

HITCHCOCK, ALFRED (1899-- ), British director, after a Jesuit education and a short period in advertising, went to work for Famous Players-Lasky when they opened their studio at Islington, London, in 1920. His first job was lettering and designing the backgrounds for silent film titles. When Michael BALCON took over the studio in 1922, Hitchcock worked there as assistant director, art director, and scriptwriter to Graham Cutts. His early experience included work at the UFA studios in Germany (during the slump that preceded the first British QUOTA legislation) and the style of his early films reflects this contact with EXPRESSIONISM as well as a natural Anglo-American influence.

After several apprentice works of little distinction, Hitchcock directed *The Lodger* (1927), the tale of a family who suspect their lodger of being a latter-day Jack the Ripper. This is his first film to contain the basic characteristics of his developed style: the ordinary person caught up in extraordinary events; the suspense story that has provided the basis of nearly all his films; and exuberantly imaginative cinematic effects (including the famous shot through a glass floor of the lodger pacing his room above the family sitting-room, eloquently conveying the impression of sound). Because of a temporary shortage of extras, Hitchcock himself appeared in *The Lodger*; subsequently a glimpse of his rotund form became an obligatory gag, occurring in almost all his films.

BLACKMAIL (1929) was the first British feature film with synchronous sound; and already showed the characteristic interplay of soundtrack and editing that distinguishes his work throughout his career. It introduced his recurrent motif of the chase, which he has developed with great expertise by the dramatic use of rapidly changing settings and a blend of realism and intense stylization that achieves the vivid impact of a nightmare. Following the success of *Blackmail*, Hitchcock directed a variety of films including some routine theatrical adaptations and even a musical, *Waltzes from Vienna* (1933). His outstanding films of the thirties were all thrillers: THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (1934), THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS (1935), SABOTAGE (1936, A Woman Alone in US), and THE LADY VANISHES (1938). Apart from demonstrating his increasing skill in manipulating the conventions of suspense drama, these show him introducing humour as an off-setting device to increase tension. In *The Lady Vanishes* he also set himself the problem of limiting the action to a restricted setting, to which he was to return later.

Shortly before the outbreak of war, Hitchcock went to Hollywood under contract to David O. SELZNICK. Ironically, his first film there was a British subject, REBECCA (1940), an impeccable

adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's romantic mystery story, with an all-British cast that included Joan FONTAINE and Laurence OLIVIER. It introduced a more psychological approach into Hitchcock's work; stylistically, too, it was a new departure for him, building suspense by the use of a tracking camera rather than by cutting. SUSPICION (1941) similarly used the fear-inducing properties of unspoken doubts: it was weakened by the producers' insistence on a happy ending, but marked the beginning of several successful collaborations between Hitchcock and Cary GRANT. *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) also dealt with the growth of suspicion—in this case well-founded—and is one of the few Hitchcock films in which the central character is also the villain of the piece. Its well-rounded small-town setting is another unusual feature in his work.

In *Lifeboat* (1944) Hitchcock set himself the immensely difficult task of shooting a murder mystery within the confines of a ship's lifeboat. The action was conveyed chiefly in close-up, so that the drama became one of nine characters in conflict (Hitchcock himself making his appearance in a newspaper photograph); the film's air of providing a parable of current international strife was not entirely realized.

*Spellbound* (1945), a murder story with a vogueish flavour of psychoanalysis, used dream sequences designed by Salvador DALI and images derived from Freudian symbolism. Ingrid BERGMAN, who had notable success working for Hitchcock, starred in *Spellbound* and again in NOTORIOUS (1946). *Notorious* has a visual sophistication and clarity of construction, which combine with the excellent casting to make it one of Hitchcock's most satisfying films.

In 1948, with *Rope*, Hitchcock became his own producer. Apart from its being his first colour film, the interest of *Rope* lies in its experimental shooting technique. The action, which takes place entirely in one room, was filmed in one continuous shot, interrupted only to reload the camera at ten-minute intervals; for conventional cutting Hitchcock substituted total camera mobility. The experiment was interesting if unsuccessful. Instead of heightening the intensity and unity of the drama, the technique produced a contrived and monotonous effect. He used a similar fluid camera style to a lesser extent in *Under Capricorn* (1949).

*Stage Fright* (1950), in which he deliberately confused the plot with a 'lying' FLASHBACK (conventionally considered a solecism), was one of his less popular films. His success was wholly re-established, however, by STRANGERS ON A TRAIN (1951), a classic example of the 'perfect crime' story. In *I Confess* (1953) a priest, played with sombre intensity by Montgomery CLIFT, is

accused of murder and cannot reveal the real criminal without violating the secrecy of the confessional. This (with *The Wrong Man*, 1957; *Frenzy*, 1972) is the most overt expression of a theme central to many Hitchcock films, the 'exchange of guilt' whereby one man is suspected or accused of another's crime. *REAR WINDOW* (1954) presented another self-imposed physical problem: the viewpoint is that of a convalescent who, passing his time observing his neighbours, chances to witness a murder. It starred James STEWART, like Cary Grant remarkably effective as the puzzled hero caught up in bewildering events, a constantly recurring character in the Hitchcock canon. *To Catch a Thief* (1955), with Cary Grant as another Hitchcock hero, made exciting use of a glossy Riviera setting, particularly in the car chase sequences.

In 1956 Hitchcock remade *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in big-budget Hollywood style. It was at first received as a pale shadow of the original British version, but with reevaluation of his later films its merits have gained recognition. *THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY*, released in the same year, was a macabre story depicted in exquisite autumnal settings and handled with a whimsical humour that was received with extremes of delight and detestation. Hitchcock ended the decade with two major films which sum up the two main trends in his work: *NORTH BY NORTHWEST* (1959) capping all his previous chase films in its extravagant fantasy, which had more than a touch of self-parody, and *PSYCHO* (1960), a horror story with all the trappings of melodrama and one of the most successful of his psychological thrillers.

*The Birds* (1963) was an attempt to derive horror from an unexplained natural source (a vicious attack on the human race by flocks of birds) rather than a human villain; *Marnie* (1964) dealt with the psychological explanation of criminal acts by a pretty young woman; *Torn Curtain* (1966), a spy story set in East Germany, returned to the chase formula, and *Topaz* (1969) again used a spy story, but without the climactic action sequences that audiences have come to expect. In his thriller *Frenzy* (1972) Hitchcock returned to London, but the Agatha Christie-like atmosphere combines uneasily with the explicit unpleasantness of the murders committed.

He has also produced, introduced, and intermittently directed two successful television series, using them to try out new ideas and apparently deriving much enjoyment from his role as 'host'.

Hitchcock's concentration on the suspense thriller and his exploration and development of the genre is probably unique. His films are characteristically invested with his personal quality of sly humour, resourceful and imaginative use

of technique, and sense of the visually dramatic. Although he has very often worked from literary sources, the original is invariably fully assimilated into his cinematic approach. His lengthy and uneven career is reflected in the variety of critical response to his films; sometimes his British films are rated highest, at others his work of the forties or his big-budget productions of later years. Many French critics, particularly those of the early period of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, class him as a leading *AUTEUR* with his own distinctive film language and as such he had considerable influence on the *NOUVELLE VAGUE*: the films of *CHABROL*, in particular, contain many touches of homage to Hitchcock. His four films of the sixties, which were received with disappointment in Britain and America, were hailed in France as confirmation of the view that he continued to be in a class of his own.

Hitchcock himself, in spite of all that his admirers claim on his behalf, maintains a steady unpretentiousness, prosaically claiming a place as a skilled entertainer—which he undoubtedly and superbly is—content to work within the commercial system. Although the plots of his films frequently resolve themselves into schematic and implausible intrigues where depth of characterization is sacrificed to dramatic development, the exuberance of his technical invention and his use of montage and visual stylization to manipulate audience emotion and to create and intensify pure sensation in the spectator is unrivalled.

Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer, *Hitchcock*, Paris, 1957; Peter Bogdanovich, *The cinema of Alfred Hitchcock*, New York, 1962; François Truffaut, *Le Cinéma selon Hitchcock*, Paris, 1966, published in English as *Hitchcock*, New York, 1967, London, 1968; Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's films*, London, 1965, New York, 1969.

*HITLERJUNGE QUEX*, Germany, 1933. Dir Hans Steinhöff; prod Karl Ritter for UFA; scr K. A. Schenzinger, B. E. Lütthge; ph Konstantin Irmen-Tschet; des Benno von Arent, Arthur Gunther; cast a Hitler Youth (Quex), Heinrich George (his father), Bertha Drews (his mother), Claus Clausen.

Heini Völker, nicknamed Quex (mercury), the son of dedicated Communists, is converted to the cause of Nazism. While distributing election leaflets in Berlin he is stabbed by Communists and becomes a hero-martyr of the Hitler Youth.

*Hitlerjunge Quex* combined a naive emotionalism—the youth and fragility of Quex, the poverty which has induced misguided political allegiance in his parents—with the technical accomplishment characteristic of German films of the time. It was one of the first avowedly PROPAGANDA films following Hitler's rise to