



**BIG SCREEN CLASSICS**

# The Stranger

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away the film's ending.

The ugly duckling of Orson Welles' wayward career, *The Stranger* was the director's attempt to prove to increasingly sceptical paymasters that he could tackle something conventional if he really put his mind to it (though he then made *The Lady from Shanghai*, and burned his Hollywood bridges almost for good). Although minor Welles almost by definition, it's nonetheless a very watchable thriller about wanted Holocaust architect Franz Kindler (Welles) pursued by a proto-Simon Wiesenthal (Edward G. Robinson) in small-town America.

Welles handles the suspense mechanics with appropriate brio, the clocktower climax being especially effective, but he also scores points for neither caricaturing the subject of Nazism (the film was shot and released while the main Nuremberg trials were still in session), nor making its Nazi an obvious Peter Lorre-style grotesque. Indeed, Welles' performance is worryingly charismatic, though he lays his cards firmly on the table when he accidentally outs himself as an antisemite during a postprandial chat.

**Michael Brooke, *Sight & Sound*, October 2009**

## A contemporary review

*The Stranger*, to which the critics looked forward because Orson Welles once directed two remarkable films, is no successor to those earlier achievements, though it contains many technical points of presentation which remind one of them. *The Stranger* is good, but not excellent, thriller entertainment, in the same class as *Journey into Fear*. Welles himself plays magnificently a German war criminal who has escaped incognito to an American small town where he has become a college teacher. A minor war criminal is loosed to act as a decoy by Edward G. Robinson, who plays an investigator concerned to find the whereabouts of the major offender. The earlier scenes are beautifully done: the small-town setting is alive and vivid, and the character of the shop-keeper who works a 'self-serve' store is himself the best piece of cinema in the film.

*The Stranger* is full of fine touches of melodrama, for example the attempted murder in the deserted gymnasium, or the strained walk through the woods ending in the murder of the decoy, but in the end we come back to the many, almost choric, scenes in the shop which fix the film's terrors into a frame of reality that sharply sets them off. This is the technical trick of Hitchcock which used to work so well during his period of British melodramas. For all his extravagance, Hitchcock knew where to stop straining our credulity.

*The Stranger* soon outpaced mine. Considering the lone detective possesses every proof of the Nazi's identity and guilt, it seems incredible he should be left at large to be a danger to innocent people and to come to so destructive an end on the melodramatically designed Gothic bell tower which fascinates him at odd hours of the night, and end by impaling his terror-stricken body on one of its medieval mechanical figures.

***Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1946**

THE STRANGER

Direction: Orson Welles  
©: Haig Corporation  
Production Company: International Pictures Corporation  
Produced by: S.P. Eagle  
Assistant Director: Jack Voglin  
Dialogue Director: Gladys Hill  
Screen Play by: Anthony Veiller  
Adaptation by: Victor Trivas, Decla Dunning  
Original story by: Victor Trivas  
Director of Photography: Russell Metty  
Film Editor: Ernest Nims  
Production Desigr: Perry Ferguson  
Make-up: Bob Cowan  
Music: Bronislaw Kaper  
Sound: Corson Jowett, Arthur Johns

uncredited  
Screenplay: John Huston, Orson Welles  
Camera Operator: John L. Russell  
Costumes: Thomas Woulfe  
Orchestration: Harold Byrns, Sidney Cutner  
Music Mixer: Paul Neal

Cast

Edward G. Robinson (Inspector Wilson)  
Loretta Young (Mary Longstreet)  
Orson Welles (Franz Kindler alias Charles Rankin)  
Philip Merivale (Judge Longstreet)  
Richard Long (Noah Longstreet)  
Konstantin Shayne (Konrad Meinike)  
Byron Keith (Dr Jeffrey Lawrence)  
Billy House (Mr Potter)  
Martha Wentworth (Sara)

uncredited  
Isabel O’Madigan (Mrs Lawrence)  
Pietro Sosso (Mr Peabody)  
Theodore Gottlieb (Farbright)  
Johnny Sands (student)

USA 1946©  
95 mins

With a pre-recorded introduction by film critic  
Farran Smith Nehme (Wed 1 Sep only)

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Stranger

Wed 1 Sep 18:00 (+ pre-recorded intro by film critic Farran Smith Nehme); Fri 17 Sep 21:00; Fri 1 Oct 14:30

Detective Story

Thu 2 Sep 18:00; Fri 24 Sep 18:00; Sun 3 Oct 12:10

Double Indemnity

Thu 2 Sep 14:45; Sun 12 Sep 15:00; Wed 29 Sep 17:45 (+ intro by Lucy Bolton, Queen Mary University of London); Sat 2 Oct 20:50

Call Northside 777

Fri 3 Sep 20:40; Thu 9 Sep 14:30; Tue 14 Sep 17:50; Mon 20 Sep 17:50

The Hound of the Baskervilles

Sat 4 Sep 15:15; Thu 30 Sep 18:15

Cry of the City

Sun 5 Sep 18:10; Thu 9 Sep 18:10; Sat 18 Sep 21:00; Tue 21 Sep 14:45

The Undercover Man

Mon 6 Sep 18:10; Thu 23 Sep 14:45; Sun 26 Sep 12:00

The Big Sleep

Tue 7 Sep 20:45; Sun 19 Sep 11:00; Mon 4 Oct 17:45

Laura

Wed 8 Sep 18:10 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Thu 16 Sep 14:30; Tue 21 Sep 21:00; Fri 1 Oct 20:50

The Third Man

Wed 8 Sep 21:00; Fri 10 Sep 14:30; Tue 14 Sep 20:50; Sat 2 Oct 11:30

Rear Window

Thu 9 Sep 20:45; Wed 15 Sep 17:20 (+ pre-recorded intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Sat 25 Sep 11:30; Tue 28 Sep 20:45; Tue 5 Oct 14:30

The Big Heat

Sat 11 Sep 14:30; Mon 13 Sep 21:00; Wed 22 Sep 18:00 (+ intro by Simran Hans, writer and film critic for ‘The Observer’); Mon 27 Sep 17:50

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