

KINO
ON
VIDEO

THE WILLIAM WYLER COLLECTION – *Early Films*

The Love Trap

**COUNSELLOR
AT LAW**

The Good Fairy

**DIRECTED BY
WILLIAM
WYLER**

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PRESSBOOK

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WILLIAM WYLER (BIOGRAPHY)

–Written by John Bloomfield–

BEGINNINGS

William Wyler was perhaps the most honored of Hollywood filmmakers. He was a perfectionist, a meticulous craftsman, who in his 45 years as a director won three Oscars® — for *MRS. MINIVER* (1942), *THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES* (1946), and *BEN-HUR* (1959) — and was nominated on nine other occasions.

He was born Willi Wyler on July 1, 1902, in Mulhouse in the province of Alsace. His father was Swiss, his mother German. Educated in Mulhouse and Lausanne, Switzerland, he worked briefly in Paris before meeting his mother's first cousin, Carl Laemmle. Laemmle, who left Europe for America as a teenager, had become head of Universal Studios. Laemmle offered Willi the opportunity to come to America and work for him. Wyler left Europe on the *Aquitania* on September 10, 1920 — he was barely 18.

Wyler first worked in Universal's New York offices. In January 1922, he persuaded Laemmle to bring him to California. Wyler began at Universal as an errand boy but moved quickly through the ranks. By July 1925, he had graduated to director. His first film was the 24-minute long *CROOK BUSTER* (1925). Although he never officially changed his name, on this movie he was credited as William Wyler.

After a long apprenticeship in which he made more than two dozen B Westerns, Wyler graduated to A features. In 1930, he was assigned to direct *HELL'S HEROES*. It was Universal's first all-sound, outdoor movie, and it became the first of many Wyler movies that were both commercial and critical hits.

THE GOLDWYN YEARS

In the 1930's, Wyler began a long, productive and sometimes stormy relationship with notorious producer Samuel Goldwyn. Though Wyler often had to fight the producer, the films he made for Goldwyn were striking. The first was *THESE THREE* (1936), which, although it had to jettison the lesbian theme of the Lillian Hellman play on which it was based, is a fine drama. Then came *DODSWORTH* (1936), a beautifully achieved work, with particularly fine performances by Walter Huston, Mary Astor, and Ruth Chatterton. It remains a potent examination of a disintegrating marriage more than 65 years after it was made.

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WILLIAM WYLLER (Continued)

Another of their collaborations, *THE WESTERNER* (1940), is a glittering black-and-white Western sparked by the vital interplay between Walter Brennan (as that most attractive of evil men, Judge Roy Bean) and the slow-speaking but quick-witted Gary Cooper. The scenes between Cooper and Brennan have an extraordinary naturalness.

Some commentators suggest the extensive use of deep-focus images in Wyler's movies originates with the great photographer Gregg Toland. Toland worked on seven of Wyler's eight films for Goldwyn, and undoubtedly his photography in them is superb. However, similar powerful diagonal, deep-focus compositions can be found in *THE LETTER* (1940), photographed by Tony Gaudio; and there are beautifully composed deep-focus staircase shots in *THE HEIRESS* (1949), photographed by Leo Tover, after Toland's premature death.

The photography in *THE GOOD FAIRY* (1935) is even more telling. This rarely seen gem was released well before Wyler worked with Toland. A delightful comedy with a witty script by Preston Sturges, it is acted with comic grace by Margaret Sullavan, Herbert Marshall, Frank Morgan, and Reginald Owen. Photographed by Norbert Brodine, it is filled with deep-focus shots and Wyler's trademark diagonal compositions—and it features a beautiful receding mirror shot (even more striking than that produced by Orson Welles and Toland, five years later, in *CITIZEN KANE*).

Wyler was married twice — once, briefly, to Margaret Sullavan, the star of *THE GOOD FAIRY*; then from October 23, 1938, until his death, to actress Margaret Tallichet, with whom he had five children.

In the Goldwyn years, Wyler also made two non-Goldwyn movies. The first, *JEZEBEL* (1938), is built around Bette Davis's bold, powerful, and, at times, subtle performance. The second, *THE LETTER*, has an even more powerful performance by Davis as she captures the underlying sexual desperation of an unfaithful wife. It also has a riveting opening sequence in which the still of a Malaysian night is shattered by the sound of a shot, and a man stumbles onto the veranda of a white house. The man is followed by Davis holding a gun. She keeps firing until there are no more bullets, and his body is still.

WWII

In World War II, Wyler joined the armed forces. He made war films, most notably, *THE MEMPHIS BELLE* (1944). For this story of an air raid by American flyers based in



WILLIAM WYLLER (Continued)

England, Wyler cut aerial battle footage that he and his photographers had captured over Germany to a spare, rhythmic, poetic narration written by Lester Koenig. The result is a remarkably powerful documentary.

The film prior to this documentary was *MRS. MINIVER* (1942), a film that takes place in England, really captured the feeling of the people living amongst the war. After *MRS. MINIVER* was shown at the White House, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had been transfixed throughout, said, "This has to be shown right away, everywhere."

Wyler's first feature after the war was his last with Goldwyn. Perhaps his own military service, which left him deaf in one ear and with only partial hearing in the other, gave Wyler the experience needed to sympathetically realize the problems of military personnel returning to civilian life. *THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES* (1946) is a beautiful picture and wonderfully well acted by Fredric March, Dana Andrews, Myrna Loy, Harold Russell, Hoagy Carmichael, Cathy O'Donnell, and Teresa Wright.

LATER WORK

Then came *THE HEIRESS* (1949), a fine version of Henry James's novel *Washington Square*, with splendid performances by Olivia de Havilland and Ralph Richardson. *ROMAN HOLIDAY* (1953), which was completely shot on location in Rome, Italy, is a delight. Wyler gave Audrey Hepburn her first leading role and was rewarded with a magical performance. Hepburn won an Oscar®, like so many of Wyler's actors did (14 of whom won Academy Awards®, out of a total of 36 nominations).

Later in his career, Wyler was involved in several popular big-budget blockbusters. *BEN-HUR* (1959), which includes the justly famous chariot race, was the biggest, and it went on to win a record 11 of the 12 Oscars® for which it was nominated. There was also *FUNNY GIRL* (1968), in which Wyler guided another first-time performer, Barbra Streisand, to an Oscar®.

The roster of great performances in Wyler's films also includes Merle Oberon (*THESE THREE*), Claire Trevor (superb in a vignette in *DEAD END* [1937]), the less-well-known Doris Davenport (*THE WESTERNER*), James Stephenson (*THE LETTER*), Phyllis Love (*FRIENDLY PERSUASION* [1956]), and the nonprofessional Harold Russell (*THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES*).



WILLIAM WYLLER (Continued)

Even toward the end of his career, Wyler was still capable of surprising his audience. His last movie, **THE LIBERATION OF L.B. JONES** (1970), is a scathing attack on racism in a small American town. A film of power and vigor, it capped his long, marvelous career as a director.

Wyler wanted to continue to make pictures up until the end, but his health kept him from doing so. For the next decade, Wyler, and his wife Talli, traveled the globe. In 1976, he became the fourth recipient of the AFI Lifetime Achievement Award, succeeding John Ford, James Cagney and Orson Welles.

William Wyler died on July 27, 1981, in Beverly Hills, California.

KINO ON VIDEO

COUNSELLOR AT LAW

Cast

John Barrymore.....George Simon
Bebe Daniels.....Regina Gordon
Doris Kenyon.....Cora Simon
Isabel Jewell.....Bessie Green
Melvyn Douglas.....Roy Darwin
Onslow Stevens.....John P. Tedesco
Thelma Todd.....Lillian La Rue
Clara Langsner.....Lena Simon
John Hammond Dailey.....McFadden (as J. Hammond Dailey)
Mayo Methot.....Zedorah Chapman
Bobby Gordon (I).....Henry Susskind
Malka Kornstein.....Sarah Becker
Vincent Sherman.....Harry Becker
Marvin Kline.....Weinberg
T.H. Manning.....Peter J. Malone

Crew

William Wyler.....Director
Elmer Rice.....Writer
Carl Laemmle Jr.....Producer
Giuseppe Becce.....Composer
Norbert Brodine.....Cinematographer
Daniel Mandell.....Editor
Charles D. Hall.....Art Director
Gilbert Kurland.....Sound designer

COUNSELLOR AT LAW

U.S. · 1933 · 81 min · B&W · 1.33:1

A Universal Picture

Directed by William Wyler

KINO ON VIDEO

COUNSELLOR AT LAW

SYNOPSIS

Set entirely in a high-class, law firm's office based in the Empire State Building, **COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW** is a wry examination of the life of high-powered New York attorney George Simon (John Barrymore), a Jewish man with a life of poverty behind him.

As Simon attempts to help working-class Jewish New Yorkers and continue his work with high-class clients, he ends up falling victim to a political enemy who uncovers some of Simon's legal indiscretions while helping a young worker in legal trouble.

Abandoned by his wife and in danger of being publicly humiliated, Simon quickly realizes that only his legalistic wizardry can save his reputation and the freedom of those who count on him for social justice.

PRE-CODE CINEMA

William Wyler's **COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW** is considered a perfect example of an era of mainstream cinema known as Pre-Code Hollywood because of its complex and mostly unresolved allusions to issues like Communism and corporate corruption.

Pre-Code Cinema can be described as a series of Hollywood films, made from 1930 to 1934, which dealt with issues that were considered "immoral" and "obscene" by a conservative segment of the national political spectrum. As a matter of fact, these films were produced after the drafting of a "code" written by publisher Martin Quigley and Jesuit priest Daniel Lord in 1929, which prohibited obscenity, sex perversion, excess alcohol consumption and corruption in mainstream cinema. Hollywood voluntarily accepted these rules, but clearly had different standards for what was excessive and inappropriate.

What followed the religious and right wing support of the code was a series of films which portrayed gangsters, drug addiction, intelligent prostitutes, sympathetic communist characters, corporate corruption and "inappropriate" sexual behavior. As a consequence, the Production Code was fully implemented in 1934, making films like **COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW** virtually unavailable in mainstream cinema.

KINO ON VIDEO

COUNSELLOR AT LAW

JOHN BARRYMORE

-Biography by Jim Beaver <From IMDB>

American stage and screen actor whose rise to superstardom and subsequent decline is one of the legendary tragedies of Hollywood. A member of the most famous generation of the most famous theatrical family in America, he was also its most acclaimed star. His father was Maurice Blyth (or Blythe; family spellings vary), a stage success under the name 'Maurice Barrymore'.

His mother, Georgie Drew, was the daughter of actor John Drew. Although well known in the theatre, Maurice and Georgie were eclipsed by their three children, John, Lionel Barrymore, and Ethel Barrymore, each of whom became legendary stars. John was handsome and roguish.

He made his stage debut at 18 in one of his father's productions, but was much more interested in becoming an artist. Briefly educated at King's College, Wimbledon, and at New York's Art Students League, Barrymore worked as a freelance artist and for a while sketched for the New York Evening Journal. Gradually, though, the draw of his family's profession ensnared him and by 1905 he had given up professional drawing and was touring the country in plays.

He survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and in 1909 became a major Broadway star in "The Fortune Hunter." In 1922, Barrymore became his generation's most acclaimed Hamlet, in New York and London. But by this time he had become a frequent player in motion pictures. His screen debut supposedly came in American Citizen, An (1914), though records of several lost films indicate he may have made appearances as far back as 1912. He became every bit the star of films that he was on stage, eclipsing his siblings in both arenas. Though his striking matinee-idol looks had garnered him the nickname "The Great Profile," he often buried them under makeup or distortion in order to create memorable characters of degradation or horror.

Barrymore was a romantic leading man into the early days of sound films, but his heavy drinking (since boyhood) began to take a toll, and he degenerated quickly into a man old before his time. He made a number of memorable appearances in character roles, but these became over time more memorable for the humiliation of a once-great star than for his gifts. His last few films were broad and distasteful caricatures of himself, though in even the worst, such as Playmates (1941), he could rouse himself to a moving soliloquy from Hamlet.

John Barrymore died in 1942, mourned as much for the loss of his life as for the loss of grace, wit, and brilliance which had characterized his career at its height.

KINO ON VIDEO

The Good Fairy

Cast

Margaret Sullivan.....Luisa Ginglebusher
Herbert Marshall.....Doctor Max Sporum
Frank Morgan.....Konrad
Reginald Owen.....Detlaff
Eric Blore.....Doctor Metz
Beulah Bondi.....Doctor Schultz
Alan Hale.....Maurice Schlapkohl
Cesar Romero.....Joe
Luis Alberni.....The Barber
June Clayworth.....Mitzi

Crew

Henry Henigson.....Associate Producer
Carl Laemmle Jr.....Producer
William Wyler.....Producer
David Klatzkin and Heinz Roemheld.....Composer
Norbert Brodine.....Cinematographer
Daniel Mandell.....Editor
Charles D. Hall.....Art Director
Vera West.....Costume Designer
Jack P. Pierce.....Makeup artist
Archibald Buchanan.....Assistant director
John P. Fulton.....Special effects

THE GOOD FAIRY (1935)

U.S. ' 1935 ' 97 min ' B&W ' 1.33:1

A Universal Picture

Directed by William Wyler



The Good Fairy

MARGARET SULLAVAN
-BIOGRAPHY-

Margaret Sullivan, born Margaret Brooke, first stepped onto a stage at the age of 17 to work with the notorious University Theatre troupe (Jimmy Stewart and Henry Fonda were also part of the company). Margaret Sullivan went on to make her Broadway debut in *A MODERN VIRGIN* (1931), and started her film career with a leading role in John Stahl's *ONLY YESTERDAY* (1933).

Alternating Broadway roles with high-end Hollywood productions, Margaret Sullivan quickly became a favorite leading lady. Usually cast in melodramas, Sullivan actually displayed some of her most solid work in sophisticated comedies like *THE LOVE TRAP*.

Known to have a somewhat unstable personal life, Margaret Sullivan married four times—three of them with actor Henry Fonda, director William Wyler, and producer Leland Hayward— and two of her children were taken, in different instances, to mental institutions because of chronic depression. Sullivan committed suicide at the age of 49 by taking an overdose of barbiturates.

KINO ON VIDEO

**DIRECTED
BY
WILLIAM
WYLER**

Interviews with:

**Bette Davis
Samantha Eggar
Greer Garson
Lillian Hellman
Audrey Hepburn
Charlton Heston
John Huston
Laurence Olivier
Gregory Peck
Ralph Richardson
Terence Stamp
Barbra Streisand
Margaret Tallichet
Billy Wilder
and
William Wyler**

Crew

**Director and Editor.....Aviva Slesin
Producer.....Catherine Tatge and Catherine Wyler
Cinematographer.....Richard Leacock
Executive Producer.....Catherine Wyler**

**Directed by William Wyler
U.S. · 1986 · 58 min · Color/ B&W ·
1.33:1 with Letterboxed clips
Directed and Edited by Aviva Slesio
Executive Producer: Catherine Wyler**

KINO ON VIDEO

The Love Trap

CAST

Laura La Plante.....Laura
Neil Hamilton.....Peter Cadwallader
Robert Ellis.....Guy Emory
Jocelyn Lee.....Bunny
Norman Trevor.....Judge Cadwallader
Clarissa Selwynne.....Mrs. Cadwallader
Rita La Roy.....Mary Cadwallader
Earl McCarthy.....Bit
Rolfe Sedan.....Drunk

CREW

Director.....William Wyler
Writers.....John B. Clymer and Albert DeMond
Writers.....Clarence Marks and Edward J. Montagne
Story by.....Clarence Thompson
Cinematographer.....Gilbert Warrenton
Editor.....Maurice Pivar

The Love Trap

U.S. · 1929 · 70 min · B&W · 1.33:1

Directed by William Wyler

Story by Edgard J. Montagne

Photographed by Gilbert Warrenton

With Laura LaPlate

KINO ON VIDEO

The Love Trap

LAURA LA PLANTE – BIOGRAPHY

By Tony Fontana (IMDB)

Laura was 15 years old when she entered films as a Christie Comedy Bathing Beauty. By 1921, she had a number of roles including a Tom Mix western called 'Big Town Round-up (1921)' for Fox and 'The Old Swimmin' Hole (1921)' for First National. Laura, now 17, next signed with Universal where she appeared in shorts, serials and many supporting roles. Over the next few years, Laura would become one of the leading stars at Universal as she could act in drama's, mysteries and comedies. Some of her more important films were the adventure 'Crooked Alley (1923)', the comedy 'Sporting Youth (1924)', the drama 'Smouldering Fires (1925)' and the mystery 'The Cat and the Canary (1927)'. One of her successful comedies, 'Skinner's Dress Suit (1926)', was directed by her husband William A. Seiter. When sound came to Universal, she was one of the silent film stars who made the transition. She played a leading role in the sound film 'Show Boat (1929)' and made her first all talking picture with 'Hold Your Man (1929)'. By 1930, she decided that she had enough and left Universal, which terminated her contract. She went to England where she would appear in a few more films over the years. Laura returned to Hollywood in 1935 where she again retired from the screen.