



Citizen Kane
A Filmmaker's Journey
is the new and expanded edition of Harlan Lebo's extraordinary exploration of the creation of Orson Welles's classic film. A treasure trove of remarkable images, the book is a captivating tale of conspiracy, blackmail, and Communist witch hunts, detailing the extraordinary rise of Welles, the rebel who, at twenty-five years old, defied the studio system and became a Hollywood icon—simply by making the greatest film of all time.

About the first edition:

“Highly readable . . . lucid, and page-turning. Fans of Welles and classic Hollywood will be delighted by this comprehensive, intelligent work.”

—*Publisher's Weekly*

“This book is a gold mine for fans.”

— *Kirkus Reviews*

“The most thorough account yet of the genesis, production and release of Welles's most famous film. It's never been presented this comprehensively.”

— *New York Times Book Review*

“Aside from this thorough study, it's Lebo's engaging writing style that is the chief feature of this volume. The author gives as full a view of *Kane* and its origins as has ever been written.”

— *Library Journal*

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CITIZEN KANE

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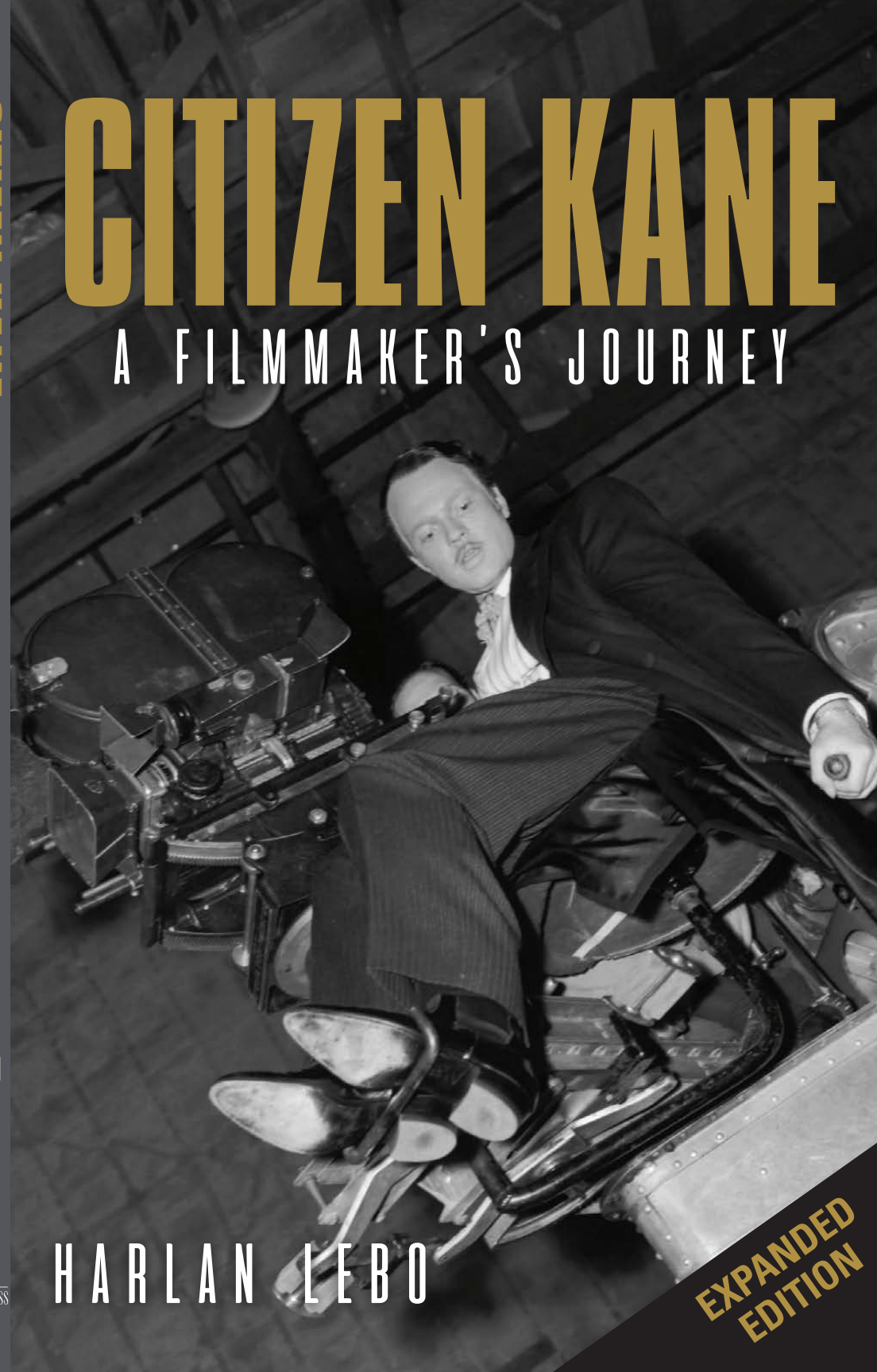
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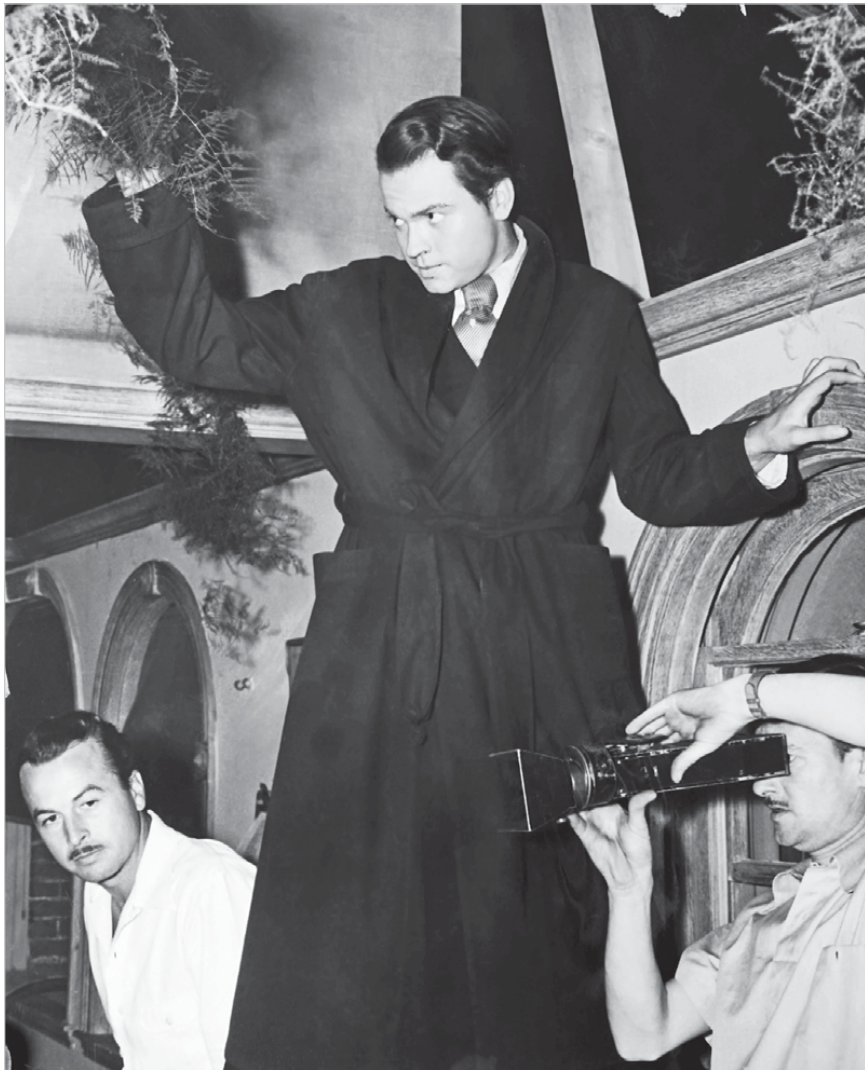
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A FILMMAKER'S JOURNEY

HARLAN LEBO

EXPANDED
EDITION





Orson Welles, in costume as newspaper publisher Charles Foster Kane, sets up a shot of the party scene in the *New York Inquirer* newsroom, along with director of cinematography, Gregg Toland (with viewfinder), his principal creative partner on the film.

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The number of times that Welles visited Victorville lingers as yet another hazy issue: Houseman says Welles visited once, but Richard Baer remembered multiple trips, with other portions of the script “sent in relays” to Hollywood. Richard Wilson, who had also come west to work with Welles, remembered his own treks with Welles to visit the writers.

Ruth Warrick, already in Los Angeles, recalled the deliveries of pages to RKO—and Welles’s reactions:

I was in the production office more than once as the courier arrived with sheets from the desert and I remember well how Orson would look them over, chuckling with pleasure or scribbling furious notes for rewrite.

The material was acceptable, but much of it was unimpressive; as pages began to arrive from Mankiewicz and Houseman, Welles was not wild about the quality. Welles’s assistant Kathryn Trospen remembered that, several times after reviewing a week’s work sent down from Victorville, Welles said, “This stuff stinks.”

Baer also recalled that Welles would “fume about the pages that arrived from Mankiewicz,” and would call much of the material “dreadful.” Baer, who made the trip (or was it two?) with Welles to Victorville, remembered: “On the return trip, Orson would read new pages, often cursing the results. He would start rewriting in the car, and continue in the office, turning his new pages over to Trospen.” Welles’s revisions, Baer wrote, were not limited to mere general suggestions, but “included the actual rewriting of words, dialogue, changing of sequences, ideas, and characterizations, and also the addition or elimination of scenes.”

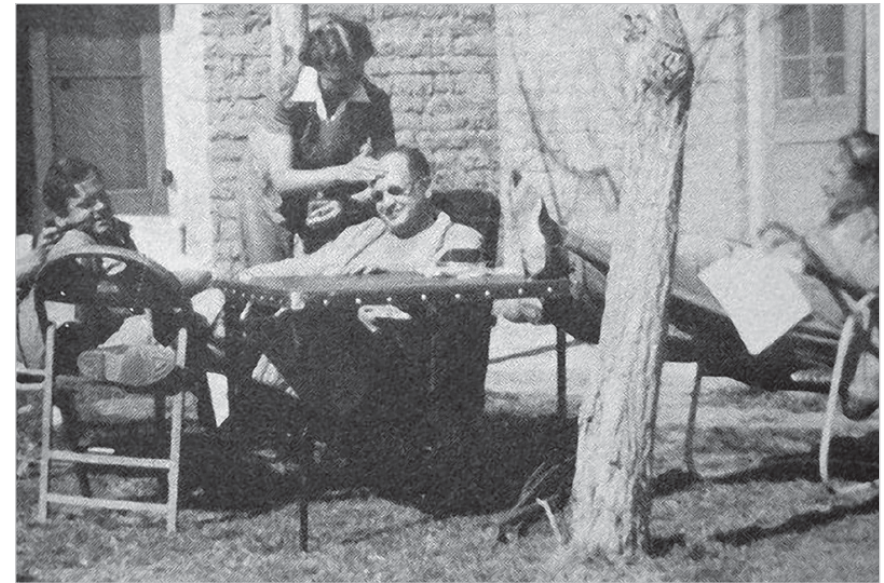
Mankiewicz and Houseman sent the first major draft to Welles in mid-April, a massive 267-page script. But the work was not yet complete: after page 212 was a fifty-eight-page gap left for material about Kane’s developing relationship with his second wife, Susan Alexander. Two weeks later, another forty-four draft pages were completed, and Mankiewicz and Houseman returned to Los Angeles during the second week in May.

The draft contained enough content for at least two films—much of it too long at best, cumbersome and irrelevant at worst. Houseman admitted that the initial draft was “over rich, repetitious, and loaded with irrelevant, fascinating detail and private jokes—of which we loved every one.”

There would be much work for Welles to do.



Mankiewicz’s script for *American* told the mammoth story of the life of Charles Foster Kane, a newspaper publisher whose struggles to be loved and accepted led to his ruin. While the script did include the most basic story



Welles (left), Mankiewicz (center), and Houseman (right) in Victorville—far from Hollywood’s temptations. The woman applying suntan lotion to Mankiewicz’s head is either Rita Alexander or the unidentified nurse who tended Mankiewicz’s broken leg.

structure that was featured in the film, the plot varied greatly from the finished motion picture (reading this summary after viewing the film offers the best opportunity for comparison).

The early versions of the draft script featured a host of twists, bits of Hollywood gimmickry, and lengthy asides—among them murder, corporate espionage, and an assassination attempt on the president of the United States.

(In some draft material—primarily in notes from the discussions in Los Angeles and in some of the Victorville writing sessions as well—the central figure of the film was named Charles Foster Rogers, and later Charles Foster Craig. For clarity, “Charles Foster Kane” is used here throughout.)

In *American*, readers are introduced to Kane in a structure similar to the final film: Mankiewicz’s script begins with the panorama of the decaying Xanadu (also called “Alhambra” in early pages). It then moves into Kane’s bedroom and shows his deathbed. As Kane dies, he whispers a single word, “Rosebud.” Clutched in his hand is a snow globe containing a rustic cabin scene; the snow globe falls to the floor and shatters.

The action then jumps to a newsreel that covers Kane’s life and death (in the original script, this segment is called *The March of Time*, like the actual newsreels of that period). “To forty-four million news buyers, more newsworthy than the names in his own headlines, more potent and more bitterly

discussed than the world figures he helped to create, was Charles Foster Kane, greatest newspaper tycoon of this or any other generation,” reports the newsreel narrator.

The newsreel script captures the highlights and defeats in Kane’s life in

1.

FADE IN ON:
 THE LITERALLY INCREDIBLE DOMAIN
 of Charles Foster ~~Rogers~~ ^{CRAIG}. Its right flank ^{Gulf Coast}
 resting for nearly forty miles on the Atlantic
~~Coast~~, it truly extends in all directions farther
 than the eye can see. Designed by nature to
 be almost completely ^{barren and} flat -- it was, as will
 develop, practically all marsh land when
 Rogers acquired it and changed its face -- it is
 now pleasantly uneven, with ^{no fine} a share of rolling
 hills and one very good-sized mountain, all
 man-made. ^{Almost all} ~~Very little of~~ the land is ~~unimproved~~,
 either through cultivation for farming purposes
 or through careful ^{handicraft} ~~manicuring~~; in the shape of
 parks and lakes, and it is dotted with collections
 of houses, sometimes alone, sometimes in clusters
 big enough to make tiny villages. To a man
 high in an airplane, the whole thing would be
 dominated by the man-made mountain, though it
 is certainly not anywhere near exactly dead
 center.

~~DISCONTINUED~~

~~THE MAN THAT IS CERTAINLY.~~

The manicuring of nature would seem here
 to have been done by hand. ~~Everything, basic, my,~~
 is neat and ~~crafted~~. The castle itself, an
 enormous pile -- ~~it~~ is compounded of several

CONTINUED

The opening page from the first draft of *American*, Herman Mankiewicz’s first tentative steps in the project—a draft so early in the work that the lead character was named “Charles Foster Rogers,” and then changed to “Craig.” The heavily marked edits are by Welles.



Film of Kane and Theodore Roosevelt for the “News on the March” newsreel was deliberately mutilated to simulate age by editor Robert Wise and assistant Mark Robson, a task accomplished by grinding footage in bags of sand and across the concrete floor of the cutting room. (0:08:32)

the 1940s and 1950s—including *The Curse of the Cat People* (1944), *The Body Snatcher* (1945), *The Set-Up* (1949), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), and *I Want to Live!* (1958)—as well as two of Hollywood’s biggest blockbusters: *West Side Story* (1961) and *The Sound of Music* (1965).

Wise broke into the film business at RKO in 1933 as a nineteen-year-old apprentice, and by the summer of 1938, he was an editor at the studio. Wise’s editing for Welles began while filming was underway, and he visited the set at least once a day to see how the work was progressing. As Wise recalled:

Orson would describe what he wanted to accomplish with a particular segment, and I would take notes and go back into the editing room to cut the scene. I worked with my assistant, Mark Robson, to assemble the footage, and then Orson would review what we had done.

Welles reviewed the visual plan and the material with Wise, then let his editor proceed unencumbered by a hovering producer-director-star (Welles would, however, later request many changes or revisions as Wise showed him the progress).

“Much of my editing involved merely taking the marvelous material and putting it in proper shape,” said Wise. “Orson told me what he wanted to

CHAPTER 3
THE SCRIPT

I don't know—I'm making it up as I go along.

—HERMAN J. MANKIEWICZ

TWO WEEKS AFTER Mankiewicz joined the RKO payroll, he and Houseman departed Hollywood for Victorville, a desert community well-known to Hollywood filmmakers; Westerns had been shot in the nearby scrub country since the early days of silent films. Two years before, director John Ford had filmed portions of *Stagecoach* on a nearby dry lake, including the climactic Indian chase.

With their ideas mutually agreed-upon by Welles and Mankiewicz, the story that would become *Citizen Kane* began to evolve, as Welles recalled, in two separate projects.

“Mankiewicz went to the desert to write his, and I stayed in Hollywood to write mine,” said Welles.

Also understood was Welles allowing Mankiewicz to work on his own terms. As Houseman remembered it:

At Mank's insistence and remembering how badly I had worked with Orson peering over my shoulder, it was clearly stated in the agreement that we would do our work without interference.

Houseman and Mankiewicz settled at the Kemper Campbell Ranch, also known as the Verde Guest Ranch, a small, out-of-the-way resort a mile from town and owned by Litta Belle Campbell, an expert at keeping celebrities sober. The three-hour drive from Los Angeles on Route 66 would discourage Welles from dropping in unexpectedly to check on their progress. Joining the writers were a nurse (her name apparently lost to history) to tend Mankiewicz's leg, and Rita Alexander, a secretary willing to tolerate the professional demands of the writers entrenched in their desert retreat.

Supplementing her secretarial support for the writers, Alexander handled less traditional chores, such as helping Mankiewicz with his unique

**THANK YOU,
Orson Welles!**

CITIZEN KANE

**IS A VERY FINE PRODUCTION, THE
RESULT OF GREAT INITIATIVE AND
COURAGE, ESPECIALLY UNDER THE
MOST TRYING OF CIRCUMSTANCES.**

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