

Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 13th July at 7:30pm

Odd Man Out (1947)

UK, 1 hr 56 mins, not rated

Director; Carol Reed,

Stars; James Mason, Robert Newton and Cyril Cusack

Johnny McQueen, leader of a clandestine Irish organization, has been hiding in the house of Kathleen and her mother, planning a hold-up that will provide his group with the funds needed to continue its activities. During the hold-up, things go sour: Johnny is wounded, cannot make it back to the hideout, and disappears in the back-alleys of Belfast. Immediately, a large-scale man-hunt is launched, and the city is tightly covered by the constabulary, whose chief is intent on capturing Johnny and the other members of the gang.



From the Obituary to Sir Carol Reed, New York Times April 1976

Sir Carol, whose work was characterized by a certain keenly graceful understatement, humanity and attention to small but revealing details, won an Academy Award for one of his last movies, the musical “Oliver,” based on Dickens's “Oliver Twist,” which was released in 1968. But most critics considered that film one of Sir Carol's lesser works, and many believed that his gift as a director reached its apogee with “The Third Man,” the 1950 thriller set in seedy postwar Vienna that has become a classic of its genre.

Graham Greene, who wrote the screenplay, gave tribute to Sir Carol for the movie's unusual surprise ending. Mr. Greene said that in his original version, Anna (Alida Valli), the mistress of the sinister villain, Harry Lime (Orson Welles), was supposed to take the arm of Holly (Joseph Cotten), the bumbling hero, and they were to walk off together from the cemetery. However, said Mr. Greene, in the “triumphant rightness” of artistic judgment, Sir Carol! changed the ending to have Anna walk scornfully past Holly, appearing to barely notice his confused, unbelieving eyes. Sir Carol, Mr. Greene added, was “the only director I know with that particular warmth of human sympathy, the extraordinary feeling for the right face for the right part.”

A dominant theme in many of Sir Carol's more than 20 films was the idea of the loner, the outsider, the man on the run from the law, society or the establishment. A typical example of such subjects was “The Third Man,” whose major character was a postwar black marketeer. Another was “Odd Man Out,” a sweaty, gritty chase melodrama about the last hours in the life of an Irish Republican Army gunman (James Mason), released in 1947. Other notable Reed films included “Our Man in Havana,” based on the Graham Greene novel, released in 1960; “The Stars Look Down,” 1941, based on A. J. Cronin's novel about coal miners; “Young Mr. Pitt,” “The Man Between,” “Outcast of the Islands,” “The Key,” “Kipps” and “A Kid for Two Farthings.”

Sir Carol liked to pay careful attention to every detail in his films, and for that reason often co-produced them. Settings, costumes, lighting, all had to be created to his exacting standards. Often, after a film had been completed, he would be struck with an idea that changed its entire tempo. In the case of “The Third Man,” for example, after a complete orchestral musical score had been written and recorded for the sound track, Sir Carol was struck with the idea of using a catchy tune, played on a zither, for the entire length of the film. The tune was a popular success on jukeboxes for more than a year, and it not so coincidentally gave the movie just the proper tone of despair and intrigue.

Sir Carol's talents seemed on the wane toward the end of life. “The Agony and the Ecstasy,” the multimillion-dollar “biography of Michelangelo, which he directed in 1965, was not successful, and one critic said **of it**, “too much agony and not enough ecstasy.” “Oliver” his last major film and winner of the best-picture Oscar for 1968, was respectably and respectfully received.

Edited by Alex O'Reilly

