

HOPE LIES AT 24 FRAMES PER SECOND

F For Fake

and The Lesser Spotted Welles



A Hope Lies Monograph

INTRODUCING

The Hope Lies Monograph

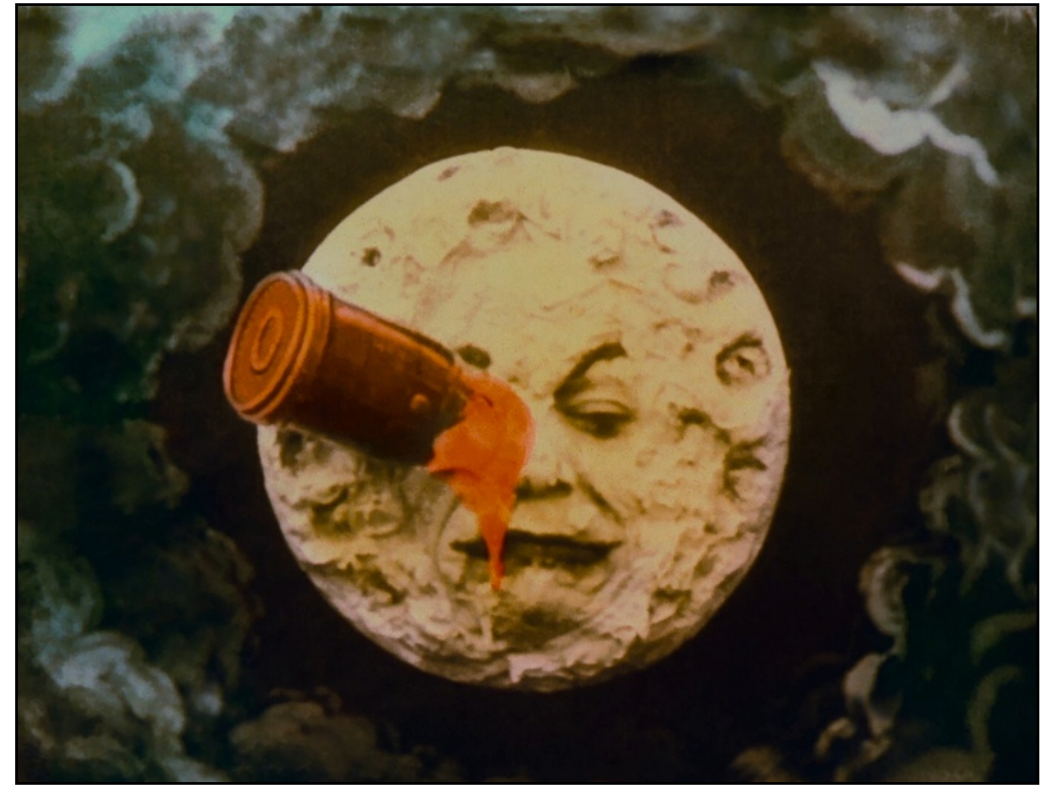


Welcome to this very special Hope Lies Monograph, in which we examine the lesser known films of Orson Welles. Hope Lies at 24 Frames Per Second is an independently run film website based in the UK. Over the course of the last two years Hope Lies has built itself up from simple blog to being one of the most respected film websites in the UK (and, we're told, the 12th most influential in Europe...).

Cinema fascinates us. Every facet, from the latest Aki Kaurismäki feature to the most over the top blockbuster that Hollywood has to offer, gives us something to mull over, debate or be passionate about. Our long held tagline on the website has been "*From A Bout de Souffle to Zabriskie Point, Hope Lies at 24 Frames Per Second attempts to cover every corner of the cinema spectrum*" and that stand remains as strong as ever: we have a passion for the cinema that knows no bounds, and we hope that these Monographs reflect that.

Technology also fascinates us, which is why we've decided to experiment a little with this Monograph that you hold in your hands. We are utterly convinced that the future of reading delivery is digital: it's convenient, it's good for the environment and ultimately it provides a very satisfying reader experience. We say this as fans of what publications like Film Comment, Cinema Scope and Empire Magazine have been doing with their digital alternatives to their traditional publications, and if we can replicate/mimic one iota of the great work being done by those institutions then we'll be happy. As with any experiment there will no doubt be issues at first, but we thank you in advance for helping us to resolve any that may crop up.

Our aim with the website has always been to remain as influence-free as possible, so we're looking to instill similar innovative methods of delivery here too: we want to keep this free, but we don't want to be overly reliant on advertising (We appreciate just as much as anyone how mass advertising can ruin a clean user experience). Feel free to get in touch if you would like to be involved with that aspect of the Monographs.



This Monograph is designed to be read in landscape orientation. That's when it looks its best. If you'd like to read it sans film stills and whatnot then simply turn it to portrait scale.

Each Monograph, as the title suggests, takes a look at one film. There's no defining reason for why a film might be subjected to coverage, but it's probably a given that a timely theatrical release will lead to featuring. With that in mind we do have a mammoth special edition in the works in which we'll be taking a look at the complete oeuvre of a specific filmmaker to mark an anniversary, but more on that later.

In closing, we would like to thank you for downloading and giving this inaugural monograph a shot. Any feedback will be really appreciated.



MONOGRAPH

F For Fake



F For Fake (Welles, 1973)

Noteworthy

1. F For Fake was Welles' final completed feature film.
2. The film is neither a documentary, nor a dramatic feature. Instead Welles described the work as "a new kind of film".
3. F For Fake started life as a very different film. Welles essentially hijacked French filmmaker François Reichenbach's production, which was a straight exploration of the life of Elmyr de Hory, and spun his grand tale from there.
4. Welles real-life love interest, Oja Kodar appears as the object of mass affection at the beginning of the film. One might declare that to be the ultimate message of F For Fake: it's Welles' ode to the love of his life.



Welles himself appears in F For Fake, as a connective figure that draws everything together

There's a certain charm in seeing one of the cinema's great "mythological" figures produce one of the defining works in the medium on the subject of truth. F For Fake, Orson Welles' 1973 movie is a thesis on reality, perception and appearances.

The project itself stems from appropriately confused beginnings. Initially conceived as a separate film, by a different filmmaker, in that it was one concerned solely with the tale of master art-forgery Elmyr de Hory, and was initially produced under the tutelage of François Reichenbach, a French director. Welles, somewhat ironi-

cally given the American filmmaker's own relationship with such things, took over proceedings some way into production, as the events surrounding Reichenbach's production swelled in to the archetypal real-life tale that would probably have been described as being "stranger than fiction". The resulting work is a master class in the examination of what cinema is, with a technical arm as impressive as its content.

Through his exploration of the nature of truthfulness Welles' film acts as an accomplished and playful deconstruction of the medium. One cannot help but recall Jean Renoir's *Le Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir* in the sense that it distills the things that one might consider to be that filmmakers' particular strengths and presents them in a wholly focused manner, with the nature of the pieces giving each a sense of the definitive (it's apt that both were the final completed projects of each of the film-makers).

The power of the edit, by now Welles' most formidable weapon is at the fore with *F For Fake*. So often a filmmaker denied the final cut of his own work, Welles here cuts as one might expect: with a passion and an urgency not seen since 1941 and *Citizen Kane*. As with that film Welles uses the iconography of the moving picture screen to subvert his audience's response. He once again refers to the newsreel when presenting an idea, the newsreel of course being one of the great sources of information for an America in the first half of the 20th century, just as he did so in the opening reel of *Citizen Kane*. In the same way that he manipulated that medium to present one fabricated life as real, here he uses it to present an

openly fictional account of a real life. Early on in the picture Welles cuts what might be the most romantic montage in all of the cinema, and further muddies the line between truth and fiction as he displays his love interest at the time, Oja Kodar to the world for all to see. In a sequence referred to as "Girl Watching", Welles cuts the faces of the men staring at Kodar, as she walks down a continental passage. Their gazes averted by the beautiful woman, Welles takes this moment of necessary male longing and turns it in to high drama.



With attention turned to Welles and his lack of a final cut for over 30 years, one ought also evaluate the manner in which Welles also uses the *F For Fake* platform as one from which for the director to address one of the reasons behind why this was the case. The film is ultimately a meditation on expertise, with Welles never getting

over the critical adversity that greeted him in many areas, it's easy to read *F For Fake* as his response to the criticism that plighted his career. As Peter Bogdanovich explains in his introduction to *This Is Orson Welles*, the written volume on which the pair collaborated and the closest thing to an autobiography ever produced by Welles the elder filmmaker was incredibly susceptible to criticism, and especially the ill-thought out, vindictive and poorly researched haute-scandal ramblings of the likes of Pauline Kael and Charles Higham. One might view *F For Fake* as a companion piece to *This Is Orson Welles*, with the director using the cinema medium to present his own criticisms in the more abstract form.

The whole thing rests on Welles' ability to tell a story, a talent for which he had nary an equal. He makes the overt or ridiculous incredibly moving (see his artists lament, "Cry the dead artists out of the living past" declares Welles), with the manner in which the aforementioned "stranger than fiction" nature of the film can be presented without the aid of a raised eyebrow a testament to the talent of the man behind the cut.

It's perhaps this film's post script that is the most interesting out of all of those in Welles oeuvre (no mean feat, I'm sure you will agree), with Elmyr de Hory going as far as to kill himself for his art, rather than face jail. In a neat twist of fate, within days of the man's death reports of forgeries of his own work, which were by this point deemed seriously valuable pieces of art in their own right thanks to the forger's celebrity, made their way on to the market....



MONOGRAPH

Falstaff: Chimes At Midnight



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FALSTAFF: CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT (WELLES, 1965)

This piece on Falstaff: Chimes At Midnight was originally written for Take One, The Cambridge Picturehouse Review, as a part of their coverage of the 2012 Cambridge Film Festival.

By 1966 Orson Welles was nearing the end of his career as a filmmaker. While he would complete three more films, not one of them was a dramatic feature, with the director instead focusing upon the video essay, a form over which he would have complete and unabashed control.

It's neat and fitting, then, that CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT should be Welles' final film as a director of actors and a manipulator of scenario, given that the film's principal character, and mainstay of several Shakespearean works, Sir John Falstaff is accused of being that thing that Welles himself was often declared: a liar. It's also appropriate that the central meditation throughout CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT is a refrain questioning the very notion of 'honour', which might reasonably be interpreted as a slight towards the filmmaker's harshest critics. That Welles himself portrays Falstaff cements the debate.

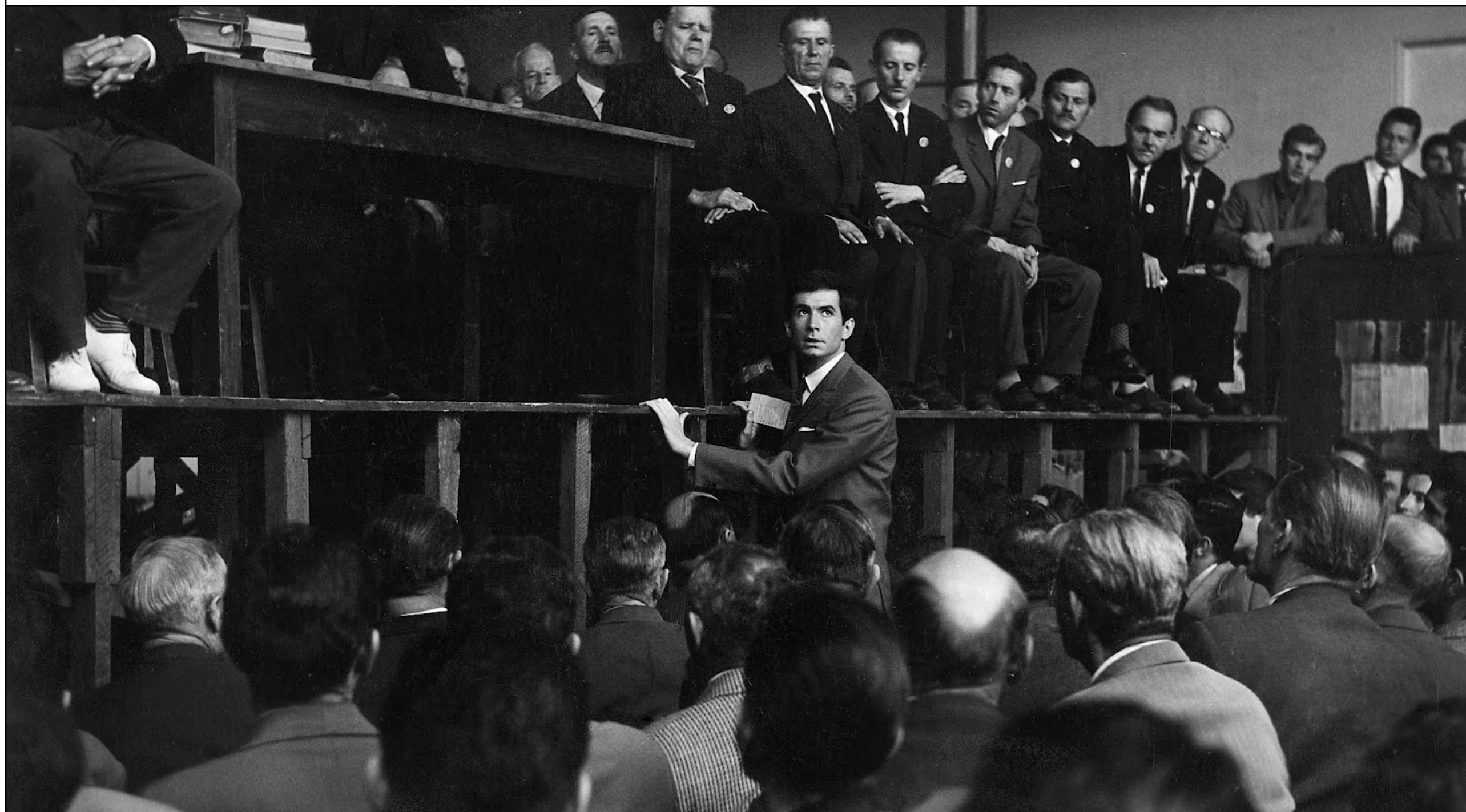
The roots of this particular production can be found in Welles' earliest years. The concept of CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT was born during his schoolboy days, before the idea was resurrected and honed as the play "Five Kings" in the late 1930s. "Five Kings" combined a number of Shakespeare's history plays in to one great tale, with the idea further defined in the mid-1960s to create CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT.

CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT is considered in some quarters to be Welles' greatest achievement, which is quite the claim when one considers that the film sits alongside such impressive works as TOUCH OF EVIL, F FOR FAKE and, of course, CITIZEN KANE. It is notably abstract and unique within Welles' oeuvre: combining the European sensibilities of the time (see the surreal nature of the horn players in one early moment), with Welles' own unique eye, and his appreciation of the polar opposites of a wide canvas and an extreme close-up. It's this magnificent juxtaposition of ideas that gives Welles' film that most profound of edges, securing its place in the cinematic canon of definitive Shakespeare productions. Indeed, one might note CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT as the most European take on a British source by an American, ever, in filmic memory.



MONOGRAPH

The Trial



The Trial (Welles, 1962)

Noteworthy

1. The Trial is derived from the Franz Kafka novel of the same name.
2. Martin Scorsese's 1985 film *After Hours* riffs on the same source material.
3. In 1981, Welles began production on *Filming The Trial*, a documentary in the vein of his *Filming Othello*, but never completed it.
4. Welles claims to have dubbed 11 separate voices with his own in the film. Including Perkins'. Whether this is true or not is up for the viewer to decide.
5. The Gare d'Orsay was used for the set of Josef K's remarkable office, in the interim period before the former train station became one of the world's finest museums.



Anthony Perkins may lead in front of the camera, but The Trial is very much Orson Welles' picture.

In a career which saw Orson Welles adapt Shakespeare, Tarkington and that other notable Wells, there's perhaps no greater indication as to Welles' adeptness at adaptation than his encounter with Franz Kafka. In turning to Kafka's 'Der Process', Welles produced one of his most visually striking works. A rhetorical question of a film, *The Trial*

saw Welles take to Paris, and a work that refers to the cinema as much as it does Kafka's source material. Welles claimed to have strictly been against homage, and while this may be true, the external reading of the work can't fail but to look to the movies. In fact, one might argue that the manner in which Welles' film evokes the wider

realm of the cinema in practically every shot makes for a case of the kid from Kenosha as the ultimate omnipresent harbinger of the movies.



The Trial looks to tokens of popular culture as diverse as Jean Cocteau and 'The Twilight Zone', while the scenario recalls Vidor. The presence of Anthony Perkins brings to mind Psycho, his place here actually reminds of another Hitchcock film: The Trial acting like a metaphysical response to North By Northwest (even down to the suit). Perkins is the inverted Jimmy Stewart, his impassioned speech in The Trial's famous courtroom sequence the reverse negative of that of Mr. Smith (who went to Washington). From the apocalyptic office space to the Harry Lime-esque sewers, one can't help but feel as though Welles is making a statement as much as

anything, on the world that changed in the wake of a second World War.

Perkins' Josef K. wanders around a post-apocalyptic setting like something from an Antonioni film, whilst channeling a post-Godardian sense of the absurd as real. Filtering the holocaust through Catholic guilt-complex Welles comments on the post-WW2 landscape effectively, while the internalised monologue that is essentially the film at hand is contradicted nicely by the bustling locales. As K. sits in on a theatrical performance the audience doesn't get to see what's unfolding on stage, instead their gaze forced to focus upon the literal audience of the picture.

The locations/sets sit at the centre of a hugely affecting visual pattern. A haunting, Auschwitz-evoking crowd stand like statues, while thousands of extras give the film the tone of a biblical epic in parts, both aesthetically and thematically. It's these occasional bursts of populace that are the films greatest asset when it comes to reinforcing the dreamlike quality. A surreal thrashing in a cupboard, in which a light swings through a confined space is encouraged by ferocious editing see things turn positively Hell-ish (and let's not forget that the term "trial" can be reapplied to suggest a hardship/nightmare situation), while the character of The Advocate (played by Welles himself) occupies a space that reminds of a Universal Monsters film set, all candles and smoke, while the Advocate himself wears a mask and his assistant has webbed fingers. While tonally very different to much of Welles work, The Trial maintains the playful spirit many associate with the filmmaker. It's arguably his most surreal 120 minutes, and at times is his most distressing.



From the opening prologue, drawn by notable artist Alexandre Alexeieff, in which Welles relays a second Kafka tale, 'Before The Law', the motif of the door is placed at the fore. Door keys and mirrors (the theoretical opposite of a closed door) feature commonly throughout, while the physical act of breaking down a door in the films third-act forms the closest thing we see to an escape for freedom, even if the spirit of the story does necessitate that K. must always wind up in the same spiral of chaos in spite of his attempts to break through. The focus on doors also acts as a straight indication of on-screen space too, as does the familiar Wellesian emphasis on ceilings. The director's fondness for ceilings comes in to it's own in the law courts, as once majestic roofs become a character of their own. Welles refrains from framing his protagonist in the centre of his picture, instead choosing to place him on the fringes of any scenario involving another figure (see his encounters with Leni, one of

the films anti-love interests, or the situation that unfolds in the cupboard). The world itself is a maze, with as diverse commodities as stacks of paper and piles of bricks forming the paths. It's perhaps the manner in which Welles presents the world of Titorelli, the painter, and key figure of the films third act, that fascinates the most. Wooden stakes form the walls of his studio/living space, while masses of stray children peer thru the gaps, the set in turn becoming a prison. Titorelli himself wears prison stripes and corduroy trousers, the vertical lines again prominent.

In presenting such oppressive thematic content in as contrasting a free-flowing and light-hearted manner as he does, Welles produced perhaps his greatest puzzle, which, for a figure whose filmography is filled with such jigsaws, is really saying something.



MONOGRAPH

Touch Of Evil



Touch Of Evil (Welles, 1958)

Noteworthy

1. As is commonplace with much of Welles' post-Citizen Kane works, the cut of Touch Of Evil was subject to meddling with by the studio heads that fronted the money for the project.
2. Welles wrote a now infamous 58-page memo to Universal head of production Edward Muhl expressing his wishes. The memo was ignored and the film released in a truncated 95-minute cut.
3. In 1998, thirteen years after the death of Welles, legendary editor Walter Murch attempted to reconstruct Touch Of Evil to Welles' original instructions in the 58-page memo. This version is now widely available.



Welles' Quinnan cuts a monstrous figure in Touch Of Evil.

To liberally borrow from the title of a Louis Malle film, Orson Welles's Touch Of Evil is a film which is balanced between two 'lifts to the scaffold'. The film's famous opening sequence sees the camera, Welles' eye, lifted up and elevated over the world below, instantly turning a film dealing with a relatively grim scenario in to one

ground in pure fantasy. The second elevation comes in the film's final scene, as our scurrying protagonist, who by that point might not even still actually be our protagonist, finds himself in the lowliest possible situation, burrowing in the undergrowth in an attempt to take down the

Frankenstein's Monster at the head of the picture.

Touch Of Evil is perhaps the ultimate 1950's American dissection of the cinema. Welles's Mexico is shot like a film set. It has the familiar backstage hustle and bustle one might associate with one of the great film studios, while one of the films protagonists accuses one of the figures that make up the aforementioned "hustle and bustle" of having "seen too many gangster movies". Uncle Joe, the closest thing to a traditional crime lord in *Touch Of Evil* even wears a wig, having seemingly raided the nearest make up truck on the studio lot that is Welles' Mexico border town. And of course Janet Leigh is best known for being one of the great monster sirens (itself the inversion of the femme fatale), with Quinlan a predatory, anti-Norman Bates (although of course Bates came later), a beast on a walking stick and coated in prosthetics, always shot from low angles and close-ups, his grotesque appearance the overriding factor whenever he's on screen. And yet Quinlan is a monster at once humanized by a tragic backstory (has there ever been as humanizing a backstory as the story of Quinlan's wife?), the influence of Shakespeare on Welles seeping through.

The opening sequence of *Touch Of Evil* is usually the section of the film most keenly focused upon by retrospective essays such as this, and for good reason. Fifty four years on, and in the age of the digitally aided, theoretically temporally infinitely long long-shot the sequence remains one of the great examples of the technique, with Welles and cinematographer Russell Metty channeling Murnau and Karl Freund's unchained camera and creating something truly breathtaking. The fluidity of the opening crane shot is broken by

the chaos of the aftermath of the explosion, which coincides with the entrance of Welles's Quinlan, who himself serves as a physical manifestation of the chaos on display.

And yet the fantastic camerawork is not but limited to this opening long-take. Take the post-acid attack weaving chase between Vargas and one of the hoods employed to make his life hell. Or the atmospheric use of depth of field in the hall of records sequence, which, appropriately enough serves as a significant punctuation point in the trail of the film itself (similarly to how the opening sequence serves as a tone setter). Expressionism-recalling extreme close ups fill the frame, the human face becoming the most imposing feature in all of the cinema. As things to come the fore in this sequence, as Quinlan's partner Menzies comes to his senses in understanding his partners true past, a realisation disguised as admission as everything comes crashing together. Meanwhile, and somewhere off in the distance (and unseen) Quinlan is away on havoc duty. The scene that immediately follows that shows off the level of depth beautifully too, as well as the films most chaotic, and downright bizarre moments. Dennis Weaver's motel night manager stands out almost as much as Heston's "Mexican", but as he paces around under scrutiny from Vargas pressed on the whereabouts of the latter man's wife, the visage of the Weaver clambering over the weathered desert trees makes for affecting, and striking viewing.

Menzies, Quinlan's right hand man might actually be the most interesting character in the film. His redemption arc, which correlates nicely with the films third act, makes for a satisfying conclusion to what is ultimately a rather confused film (in its truncated,

studio-handled theatrical cut at least). As both Quinlan and Menzies' fates are decided Welles shoots from afar. The camera rises to a Vargas-in-the-rafters point-of-view, as the protagonist hides in the upper siding of an oil pump machination. Dutch angles and expressionist framing again lead the way, Welles portraying an unorthodox chase scene, in which modernity collides with the old, with as unorthodox a technique. Quinlan's "hunch" ultimately reigns supreme, even if it does so too late, his downfall inevitable by the time instinct kicks in, while the contextually modern technology remains hampered by the necessity of the user to physically maintain a link with the situation that the technology would theoretically afford a dissection from.

That Quinlan's instinct ultimately dominates in spite of the drama that has occurred as a result of the professional formulas not followed leaves us in a situation whereby the "real" hero of Welles' *Touch Of Evil* is as ambiguous as anything else in the filmmakers oeuvre. As the penultimate scene of the film reaches its end, a defeated Quinlan seated on a throne of trash, one can't help but feel that the at-once immoral code of judgment adhered to by the man, in which those he deems guilty are punished as such, in spite of whether or not evidence to prove his theories can be found, are actually relatively sound. It's the methods that draw the madness, the theory itself is fine.



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Credits

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