The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 388
“Woman of the Year”
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

“As for me, prizes are nothing. My prize is my work.”

Four-time Academy Award winner Katharine Hepburn.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 388. Woman of the Year.

Last time, I began talking about the American motion picture industry, often known by the metonym “Hollywood.” I gave you an overview of the “studio system,” which was the model for how these studios operated, and named the eight studios that qualified as “major studios” at the time. In descending order of commercial success and influence, these eight would be the Big Five—MGM, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, and RKO—followed by the Little Three—Universal, United Artists, and Columbia.

These studios were integrated businesses that controlled the industry every step of the way from writing the script to the theaters in which the finished movie was shown. Each of them had certain types of pictures they were noted for, and each of them had a CEO or head of production who controlled it all, running the studio as if they were medieval lords administering their domains. Next I began going over each of the studios to talk about what each was doing and some of their most important output of the period. Of the eight, I managed to cover…one. That would be Columbia Pictures.

I’m going to continue with this today, and who knows? I might be able to cover two or three! We’ll see.

Actually, I kid. A little. I covered the first of the Little Three, Columbia, but as for the other two, I’ve already discussed them a bit on the podcast, so this will be more like a quick review.

First, United Artists, which was founded in 1919 by some of the biggest names in film at the time because they wanted more control over their own work. These were Charles Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and D.W. Griffith. I told that story in episode 118. This was a radical act for the time, and United Artists was not so much run according to the studio system as it was an escape hatch from it.

The company had some early successes with a few Douglas Fairbanks' pictures such as *The Mark of Zorro*, but the studio was never very stable financially. Griffith dropped out in 1924, and Pickford and Fairbanks retired from acting in the early 1930s.

The company struggled. Mary Pickford became head of the studio in 1935, and United Artists became largely a producer and/or distributor of independently made films from an ever-changing pool of talent who came to United Artists for the sake of the creative freedom, and often left soon after to escape the chaos, including names like Gloria Swanson, Buster Keaton, Alexander Korda, and Samuel Goldwyn. Walt Disney left Columbia Pictures to enter into a distribution agreement with United Artists, which distributed some of his most important short animated films in the mid-Thirties, but he moved on as well, to RKO.

United Artists continued to struggle until the 1950s, but it was an outlet for creative independent work and served as a valuable counterweight to the power of the other studios.

Beyond management issues, United Artists struggled because the powerhouse film stars who founded it, once they were freed from studio oversight, were also freed from studio pressure to produce work on schedule, and their output slowed. While Douglas Fairbanks continued to make the sort of action films that were his specialty, the world's most famous film star, Charles Chaplin, chose as his first production at United Artists a 1923 drama titled *A Woman in Paris*, which he directed, but in which he did not appear. The film was acclaimed by critics, but left most audiences disappointed. It was not what they expected when they saw the name Charlie Chaplin on the poster.

Chaplin reverted to expectations for his next two films at United Artists, *The Gold Rush* and *The Circus*, both feature-length silent comedies with Charles Chaplin front and center, playing his "Little Tramp" character, although Chaplin made use of feature length to flesh out the stories with romance and even moments of poignancy. These films were both well received, especially *The Gold Rush*, which stands as one of the highest-grossing silent films ever made.

In 1931, Chaplin released his last film through United Artists, *City Lights*, in which Chaplin's Little Tramp falls in love with a blind flower girl. It was Chaplin's personal favorite of his own films and many regard it as his best. *City Lights* was essentially a silent film, though it had music and sound effects. This made it a rarity in 1931, by which time virtually all feature films had spoken dialog. Chaplain resisted adding dialog to his own films. He considered himself a pantomime artist, and felt that the character of the Little Tramp wouldn't work if he talked.

City Lights was a success, both critically and commercially, though there had been some grumbling about it being a silent film and thus out of step with the 1930s. These sentiments left Chaplin in low spirits. He began a relationship, which many found scandalous, with film actress Paulette Goddard, who was half his age, and took an increasing interest in politics and international affairs, which became obvious in his next film, 1936's *Modern Times. Modern Times* was another silent film with a soundtrack of music and special effects, but it also contained political and social commentary about industrialization and modern life that some found off-putting, but it was still hilarious and was acclaimed critically and commercially.

After the release of *Modern Times*, Chaplin and Goddard went on an extended tour of the Far East; they got married in China.

Chaplin became increasingly outspoken politically, expressing pacifist views and criticizing fascism in Europe. This drew the ire of the Nazi Party in Germany, which condemned him in its propaganda, claiming he was Jewish and on that basis, banning his films. He was not in fact Jewish. Once when he was asked, Chaplin replied, “I have not that good fortune.”

Despite their distaste for one another, Charles Chaplin and Adolf Hitler were two of the most famous names and most recognized faces in the world of the 1930s, and in a case of startling synchronicity, the two of them were quite similar in appearance: in their builds, their dark hair, and their mutual predilection for the toothbrush mustache. Both of them rose from poverty to prominence, and they were virtually the same age. Chaplin was born just a few days before Hitler was.

The resemblance between the two of them was much commented on at the time. A popular song in Britain in 1938 asked the musical question, “Who Is this Man (Who Looks like Charlie Chaplin?)” This resemblance inspired the politically active Chaplin to make his next film, and his first talking picture, a satire of Hitler: 1940's *The Great Dictator*. It was a controversial project, to make a feature film mocking a foreign leader, but Chaplin had the resources and the clout to pull it off. He financed the film himself and produced it independently.

In the film, which also starred his then-wife, Paulette Goddard, Chaplin plays two roles. The first is a Jewish barber who was a hero in the last war, but was left comatose for twenty years. He awakens in a nation he scarcely can recognize. Whether or not you can call this character The Little Tramp is a question that is surprisingly controversial, but they do look the same and share a lot of character traits. This character speaks, however, since Chaplin could not imagine how to make a film that mocked Hitler without dialog, although the barber does also get mixed up in incidents of silent slapstick very much in the mode of The Little Tramp. Chaplin making the character Jewish was itself perhaps some sly mockery of the Nazis and their claims about his heritage.

The second character he portrays is Adenoid Hynkel, the Phooey of the imaginary nation of Tomania, the same country the barber lives in. Hynkel is transparently a parody of Adolf Hitler.

Chaplin surrounded the character with other parodies, Hynkel's two closest advisors: Herring and Garbitsch, along with fellow dictator, Benzino Napaloni, the Diggadaditche of Bacteria.

In one of the film's most memorable scenes, Chaplain, as the dictator, dances a ballet with a balloon globe of the world to the music of Richard Wagner's opera *Lohengrin*, only to collapse into tears when the balloon pops.

The Great Dictator was the first Hollywood film to mock Adolf Hitler, unless you count The Three Stooges short, *You Nazty Spy*, which was filmed and released while *The Great Dictator* was in production. The Second World War also began while the film was in production. It was released in January 1940, during the period of the Sitzkrieg. It was okay to poke fun at Hitler by this time, and the film was well received in the United States and in the United Kingdom, but the ending of the movie drew criticism. Here Chaplin all but abandoned the story to have his character address the audience directly in a plea for tolerance and peace.

The film cost $1.5 million to make and represented a financial gamble for Chaplin, but it paid off handsomely, earning a big return despite the fact that the film was banned in Germany and Occupied Europe; also in Ireland and a number of Latin American countries.

The big unanswered question about this movie is whether noted film buff Adolf Hitler ever saw it. Reportedly Hitler did screen the film, twice, in private, but it seems he never shared his opinion of it with anyone else. Chaplin said, "I'd give anything to know what he thought of it."

[music: Wagner, Prelude to Act I, *Lohengrin*.]

Universal Pictures was founded in 1912, which makes it one of the oldest American studios. It began in New York, but soon made the move to Hollywood. Its principal founder was Carl Laemmle, who was born in what is now Germany and emigrated to the United States in 1884, when he was still a teenager.

Laemmle worked as a bookkeeper until 1906, when he took note of the rising popularity of motion pictures and opened a nickelodeon in Chicago. This was the beginning of a chain of nickelodeons, which led to Laemmle founding a film company to make pictures for his theaters. He merged his company with several others in 1912 to form Universal Pictures, with Laemmle himself running the company.

Universal was vertically integrated, with a production facility, a distribution business and a chain of theaters all owned by one corporation. You may recall from episode 288 that Walt Disney produced "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit" cartoons for Universal through distributor Charles Mintz. Mintz then forced Disney out and took control of the character; later Universal forced Mintz out and created its own in-house animation studio to produce more "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit" cartoons. The new studio was headed by cartoonist Walter Lantz.

In those early years, Universal had the largest production facility in Hollywood. Under Laemmle, the studio concentrated on low-budget offerings, mostly westerns and melodramas. It was essentially a studio that produced only B pictures. Unlike the way the other studios did business, Universal paid all the costs of producing its films. Also unlike other studios, Laemmle opened his studio to tourists, which provided another source of revenue.

Nepotism was and is quite common in Hollywood, but Laemmle took it to a whole other level. It is said that at one time, he had more than 70 of his relatives on the studio payroll. In 1928, Laemmle's son, Carl Laemmle Jr., celebrated his 21st birthday. As a birthday present, his dad handed over to him control of the studio.

Remember that next time you begin wondering why you haven't gotten farther in your own life.

The younger Laemmle took control over the studio just as talking pictures and Technicolor were coming into their own, and he was quick to embrace the new technologies. He took more risks than his father by funding more ambitious and more lavish productions, with mixed results. Universal's 1930 release of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, directed by Lewis Milestone and adapted from the novel by German author Erich Maria Remarque, was a huge success, critically and commercially. It won the Academy Awards for Best Director and Best Picture that year. Also, the Nazis hated it, and what better endorsement could you ask for?

It was also under Junior's management that Universal found its niche producing horror films, like 1931's *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, 1932's *The Mummy*, and 1933's *The Invisible Man*. But the Depression was hard on the studio; it was hard on everyone. In 1936, Junior embarked on the production of *Show Boat*, a big-budget film adaptation of the 1927 Broadway musical. For the first time in the studio's history, it was forced to take out a loan to finance the production. When the project ran over budget, the loan was called and the Laemmles lost control of the studio, although when the film was finally released it was a huge success.

This production had Paul Robeson sing "Old Man River," the song that was written for him, and for what it's worth, watching his performance makes me tear up.

Under its new management, Universal went back to its bread and butter: low budget "B pictures," Westerns, melodramas, and now multiple sequels to those famous horror pictures. Universal did have a big hit in *Destry Rides Again*, a 1939 Western comedy directed by George Marshall and starring James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich. I'm not going to bother summarizing the story because most of you have seen *Blazing Saddles*. Stewart plays a drunk who is appointed sheriff of the town of Bottleneck by a corrupt mayor who wants an ineffective lawman, but he surprises everyone by being good at his job. Dietrich plays a saloon girl in league with the bad guys, who falls in love with Stewart's character and switches sides. Any of this sound familiar?

So much for the Little Three; now we'll turn to the littlest of the big five, RKO Radio Pictures, usually known simply as RKO. RKO was a Johnny-come-lately to the film industry. It only appeared on the scene after talking pictures had been introduced. RKO was created though a deal between Boston businessman Joseph Kennedy and RCA, the giant electronics company, in 1928. Kennedy stitched together a few small studios and a theater chain and, backed with RCA's money, attempted to build a major film studio overnight.

Had I been around at the time, I would have been tempted to bet against this project. Even if RKO had the assets of a major studio, it didn't have the experience and knowhow of a major studio. But RKO had plenty of money to spend and enjoyed early success with a few musicals, but it soon developed a reputation as a studio that released second-rate films. In 1931, RKO released *Cimarron*, a Western starring Richard Dix and Irene Dunne and directed by Wesley Ruggles. *Cimarron* won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture, which helped the studio's reputation, even though the film lost money, owing to its extravagant budget of $1.4 million.

In an effort to boost the studio, RCA general manager David Sarnoff replaced the production head at RKO with the 29-year-old David O. Selznick. Selznick was born in Pittsburgh, the son of a father who was—say it with me—a Jewish immigrant from what was then the Russian Empire. He was born simply David Selznick, with no middle name, but he adopted the "O" because he liked the sound of it. It doesn't stand for anything.

The elder Selznick had been a silent film distributor, so David was born into the business, so to speak. He cemented his place in the industry by marrying Irene Mayer, the daughter of MGM studio chief Louis B. Mayer. Remember what I said about Hollywood and nepotism?

Selznick only lasted at RKO for 15 months, before quitting in a dispute with the company president, but during that brief tenure, he made some important changes that turned the studio into a major player. First, he clamped down on the budgets, and second, gave individual film producers more creative freedom than was typical in the studio system. The goal was to produce better films at a lower cost.

He also signed two performers who would prove lucrative for the studio. The first was a 24-year-old up-and-coming stage actress named Katharine Hepburn. And here's a fun fact: Mrs. History of the Twentieth Century is a distant cousin of Katharine Hepburn's. That makes me one of her in-laws.

Selznick had doubts about her looks; she was not what you would call Hollywood beautiful, and Hepburn asked for a salary of $1,500 per week, which was an awful lot of money for someone who had yet to prove she was even capable of making a decent picture. But there was something distinctive about her, and Selznick took a chance, signing her at first to a short-term contract.

She was cast in the 1932 melodrama *A Bill of Divorcement*, directed by George Cukor. I'll have more to say about him later. She more than held her own opposite one of the leading actors of the day, John Barrymore. The film was successful commercially and hailed by the critics, many of whom singled out Hepburn's performance for special praise.

That was enough to convince RKO. They signed her to a seven-year contract. Her third picture, 1933's *Morning Glory*, directed by Lowell Sherman, paired her with Douglas Fairbanks Jr.—nepotism alert—and won her her first Academy Award for Best Actress. Hepburn did not attend the award ceremony at which she received the award; in fact, she never attended an Academy Award ceremony. She did accept the statuette, though.

Her next picture, also released in 1933, was *Little Women*, directed by Cukor and based on the novel by Louisa May Alcott. Hepburn got top billing for this one, and again brought in rave reviews and abundant ticket sales. By 1934, she was a major star.

In 1938, Hepburn got top billing over Cary Grant in the screwball comedy *Bringing Up Baby*, directed by Howard Hawks. In this film, Grant plays a prim and proper paleontologist; Hepburn a free-spirited young woman who crosses paths with Grant's character and upends his life. The titular "Baby" is a leopard, owned by Hepburn's character.

Alas, *Bringing Up Baby* got mixed reviews and was a commercial failure, although in our time it is regarded as a classic—one of the greatest of the screwball comedies so popular in that period. It's failure was also bad for Hepburn's career. After her initial successes, she appeared in a string of films that lost money. For a time, she was tagged as "box-office poison."

Selznick also signed a dancer named Fred Astaire, again despite reservations about his looks. Selzick wrote in a memo, "I am uncertain about the man, but I feel, in spite of his enormous ears and bad chin line, that his charm is so tremendous that it comes through…"

RKO loaned Astaire out to MGM for his first picture. For his second, they paired him with another dancer they had under contract named Ginger Rogers, in the 1933 musical *Flying Down to Rio*. Ginger Rogers got higher billing than he did on that picture, although they both were playing supporting roles. The critics noticed Astaire. *Variety* raved that "as a dancer, he remains in a class by himself."

They were teamed together again the following year in the musical comedy *The Gay Divorcee*, this time with Astaire and Rogers getting top billing. Astaire was at first leery of becoming part of a team. He told his agent, "I don't mind making another picture with her, but as for this 'team' idea, it's out!" But there was no arguing with success. Astaire and Rogers made nine films together at RKO; they were among the biggest hits in the studio's short history. As Katharine Hepburn quipped, "He gives her class and she gives him sex appeal."

RKO assigned choreographer Hermes Pan to work with Rogers and then Astaire, and credit has to be given to Pan and Astaire for their breakthrough choreography. The standard for a dance number in early Hollywood musicals was a big production with many dancers. The choreographer who perfected that approach was Busby Berkeley, who made a series of musical films for Warner Brothers, notably *42nd Street* and *Gold Diggers of 1933*. Berkeley went in for spectacle, with lots of dancers in lavish costumes and camera shots from many angles, including overhead, or from a camera gliding among the performers as they danced.

This sort of thing was very popular during the depths of the Great Depression, but then came Astaire, who revolutionized dance on film. He danced alone or with Rogers on a realistic set with a camera that stayed put, keeping the performance grounded and making it feel as if Astaire had performed the whole dance in one take.

Selznick also did RKO a huge favor by approving production of the 1933 film *King Kong*, about a giant gorilla discovered on a remote island and brought to New York City to be put on display. I hardly need to tell you the ending, do I? Famously, the chained-up King Kong goes berserk from the photographers' flash bulbs and breaks free, seizes the beautiful Ann Darrow, played by Fay Wray, and carries her along as he climbs the outside of the Empire State Building, until he is brought down by fighter planes. The film ends with the immortal line, "[I]t wasn't the airplanes. It was Beauty killed the Beast."

The movie was a gigantic success, you could call it one of the first special effects blockbusters in cinema history, and is still familiar today, even to people who have never seen it. It is also riddled with the racism and sexism of the time. It led to a sequel, *Son of Kong*, also released in 1933. Since then the character has appeared in eight more feature films produced in the United States and in Japan.

Almost as famous as *King Kong* is RKO's 1941 release, *Citizen Kane*. The story of this film begins with Orson Welles and his famous 1937 *War of the Worlds* adaptation for radio, which some listeners mistook for reality. I told you about that incident in episode 309. *War of the Worlds* tarnished Welles' reputation some, but at RKO, they viewed this young man who had already conquered stage and radio as someone who might also become a great filmmaker. As for the negative publicity *War of the Worlds* brought him, the leadership at RKO adopted the common Hollywood view that, as Oscar Wilde put it, the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about, and Welles had proven himself to be someone people were always talking about.

Welles co-wrote, produced, directed, and starred in the film, which was released in 1941. Welles based the film on the life of William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper magnate. Hearst, however, was still very much alive in 1941, and Welles underestimated either how much Hearst would become enraged when he got wind of the project, or how much clout he still could wield, or both. Hearst pressured RKO not to release the film; when that didn't work, he directed his

newspapers not to review the film or accept advertisements for it or in any way acknowledge its existence.

The film was hailed by the critics, but produced mixed results at the box office. *Citizen Kane* made a profit and earned its backers a reasonable return, but the returns were disappointing in light of Welles's reputation and all that critical acclaim. This may have been because of Hearst's campaign against the film. Or maybe because *Citizen Kane's* message, that a happy person can garner wealth, success, fame, and power, and end up miserable, was not a message 1941 audiences were ready to hear.

I promised you I would talk about George Cukor before the end of today's episode, so let's get to it. Cukor was born in 1899, the son of Jewish immigrants from what was then Hungary—surprised you there, didn't I?

Cukor got into theatre and was directing shows on Broadway before he was thirty. When talking pictures came in, movie studios began to recruit stage directors, and Paramount recruited Cukor, who started as a dialect coach and was directing films by 1930. After a falling out with Paramount, Cukor signed with his childhood friend David O. Selznick at RKO.

I already told you that Cukor directed Katharine Hepburn in her debut film, *A Bill of Divorcement* and again in *Little Women*, two films that established Hepburn as a major film star. At least in part because of Hepburn, Cukor developed a reputation as a "women's director," meaning that he was particularly skilled at directing actresses. Cukor himself resented that description, as he also got some memorable performances out of male actors. Also, the label may have been a sly reference to the fact that Cukor was gay. This was an open secret in Hollywood at the time, though in keeping with the expectations of the period, Cukor was discreet and kept his private life private. His only indulgence was regular Sunday afternoon pool parties at his home, to which only his circle of gay friends were invited.

When Selznick left RKO, he went over to MGM, where, remember, he was the boss's son-in-law. Cukor went to MGM along with him. His first picture for MGM was 1933's *Dinner at Eight*, a comedy-drama adapted from a stage play written by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber, two names which should be familiar from episode 243, where I talked about the Algonquin Roundtable. *Dinner at Eight* is notable for how deftly it balances its humor and its tragedy, not to mention how Cukor balanced the performances of its large ensemble cast.

In 1935, Cukor directed *David Copperfield*, adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens. The film was well received and nominated for three Academy Awards. *David Copperfield* is notable for casting comedian W.C. Fields in his only serious film role. Fields was an avid reader and a great admirer of Dickens; he had long dreamed of playing a role in a film based on one of Dickens' books, and Cukor made his dream into reality.

By the late Thirties, Katherine Hepburn's film career was in trouble. After rising so quickly, her fortunes had fallen. In 1939, she left Hollywood altogether to return to the stage. Playwright Philip Barry wrote a play specifically intended as a vehicle for Hepburn. Hepburn was very pleased with it, and helped launch the production by agreeing to play the lead role in exchange for a percentage of the profits, with no salary up front.

Hepburn was at the time dating the wealthy aviator and engineer Howard Hughes, who had founded Hughes Aircraft in 1932. Hughes would become a household name in his own right, but in 1939, he was best known to the general public as Katharine Hepburn's boyfriend. Hughes read the script for this play and felt so sure it would rekindle her career that he bought the film rights to the play before it was produced and gave them to Hepburn as a gift.

The play was called *The Philadelphia Story*. Hepburn plays a divorced socialite named Tracy Lord from an elite Main Line family. On the eve of her second wedding, she has to balance her obligations to her stuffy fiancé against her love/hate relationship with her ex-husband and with the New York magazine reporter assigned to cover the wedding, whose presence she initially resents, until she begins to warm to him as well. By the end of the play, Tracy's behavior toward the other two men causes her fiancé to call off the wedding. She almost marries the journalist, but decides instead to fix him up with his photographer and remarry her first husband.

The play was a big success on Broadway and several studios expressed interest in the film rights. Hepburn cut a deal with MGM, the biggest studio of the time, on condition that she play the lead and choose her own director and co-stars. She chose Cukor as director, Cary Grant to play the role of the ex-husband, and Jimmy Stewart as the reporter.

Hepburn had a strategy, and it was quite shrewd. She recognized that the sort of strong, free-spirited character she normally played came across to the public as haughty, perhaps even arrogant. Movie audiences had tired of this character and were finding her unlikeable.

Her solution was to put her trademark character into a story that would take her down a couple of pegs and show her vulnerable side. That's exactly what *The Philadelphia Story* does, and it accomplished exactly what Hepburn intended. The film was a big success with critics and audiences, becoming one of the highest grossing pictures of 1940. *Time* magazine's film critic wrote of Hepburn, "Come on back, Katie, all is forgiven."

The Philadelphia Story got six Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture, Best Director for Cukor, and Best Actress for Hepburn, her third in that category in seven years. It won in two categories: Best Screenplay Adaptation and Best Actor for Jimmy Stewart. It would be Stewart's first and only Oscar. He'd been nominated the previous year for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*; Stewart said he believed his Oscar win had more to do with that film than this one.

Hepburn herself had shown Hollywood how to cast her, and in case anyone missed the point, she did it again. In 1941, a screenwriter approached her with an idea for another film that would be

written especially for her. Hepburn herself contributed to writing the script and sold MGM on the idea. Again, she picked her director and her co-star: this time, they were George Stevens and Spencer Tracy.

The film was a romantic comedy in which Hepburn plays a newspaper columnist. It was called *Woman of the Year*. It won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay and garnered Hepburn her fourth nomination for Best Actress.

It was a commercial and critical success. A number of critics commented on the chemistry between Hepburn and Tracy. The studio noticed too; Hepburn and Tracy would be paired again in eight more films. The duo had off-screen chemistry as well. They began a romantic relationship that lasted until his death in 1967.

But that is a story for another episode. We'll have to stop here for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Dan for his kind donation, and thank you to Greg for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Dan and Greg help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone always, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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The end of year holidays are upon us, so it's that time of year when I remind you that donations to and patronages of *The History of the Twentieth Century* make the perfect holiday gift…for me. You never have to worry if it's the right size or the right color or if it's to my tastes, and I can promise you it will never be returned.

Now I recognize that not everyone has a patronage or a donation in their budget. If that's the case, might I suggest a rating and review that would help the podcast find new listeners. That would make a nice present, too. Or maybe you can find a new listener yourself, someone in your life who might enjoy becoming a listener. And as always, I thank *you* for being a listener.

I've got more to say about Hollywood, and four more studios to get through, so that's four more episodes, probably, but we'll set that aside for now, because the Second World War is still raging. Next week is a bye week for the podcast, but I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, here on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as consider Germany's position, and Adolf Hitler's

position, in the aftermath of the disaster at Stalingrad. On the Defensive, in two weeks' time, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. George Cukor was the original director chosen to direct one of the biggest films of this era: *Gone with the Wind*. But he was fired three weeks into the project. The reason remains a matter in dispute. By some accounts, producer David O. Selznick was unhappy with his work. Others say that it was Clark Gable who forced Cukor off the project. Why? It may have been that Gable was uncomfortable working with a gay director, but there are also rumors that Gable himself was a part of the Hollywood gay scene when he was a young unknown and crossed paths with Cukor back then, and that he was uncomfortable working with a director who was aware of a past Gable would sooner have forgotten.

According to Selznick, about half an hour's worth of the finished film are scenes directed by Cukor.

[music: Closing War Theme]

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