

Critical Insights: Casablanca contains fourteen essays from pop culture scholars and film critics, along with introductory essays on the film, its director, and a resource section containing a general bibliography, director's chronology/filmography, cast list, awards and honors, and the volume's contributors ... to whom I am grateful. *Casablanca* has received both popular and critical acclaim over the years, and in that spirit *Critical Insights: Casablanca* is intended as both a companion for serious film fans and a resource for students and scholars. No single volume on any movie can be complete, because the best films—the *classic* films—always yield up things to say, year after year. Not surprisingly, much has been written already about *Casablanca*, as the bibliography attests. The essays contained in this volume add to the critical “conversation” in, I hope, provocative ways. Some overlapping is unavoidable, but individually these essays approach the film from different angles; collectively they help to explain why *Casablanca* is so highly regarded—still, or despite its flaws—and why it will likely remain so.

Certain themes begin to resonate among the essays, as contributors consider whether *Casablanca* was, in fact, the “happiest of happy accidents” that critic Andrew Sarris posited and try to identify the reasons for its success. The issue of auteurism comes up a number of times, with varying opinions over the amount of credit due director Michael Curtiz—though none of the contributors disputes the film's—or Curtiz's—greatness.

In her essay on “Tips of the Hat: The Critical Response to *Casablanca*,” Brennan M. Thomas notes that *Casablanca* performed well at the box office partly because of fortuitous timing. Early reviewers remarked that Warner Bros. was either lucky or prescient, given that the film's premiere came less than three weeks after Casablanca, Morocco, was captured by Allied forces and the

film's subsequent worldwide release coincided with the Churchill-Roosevelt meetings in Casablanca. But timing wasn't everything. As Thomas details in her essay, a number of early critics also praised the film's acting and direction, with columnist Bennett Cerf calling it one of the two "most exciting films now current in New York" and *New York Times* critic Bosley Crowther complimenting director Michael Curtiz and his cast and crew for "draping a tender love story within the folds of a tight topical theme." Such positive reviews offset negative appraisals from the legendary Pauline Kael, who dismissed it as "schlocky romanticism," and the *London Times*, which pronounced Bogart's performance "flat" and forgettable. But, Thomas points out, it's clear "As Time Goes By" that *Casablanca* only gets better with age, as contemporary reviewers voiced when a restored version of the film was released in theaters in 2012.

In "We'll Always Have *Casablanca*: Popular Culture's Embrace," Kathy Merlock Jackson considers the far-reaching effects of a film that director Billy Wilder called "wonderful claptrap." As Jackson notes, though it was the right movie at the right time, the film transcends its age because "no other film has captured the American psyche as eloquently as *Casablanca*"; because of "the Cult of Bogart," the iconic figure that "stands at the crux of the film's popularity"; and because it features one of the big screen's most romantic scenes and a host of characters that have also become "embedded in the popular culture." From memorabilia to fashion and even Disney rides, *Casablanca* has had a remarkable influence on pop culture, as Jackson illustrates in an engaging roundup of "pop" suspects.

On the surface, Li Zeng writes in "Bogie Noir: *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon*," *Casablanca* seems the opposite of film noir because of its patriotic and propagandistic messages and optimistic/upbeat ending. But Humphrey Bogart starred in *The Maltese Falcon*, which, released a year prior to *Casablanca*, is often considered the first example of American film noir. As Zeng observes, "*Casablanca* can be seen to share some noir elements, including an existentialist hero in a trench coat, a dangerous and corrupt urban space, and the prominent use of low-key lighting." Zeng doesn't go so far as to

call *Casablanca* a noir film, but she does, through a comparison of the two films, “illustrate the relationship of each film to noir and the significance of *Casablanca* in the canon of ‘Bogie Noir.’”

Erik Eskilsen considers the deeply flawed nature of the cynical nightclub owner in his essay “I Stick My Neck Out for Nobody: Rick Blaine’s Antiheroism.” As Eskilsen writes, “To remember him as an exemplar of ‘clear-eyed heroism,’” as one critic described, “is to overlook certain questionable events from his past, his entire present-day conduct save for a flash of heroic action, and his ready future kinship with one of cinema’s great understated sleazeballs, Captain Louis Renault (played by Claude Rains).” After analyzing Blaine in his “film-historical context,” Eskilsen concludes that Rick “emerges as the arguable *ur*-antihero of American popular culture—that individual whose perspective on our flawed selves and our troubled world in a bygone era animates and reanimates a useful understanding of our flawed selves in today’s troubled world and the world we trouble.”

In “Ilsa’s Sacrifice: Gender, History, and *Casablanca*’s Conversion Narrative,” Linda Mokdad acknowledges Rick’s importance but asks readers to consider how Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman) is “also essential to understanding the film’s connections between gender, history, and wartime ideology.” There’s a rather large disparity, she argues. “While Ilsa and the film’s mobilization of romance help explain how the film appeals to history, Rick is the person who gets to participate in its making—ultimately relegating and confining Ilsa to the past,” their Paris past. Mokdad talks about the intent of the “conversion narrative” and how *Casablanca* is a prime example, “a story that celebrates personal sacrifice for the common good of the world.” Although Ilsa’s part seems diminished compared to the two men in this famous cinematic triangle, Mokdad reminds us that Ilsa “is necessary to inspire Rick to take a stand,” even as “the emotionalism she generates for him also threatens to overtake him.”

Delia Malia Konzett considers Sam and issues of race in “Classical Hollywood, Race, and *Casablanca*,” while also looking critically at the trajectory of Curtiz’s career. Her essay focuses

on “tropes that manage the discourse of race in Hollywood.” She questions Sam’s disappearance after the flashback scene, for example, and observes that his piano is taken over by Major Strasser and the Germans, with Sam “curiously absent.” Konzett builds a case for Sam being less Rick’s equal than a familiar type with the same old restrictions. “While this seriously flawed representation of African American culture does not entirely call into question the film’s continuing iconic status and the talents of its director, cinematographer, editor, and performers, it should give one reason to check cinematic idolatry of Hollywood with a more critical perspective on its collusion with racial segregation in the U.S.,” she suggests.

In “Defining Classical Hollywood Narration in *Casablanca*,” Eric S. Faden applies the film/media studies definition of “classical cinema” in order to talk more specifically about the three things that establish *Casablanca* as a prime example of classical Hollywood narration: studio practices, a recognizable formulaic narrative, and a distinct style. Faden discusses the three-act narrative structure and how “lightly mixing” genres became common practice during the 1940s, as well as how such techniques as repetition and a standardized form of shot selection and editing helped guide viewers through films such as *Casablanca*. Just as helpful, he walks readers through a number of scenes, pointing out how the narrative was shaped and enhanced by filming techniques.

Kirk Honeycutt discusses the writing-by-committee approach that somehow worked in “Adlibbing Greatness: *Casablanca*’s Screenplay” and the wartime mandate from the U.S. Office of War Information that helped shape the film—which obliged by “featuring an apathetic, cynical antihero rediscovering the Cause; satirizing the enemy as pompous, belligerent fools; and emphasizing a nightclub teeming with a veritable United Nations of anti-fascist refugees and resistance fighters.” Honeycutt also discusses some of the differences between *Everybody Comes to Rick’s*, the play that *Casablanca* was based upon, and the eventual film, as well as elements of the screenplay the collective “Author” introduced that helped make *Casablanca* the success that it is.

But what of the stars? Christopher S. Long considers how the long “looks” and reaction shots offered by Bogie and Bergman—particularly their exchange of gazes in one crucial scene, which is “one of the most supercharged in the history of cinema and speaks so eloquently of the heat of their attraction and the depth of their relationship that it renders the entire Paris flashback superfluous.” Other characters, such as Claude Rains and his “side-eye,” contribute just as much expression and emotion, as do even minor characters in *Casablanca*, as Long illustrates.

In “This Crazy World: Cinematic Space and the Casualties of *Casablanca*,” Larrie Dudenhoeffer argues that *Casablanca* “more exactly represents a new sort of film space, a *decoherent space* that entangles the characters so thoroughly in its shifting ideological, intersubjective, and sentimental conditions that they come to seem non-unitary with their own images on the screen.” Dudenhoeffer proposes *Casablanca* as a cinema of subtraction, where characters and images disappear gradually from the film, something that even the audience experiences at film’s end.

Although *Casablanca* is widely regarded as a quintessential American movie, a product of the studio system during the golden age of Hollywood, Björn Nordfjörd proposes in “Rick’s Café International: *Casablanca* as a Film of the World” that it is also “ultimately a film responding to a world event, made by and about a multinational community, and—then, as now—admired, criticized, and debated the world over.” Nordfjörd suggests that approaching the film from a world cinema perspective also “enables us to see more sides of the film than a strictly American perspective does.”

In “The Undercut Auteur: Michael Curtiz and *Casablanca*’s Iconic Imagery, Motifs, and Symbols,” Michael O’Conner considers Andrew Sarris’s three categories necessary for a director to be considered a true auteur, then argues that the only place where Curtiz falls short is “from the overall lack of interior meaning in his films.” In his essay, O’Conner investigates *Casablanca* and its “extensive range of interpretive attributes, including haunting themes of betrayal, entrapment, and freedom; motifs of doubling;

and even an emphasis on games of skill and games of chance, all of which can be located in Curtiz's larger body of work."

Before Curtiz began filming *Casablanca*, the Warner Bros. publicity department went out of its way to inform the media, via press release, that it was *not* a musical. And yet, music drives the romance and music is responsible for the film's dramatic political crescendo as Germans and pro-French patrons in Rick's sing dueling anthems. Max Steiner's score brilliantly reinforces those two moments throughout the film, and, I argue, if the songs were sung by Bogie and Bergman rather than by Dooley Wilson (Sam) and Corinna Mura (the café singer and guitar player), it may well have been regarded as a musical rather than the blend of genres now ascribed to it.

Finally, there's more speculation in "*Casablanca: The Individual and the Collective*," in which Paul Morrison considers the problem of the auteur and the reasons why Curtiz has often been overlooked as the most influential person behind the film. Morrison considers other candidates as well—the screenwriters and producer Hal B. Wallis—and arrives at a point where the question becomes: "how to ponder the cinematic production of meaning without recourse to the figure of the auteur, and how to think of cinematic art without the artist." Then, too, he argues, *Casablanca* is "the perfect product of the studio system" in which "what speaks in place of the director is multiple."

In this volume, too, what speaks is multiple.

Tips of the Hat: The Critical Response to *Casablanca*

Brennan M. Thomas

Casablanca has been described by film critics and historians as one of the most well-crafted film noirs of all time, replete with oft-quoted dialogue and an engaging love-triangle story set against the backdrop of World War II that, according to the late critic Roger Ebert, “convinced [viewers] that the only thing keeping the world from going crazy is that the problems of three little people do after all amount to more than a hill of beans.” Premiering on Thanksgiving Day 1942 less than three weeks after the Allied Forces’ capture of Casablanca, the Warner Bros. production would run for ten weeks at the Hollywood Theater in New York before its worldwide release on January 25, 1943, which fortuitously coincided with the Churchill-Roosevelt meetings in Casablanca (Mulligan). As one *Hollywood Reporter* staff member observed of such impeccable timing, “That Warners had a lucky break in the progress of world events that put the name of *Casablanca* on everyone’s lips is the answer to the surefire box-office smash the Hal B. Wallis production will enjoy” (“*Casablanca*’ Terrific Hit”).

With Americans’ heightened interest in the film’s titular city due to extensive news coverage, *Casablanca* fared relatively well during its initial theatrical run, earning approximately \$3.7 million (Jackson 33), receiving eight nominations for the 1943 Academy Awards, and winning three for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay (Goldman). Since its release on home video cassettes in 1984 and other media in more recent years, the film has been selected by dozens of polled groups, from the American Film Institute’s membership to *Entertainment Weekly*’s editorial staff and *International Movie Database* subscribers, as one of the greatest films in cinematic history (Nachbar & Merlock 47–8). As of 2015, *Casablanca* ranked third on the American Film Institute’s “Top 100

All-Time Greatest Films,” behind *Citizen Kane* and *The Godfather* (“AFI’s 100”).

Yet the film’s beginnings were hardly auspicious. Based upon the unproduced play *Everybody Comes to Rick’s* by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison, alleged by critic James Agee to be “one of the world’s worst” plays (qtd. in Blades), the film’s producer, Hal B. Wallis, struggled to secure a director, settling for Michael Curtiz when first choice William Wyler was unavailable (Christiansen), and then a suitable cast; although Wallis selected Bogart fairly early, actresses Hedy Lamarr and Michele Morgan were considered for the film’s leading female role before producers finally contracted Ingrid Bergman “for a bargain price” (Lumenick). In his 1992 article celebrating *Casablanca*’s fiftieth anniversary, Hillel Italie of the Associated Press wrote, “The stars didn’t want to be in it, the writers didn’t know how to end it, the director wasn’t sure how to direct it.” Of the problems to which Italie alludes, the most vexing for Howard Koch, one of *Casablanca*’s three credited screenwriters, proved to be the film’s unfinished script.

In his 1973 article for the magazine *New York*, Koch confessed that when co-writers Julius and Phillip Epstein presented the film’s story to studio executive David Selznick to persuade him to “loan” contract player Ingrid Bergman, there was no script backing their pitch. “[The Epsteins] must have given quite a performance,” Koch conjectured, “because Selznick was sufficiently impressed to loan Ingrid Bergman” (74). After drafting pages of dialogue for *Casablanca*’s various residents and refugees (Koch 74), the Epstein brothers left the project temporarily to work on Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* series (Merlock 4), and Koch was tasked with cobbling together completed sections of the script while fleshing out its burgeoning plot twists (Blades). Koch characterized his situation as one “holding a bag that while not exactly empty, contained a miscellaneous jumble of characters, ideas for scenes, and atmospheric bits” (75). Pressed by impending deadlines and Curtiz’s requests for a script, Koch struggled to come up with a cohesive narrative (even to the point of spending an entire day staring out his office window at a mockingbird) before zeroing in on what would become one of

the film's key story lines: French prefect Louis Renault's growing interest in and respect for the mysterious American proprietor Rick Blaine (75). But even with this newly added plot thread, which gave the story much needed structure, the film's script wasn't completed when shooting began in May 1942 (Blades); in fact, Koch admitted, fewer than seventy pages had been submitted to the rest of the film's production crew by the first day of shooting (78).

When Julius and Phillip Epstein returned to the project, they and Koch completed the script, assisted by several uncredited writers, including Casey Robinson, who added the film's romantic backstory (Blades). These contributions were not always approved by or even made known to Koch, however; Michael Curtiz, who had embraced Koch's partial scripts early on, became increasingly concerned about the story's direction and so began soliciting script edits from "sources unknown" to Koch (78, 81). Fortunately, the writers and crew seemed to have defined the characters so well that they were able to write dialogue that suited both their personalities and the acting abilities of their onscreen counterparts (Ebert). Humphrey Bogart himself contributed one of the film's most frequently quoted lines—"Here's looking at you, kid"—as his character, Rick Blaine, gently lifts the tear-streaked chin of Ingrid Bergman's Ilsa before the latter boards a Lisbon-bound plane with her Resistance-leader husband, Victor Laszlo (Nachbar & Merlock 46). In spite of these script additions, Koch remembers the final days of shooting as "a nightmare" of escalating tensions and frequent verbal spats between himself and Curtiz; when Koch finished his last pages and sent them to the production crew, he felt he had been reduced to "a weary traveler" with little cognizance of his surroundings (81). Even after the film's worldwide premiere in January 1943 generated considerable buzz among critics and audiences, Koch remained oblivious to everything but what he believed were *Casablanca's* glaring faults. "I kept wondering what all the excitement was about," he wrote (Koch 81).

The "excitement" to which Koch alludes were critics' adulation of the film's artful direction, acting, and uncanny correspondence with the Allied forces' African campaign. In his "Trade Winds"

column for the February 27, 1943, issue of *Saturday Review*, Bennett Cerf named *Casablanca* one of “the two most exciting films now current in New York,” the other being *Air Force* (18). Under the nom de plume Kate Cameron, film critic Loretta King of *The Daily News* awarded the film three and a half stars, noting that “Hal Wallis of Warner Bros. must have had a hunch that the next important arena in the global war would be Northwest Africa,” as General Eisenhower’s successful military campaign to liberate the Moroccan city from the Vichy France regime had been extensively covered in the press in the weeks leading up to *Casablanca*’s premier. King describes *Casablanca* in sentimentalized terms, as the linchpin in every European refugee’s efforts to escape to America (“the Island of the Free”), where the Nazi regime could not reach them, and Rick’s café in particular as an appropriate backdrop for rekindling his love affair with Ilsa. A staff writer for *Variety* predicted the film would do well at the box office despite *Casablanca*’s liberation by Allied troops, as its other exceptional qualities—acting, directing, plot—would hide this anachronism (“*Casablanca* [Songs]”). Moreover, the staff writer perceived that audiences’ increasing awareness of *Casablanca* and its strategic value as a potential launch zone for Allied troops were marketable features that Warner Bros. executives already were “wisely cashing in on” (“*Casablanca* [Songs]”).

Perhaps the film’s biggest box office draw was (and still is) the character of Rick Blaine, who, playing both the incisive, bitter nightclub owner and the loving idealist, offers a unique amalgam of principled unselfishness and guarded cynicism with which audiences could readily identify. This duality of good and evil represented in one person, one reviewer noted, “is a novel characterization that, properly billed, might itself be good for some coin in the trough” (“*Casablanca* [Songs]”), with goodness winning out as Rick Blaine endangers himself to ensure his former lover’s safe passage to Lisbon. In his first review of the film, appearing in the November 27, 1942, issue of the *New York Times*, critic Bosley Crowther applauded *Casablanca*’s filmmakers for “draping a tender love story within the folds of a tight topical theme” (“The Screen”). His follow-up article, published two days later in the *Times*’s Sunday edition, further

praised *Casablanca*'s storytelling ingenuity and Bogart's portrayal of the enigmatic Rick, whose bored disdain for Nazi officials searching and eventually shutting down his establishment is both admirably "casual" and "brave" (Crowther, "Better"). Yet Crowther acknowledged that his description of *Casablanca*'s protagonist failed to capture the intensity of Rick's struggle to do "what is right" when confronted by his romantic past or the many other intriguing subplots revolving around him ("Better"). "But that doesn't really matter," Crowther concluded, "because you'll see it yourself if you know what's best" ("Better"). *St. Petersburg Times* writer Lillian Blackstone likewise identified the film's "fascinating love story" as its main attraction, predicting that both it and the leading cast's performances would earn *Casablanca* a spot among the year's best films. Koch later conceded that although he was more interested in the story's political elements than in Rick's personal liaisons, which director Curtiz preferred, he and Curtiz's dueling agendas for their characters "somehow meshed," adding that "perhaps it was partly this tug-of-war between Curtiz and me [Koch] that gave the film a certain balance" (81).

Later reviews of *Casablanca* were similarly generous in their praise of the film's multi-layered story arcs and superior direction and acting. In his 1982 article for *Casablanca*'s fortieth anniversary, *Time* critic Lance Morrow, pontificating the film's lasting legacy, identified its careful casting and finely written script as its most praiseworthy attributes: "The movie is a procession of perfect moments." In a 2006 review, following the film's screening at the Gene Siskel Film Center, *Chicago Tribune* critic Michael Wilmington described *Casablanca* as the paramount of Hollywood's Golden Age, with a cast ensemble every bit deserving of its director and meticulously crafted script. "It's a true 'dream factory' product," wrote Wilmington, in that *Casablanca* "unfolds like a great collective dream." And in his 2012 article commemorating the film's seventieth anniversary, *Atlantic* contributor David W. Brown hypothesized that the quotable lines from *Casablanca*'s witty screenplay "could have filled the entire list [of AFI's Top 100 Movie Quotes] twice over."

Still, *Casablanca* is not without its detractors. Among them is long-time *New Yorker* critic Pauline Kael, who described the film as charming but “schlocky romanticism,” with “melodramatic twists and turns” that can hardly be taken “seriously” (qtd. in Brown). Several outlier reviews published during *Casablanca*’s initial release expressed similar criticisms. One staff writer for the November 30, 1942, issue of *Time*, equated the film’s cast of characters to a jumbled assortment of stereotypes and motifs, reducing the recalcitrant Rick to a tough-guy “Buster Keaton” and Victor Lazlo to an indefatigable do-gooder (“New Pictures”). The writer’s final verdict of the film’s entertainment value was especially grim: “Nothing short of an invasion could add much to *Casablanca*” (“New Pictures”). The London *Times* review of *Casablanca* for its worldwide release described Rick Blaine as the “sentimentalist masquerading as the cynic” and Bogart’s performance as “flat” and forgettable (“*Casablanca*: Film of Intrigue”). Even some of the Warner Bros. executives found the principal characters unbelievable; in a memo to the film’s producer, Hal Wallis, one executive described Rick Blaine as “two-parts Hemingway, one-part Fitzgerald, and a dash of cafe Christ” (qtd. in Italie). Stereotypes among its secondary characters are even more obvious, as these characters often appear on screen as simplistic caricatures of their corresponding nationalities (Otero-Pailos). Yet, David W. Brown argued, the film succeeds not in spite of but because of these stereotypical characters, which are all recognizable, identifiable, and representative of a broad range of human responses to war and conflict:

Part of the richness of the film is that each of the bar’s patrons seems to work not in service of the narrative, but rather, in service of his or her own cause. Every character, it seems, could be the subject of a movie just as compelling as *Casablanca*. Rick’s Cafe Americain attracts that kind of crowd. (Brown)

Casablanca also has been criticized for its incongruous story elements, particularly those involving the nature of Laszlo’s status as a political refugee and the relative freedoms enjoyed by *Casablanca*’s residents. In his otherwise favorable critique of the film,

New Yorker contributor David Denby, who reviewed the restored print of *Casablanca* released in theaters in 2012, acknowledged the implausibility of such a high-profile Resistance leader as Laszlo walking freely about the Moroccan city without being arrested: “[N]o underground leader would show up in a tropical white suit in a night club with his gorgeous wife on his arm.” Equally problematic are the supposed freedom-granting letters of transit Rick acquires from one of Casablanca’s black market passport dealers, which would have been useless in Vichy France. Indeed, according to *New York Post*’s Lou Lumenick, screenwriter Casey Robinson, though integral to the story development of Rick and Ilsa’s love affair in Paris, sought no credit for his contributions to the film because of the script’s logical gaps: “Why would Nazis honor letters of transit signed by Free French leader Charles de Gaulle?” Koch later clarified that these letters had actually been signed by General Maxime Weygand rather than de Gaulle (76), but even so, Julius Epstein, one of the film’s co-writers, points out, they are pure fiction, as “there were no such thing as letters of transit” (qtd. in *Italie*). Also fictitious were the prowling Gestapo and military officials who interrogated Rick Blaine and his anti-fascist clientele, as there were no uniformed German military forces in Casablanca (Mulligan).

Yet despite these historical inaccuracies, Denby insisted that even for filmgoers well acquainted with the story of star-crossed lovers Rick and Ilsa, the film still offers “many little busy corners to nestle in.” For one, noted Denby, the movie competently lays out in simple, economic visuals, such as a spinning globe and animated map lines, the plight of European refugees who, along with Resistance fighters, Nazi officials, entertainers, gamblers, and degenerates, frequent Rick’s establishment. Collisions between such strangely assorted and diametrically opposed characters bend credulity, Denby conceded, but against the backdrop of Rick’s bustling *Café Americain* and Casablanca’s foggy streets and airstrips, these collisions feel almost expected, especially among its three leading characters: “[T]he movie takes place in a magic space, the blissful imagining of big-studio Hollywood, a playground for the knowing, the sexual, the witty, the risk-takers.”

Cast

Starring (in order of billing)

Humphrey Bogart Rick Blaine
Ingrid Bergman Ilsa Lund
Paul Henreid Victor Laszlo
Claude Rains Capt. Louis Renault
Conrad Veidt Maj. Heinrich Strasser
Sydney Greenstreet Signor Ferrari
Peter Lorre Ugarte
S. Z. Sakall Carl
Madeleine LeBeau Yvonne
Dooley Wilson Sam
Joy Page Annina Brandel
John Qualen Berger
Leonid Kinskey Sascha
Curt Bois Pickpocket

Uncredited (alphabetical)

Enrique Acosta Guest at Rick's
Ed Agresti Bar Patron
Louis V. Arco Refugee at Rick's
Frank Arnold Overseer
Leon Belasco Dealer at Rick's
Nino Bellini Gendarme
Trude Berliner Baccarat Player at Rick's
Oliver Blake Waiter at the Blue Parrot
Monte Blue American
Eugene Borden Policeman
Dick Botiller Native Officer
Maurice Brierre Baccarat Dealer at Rick's

Awards & Honors

National Board of Review Awards, 1942

Winner—Top Ten Films

Academy Awards, 1944

Winner—Best Picture

Winner—Best Director (Michael Curtiz)

Winner—Best Writing, Screenplay (Julius J. Epstein, Philip G. Epstein, Howard Koch)

Nominated—Best Actor in a Leading Role (Humphrey Bogart)

Nominated—Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Claude Rains)

Nominated—Best Cinematography, Black-and-White (Arthur Edson)

Nominated—Best Film Editing (Owen Marks)

Nominated—Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture (Max Steiner)

National Film Preservation Board, Library of Congress, 1989

Voted to the National Film Registry

Online Film & Television Association, 1997

Voted to the Film Hall of Fame

American Film Institute, 1998

Voted #2, 100 Greatest American Movies of All Time

American Film Institute, 2002

Voted #1 screen romance, AFI's 100 Years...100 Passions

American Film Institute, 2008

Voted #3, 100 Greatest American Movies of All Time

Chronology of Michael Curtiz's Life

1886 Born December 24 to a Jewish family in Budapest, Austria-Hungary as Manó Kertész Kaminer.

1905 Adopts a more Hungarian name: Mihály Kertész.

1912 Begins his career as an actor and that same year at the National Hungarian Theater starts his directing career with the silent film *Ma Es Holnap (Today and Tomorrow)*.

1913 Studies advanced techniques at Nordisk Studio in Denmark and works for director August Blom on *Atlantis*, the first multi-reel feature film made in Denmark.

1915 Returns to work in the Hungarian film industry.

1918 Marries actress Lucy Doraine.

1919 Relocates in Vienna, Austria, after the Hungarian film industry is nationalized under the Hungarian Soviet Republic; begins working for Sascha Films, starting with *Die Dame mit dem Schwarzen Handschuh (The Lady with the Black Gloves)*, his forty-eighth feature film and the first to use, in the credits, a European form of the name he would settle on for American audiences: Michael Kertesz.

1923 Divorces first wife Doraine.

1924 Hired by Warner Bros. to direct *Noah's Ark* because of his German-language epics *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1922) and *Moon of Israel* (1924).
