – its inherent lack of star power. Hitchcock always worked with the top stars of his generation. But **Topaz** has not a single name to recommend it. John Forsythe is the American headliner. But Forsythe's name never commanded an audience – not until decades later and a move to the small screen for Aaron Spelling's prime time soap opera **Dynasty**. Although Hitchcock's movie is populated by an impressive roster of European talent, each competent in his/her performance, none is capable of breaking through the material or, for that matter, given their moment within the film to particularly shine and stand out.

Hitchcock's first sneak preview of **Topaz** must have turned his blood cold. The audience quickly became bored, their preview cards criticizing practically every aspect of the production – some even going so far as to rate the movie's overall appeal below 'poor', penciled in. Some participants even suggested that they had been duped into thinking **Topaz** was a Hitchcock picture when it so clearly was a disaster made by some other inferior director. The original ending, a duel inside a vacant soccer stadium, was universally panned. Panic inside Universal's front offices forced Hitchcock to cobble together a compromised alternative ending. André and Nicole are seen departing on a plane for France with their seemingly shattered marriage brought back into perspective. A second preview with this new ending fared only marginally better than the first.

So Hitchcock then came up with his second alternate; the off-camera suicide of Claude Martin (John Van Dreelan) – the suspected head of the international cartel and the man who has had an affair with Nicole. Since Hitchcock had no footage of Martin, he employed a reverse shot from an outtake, freeze-framed and zoomed in before fading to black with the sound of a gunshot heard on the soundtrack. When this ending too failed to engage his audience, Hitchcock had to resign himself to the fact that he had his first real turkey on his hands. Universal forgave Hitchcock his misfire. Arguably, Hitchcock's fans – even his diehards – never did.



(Above): Hitchcock's longtime association with costume designer Edith Head was a collaboration that produced many stunning ensembles, including Grace Kelly's for **Rear Window** (1954) and **To Catch a Thief** (1955). For 43 years Head reigned supreme as Paramount's premiere designer; the celebrated recipient of eight Academy Awards, making her the second most honored individual in Oscar history, surpassed only by Walt Disney. In 1967 Head moved from Paramount to Universal where she would remain until her death from myelofibrosis in 1981. She is seen here consulting Hitchcock on the set of **Family Plot** (1976). (Middle left): By the time Janet Leigh and Anthony Perkins posed for this impromptu photo-op **Psycho** (1960) was already ringing cash registers around the world; the killer and his victim brought back for old time's sake and one last spin around the Bates' Motel set on Universal's back lot. (Middle right): Hitchcock takes a phone call in between takes filming his monologue for an episode of **Alfred Hitchcock Presents**. That's studio photographer Jerry Alberts caught in the mirror snapping the photo. (Right): Hitchcock observes Bernard Herrmann's exhaustion with mild concern on the set of **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1956). Herrmann and Hitchcock's creative partnership proved an extraordinary alliance that spanned decades before a rift on the set of **Torn Curtain** (1966) put a period to both their professional and private friendship.

If there were those who thought Hitchcock was finished as a director upon **Topaz's** release, his next film **Frenzy** (1972) provided a considerable reprieve. Based on Arthur La Bern's novel, *Farewell Piccadilly, So Long Lester Square*, **Frenzy** represents Hitchcock at his most uncharacteristic and undeniably gruesome. In many ways the film is a throwback to the kind of entertainment Hitchcock was making in Britain prior to embarking upon his Hollywood career. Shot on a modest budget and on location in the UK, **Frenzy** opens with the discovery of a naked female corpse floating face down in the Thames; the latest victim of The Necktie Killer.

After Hitchcock's prerequisite cameo, as a passerby who observes the recovery of the body, the narrative constructed by Anthony Shaffer moves to a local watering hole and the firing of bartender Richard Blaney (Jon Finch), after being caught by his employer attempting to sneak a quick one for the road. Blaney's girlfriend, barmaid Babs (Anna Massey) encourages Richard to keep a stiff upper lip. Richard is next scene strolling through the marketplace at Covent Garden and addressed by friend, Bob Rusk (Barry Foster) who turns out to be the actual serial killer. Rusk suggests that Richard move on to greener pastures. But all Richard can think of is to revisit his past; his estranged wife; employment counselor, Brenda (Barbara Leigh-Hunt). Shortly thereafter, Rusk also pays Brenda a call too – one that ends with her becoming the next victim of the Necktie Killer.

The murders in **Frenzy** are not only amongst the most brutal ever created for a Hitchcock film, but they tend to take on a distinct note of pandering to the times. Hitchcock ups the ante he first established in **Psycho** by inserting gratuitous nudity into several key sequences – titillating his audience with the prospect of exploitative erotica turned upside down; lust escalating into violent crime and death. Although the inclusion of violent rape represents something new within a Hitchcock film, the staging of the strangulations in quick cuts is pure homage to the shower sequence in **Psycho**. Already in declining health, Hitchcock clearly relished the opportunity to revisit some of the familiar haunts he had known as a boy. Hence, **Frenzy** was, in its own way, a return of Hitchcock as England's prodigal son, come home. A financial success, **Frenzy** also introduced scores of younger filmgoers to Hitchcock at the movies even though it had become quite apparent to his most ardent fans that his best work was now truly behind him.

Family Plot (1976) effectively brought down the curtain on Hitchcock's career with a preposterous and lumbering bit of inane nonsense. The story concerns a fake medium, Madam Blanche (Barbara Harris) and her taxi driver boyfriend George (Bruce Dern) who cleverly scams naïve rich people out of their life savings. At present, their sitting duck is Julia Rainbird



(Above): for anyone who thinks a love scene is all about feeling sexy and getting into the mood with a costar – think again – then contrast this image of John Gavin and Janet Leigh posing for publicity with the actual work being done on the motel set during the filming of *Psycho* (1960), surrounded by grips, lighting and camera crew and Hitchcock (feet dangling in the upper center of the photo) all cautiously observing everything at a very close proximity. Reportedly Gavin was more nervous about filming this sequence than Leigh. He regarded his physical stature as anemic at best and worried that his shirtless debut would elicit laughs from the audience.

(Cathleen Nesbit), a widower who is certain that the ghost of her dead sister has come back to haunt her. George and Blanche accidentally cross paths with a pair of spurious diamond smugglers; Arthur Adamson (William Devane) and his mysterious girlfriend Fran (Karen Black). These two are behind a series of VIP kidnappings in the San Francisco Bay area. When Blanche is asked by Julia to channel her nephew, whom she had given away for adoption many years earlier, this improbable greedy foursome inadvertently come in contact over the kidnapping of a high-ranking cleric from the Catholic Church.

Based on Victor Canning's novel, the plot as reconstituted by Ernest Lehman relocates the action to Southern California, in the process rendering much of the original novel's appeal inconsequential, tired and meandering. In Canning's book Blanche has real psychic powers. In the movie she is merely an enterprising fop without a clue to recommend her. Everyone seems to be going through the motions – particularly Barbara Harris, who plays up the camp elements of the story more than the suspense, as though the entire production were a sort of *Freak Friday Part Two* instead of a Hitchcock thriller. In point of fact, Hitchcock had long admired Harris' work. However, Hitchcock's usual discriminant and exacting precision; his strict adherence to script and his meticulous planning via storyboards seem to have fallen by the waste side on **Family Plot**. Like **Torn Curtain** and **Topaz** before it, Hitchcock finds it difficult, if not in fact impossible to imbue the movie with clever visual touches. The action plays straight and from a rather disengaged perspective. Hitchcock was also rather lax about re-shooting scenes with actor Roy Thinnes, whom he fired after his first choice for the role of Arthur Adamson - William Devanes - suddenly became available. Although Hitchcock was forced to re-shoot close-ups and medium shots already made with Thinnes in the role for continuity sake, several rather obvious long shots remain of Thinnes walking away from the camera.

In hindsight, and with his health in very steep decline, one wonders why Hitchcock chose to shoot **Family Plot** at all. In point of fact, Hitchcock relied heavily on his second unit to lens the more strenuous action sequences. In retrospect Hitchcock's last three movies (**Topaz**, **Frenzy**, **Family Plot**) barely resemble the rest of his canon, both from a stylistic and narrative perspective. Instead, and particularly with the advent of home video that has made entire bodies of work



viewable in chronological order, these last few Hitchcock films exist today as strange anomaly apart from what was then referred to as Hitchcock's auteur style.

In more recent years Hitchcock's private life has come under considerable scrutiny. His daughter Pat has defended against the rumors that have circulated about her father: that his humor lent itself to cruelty rather than fun; that he rarely socialized with people outside of the making of his movies; that he derived a sick fascination by playing on actors' phobias, and, that he firmly believed all actors were cattle. The Hitchcock family legacy reveals a man unlike the persona of that macabre gentleman glimpsed in Hitchcock's features or adroitly providing glib sarcasm as introductions to his weekly television series.

No, Alfred Hitchcock in private is arguably not the Alfred Hitchcock the public knew and came to love. True enough, as a showman Hitchcock was ever-concerned with cultivating this reputation of the loveably brooding ham. Yet, in the final analysis Alfred Hitchcock lives primarily in the public's estimation through a curious balance between this well-crafted persona and his undeniable – and largely peerless body of work – most of it perennially revered and revived. That Hitchcock's contributions to American cinema and audiences the world over should lean toward darker tastes and themes was perhaps in servitude to the public's appetite and what Hitchcock perceived they wanted and had come to expect from him. That Hitchcock himself chose work over a quiet retirement is also admirable from the perspective that he remained an aspiring artist to the very end – even if his last few ventures were 'less than' what he might have provided his ardent fans during his golden period.

Today, Alfred Hitchcock holds hallowed respect amongst movie goers and movie makers alike and this, without a doubt, is as it should be. He is undeniably 'the master of suspense'. Few film makers so readily hit their mark with such spellbinding precision; fewer still without more obviously repeating themselves or merely falling back on techniques exploited in earlier contributions to the pantheon of world entertainment. If Hitchcock '*borrowed*' in his later years – as he unquestioningly did – then he pilfered from his own formidable archive of genius. And Hitchcock in his prime was indeed cutting edge and at the forefront of creating movie screen magic; a force to be reckoned with; a creative genius unlike most any before or since his own time and someone who quite instinctually understood the power of the camera.

Hitchcock understood not only the strength of his own directorial prowess, but also persisted in a vision relayed to his actors and crew. In effect, Hitchcock made everyone a part of his plan. Those who fell in line were well rewarded. Those who did not were quick to discover and perhaps regret their missed opportunity. But in the end, Alfred Hitchcock gave audiences what no other director of the American movie thriller arguably has – the template for creating genuine suspense. It's all there in a Hitchcock movie, furthermore explained away in great detail – the magician divulging his secrets in any number of interviews Hitchcock gave during his later years. He shared everything with us, while keeping the best part of himself for those closest to him – his family and grandchildren. As such, every director attempting a thriller today owes Alfred Hitchcock an eternal debt of gratitude. Permit us to worship.

