



MARTIN SCORSESE SELECTS HIDDEN GEMS OF BRITISH CINEMA

Green for Danger

Green for Danger

Directed by: Sidney Gilliat

J. Arthur Rank presents

An Individual Picture

Released by: General Film Distributors

A Laundry Gilliat Production

Production Manager: A.S. Bates

Assistant Director: Percy Hermes

The Screenplay by: Sidney Gilliat, Claud Gurney

From the novel by: Christianna Brand

Director of Photography: Wilkie Cooper

Cameraman: Oswald Morris

Editor: Thelma Myers

Production Designer: Peter Proud

The Music Composed by: William Alwyn

The Music Played by:

The London Symphony Orchestra

Under the direction of: Muir Mathieson

Sound Recordist: Eric Clennell

Sound System: Western Electric

Made at: D&P Studios

Made at: Pinewood Studios

uncredited

Production Company: Independent Producers

2nd Assistant Director: Christopher Noble

3rd Assistant Director: Eric Braun

4th Assistant Director: Lawrence G. Knight

Continuity: Patricia Arnold

Focus Puller: Frank Ellis

Clapper Loaders: Revel King, Alan Perry

Grips: A. Marks

Stills: Arthur Evans

Special Effects: Percy Ralphs

Assistant Editor: Norah Walsh

2nd Assistant Editors:

Kenneth Peck, Bill Lenny, David Withers

Art Director: William Hutchinson

Set Dresser: Vernon Dixon

Draughtsman: John Hoesli

Prop Master: Jack Crowhurst

Construction: Harold Batchelor, Fred Kleeman

Dress Supervisor: Michael Waite

Costumes: Raemonde Rahvis, Dora Rahvis

Wardrobe: Kathleen Moore

Make-up: Stuart Freeborn

Assistant Make-up: Eric Carter

2nd Assistant Make-up: Sylvia Croft

Hairstyles: Betty Baugh, Biddy Chrystal

Assistant Hairstylist: Kathleen Smith

Music Recordist: Ted Drake

Chief Production Mixer: John Dennis

Sound Recordist: Alan Hogban

Sound Camera Operator: Harry Raynham

Boom Operator: Jack Locke

Assistant Boom: P.J. Craig

Dubbing Crew: Gordon K. McCallum, J.B. Smith

Charles Knott, Bill Daniels, H. Clarke

Dubbing Editor: John Seabourne Jr

Cast:

the hospital staff – the doctors

Leo Genn (*Mr Eden*)

Henry Edwards (*Mr Purdy*)

Trevor Howard (*Dr 'Barney' Barnes*)

Ronald Adam (*Dr White*)

the hospital staff – the nurses

Judy Campbell (*Sister Marion Bates*)

Wendy Thompson (*Sister Carter*)

Rosamund John (*Nurse Esther Sanson*)

Sally Gray (*Nurse Freddi Linley*)

Megs Jenkins (*Nurse Woods*)

John Rae (*the porter*)

Eight years after *The Gaunt Stranger*, Sidney Gilliat once more did battle with a whodunit in this terse, wry thriller taken from a novel by Christianna Brand. Brand's Inspector Cockrill investigates a suspected hospital murder after a patient has mysteriously died on the operating table: all the doctors and nurses present at the operation are suspects.

Gilliat: '*Green for Danger* was by no means ill-received by the critics; but it mortified me somewhat that nobody at all spotted that it was, so to speak, a film presented in quotation marks, dotted with references to the stereotypes of half a century of detective fiction, with an affectionate side-swipe at the arrogantly omniscient Detective figure of the genre. (I was in fact almost as disappointed as when I inserted a reference in a later picture, *State Secret*, to Rudolf Rassendyl's breakfast egg especially for the benefit of C. A. Lejeune and she never even noticed it!).

The novel, by Christianna Brand, had not been recommended as film material by the story department of the Rank Organisation and I bought a copy at Victoria Station just to while away a journey. I was attracted not by the detective, Inspector Cockrill, who, though by no means as dull a plodder as Inspector French, did not exhibit very much in the way of élan; nor particularly by the hospital setting, then still held by many distributors and exhibitors to be death at the box-office.

No, what appealed to me was the Anaesthetics – the rhythmic ritual, from wheeling the patient out to putting him out and keeping him out (in this case permanently) – with all those cross-cutting opportunities offered by flow-meters, hissing gas cylinders, palpating rubber bags and all the other trappings, in the middle of the Blitz, too. As for that unfortunate whodunit element, I largely informed myself and my collaborator Claud Gurney, we would lose it altogether or at the least reduce its importance. But Miss Brand had integrated her story far too well, and in the end we had to change tack and – on the principle, one supposes, of if you can't beat 'em join 'em – deliberately make capital of the very clichés of the detective novel, in the course of which Cockrill turned into the spritely conceited extrovert of the film with a dash of mild sadism and a decided tendency to jump to the wrong conclusion; and incidentally became the narrator.

The blitz of the novel we changed into the 1944 VI attacks as being by far the most dramatic of the various assaults on the old folks at home. One or two other points that might be of interest: with the exception of two exceedingly brief shots at the beginning, the film was photographed entirely inside the studio, exteriors and all, in three main complexes, the sets taking up the whole of Pinewood and all standing at the same time – delightful, but terribly expensive! The operating theatre was built twice over, so that to shoot reverse shots one simply moved a couple of yards to the "spare" theatre without having to float anything or change around properties.

There were in fact no operations, the patient being either dead or dying before the surgeon could sharpen his scalpel; but this did not prevent the British Film Censor from bizarrely putting a total ban on the picture on the strange ground that any wounded soldiers who might see the film (there were still plenty of them in 1946) would be so overcome by the fear of being murdered by one of

the patients

Moore Marriott (*Joseph Higgins, the postman*)
Frank Ling (*rescue worker*)

the police

Alastair Sim (*Inspector Cockrill*)
George Woodbridge (*Detective Sergeant Hendricks*)

uncredited

Hattie Jacques
Elizabeth Sydney

UK 1946

91 mins

35mm

A BFI National Archive print

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Martin Scorsese and Edgar Wright

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the nurses that it could seriously affect their chance of recovery! We pointed out to him that he must be thinking of the novel where the action took place in a military hospital – in the film there wasn't a wounded soldier to identify with in sight. In the end it turned out that he had indeed been thinking of the book and that he had in fact expressed the wish that it should not have been filmed at all, but his letter had become a casualty somewhere down the line. A splendid lunch at the best black market restaurant in Soho restored amity and *amour propre* and he finally passed the picture with only one cut, the reasons for which still totally escape me.'

Claud Gurney, Gilliat's script collaborator (and the producer of *The Body Was Well Nourished*), was due to join Launder and Gilliat in Individual Pictures, but he died during production after a car accident. The script was worked out when Launder was in America sorting out the presentation and distribution of *I See a Dark Stranger*. And the new film had equal distribution problems. Launder: 'They obviously thought little of it, because they pushed it out with little presentation or publicity in a very poor release form. When it took off, they attempted to retrieve the position, but it is difficult once the initial damage is done. However, gradually it built up to a success in Britain. Indeed, it was a considerable success all over the world, particularly in the States, but, alas, like *I See a Dark Stranger*, it suffered there from those vast distribution and exploitation expenses.'

Geoff Brown, *Launder and Gilliat* (BFI, 1977)

A contemporary review

Though the story has plenty of improbabilities when considered in cold blood, this thriller holds one well when on the screen. Alastair Sim is most amusing as the self-important detective who enjoys tormenting his suspects, but who comes a partial cropper despite his assurance. Leo Genn contributes an excellent portrait of the philandering but humorous and likeable Eden. Trevor Howard as Barnes has a bad-tempered and less attractive part in comparison. Sally Gray and Rosamund John make attractive nurses, and the whole cast is good in this clever Launder and Gilliat production.

Monthly Film Bulletin, January 1947