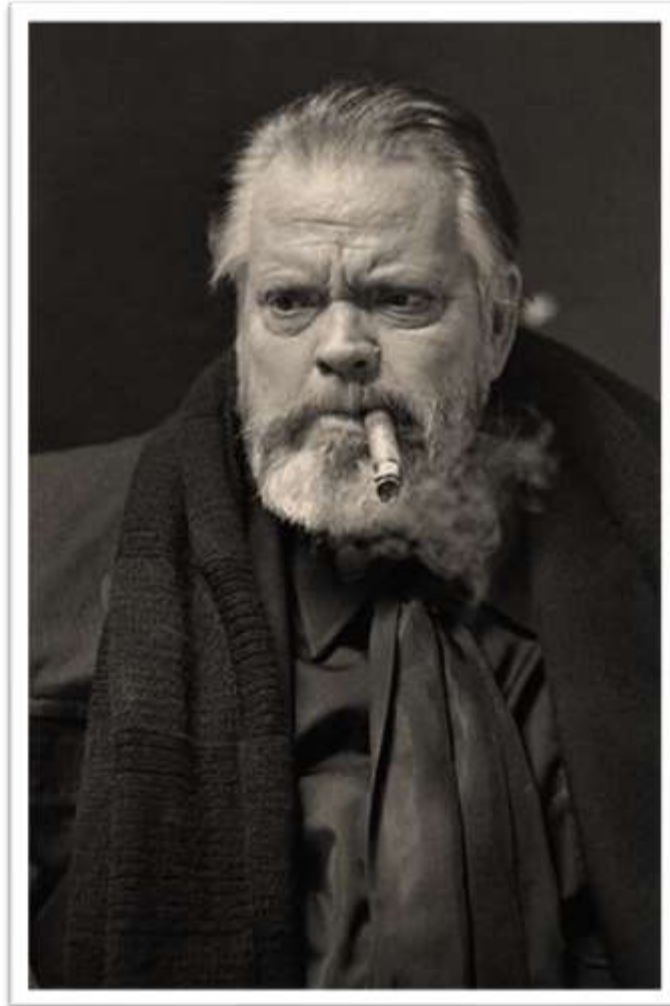


MY LUNCHES WITH ORSON WELLES

Synopsis - Pitch



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AT A GLANCE

TITLE: "My Lunches With Orson Welles"
GENRE: Biographical Drama
PERIOD: 1983-85
PRODUCTION COMPANY: Quixotic Arts
SIMILAR FILMS: "My Dinner with Andre."
TARGET AUDIENCE: Art-house, Criterion crowd
WRITER/DIRECTOR: Jeff Thelen

BACKGROUND

For 3 years prior to his death in 1985, Orson Welles had lunch weekly with his younger friend, the independent film maverick, Henry Jaglom.

The lunches took place at the famed Ma Maison restaurant in Hollywood, a bistro frequented by Hollywood power-players and celebrities. Orson was a daily fixture at the restaurant, where he held court at his dedicated table. The bistro served as a kind of office for Welles, where he would hold meetings, receive mail and phone calls.



With Welles' permission, Jaglom tape-recorded many of their lunch-time conversations (Jaglom hid the recorder in a satchel so that its constant presence wouldn't put Welles on his guard). These discussions between two good friends shed a brilliant, intimate light on one of our greatest and most troubled film artists in the twilight of his career.

Always opinionated, Welles is often seen as often friendly, polite and humorous, but just as often he is dark and depressed, beaten down by his struggles to get projects off the ground--to simply pay "the grocer's bill."

The Art of Conversation. Here we have the pleasure of

eavesdropping on a great conversationalist. Spurred on by Jaglom, Welles pontificates on a vast range of topics from gossip about Hollywood's Golden Age; his own biases and prejudices; his scorn for Hollywood; to his deteriorating health and troubled finances.

Thirty years after Welles' death in 1985, the recordings were transcribed and edited by Peter Biskind and published as "My Lunches with Orson."

THE FILM

The film takes place nearly entirely at Welles' table at Ma Maison over a series of lunches from 1983 to 1985. Modelled somewhat on "My Dinner with Andre," the majority of the film is the fascinating conversations between Welles and Jaglom, who serves as his Boswell and sometime sparring partner.



Welles and Jaglom

The intensity of the talk is relieved by clips from Welles' work, which also provide comment on his former glory and present despair.

The conversations are also frequently interrupted by their

obsequious Waiter--for comic relief--and by celebrities and friends, such as Zsa Zsa Gabor and Richard Burton, who stop by to say hello. These interruptions show Welles in another light--Welles the Citizen, Welles the Legend, Welles the "Dancing Bear."

Woven throughout the discussions is the dark thread of a survival story. A good friend, Jaglom is seen doggedly trying to help Welles get scripts and projects off the ground--to help him simply find work to ease his desperate financial troubles.

It's a Sisyphean struggle. In the end, Welles lashes out furiously at Jaglom and others who are trying to help. His career never regained its early glory, leaving him a broken man, a monument to artistic failure.

So pull up a chair at Orson's table.

It's Welles unplugged, raw, and bruised.

Characters

Orson Welles. 70. Classic late-day Welles. Bearded. 300+ pounds. Wears tents of black cloth, into which have been sewn pockets and buttons to make it look like a suit.

Henry Jaglom. 45. Independent film director and friend of Orson Welles. He is partial to colorful scarves and floppy hats.

Waiter. A French slug.

Cameos

Robert Wagner. 50.

Richard Burton. 55.

Zsa Zsa Gabor. 55.

Swiftly Lazar. 70.

Jack Lemmon. 50.

Mrs. Vincente Minnelli. 70.

Tourist.

Susan Smith, HBO executive. 35.

Driver. 25.

Location. Ma Maison (1973-1985), a bistro frequented by celebrities and Hollywood power-brokers.

Time. 1983-1985.