



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Road to Patagonia was a wonderful film, appreciated by all. It caused introspection: always a productive exercise! We had requests from people other than our members to be included. For those who missed it, it is available for viewing as a rental on Apple TV.

We are so excited to tell you of our chosen films from April to July. Remember ours is the financial year, not the calendar one.

Please note these in your diary:

27/29th April	<i>Black Dog</i> (China)
18/20th May	<i>Hammarskjold</i> (Sweden)
15/17th June	<i>My Favourite Cake</i> (Iran)
20/22nd July	<i>All We Imagine as Light</i> (India)

Best Wishes to all, **Roz Garwen**



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FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 16th March 2025

8.15 pm Tuesday 18th March 2025

Citizen Kane *
[USA 1941]

Spoiler alert : You may prefer to read this review after the screening

DIRECTOR : Orson Wells
RUNNING TIME : 119mins
RATING : PG

Synopsis:

When a reporter is assigned to decipher magnate Charles Foster Kane's dying words, his investigation gradually reveals a fascinating portrait of a complex man. While friends shed fragments of light on Kane's life, the reporter however, fears he may never penetrate the mystery.

Review: Roger Ebert

"I don't think any word can explain a man's life," says one of the searchers through the warehouse of treasures left behind by Charles Foster Kane. Then we get the famous series of shots leading to the closeup of the word "Rosebud" on a sled that has been tossed into a furnace, its paint curling in the flames. We remember that this was Kane's childhood sled, taken from him as he was torn from his family and sent east to boarding school.

Rosebud is the emblem of the security, hope and innocence of childhood, which a man can spend his life seeking to regain. It is the green light at the end of Gatsby's pier; the leopard atop Kilimanjaro, seeking nobody knows what; the bone tossed into the air in "2001." It is that yearning after transience that adults learn to suppress. "Maybe Rosebud was something he couldn't get, or something he lost," says Thompson, the reporter assigned to the puzzle of Kane's dying word. "Anyway, it wouldn't have explained anything." True, it explains nothing, but it is remarkably satisfactory as a demonstration that nothing can be explained.

Citizen Kane likes playful paradoxes like that. Its surface is as much fun as any movie ever made. Its depths surpass understanding. I have analysed it a shot at a time with more than 30 groups, and together we have seen, I believe, pretty much everything that is there on the screen. The more clearly, I can see its physical manifestation, the more I am stirred by its mystery.

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.

For his cast Welles assembled his New York colleagues, including Joseph Cotten as Jed Leland, the hero's best friend; Dorothy Comingore as Susan Alexander, the young woman Kane thought he could make into an opera star; Everett Sloane as Mr. Bernstein, the mogul's business wizard; Ray Collins as Gettys, the corrupt political boss, and Agnes Moorehead as the boy's forbidding mother. Welles himself played Kane from age 25 until his deathbed, using makeup and body language to trace the progress of a man increasingly captive inside his needs. "All he really wanted out of life was love," Leland says. "That's Charlie's story—how he lost it."

The structure of *Citizen Kane* is circular, adding more depth every time it passes over the life. The movie opens with newsreel obituary footage that briefs us on the life and times of Charles Foster Kane; this footage, with its portentous narration, is Welles' bemused nod in the direction of the "March of Time" newsreels then being produced by another media mogul, Henry Luce. They provide a map of Kane's trajectory, and it will keep us oriented as the screenplay skips around in time, piecing together the memories of those who knew him.

The screenplay by Mankiewicz and Welles (which got an Oscar, the only one Welles ever won) is densely constructed and covers an amazing amount of ground, including a sequence showing Kane inventing the popular press; a record of his marriage, from early bliss to the famous montage of increasingly chilly breakfasts; the story of his courtship of Susan Alexander and her disastrous opera career, and Kane's eventual decline.

The film's construction shows how our lives, after we are gone, survive only in the memories of others, and those memories butt up against the walls we erect and the roles we play. There is the Kane who made shadow figures with his fingers, and the Kane who hated the traction trust; the Kane who chose his mistress over his marriage and political career, the Kane who entertained millions, the Kane who died alone.

There is a master image in *Citizen Kane* you might easily miss. The tycoon has overextended himself and is losing control of his empire. After he signs the papers of his surrender, he turns and walks into the back of the shot. Deep focus allows Welles to play a trick of perspective. Behind Kane on the wall is a window that seems to be of average size. But as he walks toward it, we see it is further away and much higher than we thought. Eventually he stands beneath its lower sill, shrunken and diminished. Then as he walks toward us, his stature grows again. A man always seems the same size to himself, because he does not stand where we stand to look at him.

Source: www.RogerEbert.com Roger Ebert *Citizen Kane* 24/5/1998 ~ Edited extracts Accessed 2/1/2025

*Enhanced format

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COMING UP

See President's message.

Some Thoughts on: The Road to Patagonia

I grew to love this film. The openness of Matty Hannon and his willingness to expose his soul to the camera, warts and all, was challenging at first – a sort of naivety that made me wonder if this was an adopted persona for the sake of the doco. But it soon became obvious that it was all genuine. I knew it involved a motorcycle and presumed from the title that it would be a road trip but in fact the title was truer than I knew – the road was to Patagonia but in the end, it scarcely mattered whether he got there or not. The real goal(s) turned out to be what happened on the way. It's a commonplace now that "the purpose is not the destination but the journey" but in fact, to truly acknowledge this means that you have to let go, relinquish any sort of expectation or control. That is something that few of us are able or willing to do. Matty does, and so does Heather.

There was calmness and resilience of working out what to do with the unexpected, or at least the unplanned for: how to ride a horse; how to put on a bridle; the idea of making a cradle for the surfboards so that they did not upset the horses; the beautiful leather (probably handmade?) stirrups; making do without water.....these are only a few.

His environmental and ecological concerns must have been with him from his childhood – that's what he studied at university and that's what he pursued in practical form in Indonesia for 5 years. His clinical depression after another 5 years in a Melbourne office told him, and tells us of his soul-sickness and though I have no idea why he chose the Americas to travel (and perhaps neither did he), it was obviously important that he travel and surf and live as close to nature as circumstances would allow. Possibly it was to do with learning about the unfamiliar, as far away from home as possible, not because he was "escaping" but because he needed to experience how the same lessons about living with nature, applied everywhere, in every country, in every culture. The individuals and communities he meets along the way helped form and firm his growing sense of what it means to be human. As various religious teachers in various traditions have said, we are already spiritual creatures; the hard bit is learning how to be human. It seemed to me that Matty was already intensely alive to the spirit in Nature, whether he called it animism or shamanism or simply spirituality, but what he experienced was seeing how it could actually be lived in an authentic way. From Alaska south, indeed from the Indonesian episode on, I kept on being reminded of the great gift our own First Nations people have offered us, on how to live not just in harmony with the natural world, but to consider ourselves utterly co-dependent on it and with it.

The beautiful photography, from the handheld disasters to the incredible Andes and night skies and waves and surfers....how did he do it? Once Heather joined him, I presume she took some of the footage, but there were other shots where he must have relied on some bystanders – or perhaps he was able to set up his camera with a moving lens?? I have no idea. How did he manage to get a new one when everything was stolen in Mexico? After a while I stopped asking myself these questions and tried not to "be in control" of the story but like the horses, just let it happen. And while, towards the end after Heather had left, I wanted to know how he actually got to southern Patagonia, I then realised that that actually wasn't the point. The

point was – as it always is – relationship. With other people, communities, the ocean, the forests, the mountains, the animals and insects - all of it. And ultimately, and very satisfyingly, with Heather. I was glad that they ended up in Australia. It seemed fitting that he should choose to continue to work out how to be fully human here, in this country, with his family.

Exposure to other stories is always an invitation, a gateway to knowing. But it is only a gateway, that is, it is only an opportunity to know. Matty wanted not only to welcome and accept diversity, he wanted to know it, experience it. Brief or a bit longer, these sharings along the way enabled him to become the custodian of his own story. And as it turned out, his story is part of a much larger one, involving the whole planet – and indeed, after looking at those extraordinarily beautiful night skies, the whole cosmos.

Trish Topp

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