

Biography: Alfred Hitchcock

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Alfred Hitchcock



Alfred Hitchcock introduces the *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* episode "The Sorcerer's Apprentice"

Born: 13 August 1899
Leytonstone, London, UK

Died: 29 April 1980
Bel Air, Los Angeles, USA

Occupation: Film director and producer

Spouse: Alma Reville

Sir Alfred Joseph Hitchcock, KBE (13 August 1899 – 29 April 1980) was a British film director and producer, a master of the suspense thriller genre. He began directing in the United Kingdom before working mostly in the United States from 1939 onwards, taking a dual citizenship in 1956. The "Master of Suspense" and his family lived in a mountaintop estate high above Scotts Valley, California, for 32 years, from 1940 to 1972. He directed more than fifty feature films in a career spanning six decades, from the silent film era, through the invention of talkies, to the colour era. Hitchcock remains one of the best known and most popular directors of all time, famous for his expert and largely unrivaled control of pace and suspense throughout his movies.

Hitchcock's films draw heavily on both fear and fantasy, and are known for their droll humour. They often portray innocent people caught up in circumstances beyond their control or understanding. This often involves a *transference of guilt* in which the "innocent" character's failings are transferred to another character, and magnified. Another common theme is the basic incompatibility of men and women; Hitchcock's films often take a cynical view of traditional romance.

Rebecca was the only one of his films to win the Academy Award for Best Picture, although four others were nominated. Hitchcock never won the Academy Award for Best Director. He was awarded the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award for lifetime achievement in 1967, but never personally received an Academy Award of Merit.

Until the later part of his career, Hitchcock was far more popular with film audiences than with film critics, especially the elite British and American critics. In the late 1950s the French New Wave critics, especially Éric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, and François Truffaut, were among the first to see and promote his films as artistic masterworks. Hitchcock was one of the first directors to whom they applied their auteur theory, which stresses the artistic authority of the director in the film-making process.

Through his fame, public persona, high degree of creative control and frequent return to favored themes, Hitchcock transformed the role of the director, which had previously been eclipsed by that of the producer. He is seen today as a director who managed to combine art and entertainment in a way very few have ever matched. His innovations and vision have influenced a great number of filmmakers, producers, and actors.

Biography

Early life

Alfred Hitchcock was born on August 13, 1899, in Leytonstone, London, the second son and youngest of the three children of William Hitchcock, a greengrocer, and his wife, Emma Jane Hitchcock (née Whelan). His family was mostly Irish Catholic. Hitchcock was sent to Catholic boarding schools in London. He has said his childhood was very lonely and sheltered.

At an early age, after acting childishly, Hitchcock claimed that his father sent him to the local police station carrying a note. When he presented the police officer on duty with the note, he was locked in a cell for a few moments, petrifying the young child. This was a favorite anecdote of his, one which is often suggested to be the cause for the theme of distrust of police which runs through many of his films.

At 14, Hitchcock lost his father and left the Jesuit-run St Ignatius' College in Stamford Hill, his school at the time, to study at the School for Engineering and Navigation. After graduating, he became a draftsman and advertising designer with a cable company.

About that time, Hitchcock became intrigued by photography and started working in film in London. In 1920, he obtained a full-time job at Islington Studios under its American owners, Famous Players-Lasky, and their British successors, Gainsborough Pictures, designing the titles for silent movies.

Pre-war British career

As a major talent in a new industry with plenty of opportunity, he rose quickly. In 1925, Michael Balcon of Gainsborough Pictures gave him a chance to direct his first film, *The Pleasure Garden*, made at the Ufa studios in Germany. However, the commercial failure of this film, and his second, *The Mountain Eagle*, threatened to derail his promising career, until he attached himself to the thriller

genre. The resulting film, *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog*, was released in 1927 and was a major commercial and critical success. Like many of his earlier works it was influenced by Expressionist techniques he had witnessed firsthand in Germany. In it, attractive blondes are strangled and the new lodger (Ivor Novello) in the Bunting family's upstairs apartment falls under heavy suspicion. This is the first truly "Hitchcockian" film, incorporating such themes as the "wrong man".

Following the success of *The Lodger*, Hitchcock began his first efforts to promote himself in the media, and hired a publicist to cement his growing reputation as one of the British film industry's rising stars. In 1926, he was to marry his assistant director Alma Reville. They had a daughter, Patricia, in 1928. Alma was Hitchcock's closest collaborator. She wrote some of his screenplays and (though often uncredited) worked with him on every one of his films.

In 1929, he began work on *Blackmail*, his tenth film. While the film was in production, the studio decided to make it one of Britain's first sound pictures. With the climax of the film taking place on the dome of the British Museum, *Blackmail* also began the Hitchcock tradition of using famous landmarks as the backdrop to a story.

In 1933, Hitchcock was once again working for Michael Balcon at Gaumont-British Picture Corporation. His first film for the company, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), was a success, while his second, *The 39 Steps* (1935), is often considered one of the best films from his early period. It was also one of the first to introduce the concept of the "MacGuffin", a plot device around which a whole story would revolve. In *The 39 Steps*, the MacGuffin is a stolen set of blueprints.

His next major success was in 1938, *The Lady Vanishes*, a clever and fast-paced film about the search for a kindly old Englishwoman (Dame May Whitty), who disappears while on board a train in the fictional country of Vandrika (a thinly-veiled version of Nazi Germany).

By the end of the 1930s, Hitchcock was at the top of his game artistically, and in a position to name his own terms when David O. Selznick managed to entice the Hitchcocks to Hollywood.

Hollywood

Hitchcock's *gallows humour* continued in his American work, together with the suspense that became his trademark. However, working arrangements with his new producer were less than optimal. Selznick suffered from perennial money problems and Hitchcock was often unhappy with the amount of creative control demanded by Selznick over his films. Consequently, Selznick ended up "loaning" Hitchcock to the larger studios more often than producing Hitchcock's films himself.

With the prestigious Selznick picture *Rebecca* in 1940, Hitchcock made his first American movie, although it was set in England and based on a novel by English author Dame Daphne du Maurier. This Gothic melodrama explores the fears of a naïve young bride who enters a great English country home and must grapple with a distant husband, a predatory housekeeper, and the legacy of her husband's late wife. It has also subsequently been noted for the lesbian undercurrents in Judith Anderson's performance. The film won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1940. Hitchcock's second American film, the European-set thriller *Foreign Correspondent* was also nominated for Best Picture that year.

Hitchcock's work during the 1940s was diverse, ranging from the romantic comedy, *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* (1941) and the courtroom drama *The Paradine Case* (1947), to the dark and disturbing *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943).

Shadow of a Doubt, his personal favorite, was about young Charlotte "Charlie" Newton (Teresa Wright), who suspects her beloved uncle Charlie Spencer (Joseph Cotten) of murder. In its use of overlapping characters, dialogue, and closeups it has provided a generation of film theorists with psychoanalytic potential, including Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek. The film also hearkens to one of Cotten's better known films, *Citizen Kane*.

Spellbound explored the then very fashionable subject of psychoanalysis and featured a dream sequence which was designed by Salvador Dalí. The actual dream sequence in the film was considerably cut from the original planned scene that was to run for some minutes but proved too disturbing for the finished film.

Notorious (1946) marked Hitchcock's first film as a producer as well as director. As Selznick failed to see the subject's potential, he allowed Hitchcock to make the film for RKO. From this point on, Hitchcock would produce his own films, giving him a far greater degree of freedom to pursue the projects that interested him. Starring Hitchcock regulars Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant, and featuring a plot about Nazis, uranium, and South America, *Notorious* was a huge box office success and has remained one of Hitchcock's most acclaimed films. Its inventive use of suspense and props briefly led to Hitchcock being under surveillance by the CIA due to his use of uranium as a plot device.

Rope (his first colour film) came next in 1948. Here Hitchcock experimented with marshalling suspense in a confined environment, as he had done earlier with *Lifeboat*. He also experimented with exceptionally long takes — up to ten minutes (see Themes and devices). Featuring James Stewart in the leading role, *Rope* was the first of an eventual four films Stewart would make for Hitchcock. Based on the Leopold and Loeb case of the 1920s, *Rope* is also among the earliest openly gay-themed films to emerge from the Hays Office-controlled Hollywood studio era.

Under Capricorn, set in nineteenth-century Australia, also used this short-lived technique, but to a more limited extent. For these two films he formed a production company with Sidney Bernstein, called Transatlantic Pictures, which folded after these two unsuccessful pictures.

Peak years and decline

With *Strangers on a Train* (1951), based on the novel by Patricia Highsmith, Hitchcock combined many of the best elements from his preceding British and American films. Two men casually meet and speculate on removing people who are causing them difficulty. One of the men, though, takes this banter entirely seriously. With Farley Granger reprising some elements of his role from *Rope*, *Strangers* continued the director's interest in the narrative possibilities of homosexual blackmail and murder.

Three very popular films, all starring Grace Kelly, followed. *Dial M for Murder* was adapted from the popular stage play by Frederick Knott. This was originally another experimental film, with Hitchcock using the technique of 3D cinematography, although the film was never released in this format. *Rear Window*, starred James Stewart again, as well as Thelma Ritter and Raymond Burr. Here the wheelchair-bound Stewart observes the movements of his neighbours across the courtyard and becomes convinced one of them has murdered his wife. Like *Lifeboat* and *Rope*, the movie was photographed almost entirely within the confines of a small space: Stewart's tiny studio apartment overlooking the massive courtyard set. *To Catch a Thief*, set in the French Riviera, starred Kelly and Cary Grant.

In 1956, Hitchcock made *The Wrong Man*, based on a real-life case of mistaken identity, his only film to star Henry Fonda, and also remade his 1934 film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, this time with James Stewart and Doris Day, who sang the theme song, "Whatever Will Be (Que Será, Será)".

1958's *Vertigo* again starred Stewart, this time with Kim Novak and Barbara Bel Geddes. The film was a commercial failure, but has come to be viewed by many as one of Hitchcock's masterpieces.



Philippe Halsman portrait of Hitchcock

Hitchcock followed *Vertigo* with three very different films, which were all massive commercial successes. All are also recognised as among his very best films: *North by Northwest* (1959), *Psycho* (1960), and *The Birds* (1963). The latter two were particularly notable for their unconventional soundtracks, both by Bernard Herrmann: the screeching strings in the murder scene in *Psycho* pushed the limits of the time, and *The Birds* dispensed completely with conventional instruments, using an electronically produced soundtrack. These were his last great films, after which his career slowly wound down (although some critics such as Robin Wood and Donald Spoto contend *Marnie*, from 1964, is first-class Hitchcock). In 1972 Hitchcock returned to London to film *Frenzy*, his last major success. For the first time, Hitchcock allowed nudity and profane language, which had before been taboo, in one of his films.

Failing health slowed down his output over the last two decades of his life.

Family Plot (1976) was his last film. It related the escapades of "Madam" Blanche Tyler played by Barbara Harris, a fraudulent spiritualist, and her taxi driver lover Bruce Dern making a living from her phony powers. William Devane, Karen Black and Katherine Helmond co-starred.

Hitchcock was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II in the 1980 New Years Honours. He died just four months later, on April 29, before he had the opportunity to be formally invested by the Queen. He was nevertheless entitled to be known as **Sir Alfred Hitchcock** and to use the postnominal letters "KBE", because he remained a British subject when he adopted American citizenship in 1956.

Alfred Hitchcock died from renal failure in his Bel-Air, Los Angeles, home aged 80, and was survived by his wife Alma Reville, and their daughter, Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell. His body was cremated, and apparently there was no public funeral or memorial service.

Themes and devices

Hitchcock preferred the use of suspense over surprise in his films. In surprise, the director assaults the viewer with frightening things. In suspense, the director tells or shows things to the audience which the characters in the film do not know, and then artfully builds tension around what will happen when the characters finally learn the truth.

Further blurring the moral distinction between the innocent and the guilty, occasionally making this indictment inescapably clear to viewers one and all, Hitchcock also makes voyeurs of his "respectable" audience. In *Rear Window* (1954), after L. B. Jeffries (played by James Stewart) has been staring across the courtyard at him for most of the film, Lars Thorwald (played by Raymond Burr) confronts Jeffries by saying, "What do you want of me?" Burr might as well have been addressing the audience. In fact, shortly before asking this, Thorwald turns to face the camera directly for the first time — at this point, audiences often gasp.

One of Hitchcock's favourite devices for driving the plots of his stories and creating suspense was what he called the "MacGuffin." The plots of many of his suspense films revolve around this device: a detail which, by inciting curiosity and desire, drives the plot and motivates the actions of characters within the story, but whose specific identity and nature is unimportant to the spectator of the film. In *Vertigo*, for instance, "Carlotta Valdes" is a MacGuffin; she never appears and the details of her death are unimportant to the viewer, but the story about her ghost's haunting of Madeleine Elster is the spur for Scottie's investigation of her, and hence the film's entire plot. In *Notorious* the uranium that the main characters must recover before it reaches Nazi hands serves as a similarly arbitrary motivation: any dangerous object would suffice. And state secrets of various kinds serve as MacGuffins in several of the spy films, like *The 39 Steps*. In *Psycho*, an obvious MacGuffin at the beginning of the film (a package containing \$40,000 in stolen money) is actually a red herring.

Most of Hitchcock's films contain cameo appearances by Hitchcock himself: the director would be seen for a brief moment boarding a bus, crossing in front of a building, standing in an apartment across the courtyard, or appearing in a photograph. This playful gesture became one of Hitchcock's signatures. As a recurring theme he would carry a musical instrument — especially memorable was the large double bass case that he wrestles onto the train at the beginning of *Strangers on a Train*.

In his earliest appearances he would fill in as an obscure extra, standing in a crowd or walking through a scene in a long camera shot. But he became more

prominent in his later appearances, as when he turns to see Jane Wyman's disguise when she passes him on the street in *Stage Fright*, and in stark silhouette in his final film *Family Plot*. (See a list of Hitchcock cameo appearances.)

Hitchcock includes the consumption of brandy in nearly every sound film. "I'll get you some brandy. Drink this down. Just like medicine ..." says James Stewart's character to Kim Novak, in *Vertigo*. In a real life incident, Hitchcock dared Montgomery Clift at a dinner party around the filming of *I Confess* to swallow a carafe of brandy, which caused his lead actor to pass out almost immediately. This near obsession with brandy remains unexplained. In *Torn Curtain* and *Topaz*, brandy is replaced by cognac

Another almost inexplicable feature of any Hitchcock film is the inclusion of a staircase. Of course, stairways inspire many suspenseful moments, most notably Farley Granger's character visit to the murderer in *Strangers On A Train* or the detective's demise in the Bates' mansion in *Psycho*. However, a completely nonfunctional staircase adorns the apartment of the James Stewart character in *Rear Window*, as if Hitchcock feels compelled to its inclusion by some unspoken superstition.

Hitchcock seemed to delight in the technical challenges of filmmaking. In *Lifeboat*, Hitchcock sets the entire action of the movie in a small boat, yet manages to keep the cinematography from monotonous repetition. His trademark cameo appearance was a dilemma, given the claustrophobic setting; so Hitchcock appeared on camera in a fictitious newspaper ad for a weight loss product.

In *Spellbound* two unprecedented point-of-view shots were achieved by constructing a large wooden hand (which would appear to belong to the character whose point of view the camera took) and outsized props for it to hold: a bucket-sized glass of milk and a large wooden gun. For added novelty and impact, the climactic gunshot was hand-coloured red on some copies of the black-and-white print of the film.

Rope (1948) was another technical challenge: a film that appears to have been shot entirely in a single take. The film was actually shot in eight takes of approximately 10 minutes each, which was the amount of film that would fit in a single camera reel; the transitions between reels were hidden by having a dark object fill the entire screen for a moment. Hitchcock used those points to hide the cut, and began the next take with the camera in the same place.

His 1958 film *Vertigo* contains a camera trick that has been imitated and re-used so many times by filmmakers, it has become known as the Hitchcock zoom.

Although famous for inventive camera angles, Hitchcock generally avoided points of view that were physically impossible from a human perspective. For example, he would never place the camera looking out from inside a refrigerator. This helps to draw audience members into the film's action.

Regarding Hitchcock's sometimes less than pleasant relationship with actors, there was a persistent rumor that he had said that actors were cattle. Hitchcock later denied this, typically tongue-in-cheek, clarifying that he had only said that actors should be treated like cattle. Carole Lombard, tweaking Hitchcock and drumming up a little publicity, brought some cows along with her when she reported to the set of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. For Hitchcock, the actors, like the props, were part of the film's setting.

Hitchcock often dealt with matters that he felt were sexually perverse or kinky, and many of his films aimed to subvert the restrictive Hollywood Production Code that prohibited any mention of homosexuality.

A recurring theme in Hitchcock's movies is mistaken identity. Audiences see this theme in almost all of Hitchcock's movies. A prime example is *North By Northwest*, when Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) is mistaken for George Kaplan, a non-existent man made up by the FBI.

In many Hitchcock's movies, an ordinary person is thrust into an extraordinary situation. In *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) Dr. Ben McKenna is an ordinary man from Indianapolis who is on a vacation in Morocco and he winds up with his son getting kidnapped. This entangling of an ordinary protagonist in peril and guilt is also evident in *Strangers on a Train*, *I Confess*, *Rear Window*, *To Catch a Thief*, *The Wrong Man*, *Vertigo*, *North By Northwest*, *Psycho*, *The Birds* and others.

Hitchcock loved the number 13. He often placed numbers that added up to thirteen in his movies.

His character and its effects on his films

Hitchcock's films sometimes feature male characters struggling in their relationships with their mothers. In *North by Northwest* (1959), Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant's character) is an innocent man ridiculed by his mother for insisting that shadowy, murderous men are after him (in this case, they are). In *The Birds* (1963), the Rod Taylor character, an innocent man, finds his world under attack by vicious birds, and struggles to free himself of a clinging mother (Jessica Tandy). The killer in *Frenzy* (1972) has a loathing of women but idolizes his mother. The villain Bruno in *Strangers on a Train* hates his father, but has an incredibly close relationship with his mother (played by Marion Lorne). Norman Bates' troubles with his mother in *Psycho* are infamous.

Hitchcock heroines tend to be lovely, cool blondes who seem proper at first but, when aroused by passion or danger, respond in a more sensual, animal, or even criminal way. As noted, the famous victims in *The Lodger* are all blondes. In *The 39 Steps*, Hitchcock's glamorous blonde star, Madeleine Carroll, is put in handcuffs. In *Marnie* (1964), glamorous blonde Tippi Hedren is a kleptomaniac. In *To Catch a Thief* (1955), glamorous blonde Grace Kelly offers to help someone she believes is a cat burglar. In *Rear Window*, Lisa risks her life by breaking into Lars Thorwald's apartment. And, most notoriously, in *Psycho*, Janet Leigh's character steals \$40,000 and gets murdered by a young man named Norman Bates (played by Anthony Perkins) who thought he was his own mother. Hitchcock's last blonde heroine was Barbara Harris as a phony psychic turned amateur sleuth in his final film, 1976's *Family Plot*. Interesting to note that in the same film, the diamond smuggler played by Karen Black, could also fit that role, as she wears a long blonde wig in various scenes and is becoming increasingly uncomfortable about her line of work.

Hitchcock saw that reliance on actors and actresses was a holdover from the theater tradition. He was a pioneer in using camera movement, camera set ups and montage to explore the outer reaches of cinematic art.

Most critics and Hitchcock scholars, including Donald Spoto and Roger Ebert, agree that *Vertigo* represents the director's most personal and revealing film, dealing with the obsessions of a man who crafts a woman into the woman he desires. *Vertigo* explores more frankly and at greater length his interest in the relation between sex and death than any other film in his filmography.

Hitchcock often said that his personal favourite was *Shadow of a Doubt*.

His style of working

Hitchcock once commented, "The writer and I plan out the entire script down to the smallest detail, and when we're finished all that's left to do is to shoot the film. Actually, it's only when one enters the studio that one enters the area of compromise. Really, the novelist has the best casting since he doesn't have to cope with the actors and all the rest."

However much of Hitchcock's hatred of actors has been overhyped. Hitchcock simply did not tolerate the method approach as he believed that actors should only concentrate on their performances and leave work on script and character to the directors and screenwriters. In a Sight and Sound interview, he stated that, 'the method actor is OK in the theatre because he has a free space to move about. But when it comes to cutting the face and what he sees and so forth, there must be some discipline'. [1] During the making of *Lifeboat*, Walter Slezak who played the German character stated that Hitchcock knew the mechanics of acting better than anyone he knew [Source - Alfred Hitchcock's 2003 biography by Patrick McGilligan]. Several critics have observed that despite his reputation as a

man who disliked actors, several actors who worked with him gave fine, often brilliant, performances and these performances contribute to the film's success.

The first book devoted to the director is simply named *Hitchcock*. It is a document of a one-week interview by François Truffaut in 1967. (ISBN 0671604295)

Awards

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded Hitchcock the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award, in 1967. However, despite six earlier nominations, he never won an Oscar in a contested category. His unsuccessful Oscar nominations were:

- for Best Director: *Rebecca* (1940), *Lifeboat* (1944), *Spellbound* (1945), *Rear Window* (1954), and *Psycho* (1960); and
- as a producer, for Best Picture: *Suspicion* (1941).

However *Rebecca*, which Hitchcock did direct, won the 1940 Best Picture Oscar for its producer David O. Selznick. Three other films Hitchcock directed were unsuccessfully nominated for Best Picture.

Hitchcock was knighted in 1980.

Television and Books

From 1955 to 1965, Hitchcock was the host and producer of a long-running television series entitled *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. While his films had made Hitchcock's name strongly associated with suspense, the TV series made Hitchcock a celebrity himself. His irony-tinged voice, image, and mannerisms became instantly recognizable and were often the subject of parody. He directed a few episodes of the TV series himself and he upset a number of movie production companies when he insisted on using his TV production crew to produce his motion picture *Psycho*. In the late 1980s, a new version of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* was produced for television, making use of Hitchcock's original introductions.

Alfred Hitchcock is also immortalised in print and appeared as himself in the very popular juvenile detective series, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators*. The long-running detective series was clever and well written, with characters much younger than the Hardy Boys. In ghost-written introductions, "Alfred Hitchcock" formally introduced each case at the beginning of the book, often giving them new cases to solve. At the end of each book, Alfred Hitchcock would discuss the specifics of the case with Jupiter Jones, Bob Andrews and Peter Crenshaw and every so often the three boys would give Alfred Hitchcock mementos of their case.

When Alfred Hitchcock died, his chores as the boys' mentor/friend would be done by a fictional character: a retired detective named Hector Sebastian. Due to the popularity of the series, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators* scored several reprints and out of respect, the latter reprints were changed to just *The Three Investigators*. Over the years, more than one name has been used to replace Alfred Hitchcock's character, especially for the earlier books when his role was emphasised.

At the height of Hitchcock's success, he was also asked to introduce a set of books with his name attached. The series was a collection of short stories by popular short story writers, primarily focused on suspense and thrillers. These titles included *Alfred Hitchcock's Monster Museum*, *Alfred Hithcock's Supernatural Tales of Terror and Suspense*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Spellbinders in Suspense*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Witch's Brew*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Ghostly Gallery* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Haunted Houseful*. Hitchcock himself was not actually involved in the reading, reviewing, editing or selection of the short stories; in fact, even his introductions were ghost-written. The entire extent of his involvement with the project was to lend his name and collect a check.

Some notable writers whose works were used in the collection include Shirley Jackson (*Strangers in Town*, *The Lottery*), T.H. White (*The Sword in the Stone*), Robert Bloch, H. G. Wells (*The War of the Worlds*), Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Mark Twain and the creator of *The Three Investigators*, Robert Arthur.

Filmography

(all dates are year of release)

Silent films

- No. 13 (Unfinished, also known as *Mrs. Peabody*) (1922)
- Always Tell Your Wife (Uncredited) (1923)
- *The Pleasure Garden* (1925)
- *The Mountain Eagle* (1926)
- *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (1927)
- *Downhill* (1927)
- *Easy Virtue* (1928), based on a Noel Coward play
- *The Ring* (1927), an original story by Hitchcock.
- *The Farmer's Wife* (1928)
- *Champagne* (1928)
- *The Manxman* (1929)
- *Blackmail* (1929), silent version of the more famous talkie

Sound films

- *Blackmail* (1929), the first British talkie
- *Juno and the Paycock* (1930)
- *Murder!* (1930)

- *Elstree Calling* (1930), made jointly with Adrian Brunel, Andre Charlot, Jack Hulbert and Paul Murray
- *The Skin Game* (1931)
- *Mary* (1931)
- *Number Seventeen* (1932)
- *Rich and Strange* (1932)
- *Waltzes from Vienna* (1933)
- *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934)
- *The 39 Steps* (1935), with Robert Donat
- *Secret Agent* (1936), loosely based on Somerset Maugham's "Ashenden" stories
- *Sabotage* (aka *A Woman Alone*) (1936), adapted from Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*
- *Young and Innocent* (1937)
- *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), with Michael Redgrave
- *Jamaica Inn* (1939), starring Charles Laughton
- *Rebecca* (1940), his only film to win the Academy Award for Best Picture
- *Foreign Correspondent* (1940)
- *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* (1941), written by Norman Krasna
- *Suspicion* (1941)
- *Saboteur* (1942), often seen as a dry run for *North by Northwest*
- *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943)
- *Lifeboat* (1944), Tallulah Bankhead's most famous film role
- *Aventure Malgache* (1944), a French language short made for the British Ministry of Information
- *Bon Voyage* (1944), another French language propaganda short
- *Spellbound* (1945), includes dream sequences designed by Salvador Dalí
- *Notorious* (1946)
- *The Paradine Case* (1947)
- *Rope* (1948)
- *Under Capricorn* (1949)
- *Stage Fright* (1950), his first film in Britain since 1939
- *Strangers on a Train* (1951)
- *I Confess* (1953)
- *Dial M for Murder* (1954)
- *Rear Window* (1954)
- *To Catch a Thief* (1955)
- *The Trouble with Harry* (1955)
- *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), remake of his 1934 film
- *The Wrong Man* (1956)
- *Vertigo* (1958)
- *North by Northwest* (1959)
- *Psycho* (1960)
- *The Birds* (1963)
- *Marnie* (1964)
- *Torn Curtain* (1966)

- *Topaz* (1969)
- *Frenzy* (1972)
- *Family Plot* (1976)

Television episodes

- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Revenge" (1955)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Breakdown" (1955)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "The Case of Mr. Pelham" (1955)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Back for Christmas" (1956)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Wet Saturday" (1956)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Mr. Blanchard's Secret" (1956)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "One More Mile to Go" (1957)
- *Suspicion*: "Four O'Clock" (1957)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "The Perfect Crime" (1957)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Lamb to the Slaughter" (1958)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Dip in the Pool" (1958)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Poison" (1958)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Banquo's Chair" (1959)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Arthur" (1959)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "The Crystal Trench" (1959)
- *Ford Startime*: "Incident at a Corner" (1960)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat" (1960)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "The Horseplayer" (1961)
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: "Bang! You're Dead" (1961)
- *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*: "I Saw the Whole Thing" (1962)

Frequent collaborators

Sara Allgood, Charles Bennett (screenwriter), Ingrid Bergman, Carl Brisson, Robert Burks (cinematographer), Madeleine Carroll, Leo G. Carroll, Joseph Cotten, Hume Cronyn, Robert Cummings, Joan Fontaine, John Forsythe, Farley Granger, Cary Grant, Clare Greet, Lilian Hall-Davis, Gordon Harker, Ben Hecht (writer), Tippi Hedren, Bernard Herrmann (composer), Hannah Jones, Malcolm Keen, Grace Kelly, Charles Laughton, John Longden, Peter Lorre, Miles Mander, Vera Miles, Ivor Novello, Anny Ondra, Gregory Peck, Jessie Royce Landis, James Stewart, John Williams

Quotes

- "Good evening" the quote he's remembered most for saying
- Television has brought back murder into the home - where it belongs. [\[2\]](#)
- Actors are cattle.[\[3\]](#)
- I never said all actors are cattle; what I said was all actors should be treated like cattle.[\[4\]](#)
- Blondes make the best victims. They're like virgin snow that shows up the bloody footprints.[\[5\]](#)
- There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it. [\[6\]](#)

- When an actor comes to me and wants to discuss his character, I say, 'It's in the script.' If he says, 'But what's my motivation?', ' I say, 'Your salary.'[7]
- If it's a good movie, the sound could go off and the audience would still have a perfectly clear idea of what was going on.[8]
- A good film is when the price of the dinner, the theatre admission and the babysitter were worth it.[9]
- The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder.[10]