



## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

# The Age of Innocence

### The Age of Innocence

Director: Martin Scorsese

©: Columbia Pictures Industries Inc.

Production Company: Cappa DeFina Productions

Presented by: Columbia Pictures Corporation

Producer: Barbara De Fina

Co-producer: Bruce S. Pustin

Associate Producer: Joseph Reidy

Unit Production Manager: Bruce S. Pustin

Unit Production Manager (Paris): Jean-Pierre Avice

Production Co-ordinator: Alesandra M. Cuomo

Production Co-ordinator (Paris): Joanny Carpentier

Location Manager: Patricia Anne Doherty

Unit Location Manager (Paris): Sandrine Ageorges

1st Assistant Director: Joseph Reidy

Script Supervisor: Kay Chapin

Casting: Ellen Lewis

Casting Associate: Julie A. Madison

Screenplay: Jay Cocks, Martin Scorsese

Based on the novel by: Edith Wharton

Director of Photography: Michael Ballhaus

Camera Operator: David M. Dunlap

Steadicam Operators: Larry McConkey,

Anastas Michos

1st Assistant Camera: Florian Ballhaus

Special Visual Effects: Illusion Arts, Syd Dutton,

Bill Taylor

Special Effects Co-ordinator: John Ottesen

Special Effects Operators: Ronnie Ottesen,

Mike Maggi

Editor: Thelma Schoonmaker

Production Designer: Dante Ferretti

Art Director: Speed Hopkins

Art Director (Paris): Jean-Michel Hugon

Art Department Co-ordinator: Michele Giordano

Set Decorators: Robert J. Franco, Amy Marshall

Costume Designer: Gabriella Pescucci

Wardrobe Supervisors: Deirdre Nicola Williams,

Hartsell Taylor

Make-up: Allen Weisinger, Ronnie Specter

Special Make-up Effects: Manlio Rocchetti

Hair Design: Alan D'Angerio

Hairstylist: Michael Kriston

Hair Consultant: Antonio Soddu

Title Design: Elaine Bass, Saul Bass

Opticals: The Effects House

Music: Elmer Bernstein

Orchestrations: Elmer Bernstein

Music Editors: Suzana Peric, Suki Buchman

Nineteenth Century Music Consultant:

David Montgomery

Sound Recordist: Tod Maitland

Sound Re-recording: Tom Fleischman

Supervising Sound Editor: Skip Lievsay

Dialogue Editors: Marissa Littlefield,

Laura Civiello

Dialogue Supervisor: Philip Stockton

Sound Effects Editor: Eugene Gearty

ADR Editor: Hal Levinsohn

Foley Supervisor: Bruce Pross

Foley Editors: Frank Kern, Steve Visscher

Visual Research Consultant: Robin Standefer

Etiquette Consultant: Lily Lodge

Dramaturg: Michael X. Zelenak

Table Decoration Consultant: David McFadden

Chef Nineteenth Century Meals: Rick Ellis

Dance Consultant: Elizabeth Aldrich

Cast:

Joanne Woodward (narrator)

Daniel Day-Lewis (Newland Archer)

Michelle Pfeiffer (Ellen Olenska)

Winona Ryder (May Welland)

Richard E. Grant (Larry Lefferts)

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away some of the plot.

### Martin Scorsese on 'The Age of Innocence'

Set in New York in the 1870s, *The Age of Innocence* tells the story of Newland Archer, who is engaged to May Welland, of the powerful Mingott family. A 'disgraced' member of May's family, Countess Ellen Olenska, returns from a disastrous marriage in Europe and is snubbed by New York society. Archer asks the powerful Van der Luyden family to host a dinner for the Countess to counter her exclusion. Archer falls in love with Ellen, but stifling social pressures prevent him from consummating their relationship and he is torn between his passion for the Countess and his life with May.

*You quote in your book that accompanies the film a sentence from the novel: 'They all lived in a hieroglyphic world, where the real thing was never said or done or even thought, but only represented by a set of arbitrary signs. Is this why you paid so much attention to period detail in the film – and why you're irritated by all the talk about 'obsessive attention to detail', as if this comes from you?*

Yes, it's all in the book. What seems to be description is in fact a clear picture of that culture, built up block by block – through every plate and glass and piece of silverware, all the sofas and what's on them. All this wealth of detail creates a wall around Newland Archer, and the longer he stays there, with these things becoming commonplace, the harder it will be for him to move out of that society.

*Edith Wharton published the book in 1920, recalling a society that no longer existed after the war. Did you feel that you were showing Americans a period which most of them did not know existed?*

Of course. And it was even more sumptuous than we show. I felt the film had to show a modern audience the blocks they put around Newland and people like him. But there's also an irony and a sarcasm in the presentation of that lifestyle – both in the way I tried to do it and in the way Wharton did it in the book. The decor had to become a character for me.

Jay Cocks showed the film to an audience of Wharton specialists which included R. E. B. Lewis, who wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography. And he told me that their reaction was extraordinary, because every time a dinner service was shown or when Mrs Mingott selected the silver plate, they laughed. They knew what the presentation of that particular piece meant. So when the Van der Luydens create a dinner for Countess Olenska, they are making a statement and daring people to go against them.

*In the book there's a fantastic build-up to that dinner that tells you just how important the Van der Luydens are and how everyone in New York society acknowledges their status.*

I tried to convey that by the attention given to the dinner itself – the centrepiece, the Roman punch – which is like having a triple high mass for a funeral rather than a regular low mass. They are saying, 'Not only will we defend you, but we are going to do so on the highest level. If anyone has a problem with that, they are going to have to answer to us.'

*Just like in GoodFellas...*

Exactly. It's a matter of 'You have a problem with that? Then you have a problem with me and let's settle it right now.' Or in this case, 'Oh very well. We're going to have to bring out the Crown Derby, aren't we?' I remember in *The Razor's Edge*, when Gene Tierney throws a plate at Herbert Marshall, he says, 'My goodness, the Crown Derby.'

*It's the heavy artillery.*

Absolutely. And the Wharton specialists loved it because they understood better than other people what those signals meant. It was important for me

Alec McCowen (*Sillerton Jackson*)  
 Geraldine Chaplin (*Mrs Welland*)  
 Mary Beth Hurt (*Regina Beaufort*)  
 Stuart Wilson (*Julius Beaufort*)  
 Miriam Margolyes (*Mrs Mingott*)  
 Siân Phillips (*Mrs Archer*)  
 Carolyn Farina (*Janey Archer*)  
 Michael Gough (*Henry van der Luyden*)  
 Alexis Smith (*Louisa van der Luyden*)  
 Jonathan Pryce (*Rivière*)  
 Robert Sean Leonard (*Ted Archer*)  
 Linda Faye Farkas (*female opera singer*)  
 Michael Rees Davis, Terry Cook, Jon Garrison  
 (*male opera singers*)  
 Howard Erskine (*Beaufort guest*)  
 John McLoughlin, Christopher Nilsson  
 (*party guests*)  
 Kevin Sanders (*the duke*)  
 W.B. Brydon (*Mr Urban Dagonet*)  
 Tracey Ellis (*Gertrude Lefferts*)  
 Christina Pronzati (*Countess Olenska's maid*)  
 Clement Fowler (*florist*)  
 Norman Lloyd (*Mr Letterblair*)  
 Cindy Katz (*stage actress*)  
 Thomas Gibson (*stage actor*)  
 Zoë (*herself*)  
 June Squibb (*Mingott maid*)  
 Domenica Scorsese (*Katie Blenker*)  
 Mac Orange (*Archer maid*)  
 Brian Davies (*Philip*)  
 Thomas Barbour (*Archer guest*)  
 Henry Fehren (*bishop*)  
 Patricia Dunnock (*Mary Archer*)  
 USA 1993  
 138 mins

## RE-RELEASES

### Dance Craze

From Mon 27 Mar

### The Age of Innocence

From Fri 31 Mar

### Top Hat

From 7 Apr

### Raging Bull

From 14 Apr

### Young Soul Rebels

From Fri 28 Apr

### The Passion of Remembrance

From Fri 28 Apr

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that real goodfellas would like *GoodFellas* and say that it was accurate – and they did. With *The Age of Innocence*, I think that even if ordinary people don't understand fully the significance of the different pieces of china, they will at least see that a lot of pomp and circumstance goes into certain sequences. And as it's not done by me, but by the characters, they get some understanding of the ritual. Such occasions are the most official way they can sign someone on and make them credible in that society. For instance, when Ellen Olenska arrives late at the party given for her, it's not important to her. Next day Newland says, 'You know all New York laid themselves at your feet last night.' And she answers, 'Yes, it was a wonderful party.' The audience has to understand that this wasn't just a party, lady! Newland is in effect saying, 'I'm getting married to your family, and we have agreed to take on the disgrace of your separation from your husband and we are going to do it with a stiff upper lip. So you really should know what we are doing for you by putting on a party.'

*There is something about social and professional ritual that fascinates you, whatever the setting or period. But now you seem to feel happier about moving away from your own experience.*

One of the lines that led me to make *The Age of Innocence* was my interest in doing different kinds of genre film. I mean, there's a major part of me that says, 'Let's do a Western', but it's not that easy. I have to find what's important for me in order to feel comfortable enough to wallow in the malting of a film. So although this film deals with New York's 'aristocracy' and a period of New York history that has been neglected, and although it deals with codes and ritual, and with love that's not unrequited but unconsummated – which pretty much covers all the themes I usually deal with – when I read it, I didn't say, 'Oh, good – all those themes are here.' I was just hit by the impact of the sequence near the end where Newland tries finally to tell his wife May he'd like to leave and by her response. It all came together in that scene, and I loved the way I was led by Wharton down the path of Newland's point of view, in which he underestimated all the women, and how he wound up checkmated by them, and how his wife becomes the strongest of them all. I find that admirable. Even though I may not agree with May totally, I like the growth of her character from a young girl to the person who takes control.

*Ironically there seems to be more of you – your own desires and frustrations – in this movie than in some of your other films, even though it comes fully formed from Wharton and is set in such an apparently remote and artificial milieu.*

There is. Sometimes when you fall in love you can't see what other people see. You become as passionate and obsessive as Newland, who can't see what's going on around him. That's the theme of *Taxi Driver* and of *Mean Streets* – it's a situation I've found myself in at times, and I've found the way it plays out so wonderful. But then Wharton goes beyond that and makes a case for a life that's not exactly well spent, but a life that happens to him. Newland has his children, then he finds out that his wife knew all along about his love for Ellen and even told his son about it. Basically he is what they call in America a stand-up guy – a man of principles who would not abandon his wife and children. When he really wanted something most, he gave it up because of his kid. That's very interesting to me – I don't know if I could do the same. But I do know that there are a lot of people, even today, who would: it's about making a decision in life and sticking to it, making do with what you have. I don't say it's a happy ending, but it's a realistic and beautiful one.

The emotional intensity is very important to me. What kept me going as I was reading the book was what a writer friend of mine called 'the sweet romantic pain' of the situation, where Newland and Ellen can't consummate their relationship. A touch of the hand has to suffice for months; the anticipation of a two-hour ride to a train station is so sweet, it's almost overwhelming. That was the real reason I wanted to make the film – the idea of that passion which involved such restraint.

Martin Scorsese interviewed by Ian Christie, *Sight and Sound*, February 1994