

# **LOLA MONTES**

**- RIALTO PICTURES -**

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## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Director  
**Max Ophüls**

Screenplay  
**Annette Wademant**  
**Max Ophüls**  
**Jacques Natanson** (dialogue)

Based on the novel by **Cécil Saint-Laurent**<sup>1</sup>

Producer  
**Albert Caraco**

Cinematography  
**Christian Matras**

Production Design  
**Jean d'Eaubonne**

Costume Design  
**Georges Annenkov**

Editor  
**Madeleine Gug**

Original Music  
**Georges Auric**

Original French release: 1955    Original U.S. release: 1959  
France    Color    Aspect ratio: 2.55:1 (CinemaScope)    Dolby Digital  
Running time: 115 min.

**A JANUS FILM**  
**A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE**

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<sup>1</sup> Although this exact credit appears in the opening titles of the film, there was actually no novel basis for the movie (see page six).

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## **CAST**

Lola Montès  
**Martine Carol**

Ringmaster  
**Peter Ustinov**

Ludwig I, King of Bavaria  
**Anton Walbrook**

The Student  
**Oskar Werner**

Lieutenant Thomas James  
**Ivan Desny**

Franz Liszt  
**Will Quadflieg**

Horseman Maurice  
**Henry Guisol**

Mrs. Craigie, Lola's mother  
**Lise Delamare**

Circus Manager  
**Friedrich Domin**

Lieutenant James' Sister  
**Hélène Manson**

*Lola Montès* has been restored by La Cinémathèque Française in collaboration with Les Films du Jeudi, Les Films de la Pléiade, Marcel Ophuls, Thomson Foundation for Film and Television Heritage, The Franco-American Cultural Fund, DGA – MPAA – SACEM - WGA. With the sponsorship of L'Oréal and agnès b.; the support of Filmmuseum München, La Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, and La Cinémathèque de la Ville de Luxembourg; and the technical advice of François Ede.

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## SYNOPSIS

The camera tilts down past ornate chandeliers and a black-faced band to curtains that part to reveal the Ringmaster of the Mammoth Circus (Peter Ustinov), who then announces the most sensational act of the century—Lola Montes! As jugglers fling pins about and clowns enter, Lola (Martine Carol) is revealed enthroned, and her platform revolves as the Ringmaster invites the audience to ask questions, at 25 cents per: Where did you dance without a costume? How many lovers have you had? Do you remember the past? This cues the first flashback, to her affair with Franz Liszt (Will Quadflieg).

Together they ride in his luxurious coach across the Italian countryside, as her own coach proceeds behind, presumably as an escape hatch. And in fact they seem to be intending to end their affair, Lola remarking that life to her is movement. The next morning at their inn, she calls him back before leaving for a final kiss, imagining how they would meet again.

Leaving in her carriage segues into her leaving the floor of the circus in a carriage as the Ringmaster announces twelve *tableaux vivantes* depicting her life. Backstage, she receives medicine. As the Ringmaster rhapsodizes about her early family life, the second flashback begins.

She, her mother, and her mother's "friend," Lieutenant James (Ivan Desny), embark on a ship back to Britain from India in the wake of her father's death, Lola being relegated to the dormitory/steerage, while her mother has a cabin to herself.

In a private box at a Paris theater, Lola's mother begins negotiations on marrying her daughter to an elderly baron. Lola flees, followed by Lt. James. He confesses his interest, and she asks him to save her, to marry her.

As the Ringmaster talks about their happy married life, James returns, seemingly drunk, from a hunt; Lola accuses him of cheating on her. She tries to walk out, but he says he'll never let her go.

Back at the Circus, the Ringmaster speaks of Lola's dream of being a dancer, of how it is hard work, as she pirouettes through simple exercises, then skips through stagings of her triumphs, climaxed by her kidnapping by Cossacks. While her dalliance with an ambassador is staged behind a screen, the Ringmaster sings a song about her twelve attributes.

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Backstage, a doctor confers with the fully costumed and made-up clown, the circus's owner, about his concerns for Lola's health, noting that she has a weak heart. The clown is not terribly concerned.

Via flashback, Lola, amid an alfresco dance, humiliates a conductor, who had not told her he was married, to the applause of the crowd.

In the wake of the scandal with the conductor on the Riviera, the visits to her hotel mount up, including one from the Ringmaster himself. He offers her a contract with his circus, telling her that she can't dance, but that she can trigger a scandal and that a scandal means money—and in America there are no limits. She rejects his contract, and when he kisses her, tells him not to be foolish.

In the circus, the trapeze act begins, Lola mounting higher and higher, even as the net worth of her lovers, as narrated by the Ringmaster, escalates. As she waits at the top, it's clear that Lola is exhausted.

The Ringmaster now announces "Lola in Bavaria" and the final flashback begins. Amid snowy mountains, Lola's carriage has lost its way, and she asks directions of a student (Oskar Werner). He gets talked into her carriage—and Lola immediately sends her maid out to sit with the coachman.

At her hotel in Munich, Lola gets a letter from the Royal Theater accepting her request for an audition and immediately takes the more expensive room. But she doesn't get the job, and as she walks off dejectedly, is befriended by a mounted officer. It's clear that, at her behest, he has been trying for six weeks to get her an audience with King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Lola takes matters into her own hands, riding through the parade until stopped just short of the King by his guards. At her ensuing audience, the King (Anton Walbrook) expresses doubts about her figure, at which she tears open her bodice. The cry of "Needle and Thread!" echoes through the palace, and after the repairs, he tells her that she will be accepted by the theater.

From the royal box, the King watches her perform with great interest. In her dressing room, Lola gets an invitation to the Royal Box and she hurries off, but the King meets her halfway, on the now deserted stage. Amid the sets, music stands, and a swaying rope that dangles in the foreground of the shot, the King dismisses all the hangers-on.

The King announces that he wants a portrait to be painted -- of Lola. At the Academy, he picks the artist who will take the longest to complete the portrait. As the artist is working the painting, with Lola posing in winter gear in a sleigh, the kibitzing King suggests that they lose the cloak—sure to cause another delay.

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The Ringmaster, in rhymed couplets, announces that Lola has agreed to pose “in pink” and that the King had then given her a palace.

Workmen wrestle the large semi-nude portrait into her lavish palace as the King complains that the National Museum, Library, and Theater have refused to exhibit it. Lola advises him to fire a few people, ignore the rest, and close the University. Seeing an ear doctor for his deafness, the King is shown a pamphlet that apparently decries his relationship with Lola, immediately followed by a brief montage of printing more pamphlets and impassioned meetings.

Rocks crash through the glass roof of her palace. The King reassures Lola, saying that if they stop it's just a riot, but if they don't, then it's a revolution. But a nervous official arrives to tell him that he's got to go and to take leave of the lady.

Alone in her bedroom Lola nervously plays cards when noises cause her to run out through the basement of her palace. In a corridor, the Student finds her and, telling her she's saved the Royal house, takes her off in a carriage, accompanied by a guard of his student group. As they escape Munich, he declares his love, but Lola rejects him, declaring that she did love the King, and that was her last chance for a haven.

At the circus, the doctor demands that Lola must use a safety net for her jump and the owner agrees. But the Ringmaster has already announced that no net will be used; he ultimately leaves it up to her. She is silent and he has the net dropped, but tells her that he is terrified and couldn't live without her. She jumps.

In a cage she awaits an endless line of men paying a dollar to kiss her hand as the camera tracks back, and back ...

## PRODUCTION NOTES

*Lola Montès* was originally the idea of Gamma Films, a firm adept at raising money—albeit on credit—but with little production experience. Its heads were film salesmen and distributors, plus other assorted businessmen, including the head of a German brewery. The Swiss partners were brothers whose socialist father had been kicked out of Italy by Mussolini; a German partner had made business arrangements for the Nazis in France during the Occupation; and the head of French Gamma, Albert E. Caraco, was born in Constantinople but flew for the RAF during the war. Their setup of the *Lola Montès* production was in many ways a triumph of packaging, if not of actual producing, worthy of latter-day Hollywood.

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They began with Cécil Saint-Laurent, best-selling author of the “Caroline Chérie” series, mildly naughty historical novels, often filmed as star vehicles for Martine Carol, France’s reigning pre-Bardot sex kitten—and he submitted a first draft early in 1954. (Despite the eventual credit “Based on a novel by Cécil Saint-Laurent,” there was no original novel; Saint-Laurent published one ten years later, but it had nothing to do with the film.)

Gamma then searched for a director – prominent on their original wish list was Michael Powell of *Red Shoes* fame – but in the summer of 1954 they signed Max Ophuls, available in the wake of several fizzled projects following his 1953 *The Earrings of Madame De...* This was no dream project for Ophuls: “Lola Montes? That woman doesn’t interest me. It is the people who surround her that excite me. Her role is roughly the same as that of our pair of earrings in *Madame De...*” Ophuls totally rejected Saint-Laurent’s script, immediately writing his own with regular collaborators Annette Wademant and Jacques Natanson. The framing device of the circus was apparently present from the first draft.

In September 1954, Gamma then hired-superstar Martine Carol herself for the title role, while Ophuls was still writing the script. She was not his choice, but the casting immediately guaranteed full funding for the film, whose budget ballooned from two million Deutschmarks in 1954 to eight million through filming in 1955 (roughly two million dollars, the same as Ophuls’ 1947 Hollywood flop *The Exile*), making Lola the most expensive film made in postwar Europe to date. With the increased scope of the film, the producers determined to shoot in the then-new CinemaScope<sup>2</sup> and in three versions, French, German, and English. Although Ophuls disliked stereophonic sound and was suspicious of Cinemascope, he received carte blanche in the rest of the casting, a salary of two hundred four thousand marks—twice the top salary for German directors—and his regular crew: designer Jean d’Eaubonne, camera operator Alain Douarinou, and director of photography Christian Matras (who, luckily, was Carol’s own DP of choice).<sup>3</sup> As Ophuls noted to Truffaut, “J’aime les films chers!” – “I love expensive movies!”

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<sup>2</sup> CinemaScope, a trademark of 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox, is an anamorphic widescreen process invented by Henri Chrétien in the 1920s. Fox introduced it with its new name in 1953’s *The Robe*. *Lola Montès* has been restored to its original CinemaScope ratio of 2.55:1. (The narrower ratio of 2.35:1 later became the CinemaScope standard; prints made for *Lola*’s later reissues were subsequently cropped on the left and right of the screen.)

<sup>3</sup> There was one exception: Carol nixed costumer Georges Annenkov, who had trashed her in print (“Carol’s cute face is as impersonal as the new Soviet National Anthem”), then okayed him on condition that Marcel Escoffier, costumer on four earlier Carol films, would dress her, Annenkov everyone else.

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Shooting was delayed both because of extensive pre-production work, but also because Carol's previous film *Nana*, directed by her husband Christian-Jaque, went over schedule and didn't finish until January 1955. Principal photography for *Lola* began on March 1st in Paris and continued in France for thirty-four days, then resumed in Bavaria, beginning with the "Nadel und Faden!" (Needle and thread!) scene; the king's request after Lola's bodice ripping. This scene alone took four days: two at the Bavaria Studio in Munich, and two on location at Schloss Weißenstein.<sup>4</sup>

Five hundred costumed extras were required for the parade scene at the English Garden in Munich, but it wasn't sunny enough for the slow color stock of the time, and everyone had to be brought back on the next sunny day.

Fifty days into shooting, having crashed through its budget and fallen behind schedule, the production was already having major problems: the negative of the German version now belonged to a German bank; Martine Carol, whose fee was twice the director's, was kept waiting for her next check; Peter Ustinov, who, because of all the delays, only started work two days before his contract was due to expire, received a bounced check; and when Caraco arrived in Munich to negotiate with the French crew regarding overtime and expenses, their representative, camera operator Douarinou, a communist trade unionist, threatened a strike. The producers had already been showering Ophüls with registered letters and injunctions; suitably framed, they decorated the walls of his dressing room.

Finally, shooting was stopped, and after dramatic conferences with the producers at Munich's Four Seasons Hotel, Ophüls, under threat of firing and having to return his salary, agreed to film the circus scenes, all that remained, in twenty-four days.<sup>5</sup>

On June 28, filming in the circus began with the sweeping first shot of the movie, tilting down from the chandeliers past a band in blackface to the entrance of Ustinov's ringmaster, then tracking backwards ahead of him while curving

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<sup>4</sup> Situated in Pommersfelden, in Upper Franconia, south of Bamberg, the baroque *schloss* was built between 1711 and 1716, features an impressive staircase and is held in private hands.

<sup>5</sup> The Circus Brumbach, complete with staff and animals, was quartered on the grounds of the Munich studios for several months. It had been previously featured in Elia Kazan's *Man on a Tightrope* (1953). Its Big Top was deemed too small, and the resulting film set was the largest ever built at the studios, rising higher than the highest studio buildings, with room for 2000 people and four orchestras.

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through lines of jugglers, which would be two minutes of screen time. To conceal the tracks, 50 meters of packing cloth, the color of the arena floor, were unrolled by stagehands in the wake of the camera as it moved backwards—the resulting irregularity in the surface can be glimpsed by eagle-eyed viewers. Despite the urgency of the impending twenty-four day deadline, the first four hours of the day were wasted in a dispute over the makeup of the musicians, seen just for a few seconds in the shot; this first shot was only finally finished at the end of the day.

After five months, a hundred days of shooting, and on the twenty-fourth day in the circus, filming concluded at 4 a.m. on July 29, after 14 straight hours of filming all the scenes between the doctor and the clown-costumed circus director.

In Paris, Ophuls edited the three versions -- French, German, and English -- in three separate cutting rooms, with three editors, leaving several languages in each version, with subtitles in French and German for the German and French audiences respectively.<sup>6</sup> "The audience is expecting a cream cake but instead it gets a punch in the stomach!" Ophuls would write later.

At its French public premiere just before Christmas 1955, audiences got rowdy, with many demanding their money back, and even warning those waiting in line in the rain for the next show to avoid it. At a café across the street, Ophuls lamented to his son Marcel, then his assistant (and later the great documentarian, whose credits include *The Sorrow and the Pity*), "I didn't want to make an avant-garde movie. I have never tried to make an avant-garde movie. I wanted to make a commercial movie." Marcel suggested he had already made films considered masterpieces, but Ophuls replied "Yes, but you see, Zewen, I can never go back!"

The critics were equally harsh: "The aesthetics of gurgling and rumbling are blended with the aesthetics of whipped cream." "The style is heavily German, as a result of which the spectacle only feels long and boring." There were counter-attacks from the film intelligentsia, chief among them from François Truffaut, then a film critic (see page 14).

After the also unsuccessful Munich premiere, producer Caraco demanded that each language version be solely in that language, necessitating extensive re-dubbing; at that time anywhere from two to three, or five to six minutes were cut from the images, according to Marcel Ophuls, under the direction of his father, who in fact thought trimming was advisable in view of the disastrous premiere.

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<sup>6</sup> Despite some reports, this premiere version never ran 140 minutes.

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However, for the English version the producers demanded, against the director's wishes, a complete revamping, a version that dumped the flashback structure and put the whole story in chronological order, beginning with Lola's youth, was reduced down to ninety minutes, and re-titled *The Sins of Lola Montes*. Even worse, the existing French and German versions, okayed by Ophuls, were recut to conform with it. French editor Madeleine Gug resigned rather than participate. This third French version premiered in January 1957, when Ophuls was already in the Hamburg hospital where he would die in March.

In 1959, *Lola* finally premiered in New York. It ran 75 minutes, and began with the last shot of the original version, the track back through the long line of waiting men.

In the wake of these box office flops, Gamma went bankrupt. Pierre Braunberger, one of the great producers of the New Wave<sup>7</sup> obtained the rights in 1966 for his Les Films de la Pléiade and proceeded to buy up all the still-extant elements of the film. In 1967 and 1968, he began to reconstruct the film from its existing 90-minute version, combing European laboratories in search of the cuts made from the camera negative, eventually printing up an internegative from positive separations, with advice from Christian Matras, the director of photography. With the then state of film restoration, the results were not perfect, but Braunberger premiered this version, which ran 110 minutes, at his own theater in 1969, and in the U.S. at the 6<sup>th</sup> New York Film Festival that same year (It had also been shown at the very first NYFF in 1963<sup>8</sup>, in a sidebar of overlooked films, making *Lola* the first and only film ever to play the NYFF twice. Its presentation at the 2008 festival beats even that record: *Lola Montès* is the only film selected for the New York Film Festival three times. )

A commercial release across the U.S. followed in April 1969 – the first U.S. release version that approximated the director's cut. But, even with this loving reconstruction, *Lola Montès* had not recovered its original colors, format, or soundtrack, or its complete running time.

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<sup>7</sup> Braunberger's impressive list of producing credits included Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player*, Godard's *My Life to Live*, and Rivette's *Le coup du berger*. In the 1930s, he had produced Renoir's *A Day in the Country*.

<sup>8</sup> It was following the 1963 NYFF screening that Andrew Sarris called *Lola Montès* "the greatest film of all time." (see page 15)

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## **THE RESTORATION**

40 years later, film restoration had progressed drastically. Pierre Braunberger died in 1990, but, in 2006, his daughter Laurence, with aid from the Thomson Foundation, the Franco-American Cultural Fund, and the Cinémathèque Française, set out on a new quest of discovery. Amazingly, the original sound mix and “monochromes”<sup>9</sup> were found at Technicolor in Hollywood. Working from the incomplete original negative, a rough cut, and a very fragile, faded complete exhibition print, the elements were digitized at Technicolor Creative Services in Los Angeles, under the supervision of Tom Burton. Scratches, tears, dirt, poor splicing, and missing frames could then be repaired without additional wear to the original materials. Over the years, the now-defunct original CinemaScope format of 2.55:1 had been slimmed down to the now-more standard anamorphic ratio 2.35:1; this was corrected.

Four magnetic tracks taken from the first Cinemascope copies were re-synchronized to the picture in Dolby Digital. For the restoration of the color, one print was struck from the original, if shortened, negative, this serving as basic guideline; Max Ophuls’ own extensive notes specified color schemes for particular episodes and even contrasts and tones. The resulting digital files were transferred to negative film and printed normally. “Film remains the only media that guarantees perennial preservation”—François Ede.

## **THE REAL LOLA MONTES**

Lola Montès – or Montez -- was born Elizabeth (or Eliza) Rosanna Gilbert on February 17<sup>10</sup>, 1821 in Grange, County Sligo, Ireland. Her father was a British army ensign in the 25<sup>th</sup> Regiment who moved his family to India in 1823, and almost immediately died of cholera. Her then-19 year old mother remarried within a year, and “Betsy” was eventually sent back to Britain to school. Noted for her beauty, intelligence, propensity for mischief, and violent obstinacy, she attended three different schools before eloping with Lieutenant Thomas James at 16; five years later they separated in Calcutta, and Betsy returned to England, reportedly after a stopover in Spain, where she steeped herself in the local dances and adopted Lola Montez as her stage name.

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<sup>9</sup> Three different b&w negatives, each representing one of the film’s primary colors.

<sup>10</sup> She also claimed Feb. 14 as her birthday.

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Her sensational dancing debut on June 3, 1843 at Her Majesty's Theatre (Wellington and the Queen-Dowager attended) was interrupted when a Lord Ranelagh bellowed out from the audience that the exotic Lola Montez was really the prosaic Betsy James. She fled from the resulting scandal to the Continent, where she became famous and had an affair with the phenomenally popular composer/pianist Franz Liszt. In 1846 she arrived in Munich and soon became the mistress of the 60-year-old King Ludwig I, who made her Countess of Landsfeld in 1847. Her encouragement of his liberalizing tendencies prompted a popular revolt – a rare reactionary one amid the populist, left wing revolutions that swept across Europe in 1848. Lola showed great personal courage, at one point emerging onto a balcony above a rioting crowd to toast them in champagne, but she was ultimately forced to flee, with Ludwig abdicating a month later.

Returning to London in 1848, she married a cavalry officer but had to flee the country amid accusations of bigamy (there were questions regarding her divorce from Lt. James). In 1851, Lola set out alone for the U.S. and made a very successful fresh start as a dancer and actress. In 1853, she married a San Francisco newspaperman; that marriage failed and she lived alone in a little cottage in Grass Valley, California (now a historical landmark) for two years. Beginning in 1855, she toured Australia, first in a burlesque called "Lola Montez in Bavaria," and then creating a sensation with her Spider (or Tarantula) Dance:<sup>11</sup> Miners showered the stage with gold nuggets. Enraged by a bad review in the *Ballarat Times*, she horsewhipped the editor in public. Back in America, she gave lecture tours and published *The Arts of Beauty and Lectures* (1858), the latter containing an autobiography. On June 30, 1860, she suffered a stroke and thereafter walked with a slight limp. She turned to religion, contracted pneumonia, and died in near-poverty on January 17, 1861. Lola Montez is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn. Her unkempt grave is marked "Mrs. Eliza Gilbert, D. Age 42."

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<sup>11</sup> The conceit was that she was shaking an arachnid out of her clothes.

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## WHAT CRITICS HAVE SAID ABOUT *LOLA MONTES*...

"From first moment to last, *Lola Montes* is a treasure for the eye, abundant, exciting in its abundance, rich in what Ophuls includes and in the way he handles it. It is Ophuls' gift for selecting the right element of decor, for layering every scene with planes of detail ('Details make art,' he said) so that the characters are always moving through a world that just happens to tell us something relevant or characteristic about itself at the moment they pass. **Superb: there is not a flaw in the *mise en scene*, not a dull frame for the eye.**" - Stanley Kauffmann, *The New Republic*

"The last and **most spectacularly impressive work of the brilliant director Max Ophuls**. An Ophuls film is always visually delightful to watch, but *Lola Montes* exceeded all expectations in the constant succession of overwhelmingly lovely images. So much 'beauty,' using the term in its most traditional and unambivalent sense, was crammed into the movie that it almost became painful to watch. It may well be **the most beautiful color CinemaScope movie ever made. Ophuls uses color with a dazzling, kaleidoscopic imagination**, and manipulates the CinemaScope screen so that it becomes alternatively larger, more spacious than it has ever seemed before, and capable of confining the most intimate love scenes. The film unrolls in a dreamily fluid manner, carried along by Ophuls's smooth, stately tracking and crane shots, and his breathtaking use of dissolves." - Phillip Lopate

"**Ophuls' masterpiece**. Every frame of the CinemaScope screen is crammed. Much motion; deep browns and reds and purples; subdued points of light; the Ophuls wealth of detail in the Ophuls flux. The film whirls. There is vertigo for us from camera movement and from midgets dangling off high wires as if they were on butchers' hooks, and dizziness for Lola, because of the indifference between the striking morsels of gossip that the public is badgering her for and the past that is still alive in her. Some directors make film authorship seem very difficult. Others, like Jean Renoir and Ophuls, make it look like play -- something they do to enjoy themselves. The fluency of Ophuls' style is balm. The story of his Lola is transformed by his easy command into something quite at odds with fan-magazine facts of the narrative. Because of Ophuls' beneficent style, ***Lola Montes* is majestic and complex. There is a sense that something unique is being glimpsed in the apparently commonplace** and this is nearly as reviving and moving as the response of Mozart to da Ponte's *Così fan Tutte*." - Penelope Gilliatt, *The New Yorker*

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**“An extraordinary movie...** It is not only Ophuls's last film...but it is also an eye-expanding summation of the lush, romantic style... **A visibly dazzling ironic commentary on celebrity.**” -- Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*

“One of the signs of a great director is his ability to sustain a consistent tone throughout a film. Max Ophuls was such a director, and his *Lola Montes* has as much unity of tone as any film I can remember. It is all of a piece from beginning to end: The mood, the music, the remarkably fluid camera movement, the sets, the costumes. It is a director's film. The actors are in Ophuls' complete control, an additional element in his examination of the romantic myth... The device of the circus is as successful as it is daring. Using it to supply his narrative thread, Ophuls slides through a series of flashbacks with as much ease, and psychological completeness, as Welles exhibited in *Citizen Kane*. The structure of the film is terribly artificial -- flashbacks suspended from a fantasy circus -- and the style itself is a highly mannered romanticism. But it works; Ophuls understands and justifies his method.” – Roger Ebert

“A biography of the celebrated 19th century adventuress, but not a biography in the conventional sense: the lady's life is chronicled in a highly selective series of flashbacks, framed by scenes in a New Orleans circus where she allows herself to be put on show to a vulgar and impressionable public. The space between her memories and her circus appearance is the distance between romantic dreams and tawdry reality, or between love and the knowledge that love dies. Ophuls conjures that space into life - indeed, makes it the very subject of his film - by means of the most sumptuous stylistic effects imaginable: compositions unmatched in their fluidity, moving-camerawork that blurs the line between motion and emotion. If ever a director 'wrote' with his camera, it was Ophuls, and this still looks like his most sublime work.” – Tony Rayns, *Time Out* (London)

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## TRUFFAUT ON *LOLA MONTES*

*Responding to negative criticism against Lola Montès, 23-year old film critic François Truffaut wrote a lengthy counter-attack, excerpted here<sup>12</sup> :*

The cinematographic year now ending [1955] has been the richest and most stimulating since 1946. It opened with Fellini's *La Strada*, and its apotheosis is Max Ophuls' *Lola Montès*.

Like the heroine of its title, the film may provoke a scandal and arouse passions. If we must fight, we shall; if we must polemicize, so be it.

It is whole cinema that must be defended today, a cinema of *auteurs* which is also a visual pleasure, a cinema of ideas where inventiveness informs each image, a cinema that does not borrow from the prewar period, a cinema that breaks new paths too long forbidden.

...The way the narrative is constructed, the way it hurries the chronology, reminds us of *Citizen Kane*, though now we have the benefits of CinemaScope, a process here used to the maximum of its potential for the first time...The structure is new as well as daring; it could well confuse the viewer who lets himself become distracted or who comes in the middle. Too bad. There are films that demand undivided attention. *Lola Montès* is one of them.

The film is constructed rigorously; if it throws some viewers off, it's because for fifty years most films have been narrated in an infantile way. From this point of view, *Lola Montès* is not only like *Citizen Kane*, but also *The Barefoot Contessa*, *Les Mauvaises Recettes*, and all those films that turn chronology around for poetic effect.

The result is less a matter of following a story than contemplating a portrait of a woman. The image is too full and too rich to see it all at once. The author clearly intends it that way, going so far as to listen to several conversations at once. Clearly, Ophuls is interested less in the strong moments of intrigue than in what occurs *in between* them. The story that we grasp in scraps—what we perceive of it helps us to reconstitute the rest as in real life—is brilliantly laconic. The characters do not sum up situations with elegant formulas; when they suffer, it is seen, not articulated. Surely this is the most intelligent and precise dialogue heard in a French film since Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite*

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<sup>12</sup>The complete essay is reprinted in *The Films in My Life* (1975, Simon & Schuster), a collection of Truffaut's film writing.

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## ANDREW SARRIS ON *LOLA MONTES*

*Perhaps the greatest champion of *Lola Montès* has been the legendary American critic Andrew Sarris, who saw it at the first New York Film Festival in 1963. It was then that he wrote:*

**"*Lola Montès* is in my unhumble opinion the greatest film of all time, and I am willing to stake my critical reputation, such as it is, on this one proposition above all others."**

*When the Braunberger restoration of *Lola Montès* was released here in April 1969, Sarris again wrote about the film in his weekly Village Voice column:*

Back in 1962, I hailed *Lola Montès* as the greatest film of all time, and I stand by that judgment...This culminates a crusade I have been waging for the past six years through two New York Film Festivals. And now, as the big moment approaches, I find it will take me two or three weeks and several more viewings to write an adequate critique... ***Lola* is probably the single most important experience of my critical life, the one film more than any other that has shaped my aesthetic...** *Lola* is nothing if not pleasurable. I have been told by authorities in the field that it even fits into the pot [marijuana] scene as it swirls and swoops through space with its delirious director's camera. **No matter, *Lola Montès* is clearly the film of the year, or any year.**"

*In his landmark book The American Cinema, Sarris placed Ophüls in his rarified Pantheon of greatest directors, despite the fact that Ophüls made only three films in Hollywood.*

## MOLLY HASKELL ON *LOLA MONTES*

*Critic/author Molly Haskell has been married to Andrew Sarris for 38 years.*

**"I think if I hadn't liked *Lola Montès*, our relationship might have been over."**

# LOLA MONTES

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## MAX OPHULS

Max Oppenheimer was born in 1902 in Saarbrücken, Germany, near the French border. His wealthy Jewish family owned a major department store in the town. Stage-struck early on, he began writing theater reviews in 1920, and thought of performing in the circus or music halls. But determining to become a stage actor – thinking of beautiful girls waiting at the stage door, he later said—he began in regional repertory theaters at 18, taking the stage name Ophuls to avoid embarrassment to his bourgeois family. Only cast in small parts, he was so apparently untalented that in 1923 the manager of the Dortmund Theatre demanded that he double as a director or take a pay cut. He soon dropped acting and reportedly directed 200 plays at Dortmund, staging operettas at other theaters. In 1926, he became one of the youngest directors hired by the prestigious Burgtheater in Vienna, also directing the classics in Frankfurt and Breslau. In 1930, while staging political plays in Berlin, he was asked to be dialogue director on Anatole Litvak's *Nie Wieder Liebe*, then being filmed in French and German.

Springboarding from his success there, he directed his first film *Rather Cod Liver Oil (Dann schon lieber Lebertran)*, a forty minute fantasy, reportedly grabbing the original novel from the studio library just ahead of Billy Wilder. The full-length *The Company in Love (Die Vierliebte Firma)*, a comedy about movie people, followed in 1932. He then filmed Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, with the great clown Karl Valentin as a circus director. A Czech village was built near Munich and Ophuls integrated the songs into the action as recitative, turning it into an anarchic celebration of *artistes* versus squares—an all too little known minor classic.

After an obscure musical, *The Happy Heirs (Die Lachende Erben)*, Ophuls achieved his first acknowledged major success, an adaptation of Artur Schnitzler's *Liebele*, which starred Wolfgang Liebeneiner and Magda Schneider (mother of Romy). Highlights included a sleigh ride through snowy woods; the camera circling counterclockwise around dancers who revolve in the opposite direction; and the finale, with the camera tracking through the now empty apartment.

This was 1933, and Ophuls and his family left Hitler's Germany for Paris, where he immediately directed a French version of *Liebele*, re-shooting only the close-ups and dubbing the rest into French.

After a routine mystery story, Ophuls was invited to Italy to make *La Signora di tutti* (1934). Beginning with movie star Isa Miranda on the operating table after a

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suicide attempt, the (multiple) flashbacks unreel, as Miranda brings catastrophe to everyone around her. Melodramatic, but critic Claude Beylie called it “the most musical of Ophuls’ films.”

Back in France, Ophuls made *Divine* (1935), from a scenario by Colette, a slight tale of a country girl dancer in Paris, who becomes involved with a (literal) snake charmer but returns home wiser. François Truffaut later called it “a little masterpiece, a real little Renoir,” but at the time Ophuls called it his biggest flop.

Ophuls made *Komedie om geld* in Holland, a satirical comedy about a bank clerk’s financial shenanigans, complete with a Brechtian street singer framing device, an almost unseen but quite funny work.

Back in France in 1936, in *La tendre ennemie*, flashbacks again told the story, here of a woman, thwarted from marrying the man she loved, who makes both husband and lover pay, but is prevented by their ghosts from railroading her daughter into a similarly unwanted marriage. Later that same year, Ophuls was offered a contract in the Soviet Union, but after a two-month visit, at the height of Stalin’s purges, returned to France.

*Yoshiwara*, a triangle story among a Russian naval officer, a geisha, and Sessue Hayakawa’s rickshaw driver; and an adaptation of Goethe’s *Werther*; were both unsuccessful. But despite its slight story—stripper sacrifices herself for love—*Sans Lendemain*, with Edwige Feuillère, was well received. Ophuls’ last prewar film in France was *De Mayerling à Sarajevo*, with John Loder and Feuillère as Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Czech countess he married despite imperial opposition. Filmed less than thirty years after the actual events, it achieves a documentary quality in the Sarajevo assassinations finale, with the hunting scene between Loder and Jean Worms’s emperor a further highlight.

As France fell in 1940, Ophuls and his family fled to Switzerland, where he directed several plays but could not get film work; and in 1941 they moved to Hollywood.

For four years he couldn’t get work, living on loans from working European colleagues, then, aided by Preston Sturges, was assigned *Vendetta*—but unfortunately, its producer was Howard Hughes and it became one of Hollywood’s most legendarily misbegotten projects, Ophuls becoming one of numerous directors fired from it. Presumably, he at least got paid.

In 1947, aided by friend Robert Siodmak, he was hired by Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. for his *The Exile*, with Fairbanks as Charles II, exiled from England to the Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: unsung, but an enjoyable and ultimately touching work, with Ophuls wresting an actual performance from guest star Maria Montez.

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*Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), an adaptation of a Stefan Zweig novella, was dumped by the studio, but is now regarded as a classic. Joan Fontaine, in a tour de force performance ranging from tremulous youth to disappointed invalidism, loves and is left by pianist Louis Jourdan, then romantically meets him again, but when he receives her last letter years later finds he cannot remember her.

In *Caught* (1949), Ophuls got his revenge on Howard Hughes in Robert Ryan's searing portrait of a loathsome zillionaire whose wife, Barbara Bel Geddes, must be rescued by doctor James Mason. Mason returned in *The Reckless Moment* (1949) as the surprisingly golden-hearted blackmailer of Joan Bennett. At this time, Mason wrote a poem about Ophuls' proclivity for moving shots, beginning, "A shot that does not call for tracks/ is agony for poor old Max."<sup>13</sup>

An adaptation of Balzac's *The Duchess of Langeais*, to have starred Greta Garbo in her comeback, was aborted when the star eventually balked. Ophuls now began his most successful and best remembered run of films. Adapting a play by his much-admired Schnitzler, *La Ronde* (1950) featured eleven stars—including Simone Signoret, Danielle Darrieux, Gérard Philipe, Anton Walbrook, et al. -- in a sexual roundelay in turn-of-the-century Vienna. The result was a resounding international hit, and Ophuls would film with the same technical crew for the rest of his life.

*Le Plaisir* (1952) adapted three de Maupassant stories, with a starry cast including Jean Gabin, Danielle Darrieux, and Simone Simon and Ophuls' camera circling but never entering the elaborately-built Maison Tellier.

*The Earrings of Madame de...* (1953) move from Charles Boyer to extravagant wife Danielle Darrieux back to a jeweler for cash, who then sells them back to Boyer who gives them as a farewell to his mistress ... ending up with Darrieux's diplomat lover Vittorio de Sica, who gives them to Darrieux—with tragic consequences for all concerned. "The performances by Boyer, Darrieux, and de Sica are quite likely the finest each has given." — Pauline Kael.

*Lola Montes* was his first color film and his most lavish production ever. After its disastrous reception, he was in Hamburg to direct an opera when the heart disease from which he had long suffered flared up. He entered a clinic, where he died in March 1957.

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<sup>13</sup> The rest of Mason's poem goes, "...Who, separated from his dolly/Is wrapped in deepest melancholy./Once, when they took away his crane,/I thought he'd never smile again."

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No major director has wandered further than Ophuls, filming in five languages, moving from great successes to the ashcan and back again, with an oeuvre that, taken overall, remains the most unseen on the usual revival and institutional circuits. His romanticism, his delving into the intricacies of seemingly trivial love affairs, his sweeping camera movements, the lack of “serious” themes, his primary interest in the visual and the non-verbal have divided critics, but his advocates have been much more passionate than his detractors. As Roy Armes has noted, “For those whose concern is purely visual and whose ideal is an abstract symphony of images, Ophuls has the status of one of the very great directors.”

His son Marcel (born 1927) is the great documentarist, whose films include *Hotel Terminus* and *The Sorrow and the Pity*.

## MARTINE CAROL (Lola)

Martine Carol was born Maryse Louise Mourer on May 16, 1920 in Saint-Mandé, France. After studying acting with renowned teacher René Simon, she made her stage debut in 1940 and her film debut the following year, first making an impact in *La ferme aux loups/Wolf Farm* in 1943. Throughout she remained mostly a supporting actress, renowned more for being a pinup favorite and for being kidnapped, briefly, by France’s then public enemy number one -- Pierre Lourel, aka “Pierrot le fou”<sup>14</sup> (“Crazy Pete”), who apologized with a rose the next day.

In the wake of a torrid, doomed affair with married actor Georges Marchal, she drunkenly hurled herself into the Seine, then was saved by the cabbie who had driven there. Ironically, her suicide attempt became a great career move, with her popularity/notoriety skyrocketing in the wake of scandal; and in 1950 she began the series of sexy roles, featuring eye-opening-for-the-50s semi-nudity, that would make her France’s highest paid actress and its top sex siren pre-Bardot: Caroline Cherie, Lucretia Borgia, Madame du Barry, Nana -- most of them directed by her eventual second husband, Christian-Jaque. But aside from such vehicles, she also worked with André Cayatte (*The Lovers of Verona*), René Clair (*Les Belles de la Nuit*), Sacha Guitry (*Si Versailles m’était conté*), Preston Sturges (*Les carnets de Major Thompson*),<sup>15</sup> Robert Aldrich (*Ten Seconds to Hell*), Abel Gance (*Austerlitz*), and Roberto Rossellini (*Vanina Vanini*), and had one of the many star cameos in *Around the World in 80 Days*. When Brigitte Bardot ascended to the throne as France’s preeminent sex kitten in the mid-50s, Carol moved to more mature roles and became reclusive. Her fourth

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<sup>14</sup> Godard’s 1965 film of that title has little or nothing to do with the real Pierrot.

<sup>15</sup> Made in 1955, *The Notebooks of Major Thompson*, in which Carol co-starred with British variety star Jack Buchanan, was Sturges’ final film as director and screenwriter.

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husband discovered her body in the bathroom of their hotel room in Monaco on February 6, 1967; she had died of a heart attack, age 46 – only four years older than Lola at the time of her death.

## PETER USTINOV (Ringmaster)

Peter von Ustinov was born April 16, 1921 in London, the son of a former flier for the German air corps in World War I (who would work for Britain's MI5 during WWII). His mother Nadia Benois was an artist who worked for the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg; her brother Alexandre was the designer for Diaghilev's Ballet Russe. Overall he was of Russian, German, French, Italian and Ethiopian descent and was fluent in French, German, English, Italian, Russian and Spanish and could pass in Turkish and Greek. When asked in what language he dreamt, his instant reply was "in the abstract."

He debuted on stage in 1938 and on film in 1940, and, after playing a Dutch priest in Michael Powell's *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, joined the army as a private. At one point Colonel David Niven's batman, he mostly served in the Army Cinema Unit, co-writing the screenplay for Carol Reed's *The Way Ahead*. Immediately after the war, he wrote and directed three films (*School for Secrets*, *Vice Versa*, *Private Angelo*) with mixed results, but in the early 50s his play *The Love of Four Colonels* was an award-winning smash in New York and London and, in Hollywood, he stole *Quo Vadis?* outright as Nero, garnering his first Oscar nomination. In 1956 his play *Romanoff and Juliet* was another transatlantic hit (he would direct and star in a film version in 1961) and he began appearing on U.S. talk and variety shows—he was a legendary raconteur and recorded comedy albums as well. He won his first Supporting Actor Oscar for Kubrick's *Spartacus* in 1960—but then he wrote most of his own lines—and his second for his sly, clumsy rogue in Jules Dassin's caper film *Topkapi*, in 1964. In between, in a labor of love, he wrote, starred in, and directed a film adaptation of Melville's *Billy Budd*, with Terrence Stamp in the title role. Later, he directed *Lady L* (1965), with Sophia Loren; was nominated for a screenplay Oscar for *Hot Millions* (1968), a vastly underrated comedy with Maggie Smith; played Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot six times in films and on TV; and over the years won three Emmies, for playing Dr. Samuel Johnson on *Omnibus* (1958), for his Socrates in *Barefoot in Athens* (1967), and for *A Storm in Summer* (1970).

In the latter part of his life, acting came second to his role as Good Will Ambassador for UNICEF; he also wrote and appeared in documentaries, notably the 1986 miniseries *Russia*.

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On October 31, 1984, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was approaching Ustinov and a TV crew waiting to interview her in her garden when she was shot to death by her bodyguards. His second wife was French actress Suzanne Cloutier, Desdemona in Welles' *Othello*. Ustinov was awarded the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1975 and was knighted in 1990. He died at his home in Switzerland on March 28, 2004.

## ANTON WALBROOK (King Ludwig I)

Born Adolf Wohlbrück in Vienna on November 19, 1896, into a family that had been clowns for 300 years (or ten generations) – but Walbrook preferred the stage. Trained by Max Reinhardt, he starred on the German and Austrian stages and appeared in a few silent films, but achieved screen stardom in talkies. In 1933, he played Johann Strauss in *The Waltz War*, starred in the original *Viktor und Viktoria* (in the role played by James Garner 50 years later), and had an international hit in 1934 with *Maskerade*. In 1936 he played in both the French and German versions of Jules Verne's *Michel Strogoff*, then went to Hollywood for the English-language remake, *The Soldier and the Lady*.

A Jewish homosexual, Walbrook decided not to go back to Hitler's Germany and settled in England, where, on screen, he twice played Prince Albert to Anna Neagle's Queen Victoria, starred in the original *Gaslight* in 1940 with Diana Wynward, and had his biggest success with *Dangerous Moonlight*—it introduced the “Warsaw Concerto.” In 1943, he began an association with Michael Powell, playing the head of the Hutterite community in *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, and, in a role written for him, the hero's German friend in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. In 1947, he played the domineering impresario in *The Red Shoes*, his emotional speech before the curtain at the conclusion done reportedly in one take. In France, he played the Master of Ceremonies in Ophuls' smash *Le Ronde*, a role not in the original Schnitzler play.

In 1955, he appeared in two legendary flops: *Oh Rosalinda!*, Powell's version of “Die Fleidermaus,” and of course, Ophuls' *Lola Montes*. After Preminger's *Saint Joan*, as Cauchon, and *I Accuse*, as Major Esterhazy, the actual spy in the Dreyfus case—definitive as a charming, shameless rotter—he stuck to stage appearances. He died in Germany of a heart attack on August 9, 1967.

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## **OSKAR WERNER (the Student)**

Born in Vienna on November 13, 1922 as Oskar Bschießmayer (imagine *that* on a marquee), Werner was stage-struck from an early age and dropped out of school to pursue acting, getting bit parts in several pre-war films thanks to an uncle in the business, and becoming the youngest actor to be offered membership in the prestigious Burgtheater up to that time, debuting in 1941—and being renamed Werner. A lifelong pacifist—and eventually married to a half-Jewish actress—he avoided military service, and when finally drafted, either immediately deserted, or was relegated to KP duty by feigning stupidity. After the war, he played a succession of classical roles at the Burgtheatre, not only the romantic leads for which his beautifully musical voice and image of Byronic waif uniquely fitted him, but a wide range of character parts as well. After he achieved film stardom, he noted "I am married to the theatre, and the films are only my mistress". In *Eroica* (1949), he played Beethoven's unfortunate nephew; in *The Angel with a Trumpet*, he was one of the few cast members to play in both the English and German versions. *Decision before Dawn*, made by Fox in Europe in 1951, cast him as an anti-Hitler German soldier and promised Hollywood stardom, but the studio let him down and he eschewed films for years, playing his renowned Hamlet for the first time in 1952. In 1955 he had a heroic cameo in Pabst's *The Last Ten Days* (in Hitler's bunker), starred as Mozart, and played the Student in *Lola Montes*. It was 7 years before he filmed again, in the interim launching his own troupe, the Theatre Ensemble Oskar Werner; but in 1962 he appeared as one-half of the title roles in Truffaut's *Jules and Jim*, to worldwide acclaim. After a few years, Hollywood stardom did follow: he was Oscar-nominated for *Ship of Fools* (featuring one of the greatest death scenes in the history of film); and also appeared in *The Spy who came in from the Cold*, Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (on which they quarreled bitterly), and *The Shoes of the Fisherman*. His later years were impaired by growing alcoholism, and, in the last 16 years of his life, he only appeared on screen in *Voyage of the Damned* and an episode of tv's *Columbo*, while constantly touring with his one-man show of readings. He died in Germany of a heart attack on October 12, 1984.

## **IVAN DESNY (Lt. Thomas James)**

(1922-2002) Born as Ivan Nikolai Desnitskij to White Russian parents in exile in Peking, China, Desny appeared in nearly 200 films and TV programs in a multiplicity of languages, mostly in German. His first significant role, however, was eminently English, as Ann Todd's doomed lover in David Lean's *Madeleine* in 1950. He later appeared in Antonioni's *Lady without Camelias*, and, after playing Lola Montes' first husband, appeared in two films about Anastasia in the same year, 1956: in German opposite Lilli Palmer, and in English opposite Ingrid

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Bergman—albeit in different roles. Later, he spanned the range of the cinema by appearing several times on the television series *Disneyland*, while also becoming a member of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's stock company, appearing in Berlin *Alexanderplatz*, *Lola*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, and *World on Wires*.

## **CHRISTIAN MATRAS (Director of Photography)**

Matras (1903-1977) began as a newsreel cameraman, graduating to features in the early 30s, shooting Duvivier's *End of the Day*, Gance's *Paradis perdu* and Renoir's *Grand Illusion* before the war. In 1945 he began a ten year, 13-film collaboration with Christian-Jaque, from *Boule de Suif* to *Nana* in 1955, including all the Martine Carol vehicles and *Fanfan le Tulipe*. He also filmed all of Ophuls' post-war French films: *La Ronde*, *Le Plaisir*, *The Earrings of Madame de...*, and *Lola Montès*. In the course of a forty year career—he last filmed in 1971—he also worked with Cocteau, Luis Buñuel (*The Milky Way*), Clouzot, Clair, Preston Sturges (*The Notebooks of Major Thompson*), and novelist Romain Gary.

## **JEAN D'EAUBONNE (Production Designer)**

D'Eaubonne (1903-1971) debuted as art director on Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet* (1930). His credits, as art director or production designer, include Cocteau's *Orphée*, Jacques Becker's *Touchez pas au Grisbi*, Nicholas Ray's *Bitter Victory*, Vincente Minnelli's *The Reluctant Debutante*, and Stanley Donen's *Charade*. For Ophuls, he designed *From Mayerling to Sarajevo* in 1940 and all of the director's post-war French films, earning an Oscar nomination for his work on *La Ronde*.

## **GEORGES ANNENKOV (Costumes)**

(1889-1974) Born in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Russia, while his father was in Siberian exile courtesy of the Czar (his great uncle had been Pushkin's publisher), Annenkov studied to be an artist, an early classmate being Marc Chagall. Before WWI he spent two years in Paris, and during the war designed for the stage (where he met Peter Ustinov's uncle Alexandre Benois) and illustrated books, notably Alexander Blok's "The Twelve." In the early 20s, he also staged massive street shows and became a well-known portraitist. Settling in Paris in 1924, he designed sets for ballet directors Leonide Massine and Georges Balanchine. His film career began with costume designs for Murnau's *Faust* in 1926; among his other costume credits are *The Charterhouse of Parma*, *La Symphonie Pastorale*, and all of Ophuls' post-war French films, garnering an Oscar nomination for *The Earring of Madame De...* His artwork can be found in museums and galleries around the world.

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## JACQUES NATANSON (Co-screenplay)

(1901-1975) Originally a playwright, Natanson's plays were adapted for the screen as early as 1929. During the 30s, he wrote numerous scripts (notably *From Mayerling to Sarajevo* for Ophuls) and directed several—but not from his own scripts. He co-wrote all of Ophuls' post-war French films, sharing an Oscar nomination with the director for *La Ronde*.

## CECIL ST. LAURENT (story)

(1919-2000) Born Jacques Laurent, he wrote mildly naughty historical novels like the "Caroline Chérie" series, and was a prolific screenwriter. As Jacques Laurent, he belonged to the literary group the Hussards and wrote serious novels and essays, published in reviews like *La Parisienne* and *Arte*—in the latter, François Truffaut first became famous for his volcanic reviews, including his advocacy of *Lola Montès*. Laurent was elected to the Académie Française in 1986.

## GEORGES AURIC (Composer)

Born in 1899 in the Languedoc area of France, Auric was a musical child prodigy whose work was first published at age 15 and scored ballets and stage productions before he was 20. One of a group mentored by the older Erik Satie (later dubbed "Les Six" by others, it included Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Arthur Honegger), he also worked with Jean Cocteau, for whom he wrote the music for *Blood of a Poet*, his first film score. Auric would eventually score all of Cocteau's films, up to *Le Testament d'Orphée* in 1958. In 1945 he crossed the Channel to score *Dead of Night* for Ealing Studios, eventually becoming identified with Ealing Comedy via *Passport to Pimlico*, *The Lavender Hill Mob*, and *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, as well as *Hue and Cry* and *It Always Rains on Sunday* (re-released by Rialto Pictures in 2008). Other notable scores include those for René Clair's *A nous la liberté*, Wyler's *Roman Holiday*, Jules Dassin's *Rififi*, Ophuls' *Lola Montès*, Preminger's *Bonjour Tristesse*, Clouzot's *The Wages of Fear*, and John Huston's *Moulin Rouge* (with its Auric-penned theme song "Where is Your Heart?" cracking the Hit Parade). For a film composer with this incredible range, his reputation is remarkably low-profile, perhaps because of his subtlety and general lightness of tone. But he could also unleash the thunderousness of *The Mystery of Picasso*, and the low-key creepiness of *The Innocents*. In 1962, Auric semi-retired to become director of the Paris Opera and later the chairman of SACEM, the French ASCAP. He died in 1983.

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## ABOUT RIALTO PICTURES

Described as “the gold standard of reissue distributors” by Los Angeles Times/NPR film critic Kenneth Turan, Rialto Pictures was founded in 1997 by Bruce Goldstein. A year later, Adrienne Halpern joined him as partner. In 2002, Eric Di Bernardo became the company’s National Sales Director.

Rialto’s past releases have included Renoir’s *Grand Illusion*; Carol Reed’s *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol*; Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria*; Jules Dassin’s *Rififi*; De Sica’s *Umberto D*; Godard’s *Contempt*, *Band of Outsiders*, *Masculine Feminine*, *A Woman is a Woman* and *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*; Julien Duvivier’s *Pépé le Moko*; Buñuel’s *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Phantom of Liberty*, *The Milky Way* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*; Claude Berri’s *The Two of Us* (and his Oscar-winning short *Le Poulet*); Louis Malle’s *Elevator to the Gallows*; John Schlesinger’s *Billy Liar*; Clouzot’s *Quai des Orfèvres*; Mike Nichols’ *The Graduate*; The Maysles’ *Grey Gardens*; Mel Brooks’ *The Producers*; Claude Sautet’s *Classe Tous Risques*; Jacques Becker’s *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi*; Bresson’s *Au Hasard Balthazar* and *Mouchette*; Franju’s *Eyes Without A Face*; and Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Bob le Flambeur* and *Le Cercle Rouge*, the latter released for the first time in its uncut European version.

In 2002, the company released the critically-acclaimed first-run film *Murderous Maids*, the chilling true story of two homicidal sisters, starring Sylvie Testud.

Rialto celebrated a record-breaking 2004 with the previously unreleased, original 1954 Japanese version of Ishiro Honda’s *Godzilla*; Peter Davis’s Oscar-winning and newly-restored 1974 documentary *Hearts and Minds*; and Gillo Pontecorvo’s groundbreaking *The Battle of Algiers*, which became one of the year’s top-grossing foreign films.

In 2006, Rialto released Melville’s 1969 epic masterpiece *Army of Shadows* for the very first time in the United States. *Army of Shadows* became the most critically acclaimed film of the year, topping many Ten Best lists, including those in *The New York Times* and *Premiere*, and was named Best Foreign Film of 2006 by the New York Film Critics’ Circle, in addition to receiving special awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics and National Film Critics associations.

Rialto’s re-release of Alberto Lattuada’s 1962 *Mafioso*, a black comedy starring Alberto Sordi, was the unqualified highlight of the 2006 New York Film Festival.

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2007 re-releases included Melville's *Le Doulos*, starring Jean-Paul Belmondo, and Jean-Jacques Beineix's "second wave" thriller *Diva*.

In 1999, Rialto received a special Heritage Award from the National Society of Film Critics, and in 2000 received a special award (in honor of the re-release of *Rififi*) from the New York Film Critics Circle, presented to Goldstein and Halpern by Jeanne Moreau; their second NY Film Critics Circle honor came in 2006, for the release of Melville's *Army of Shadows*. The two co-presidents have each received the French Order of Chevalier of Arts and Letters.

2007 marked Rialto's tenth anniversary, a milestone that was celebrated with a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Similar tributes were held at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York; the AFI Silver Theater in Washington, D.C.; and the SIFF Theater in Seattle.

Rialto is currently enjoying a phenomenal success with Alain Resnais's 1962 arthouse classic *Last Year at Marienbad*, which is creating the same kind of buzz it had over 45 years ago. This year, the company has also released Robert Hamer's rediscovered masterwork of "Brit Noir," *It Always Rains on Sunday* and undertook their second hugely successful reissue of Godard's *Contempt*.

## "TEN YEARS OF RIALTO PICTURES"

### DVD BOX SET TO BE RELEASED OCT. 28 BY CRITERION

In honor of the company's anniversary, The Criterion Collection is issuing a special gift box set (street date: October 28, 2008) containing ten films displaying the breadth of Rialto's collection, including *Army of Shadows*, *Band of Outsiders*, *Au Hasard Balthazar*, *Rififi*, and *The Third Man*.

**Press contact (Rialto box set only): Brian Carmody, (212) 685-4144**

### RIALTO PICTURES RELEASES

#### 2008

**LOLA MONTES  
LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD  
IT ALWAYS RAINS ON SUNDAY  
CONTEMPT**

#### 2007

**MAFIOSO  
LE DOULOS  
DIVA**

#### 2006

**ARMY OF SHADOWS  
THE FALLEN IDOL  
FANFAN LA TULIPE  
TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER**

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- 2005**            **MASCULINE FEMININE  
ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS  
THE TWO OF US  
CLASSE TOUS RISQUES  
MOUCHETTE**
- 2004**            **THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS  
GODZILLA (U.S. premiere of uncut Japanese version)  
HEARTS AND MINDS**
- 2003**            **LE CERCLE ROUGE (U.S. premiere of uncut version)  
A WOMAN IS A WOMAN  
TOUCHEZ PAS AU GRISBI  
AU HASARD BALTHAZAR  
EYES WITHOUT A FACE  
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