



MEMBER MONDAYS

Out of the Past

Out of the Past (aka Build My Gallows High)

Directed by: Jacques Tourneur

©: RKO Radio Pictures

Presented by: RKO Radio Pictures

Executive Producer: Robert Sparks

Produced by: Warren Duff

Assistant Director: Harry Mancke

Screen Play by: Geoffrey Homes

Based on the novel Build My Gallows High by:
Geoffrey Homes

Director of Photography: Nicholas Musuraca

Special Effects by: Russell A. Cully

Editor: Samuel E. Beetley

Art Directors: Albert S. D'Agostino, Jack Okey

Set Decorations: Darrell Silvera

Gowns by: Edward Stevenson

Make-up Supervision: Gordon Bau

Music by: Roy Webb

Musical Director: C. Bakaleinikoff

Sound by: Francis M. Sarver, Clem Portman

uncredited

Unit Manager: James Anderson

2nd Unit Director: Lynn Shores

Assistant Director: Earl Harper

Dialogue Director: Dixie McCoy

Adaptation: James M. Cain, Frank Fenton

Fill-in Photographer: Robert de Grasse

2nd Unit Photography: Harold Stine

Optical Effects: Linwood G. Dunn

Stand-in for Robert Mitchum: Boyd Cabeen

Stand-in for Jane Greer: M. Guterman

Unit Publicity Writer: Leonard Shannon

Cast:

Robert Mitchum (*Jeff Bailey/Jeff Markham*)

Jane Greer (*Kathie Moffat*)

Kirk Douglas (*Whit Sterling*)

Rhonda Fleming (*Meta Carson*)

Richard Webb (*Jim*)

Steve Brodie (*Jack Fisher*)

Virginia Huston (*Ann Miller*)

Paul Valentine (*Joe Stefanos*)

Dickie Moore (*the kid*)

Ken Niles (*Leonard Eels*)

uncredited

Mary Field (*Marny*)

Theresa Harris (*Eunice Leonard*)

Caleb Peterson (*man with Eunice*)

Sam Warren (*waiter at Harlem Club*)

Mildred Boy, Ted Collins

(*people at Harlem Club*)

Tony Roux (*José Rodriguez*)

Manuel Paris (*croupier*)

José Portugal (*Mexican waiter*)

Primo Lopez (*Mexican bellhop*)

Eumenio Blanco, Victor Romito

(*Mexican waiters*)

Jess Escobar (*Mexican doorman*)

Oliver Blake (*Tillotson*)

John Kellogg (*Lou Baylorg*)

James Bush (*doorman*)

Archie Twitchell (*Rafferty, taxi driver*)

Philip Morris (*porter*)

William Van Vleck (*Jackson, cigar-store clerk*)

Harry Hayden (*Canby Miller*)

Adda Gleason (*Mrs Miller*)

Frank Wilcox (*Sheriff Ed Douglas*)

Lee Elson (*cop*)

Wallace Scott (*Petey*)

Charles Regan (*mystery man*)

Hubert Brill (*car manipulator*)

Wesley Bly (*head waiter*)

Out of the Past is such a surpassingly and surprisingly great film that it makes one's memory of it do strange things. It has an extremely elaborate and complicated plot, that seems to start, stop and start all over again at least three or four times. When it comes to you in memory, it feels like more than one movie. It is also the case that its visual brilliance is completely matched at a verbal level. Director Jacques Tourneur is great here, working with a master of low-key lighting, Nick Musuraca. Daniel Mainwaring is credited as Geoffrey Homes with the script, based on his own novel *Build My Gallows High* though RKO rewrite man Frank Fenton is thought to have had a hand in it and James M. Cain did a draft that was apparently rejected.

Mitchum as Bailey is a man of action who utterly disdains the task he's been hired to perform, who falls in love with Kathie Moffat (Jane Greer), the woman who is meant to become the victim of his employer Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas), who is in turn betrayed by her, who in turn plots his own revenge against her and escapes from her... Well, there you go. You start telling the story of *Out of the Past* and you get tongue-tied.

The one who isn't tongue-tied is Mitchum. He endures this excruciatingly sad and perverse labyrinth without complaint. It's a mad movie with a startlingly sane protagonist at its heart. And a witty one. Mitchum never had so many good lines again – indeed, few American actors have. One of my favourite exchanges is between femme fatale Greer and Mitchum as he watches her play roulette. Mitchum: 'That's not the way to win.' 'Oh, I didn't know there was a way to win,' she says, to which he replies, 'There's a way to lose more slowly.' My other favourite line is the opposite of rhetorical bravura. Moffat wants to tell Bailey a tale that will exonerate her of the charges Whit Sterling has made against her. He stops her with this simple reply: 'Baby, I don't care.'

One more thing I love about Mitchum in *Out of the Past* is his astonishing body-length trench-coat. Something in between a knight's chain mail, a magic carpet and a sombre pair of wings.

Larry Gross, *Sight and Sound*, September 1997

In the *film noir* classic *Out of the Past*, Greer portrayed Kathie Moffat, a role that she described as 'a real Alan Ladd part, where people talk about someone in such intriguing terms that when this little five-feet-three guy finally appears, you're too sold to notice that maybe he's not really the biggest, toughest guy in town. That's what happened in *Out of the Past*.'

To date, *Out of the Past* remains Greer's favourite film. 'Was I lucky to have Bob Mitchum and Kirk Douglas working with me. Wow!' she said. 'It was a wonderful acting experience.' With her appearance in the film, Greer's popularity continued to skyrocket, earning praise in *The Hollywood Reporter* as 'excellent, indeed,' and in *Variety* for delivering her 'most effective job to date.' Greer's performance was also noticed by RKO executive Dore Schary, who renegotiated her contract from \$750 a week to \$1,000 a week.

Karen Burroughs Hannsberry, *Femme Noir: Bad Girls of Film* (McFarland, 1998)

Brooks Benedict, Mike Lally, Homer Dickinson,
Bill Wallace (*kibitzers*)
USA 1947©
97 mins
Digital

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Last Year in Marienbad L'Année dernière à Marienbad

Thu 1 Aug 18:10; Wed 7 Aug 12:00; Mon 12 Aug 20:30

Persona

Fri 2 Aug 12:20; Sat 10 Aug 20:50; Thu 15 Aug 18:30; Wed 28 Aug 18:20 (+ intro by Lilia Pavin-Franks, BFI Events)

Sebastiane

Sat 3 Aug 20:45; Sat 10 Aug 18:20; Tue 13 Aug 14:40

Les Enfants terribles

Sun 4 Aug 18:00; Sat 17 Aug 12:50; Sat 31 Aug 20:40

The Old Dark House

Mon 5 Aug 12:30; Sat 10 Aug 16:00; Sun 25 Aug 14:10; Thu 29 Aug 18:30

Archipelago

Mon 5 Aug 18:00; Sun 11 Aug 13:10; Thu 22 Aug 20:30

Woman of the Dunes

 Suna na Onna

Mon 5 Aug 20:30; Wed 21 Aug 18:00 (+ intro by Tom Price, BFI Events)

The Philadelphia Story

Tue 6 Aug 12:20; Sun 11 Aug 18:30; Mon 26 Aug 15:00

Charulata

 The Lonely Wife

Tue 6 Aug 14:50; Sun 11 Aug 15:50; Fri 30 Aug 20:40

Bigger Than Life

Wed 7 Aug 18:10 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Sun 18 Aug 13:30; Tue 27 Aug 14:30

3 Women

Thu 8 Aug 12:10; Fri 16 Aug 20:30; Sat 24 Aug 17:10

All That Heaven Allows

Fri 9 Aug 12:15; Wed 14 Aug 18:20 (+ intro by Ruby McGuigan, BFI Programme and Acquisitions); Wed 28 Aug 20:50

In the Realm of the Senses

 Ai no corrida

Fri 9 Aug 18:10; Mon 19 Aug 20:40

The Shining (Extended Cut)

Fri 23 Aug 17:50; Mon 26 Aug 20:00

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**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

Jacques Tourneur on 'Out of the Past'

I was delighted to be able to see this film again and I think it has stood up rather well. Daniel Mainwaring's (Geoffrey Homes) script and the dialogue were first class and I was able to shoot a substantial part of the film on location. In fact, the village you see in the film is the village where I go trout fishing. I knew everyone there and I also knew exactly which parts of the landscape had to be used. The real inhabitants were cast in some of the small roles, and as I was far away from the studio, I was in a position where I could disregard routine. For instance, I avoided the use of transparencies in the opening shot where the car of Kirk Douglas' right hand man drives up to the gas station. And I was the one who suggested to Mainwaring that one of the gangsters ought to be killed with a fishing rod. It was more original that way than with a gun, and more importantly, it was more weird... I loved working with Jane Greer very much. She was a marvellous actress, very underrated. Her character is extremely original compared to the vamps of the period and I adore her love scenes with Mitchum. She is very moving in them.

Jacques Tourneur interviewed by Bertrand Tavernier, in Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen (eds), *Jacques Tourneur* (Edinburgh Film Festival, 1975)

A contemporary review

Out of the Past is a hardboiled melodrama strong on characterisation. Considerable production polish, effective direction and compelling mood slot it for attention of ticket buyers who go for violence and help overcome tendency towards choppiness in story unfoldment. Direction by Jacques Tourneur pays close attention to mood development; achieving realistic flavour that is further emphasised by real life settings and topnotch photography by Nicholas Musuraca. Players groove themselves into the assorted characters with an easy naturalness that abets the melodrama.

Geoffrey Homes scripted from his novel titled *Build My Gallows High* and film plot depicts Robert Mitchum as a former private detective who comes to a violent end despite efforts to lead a quiet, small-town life. Good portion of story is told in retrospect by Mitchum when his past catches up with him.

Mitchum gives a very strong account of himself. Jane Greer as the baby-faced, charming killer is another lending potent interest.

Kirk Douglas, the gangster, is believable and Paul Valentine makes role of henchman stand out. Rhonda Fleming is in briefly but effectively. Virginia Huston. Mitchum's village love; Steve Brodie, Richard Webb, and Ken Niles are good. Dickie Moore, former film moppet, wraps up part of deaf-mute friend of Mitchum's, garnering attention.

Warren Duff produced under executive supervision of Robert Sparks and gives film the proper backing to make its story effective. Aiding moody atmosphere is music by Roy Webb.

Variety, 19 November 1947