

2. THE KILLERS

Like many of those discussed in the previous chapter, the sultry Kitty Collins (portrayed by Ava Gardner, opposite) is a true femme fatale. In *The Killers* and other noir films like *The Asphalt Jungle* below that focus on violent capers and the work of hit men ("hit women" being a post-classic period concept seen only in neo-noir), characters such as Kitty are duplicitous shills from the very beginning. The character of Anna in the extraordinarily bleak *Criss Cross* (pages 37 and 44) may not start out as a double crosser. In fact, her affection and renewed passion for her former husband Steve Thompson is genuine. Also in *Criss Cross*, Burt Lancaster's narration as Thompson opines that "from the start, it all went one way. It was in the cards or it was fate or a jinx or whatever you want to call it." Despite this deterministic undercurrent, the viewer is encouraged to believe that Steve and Anna at least have a chance. For characters that live in or are drawn into the menacing underworld of film noir--Kitty, her co-conspirators, and, in the role that introduced him to audiences, Lancaster as "Swede" Andersen--the outlook is simply grim.



UNIVERSAL-INTERNATIONAL presents

**BURT
LANCASTER**

**YVONNE
DeCARLO**

**DAN
DURYEA**



"CRISS X CROSS"

with **STEPHEN McNALLY • RICHARD LONG**

Screenplay by **DANIEL FUCHS** • Based upon the novel by **DON TRACY**

Produced by **MICHEL KRAIKE** • Directed by **ROBERT SIODMAK**

A UNIVERSAL-INTERNATIONAL RE-RELEASE



The urban nightmare, a key noir motif, plays a significant role in many noir graphics. The poster for Republic's cheapie *City That Never Sleeps* crams three or four potential pulp covers into one frame, desperately trying to seduce the moviegoer into seeing its low-budget product.

While Universal's poster for *The Killers* relies on the sexual appeal of the two stars—Lancaster and Gardner. The Swedish poster, like most European graphics, opts for expressionism and pictorialism over realism. The Lancaster character in green is trapped not only by the two killers in silhouette but also by the vixen Kitty floating in a pool of scarlet—symbolizing her erotic nature.

The Belgian poster for *Asphalt Jungle* also chooses to underline the urban nightmare with a vampish Marilyn Monroe in red posed against a city backdrop while the cops rough up a potential perp in the center of the poster. Note also the French title: *When the City Sleeps*.





TENSE! TAUT!
TERRIFIC!

MARK HELLINGER
presents

Ernest Hemingway's
The KILLERS

Directed by
ROBERT SIODMAK
of "The Spiral Staircase" fame

A UNIVERSAL RELEASE with

EDMOND O'BRIEN AVA GARDNER
ALBERT DEKKER SAM LEVENE

And Introducing **BURT LANCASTER**



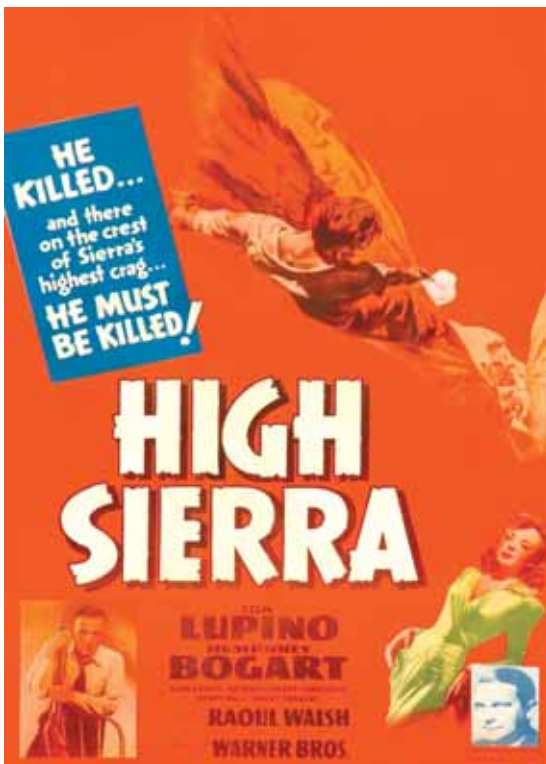
Screenplay by ANTHONY VEILLER From the story by ERNEST HEMINGWAY Produced by MARK HELLINGER 46/730



The Italians once again invoke classical painting in their poster for *High Sierra* (Italian title: *A Bullet for Roy*). The extremely dynamic vertical composition showing the aging gangster Mad Dog Earle (Bogart) clinging to a cliff as he fires down at his pursuers contrasts with the two less imaginative American posters which simply feature slightly rendered photos of the actors.

The American graphic for *I Walk Alone* (also like *High Sierra* featuring an ex-con on the run) however returns to the vivid pulp style with its lurid colors, men with guns, and bitter misogynistic text: "Once I trusted a dame...now I Walk Alone."

On the next page, killer couples are rampant through film noir. Among the most notable are Cora and Frank from *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and Phyllis and Walter in *Double*



*Their Love was a Flame
that Destroyed!*



M.G.M. presents

**LANA TURNER
JOHN GARFIELD**

**THE Postman
Always
Rings Twice**

The Book that Blazed to Best-Seller Fame!

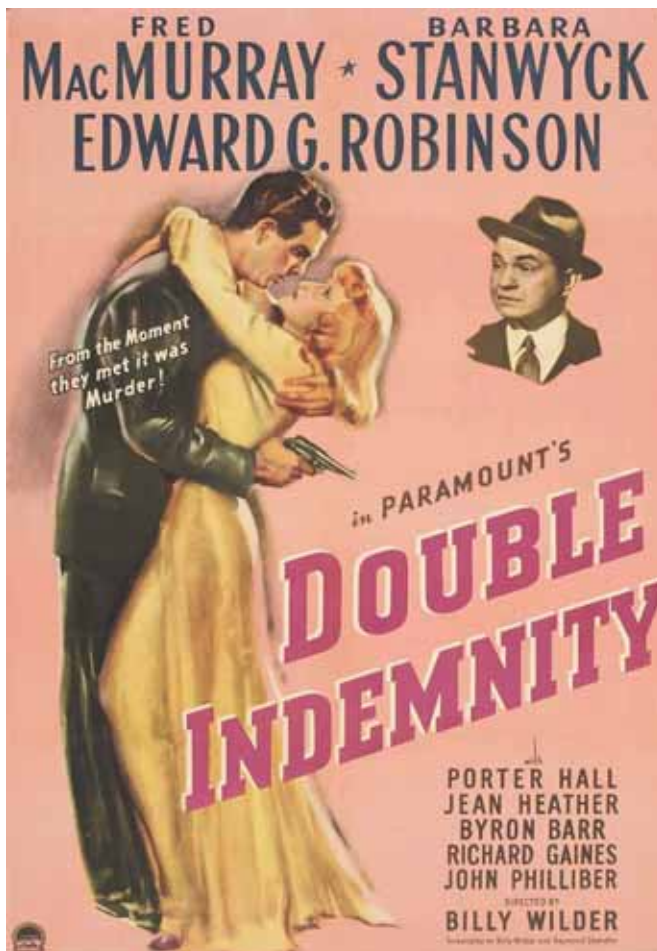
**CECIL KELLAWAY HUME CRONYN
LEON AMES AUDREY TOTTER · ALAN REED**
SCREEN PLAY BY HARRY RUSKIN AND NIVEN BUSCH
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JAMES M. CAIN
PRODUCED BY CAREY WILSON
DIRECTED BY TAY GARNETT



A METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURE

Indemnity, both based on James M. Cain novels. In the first poster for *The Postman* the couple is given a painterly treatment which highlights their star quality as well as the dark romantic elements of their relationship. Notice also how the original novel by Cain is treated as a character as it was a selling point for the film. The second graphic for the movie is less painterly and more violent, with Frank (John Garfield) seeming to threaten Cora (Lana Turner) with his hands around her neck. This, of course, never occurs in the movie.

"From the moment they met it was murder," proclaims the text for the *Double Indemnity* graphic. Walter and Phyllis are in a classic clutch with the gun as a third party to the affair while a paternalistic and suspicious Edward G. Robinson seems to watch from a corner.

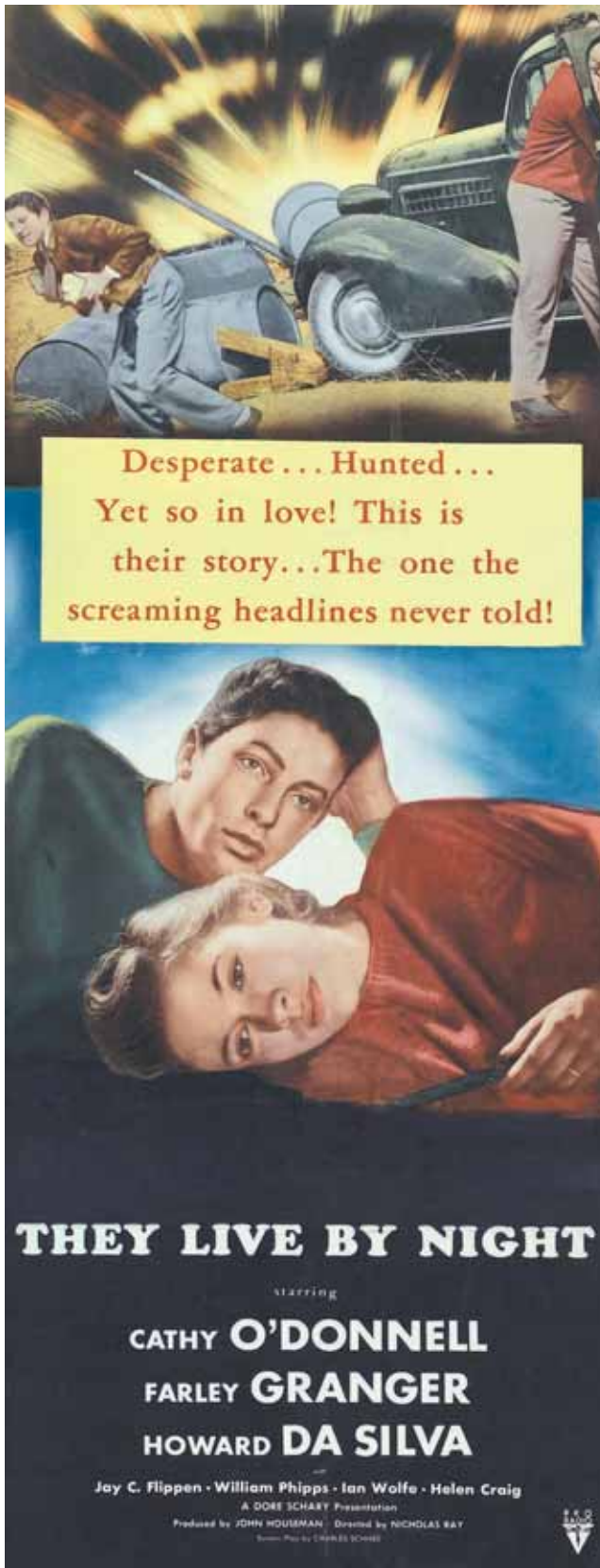


Teen rebels without a cause saw the light of day in noir, most notably in Nicholas Ray movies. The Japanese graphic for Ray's *They Live by Night* emphasizes the stark, violent mood of the film while the American graphic plays upon young love, particularly in the poetic text.

The Italian and the German graphics for Ray's *Knock on Any Door* highlight the star of the film Humphrey Bogart, who plays a lawyer, and not the teen rebel/killer John Derek. In the Italian poster--*Crimen*--Bogart looks world-weary and grim while in the German ad art Bogart is dashing and dangerous as the key visual plays up a very minor love interest.

In a tradition that stretches back to *The Public Enemy* (1931) it's a short step from teen-age criminal to grown-up killer, as noir films such as *He Walked by Night* (1949) and *The Sniper* (1952) confirm. *Follow Me Quietly* adds a twist: a vigilante killer who metes out justice to the unsavory denizens of the noir underworld.







Even more out of step with the mood and intent of the film are these three graphics for the Bogart docu-noir about Murder Incorporated—*The Enforcer*. All three stress the dark romantic qualities of the star Bogart. The Warner Bros. graphic shows him ascending the stairs, bathed in sepia, with a shaft of light across his face, on his way, we assume, to rescue a damsel in distress, pictured below him. The French graphic is even more blatant. Its title means *A Woman Abused* and Bogart, now bathed in red, defends her with a gun and a defiant display of his hand. The final Italian poster is the most extreme in its pictorialism and emotionalism. Titled *The City Is Saved*, a giant knight errant—Bogart—carries his damsel in distress through a threatening city to safety.



Warner Bros. PRESENTS

HUMPHREY

BOGART



LA FEMME
à abattre



AVEC
ZERO MOSTEL — TED de CORSIA — ROY ROBERTS — EVERETT SLOANE
SCÉNARIO DE MARTIN RACKIN

MISE EN SCÈNE DE BRETAGNE WINDUST. LINE PRODUCTION UNITED STATES PICTURES

INTERDIT
AUX MOINS
DE 16 ANS

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