

Marlene Dietrich Collection Berlin is a division of Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

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Dear Friends,
this newsletter is focused on Fritz Lang's "Rancho Notorious". As you may know Filmmuseum Berlin is currently doing a retrospective and an exhibit on Fritz Lang and it seems quite appropriate that we not only pay our tribute to this major event but also benefit from the research of our colleagues. Thus we have the privilege of reprinting the "Rancho Notorious" section of the Fritz Lang book just published by our colleagues.

"Rancho Notorious" will be shown during the Berlinale at CinemaxX 9, February 16th, 10.30 p.m. For more information on the Fritz Lang exhibit in Filmmuseum Berlin please go to <http://www.fffb.de> German version, section Aktuelles & Presse

The centenary calendar will be published soon; although we received some information on events taking place worldwide the center of all activities seems to be Berlin and Germany. So again: if you know of any events taking place in your country please let us know.

Orbit

Jean Pierre Aumont (January 5th, 1911 - January 30th, 2001)



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Marlene Dietrich and Jean Pierre Aumont at the opening of Cinema St. Cloud in Paris on January 28th, 1966.

This is Jean-Pierre Aumont introduction to his seven chapters on Dietrich:

Une femme fascinante! Que dis-je? Dix, vingt, trente femmes fascinantes. Il y a, bien sûr, la star. Elle brillait d'un tel éclat qu'elle faisait passer au second plan ses talents d'actrice. Et pourtant, dans certain films, tels «Femme au Démon» ou «Témoin à charge», elle réussit des performances qui ne devaient rien à sa beauté. Il y a l'astrologue, qui établit avec soin l'horoscope détaillé de ses amis, afin de leur signaler les dangers à éviter. OI a l'amie. Généreuse, attentive, incomparable. Quand j'ai joué une poèce a New York, non seulement elle m'a offert sa appartement, mais elle l'avait rempli de fleurs pour m'accueillir. Elle avait sorti des bouteilles de champagne, et laissé des petits mots sur chaque meuble, sous chaque interrupteur, pour m'en expliquer le fonctionnement. Des toutes ces femmes étonnantes, et parfois contradictoire, j'en ai connu sept dans la même semaine ! Qu'il me sois permis, sur le mode humoristique, de les évoquer. On m'accusera d'outrance. Mais André Gide l'a dit – et Marlène le sait mieux que quiconque: «Pour conserver au récit les couleurs de la vie , il FAULT exagérer».

Taken from Jean-Pierre Aumont: Dis moi d'abord que tu m'aimes. Éditions Jade/ Librairie Flammarion, Paris, 1986.

Marlene and Fritz Lang

Excerpt from the new Fritz Lang book "FL" (see page 4 of this newsletter).

Lang writes in reverence of his leading lady:

"You're an enrichment to life, lending meaning to the meaningless, the spark making fire and burning possible. Whereby it's irrelevant whether you're a current lover or not... I'm happy to be friends with you." (Fritz Lang File, American Film Institute, Los Angeles)

The director had known Marlene Dietrich for years. On February 28, 1935, for example, he sends her a telegram with the words: "without being gray burn burn "; on March 5 he telegraphs her: "no sad eyes have no beauty happy eyes morning eyes you know stop

your voice surrounds me all day long sleep well!" Their relationship endured, a relationship which Lang forced. A telegram on April 27, 1936 reads: "finished shooting start cutting am terribly tired and you're not here and you're a bad friend who doesn't keep in touch and i wish you'd be happy." On March 28, 1937, Lang cables the following lines: "dear little dearest am changing my spots running after myself and trying to catch myself stop have a wonderful lovely easter bunny day."

(Telegrams: Marlene Dietrich Collection Berlin / American Film Institute)

It was against this very personal backdrop that Lang's film *Rancho Notorious* was shot.

However, collaboration between the star director and star actress was not uncomplicated: Lang tried to mold Marlene Dietrich into the image he envisaged, while she still clung to the one Sternberg had created for her. Later she wrote about Lang, that he belonged to "Sadist Incorporated": "The teutonic Arrogance which he was feeding on was repulsive to me. Only my professional dedication saved me from the complete DESERTATION of my contractual duties." (Manuscript, Paris, around 1984; Marlene Dietrich Collection Berlin).

Marlene on Fritz Lang:

"The director I deeply hated was Fritz Lang. I had to swallow all the poison that flowed through my system in order to be able to make a film for him. If it hadn't been for Mel Ferrer I would not have lasted. Mel was always on my side – helping me through the endless days of work. He [Fritz Lang] would go through endless pains hours and hours before the 'ready-to-work-call' in order to mark on the floors of all the studios we worked in the exact positions we had to take without looking down. – He did this deliberately so not to give the actors a chance to run through the scenes – just seeking their way. He marked every step – he marked every breath – he marked - like Hitler would have done – except he was a german jew taking refuge in America. But he decided to have his own way. He would 'have walked over corpses' as we said at that time. He had made some successful films in Germany and some in the US but he never achieved the great celebrity he wanted. I don't cry for him. Nothing lost. No friendship – no tears. The film was called '*Rancho Notorious*' – a very mediocre effort.

As Fritz Lang was a very big man it stands to reason that his steps were rather large and that is why his markings on the floor were hard to follow. Mel Ferrer is an elegant small-boned man and had a terrible time to hit those marks without wiggling. Not to speak of me – a rather strong woman – but unable to ever match his steps.

He would make me do it again and again while screaming "Don't wiggle". I could have killed him right then and there because there was no rhyme or reason for his demands. He tried his best to make me responsible for the time needed to re-adjust the lights to my new positions but I faught back like a tiger. I had worked with too many great film-directors and knew that regimenting an actors movements before the actor had a chance to try out the scenes he had to play was sheer voluntary amateurism, or just plain sadism like in the case of Mr. Fritz Lang."

From an unedited handwritten manuscript.



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Rudi Sieber, Maria Sieber, Marlene Dietrich and Fritz Lang at the Coconut Grove, Los Angeles, February 20th 1935.

Rancho Notorious

USA 1951/52. Director: Fritz Lang. Script: Daniel Taradash, from the Story "Gunsight Whitman" by Silvia Richards. Camera: Hal Mohr. Camera assistant: Sam Leavitt. Technicolor-consultant: Richard Mueller. Cut: Otto Ludwig. Sound: Hugh McDowell, Mac Dalgleish. Music: Emil Newman, Songs by Ken Darby: Gypsy Davey (sung by Marlene Dietrich), Get Away, Young Man (sung by Marlene Dietrich), Legend of Cuck-A-Luck (sung by William Lee). Decors: Wiard B. Ihnen. Set decorator: Robert Priestley. Costumes: Joe King; Costumes of Marlene Dietrich: Don Loper. Make up: Frank Westmore. Marlene Dietrich's Hair stylist: Nellie Manley. Director's Assistant: Emmett Emerson. Cast: Marlene Dietrich (Altar Keane), Arthur Kennedy (Vern Haskell), Mel Ferrer (Frenchy Fairmont), Gloria Henry (Beth Forbes), William Frawley (Baldy Gunder), Lloyd Gough (Kinch), Lisa Ferraday (Maxine), John Raven (Chuck-A-Luck dealer), Jack Elam (Geary), Dan Seymour (Commanche Paul), George Reeves (Wilson), Rodric Redwing (Rio), Frank Ferguson (Preacher), Charles Gonzales (Hevia), Francis

MacDonald (Harbin), John Kellogg (Salesman), Stuart Randall (Starr), Roger Anderson (Red), Felipe Turich (Sanchez), Jos Dominguez (Gonzales), Stan Jolley (Deputy Warren), John Doucette (Whitney), Ralph Sanford (Intrigant), Lane Chandler (Sheriff Hardy), Fuzzy Knight (Barber), Frank Graham (Ace Maguire), William Haade (Sheriff Bullock), Russell Johnson (Croupier), Mabel Smaney (fat woman), Dick Wessel (human nag), Dick Eliot, .
 Production Company: Fidelity Pictures Inc., Hollywood, for RKO Pictures. Producer: Howard Welsch. Production manager: Ben Hersh. Production dates: March 19th – April 26th, 1951; Shooting dates for Marlene: March 21st – April 25th 1951; Make-Up and wardrobe tests: March 9th, 7th and 15th 1951; Get away young man. Recording date: April 10th, 1952;
 Marlenes Stand In: Fran Shore, Copyright: 6.3.1952, LP 1632. World Premiere: March 6th 1952, Chicago, State Lake Theatre. Premiere New York: May 15th 1952, Paramount Theatre; Original length: 89 min. Format: 35 mm, colour (Technicolor); Working title: Chuck-A-Luck; Copy: Warner Bros. / Turner Entertainment, Burbank, 8010 ft
 Video: Magna Entertainment.



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RKO American One-sheet, signed by Marlene Dietrich, 1952.

Songs

Gypsy Davey

Music and Lyrics by Ken Darby.

How could she leave her high born lord?
 How could she leave her baby?
 How could she leave her bed and board?
 And elope with the Gypsy Davey?

Last night she slept in an goose-feather bed,
 Along with her lord and her baby,
 Tonight she sleeps -
 (Broken off)

Get away, young man.

Music and Lyrics by Ken Darby.

A young man is full of adventure,
 and eager to do what he can!
 He may be a boy, but don't send a boy
 To do the work of a man!
 Get away --- get away
 Get away, young man, get away!

A young man will come when you call him,
 And leave when you tell him to go,
 But some day he'll guess, a woman means yes,
 Whenever a woman says no!
 Get away...

A woman is only a creature
 Of notions and dimples and lies
 So learn if you can, this lesson, young man,
 And don't run off when she cries
 Get away ---get away.....
 If you can!

Reviews

Rancho notorious is not meant to be taken seriously even though it begins with a rape-murder and ends with Marlene Dietrich dying nobly for her fellow man. Director Fritz Lang has shaped his Technicolor western in the form of a cowboy ballad: the plaintive lyrics, sung by William Lee, set the stage for Arthur Kennedy's far-ranging man-hunt of the foul fiend who dishonored and killed his sweetheart (Gloria Henry). The search brings Cowhand Kennedy to Marlene's ranch on the Mexican border, a fancy men's club restricted to desperadoes who want rest and relaxation between their brushes with the law. While Kennedy tries to decide which of the resident badmen killed his girl, Marlene sings throatily, lazily crosses her beautiful legs, and looks sultry. She also irritates Gunman Mel Ferrer by going on moonlight walks with Kennedy and murmuring such sweet nothings as I wish you'd go away and come back ten years ago.

Rancho ends in a predictable crescendo of six-shooters. Marlene brings the competence of long experience to her role of an aging seductress, Mel Ferrer is suitably dashing as the fastest draw in the West, and Arthur Kennedy is all right as the vengeful lover, but he should not have been required to outrage Dietrich fans by delivering moral preachments to her.

Anon. in: Time, March 3rd, 1952.

It is an oddly indifferent Marlene Dietrich who appears with a group of mangy men in R.K.O.'s rancho notorious (...). As the only considerable woman in this brash tale of western banditry that has a disturbing disposition to wander all over the place, Miss Dietrich expands her drowsy optics with a come-hither look a couple of times, exposes her gams on two occasions and goes into one warm embrace. But for the rest, she strolls in listless fashion through the standard conceits of a role which has her acting as mistress of a hideout for fugitive outlaws in Texas years ago.

It is not surprising that she ambles. The screen play Daniel Taradash has rigged up for this occasion is a rambling and motley affair that falls between slam-bang horse-opera and offers the capable Miss Dietrich very little of consequence to do. One scene, introduced as a reflection of her youth as a dance-hall girl, wherein she and several other floozies ride gentlemen piggy-back across a barroom floor, gives promise of something on the order of her cut-ups in destry rides again, but that is the only demonstration of rowdy behavior that she gives. And one song number, Get Away, Young Man, brings but an echo of La Dietrich of yore.

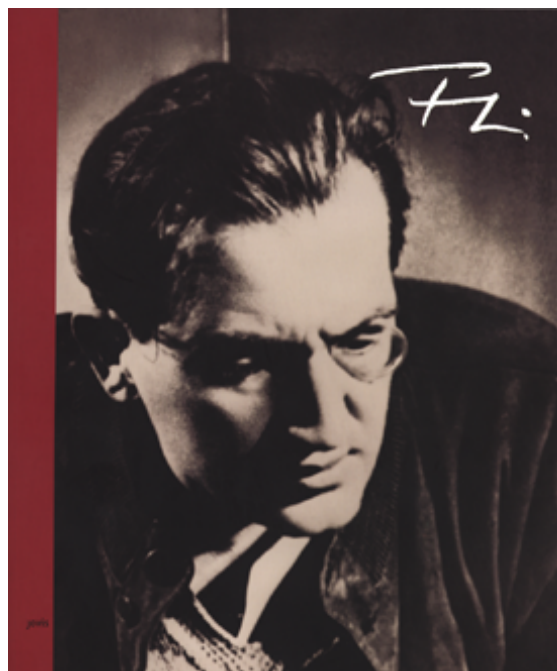
Actually, Mr. Taradash, working from a Silvia Richards yarn is much less concerned with his lady than he is with his gun-slinging men. His clashes of dialogue and violence are almost entirely between Arthur Kennedy as a vengeance-hunting cowboy and Mel Ferrer as an aging highwayman. And when these two buckos aren't bounting, Mr. Kennedy devotes as much time to the secondary outlaws at the hideout as he does to the lady who runs the place. Mr. Taradash and the ruffians treat Miss Dietrich as little more than a pawn.

In the department of western action, the show has its interesting points, including a couple of

fist-and-gun fights that have been racily staged by Fritz Lang. Anyone who will settle for stick-ups and slug fests and pistol duels, all in Technicolor, may find enough in this picture to satiate his lust. Hungry-looking actors swagger and snarl in the outlaw roles. But anyone who expects a western picture to match the character of its able female star had better look in another direction. This one is run-of-the-mill.

Bosley Crowther in: The New York Times, May 15, 1952.

Books



Fritz Lang. His Life and work. Photographs and Documents

Edited by Rolf Aurich, Wolfgang Jacobsen and Cornelius Schnauber in collaboration with Nicole Brunnhuber and Gabriele Jatho
Berlin: Filmmuseum Berlin and Jovis Verlag GmbH, 2001; 512 p. in German, French and English. Hard cover edition 98,- DM

End of Newsletter