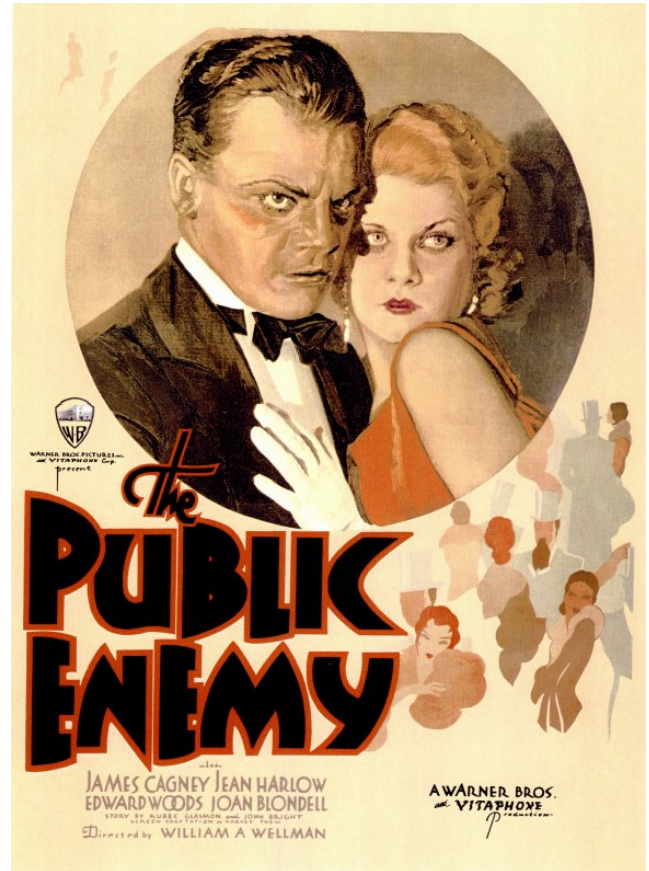


**Directed by** William A. Wellman  
**Written by** Kubec Glasmon and John Bright  
**Produced by** Darryl F. Zanuck  
**Cinematography by** Devereaux Jennings  
**Film Editing by** Edward M. McDermott  
**Makeup Department** Perc Westmore

James Cagney... Tom Powers  
 Jean Harlow... Gwen Allen  
 Edward Woods... Matt Doyle  
 Joan Blondell... Mamie  
 Donald Cook... Mike Powers  
 Leslie Fenton... Nails Nathan  
 Beryl Mercer... Ma Powers  
 Robert Emmett O'Connor... Paddy Ryan  
 Murray Kinnell... Putty Nose

**William A. Wellman** (director) (February 29, 1896, Brookline, Massachusetts – December 9, 1975, Los Angeles, California) has 83 directing credits, some of which are 1958 *Lafayette Escadrille*, 1955 *Blood Alley*, 1954 *Track of the Cat*, 1954 *The High and the Mighty*, 1953 *Island in the Sky*, 1951 *Westward the Women*, 1951 *It's a Big Country*, 1951 *Across the Wide Missouri*, 1949 *Battleground*, 1948 *Yellow Sky*, 1948 *The Iron Curtain*, 1947 *Magic Town*, 1945 *Story of G.I. Joe*, 1945 *This Man's Navy*, 1944 *Buffalo Bill*, 1943 *The Ox-Bow Incident*, 1939 *The Light That Failed*, 1939 *Beau Geste*, 1938 *Men with Wings*, 1937 *Nothing Sacred*, 1937 *A Star Is Born*, 1936 *Tarzan Escapes*, 1936 *Small Town Girl*, 1936 *Robin Hood of El Dorado*, 1935 *The Call of the Wild*, 1934 *Viva Villa!*, 1933 *Wild Boys of the Road*, 1933 *Midnight Mary*, 1932 *The Purchase Price*, 1932 *So Big!*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *Other Men's Women*, 1930 *Maybe It's Love*, 1928 *Ladies of the Mob*, 1928 *The Legion of the Condemned*, 1927 *Wings*, 1926 *The Cat's Pajamas*, 1926 *You Never Know Women*, 1923 *Cupid's Fireman*, 1923 *Big Dan*, 1923 *The Man Who Won*. His 1927 film, *Wings*, was the first film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture.

**Devereaux Jennings** (cinematography) (September 22, 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah – March 12, 1952, Hollywood, California) has 83 cinematographer credits, some of which are 1937 *Born to the West*, 1936 *Hark Ye Hark!*, 1932 *Stranger in Town*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *50 Million Frenchmen*, 1931 *Finn and*



*Hattie*, 1930 *Divorce Among Friends*, 1930 *The Life of the Party*, 1930 *Oh, Sailor Behave*, 1930 *The Matrimonial Bed*, 1930 *Golden Dawn*, 1930 *Bride of the Regiment*, 1930 *Dumbbells in Ermine*, 1930 *Hold Everything*, 1930 *Song of the West*, 1928 *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, 1927 *College*, 1927 *The Missing Link*, 1926 *The General*, 1926 *Battling Butler*, 1925 *Steel Preferred*, 1923 *The Gunfighter*, 1923 *Children of Jazz*, 1921 *The Mistress of Shenstone*, 1920 *Madame X*, 1920 *The Daredevil*, 1919 *Treat 'Em Rough*, 1918 *Ace High*, 1918 *Confession*, 1917 *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1917 *Her Temptation*, 1916 *A Gamble in Souls*, 1916 *Eye of the Night*, 1916 *Bullets and Brown Eyes*, 1916/1 *The Corner*, 1915 *The Winged Idol*, and 1915 *Matrimony*.

**Perc Westmore** (October 29, 1904 in Canterbury, England – September 30, 1970, Los Angeles, California) has 343 makeup credits, probably more than anybody else. Some of them are 1970-1971 "The Bill Cosby Show" (23 episodes), 1970 *There Was a Crooked Man...*, 1969 *Once You Kiss a Stranger...*, 1969 *The Good Guys and the Bad Guys*, 1964-1966 "The Munsters" (69 episodes), 1956 "Queen for a Day", 1955 *The Virgin Queen*, 1950 *The Glass Menagerie*, 1950 *Pretty Baby*, 1950 *The Great Jewel Robber*, 1950 *Caged*, 1950 *The Damned Don't Cry*, 1950 *Chain Lightning*, 1950 *Young Man with a Horn*, 1950 *Backfire*, 1949 *Always Leave Them Laughing*, 1949 *White Heat*, 1949 *Task Force*, 1949 *The Fountainhead*, 1949 *Flamingo Road*, 1948 *Adventures of Don Juan*, 1948 *Johnny Belinda*, 1948 *Rope*, 1948 *Key Largo*, 1948 *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, 1947 *Dark Passage*, 1947 *Life with Father*, 1947 *Possessed*, 1947 *Cheyenne*, 1946 *Humoresque*, 1946 *Cloak and Dagger*, 1946 *The Big Sleep*, 1946 *A Stolen Life*, 1946 *Of Human Bondage*, 1946

*Night and Day*, 1945 *Mildred Pierce*, 1945 *Pride of the Marines*, 1945 *Rhapsody in Blue*, 1945 *The Horn Blows at Midnight*, 1945 *God Is My Co-Pilot*, 1944 *To Have and Have Not*, 1944 *Arsenic and Old Lace*, 1944 *The Mask of Dimitrios*, 1944 *Passage to Marseille*, 1943 *Destination Tokyo*, 1943 *Watch on the Rhine*, 1942 *Casablanca*, 1942 *Now, Voyager*, 1942 *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942 *In This Our Life*, 1942 *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, 1941 *You're in the Army Now*, 1941 *They Died with Their Boots On*, 1941 *The Maltese Falcon*, 1941 *The Little Foxes*, 1941 *A Shot in the Dark*, 1941 *The Sea Wolf*, 1941 *The Strawberry Blonde*, 1941 *High Sierra*, 1940 *Santa Fe Trail*, 1940 *The Letter*, 1940 *South of Suez*, 1940 *They Drive by Night*, 1940 *The Sea Hawk*, 1940 *Virginia City*, 1940 *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet*, 1939 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1939 *The Roaring Twenties*, 1939 *Each Dawn I Die*, 1938 *Heart of the North*, 1938 *Angels with Dirty Faces*, 1938 *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, and 1935 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**James Cagney** (July 17, 1899, New York City, New York – March 30, 1986, Stanfordsville, New York) won a Best Actor Oscar for *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942). Some of his other 68 roles were in 1984 “Terrible Joe Moran”, 1981 *Ragtime*, 1968 *Arizona Bushwhackers*, 1957 *Man of a Thousand Faces*, 1955 *Mister Roberts*, 1955 *The Seven Little Foys*, 1955 *Love Me or Leave Me*, 1953 *A Lion Is in the Streets*, 1952 *What Price Glory*, 1950 *The West Point Story*, 1950 *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye*, 1949 *White Heat*, 1948 *The Time of Your Life*, 1947 *13 Rue Madeleine*, 1945 *Blood on the Sun*, 1943 *Johnny Come Lately*, 1942 *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1941 *The Strawberry Blonde*, 1939 *The Roaring Twenties*, 1939 *Each Dawn I Die*, 1938 *Angels with Dirty Faces*, 1938 *Boy Meets Girl*, 1935 *Mutiny on the Bounty*, 1935 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1935 *'G' Men*, 1935 *Devil Dogs of the Air*, 1934 *The St. Louis Kid*, 1934 *Here Comes the Navy*, 1934 *Jimmy the Gent*, 1933 *Lady Killer*, 1933 *Hard to Handle*, 1932 *Winner Take All*, 1932 *Taxi!*, 1931 *Blonde Crazy*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *Other Men's Women*, 1930 *The Doorway to Hell*, and 1930 *Sinners' Holiday*.

**Jean Harlow** (March 3, 1911, Kansas City, Missouri – June 7, 1937, Los Angeles, California, uremic poisoning) appeared in 42 films, some of which are 1937 *Saratoga*, 1936 *Wife vs. Secretary*, 1936 *Riffraff*, 1935 *Reckless*, 1934 *The Girl from Missouri*, 1933 *Bombshell*, 1933 *Dinner at Eight*, 1933 *Hold Your Man*, 1932 *Red Dust*, 1932 *Red-Headed Woman*, 1932 *Scarface*, 1931 *Platinum Blonde*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *City Lights*, 1929 *The Saturday Night Kid*, 1929 *Why Be Good?*, 1929 *Fugitives*, 1929 *Liberty*, 1928 *Chasing Husbands*, 1928 *Moran of the Marines*, and 1928 *Honor Bound*.

**Edward Woods** (July 5, 1903, Los Angeles, California – October 8, 1989, Salt Lake City, Utah) appeared in only 13 films. The producers originally wanted him for Jimmy Cagney's role as Tom Powers, but Wellman knew better. Woods' other films were 1938 *Shadows Over Shanghai*, 1937 *Navy Blues*, 1935 *Fighting Lady*, 1933 *Marriage on Approval*,

1933 *Dinner at Eight*, 1933 *Tarzan the Fearless*, 1933 *Bondage*, 1933 *Reckless Decision*, 1932 *Hot Saturday*, 1932 *They Never Come Back*, 1931 *Local Boy Makes Good*, and 1930 *Mothers Cry*.

**Joan Blondell** (August 30, 1906, New York City, New York – December 25, 1979, Santa Monica, California) appeared in 157 films and TV series, among them 1981 *The Woman Inside*, 1979 “The Rebels”, 1979 *The Champ*, 1978 *Grease*, 1977 *Opening Night*, 1977 *The Baron*, 1973 “The Rookies”, 1972-1973 “Banyon” (8 episodes), 1971 *Support Your Local Gunfighter*, 1968-1970 “Here Come the Brides” (51 episodes), 1967 “Winchester 73”, 1966 “Baby Makes Three”, 1965 *The Cincinnati Kid*, 1964 “Twilight Zone”, 1963 “Wagon Train”, 1963 “The Virginian”, 1957 *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*, 1953 “Suspense”, 1947 *Nightmare Alley*, 1945 *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, 1943 *Cry 'Havoc'*, 1941 *Topper Returns*, 1939 *East Side of Heaven*, 1939 *Off the Record*, 1938 *There's Always a Woman*, 1937 *Back in Circulation*, 1937 *The King and the Chorus Girl*, 1936 *Gold Diggers of 1937*, 1935 *We're in the Money*, 1933 *Footlight Parade*, 1933 *Gold Diggers of 1933*, 1933 *Broadway Bad*, 1932 *Central Park*, 1932 *Make Me a Star*, 1931 *Blonde Crazy*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *God's Gift to Women*, 1931 *Other Men's Women*, and 1930 *The Heart Breaker*.

**Donald Cook** (September 26, 1901, Portland, Oregon – October 1, 1961, New Haven, Connecticut) has 66 acting credits, some of which are 1959 “Too Young to Go Steady”, 1958 “Schlitz Playhouse”, 1950 *Our Very Own*, 1945 *Blonde Ransom*, 1945 *Patrick the Great*, 1943 *Freedom Comes High*, 1937 *Circus Girl*, 1937 *Two Wise Maids*, 1936 *Beware of Ladies*, 1936 *Can This Be Dixie?*, 1936 *Ellis Island*, 1936 *Show Boat*, 1936 *The Girl from Mandalay*, 1936 *Ring Around the Moon*, 1936 *The Leavenworth Case*, 1935 *The Calling of Dan Matthews*, 1935 *Confidential*, 1935 *The Spanish Cape Mystery*, 1935 *Ladies Love Danger*, 1935 *Here Comes the Band*, 1935 *Murder in the Fleet*, 1935 *Motive for Revenge*, 1935 *The Casino Murder Case*, 1935 *Gigolette*, 1935 *The Night Is Young*, 1935 *Behind the Evidence*, 1934 *Fugitive Lady*, 1931 *Party Husband*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, and 1931 *Unfaithful*.



**Leslie Fenton** (March 12, 1902 in Liverpool, England – March 25, 1978, Montecito, California) appeared in 62 films, among them 1938 *Boys Town*, 1936 *The House of Secrets*, 1936 *The Longest Night*, 1935 *East of Java*, 1935 *Men Without Names*, 1935 *Chinatown Squad*, 1934 *Strange Wives*, 1934 *Marie Galante*, 1933 *Night Flight*, 1929 *The Man I Love*, 1928 *The Dragnet*, 1927 *The Last Performance*, 1925 *Lazybones*, 1925 *Thunder Mountain*, 1925 *Havoc*, and 1923 *Gentle Julia*.

**Beryl Mercer** (August 13, 1882, Seville, Spain – July 28, 1939, Santa Monica, California) was in 54 films, some of which were 1939 *A Woman Is the Judge*, 1939 *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell*, 1939 *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1939 *The Little Princess*, 1936 *Three Live Ghosts*, 1935 *Magnificent Obsession*, 1934 *Jane Eyre*, 1933 *Berkeley Square*, 1932 *No Greater Love*, 1932 *Unholy Love*, 1932 *Young America*, 1931 *The Man in*

*Possession*, 1931 *The Sky Spider*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *East Lynne*, 1931 *Inspiration*, 1930 *Outward Bound*, 1923 *The Christian*, 1922 *Broken Chains*, and 1916 *The Final Curtain*.

**Robert Emmett O'Connor** (March 18, 1885 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin – September 4, 1962, Hollywood, California) appeared in 214 films and TV series, some of which were 1958 “Man Without a Gun”, 1954 “Annie Oakley”, 1954 “The Loretta Young Show”, 1950 *Watch the Birdie*, 1950 *Sunset Blvd.*, 1947 *The Hucksters*, 1946 *The Harvey Girls*, 1945 *They Were Expendable*, 1945 *Anchors Aweigh*, 1943 *Dr. Gillespie's Criminal Case*, 1943 *The Human Comedy*, 1941 *Fiesta*, 1940 *Dance, Girl, Dance*, 1935 *A Night at the Opera*, 1933 *Gabriel Over the White House*, 1932 *Blonde Venus*, 1932 *Taxi!*, 1932 *Two Kinds of Women*, 1931 *Ladies of the Big House*, 1931 *Reckless Living*, 1931 *Fanny Foley Herself*, 1931 *The Public Defender*, 1931 *Three Who Loved*, 1931 *Up for Murder*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *Three Girls Lost*, 1930 *Our Blushing Brides*, 1930 *The Big House*, 1920 *Drink Hearty*, 1920 *His Royal Slyness*, and 1919 *Pay Your Dues*.

**Murray Kinnell** (July 24, 1889, London, England – August 11, 1954, Santa Barbara, California) appeared in 71 films, some of which were 1937 *Think Fast, Mr. Moto*, 1937 *Parnell*, 1937 *Captains Courageous*, 1937 *The Prince and the Pauper*, 1937 *The Soldier and the Lady*, 1936 *Winterset*, 1936 *Lloyd's of London*, 1936 *Make Way for a Lady*, 1936 *Mary of Scotland*, 1935 *Captain Blood*, 1935 *Charlie Chan in Paris*, 1934 *Charlie Chan's Courage*, 1933 *Today We Live*, 1932 *Rasputin and the Empress*, 1932 *Grand Hotel*, 1932 *Freaks*, 1931 *The Public Enemy*, 1931 *The Secret Six*, 1930 *Princess and the Plumber*, and 1930 *Old English*.

#### **WILLIAM WELLMAN (from Wikipedia)**

William Augustus Wellman (February 29, 1896 – December 9, 1975) was an American film director. Although Wellman began his film career as an actor, he worked on over 80 films, as director, producer and consultant but most often as a director, notable for his work in crime, adventure and action genre films, often focusing on aviation themes, a particular passion. He also directed several well regarded satirical comedies. Wellman directed the 1927 film *Wings*, which became the first film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture at the 1st Academy Awards ceremony.

Wellman's father, Arthur Gouverneur Wellman, was a New England Brahmin of English-Welsh-Scottish and Irish descent. William was a great-great-great-great-grandson of Puritan Thomas Wellman who immigrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony about 1640. William was a great-great-great grandson of Francis Lewis of New York, one of the signatories to the Declaration of Independence. His much beloved mother was an Irish immigrant named Cecilia McCarthy.

Wellman was expelled from Newton High School in Newton Highlands, Massachusetts, for dropping a stink bomb on the principal's head. Ironically, his mother was a probation officer who was asked to address Congress on the subject of juvenile delinquency. Wellman worked as a salesman and then at a lumber yard, before ending up playing professional ice hockey, which is where he was first seen by Douglas Fairbanks, who

suggested that with Wellman's good looks he could become a film actor.

In World War I Wellman enlisted in the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps as an ambulance driver. While in Paris, Wellman joined the French Foreign Legion and was assigned on December 3, 1917 as a fighter pilot and the first American to join N.87 escadrille in the Lafayette Flying Corps (not the sub-unit Lafayette Escadrille as usually stated), where he earned himself the nickname "Wild Bill" and received the Croix de Guerre with two palms. N.87, les Chats Noir (Black Cat Group) was stationed at Lunéville in the Alsace-Lorraine sector and was equipped with Nieuport 17 and later Nieuport 24 "pursuit" aircraft. Wellman's combat experience culminated in three recorded "kills", along with five probables, although he was ultimately shot down. Wellman survived the crash but he walked with a pronounced limp for the rest of his life. (He used the limp to his advantage, often exaggerating it when he had to "meet a pretty girl.") After the Armistice, Wellman returned to the United States, wrote a book about his exploits (with the help of a ghostwriter), and joined the United States Army Air Service. Stationed at Rockwell Field, San Diego, he taught combat tactics to new pilots.



While in San Diego, Wellman would fly to Hollywood for the weekends in his Spad fighter, using Fairbanks' polo field in Bel Air as a landing strip. Fairbanks was fascinated with the true-life adventures of "Wild Bill" and promised to recommend him for a job in the movie business; he was responsible for Wellman being cast in the juvenile lead of *The Knickerbocker Buckaroo* (1919). Wellman was hired for the role of a young officer in *Evangeline* (1919), but was fired for slapping the

leading lady, the actress Miriam Cooper, who happened to be the wife of director Raoul Walsh

It did not matter, because Wellman hated being an actor, thought it was unmasculine, and disliked how he looked on film. He soon switched to working behind the camera, aiming to be a director, and progressed up the line as "a messenger boy, as an assistant cutter, an assistant property man, a property man, an assistant director, second unit director and eventually... director." His first assignment as an assistant director for Bernie Durning provided him with a work ethic that he adopted for future film work. One strict rule that Durning enforced was no fraternization with screen femme fatales, which almost immediately Wellman broke, leading to a confrontation and a thrashing from the director. Despite his transgression, both men became lifelong friends, and Wellman steadily progressed to more difficult first unit assignments.

Wellman made his uncredited directorial debut in 1920 at Fox with *The Twins of Suffering Creek*. The first films he was credited with directing were *The Man Who Won* and *Second Hand Love*, released on the same day in 1923. After directing a dozen low-budget 'horse opera' films (some of which he would rather forget), Wellman was hired by Paramount in 1927 to direct *Wings*, a major war drama dealing with fighter pilots during World War I that was highlighted by air combat and flight sequences. The film culminates with the epic Battle of Saint-Mihiel. In the 1st Academy Awards it was one of two films to win Best Picture (the other was *Sunrise*).

Wellman's other notable films include *The Public Enemy* (1931), the first version of *A Star Is Born* (1937), *Nothing Sacred* (1937), the 1939 version of *Beau Geste* starring Gary Cooper, *Thunder Birds* (1942), *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943), *Lady of Burlesque* (1943), *The Story of G.I. Joe* (1945), *Battleground* (1949) and two films starring and co-produced by John Wayne, *Island in the Sky* (1953) and *The High and the Mighty* (1954).

While he was primarily a director, Wellman also produced ten films, one of them uncredited, all of which he also directed. His last film was *Lafayette Escadrille* (1958), which he produced, directed, wrote the story for and narrated. He wrote the screenplay for two other films that he directed, and one film that he did not direct, 1936's *The Last Gangster*. He also wrote the story for *A Star Is Born* and received a story credit for both remakes in 1954 and 1976.

Wellman was known for his disdain for actors in general, and actresses in particular, "Movie stardom isn't about acting ability - it's personality and temperament", he stated in 1952, and added, "I once directed Clara Bow. She was mad and crazy but WHAT a personality!"

Many actors disliked working with him, because he bullied them to get the performance he wanted. Wellman liked to work fast. Even though he hated their narcissism, he preferred working with men, because they did not need as much

preparation time before shooting as women did. Despite all this, Wellman managed to elicit Oscar-nominated performances from seven different actors: Fredric March and Janet Gaynor (*A Star Is Born*), Brian Donlevy (*Beau Geste*), Robert Mitchum (*The Story of G.I. Joe*), James Whitmore (*Battleground*), and Jan Sterling and Claire Trevor (*The High and Mighty*).

In his career, Wellman won a single Academy Award, for the story of *A Star Is Born*. He was nominated as best director three times, for *A Star Is Born*, *Battleground* and *The High and Mighty*, for which he was also nominated by the Directors Guild of America as best director. In 1973, the DGA honored him with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Wellman also has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, at 6125 Hollywood Blvd.

**Richard Maltby, *The Public Enemy, Senses of Cinema Cinémathèque Annotations on Film, Issues # 29:***

Like many 1930s crime movies, *The Public Enemy* (1931) begins with an explicit statement of authorial intent: "It is the intention of the authors of *The Public Enemy* to honestly depict an environment that exists today in a certain strata [sic] of American life, rather than to glorify the hoodlum or the criminal". This declaration of civic responsibility is usually regarded as an empty, cynical gesture intended to appease critics concerned at the movies' "subversive" effects, but such an interpretation simplifies the complex and contradictory cultural position occupied by Hollywood's representations of criminality in the early Depression. Contemporaneous reviews treated *The Public Enemy's* claim to provide "a sociological study" of gangland more seriously, endorsing its "remarkably lifelike portraits of

young hoodlums" as "a hard and true picture of the unheroic gangster" (1). The studio did not aim to produce either a sociological treatise or a socially subversive text, but the "roughest, toughest, and best of the gang films to date" (2). In the cultural climate of the time, its producers had to defend it against the persistent criticism that such movies were a source of inspiration for criminal behaviour. The editorial justification of *The Public Enemy* as a contribution to social debate was not, however, something tacked on to the end of the project to fool the censorious, but an integral part of the movie's process of construction. As the script was being written, Darryl F. Zanuck, head of production at Warner Bros., argued to the administrators of the Production Code that "if we can sell the



idea that ... ONLY BY THE BETTERMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND EDUCATION for the masses can we overcome the widespread tendency toward *lawbreaking* – we have then punched over a moral that should do a lot toward protecting us" from cuts at the hands of state and municipal censor boards (3).

No one who saw *Little Caesar* or *The Public Enemy* in 1931 saw them in a cultural vacuum. Embodying the metropolitan civic corruption that had been tolerated in the 1920s, the gangster had been an acceptable representative of anti-

Prohibition sentiment in the popular press until 1929, but in the cultural catharsis of the early Depression he became a scapegoat villain, threatening the survival of social order and American values. This shift in public sentiment was most conspicuously charted in changed press attitudes to Al Capone, who had ceased to be the celebrated “Horatio Alger lad of Prohibition” long before his conviction for tax evasion in October 1931 (4).

Contrary to the mythology of a “pre-Code” cinema, the “classic gangster film” was in fact the product of only one production season, 1930-1931, and constituted a cycle of fewer than 30 pictures. The box-office success of *The Doorway to Hell* in late 1930 and *Little Caesar* in January 1931 triggered a series of imitations in a pattern typical of the industry’s exploitation of a topical cycle, but none of the pictures released after April 1931 were box-office successes. By then, exhibitors were reporting that audiences had had enough of gang pictures, while a plethora of civic and religious organisations complained that these movies continued to endow gangsters “with romance and glamour”. In response, the industry claimed that the movies were

“deterrents, not incentives, to criminal behaviour” (5), “debunking” gangsters through “the deadly weapon of ridicule”, and stripping them of “every shred of false heroism that might influence young people”, most conspicuously through the use of ethnic stereotyping in casting and performance (6). After the New York censor board eliminated six scenes from *The Public Enemy* before permitting its release in mid-April, however, the MPPDA acted to curtail the cycle, establishing guidelines for “the proper treatment of crime” in pictures and eliminating scenes of inter-gang conflict and stories with gangsters as central characters.

The conventional critical identification of *The Public Enemy* with *Little Caesar* and *Scarface* as the trilogy of “classic” early 1930s gangster movies has encouraged a reading of its plot as if it portrayed the rise and fall of a gangster in Capone’s image. Unlike *Little Caesar* or *Scarface*, however, *The Public Enemy* does not depict the acquisition, exercise or loss of power. Tommy Powers (James Cagney) remains more hoodlum than gangster, occupying a subordinate role in the bootlegging business, not an organisational one, obeying instructions rather than giving them, and untroubled by any ambition to escape the neighbourhood.

Zanuck’s claim that the movie was “more biography than plot” was not, however, inaccurate: *The Public Enemy* might fairly be described as a composite biography of a neighbourhood criminal gang such as Chicago’s Valley gang, led by Patrick “Paddy the Bear” Ryan until his assassination in 1920. His protégés Terry Druggan and Frankie Lake became the first gangsters to distribute beer on a large scale in Chicago after Prohibition, providing Capone’s mentor John Torrio with a model of successful collaboration between bootleggers and respectable business. By 1924 bootlegging had made them

millionaires, and Druggan boasted to the press that even the lowliest member of his gang wore silk shirts and rode in chauffeur-driven Rolls Royces.

The movie’s press book explicitly identified its two protagonists as being based on Lake and Druggan, but Tommy inherited his “sunny brutality”, his impulsiveness and lack of organisational prowess from press accounts of Northside gang leaders Dion O’Banion and Hymie Weiss, who were depicted as figures of local colour rather than as Capone-like businessmen. The beer wars between Capone and the Northsiders were most often represented as a conflict between two systems of social organisation, Capone’s mercenary capitalism against O’Banion’s dependence on loyalty, friendship and affection.

The movie borrows freely from the “factual” accounts of the O’Banion gang’s exploits, incorporating several incidents from newspaper reports of the lives of O’Banion, Weiss, and Louis “Two-Gun” Alterie. Most famous of these was the 1923 death of Samuel “Nails” Morton in a riding accident, and the subsequent (apocryphal) execution of the horse by either O’Banion or Alterie. After O’Banion’s assassination in 1924, Alterie vowed revenge by proposing a publicly staged shoot-out with O’Banion’s killers, akin to Tommy’s attack on Schemer Burns’ headquarters. Weiss was notorious for his evil temper and impulsiveness, and reports that he once pushed an omelette into a girlfriend’s face were cited as the source of *The Public Enemy*’s infamous grapefruit incident. His assassination in the first “machine-gun nest” murder in October 1926 was recreated in the killing of Matt Doyle (Edward Woods).

Like other crime movies of the period, *The Public Enemy* omitted any substantial or detailed representation of what sociologists at the time described as the “unholy alliance between organized crime and politics”, in favour of their representation of the spectacle and melodrama of criminal performance (7). Tommy does become a member of the *nouveau riche*, dressing and driving in the style to which Terry Druggan’s gang became accustomed, and visiting as ritzy a nightclub as Warner’s set budget would allow. But Tommy and Matt remain “boys” throughout the movie, and Tommy’s psychological immaturity is most vividly demonstrated in his relationships with women. Incapable of domesticity – Matt says he is “not the marrying kind” – Tommy treats women as a form of property, a means to display his new affluence, along with clothes and cars. When Kitty’s (Mae Clark) attempts at domesticity start “getting on my nerves”, he trades up for a more luxurious model, but his relationship with Gwen (Jean Harlow) is never consummated, since Matt interrupts them with the news of Nathan’s death, and Tommy is deprived of the social and sexual opportunity she presents because he has to go and shoot a horse.

*The Public Enemy* is also a family melodrama, staging the conflict between the two social worlds of the second generation immigrant, dramatising the family conflicts generated



by the process of Americanisation. Tommy's father makes only one appearance in the movie, emerging from the house in police helmet and braces to beat Tommy for theft. His silence intensifies the symbolic identity as both Father and the Law bestowed on him by his improbable costume. He is subsequently absent from the movie, and the law is otherwise present only through the appearance of the garrulous Officer Patrick Burke, who tells Mike that "the worst part" of Tommy's delinquency "is that he's been lying to his mother". Tommy and his elder brother Mike fight in every scene they share until Tommy is in hospital, and for all his moral rectitude, Mike disrupts every opportunity for family harmony.

In its plot and character delineation, *The Public Enemy* attempted to render its

protagonist unattractive, but the picture's most problematic element was also its most significant commercial achievement: the creation of a new star in James Cagney. To an even greater extent than was true of Edward G. Robinson's performance in *Little Caesar*, Cagney's screen persona was defined by his first starring performance. Alone among the major stars of Classical Hollywood, Cagney's appeal was almost exclusively to an urban male audience.

Although he did not play a gangster – that is, a character making his living through organised criminal activity and in armed conflict with the police – again until 1938, Cagney did play a series of gamblers, con artists, ex-gangsters and reformed criminals who behaved very much as gangsters, and through these performances he became the mediated, heroic embodiment of the hoodlum: "good-natured, well-dressed, adorned and sophisticated, and above all... American, in the eyes of the gang boy" (8). Some of his most disreputable fans accepted the authenticity of his performance, believing that both he and Robinson were slum boys who had "made good in a big way in the movies", and eagerly imitating Cagney's dress and mannerisms, in the process supplying superficial evidence of the movies' doleful influence on the young (9). Nevertheless, adolescents with more practical experience of criminality recognised the repressive artificiality of narrative closure when they saw it. As one explained, "Sure, I like Little Caesar and Jim Cagney, but dat's de boloney dey give you in de pitchers. Dey always died or got canned. Day ain't true" (10).

#### ENDNOTES

1. Warner Bros. press book for *The Public Enemy*, André Sennwald, "Two Thugs," *New York Times*, 24 April 1931, p. 27
2. *Variety* review of *The Public Enemy*, 29 April 1931

3. Zanuck to Joy, January 6, 1931, PCA *Public Enemy* Case File. Typography in original.

4. Fred D. Pasley, *Al Capone: The Biography of a Self-Made Man*, Faber, London, 1966 [first published 1931], p. 317

5. Hays to Joseph Melillo, 11 June 1931, Production Code

Administration *Public Enemy* file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles

6. Will Hays, Annual Report of the President of the MPPDA, 30 March 1931, Motion Picture Association archive, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, 1931, Meetings file.

7. John Landesco, *Organized Crime in Chicago: Part III of The Illinois Crime Survey*

1929, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, p. 277

8. Landesco, p. 210

9. Paul G. Cressey, "The Community – A Social Setting for the Motion Picture," *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy*, ed. Garth S. Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie and Kathryn H. Fuller, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 181

10. Henry James Forman, *Our Movie-Made Children*, MacMillan, New York, 1933, p. 264

#### **Mick LaSalle: Pre-Code Hollywood (Green Cine):**

The "pre-Code era" refers to a roughly five-year period in film history, beginning with the widespread adoption of sound in 1929 and ending on July 1, 1934, with the inauguration of the

Production Code

Administration and a policy of rigid censorship. Before July 1, 1934, restrictions on movie content varied widely, depending on local laws, mores and public taste. As a result, "pre-Code films" tend to be racier, sexier, more adult, more cynical, more socially critical, more honest and more politically strident than the films produced by Hollywood on up through the early 1960s.

Indeed, the

difference between pre-Codes and films made during the Code is so dramatic that, once one becomes familiar with pre-Codes, it becomes possible to tell, sometimes within five minutes, whether a 1934 film was released early or late in the year. Contrary to what was sometimes assumed by historians, the pre-Code era didn't fade. It was ended in full bloom and with the finality of an axe coming down.

The term "pre-Code," though a convenient shorthand, is in a sense a misnomer: For the entire pre-Code era, a Production



Code did, in fact, exist. It was just blithely ignored. The story begins in 1929, when a group of lay Catholics and Catholic clergy in Chicago, seeing the 1920s social revolution beginning to make its way onto film and realizing that sound was making movies more daring than ever, devised a code of ethics and practices they hoped the studios would adopt. In February of 1930, these Catholics met with the production heads of the various studios, including Irving Thalberg of MGM, and made revisions to the Production Code. Ultimately, the Code was adopted by all the major studios, and a group already in place, the Studio Relations Committee, was installed in an advisory capacity to apply the strictures of the Code to various movies and to advise the studios as to what cuts might be needed.

It's safe to say that if the producers actually thought they might ever have to abide by the Code, they would never have adopted it. It was a reactionary document, not merely interested in grossly limiting what could be depicted on screen, but concentrating on using film as a social instrument to push forward a traditionalist agenda.

According to the Code, sex outside of marriage could not be portrayed as "attractive and beautiful," could not be presented in a way that might "arouse passion," and could not be made to seem "right and permissible." Dances were allowed, so long as they did not "excite the emotional reaction of an audience... with movement of the breasts [or] excessive body movements while the feet are stationary." All crime had to be punished,



and while it could be portrayed, it had to be done in such a way as not to arouse sympathy for either the crime or the criminal. Authority could not be held up to ridicule. In the case of clergymen, their depiction as comic characters or villains was proscribed. In the case of politicians, police and judges, they could, under some circumstances, be movie villains, so long as it was clear that they were bad apples and not representative of their institutions.

Under this Code, movies were to be sermons. Worse than that, they were to be deceitful sermons, presenting an untrue vision of life for propagandistic purposes. It was a document instigated by people who not only did not understand art but also hated and feared art's truth, power and freedom.

Fortunately, even as they signed it, the studio heads had no intention of abiding by the Code. From the beginning of film history, would-be reformers from both the left and right had repeatedly tried to censor and influence screen content, and by 1930, Hollywood had learned that the best way to handle these people was to agree with them until they went away. Thus, the Studio Relations Committee, as set up, was given absolutely no power to control screen content, and their advice was almost invariably ignored. Moreover, the man in charge of the SRC, Jason Joy, was no reformer. He liked sleazy movies and, upon leaving the SRC, Joy became story editor for Fox, which produced a slew of lewd entries during his tenure. Though eventually the Code would revive - its betrayal by the studios

gradually became a rallying point for reformers - in 1930, it was dead on arrival. And Hollywood went on making movies of increased daring and sophistication.

Today, as seen from a distance of well over 70 years, the pre-Codes retain their freshness and fascination. Their appeal is multi-faceted. They have the capacity to take viewers by surprise, by virtue of their honesty but also simply because they weren't made according to a prescribed formula. They startle us with their modernity. Women in pre-Codes, for example, act recognizably like women - independent, shrewd and worldly - and not like the bubbleheads, girls next door, martyrs and rueful sluts you often find in American film through the early 1960s. Likewise, men don't act like fools for authority but as independent spirits. Most refreshingly, with pre-Codes you get the unmistakable sense of an era's speaking with its true voice, without the countervailing influence of censorship. The pre-Codes were inhibited by only one force: Public mores. As a result, what we see in the pre-Codes is an unfiltered expression of how people felt about life in their time.

The beauty of that - of an era speaking for itself - is beauty enough. We don't need to agree with the sentiments expressed by these films. To expect them to be "modern" is to subject them to an inappropriate and ever-shifting standard. Yet, even acknowledging that, the pre-Codes have a way of making the leap across the decades, and part of their undeniable thrill is in recognizing in them one's own emotional experience.

When we connect with, for example, the exuberance of a passion turning to love in *Queen Christina*, or the wife's anger in *The Divorcee*, or the existential doubts expressed in *Frankenstein*, or the youthful passion and political rage of *The Gold Diggers of 1933*, we're having a communion across time. It's an experience akin to the feeling we might get when reading a 500-year-old poem that says everything we're feeling - only it's more immediate, because with movies we're actually seeing the people, walking and talking.

The pre-Code era was especially good for women. Though the 1940s is sometimes remembered as a golden age for actresses, it was in the early 30s that women dominated the box office, and their films weren't considered "woman's films" at the time. Rather, they were the movies that the general public flocked to see. They dealt with the issues surrounding the emergence of the newly sexualized, self-sufficient New Woman, who'd emerged in the 1920s. They explored sex, marriage, divorce, and the work place, mainly in a spirit of discovering and re-evaluating morality in light of a new day. Men's vehicles were equally interesting. They depicted crime, the business world, politics, war, history and horror also from the viewpoint of examining morality and coming to terms with modern life. It's ironic: Though the reformers considered pre-Codes immoral, Hollywood, in fact, never made so many films directly concerned with morality as in the pre-Code era. The difference was that the reformers didn't want morals to be examined, debated, discussed

or discovered. They wanted them to be accepted blindly.

Though the films of the pre-Code era are at least as varied as those of other eras, they tend to share some philosophical similarities. They celebrate independence and initiative, whether the protagonist is honest or crooked. They prefer the individual to the collective and are deeply cynical about all organized power, such as the government, the police, the church, big business and the legal system. Anything that gets in the way of freedom, including sexual freedom, they tend to be against. In the same way, anybody who tells somebody what to do is usually the villain. The horror of World War I and disgust with Prohibition are always fresh in mind. Later in the era, the Great Depression would only reinforce the notion that people in power are either stupid or malevolent, that pleasures are for the taking and that the world is a rigged game, so that anything you can do to beat it is justified. In terms of politics, an FDR-like liberalism is pervasive. The pre-Code movies celebrate individualism and individual freedom but see nothing inconsistent with expecting the government to look out for the little guy.

It used to be that pre-Code movies weren't available on DVD and scarcely available on VHS, but that's changing for the better. To start, there are several ways to see the early stirrings of the pre-Code sensibility. For glimpse of proto-pre-Code pessimism, see Lon Chaney in *The Unknown*. The glorification and the idealization of the loose woman, a consistent feature of pre-Code, can be vividly found in Garbo's *A Woman of Affairs* and *The Mysterious Lady* and in Von Sternberg's 1928 *The Docks of New York*, in which Betty Compson gets the full Sternberg treatment two years before Dietrich did.

Movies about prostitutes were a familiar feature of the first years of the pre-Code era. They were Hollywood's way of dealing with the real changes in sexual behavior happening with American women, under cover of presenting tales of exoticism. Among these are the English and German language versions of *Anna Christie* both starring Garbo (the German language version is better); *Blonde Venus*, with Dietrich, and *Red Dust*, starring a delightful Jean Harlow. Two of the best pre-Code prostitute movies are set for DVD release some time in the next year: a restored *Baby Face*, in which Barbara Stanwyck sleeps her way to the top; and James Whale's poignant *Waterloo Bridge* from 1931, with Mae Clarke giving the performance of a lifetime. (The Whale film will be included as a special feature in a re-release of the 1940 remake starring Vivien Leigh.)

Most actresses in the early pre-Code played prostitutes. Norma Shearer in the epoch-making *The Divorcee* established a different pattern. She played a normal wife who, upon discovering her husband has been unfaithful, sets out on a voyage of sexual discovery. With nothing floozy-like about her,

Shearer established the bedroom as safe territory for normal women, thus paving the way for Claudette Colbert in *Smiling Lieutenant* (only on laser disc!), Loretta Young in *Employee's Entrance*, Bette Davis in *Ex-Lady*, Miriam Hopkins in *Design for Living* and others.

The gangster was the pre-Code's male equivalent of the prostitute, an exotic figure the movies used to explore a new, amoral social mindset. James Cagney in *The Public Enemy*, Edward G. Robinson in *Little Caesar* and Clark Gable in *A Free Soul* were thinly veiled heroes, and after breaking through with these films, they carried their personas virtually intact into other films, in which they embodied a new kind of heroism: Street smart, innovative, shady and self-interested. It was the era of the shameless self-promoter, such as Lee Tracy in *Blessed Event* and Cagney in *Blonde Crazy*.

Even horror films fit the pattern of moral questioning and examination. The pre-Code era was not an era of monsters (as in the 1950s) but of existential horror, as embodied by *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (the 1931 version). These films question the nature of existence, just as the era's social protest films, such as *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, *Heroes for Sale* and *Gabriel Over the White House* questioned and criticized the social and political organization of society.

The pre-Code era came to an end soon after the Catholics formed the Legion of Decency in April of 1934, an organization of clergy that threatened to keep Catholics away from the movies. Joseph Breen, one of the architects of the Code, who was now ensconced as head of the SRC, presented himself to the studio heads as the one man who could mediate between them and the Legion. The studios gave in to his demands. The Production Code Administration was founded, under the agreement that no film could be released without a seal of approval from the PCA.

In retrospect, it's probably fortunate that Hollywood's brief era of freedom came when it did. As it happened, the pre-Code era coincided with a particularly interesting period in American history. It saw the emergence of women, the prevalence of gangsterism, the collapse of the economy, the end of Prohibition, and the coming of a political realignment that would last 47 years. Had Hollywood been allowed the same freedom between say, 1949 and 1954, would it have resulted in an equally rich cinematic legacy? It's impossible to say. In any case, the brilliance and vitality of the pre-Code era - and its virtual elimination from historical

consideration until Bruce Goldstein's pre-Code festivals at Film Forum in the 1980s and Turner Classic Movies' debut in 1994 - is a warning about the damage a small, organized bands of reactionaries can do.





**Chris Barsanti, *The Public Enemy*, Slant.com:**

Contrary to popular opinion, the best moment in *The Public Enemy* isn't when Jimmy Cagney shoves a grapefruit in his girlfriend's face—it's the moment Chicago gangsters Tom Powers (Cagney in a career-making performance) and his buddy Matt Doyle (Edward Woods) hear that one of their own is dead, not by a rival gangster, but from being thrown off his horse. Even when Powers and Doyle march into the stable in a welter of cold fury, you don't quite believe they're actually going to execute the horse, and yet they do. In a film that begins and ends with high-toned messages about the evil hoodlums do to society, this was likely originally intended to illustrate the rapacious inhumanity of these gangsters (a horse?), but there's no denying its intrinsic black comedy. Studio-imposed moralizing aside, this is a film with a wicked sense of humor—witness the scene in which a swishy haberdasher feels up Cagney's bicep while measuring him for a suit—that makes up for an occasionally stale plot.

Powers and Doyle are childhood best buddies, growing up petty crooks in the teeming Chicago tenements of the early 20th century and graduating to big-time crimes once the local mob is handed the sweet gift of Prohibition. Director William A. Wellman brings a sociological bent to his depiction of their milieu, using old newsreel footage of the city, carefully marking the passing of the years and paying close attention to the particulars of the characters' working-class Irish surroundings.

There's a clean arc to the story as we follow Powers and Doyle from the "social club" where the neighborhood kids do odd crimes for the resident Fagin character, Putty Nose, to their first involvement with burgeoning bootlegger Paddy Ryan, to them living the high life as smart-dressed hoods and the final showdown where Powers stalks into enemy headquarters (a justifiably famous shot where he practically walks into the camera), a revolver in each hand and a killer's stare on his face. The nature of the film's rise-and-fall plot, however, can seem overly premeditated at times, and borders on the simplistic. *The Public Enemy* starts by telling its audience that it does not mean to glorify the criminals that it portrays, and unlike some other gangster flicks of the 1930s, it actually doesn't. Although the crook that Cagney plays here has a definite thuggish cool, he's repeatedly shown to be such a thickheaded animal that he doesn't register as much of an antihero (the only thing helping him is that none of the other characters register much in the way of personality, either). He's the kind of overzealous idiot gunman who Bogart would have mocked relentlessly in *The Big Sleep*. Even so, there's little denying the power of Cagney's presence, from the first moment he's on screen, he radiates such a brash Fenian cockiness you can imagine kids at the time flocking out of the theater and cocking their caps just like him. It's a performance so perfect in its intensity that any other quibbles about the film ultimately recede into insignificance.

**SPRING 2012 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXIV**

- Jan 31 Merian C. Cooper, **King Kong** 1933  
 Feb 7 Ernst Lubitsch, **To Be or Not to Be**, 1942  
 Feb 14 Luchino Visconti, **Senso** 1954  
 Feb 21 Stanley Kubrick, **Paths of Glory** 1957  
 Feb 29 Sidney Lumet, **12 Angry Men** 1957  
 Mar 6 Satyajit Ray, **The Music Room** 1958  
 Mar 13 spring break  
 Mar 20 Clint Eastwood, **The Outlaw Josey Wales** 1975  
 Mar 27 John Woo, **The Killer** 1989  
 Apr 3 Krzysztof Kieslowski, Kieslowski, **Red** 1994  
 Apr 10 Terrence Malick, **Thin Red Line** 1998  
 Apr 17 Fernando Meirelles, **City of God**, 2003  
 Apr 24 Christopher Nolan, **The Dark Knight** 2008

**CONTACTS:**

...email Diane Christian: [engdc@buffalo.edu](mailto:engdc@buffalo.edu)...email Bruce Jackson [bjackson@buffalo.edu](mailto:bjackson@buffalo.edu)

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