

HOPE LIES AT 24 FRAMES PER SECOND

Hitchcock



A Hope Lies Monograph

INTRODUCING

The Hope Lies Monograph



Welcome to the first special edition in the Hope Lies Monograph series. This edition takes a look at a selection from the oeuvre of Alfred Hitchcock, and is something of a warm up for a much bigger project that we'll be undertaking over the summer. 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 16th 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 Monograph a shot. Any feedback will be really appreciated.



MONOGRAPH

North By Northwest



It is the simplest of misunderstandings that leads to one of the most perfectly chaotic action films ever made in Alfred Hitchcock's North By Northwest. We're no doubt all familiar with the tales of a Hitchcock approached by one Ian Fleming in the wake of the success of North By Northwest, so convinced that Hitch was the man for bringing his James Bond to the screen thanks to the calling card that was this 1959 film. It is the simplest of misunderstandings that leads to one of the most perfectly chaotic action films ever made in Alfred Hitchcock's North By Northwest. We're no doubt all familiar with the tales of a Hitchcock approached by one Ian Fleming in the wake of the success of North By Northwest, so convinced that Hitch was the man for bringing his James Bond to the screen thanks to the calling card that was this 1959 film.

North By Northwest (Hitchcock, 1959)

Noteworthy

1. North By Northwest marked Alfred Hitchcock's fourth collaboration with Cary Grant, following in the wake of Notorious, To Catch A Thief and Suspicion.
2. Grant wasn't always tapped for the role though: Initially Hitch had Jimmy Stewart in mind.
3. The film came in at number 55 in the most recent AFI 100.
4. Warner Brothers, the studio who now own the film following their acquisition of much of the MGM back catalogue recently issued an Inside The Script iPad enhanced ebook taking a look in to the creative process behind North By Northwest. It's a fascinating read.



Firat Tanis as Kenan, the suspect at the heart of Once Upon A Time In Anatolia.

While structurally Hitchcock's movie might have much in common with the Bond series, the same can't be said of the actual content. The protagonist here in North By Northwest is but a regular guy, an ad-man from New York City, with the aforementioned "simple misunderstanding" leading our everyman on the grandest of journeys.

It's the pre-eminent of Hitch's "Wrong Man movies, standing alongside (and slightly above) films like 1942's Saboteur and 1972's Frenzy.

The plot of the film is so well known that it almost seems extraneous to surmise it, but for the sake of clarity here goes. Successful advertising executive Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) is mis-

taken for a man named 'George Kaplan', a figure who has provoked the wrath of foreign spy Phillip Vandamm (James Mason). A game of cat and mouse ensues, with the latter and his henchmen and compadres chasing Thornhill across America. That most perfect of spy film MacGuffin, microfilm makes an appearance, and while the plot is little more than an excuse to jump from action sequence to action sequence it remains as engaging as any plot directors oeuvre. And what action sequences the film contains! While the crop-duster sequence and Mount Rushmore are most fondly remembered, its a scene early on in the film that remains our favourite, in which a drunken Thornhill partakes in a night time car chase while under the influence. It's chaotic, immersive and masterfully constructed, and sorely underrated next to it's showier brethren. (Although to be fair it is quite easy to forget just how magnificent an achievement the crop-duster scene is in itself, with the wordless set-up a masterclass in staging, playing out like Leone in Norton & Sons of London).

Hitchcock's under-referenced Brechtian streak has perhaps never been more prevalent than it is in North By Northwest. Almost every sequence contains at least one element that reminds the viewer that what they are watching is a movie, be it the back projection of many of the sequences, the miniatures that portray the famous United Nations Building or the studio assembled crowds that serve largely as a metaphorical cover for Hitchcock's intentions, as opposed to an attempt to form a semblance of realism. The use of Vistavision finishes this aesthetic, lending an artificial glaze to proceedings throughout the whole of the picture. The nature of the unlikely path charted by the films protagonist proves equally artificial, with the manner in which the self-declared every-

man turns superman over the course of 136 minutes as far-fetched and composed as the intricate set design and overt costuming.

While it might be most fondly remembered for its use of action, the opening credits of North By Northwest, courtesy of legendary titler Saul Bass are also one of its most often cited aspects. It's generally recognised that North By Northwest was the first movie to make extensive use of kinetic typography, aka – animated text. The delineated image of green coats everything, from the office block that the film opens in through to a specially manipulated MGM logo, and fades to reveal the manner in which the "real world" exists underneath Hitchcock and Bass' stylisation (as the green veneer/curtain fades away as the credits progress and we slowly head "downstairs" to the chaos of the city), again tying in to the Brechtian elements outlined above. Bernard Herrmann's bombast score accompanies, setting out its intentions during the opening moments.

Its notable that the film often declared to be the most Hitchcockian of his oeuvre came from a creative drought. North By Northwest sees the director at his wittiest, his most playful, and at his most unbearably tense. It's a masterwork of mid-20th Century Hollywood cinema, and remains an utter breeze over 50 years on from its original release.

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MONOGRAPH

Shadow Of A Doubt



Anyone who has studied cinema is likely to be familiar with *Shadow Of A Doubt*: Alfred Hitchcock's 1943 film is the lead study in Bordwell and Thompson's 'Film Art – An Introduction', with the opening section of the book relying upon the Hitchcock film to introduce a number of key film theory ideas. The film itself tells the story of the return of a nefarious uncle to the bosom of his warm-hearted out-west family, the man on the run from a menace implied in the film's opening moments.

Shadow Of A Doubt (Hitchcock, 1943)

Noteworthy

1. Shadow Of A Doubt was the favourite film of The Master Of Suspense himself.
2. Gordon McDonell received the films lone Oscar nomination for his "Based On A Story By" credit. Strangely the films three scriptwriters weren't actually recognised...
3. Shadow Of A Doubt was admitted to the National Film Registry in 1991.
4. The 'Merry Widow Waltz' is taken from Franz Lehár's operetta The Merry Widow. Dimitri Tiomkin, the composer of the score for Shadow Of A Doubt referred heavily to the Lehár music.



Joseph Cotten is Charlie Oakley.

Joseph Cotten is the man, who goes by the name of Charlie Oakley and is quite the departure from the roles the actor is most fondly remembered for. Teresa Wright is the co-lead, as the named-for niece of Charlie, Charlotte Newton. While initially liberated by the sudden arrival of her uncle, Charlotte's excitement soon turns to suspi-

cion, that greatest of Hitchcock feelings, and the situation spirals out of control.

Shadow Of A Doubt opens with an image that David Lynch would pay homage to some years later with the opening moments of Mulholland Dr., as a group of people dance while the "Merry Widow" waltz plays out. As is the case with the

Lynch film, *Shadow Of A Doubt* is a movies movie, a post-modern exercise that dissects the medium from the inside out. We cut from the credits to the far less glamorous sight of a Philadelphia brownstone, presented by way of a dutch angle, before meeting Uncle Charlie who is laying uneasily still in the middle of a bed (an image that would later be recalled as his namesake sits in a similar state). As the landlady of the abode pulls down the window blind it recalls a coffin closing, our vampire put to rest. The diegetic score, provided by an orchestra is already huge and only builds further and higher as the sequence progresses. One understands immediately that something is not right here, with the subdued climax being the first of many such instances of this kind of behaviour in the film. Sound is one of the key traits of *Shadow Of A Doubt*, and one of the most powerful devices employed here by Hitchcock. *Shadow Of A Doubt* is a noisy film in general, with the chatter of kids, the sound of traffic and the various noises produced by the locomotive making for a packed sound track. The recurrent image of the dancers is brought to centre-stage again as the film closes, with the sight of the waltz being played out as Charlie falls to his death, and while its not literally spoken one cannot help but think of Uncle Charlie's earlier insistence that "The whole world's a joke to me" as he falls victim to fate. It's a brutal end to a work far ahead of its time. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

One of my favourite things about the work of Alfred Hitchcock is his ability to present space and place. The San Francisco of *Vertigo* feels like a real city, the slow driving sequences expanding the scope of the locale impressively. And thats without even mentioning the single-location worlds of *Rear Window*, *Rope* and *Lifeboat*. Hitchcock's playground for *Shadow Of A Doubt* is the perfect idyll of Santa Rosa, a location defined by its white picket

fences and modest yet familiar town square. One particularly memorable sequence involves Charlotte in a mad dash across the town to the library, hoping to reach it before it closes for the day. The scene is presented almost in real-time with the diegetic music building in the fashion of a scene from a love story, as a besotted pair chart city and landscape in an attempt to be reacquainted. The geography of the town is matched by that of the house, one in which there are an unusual number of exits, including one from the top floor of the residence. While no doubt common place at the time of the films production, and lending a hand in creating some dramatic tension, this use of space serves well as an analogy for the burgeoning family unit, with the on-set of adolescence leading to fractured relations between parent and child. The family is clearly a key theme within Hitchcock's work, with the directors own warm relationship with his family (as detailed in Patrick McGilligan's landmark biography of the man) played against by many of those familiar relationships he presents on screen.

With Charlie Oakley Joseph Cotten brings to the screen one of its great monsters. Quirks assist the aura (No photos of him exist, he deals in broad sweeps, resenting the little details), with his declaration that "The world's a hell what does it matter what's in it?" actively helping his niece, his hyper disillusionment overshadowing her own perception of the world considerably and affording her perspective, essentially snapping the girl out of her stupor. He brings with him chaos, an anarchy that arrives in Santa Rosa via train and leaves in a similar way, itself perhaps a great analogy for the American movies and the west coast of America in general. The closest thing we get to the urban decay of the city that Charlie has left behind is in the form of the man-made fog of the smoke filled bar that Uncle takes niece to. The spiral of Charlie Jr. is akin to the

nightmares unravelling in much of Hitch's later work, a happenstance meeting with a former schoolfriend turned waitress a vision of our protagonists potential fate. Wright's turn as the troubled girl is fantastic, predating and predicting the disillusionment of the post-World War 2 baby-boomer generation. She comes across like a legitimate teenager, akin to someone from a John Cassavetes film or the sort of girl that Harvey Keitel might date in an early Martin Scorsese picture.

Shadow Of A Doubt, and it's skewed Americana fairytale nature makes for the perfect bedfellow to another directorial work from a British ex-pat. Charles Laughton's The Night Of The Hunter, famously that particular actors sole directorial outing tread a similar line, with the two films transplanting Brothers Grimm-ities on to tales of the the New World. The almost allegorical nature of the names of the two main players, coupled with a hint at the supernatural via telepathy and superstitions help to flesh out these ideas. As mentioned briefly afore, Shadow Of A Doubt also happens to be one of the great early deconstructions of the cinema. One of the films strongest undercurrents involves Henry Travers's patriarch of the Newton family and his friend Herb (Hume Cronyn) discussing the intricacies and specifics of commuting a murder, purely hypothetically of course, with their commentary in turn providing apt discussion over the film itself. Hitchcock was deconstructing the genre 50 years before the post-modern 1990's.

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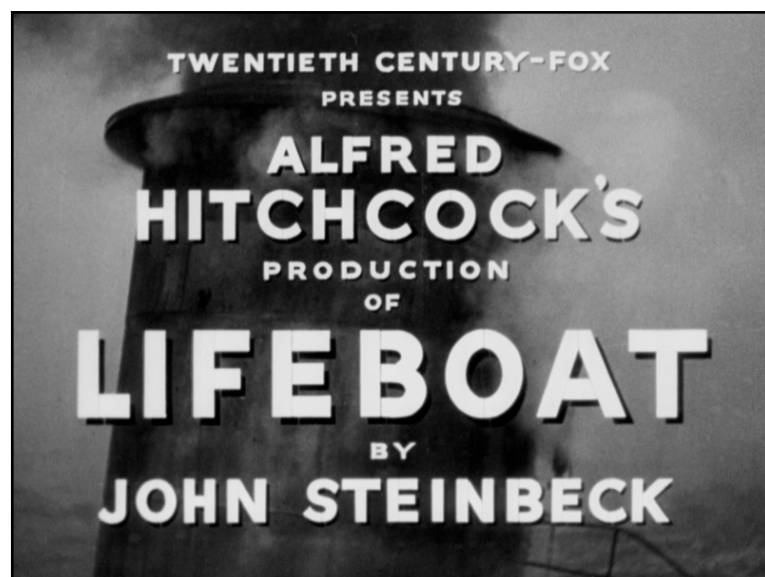


MONOGRAPH

Lifeboat



Five thoughts on Alfred Hitchcock's Lifeboat, his 1944 follow-up to Shadow Of A Doubt.



1. Stylistically speaking *Lifeboat* begins where *Shadow Of A Doubt* left off. The blaring noise of the last chimney of the sinking ship, coupled with a booming score from Hugo Friedhofer that follows in the tradition of Dimitri Tiomkin's work on *Shadow Of A Doubt*. The overlaying of diegetic music with the sound of chaos recalls the use of sound in the earlier film too. Friedhofer worked on the music for a number of greats, with Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once*, Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* and John Ford's *How Green Was My Valley* just a few of the films that feature on his CV. The film itself feels like an interesting diversion from *Shadow Of A Doubt*, and indeed Hitchcock's work in general. It plays out like an episode of the *Twilight Zone* in some ways, although

where it does feel most familiar is in the moral tale at the heart of the movie.

2. One performance nigh on overshadows the rest. Tallulah Bankhead went on to win the New York Film Critics Circle Award for "Best Actress" for her performance here. With her perfect coiffure, aghast at the site of a pull in her stockings Bankhead's Connie Porter is the archetypical (and literal) fish out of water when we see the film open, with the character undergoing a significant change over the course of the film. Hume Cronyn from *Shadow Of A Doubt* returns to work under Hitchcock in a very different performance than that of the previous film too, while Canada Lee, the actor most famous for his turn as Orson Welles' "Voodoo" Macbeth also makes an appearance.

3. *Lifeboat* is a spectacular example of set design, and controlled space. While Hitchcock was rather fond of the limited scenario, none posed quite as big a problem as *Lifeboat*. Not only is it an extremely confined space but it features a relatively large cast.

4. The film features the single best Hitchcock cameo. No image defines the walk-on



cameo better than the sight of Hitchcock stumbling in to view in the background of a scene, yet *Lifeboat*, with its incredibly limited setting posed a problem: just how would the filmmaker make his obligatory appearance? The quandary was solved in ingenious fashion thanks to a well placed newspaper advert promoting an "obesity slayer". The directors self-deprecating humour shines through.

5. The film is heavily cine-literate. A camera viewfinder is used by Bankhead to identify another figure as the film opens, Hitchcock reminding his audience that what they are witnessing is a constructed reality from the off. It's interesting that the camera is soon abandoned to the sea, with the film ultimately feeling more like allegory than propaganda in this respect.

MONOGRAPH

The Lady Vanishes



Prior to heading off to the bright lights of Hollywood Alfred Hitchcock made what was perhaps his most ambitious British film, *The Lady Vanishes*. Starring Margaret Lockwood and Michael Redgrave, the film paved the way for his most notable early Hollywood film, with its theme of memory and identity laying the groundwork for the expression of those ideas in works such as *Notorious*, *Saboteur* and *Spellbound*. Obviously those are two of the key recurring notions passed through his entire body of work, and it's arguable that *The Lady Vanishes* is where it all began (although admittedly *The 39 Steps* may beg to differ).

The Lady Vanishes (Hitchcock, 1938)

Noteworthy

1. The film's set was only ninety feet long, and housed in Islington, London.
2. Alfred Hitchcock won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for direction for his work on *The Lady Vanishes*.
3. Carol Reed's *Night Train To Munich* is often misread to be a sequel to *The Lady Vanishes*. This is not the case, in spite of the two films sharing a number of characters.
4. Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne's *Charters* and *Caldicott* would return in a couple of other films, and even appeared in an early draft of *The Third Man*. Billy Liar writer Keith Waterhouse would later spin the characters off in to a television series.



Margaret Lockwood leads a solid ensemble cast embroiled in the conspiracy surrounding the eponymous "lady" of the title.

The *Lady Vanishes* combines a number of Hitchcockian tropes, spy thriller, conspiracy ghostliness, witty, wry comedy and a strong female presence, in to a grand showcase of all that made the director's early period great. The director is one of the few that crossed over from the silent period in to the sound relative unscathed, placing

in a rather unique position in the 1930's. The concept of relating a filmic narrative structure to the process of a train journey was certainly nothing new in 1938, but Hitchcock delighted in the possibilities of the hyper-cinematic form of transport.

From a technical perspective the film is a bit of a marvel, with sound stages, model work and back

projection doing a mighty job of standing in for continental Europe. The films opening bars, in which a glorified train set stands in for the snow-struck Bandrika mountain retreat is remarkable, with confident camerawork standing in for shooting on location. The sight of a train in motion is achieved utilising similar creative thinking, with an experimental montage that recalls Hitchcock's time in Germany making up for any shortcomings in provisions. Even with the limitations of shooting in Britain in 1939 in mind, one cannot ever look upon the creative decisions made by Hitchcock as being lesser in any way, with they the unequivocally best for the story at hand. One might assume that had conditions been any different the film would have remained the same.



The formidable pairing of Lockwood and Redgrave make for an endearing leading duo, with the ensemble cast in which they lead proving one of Hitchcock's most successful larger casts. Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne are on proto-R2D2/C3PO duties, with their witty asides providing a sort-of context and running commentary to proceedings, ensuring that the familiar Hitchcock wry humour punctuates even the most disparate of situations. A familiar translation-woe driven comedy features, with translation and communication problems actually driving the film dramatically too. It's perhaps more interesting observation when one considers that the world was on the verge of all out war at this time. The spacial peace within the film itself soon breaks out in chaos when the realisation that our momentary protagonists aren't going anywhere as the film opens, with this absurdity pulling the film along not unlike the transport at the heart of the film. No better is this chaotic approach illustrated than with opening portion of the films final act, in which the daftest of fight scenes, complete with doves, bunnies and magic tricks breaks out. Chaos reigns, yet order prevails by the time the closing credits roll, an apt finale to Hitchcock's time in his homeland.

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Credits

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