



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Bitter Victory

Two officers leading a mission to attack Nazi headquarters in the Libyan desert come into conflict, due partly to sexual jealousy, partly to differences in capability and courage in facing the perils of war. Ray – always expressive with horizontals – and cinematographer Michel Kelber use the expanses of the 'Scope frame to turn the arid landscape into an arena of deadly rivalry and private anguish.

bfi.org.uk

Bitter Victory is a very characteristic Nicholas Ray film: there is a spectacular lyric pain in sustained passages; it is always suggestive of uglier or lovelier things unsaid or unshown; like lightning in its action scenes; but flawed – in this case by the intractable limitations of Curd Jürgens (Ray had wanted Montgomery Clift) and Ruth Roman. Like all Ray's best work, the more overt the action becomes, the more surely we discover depth in characters who have a greater doubt and self-awareness than is common in American pictures. Time and again, over 15 years, he made insecurity the focus in people, rejecting Hollywood's industrial confidence and vigour.

The just war against the Germans in North Africa in *Bitter Victory* takes second place to the temperamental hostility of fellow officers – it is a study in grace and shabbiness (like *The Savage Innocents*) and to Richard Burton's wintry refusal to regard life as more than a trap or an anachronism. It is a CinemaScope picture of unfailing visual crisis. The close-ups on the stretched screen are among the most sombre images of exposed loneliness ever filmed. In one sequence, Burton has to shoot a wounded soldier and then labours to carry another on his back, only to find the burden has died too, after dreadful agony: 'I kill the living and save the dead.' It is one of Ray's grimmest jokes, resigned, mirthless and apocalyptic.

David Thomson, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1979

BITTER VICTORY

Directed by: Nicholas Ray
©: Transcontinental Films
Production Companies: Transcontinental Films, Productions – Robert Laff
Presented by: Columbia Pictures Corporation
Executive Producer on Location: Janine Graetz
Produced by: Paul Graetz
Production Manager: Paul Joly *
Assistant Directors: Christian Ferry, Eddie Luntz
Continuity: Lucie Lichtig
Screenplay by: Rene Hardy, Nicholas Ray, Gavin Lambert
Additional Dialogue from Mr Hardy's novel by: Paul Gallico
Director of Photography: Michel Kelber
Camera Operator: Wladimir Ivanov *
Editor: Leonide Azar
Art Director: Jean d'Eaubonne
Wardrobe: Jean Zay
Make-up: René Daudin *
Opticals: Lax
Music Composed and Conducted by: Maurice Le Roux
Sound Engineer: Joseph de Bretagne
Sound by: Western Electric
Military Adviser: Major General C.M.F. White
Thanked in credits: The War Office, Her Majesty's Forces in Libya
Studio: Studios de la Victorine (Nice)

Cast

Richard Burton (*Captain Jimmy Leith*)
Curd Jürgens (*Major David Brand*)
Ruth Roman (*Jane Brand*)
Raymond Pellegrin (*Mokrane*)
Anthony Bushell (*Major General R.S. Paterson*)
Sean Kelly (*Lieutenant Barton*)
Christopher Lee (*Sergeant Barney*)
Alfred Burke (*Lieutenant Colonel Michael Callander*)
Andrew Crawford (*Private Roberts*)
Raoul Delfosse (*Lieutenant Kassel*)
Ramon de Larrocha (*Lieutenant Sanders*)
Nigel Green (*Private Wilkins*)
Harry Landis (*Private Browning*)
Fred Matter (*Oberst Lutze*)
Christian Melsen (*Private Abbot*)
Ronan O'Casey (*Sergeant Dunnigan*)
Sumner Williams (*Private Anderson*)
Joe Davray (*Private Spicer*)

France/USA 1957©
102 mins

* Uncredited

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Bitter Victory

Sun 20 Jun 13:00; Mon 28 Jun 17:55

Touch of Evil

Sun 20 Jun 18:15

Cleo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)

Mon 21 Jun 14:30

Citizen Kane

Mon 21 Jun 20:45

Steamboat Bill, Jr.

Tue 22 Jun 18:30

The Big City (Mahanagar)

Wed 23 Jun 17:40

The Killers

Wed 23 Jun 17:50 (+ pre-recorded intro by Imogen Sara Smith, author of 'In Lonely Places: Film Noir beyond the City')

The Gospel According to Matthew (Il vangelo secondo Matteo)

Thu 24 Jun 17:40

Eraserhead

Thu 24 Jun 21:10

Alice in the Cities (Alice in den Städten)

Fri 25 Jun 20:45

Sweet Smell of Success

Sat 26 Jun 11:40

The White Ribbon (Das weisse Band)

Sat 26 Jun 16:30

The Man Who Wasn't There

Sun 27 Jun 18:20

Persona

Mon 28 Jun 21:00

Man Hunt

Tue 29 Jun 14:15

Le Doulos + pre-recorded intro by Professor Ginette Vincendeau, King's College London

Wed 30 Jun 17:45

Battleship Potemkin (Bronenosets Potemkin)

Thu 1 Jul 14:30; Thu 15 Jul 18:00; Sat 24 Jul 11:50

Hope and Glory

Thu 1 Jul 17:30; Mon 5 Jul 14:30; Fri 23 Jul 18:00

Casablanca

Fri 2 Jul 14:30; Sat 17 Jul 13:00; Sat 24 Jul 14:40; Thu 29 Jul 18:00

All about My Mother (Todo sobre mi madre)

Fri 2 Jul 20:40; Tue 6 Jul 20:45; Sat 10 Jul 21:00; Thu 22 Jul 14:30

How Green Was My Valley

Sat 3 Jul 11:30; Thu 8 Jul 14:15; Fri 16 Jul 17:50

Wild Strawberries (Smultronstället)

Sat 3 Jul 18:10; Mon 5 Jul 20:45; Sun 11 Jul 12:50; Wed 21 Jul 18:00

(+ pre-recorded intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large);

Tue 27 Jul 14:30

All the President's Men

Sun 4 Jul 11:50; Tue 20 Jul 14:15; Sat 31 Jul 20:20

Rear Window

Sun 4 Jul 15:40; Fri 9 Jul 14:30; Tue 20 Jul 17:50; Mon 26 Jul 18:00;

Sat 31 Jul 11:10

The Magnificent Ambersons

Mon 5 Jul 20:50; Wed 14 Jul 18:00 (+ pre-recorded intro by

Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Sun 25 Jul 15:00

Distant Voices, Still Lives

Wed 7 Jul 18:00 (+ pre-recorded intro by film critic Thirza Wakefield);

Sun 18 Jul 12:45; Mon 19 Jul 20:50; Fri 30 Jul 14:30

35 Shots of Rum (35 Rhums)

Mon 12 Jul 20:45; Wed 28 Jul 17:40 (+ pre-recorded intro by Be Manzini,

poet and director of Caramel Film Club)

Man About Town (Le Silence est d'or)

Tue 13 Jul 14:15; Sun 18 Jul 12:30; Mon 26 Jul 14:20

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