

# Warner Brothers

Within several years of its founding in 1923, Warner Brothers had acquired First National Pictures. It then teamed with Western Electric to form Vitaphone, a subsidiary to develop sound-on-disc motion pictures. After a period of experimentation, the company made cinematic history with the release of the first film with synchronized songs and dialogue, *THE JAZZ SINGER*.

Almost more than from any other Hollywood studio, films made at Warner Brothers have been historically associated with a distinctive style. Warner films have been described as socially conscious in theme and relatively simple in visual style (low key lighting and sparse sets). These aspects are present in the studio's best-known genre, the gangster film (*PUBLIC ENEMY*, *LITTLE CAESAR*, *THE ROARING TWENTIES*), but is also readily evident in the studio's "New Deal" dramas (*THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT*, *I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG*) and its musicals (*GOLDDIGGERS OF 1933*).

Cartoons were a Warner Brothers' staple throughout the studio era. The studio's animation department routinely allowed its talented artists, voice actors, writers, and composers complete



Alexander Gray in Warner Brothers' 1930 musical *Viennese Nights*. This film was preserved by the UCLA Film and Television Archive.

access to studio resources and facilities, and encouraged creative freedom as long as a certain output was guaranteed (30-40 shorts per year). For thirty years, beginning in 1930, the studio produced the *LOONEY TUNES* and *MERRIE MELODIES* series which featured "stars" like Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, and Daffy Duck.

During the studio's heyday (1930s and 1940s) it employed legendary producers Darryl Zanuck, Hal B. Wallis,

and Steve Trilling. Directors associated with Warner Brothers include Michael Curtiz, Mervyn LeRoy, William Wellman, John Huston, William Dieterle, and Raoul Walsh. Its impressive star roster boasted the likes of Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Muni, and Joan Crawford.

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## Films

(this is only a partial list – consult the Archive Research and Study Center for further listings)

*The Jazz Singer* (1927). Warner Brothers. Director, Alan Crosland. Writer, Al Cohn. Study Copy: VA 2858 M.

*I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* (1932). Warner Brothers. Director, Mervyn LeRoy. Writers, Howard J. Green, Brown Holmes, and Sheridan Gibney. Study Copy: VA 1071 M.

*Golddiggers of 1933* (1933). Warner Brothers. Director, Mervyn LeRoy. Writers, Erwin Gelsey and James Seymour. Study Copy: VA 2736 M.

*The Public Enemy* (1931). Warner Brothers. Director, William Wellman. Writers, Kubec Glasmon and John Bright. Study Copy: VA 1168 M.

*Casablanca* (1942). Warner Brothers. Director, Michael Curtiz. Writers, Julius J. and Philip G. Epstein and Howard Koch. Study Copy: VD 34 M.

*Little Caesar* (1930). Warner Brothers. Director, Mervyn LeRoy. Writer, Francis Faragoh. Study Copy: VA 2894 M.

*Juarez* (1939). Warner Brothers. Director, William Dieterle. Writers, John Huston, Aereas MacKenzie, and Wolfgang Reinhardt. Study Copy: VA 1436 M.

*Key Largo* (1948). Warner Brothers. Director, John Huston. Writers, Richard Brooks and John Huston. Study Copy: VA 10711 M.

*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948). Warner Brothers. Director and Writer, John Huston. Study Copy: VA 5560 M.

*They Drive By Night* (1940). Warner Brothers. Director, Raoul Walsh. Writers, Jerry Wald and Richard Macaulay. Study Copy: VD 456 M.

## Print Resources

(for more information consult the UCLA Arts Library)

Behlmer, Rudy, ed. *Inside Warner Bros. (1935-1951)*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987.

Friedwald, Will. *The Warner Brothers Cartoons*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981.

Roddick, Nick. *A New Deal in Entertainment: Warner Brothers in the 1930s*. London: British Film Institute, 1983.

Sperling, Cass Warner. *Hollywood Be Thy Name: The Warner Brothers Story*. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1998.