

## MAKING THE 3rd MAN and OTHER INTERESTING STUFF

### **The Restoration**

In a vault at the legendary Pinewood studios, just outside of London, rests the original nitrate picture negative and corresponding nitrate optical sound track negative, of one of the most famous films of all time: **The Third Man**.

In 1996, at London's Soho laboratories -- a specialist in film restoration and the lost art of black & white -- a safety fine grain was produced from these original nitrate elements. The nitrate was in surprisingly good condition in terms of its having had no nitrate decomposition whatsoever, but as often happens with vintage films that have had a successful lifetime, it had been scratched in some sections. In the past, the care and attention given to original elements that is common practice today was rarely adhered to - it wasn't uncommon for release prints to be made right off the camera negative.

The nitrate negative was cleaned and then a safety fine grain produced via wet gate printing, so many of the flaws disappeared, or were lessened. In 1999, Canal+, who had subsequently acquired the library that contained **The Third Man**, recognized the tremendous importance and value of the title and made available the budget to make a brand new internegative from the 1996 safety fine grain. In addition, a completely re-mastered sound negative was produced. This was made by making a sound print (after cleaning via wet gate method) at the best possible density from the nitrate sound negative. Then, from the new sound master positive, a new optical sound negative was manufactured to match the new internegative.

At this point, the first 35mm check print was produced (on b&w film stock). This enabled various gradings to be checked and also highlighted some loose synch that occurred in reel 2. Necessary corrections to both grade and synch were made, until all technicians at Soho Images were satisfied they had made the best negative, track and print possible from the original elements.

### **Martin Bigham**

Martin Bigham is the managing director of the London-based CineServe, which supervises the maintenance of several important film libraries.

"You know what the fellow said: in Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed -- and they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, five hundred years of democracy and peace. And what did that produce? The cuckoo clock."

**Harry Lime**

## The Making of The Third Man

"I had paid my last farewell to Harry a week ago, when his coffin was lowered into the frozen February ground, so that it was with incredulity that I saw him pass by, without a sign of recognition, among the host of strangers in the Strand."

As legend has it, this seed of a story, which was to flower into the classic film **The Third Man**, was jotted on the back of an envelope by celebrated novelist Graham Greene.

Over dinner one evening, Greene shared this idea with producer Alexander Korda, who was hoping to persuade the writer to collaborate on another project with himself and director Carol Reed, following the trio's success with **The Fallen Idol**. After learning of the unique Four-Power occupation of Vienna, Korda was eager to produce a film set in the war-torn European city. Since Britain, the United States, Russia and France shared authority, the city was divided into five zones: one for each country and a central zone policed in groups of four (one representative from each power).

Intrigued by Korda's suggestion, Greene (who frequently traveled to settings of political unrest when in search of inspiration) spent two weeks there in February 1948, staying at Sacher's, a hotel reserved for military personal, which would become the residence of Holly Martins in the fictional world of **The Third Man**.

In fact, several other of the film's settings were discovered during Greene's sojourn: the Great Wheel of the dilapidated amusement park, the Josefstadt Theatre, the Mozart Café, the Oriental nightclub and the massive Central Cemetery where Lime is twice interred. While Greene's visit provided him dramatic potential, it failed to inspire a suitable plot.

Fate intervened on Greene's second-to-last day in Vienna, when he met Charles Beauclerk, a British Intelligence officer he had met through Korda's connections with the S.I.S. He told Greene of the network of sewers snaking beneath the streets, policed by its own specialized army, not subject to the multinational zones that governed street-level Vienna. These tunnels were thus the perfect means by which a clever criminal could travel freely throughout a city choked with checkpoints. The sewers were also ripe with cinematic potential, composed of enormous vaulted tunnels and stone chambers with waterfalls, rivers and hidden passageways.

From Beauclerk, Greene also learned of the illegal market for penicillin (often diluted and rendered poisonous), which would also figure prominently in the narrative. Greene wrote in his 1980 autobiography *Ways of Escape*, "The research I had made into the functioning of the Four-Power occupation, my visit to an old servant of my mother's in the Russian zone, the long evenings of solitary drinking in the Oriental, none of them were wasted. I had my film."

On May 14, 1948, Korda signed a contract with American producer David O. Selznick, allowing his Selznick Releasing Organization the Western Hemisphere rights to four films: a Michael Powell-Emeric Pressburger adaptation of *A Tale of Two Cities*; *The Doctor's Story*, to star Joseph Cotten; and two projects for Carol Reed: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and **The Third Man**. Of these, only *Third Man* would be made.

The anti-American sentiment that frequently surfaces in Greene's work is never explicit in **The Third Man**. Yet Selznick -- even after the two central roles were recast as Americans -- sensed that the screenplay was still too British. He bristled at the prospect of "paying a huge sum of money, and supplying our stars, to foist a piece of British propaganda upon the entire world." [In the end, Selznick's fears were unfounded: **The Third Man** was recently named one of the 100 greatest American films in the AFI's controversial poll.]

Selznick balked at the idea of moral ambiguity, preferring clearly delineated heroes and villains. When Greene removed the subplot of Anna's persecution by the Russians, Selznick responded, "We frankly made the Russians the heavies, in pursuit of the girl. All of this has been eliminated, even what was in the original script. We must insist upon its return, for patriotic reasons, for purposes of the picture's importance and size."

The producer dispatched no less than 72 of his legendary memos to Korda and company during the film's production. So many that they found it impossible to respond to them all. "Mr. Reed is in the middle of a very hard and responsible job," Korda wrote to the Selznick London office. "Therefore, he cannot be expected, and I am sure Mr. Selznick does not expect him to, sit down and write copious answers on copious notes."

Likewise, Greene recalled that the 25 pages of notes Selznick gave them after a screenplay conference in La Jolla, California, were promptly filed and never consulted.

Greene returned to Vienna with Reed in July 1948 to begin scouting locations, and was disappointed to learn that much of the city's rubble had been cleaned away and that life was gradually returning to normal.

**The Third Man** was shot primarily on location in Vienna during the last months of 1948, then at Isleworth and the Shepperton Studios in England. In order to capture all the material they needed within the brief five-week shoot in Vienna, the cast and two camera crews worked grueling shifts. "We worked from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., then went to bed, got up at 10 a.m., worked with the day unit until 4, and then went back to bed until 8," Reed later recalled. Selznick proposed that Cary Grant star as Martins, opposite Noel Coward as Lime (following Greene's original design of both characters being British). Fiercely determined that the film be "American-friendly," Selznick proposed other actors, such as Jimmy Stewart as Martins and Robert Mitchum as Lime. Whenever possible, Selznick campaigned for actors within his own stable to avoid the unwanted expense of borrowing stars from rival studios. Thus did his own contractees Joseph Cotten (*Portrait of Jennie*) and Alida Valli (*The Paradine Case*) find their way into central roles.

The role of Lime, however, was hotly debated. When Mitchum was still in the running, Selznick wired London: "There can be no question whatsoever about fabulous difference

in gross here with Mitchum who is clearly star of first rank against Welles whom Gallup claims is detriment and who in my opinion would not add a dollar to gross."

Orson Welles had been Reed's suggestion Lime and the director was willing to fight for him. Selznick finally conceded once it became clear Mitchum would be serving jail time for his 1948 marijuana arrest, and when he learned Welles could be hired inexpensively and with no share in the gross.

There was much concern that Welles, who was gaining a reputation for being temperamental, would usurp the director's authority. The greatest difficulty, however, turned out to be just getting Welles on the set. The actor was traveling nomadically through Europe, trying to raise money to complete his star-crossed Othello. There was a bit of congenial tension between Welles and Korda, who had often discussed film projects with the expatriate director but had never provided any actual funding. "I knew I was going to do **The Third Man**," Welles said, "but I was going to make Alex pay for all those movies I hadn't done... I thought if they really want me for this, they're going to have to chase me." After weeks of scheduling and rescheduling his appearance on the set, on the verge of being replaced by another actor, Welles finally set a date to arrive in Vienna. Desperate for cash to keep his own film alive, Welles waived the option for a percentage of the box-office in favor of \$100,000 up front -- a decision Welles would later regret but, at the time, had no choice but accept.

One of the first scenes Welles shot was the chase through the sewers. Reed later recounted the episode, "[Welles] comes down the sewer and says, 'Carol, I can't work in a sewer, I come from California! My throat! I'm so cold!' I said, 'Look, Orson, in the time it's taking us to talk about this, you can do the shot. All you do is stand there, look off, see some police after you, turn, and run away.' 'Carol,' he said, 'look, get someone else to play this. I cannot work under such conditions!' 'Orson, Orson, we're lit for you. Just stand there.' 'All right, but do it quick!' Then he looks off, turns away, and runs off into the sewers. All of a sudden I hear a voice shouting, 'Don't cut the cameras! Don't cut the cameras! I'm coming back.' He runs back, through the whole river, stands underneath a cascade over his head (all this out of camera range, mind you), and does all sorts of things, so that he came away absolutely dripping. 'How was that?' he asks. 'Wonderful! Marvelous!' I said. 'Okay. I'll be back at the hotel. Call me when you need me.' With Orson, you know, everything has to be drama. But there were no arguments of any sort."

But there's a different account of events from the film's assistant director, Guy Hamilton (now more famous as the director of several James Bond films, including Goldfinger). In an interview last year with Adrian Turner, Hamilton recalled, "We started shooting and Orson is meant to be there for his night shots, where Harry Lime is running all over Vienna. But Orson never showed up, so the location manager was sent to Rome to get him. Because Orson wasn't in Vienna, we had to shoot something. This is where the shadows started. Carol said, 'Guy, can you make a shadow running down that wall?' I found I was rather good at running in front of an arc light and moving down the wall. I was a skinny young lad so I was given a big hat and a heavy coat with shoulder padding. So we shot all this shadow stuff and that's me you see running down the streets at night. Orson finally arrives, and he's quite happy with the coat and hat I'd worn for the shadow

shots. His first scene was in the sewers. All he had to do was stand there as water poured over him. Carol did the shot and said, "Isn't it wonderful?" Then Orson went into a tirade. He said he was an American, that he might catch typhoid and said he wasn't going into the sewers again. So when Orson was being chased through the tunnels, we had to use doubles."

Welles certainly used a stand-in for the shots of Lime's fingers rising up through the steel vents of the street. Welles wasn't in Vienna at the time these scenes were shot, so Reed used his own hands. It's also Reed's voice speaking the film's opening narration (replaced by a narration by Cotten in the Selznick-edited American version).

As easily as he could have taken credit for some of **The Third Man's** many attributes, Welles magnanimously declined. "Carol Reed is the kind of director who'll use any ideas -- anything that's going," he once told Peter Bogdanovich. "I had notions for the dialogue, and Carol liked them. Except for my rather minor contribution, the story, of course, was by the matchless Graham Greene. And the basic idea -- though he took no credit for it -- was Alex Korda's...It was Carol's picture... and Korda's."

Of the scene where Harry Lime first appears to Martins, Welles said, "Pure Carol. We had a little second unit specially set up for it, and at the end of every day we went there and tried it again, over and over, till he thought it was right."

Of the film's legendary final shot: "I was there when they shot it. I wish I could pretend I'd contributed, but I was just standing there, watching them shoot it."

Welles did contribute much of his own dialogue, and both assistant director Hamilton and Graham Greene himself have concurred that the film's most famous passage of dialogue, the "cuckoo clock" speech, was Welles' invention. Other snatches of dialogue conceived by Welles include the business of the indigestion tablets and the comments at the Ferris wheel: "The kids used to ride this a lot in the old days. Of course, they haven't got the money now, poor devils."

Even though Vienna was the home of the Strauss family, Schubert and Beethoven, Reed was resistant to scoring the film with traditional waltzes. He stumbled upon the solution to his dilemma at a small café in Sievering, just outside the city. There, Anton Karas was playing a zither for (and being largely ignored by) the clientele. Impressed by the music, and pleased to observe that it didn't overpower the surrounding conversations, Reed invited Karas to his hotel room to record a sample. He took this recording back to England and played it against the film's dialogue and realized its dramatic potential. Karas had written the tune Reed admired most, later known as the "Harry Lime Theme," but hadn't performed it in fifteen years because "when you play in a café, nobody stops to listen. This tune takes a lot out of your fingers. I prefer playing 'Wien, Wien,' the sort of thing one can play all night while eating sausages at the same time."

Karas, who spoke no English, stayed at Reed's house during the scoring of the film (and would run eventually off with the family maid). The recording of the "Harry Lime Theme" was overdubbed with additional layers of Karas's zither, giving the music more

texture than a single performance could provide. Having experimented with the acoustic feel of Karas's music, Reed best liked the effect when the musician played beneath the director's kitchen table. According to the film's sound recordist, Barbara Hopkins, Reed's table was brought to the studio to precisely recreate the desired sound.

Visually, **The Third Man's** most distinctive feature is its use of expressionistic angles, then a revolutionary technique. "I shot most of the film with a wide-angle lens that distorted the buildings and emphasized the wet cobblestone streets," Reed later said. "It cost a good deal to hose them down constantly... But the angle of vision was just to suggest that something crooked was going on. I don't think it's a very good idea. I haven't used it much since -- only when I need to shoot someone standing behind another person who's sitting and I don't want to cut off his head."

The tilted camera became the focus of some good-natured humor surrounding the film. After viewing the film, director William Wyler, Reed's longtime friend, reputedly gave him a spirit-level as a gift, with the note, "Next time you make a picture, just put it on top of the camera."

Following the phenomenal success of the film, Welles reprised his role in a series of radio broadcasts which he produced, starred in and often wrote. The Adventures of Harry Lime recast the notorious black marketeer as a globe-trotting rogue who was never too busy to aid a woman in distress or foil some corrupt scheme. In 1959, Lime was revived again, this time in a short-lived television series starring Michael Rennie as Lime (transformed into a good guy!) and Jonathan Harris as his sidekick. The syndicated 30-minute Third Man lasted only one season.

Carol Reed returned to Greene's fiction in his screen adaptation of the cold war parody *Our Man in Havana* (1960). He revisited Third Man territory in 1953's *The Man Between*, a romantic thriller about a postwar black marketeer (James Mason) set along the geographic/political split of the Berlin Wall.

Vienna itself still hasn't recovered from **The Third Man**. Even today, there are "Third Man Tours" where sight-seeing cinephiles can visit some of the film's locations.

## The Novella

In his preface to the **The Third Man** novella (in print from Penguin Books since 1949), Graham Greene wrote, "My film story, **The Third Man**, was never written to be read but only to be seen... For me it is impossible to write a film play without first writing a story. A film depends on more than plot; it depends on a certain measure of characterization, on mood and atmosphere, and these seem impossible to capture for the first time in the dull shorthand of a conventional treatment. I must have the sense of more material than I need to draw on (though the full-length novel usually contains too much). **The Third Man**, therefore, though never intended for publication, had to start as a story rather than as a

treatment before I began working on what seemed the interminable transformations from one screenplay to another."

By Greene's own pen we should look upon the film as the definitive version of **The Third Man**. On its own, the novella is still a remarkable achievement, and ranks high among the author's "entertainments" (which include *This Gun for Hire*, *The Ministry of Fear* and *The Confidential Agent*). The spirit and tone of the text is virtually identical to that of the film -- testament to the abilities of the filmmakers and evidence that the project was a truly collaborative effort.

Some changes were made of necessity. For example, Greene conceived Martins and Lime as Englishmen, with Lime's fellow profiteer, Cooler, being conspicuously American. When Cotten and Welles were cast, the screenplay was altered -- at first making him Canadian, then omitting all references to his homeland. The American Cooler was rewritten as Popescu, a Romanian (who nonetheless shares Cooler's personality of shallow benevolence cloaking vicious opportunism).

The latter portions of the story are greatly condensed in the novella. Calloway presents the evidence against Lime only once to Martins (describing the victims in the children's hospital but not actually visiting), and it's enough to convince him to assist them in a trap. Martins briefly goes to Anna at the Josefstadt Theatre, but she refuses to participate in the scheme.

The screenplay and film prolong the tension between Martins and Anna, as well as the conflict within Martins himself. He is at first convinced by Calloway's presentation of the facts and agrees to help them if they will fix Anna's forged-passport charges. There follows a scene in which Martins watches Anna's departure at the train station -- until she spots him and realizes she has been the price of Martins's cooperation with the authorities.

While it amounts to no more than a paragraph of text, the most striking difference between Greene's novella and the film comes at the very end. Once Lime is "re-interred" at the Central Cemetery, Martins decides to wait for Anna in the hopes of reconciliation. In the now-legendary final shot, Anna walks past without a word or gesture of recognition. The novel, on the other hand, presents a very different resolution: "I watched him striding off on his overgrown legs after the girl. He caught her up and they walked side by side. I don't think he said a word to her: it was like the end of a story. He was a very bad shot and a very bad judge of character, but he had a way with Westerns (a trick of tension) and with girls (I wouldn't know what)."

Even though they knew a downbeat ending was more appropriate to the story, both Greene and Selznick voted for a happy ending as a concession to mainstream moviegoing tastes. Reed, however, argued otherwise, and Anna was allowed to pass Martins by.

A 50th anniversary movie edition of **The Third Man** has just been published by Penguin Books. This new paperback edition will be available for sale at Film Forum during the run of the movie.

## The Screenplay

Although the script was prepared with the cooperation of the director and both producers, it did not proceed to the screen exactly as written. Greene's text underwent numerous variations and deletions during and after filming -- ranging from substantial to insignificant.

In one of the more peculiar deviations, the name of the main character was changed to Holly after Joseph Cotten expressed concern that the character's original name, Rollo, had homosexual implications. [Why he thought the name "Holly" would not have such implications is anyone's guess.]

Other changes more radically affected the final film. The montage that currently begins the film replaced a much lengthier and more specific introduction to the setting and central character. The revised opening that appears in the finished film takes the form of newsreel-like footage depicting the bombed-out Vienna and the military activities designed to maintain order in the half-destroyed city.

The script (and novella) of **The Third Man** are much more "Catholic" than the final film. Because so many of his novels explore the ideas of Catholicism, sacrifice, retribution, guilt and hypocrisy, Greene has throughout his career been characterized as a "Catholic writer." Most likely these aspects of **The Third Man** were omitted from the film to avoid conflict with the censors, who were very particular about how organized religion was discussed and depicted on screen.

## The American Version

While **The Third Man** was released in Europe by London Films, Selznick International held the U.S. rights and re-edited the film for American audiences (removing approximately eleven minutes of footage). The differences are evident from the start, with the Selznick logo replacing that of London Films. The opening titles are substantially different as well. In the first card of the British version, Korda's name gets billing in front of Selznick's, while the American version reads "Presented by David O. Selznick and Alexander Korda." The British title sequence is lengthier, providing a more complete cast and credit list (and more of Karas's theme music).

In the American version, the opening narration -- with some necessary variation -- is spoken by Joseph Cotten rather than the anonymous voice of the British release (Reed

himself spoke it). The cutting and content are also slightly different, the American version being about ten seconds shorter.

No scenes are missing entirely from the body of the American version. But generally, the pace has been quickened (and the running time shortened) by trimming a few frames at the end of shots. At other times, complete shots were deleted or substantially shortened within a sequence. While this barely affects the substance of **The Third Man**, it subtly alters its tone.

For example, at the burial scene in the film's beginning, a two-shot of Kurtz and Winkel watching Martins has been deleted, and the footage of Martins slowly leaving the graveside and accepting a ride from Calloway has been substantially quickened (depriving the scene of its sublime languorous pace). Perhaps because Selznick thought the music too florid for a burial scene, Karas's zither music was removed from the soundtrack as Martins first approaches Lime's grave.

The largest deletion in the American cut was an exchange of dialogue between Martins and Kurtz outside Lime's building, just after Martins asks about Anna's identity.

***Kurtz***

You oughtn't to speak to her. It would only cause her pain.

***Martins***

Not necessarily. She'd probably want to know.

***Kurtz***

What's the use of another post-mortem? Suppose you dig up something discreditable to Harry.

***Martins***

Would you give me your address?

In several instances, scenes with characters speaking German were trimmed. A few seconds of the play in which Anna appears was removed, and at least three shots of Anna's German-speaking landlady were substantially shortened. These cuts were obviously made because they were considered expendable (since most Americans wouldn't be able to understand them). However, the removal of the shots does detract from the film's atmosphere and the sensation of being a stranger in a strange land.

Other small cuts include a closeup of little Hansel as he watches the porter argue with Martins. The scene where Anna is taken into custody was shortened considerably by shaving frames from various shots.

Feeling the climactic chase through the sewers went on too long, Selznick (by reducing and removing individual shots) cut one minute and nine seconds from the final pursuit of Harry Lime.

Two egregious cuts in the American version -- which on the surface seem insignificant -- tamper with the timing of two of the film's most legendary moments. The scene in which Lime jauntily walks across the amusement park to meet Martins at the base of the Great Wheel is cut by about seven seconds. And the unforgettable final sequence -- with Martins waiting for Anna as she slowly walks up the avenue -- is a full 35 seconds shorter than the British version.

This Rialto release presents the complete British cut of **The Third Man**, the first time this version has been released theatrically in the United States.

## **Graham Greene Remembers Selznick**

Our first meeting with Mr. Selznick at La Jolla in California promised badly, and the dialogue remains as fresh in my mind as they day when it was spoken. After a brief greeting he got down to serious discussion. He said, "I don't like the title."

"No? We thought . . ."

"Listen, boys, who the hell is going to a film called **The Third Man**?"

"Well," I said, "it's a simple title. It's easily remembered."

Mr. Selznick shook his head reproachfully. "You can do better than that, Graham," he said, using my Christian name with a readiness I was not prepared for. "You are a writer. A good writer. I'm no writer, but you are. Now what we want -- it's not right, mind you, of course it's not right, I'm not saying it's right, but then I'm no writer and you are, what we want is something like *Night in Vienna*, a title which will bring them in."

"Graham and I will think about it," Carol Reed interrupted with haste. It was a phrase I was to hear Reed frequently repeat, for the Korda contract had omitted to state that the director was under any obligation to accept Mr. Selznick's advice. Reed during the days that followed, like an admirable stonewaller, blocked every ball.

"There's something I don't understand in this script, Graham. Why the hell does Harry Lime . . . ?" He described some extraordinary action on Lime's part.

"But he doesn't," I said.

Mr. Selznick looked at me for a moment in silent amazement.

"Christ, boys," he said, "I'm thinking of a different script."

He lay down on his sofa and crunched a Benzedrine. In ten minutes he was as fresh as ever, unlike ourselves. -- **Graham Greene on Film (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972)**

## David O. Selznick On the Zither Music

November 25, 1949

### TELEGRAM to Daniel T. O'Shea [Executive Vice-President, Selznick Productions]

...Cannot commence to tell you sensation caused by Karas's zither music in **The Third Man**. It is rage of England and has already sold more record copies than any other record in entire history of record business in England. It is widest-played dance music in England... Ads here use "Hear Harry Lime Theme," etc. in type dwarfing all other billing. It is one of those unpredictable, tremendous sensations that I cannot expect any of you to understand who have not been here. Entirely unrelated newspaper articles and editorials, even on politics, constantly refer to it. Inevitably, this success will be repeated America if we are prepared for it. We should be able to make fortune out of this music.

Regards,  
David

By the time Selznick released the film in the U.S., in February 1950, the "Harry Lime Theme" was already a sensation. He capitalized on this by including the tag line "Featuring the Famous Zither Score by Anton Karas...He'll have in you a dither with his zither!" in the ad campaign and trailers.

## Orson Welles Remembers The Third Man

"Every sentence in the whole script is about Harry Lime -- nobody talks about anything else for ten reels. And then there's that shot in the doorway -- what a star entrance that was! In theatre, you know, the old star actors never liked to come on until the end of the first act ...

What matters in that kind of role is not how many lines you have, but how few. What counts is how much the other characters talk about you. Such a star vehicle really is a vehicle. All you have to do is ride.

To borrow Cotten and Alida Valli from Selznick, Korda had to make a deal giving David American distribution. So in America the picture arrived as "David O. Selznick presents/ A David O. Selznick Production / Produced by David O. Selznick," and so on. All David had done was to loan Alex a couple of actors. Alex dreamed up the whole project, in every sense of the word produced it, but David took the bows.

I was sitting with them about two years after the picture had opened -- when all Europe was still reverberating with the strains of the "Third Man Theme," and Alex said, "You

know, David, I hope I don't die before you do." "Oh!" said David. "Why?" And Alex said, "I hate the thought of you sneaking out to the graveyard at night and scratching my name off the tombstone."

-- **This Is Orson Welles (New York: Harper Collins, 1992)**

André Bazin on Welles' Harry Lime

"**The Third Man** clearly deserves to be marked as a milestone in Welles' career, not so much for the quality of his performance, as for the astonishing crystallizing process that took place around Welles through the character of Harry Lime. For the first and perhaps only time, this very popular actor finally found the part that could identify him in the public consciousness. All the others had been 'character creations,' even the role of Kane. And it is significant that he played Harry Lime without false hair or makeup, as he appeared in the doorway with his coat collar turned up, he gave the impression of stepping directly out of his own life. But above all, the topicality of Greene's script equated the ambiguity of his hero with our war-torn world. Personable bandit, in tune with the disillusioned romanticism of the period, arch-angel of the sewers, an outlaw prowling the zone dividing good from evil, a monster worthy of love, Harry Lime/Welles was, in this case, more than a character; he was a myth."

- **Orson Welles: A Critical View**

### **Notes By Bret Wood**

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