

United States, 1941

Running Length: 1:59

MPAA Classification: No MPAA Rating (Mature themes)

Theatrical Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1

Cast: Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten, Dorothy Comingore, Agnes Moorehead, Ruth Warrick, Ray Collins, Erskine Sanford, Everett Sloane

Director: Orson Welles

Producer: Orson Welles

Screenplay: Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles

Cinematography: Greg Toland

Music: Bernard Herrmann

U.S. Distributor: RKO Pictures

The origins of ``Citizen Kane'' are well known. Orson Welles, the boy wonder of radio and stage, was given freedom by RKO Radio Pictures to make any picture he wished. Herman Mankiewicz, an experienced screenwriter, collaborated with him on a screenplay originally called ``The American.'' Its inspiration was the life of William Randolph Hearst, who had put together an empire of newspapers, radio stations, magazines and news services, and then built to himself the flamboyant monument of San Simeon, a castle furnished by rummaging the remains of nations. Hearst was Ted Turner, Rupert Murdoch and Bill Gates rolled up into an enigma

Gregg Toland, who on John Ford's ``The Long Voyage Home'' (1940) had experimented with deep focus photography--with shots where everything was in focus, from the front to the back, so that composition and movement determined where the eye looked first.

CIRCULAR PATTERN....more detail with each pass

The screenplay by Mankiewicz and Welles (which got an Oscar, the only one Welles ever won)

from early bliss to the famous montage of increasingly chilly breakfasts

It explains what Rosebud is, but not what Rosebud means.

Long before Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* was released in 1941, there was a buzz about the movie and the "boy genius" who made it.

When Hearst learned through Hopper of Welles' film, he set out to protect his reputation by shutting the film down. Hollywood executives, led by Louis B. Mayer, rallied around Hearst, attempting to buy *Citizen Kane* in order to burn the negative. Major theater chains refused to carry *Citizen Kane*. Hearst's campaign to discredit Welles was ruthless, skillful, and much aided by Welles himself, who had never bothered to hide his contempt for Hollywood. When Welles' name and his film were mentioned at the 1942 Academy

Awards, they were booed. Nominated for nine awards, *Citizen Kane* lost in every category except one. (Welles shared the award for best screenplay with Herman Mankiewicz.) After the Academy's repudiation of *Citizen Kane*, RKO quietly retired the film to its vault.

A few years earlier, his infamous radio broadcast, *War of the Worlds*, had terrified listeners and won him the sweetest contract Hollywood had ever seen. It happened the day before Halloween, on Oct. 30, 1938, when millions of Americans tuned in to a popular radio program that featured plays directed by, and often starring, Orson Welles. The performance that evening was an adaptation of the science fiction novel *The War of the Worlds*, about a Martian invasion of the earth.

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., remembers his father asking Hearst why he preferred concentrating on newspapers, with their limited, regional appeal, rather than spending more energy on motion pictures and their worldwide audience. Fairbanks recalls Hearst's reply: "I thought of it, but I decided against it. Because you can crush a man with journalism, and you can't with motion pictures."

Hearst's companion was Marion Davies, a showgirl whom he loved and propelled into Hollywood movies. Together they entertained Hollywood's biggest, best, and brightest; San Simeon became a social mecca for the stars.

Marion Davies was widely liked in Hollywood: straightforward, full of humor and charm. The battle over *Citizen Kane* was in large part a fight over her honor: It was said that Welles's treatment of Davies riled Hearst more than any other aspect of the film. Even Welles agreed that Susan Alexander, the Davies character, was unfair:

When Herman Mankiewicz, a Hollywood writer and friend of Welles who had been a guest at San Simeon, proposed the story of Hearst, Welles seized on the idea as his last best chance.

ahead of its time. Uncompromising, unsentimental drama of this sort was not in vogue during an era that was better known for titles like *The Wizard of Oz*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *How Green Was My Valley* (which beat out *Kane* for best picture).