

## Brilliant director creator of Dietrich's mystique

There has never been a movie relationship like that between director Josef von Sternberg and star Marlene Dietrich. Sternberg made Dietrich everything she was, and she was the first to admit it. She was a phenomenon of the time matched only by Greta Garbo.

The pair made seven films together between 1930 and 1935. The first was the immortal *The Blue Angel*, and it was followed by such other beautiful, bizarre classics as *Morocco* (1930), *Shanghai Express* (1932) and the *Scarlett Empress* (1934). One of the two Sternberg films featured this weekend in the Sheldon Art Gallery Film Series is *Blonde Venus* (1932), the fifth of their films together.

*Blonde Venus* is a shadowy, back-street movie of a woman (Dietrich) on the run from her husband (Herbert Marshall), who tries to support her child. After a struggle with poverty, she becomes a successful nightclub singer.

Dietrich was the only actress of the time who could get away with wearing a white top hat, slacks and tails, as she did in one of her *Blonde Venus* numbers. Her famous "Hot Voodoo" scene also is in the movie; it is a perfect example of Sternberg's exotic eroticism.

Contrary to what many believe, Sternberg was not

a German director. He was born in Austria in 1894 and came to the U.S. at the age of seven. *The Blue Angel* was his only German-produced film, and when it was finished, he returned with his new star to America.

Sternberg's brilliance with film came with photography. He was, perhaps, the greatest developer of lighting effects in cinema, and his pictorial composition is rarely matched. His soft lighting and use of weird costumes and decor all helped created the *femme fatale* Dietrich image.

greg lukow  
key grip

After Sternberg directed Dietrich for the last time in *The Devil is a Woman* (1935), he endured nearly 20 years of frustrated filmmaking. Only occasionally was his craft allowed to show through as he put up with several films that he admits he never had his

heart in.

His last film was *Saga of Anatahan* (1953), the second of the Sternberg features to be shown at Sheldon this weekend. Filmed in Japan, it is the story of a small group of Japanese soldiers stranded on a desolate Pacific island, unaware that World War II has been over for years. In filming it, Sternberg had the most freedom from Hollywood restraints since his first experimental film in 1925. His narration adds another dimension to the film and makes it, perhaps, his most personal movie.

Many movie critics agree that between 1925 and 1935, Sternberg was the greatest film director in the world. The sour looking man with the Oriental moustache, silk dressing gown and riding boots was one of the few directors of his time to get his name up with the stars.

He always considered himself an artist, not a movie maker, but his films proclaim his firm grasp on both titles. In some ways he was a towering influence. He created the gangster-as-social-hero genre with silent masterpieces like *Underworld* and the *Docks of New York*. But he also was the one who took a second rate German actress and created a unique film mystique around her, the likes of which have not been seen since.

Essence,  
energy  
captured  
on album

By Diane Wanek  
*Between Nothingness and Eternity*-Mahavishnu Orchestra-Columbia

Anyone who has seen the Mahavishnu Orchestra live would agree that what it creates in its music is not evident on studio recordings. The dynamic energy and incredible production only can be experienced by seeing live.

It's unfortunate, then, that no one will see the orchestra as a group again, since it has disbanded. But much of its essence is captured on its new live recording, *Between Nothingness and Eternity*.

The album contains only three cuts, which might make one wary. Contrary to Ken Emerson's review in *Rolling Stone*,

John McLaughlin's music does progress and develop, as does the music of the other orchestra members. There is not a wasted note on the album; every musical device used is necessary. The result is tight music.

stick it in your ear

The abilities, even genius, of each group member have been expounded upon before; suffice it to say they are all playing up to par on this album.

The reason given for the Mahavishnu Orchestra breakup is clashing of egos. But at least we have left a group of

masterfully executed recordings made by possibly the most influential jazz/rock group in music.

*At Work in Europe*-Ben Webster-Prestige

It was unfortunate for American jazz audiophiles that Ben Webster chose to live the last 10 years of his life in Europe, away from the mainstream of jazz. If it weren't for old Duke Ellington recordings, many of us might not know him.

This double-disc release should help to acquaint many with his fine work. Recorded in 1969, it proves he had not lost his remarkable abilities.

In spite of poor back-up, Webster shines through.

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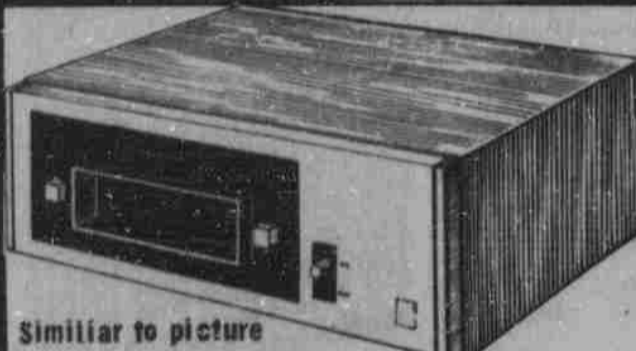
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