

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Films from the early Thirties will be shown in a summer series at The Museum of Modern Art beginning July 3 and running through September 30. A representative selection of forty-four American films made between 1930 and 1935 will be offered to the public for re-examination and enjoyment. Screenings will be daily, except Wednesdays.

THE THIRTIES: U.S.A. reveals the wide range of films made in a period of social revolution as well as cinematic upheaval; the beginning of the sound era roughly coincided with the collapse of the stock market and the onset of the Great Depression.

One of the first fields exploited by the sound film was the musical comedy -- the spectacular musicals of Busby Berkeley (GOLD DIGGERS OF 1933), later followed by the more intimate style of dance films introduced by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers (TOP HAT, 1935). The gangster films too made a functional use of the new sound. The gangster films rescued the movies from the dialogue doldrum of the photographed play, nicknamed "teacup drama." They enriched the screen with the racy dialogue of the streets; they had action based on newspaper headlines and the sharply naturalistic performances of people like James Cagney (BLONDE CRAZY, 1931).

There also appeared the escapist films (the super-adventure film THE LIVES OF THE BENGAL LANCER, 1935); the horror (THE UNHOLY THREE, 1930, and KING KONG, 1933) and early science-fiction films (THE INVISIBLE MAN, 1933); the early animated films of Walt Disney; films with Oriental influences (THE BITTER TEA OF GENERAL YEN, 1933); and attempts to re-make old silent films (REACHING FOR THE MOON, 1931); as well as the pacifist films (ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1930, and THE MAN I KILLED, 1932) and films on the depression (OUR DAILY BREAD, 1934, and THE PRESIDENT VANISHES, 1934).

The depression brought the "confession film" (SUSAN LENOX, HER FALL AND RISE, 1931) proclaiming that American moral institutions, under the stress of economic panic, were falling apart. Then came films some felt were immoral and unsuited for the screen, culminating in SHE DONE HIM WRONG with Mae West (1933), which was soon

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followed by the formation of the National Legion of Decency, which was to review all films before their release. Subsequently came the sweetness and light films (THE LITTLE COLONEL, 1935); the films with historical backgrounds (CAVALCADE, 1933); and many slap-stick comedies (DUCK SOUP, 1933, and IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT, 1934).

In sound, humor shifted abruptly from the visual world of silent comedy, with its emphasis on character and physical humor, to the verbal, and an entirely new group of comics appeared, among them, The Marx Brothers, Eddie Cantor, W. C. Fields, and Jimmy Durante.

In this period of incomparable stars were also many key directors -- Milestone (ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1930), von Sternberg (THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN, 1935), Lubitsch (TROUBLE IN PARADISE, 1932), Flaherty and Murnau (TABU, 1931), Capra (THE BITTER TEA OF GENERAL YEN, 1933), Ford (THE INFORMER, 1935), and Vidor (OUR DAILY BREAD, 1934), among others.

Every Wednesday the Museum will continue to present shorts in a one-hour program beginning at 12 noon and films from the Museum archives at 2:00 and 5:30 p.m.

See attached programs.

Part two of THE THIRTIES: U.S.A. (1935-1939) will be presented next summer.

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Film stills and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Linda Gordon, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.