

KINO
ON
VIDEO

THE AMERICAN FILM THEATRE COLLECTION
BOX SET #1

EUGENE O'NEILL'S THE
ICEMAN COMETH
DIRECTED BY JOHN FRANKENHEIMER

BUTLEY



LUTHER



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PRESSBOOK



THE AMERICAN FILM THEATRE COLLECTION

Kino on Video is pleased to announce the release on VHS and DVD of the AMERICAN FILM THEATRE SERIES, the finest collection of American plays adapted to the big screen. Aside from a limited VHS release in 1978, these 14 critically-acclaimed feature films have been completely unavailable both on video and in theatres.

THE AMERICAN FILM THEATRE SERIES was the vision of producer Ely Landau, who challenged film audiences to set their sights on high-quality drama and comedies enacted by top industry talents. Throughout its three years of existence (1973-1975), this ground-breaking series revolutionized the protocols of film distribution by successfully producing and distributing cinematic adaptations of highly regarded plays for its exclusive members—who had to purchase an annual subscription in order to attend these screenings.

Now, all 14 feature films are to be released in three separate box sets throughout 2003. And on DVD, these titles will also bring a number of unseen extras which will be of interest to theatre and film enthusiasts alike. These special features include an interview with Edie Landau, the executive in charge of the American Film Theatre, theatrical trailers, essays by Michael Feingold, the head theatre critic for the Village Voice, a photo gallery/scrapbook including original posters and reviews, plus a rare original promotional film of Ely Landau introducing the "second season" of the series.

UPCOMING RELEASES FROM THE AFT SERIES:

THE HOMECOMING, starring Ian Holm and Vivien Merchant.

IN CELEBRATION, starring Alan Bates and Brian Cox.

THREE SISTERS, starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Plowright

A DELICATE BALANCE, starring Katharine Hepburn and Paul Scofield

THE MAN IN THE GLASS BOOTH, starring Maximilian Schell

GALILEO, starring Topol and John Gielgud

LOST IN THE STARS, starring Brock Peters and Melba Moore

JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL IN PARIS, starring Jacques Brel and Elly Stone

PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME, starring Siobhan McKenna and Donal McCann



Cast

Glenda Jackson.....Solange
 Susannah York.....Claire
 Vivien Merchant.....Madame
 Mark Burns.....Monsieur

Crew

Director.....Christopher Miles
 Writer.....Robert Enders (Based on LES BONNES by Jean Genet)
 Producer.....Robert Enders and Gordon Scott
 Composer.....Laurie Johnson
 Cinematographer.....Douglas Slocombe
 Editor.....Peter Tanner
 Art Director.....Robert Jones



94 minutes / 1975 / Color / Letterboxed (1.85:1)
 Jean Genet's THE MAIDS
 In English



THE MAIDS – SYNOPSIS

When French novelist Jean Genet started writing for the theatre in the late 1940s, his work was already being championed by the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean Cocteau. Considered as a landmark in the theatre of the absurd, *THE MAIDS* tells the story of two sisters, Solange (Glenda Jackson) and Claire (Susannah York), who work under the strict rules of their Madame (Vivian Merchant). However loyal the maids seem to behave, both sisters quickly engage in a compulsive role-playing psychodrama whenever Madame leaves the house. More than simply reacting to Madame's abuses, Solange and Claire also act out their love and hate towards each other and ultimately, themselves.

Starring Glenda Jackson (*A TOUCH OF CLASS*) and Susannah York (*A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS*, *SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE*), this cinematic adaptation of *THE MAIDS* successfully translated Jean Genet's intricate dialogue and existential rhetoric into a dynamic—and psychologically charged—motion-picture. Filmed with agility and orchestrated with the same deft precision found in Jean Genet's densely witty dialogue, *THE MAIDS* helped to further catapult Genet's canonical text into the world of pop culture, making his work more accessible without compromising the daringness of the original text.

JEAN GENET

Born in Paris, on December 10th, 1910, writer Jean Genet {zhun-nay'} lived an intense life from his early days. Abandoned by his parents –François and Camille Gabrielle Genet-,– Jean spent most of his youth in institutions for juvenile delinquents and survived as a thief and male prostitute while traveling throughout Europe in the 1930s.

An outsider from day one, Genet was labeled as a homosexual and a petty thief until his madcap persona and deviant writing were catapulted to artistic legitimization by existentialist Jean Paul Sartre. Genet's commitment to representing pain, dealing with the degradation of human kind and writing from the margins fulfilled many of the requirements of existentialist writing; for Genet and Sartre, existence is godless and it precedes any given concept of human essence.

After writing his first celebration of homosexuality and marginality –*OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS* (1943)– in one of the many European prisons he lived in, Genet went on to write *MIRACLE OF THE ROSE* (1946) and *QUERELLE OF BREST* (1947). The latter was freely-adapted to the big screen by German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, which not only became one of Fassbinder's most celebrated works but also helped extend Genet's fan base into more popular grounds. "My wife is the sea; my mistress is my captain," proclaims the sailor Querelle.



"Jean Genet and THE MAIDS"
By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE

Jean Genet (1910-1986) had one of the most extraordinary lives of any modern writer. An illegitimate child who never knew his father's identity, he took to the streets at an early age, serving repeated sentences in reformatories and later in adult prisons, mostly for petty theft and vagrancy. By the time Genet's writings brought him national attention in France, his accrued criminal record required that he be given a life sentence, and he was only released from prison when the eminent writer and filmmaker Jean Cocteau, having proclaimed him a genius on the strength of his early poems, appealed successfully to the President of the Republic for a pardon. Cocteau was not Genet's only literary admirer; the philosopher and playwright Jean-Paul Sartre became so fascinated that he wrote a monumental study of his art, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr* (1951), describing him as the Existential prototype of the outcast as artist. The volume made Genet so self-conscious about his work that it ultimately had the effect of reducing him to silence: After a period of enormous creativity between 1945 and 1960, he produced almost nothing but small occasional pieces and articles until shortly before his death.

Genet's reputation rests on five major plays and five novels. The novels, often first-person narrations that tease the reader into wondering if the stories being told are truth or fiction, mostly take place in a criminal underworld of male prostitutes, pimps, drag queens, thieves and murderers, in and out of prison. Although full of struggles over precedence in an elaborate hierarchy that is like a dark mirror-image of respectable society (with the murderer always looked up to as the highest achiever), the novels are also shot through with a kind of upside-down religious mysticism, in which the worst degradation brings the highest transcendence, especially in the two earliest of them, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, 1944, and *Miracle of the Rose*, 1946. The later novels, *The Thief's Journal*, 1948, *Querelle*, 1947, and *Funeral Rites*, 1947, are more reportorial and less extravagant in style.

Despite their often sordid subject matter, all of Genet's major plays are written in an extravagant, heightened language similar to that of the earlier novels, though often more philosophic than religious in tone. The first of them, *Deathwatch* (written 1946, produced 1949), even echoes the novels' narrative material, set as it is in a prison, where the less important prisoners who have only committed minor crimes vie for the love of the condemned murderer who is their hero. *The Maids*, 1947, which moves away from the reality of crime to the pleasure of imagining it, followed this.



"Jean Genet and THE MAIDS"
By Michael Feingold, Chief Thetare Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE
—Continued—

In 1956, after the first period of silence produced by Genet's disquietude over Sartre's book, came *The Balcony*, which became a worldwide cause célèbre and source of outrage, leading to calls for censorship in many cities. Now a classic routinely studied and produced in universities worldwide, it takes place in a lavish whorehouse, *The Grand Balcony*, which Genet envisions as an upside-down microcosm of society. Here, the male clients act out the power roles that most appeal to them, wishy-washy ordinary men becoming judge, bishop, general, and the like, with the whores as the servile recipients of their power.

Genet followed this tour de force with a play even more scandalous and brilliant, *The Blacks*, 1958, which was the most prophetic of Genet's dramatic fantasies. A ritual play that begins and ends with a formal dance, it displays the investigation and trial of a group of blacks by a "white court" (made up of blacks in the masks of white power figures) for the rape and murder of a white woman, whose corpse is supposedly concealed onstage. Questions of illusion and identity, of the nature of race and the meaning of prejudice, infuse the action, in which the black characters are seen as simultaneously pretending friendliness and obedience to the larger white society while secretly plotting its doom.

While the Paris and London productions of these plays were often criticized as inadequate, in New York they encountered a set of young directors and actors who made them into a principal source of energy for the burgeoning Off-Broadway movement. In particular, the 1961 premiere of *The Blacks* made an extraordinary success, running for nearly 1400 performances, becoming a touchstone of the civil rights movement then gathering steam, and establishing many important African American theatre artists; its original cast included James Earl Jones, Cicely Tyson, Godfrey Cambridge, and the poet Maya Angelou.

Genet himself, in this period, grew increasingly interested in the Black Power movement on his visits to the US, as well as exploring the kinship between his own outcast status and that of Third World people in rebellion. In 1961, he published the work that most outraged his native France: his last major play, *The Screens*. A long and complex work of epic scale, it studies the degradation and death brought about by France's colonial war in Algeria, at that time in its final throes.



"Jean Genet and THE MAIDS"
By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE
—Continued—

Following this last gigantic work, Genet wrote nothing major. Towards the end of his life, he became preoccupied with the Palestinian problem, speaking in support of the PLO and publishing, shortly before his death, reflections on his dealings with them, under the title *A Prisoner of Love*, 1986. It was the last calculated outrage of a man whose life and art had always run counter to the prevailing view of things.

The *Maids* was first produced in Paris, directed by Louis Jouvet, in 1947. Its source is an actual crime which has also provoked a number of other plays and films over the years: In 1933, in the provincial town of Le Mans, the Papin sisters murdered, with appalling brutality, a mother and daughter by whom they were employed as domestic servants. Genet's play, however, is neither literal nor documentary, but a highly stylized ceremony, exploring the textured relations between servant and mistress. He originally wanted the characters to be played by boy actors, in a style approaching Kabuki, and later productions have often explored this approach; the all-male cast of a 1993 Off-Broadway revival featured Charles Busch as Solange. An ongoing challenge to actors, directors, and designers, the play is constantly revived. The director Minos Volanakis, on whose translation the screenplay of the AFT version is based, was also notable for staging the American premiere of *The Screens*, at New York's Chelsea Theatre Center in 1971.

KINO ON VIDEO

LUTHER

Cast

Stacy Keach.....Martin Luther
Patrick Magee.....Hans
Hugh Griffith.....John Tetzel
Robert Stephens.....Johan Von Eck
Alan Badel.....Thomas De Vio
Julian Glover.....The Knight
Judi Dench.....Katherine
Leonard Rossiter.....Brother Weinand
Maurice Denham.....Johann Von Staupitz
Peter Cellier.....Prior
Thomas Heathcote.....Lucas
Malcolm Stoddard.....King Charles
Bruce Carstairs.....Duke of Saxony

Crew

Directed by.....Guy Green
Writer....(based on John Osborne's play)Edward Anhalt and John Osborne
Executive producer.....Mort Abrahams
Producer.....Ely A. Landau
Associate Producer.....Henry T. Weinstein
Composer.....John Addison
Cinematographer.....Freddie Young
Editor.....Malcolm Cooke
Production Designer.....Peter Mullins
Costume Designer.....Joan Bridge and Elizabeth Haffenden

LUTHER

111 Minutes / 1974 / Color / Letterboxed
In English



LUTHER

SYNOPSIS

L U T H E R

Based on a meticulous biographical research, LUTHER tells the story of Martin Luther, one of the most socially revolutionary minds in world history. A German priest who ignited the Reformation in the 16th century, Martin Luther forever changed the role of religion in western civilization. In this provocative character study, director Guy Green adapts John Osborne's celebrated play, which parallels Martin Luther's deepening religious dilemmas with the irresolvable earthly anxieties that shaped his beliefs and his rebellious search for truth.

As a young monk in 1506 having to defend his vows to his jealous and disapproving father (Patrick McGee), Luther is already distinguishing himself as a gifted theologian. But as his religious commitment deepens his faith, an increasingly commercialized, politicized and spiritually empty Papacy atrophies until, having preached against the medieval Catholic Church's hypocrisy, Luther is called to account by the very Bishops he must denounce.



"LUTHER"

By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

John Osborne (1929-1994) was one of the pivotal artistic forces in British theatre in the last half of the 20th century. The illegitimate son of a barmaid and an advertising copywriter, he left school in a period of adolescent rebellion following his father's death, and had no higher education. Instead he took up a career as an actor, joining a young company that toured England and writing several early plays for them. He submitted *Look Back in Anger* (1956) to the newly formed English Stage Company at London's Royal Court Theatre in response to a notice in a trade paper. The results were extraordinary. The production made the reputations of Osborne, his director Tony Richardson, his lead actor Kenneth Haigh, and the Royal Court itself, it also launched what is widely considered to have been a revolutionary shift in the British theatre, which had for a long time been dominated by genteel, class-bound commercial productions that took no risks, offended no one, and only sparsely provided artistic illumination. Osborne, who wrote openly about class tensions, sex, and politics, and whose early career was a running battle with the system of stage censorship operated by the Lord Chamberlain's office (and not abolished till 1968), seemed the discoverer of a new world. Both Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard, along with countless other British theatre artists of their generation, have described *Look Back in Anger* as having a decisive effect on their lives.

Osborne followed this coup with *The Entertainer* (1957), a play more daring in form, using fragmented scenes, music-hall interludes, and the presence of one of England's most famous heroic actors, Laurence Olivier, improbably cast as a shabby singing comedian whose decaying theatre symbolized Osborne's view of postwar England. Like its predecessor, it met with enormous success in both London and New York, and was subsequently filmed. (It has also stood the test of repeated revivals, in general more successfully than *Look Back in Anger*.) A subsequent screenplay, for Richardson's film of Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1963), won him both American and British Academy Awards.



"LUTHER"

By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE
—Continued—

Around this time, however, Osborne's playwriting career strangely began to falter. Apart from the success of *Luther* (1960) and the powerful *Inadmissible Evidence* (1965), few of his plays evoked more than respectful indifference in any quarter. Some, like the inchoate large-scale musical *The World of Paul Slickey* (1959) and a pair of laborious one-acts about sexual peculiarities, *Plays for England* (1962), were outright failures. The interest around *A Patriot for Me* (1965), a large-scale historical play based on the Colonel Redl spy case in pre-World War I Vienna, attracted attention chiefly for its then-rare open depiction of homosexual relations (including a grand ball at which most of the company appeared in drag), which caused the Lord Chamberlain's office to ban the play outright, compelling the English Stage Company to turn the Royal Court into a private club for the duration of the run.

Of Osborne's later plays, *A Hotel in Amsterdam* (1968), which received the Evening Standard Award for Best Play, is probably the most notable. In addition to his plays and screenplays, he wrote adaptations, notably one of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* for his third wife, actress Jill Bennett, and a version of Strindberg's *The Father* for Britain's National Theatre. In his later years he produced television plays, essays (collected in a volume called, with typical Osborne ire, *Damn You, England*), and two volumes of autobiography, *A Better Class of Person* and *Almost a Gentleman*. He died in Shropshire, of diabetic complications, on Christmas Eve, 1994.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Luther was Osborne's, and to a large extent the New English theatre's first effort to bring history onto the stage in contemporary terms, particularly inspired by the example of Bertolt Brecht, whose plays *Galileo* (also filmed by AFT) and *Mother Courage* were clearly among the models for the panoramic sweep of its action, the psychological and economic scrutiny of the historical characters' motives, and the earthy explicitness of its language and details.

KINO ON VIDEO



Cast

Zero Mostel.....John
Gene Wilder.....Stanley
Karen Black.....Daisy
Robert Weil.....Carl
Joe Silver.....Norman
Marilyn Chris.....Mrs. Bingham
Don Calfa.....Waiter
Lou Cutell.....Cashier
Robert Fields.....Logician
Howard Morton.....Doctor
Percy Rodriguez.....Mr. Nicholson

Crew

Director.....Tim O'Horgan
Writer.....Eugène Ionesco (based on his play)
Producer.....Ely A. Landau
Associate Producer.....Les Landau
Supervising producer.....Robert A. Goldston
Composer.....Galt MacDermot
Cinematographer.....James Crabe
Editor.....Bud S. Smith
Casting director.....Lynn Stalmaster
Production Designer.....Jack Martin Smith
Costume Designer.....Noel Taylor
Sound Editor.....Charles L. Campbell

Eugene Ionesco's RHINOCEROS
104 Minutes / 1974 / Color / Letterboxed
In English

KINO ON VIDEO



Synopsis

In an impersonal (and unidentified) American city, sad sack Stanley (Gene Wilder) plods through his thankless days of nine-to-five pencil pushing, only to crawl into a fifth of bourbon at night and initiate yet another round of hung-over alienation. While he may occasionally stumble out of his existential hamster wheel to pine over comely co-worker Daisy (Karen Black) or listen to the blustery lectures of self-professed Renaissance man John (Zero Mostel), Stanley sees little hope of changing the banal texture of his life. All this changes when with no fanfare -- aside from a modicum of pachydermal trumpeting -- the local citizenry begins to metamorphose into rampaging rhinoceroses. As the people in Stanley's life begin to sprout horns one by one, it becomes apparent that this epidemic is less a case of viral contagion than a matter of choice -- a choice that garners hypnotized admiration from the dwindling ranks of the human species. For a moment it seems that Stanley and Daisy alone will resist the zeitgeist, but the promise of becoming pangenitor of a new race proves less than tempting to Stanley's paramour: Daisy is seduced (quite broadly, judging from her carnal response) by the rhinos' stentorian blasts and concedes her biped status. In an apocalyptic resolution almost germane to a horror film, Stanley ascends to a rooftop and crows an ultimate reverberating refusal to give in to what we can only imagine to be a boundless gray horizon.

Comments

Perhaps more than any other of its selections, *Rhinoceros* is proof positive of the AFT's courageousness in tackling the most challenging endeavors of the modern stage. As is often the case with other Theater of the Absurd staples (Jean Genet's *The Balcony*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*), Eugene Ionesco's landmark 1958 farce must be handled delicately lest it take on all the stampeding gracelessness of its titular animal. Although Romanian born Ionesco was admittedly sparked by the frightening "herd mentality" demonstrated during the 1936 Nuremberg rallies, his rhinoceros is not meant to be read as a reductive stand-in for the Nazi Party or any single agent of tyranny. To avoid collapse under the weight of obvious symbolism, *Rhinoceros* must endow its central metaphor with a great degree of plasticity while still adhering to its ridiculous literalness.

KINO ON VIDEO



Comments –Continued–

Director Tom O'Horgan (lauded for his Broadway production of Hair) does exactly this by limiting the presence of the rhinos to silhouettes and off-screen grumbling, rather than resorting to hyperreal cinematic effects. Likewise, aside from a single jab at then-President Nixon, the film does not limit its scope with immediate reference to the anti-conformist America of the time.

Ultimately, it is the film's cast that affords Rhinoceros its ambivalent tightrope walk between cartoon buffoonery and shrill anxiety, particularly through the teaming of Wilder and Mostel (re-teamed after their triumph in Mel Brooks' classic The Producers). Mostel, who had introduced his Tony Award-winning John (originally Jean) to American audiences a decade earlier, reprises his role here with a bodily gusto and facial elasticity worthy of great silent comedy. As the hapless Stanley, dewy-eyed Wilder throttles from dulcet to demonic with a degree of verisimilitude perhaps unrivaled in the history of the play. Together, the duo waver between Ionesco's precise, absurdly logical dialogue and well-nigh beastly caterwauling, shoring up perhaps Rhinoceros's most timely paradox: that to take part in society and its language is to fall prey to the stupidities of idiom and convention, to the contradictions to which reason itself inevitably leads --- and that in the depersonalized cacophony of the dumb herd, there lies a kind of horrible freedom.



"Eugene Ionesco and Rhinoceros"
By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE

Born in Bucharest to a Romanian father and a French mother, Eugène Ionesco (1909-1994) spent his early childhood in Paris, but was then brought back to Romania, where he was educated and witnessed the rise of Fascism. He and his wife eventually made their way back to France and settled permanently in Paris, where he worked for a publishing house and began to write short fiction and essays.

Though he retained fond memories of the Punch-and-Judy shows he had seen as a child in the Luxembourg Gardens, Ionesco disliked the talky "Boulevard theatre" of his adulthood, and only began writing plays in response to a strange provocation: Learning English through a language-lesson textbook, he found himself fascinated by the lives of the characters its conversations depicted. His fascination grew into *The Bald Soprano* or *Bald Prima Donna* (1950), a manic, hilarious and terrifying one-act play that has become one of the 20th century's enduring classics. It set the tone for the succession of short Ionesco plays that followed: Absurd, out-of-control events arise from banal everyday situations; rational conversation takes sudden lurches into insanity; and a weak, hapless, ordinary citizen is forced to take a stand against the engulfing madness.

Among the most important of these one-acts are *The Lesson* (1952), in which a professor stabs his female pupil to death with the word "knife," and *The Chairs* (1953), in which an elderly couple invites the world (symbolized by endless rows of empty chairs) to witness their suicide as a mute orator they have hired spouts gibberish "philosophy." The longer plays that Ionesco began to write in the mid-1950s, like *Amédée* or *How to Get Rid of It* (1954), and *The Killer* (1956), moved the insanity out into a social landscape, clearly suggesting both Cold War totalitarianism and the growing encroachments of global industrialization on the individual.

By the time of *Rhinoceros* (1959), Ionesco had become one of several Paris-based playwrights, including Beckett and Genet, whose international reputations were simultaneously solidified and marred by being grouped critically as "Absurdists." Though the three playwrights differed widely in sensibility and approach, they shared to some degree a philosophic bleakness of outlook, a willingness to find humor in its very bleakness, and a determination, based in Existentialist thought, to persevere in the face of humanity's bleak prospects. While the Irish-born Beckett, who wrote in French but translated his own works into English, tended to pursue theatrical activities outside France, Ionesco became, as it were, more French, the first of his tradition-breaking generation of playwrights to be commissioned by the Comédie-Française, France's national theatre.



"Eugene Ionesco and Rhinoceros"
By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE
–Continued–

In 1971, he became the first major postwar playwright admitted to membership among the thirty-six "immortals" of the prestigious Académie Française, an extraordinary honor for a foreign-born writer. He became, as well, an outspoken campaigner for human rights, and in particular for freedom of speech and a free press worldwide.

As Ionesco's stature increased, his plays seemed to expand their horizons, becoming epic in scope, visionary, and poetically surrealist. *Hunger and Thirst* (1962) and *A Stroll in the Air* (1963) were, like *Rhinoceros*, cartoon fables of modern man's perplexing powerlessness. The even darker *Macbett* (1972), an almost paranoiac comic revisionist version of Shakespeare's tragedy, showed the world's rulers as heedlessly brutal, bloodthirsty men, forever enslaved by hypocritically malevolent women. Death haunted even such rulers in the austere classical *Exit the King* (1963) and threw an entire city into upheaval in the elaborate mosaic of *Killing Game* (1970), which depicts the varied human reactions to an inexplicable plague.

Ionesco's concern for the plight of Ceausescu-era Romania, mingled with his childhood memories, fueled his last two major plays, *Man with Bags* (1975) and *Journeys Among the Dead* (1981). In addition to his major works, his output included numerous short plays and sketches (including several short screenplays), novels and short stories, journals, essays, works for children, and several limited-edition books illustrated by his own drawings. In frail health during much of his last decade, he nonetheless continued to campaign actively for worldwide freedom of speech. When he died at his home on March 28, 1994, *The Bald Soprano* was still running at Paris's tiny Théâtre de la Huchette.

Ionesco originally wrote *Rhinoceros* as a short story. The image, he later told interviewers, came to him from the essayist Denis de Rougemont's description of the Nazis' Nuremberg rallies. Dramatized in 1958-59, *Rhinoceros* received its stage premiere in October, 1959, in German, at the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus. Its Paris premiere followed in January, 1960, at the Théâtre de France/Odéon, staged by the company's celebrated artistic director, Jean-Louis Barrault, who also played the lead role of Béranger (renamed "Stanley" in AFT's Americanized film version). A London production followed in April, 1960, at the Royal Court Theatre, which transferred to the West End on the strength of the big names involved: It was directed by Orson Welles (his final work for the stage), and starred Laurence Olivier as Béranger. The production was marred, however, by mixed reviews, and by rumors of artistic conflict between Welles and Olivier, and had a disappointingly short run.



"Eugene Ionesco and Rhinoceros"
By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE
—Continued—

Rhinoceros's international prestige, however, was restored in January, 1961, by its triumphant reception in New York, where it was staged by the actor-director Joseph Anthony, famous for his inventive sense of stage movement. On sets designed by the show's producer, Leo Kerz, Anthony directed a cast of familiar New York stage figures, headed by the noted husband-and-wife team of Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson as Béranger and Daisy. Jean Stapleton, not yet nationally celebrated as Edith Bunker, was among the cast's many notable figures.

Most notable, however, attracting critical raves and propelling the production's successful nine-month Broadway run, was Zero Mostel's performance as John, a secondary role that became something greater in New York because of Mostel's astonishing comic exuberance, preserved in AFT's film version. A gifted painter as well as an actor, Mostel had honed his brilliant outrageousness through years of struggle playing second-tier nightclubs and resorts when he was blacklisted in Hollywood during the McCarthy era. He won his way back to public favor with his stunning performance Off-Broadway as Leopold Bloom in Ulysses in Nighttown, drawing international acclaim that was capped by his appearance in Rhinoceros, followed shortly by starring roles in two important Broadway musicals, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum and Fiddler on the Roof. His triumphant return to film was highlighted by his unforgettable performance in The Producers, where he is teamed, as in AFT's film of Rhinoceros, with Gene Wilder.

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EUGENE O'NEILL'S THE ICEMAN COMETH DIRECTED BY JOHN FRANKENHEIMER

Cast

Lee Marvin.....Hickey
Fredric March.....Harry Hope
Robert Ryan.....Larry Slade
Jeff Bridges.....Don Parritt
Bradford Dillman.....Willie Oban
Sorrell Booke.....Hugo Kalmar
Hildy Brooks.....Margie
Juno Dawson.....Pearl
Evans Evans.....Cora
Martyn Green.....The Captain/Cecil Lewis
Moses Gunn.....Joe Mott
Clifton James.....Pat McGloin
John McLiam.....Jimmy Tomorrow
Stephen Pearlman.....Chuck Morelo
Tom Pedi.....Rocky Pioggi
George Voskovec.....The General

Crew

Producer.....Ely A. Landau
Associate producer.....Les Landau
Supervising producer.....Robert A. Goldston
Cinematographer.....Ralph Woolsey
Editor.....Harold F. Kress
Casting director.....Lynn Stalmaster
Production Designer.....Jack Martin Smith
Costume Designer.....Dorothy Jeakins

Eugene O'Neill's THE ICEMAN COMETH
239 Minutes / 1973 / Color / Letterbox
In English

KINO ON VIDEO

EUGENE O'NEILL'S **THE
ICEMAN COMETH**
DIRECTED BY JOHN FRANKENHEIMER

SYNOPSIS

THE ICEMAN COMETH, directed by John Frankenheimer and starring Lee Marvin, Fredric March, Robert Ryan and Jeff Bridges, is considered the definitive cinematic adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's classic play. Set in 1912 New York, THE ICEMAN COMETH takes place at a skid row bar populated by marginal characters—prostitutes, ex-soldiers, drifters...—who sublimate their loneliness with high dosages of alcohol.

When time comes for the much-anticipated, annual arrival of big-spender Hickey (Lee Marvin), his drinking buddies quickly realize that Hickey has a completely new outlook on life. He is not only alcohol-free, but is also determined to rescue his fellow-mates from their "fruitless" lives. Getting special attention from Hickey is Larry Slade (Robert Ryan), a disillusioned former anarchist who also wastes his existence at this dark corner of town. An even though Slade is not easily disturbed by Hickey's preaching words, his young friend Parritt (Jeff Bridges) ends up rediscovering his past as a

After directing a variety of big-budget action film and award-winning dramas, director John Frankenheimer singled out the little known ICEMAN as "the best creative experience I ever had."



"Eugene O'Neil and THE ICEMAN COMETH"
By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic
THE VILLAGE VOICE

The tormented life of Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) belies his stature as one of the 20th century's greatest playwrights, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, a formative influence in the shaping of the American theatre, and a world-class cultural figure, whose plays are revived time and again, in innumerable languages. Yet for all his fame and worldly success, his life was marked by tragedy both early and late, and the somber, brooding pessimism of his plays is the source of their almost hypnotic power.

O'Neill's father, James (1847-1920), was an uneducated Irish immigrant who rose to become one of America's leading actors, playing Shakespearean and contemporary roles until, in 1883, he took the lead role of Edmond Dantès in a stage version of Dumas's *Count of Monte Cristo*. He achieved such popularity (performing the role almost 4,000 times) that he played almost nothing else for the remainder of his life. Eugene spent much of his early childhood traveling on his father's grueling theatrical tours, made more difficult because the doctor who had attended Mary Ellen ("Ella") O'Neill at Eugene's birth had given her morphine to ease her pain, and she was a drug addict for most of the playwright's youth. Growing up in this traumatic atmosphere was further complicated by the conflict between the young O'Neill's studious and literary instincts and the temptations of the flashier, hard-drinking life surrounding the theatre. Although showing early intelligence, O'Neill began openly rebelling and failing at school after his mother's suicide attempt, when he was 15, first showed him the truth about her addiction. It was in this period that he began associating with anarchists and other radicals in Greenwich Village, whose disputes and betrayals partially form the background of *The Iceman Cometh*.

Accepted to Princeton, he dropped out in his sophomore year, embarking on a period of wandering, with intermittent support from his increasingly estranged father, that included odd jobs in New York and heavier labor as a sailor and a dock worker in various ports. He secretly married a respectable young girl (against the will of both sets of parents), and fathered a son; the couple divorced in 1911. During this period he lived in a waterfront flophouse over a saloon on Manhattan's Fulton Street, run by James "Jimmy the Priest" Condon; its setting and residents were likewise later immortalized in *Iceman*. Rescued from a suicide attempt of his own there in January, 1912, he was taken back by his family, playing small parts on tour with his father and summering with them at "Monte Cristo" cottage in New London, where he began to write for the local newspaper



"Eugene O'Neil and THE ICEMAN COMETH"

By Michael Feingold, Chief Theatre Critic

THE VILLAGE VOICE

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It is here where several of his most important plays are set, including *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933) and the autobiographical *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1942, premiered 1956), usually ranked with *Iceman Cometh* as his masterpiece. Found to have acquired a mild case of tuberculosis during his wanderings, he spent six months at a sanitarium, where, at last, he took up playwriting in earnest.

His Greenwich Village associates brought him into the orbit of director George Cram Cook and his remarkable playwright wife Susan Glaspell, whose Provincetown Playhouse, with O'Neill among its founding members, was about to give New York theatre a historic focal shift. "Downtown" was established as the source of new and experimental work, largely through the sensation created by O'Neill's plays. By 1920 he was a published author, married again, father of a second son, and winner of the Pulitzer Prize (the first of four) for his first Broadway production, *Beyond the Horizon*. Well-read and keenly observant, O'Neill was steeped in the early 20th century's ferment of theatrical innovation. He sought to extend it in the bigger and bolder works of his middle period, breaking away from Broadway's prevailing naturalism with the use of masks, expressionist visions, heightened language, and even, in the lengthy but sensationally successful *Strange Interlude* (1929), a running set of inner monologues.

Worldwide acclaim and financial success, however, brought O'Neill no happiness. The fallow periods between his creative phases were marked by bouts of heavy drinking or depression. His increasingly rocky second marriage was gradually supplanted by an affair with the actress Carlotta Monterey, who would conquer her own spiky personality to become his third wife, care-giver in his medically devastating late years, and literary executor. Showered with honors despite his alternating success and failure in the theatre, he was surrounded by tragedy at home: his mother's death from a stroke in 1922; his older brother's (after an alcoholic breakdown memorialized in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, 1947) in a sanatorium the next year. Quarrels and breakups marred his life with Carlotta; he ceased to speak to his daughter Oona (his second child by Agnes) after she married Charlie Chaplin in 1943. His elder son, Eugene Jr., sank into alcoholism and committed suicide in 1950; his second, Shane, became a heroin addict, ultimately dying of an overdose. Yet through physical pain and heart-break, O'Neill soldiered on, struggling to capture in drama both his own despair and America's.



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—Continued—

The Iceman Cometh received its world premiere at Broadway's Martin Beck Theatre on October 9, 1946, produced by The Theatre Guild, whose long association with O'Neill had included the premieres of both *Strange Interlude* (1929) and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1938). It was directed by Eddie Dowling, who had just made a double triumph as director and lead actor of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), on a highly praised set by Robert Edmond Jones. Received with mixed, sometimes openly puzzled reactions -- in the flush of postwar optimism -- the production had limited success, playing only 136 performances.

Iceman lay fallow for a decade. Then it was revived at Off-Broadway's tiny Circle in the Square theatre on Bleecker Street, directed by José Quintero, with Jason Robards as Hickey. Its enormous success, ultimately playing 565 performances, made both men's reputations and did much to restore O'Neill's. His widow immediately entrusted to Quintero the New York premiere of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, in which Robards created the role of Jamie, launching the two on a long series of important O'Neill productions, including a 1985 Broadway revival of *Iceman*.

The play has since received countless productions around the world. Besides Robards and Barton, New York has seen James Earl Jones as Hickey (Circle in the Square on Broadway, 1973), while in 1999 both London and New York saw Kevin Spacey in the role. In 1960, Sidney Lumet filmed a television version featuring Robards as Hickey and the young Robert Redford as Parritt. Giving Lee Marvin the most challenging role of his career, AFT's film version surrounds him with distinguished actors, many long associated with O'Neill. Fredric March (Harry Hope) and Bradford Dillman (Willie Oban) had created the roles of James and Edmund Tyrone in the New York premiere of *Long Day's Journey*; Robert Ryan (Larry) gave a memorable performance as James in an Off-Broadway revival. Tom Pedi (Rocky) was recording for posterity a role he had played in the original 1946 production.

KINO ON VIDEO BUTLEY

Cast

Alan Bates.....Ben Butley
Jessica Tandy.....Edna Shaft
Richard O'Callaghan.....Joey Keyston
Susan Engel.....Anne Butley
Michael Byrne.....Reg Nuttall
Georgina Hale.....Miss Heasman
Simon Rouse.....Mr. Gardner
John Savident.....James

Crew

Director.....Harold Pinter
Writer.....Simon Gray
Producer.....Ely A. Landau
Executive producer.....Otto Plaschkes
Supervising producer.....Robert A. Goldston
Cinematographer.....Gerry Fisher
Editor.....Malcolm Cooke
Art Director.....Carmen Dillon
Makeup artist.....Eddie Knight
Sound designer.....Ivan Sharrock

BUTLEY

Simon Gray's BUTLEY
129 Minutes / Color / 1974 / Letterboxed
In English
Directed by Harold Pinter

KINO ON VIDEO

BUTLEY

Synopsis

Butley is nothing more than a chronicled day in the life of its eponymous anti-hero (played to perfection by Alan Bates), an impishly misanthropic teacher of English literature for whom slinging epigrams, puns and nursery rhymes at colleagues takes precedence over attending to his neglected students. On this particular day, however, the precariously teetering edifice of ritualistic manipulations and petty sadism that is Butley's existence begins to fall apart brick by brick. Following an awkward limbo of estrangement, Butley's wife Anne (Susan Engel) formally requests a divorce in order to remarry, infant daughter Marina in tow. Butley's protegee, flatmate, and one time lover Joey (Richard O'Callaghan) has also decided to sever his emotional tether and shack up with publisher Reg. Additionally, the fallow state of Butley's career is brought into sad relief when amiable but plodding fellow academic Edna Shaft (Jessica Tandy) and Anne's new fiance Tom ("the most boring man in London") both see their dutifully dull prose go to press. As the verbal melees and unmitigated tantrums mount in vitriol, it seems as though Butley is determined to douse his burning bridges with kerosene. However, just as he's ready to initiate a new round of hysterical pederasty with campus radical Gardner, Butley casts aside the cocky "plumed youth" – and along with him, all of his caustic masks and armor. Painfully alone and exhausted by his own games, Butley is ultimately a figure of muted tragedy, and the film ends, in the words of one of Butley's rare objects of admiration, T.S Eliot, "not with a bang but a whimper."

Comments

The American Film Theater's production of Simon Gray's play Butley represents a crucial nerve center of modern British drama, at work here with all synapses firing. Now bestowed with a knighthood, Sir Alan Bates had by 1974 been indispensable for England's edgiest playwrights on stage and screen, playing the leads in John Osborne's Look Back in Anger, Harold Pinter's The Caretaker and The Go-Between, as well as numerous other collaborations with Gray. Although Bates had proven his adeptness for classical roles, along with Tom Courtenay he had become the face of the Angry Young Man, that disgruntled figure of anti-establishment unrest so crucial to the literature in the U.K. during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Whether or not the actor was cast against type as this jaded dynamo of irony, Gray envisioned Bates as Butley as would a sculptor in a block of marble.

KINO ON VIDEO BUTLEY

Comments (continued)

With this tailor made showcase role, Bates delivered what may be his finest performance ever, a breathless two-hour filibuster of demonic negation as hilarious as it is ultimately heartbreaking.

Bolstering Butley's already impressive pedigree is the presence of the legendary Harold Pinter behind the camera. In his debut as a film director, wordsmith Pinter tackled the challenging task of translating a chiefly one-set play into cinematic language, exploiting the claustrophobia of Butley's dingy office without ever becoming static. Known as a writer of minimal understatement, Pinter might have seemed an unlikely choice at the helm of a screenplay where brazenly direct invectives flow like water from a broken fire hydrant. Pinter's forte, however, has always been understanding the power of what remains unspoken beneath the surface of the text, and this sensitivity cements Butley as more than a free-for-all of satanic wit. In the end, we are all but certain of Ben Butley's former greatness, for beneath the dissonance of his sing-song satire we can discern the hideous silence of squandered passion.

KINO ON VIDEO BUTLEY

"Simon Gray and Butley"

Simon Gray (1936-) embodies in many respects the definition of a working playwright. Since his first London production, the eccentric suspense comedy *Wise Child* (1967), starring Alec Guinness, he has written a large number of plays, as well as adaptations, screenplays, and television plays, some enormously successful with critics and audiences, others considerably less so. Written largely in the form of traditional stage naturalism, and set mostly in an educated middle or upper-middle class milieu, his plays seemingly resemble standard-model West End or Broadway plays of the pre-1950 era, but with their substance and dramatic structure eerily dislocated. In Gray's plays, things never work out, or are never fully explained, as they would have been in the old-style standard model.

Often extremely funny, they are usually based in a layer of pain or discomfort that prevents them from being classed as comedies. This may be why, despite the praise and awards that have often been lavished on his work, his plays tend to have a flickering shelf life. Though widely produced following their initial runs, they are only infrequently revived. One of Gray's principal tactics as a writer is to have his hero remain silent while other characters rattle on, and his plays themselves seem to carry a quietude that keeps him from being ranked higher in the critical marketplace, despite his enormous success and steady productivity.

Gray taught for twenty years at Queen Mary College before he took up writing full time, and many of his most successful plays are set, like *Butley* (1971), in an academic context: *Quartermaine's Terms* (1981) deals with faculty gossip and rivalries; *The Common Pursuit* (1984) follows the lives of university undergraduates who found a magazine together. The hero of the domestic comedy *Otherwise Engaged* (1975) is a publisher. Well-read and highly articulate, Gray's characters are prone to a careful, even manipulative, choice of words, and to discreet omissions or silences even in their most ostensibly effusive seizures of conversation. His playwriting method owes something to that of Harold Pinter, who, in addition to being a personal friend of Gray's, directed the original London stage productions of both *Otherwise Engaged* and *Butley*, in addition to AFT's film version of the latter. Yet the dramatic substance is different from Pinter's.

KINO ON VIDEO BUTLEY

"Simon Gray and Butley"

–Continued–

The disrupted events are caused less by inexplicable primal forces than by a kind of psychological slippage in the characters' nature, recalling Chekhov, another playwright to whom Gray has often been compared, though his plays tend to focus more tightly on the small setbacks of a smaller, tighter-knit group. There is little in Gray to compare to the outright tragedy that ends Chekhov's four plays; one English critic has dubbed him "the poet laureate of dyspepsia," a comment that, like Gray's attitude toward his characters, is both admiring and sardonic.

Butley was Simon Gray's fourth London production and his first runaway success, with the playwright, director Harold Pinter, and star Alan Bates coming in for equal shares in the acclaim when it opened on July 14, 1971. Bates subsequently performed the role on Broadway, with an American supporting cast, in a production directed by James Hammerstein (son of Oscar Hammerstein II), which opened on October 31, 1972; Bates won both the London Evening Standard Award and the Tony Award for Best Actor.

The production began a collaboration of playwright and actor that has continued through the decades: Bates created leading roles in Gray's *Otherwise Engaged* (1975, also directed by Pinter), *Stage Struck* (1979), *Melon* (1987), a sequel to *Otherwise Engaged* called *Simply Disconnected* (1996), and *Life Support* (1997, again with Pinter directing). In the 2003 New Year's Honors, the actor was knighted Sir Alan Bates.

Among Sir Alan's colleagues in the AFT film version, some repeating their roles from the original London cast, the one of greatest theatrical eminence is the revered Jessica Tandy, who plays Butley's academic colleague Edna Shaft. A star on Broadway and in film for many years, most frequently opposite her husband, Hume Cronyn, Tandy created innumerable stage roles, most memorably Blanche duBois in the original production of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*.