Dutt, Guru (b. 9 July 1925, Bangalore, India; d. 10 October, 1964, Bombay, India)

Guru Dutt, original name Vasanth Kumar Shivsankar Padukone, was a highly influential actor, writer, producer and director of the Hindi film industry based in Bombay. Stylistically Dutt’s films were influenced by western modernism, particularly German expressionism, the play of light and shadow, the use of deep focus, and self-reflexive camera movements. These stylistic features of his films were used to express the alienation of the modern self and to address larger questions about the meaning and purpose of life. By exposing class differences, the victimization of women, unemployment, and by undermining romantic love, his films not only questioned the tenets of mainstream cinema, but also critiqued the harsh realities of post-independence India. His most successful film *Pyaasa* (*The Thirsty One,* 1957) is the tale of a poor, alienated poet Vijay (played by Dutt) whose poetry about the suffering of a lower class citizen is rejected by the publishers. Dutt’s modernist classics, *Kaagaz ke Phool* (*Paper Flowers*, 1959), is inspired by Welles’s *Citizen Kane*, since the film portrays the fall of a successful film director Suresh Sinha, a narrative which is reminiscent of the decline of Charles Foster Kane. The film is also heavily influenced by Welles’s use of German expressionism, and therefore Dutt is sometimes referred to as the Orson Welles of India. His films provide an interesting amalgamation of expressionistic visuals and melodramatic songs.

**References and further reading**

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**Selected Filmography**

Director:

*Baazi* (*Opportunity*, 1951)

*Jaal* (*The Net*, 1952)

*Aar Paar* (1954)

*Mr and Mrs. 55*

*Pyaasa* (*The Thirsty One,* 1957)

*Kaagaz ke Phool* (*Paper Flowers*, 1959)

**Paratextual Material**:

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