Ray, Nicholas (August 7, 1911- June 16, 1979)

Nicholas Ray was an American film director, most notable for directing *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and for his complex portraits of a variety of social issues including youth culture, addiction and sexuality. Ray’s career in film began in 1944 after having worked with Elia Kazan in the Theater of Action, an improvisatory acting company. Ray’s directorial debut feature, *They Live by Night* (1949), provided a template for a stylized aesthetic that depicted the lives and loves of young loners. Ray would build on this aesthetic in his most famous work, *Rebel Without a Cause*, featuring James Dean, Sal Mineo and Natalie Wood. The film’s modernist aesthetic, marked by contradiction, foregrounded the emerging youth culture of the fifties with highly stylized sets and expressive camera movements set against subdued realist acting. Overcome by addiction Ray made eight more films, with few achieving success in America. However, French critics lauded Ray, with Jean-Luc Godard claiming in a review of *Bitter Victory* (1957) that “the cinema is Nicholas Ray.” For Godard, Ray’s films presented a unique vision of American life, one that illustrated the complexity of an emerging post-war culture defined by alienation. Not only were Ray’s topics unique but his use of camera movement provided cinema with a new form.

References further reading:

Chamberlin, C.J. (2006) “Regarding Bitter Victory: Hollywood’s Philoctetes in the Desert or *La Politique des Comédiens*” *Senses of Cinema* Issue 38, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/38/bitter\_victory/>

Eisenschitz, B., Milne T (trans) (2011). *Nicholas Ray: an American journey*.. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ray, N., Ray, S (ed) (1995) *I Was Interrupted: Nicholas Ray on Making* Movies. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995

List of Works:

Films:

*They Live by Night* (1948)

*In a Lonely Place* (1950)

*Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)

*Bigger Than Life* (1956)

*Bitter Victory* (1957)

*We Can’t Go Home Again* (2011)

Paratexual:

Indiana University Podcast “A Place for Film” Discussion on Nicholas Ray with Will Scheibel - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRYhREL8Huw>

Kathyrn Bigelow (director of such films as *The Hurt Locker* and *Zero Dark Thirty)* interviews Nicholas Ray in 1979 - <http://nicholasrayfoundation.org/kathryn_bigelow_interview_nick_ray>

Martin Scorsese introducing Nicholas Ray’s 1954 film *Johnny Guitar* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAw7y76awqk>

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