
Alfred Hitchcock: His Masterpieces!

OSHER 684-001

Dates: Tuesdays, 1/22/13 – 2/26/13

Times: 3:15 PM – 4:45 PM

Location: Commander's House, Fort Douglas

Instructor: E. Hunter Hale

Course Overview

"I enjoy playing the audience like a piano."

So said director Alfred Hitchcock who was recognized around the world as "The Master of Suspense".

But Hitchcock was much more than a suspense director -- he was an extremely supreme filmmaker whose bold storytelling involved love, death, obsession, adventure and surrealism often laced with a dose of black humor and sly sexual innuendo. In the history of film there is no director who used pure cinema better than Hitchcock.

Course participants will have the opportunity to borrow a number of Hitchcock classics on DVD to watch at home as well as CD's of a number radio broadcasts of famous Hitchcock films to listen to. The class will include numerous samples of his work including a showing in High Definition of his heart-racing spy story "The 39 Steps" from his British period that anticipates the director's most famous works and remains one of his cleverest and most entertaining films.

Class 1: Hitchcock's Early Films (1922-1933): His beginnings as a Title Writer for silent films in Britain to his exposure with some of the greatest directors of the silent era.

Becoming a director who was so good that he almost failed before being recognized as Britain's greatest director. "The Lodger (A Story of the London Fog)" becomes the first film in which Hitchcock makes a guest appearance and the first to be in the style of the type of film that he would become famous for. Class members will have an opportunity to take home a DVD of this early classic complete with an original Theatre Pipe Organ score by Blaine Gale of Salt Lake City's famous Edison Street/The Organ Loft.

Becoming the Master of Suspense (1934-1939) with such sound films as "The Man Who Knew Too Much", "Sabotage", "The 39 Steps", "The Lady Vanishes" and "Jamaica Inn" that lead to his invitation to come to Hollywood as a director.

On DVD we will hear and see a number of modern director's pay tribute to Hitchcock's brilliance and the influence that he has had on their own work.

Class 2: The class will view Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll in "The 39 Steps" (1935) 89 minutes. This is a restored print on Blu-ray of one of Hitchcock's most famous early films. The film contains many examples of the type of material that Hitchcock would develop in later classics. This will take up the time of the second class period.

Class 3: The Selznick Years (1940-1947): This covers his invitation to come to America by none other than David O. Selznick, the brilliant producer of "Gone with the Wind" (1939) to direct "Rebecca". This would be a bitter/sweet experience for Hitchcock. On the one hand he had the finest equipment and technical personnel in the filmmaking world and on the other side a producer who kept his hands in every phase of his films. This class covers Hitchcock classics that include: "Rebecca" (Academy Award winner for Best Picture 1940), "Spellbound" with Ingrid Bergman & Gregory Peck and all-star "The Paradine Case" for Selznick. Also the masterful films "Foreign Correspondent", "Suspicion", "Saboteur", "Shadow of a Doubt" and "Lifeboat" done on loan-out to other studios. Among these titles is the film that becomes Hitchcock's all-time favorite.

Class 4: The Technicolor, VistaVision, 3-D Years (1948-1959): Finally free of his contract with Selznick he was ready to strike out on his own without interference. Setting up his own company he produced "Rope" (1948), the first of four films that James Stewart would make for him; "Under Capricorn" with Bergman & Joseph Cotten; "Stage Fright" back in England; before achieving a true masterpiece with "Strangers on a Train". This is the period in which he made films such as "I Confess", "Dial M for Murder" (in 3-D and his first of three with Grace Kelly), "Rear Window", "To Catch a Thief", "The Trouble with Harry", the remake of "The Man Who Knew Too Much", "The Wrong Man" with Henry Fonda & Vera Miles, "Vertigo" and one of his most popular, "North by Northwest". These are the years that Hitchcock was at the top of his form.

Class 5: The Television Years (1955-1962) Using the "Funeral March of a Marionette" as his theme music Hitchcock introduced more than 350 TV episodes each week as a master of ceremonies. His marvelously droll introductions and closings made him the best known director in the world. During this class period we will view a few of his most famous TV episodes including "Lamb to the Slaughter" with Barbara Bel Geddes (co-star of "Vertigo").

Class 6: The Mature Years (1960-1976): Now we will discuss in depth one of the most famous Hitchcock films of all-time: "Psycho"! This was a film that his studio, Paramount Pictures didn't want to produce so Hitchcock put up the money himself. This would become his most successful box-office hit and change the way films were shown in theaters. He would follow this with "The Birds" which is now recognized as a classic. We will discuss his falling out with the brilliant film composer Bernard Herrmann over his score for "Torn Curtain" with Paul Newman & Julie Andrews as well as his dark side with Tippi Hedren who starred in "The Birds" and "Marnie". His final three films will be discussed and some thoughts on why Hitchcock remains one of the greatest directors of all-time.