



Little Caesar (RosettaBooks Into Film)

By W. R. Burnett

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Little Caesar (RosettaBooks Into Film) By W. R. Burnett

W.R. Burnett had first-hand experience of the world he describes in his vivid and terse novel *Little Caesar* (1929).

The novel's hero, Cesare Bandello (Rico), is a "gutter Macbeth", a bad guy who claws his way through the ranks of a Chicago gang, circa 1928. Though the image of Rico is almost inseparable from Edward G. Robinson's star-making performance in the 1930 film version of the book, the novel, inspired in part by Machiavelli's *The Prince*, remains a fuller experience. It is believed to have had a profound effect on William Faulkner, Horace McCoy, and Graham Greene.

There is nothing heroic about Rico. He is not a dashing or even especially talented man; the one gift he possesses is a laser-like focus. It is this intensity that sets him apart from the slovenly hoods that surround him.

Rico is a cold, clear-eyed student of human nature. This knowledge initially provides Rico's success, but when it crystallizes into hubris, it results in his ultimate undoing. Rico becomes too satisfied with his success, forgetting that he has prevailed in what is essentially a jungle and that in this place, the laws of survival are immutable and unsparing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Riley Burnett (1899-1981) was a master of fiction, a skillful writer, contemporary to James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, and Dashiell Hammett. Burnett authored some 36 novels and either wrote alone or in collaboration 60 screenplays. His novels *Little Caesar*, *High Sierra*, *The Asphalt Jungle* represent a rich vein of thought in contemporary American literature and culture.

After he began his career as a writer, Burnett moved to Chicago in the late 1920s at the height of Al Capone's power and sway over the city. It was this atmosphere, Chicago in the '20s and notably the St. Valentine's Day Massacre (Burnett was one of the first people on the scene) that inspired Burnett's first great success *Little Caesar*, which was made into a film by the same name starring Edward G. Robinson.

After this initial success, Burnett had a strong, close working relationship with

Hollywood as both a novelist and screenwriter, and eventually found a champion in writer/director John Huston. Burnett collaborated with Huston on the adaptation of High Sierra in 1941 in which Humphrey Bogart redefined himself in the role of Roy Earle. The two men's paths crossed again when Huston filmed The Asphalt Jungle in 1950. The Mystery Writers of America awarded Burnett their highest honor--the prestigious title of Grand Master--at the 1980 Edgar Awards.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

From classic book to classic film, RosettaBooks has gathered some of most memorable books into film available. The selection is broad ranging and far reaching, with books from classic genre to cult classic to science fiction and horror and a blend of the two creating whole new genres like Richard Matheson's The Shrinking Man. Classic works from Vonnegut, one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, meet with E.M. Forster's A Passage to India. Whether the work is centered in the here and now, in the past, or in some distant and almost unimaginable future, each work is lasting and memorable and award-winning.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A notable collection of screenplays... All reproduce the film as shot, with extensive data... [and] full production credits." - American Cinematographer"

From the Back Cover

This book is about a 1931 Hollywood gangster classic. The Hollywood film industry responded to the dark economic conditions of the 1930's with escapist and nontopical films.

About the Author

Gerald Peary is film critic for the *Real Paper* in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Formerly Assistant Professor of English and Film at Rutgers University, he is the author of several books on cinema.

Tino Balio, Professor in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, is the author of *United Artists: The Company Built by the Stars*, *United Artists: The Company That Changed the Film Industry*, and the editor of *The American Film Industry* as well as the 22 volume Wisconsin/Warner Bros. Screenplay series, all published by the University of Wisconsin Press. He directed the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research from 1966 to 1982.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Goodman:

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