

The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 57
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PIONEER FILM DIRECTOR HONORED SEVEN WEEK RETROSPECTIVE FOR HENRY KING CO-SPONSORED BY MUSEUM AND DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA

"...the most underpublicized filmmaker in Hollywood. This tall, lean, handsome, urbane, but unflamboyant model of a corporation president makes film hits so easily, so efficiently, and so calmly that he is not news in a community of blaring trumpets, crashing cymbals and screaming egos."

-Frank Capra

Henry King, one of the founding fathers of American film, who began his career early in the century, remains today one of the legendary figures in Hollywood, and though he preserves his privacy, his films such as "The Song of Bernadette," "Twelve O'Clock High" and "The Gunfighter" speak for themselves, and these and other major works will be part of a seven week retrospective given in King's honor by New York's Museum of Modern Art in association with the Directors Guild of America.

The Virginia-born director, who has specialized, like D.W. Griffith and John Ford, in Americana themes since his first classic, "Tol'able David," and later with "State Fair", "In Old Chicago," "Jesse James" and "Alexander's Ragtime Band," will make a trip from the West Coast to New York to participate in the opening of this program. On June 29 and 30, he will address the Museum audiences, although he seldom makes public appearances.

While he contributed to Hollywood's worldwide reputation, King, who recognized such early superstars as Richard Barthelmess, Ronald Colman and Gary Cooper and gave them their first leading roles on the screen, has managed to retain his relative anonymity in an ostentatious environment.

Yet as a craftsman he has earned the admiration of his colleagues for his expressive use of technical innovations--accelerating tempo, contrasting and parallel montage and contrapuntal sound--and this aptitude is reflected in his choice of private avocation. He acquired his license and his first airplane in 1930, became a veteran, prize-winning pilot and remains a practicing aviator.

Throughout his colorful, rich life King, however, has remained dedicated to the medium of film, to which he turned after an acting career in everything from minstrel to Shakespearian drama. It was as an actor that he entered film, and this series includes one of his earliest pictures, "The Crooked Road," in which he co-stars with Blanche Sweet, a film produced in 1916. The most recent film on the program was made in 1961--an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Tender Is the Night." King has had a penchant for cinematic treatments of literary works, including Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "The Sun Also Rises." These as well as "Lloyd's of London," "Wilson," "Prince of Foxes," "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing" and "Carousel" are among the 45 films being presented by the Museum in association with the Directors Guild of America. Responsible for the selection are Adrienne Mancina, Curator in the Museum's Department of Film, and David Shepard, Special Projects Officer of the Directors Guild, who organized the present tribute.

A year ago, King was similarly honored by the British Film Institute. That he should now receive belated acknowledgement in his own country is an irony stemming from the quantity and popularity of his output, which led to neglect by historians and scholars only now reckoning with King's unique talent for expressing himself in multiple genres--rural dramas, soap operas, Renaissance intrigue, nostalgic reminiscences, westerns, religious invocations, even musicals.

His style, essentially that of a storyteller, has been described as direct and unobtrusive, though each of his pictures bears the stamp of his own pace--partly because King has always stressed the importance of editing. The great Russian director Pudovkin long ago pointed out the excellence of King's montage work in "Tol'able David" from 1921.

Critic Scott Eyman, in referring to King's uninsistent, contemplative camera, cites the endless tracking shot down the bar in "In Old Chicago," and also the exceptional convention sequence in "Wilson," as tours de force. "In King," he writes, "we have perhaps our last link with the primacy that in the early part of this century was filmmaking, filmmaking whose tenets were balance, symmetry and intense understanding."

A director's director, who collaborated in the writing of many of his pictures, King was also one of the first to shoot on location abroad. He made "The White Sister" with Lillian Gish and Ronald Colman in Italy in 1923. Prior to this appearance opposite Miss Gish, Colman had previously been rejected for films as a result of poor screen tests. King, however, saw him on stage and recognized his talent just as he recognized the talents of Tyrone Power and Don Ameche. It seems actors and actresses alike thrived under his informed, benevolent direction. Will Rogers, too, performed some of his most memorable roles for King; and actresses Janet Gaynor, Alice Faye, Susan Hayward and Jennifer Jones all make multiple appearances in this retrospective.

Included on the program, chosen to demonstrate King's versatility, is the director's own favorite, "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain," telling of a Methodist minister and his small town congregation. King himself, as a young man, was expected to join the ministry, and "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain" exemplifies the genuine charm and persuasiveness, the

sense of unity, and the sincere feeling for people, places and things that characterize his films.

The screening schedule for the program is as follows:

- SIX FEET FOUR. 1919. William Russel, Charles French, Vola Vale.
(June 29 at 6:00 / June 30 at 2:30)
- I'D CLIMB THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN. 1951. Susan Hayward, William Lundigan.
(June 29 at 8:30 / August 5 at 2:30)
- ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND. 1938. Tyrone Power, Alice Faye, Don Ameche.
(July 1 at Noon / July 2 at Noon)
- TOL'ABLE DAVID. 1921. Richard Barthelmess, Gladys Hulette, Walter P. Lewis.
(July 1 at 2:30 / July 4 at 6:00)
- THE SEVENTH DAY. 1922. Richard Barthelmess, Frank Losee, Leslie Stowe.
(July 1 at 5:00)
- STELLA DALLAS. 1925. Ronald Colman, Belle Bennett, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.
(July 2 at 2:30 / July 10 at 6:00)
- I LOVED YOU WEDNESDAY. 1933. Warner Baxter, Elissa Landi.
(July 3 at 2:30 / July 13 at 8:30)
- THE WHITE SISTER. 1923. Lillian Gish, Ronald Colman.
(July 3 at 6:00 / July 7 at 2:30)
- OVER THE HILL. 1931. Mae Marsh, James Kirkwood.
(July 6 at 2:30 / July 11 at 6:00)
- HELL HARBOR. 1930. Lupe Velez, Jean Hersholt, Gibson Gowland.
(July 6 at 6:00 / July 9 at 2:30)
- THE WINNING OF BARBARA WORTH. 1926. Ronald Colman, Vilma Banky, Charles Lane.
(July 6 at 8:30)
- STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE. 1939. Spencer Tracy, Walter Brennan, Charles Coburn.
(July 8 at Noon / July 9 at Noon)
- MERELY MARY ANN. 1931. Janet Gaynor, Charles Farrell.
(July 8 at 2:30)
- LIGHTNIN'. 1930. Will Rogers, Louise Dresser, Joel McCrea.
(July 8 at 5:00)
- DEVIL'S BAIT. 1917. Ruth Roland, Henry King, William Conklin.
(July 10 at Noon / July 11 at Noon)
- MARIE GALANTE. 1934. Spencer Tracy, Ketti Gallian, Helen Morgan.
(July 10 at 2:30 / July 13 at 6:00)
- RAMONA. 1936. Loretta Young, Don Ameche, Jane Darwell.
(July 13 at 2:30 / July 15 at 2:30)
- THE COUNTRY DOCTOR. 1936. Jean Hersholt, John Qualen, Jane Darwell.
(July 14 at 2:30 / July 16 at 2:30)
- LITTLE OLD NEW YORK. 1940. Alice Faye, Fred MacMurray.
(July 15 at Noon / July 16 at Noon)
- STATE FAIR. 1933. Will Rogers, Janet Gaynor, Lew Ayres.
(July 15 at 5:00)
- VENGEANCE OF THE DEAD. 1917. Henry King, Philo McCollough, Edward Peters, Lillian West.
(July 17 at Noon / July 18 at Noon)

(over)

June 1978

For further information, please call Lillian Gerard, Special Projects Coordinator, or Kent Wittrup, (212) 956-7296, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Photographs available on request.

- IN OLD CHICAGO. 1938. Tyrone Power, Alice Faye, Don Ameche.
(July 17 at 2:30 / July 20 at 8:30)
- ONE MORE SPRING. 1935. Janet Gaynor, Warner Baxter, Jane Darwell.
(July 17 at 6:00)
- JESSE JAMES. 1939. Tyrone Power, Henry Fonda, Randolph Scott.
(July 18 at 6:00)
- LLOYDS OF LONDON. 1936. Tyrone Power, Madeleine Carroll, Freddie Bartholomew.
(July 20 at 2:30 / July 23 at 2:30)
- A YANK IN THE RAF. 1941. Tyrone Power, Betty Grable.
(July 20 at 6:00 / July 21 at 2:30)
- CHAD HANNA. 1940. Henry Fonda, Dorothy Lamour, John Carradine.
(July 22 at Noon / July 23 at Noon)
- THE SONG OF BERNADETTE. 1943. Jennifer Jones, William Eythe, Charles Bickford,
Vincent Price. (July 22 at 2:00 / July 28 at 2:30)
- MARYLAND. 1940. Walter Brennan, Fay Bainter, Charles Ruggles.
(July 22 at 5:00 / July 24 at 2:30)
- THE CROOKED ROAD. 1916. Henry King, Katherine Burke, Charles Dudley, Jimsie-Maye,
Mollie McConnell, Don Bailey. (July 24 at Noon /
July 25 at Noon)
- A BELL FOR ADANO. 1945. John Hodiak, William Bendix, Gene Tierney.
(July 24 at 6:00)
- REMEMBER THE DAY. 1941. Claudette Colbert, John Payne.
(July 25 at 6:00 / July 27 at 2:30)
- MARGIE. 1946. Jeanne Crain, Glenn Langan.
(July 27 at 6:00 / July 29 at 5:00)
- THE BLACK SWAN. 1942. Tyrone Power, Maureen O'Hara, Laird Cregar.
(July 29 at Noon / July 30 at Noon)
- WILSON. 1944. Alexander Knox, Charles Coburn, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Thomas
Mitchell. (July 29 at 2:00 / July 31 at 6:00)
- THE GUNFIGHTER. 1950. Gregory Peck, Millard Mitchell, Mae Marsh, Karl Malden.
(July 30 at 2:30 / August 3 at 6:00)
- TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH. 1949. Gregory Peck, Hugh Marlowe, Millard Mitchell.
(July 31 at 2:30 / August 5 at 5:00)
- CAPTAIN FROM CASTILE. 1946. Tyrone Power, Jean Peters, Cesar Romero.
(August 1 at 6:00 / August 7 at 6:00)
- DAVID AND BATHSHEBA. 1951. Gregory Peck, Susan Hayward, Raymond Massey.
(August 3 at 2:30 / August 7 at 6:00)
- THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO. 1952. Gregory Peck, Susan Hayward, Ava Gardner.
(August 3 at 8:30 / August 7 at 2:30)
- PRINCE OF FOXES. 1949. Tyrone Power, Orson Welles, Everett Sloan.
(August 5 at Noon / August 6 at Noon)
- KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES. 1953. Tyrone Power, Terry Moore, Michael Rennie.
(August 6 at 2:30 / August 8 at 6:00)
- THE SUN ALSO RISES. 1957. Tyrone Power, Ava Gardner, Mel Ferrer, Eddie Albert,
Errol Flynn. (August 10 at 2:30 / August
14 at 6:00)
- THE BRAVADOS. 1958. Gregory Peck, Joan Collins, Lee Van Cleef.
(August 10 at 6:00 / August 13 at 2:30)
- CAROUSEL. 1956. Gordon MacRae, Shirley Jones, Cameron Mitchell.
(August 10 at 8:30 / August 11 at 2:30)
- WAIT TIL THE SUN SHINES, NELLIE. 1952. David Wayne, Jean Peters, Hugh Marlowe.
(August 12 at Noon / August 13 at Noon)
- LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING. 1955. Jennifer Jones, William Holden.
(August 12 at 2:30 / August 14 at 2:30)
- TENDER IS THE NIGHT. 1961. Jennifer Jones, Jason Robards Jr., Joan Fontaine,
Tom Ewell. (August 12 at 5:00 / August 15
at 6:00)

BIOGRAPHY OF HENRY KING

"In Henry King, we have perhaps our last link with the virgin primacy that was filmmaking in the early part of this century, filmmaking whose tenets were balance, symmetry and intense understanding."

-Scott Eyman

Henry King was born in Christiansburg, Montgomery County, Virginia in 1888. His father was a farmer and railroad attorney, and his grandfather served as a first lieutenant under Robert E. Lee in the Civil War.

He received his first show business exposure and encouragement for a blackface routine performed at his junior high school commencement. "The closest thing we had to the theatre in our family tree was a couple of ministers," King says. He left school at 15 to work for the Norfolk & Western Railroad, and, after a brief return to school, left home for good to tour the South with the Empire Stock Company.

He entered the theatre much to the consternation of his family, who had intended for him to enter the Methodist ministry and regarded actors as declassé, at the very least. However, his mother supported his decision:

"By this time my father was dead and my mother and aunt had become mortal enemies, because my aunt had said that she was glad to see my dad dead, so he wouldn't be able to see me in the theatre...as long as she lived, my mother was my greatest booster."

King became a set designer as well as an actor (and seasoned reader of audiences) while playing in such classics as "The Jolly American Tramp" and "The Minister's Daughter" and traveling all over the country. He got involved in films almost by accident when he accompanied a friend in New York, Pearl White, to an interview and met the manager of the motion picture company to which she was applying for a job.

"He asked me, 'Why don't you go into motion pictures?' I said, 'I have blue eyes and they don't photograph.' He said, 'Oh, that was in the old days. We photograph blue eyes now.' We got into a discussion and I got into motion pictures. It was funny-- I didn't even ask how much money I'd be making. It was something different, something I hadn't done before..."

The production company was Lubin; and within three weeks King was directing his first movie scene. He soon got a better offer from the Balboa Amusement Company of Long Beach, California, as leading man and sometimes writer of one, two and three-reel comedies and dramas. There he quickly emerged as a directorial talent when he used the memory of a brawl he had witnessed as a child to film a screen altercation composed of many quick, eight- and ten-frame shots--an unheard-of technique at

the time--so unheard-of that he had to demonstrate the procedure for splicing the shots together to the studio's film editor.

At a time when movie companies proliferated like apple blossoms, King moved from Balboa, a subsidiary of Pathe, to American studios in 1918 and then to the Thomas Ince Company in 1919, where he directed "23½ Hours Leave," which led to an offer from still another independent, Robertson-Cole. King was considering this offer when, during Ince's absence, he was fired by the studio manager for cutting his own print of "23½ Hours Leave" for distribution. The film became a hit, and when Ince returned, he fired the studio manager as well.

Shortly after, when Robertson-Cole closed down, King was hired by Inspiration Pictures, where, after having made more than 30 feature films in less than five years, he directed and co-scripted his first award-winning movie, "Tol'able David," which established his reputation and still enjoys a very substantial following among cineastes. It also marked Richard Barthelmess' debut on the screen in the title role.

In 1930, King, having acquired his pilot's license, discovered his alternate avocation. He scouted locations by air, carefully storing his impressions, and exercising what critic Paul Rotha had already identified as his exceptional sensitivity to landscape and architecture. He discovered Morelia, Mexico while flying home to California from Panama, where he had been filming "Marie Galante," and Moralia later became the shooting location for "Captain from Castile," "The Sun Also Rises" and "The Bravados." King is still piloting his own airplane and travels by air whenever possible as well as simply flying for relaxation.

Given his penchant for travel and creative sense of technology, it can come as little surprise that King was one of the earliest to shoot on location abroad, filming "The White Sister" in Italy in 1923 with Lillian Gish and Ronald Colman (who had never before appeared on the screen). When he made "Hell Harbor" in 1930, the production of a sound film in the Florida Keys was still a very experimental idea, and his "Over the Hill" from 1931 is notable for the early maturity of its use of contrapuntal sound. King was also one of the first to take Technicolor out of doors with "Ramona" in 1936.

During the '40s and '50s he worked for Darryl F. Zanuck at 20th-Century Fox--he joined the Fox Film Company in the '30s and went on to make such critically acclaimed films as "Twelve O'Clock High" and "The Gunfighter." He also continued to introduce new stars to the public such as Don Ameche and Tyrone Power.

Today, King has a new project, "The Story of Guadalupe:"

"A few years back, the story was poison, but now, I think, the pendulum is swinging back and I have no doubt we'll get it going. It's the story of the birth of Mexico. I'd call it 'The Birth of a Nation,' except, if I remember correctly, it's been done."

King's interests over the years, aside from acting, set designing, directing, editing, writing, scouting talent and locations (and besides flying) have included protecting the privacy of his personal life, raising a prize bulldog, golf, fishing, swimming, voracious reading, and even, at one time, amateur auto racing. His list of friends and acquaintances is said to amount to a small-scale census.