

# Victor Saville - Film Producer and Director

AN ART DEALER'S SON, VICTOR SAVILLE LIVED AT 13 SPEEDWELL ROAD IN BALSALL HEATH AND WAS EDUCATED AT KING EDWARD VI GRAMMAR SCHOOL IN BIRMINGHAM. HE SERVED IN THE BRITISH ARMY



DURING WORLD WAR I, WAS WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF LOOS IN 1915 AND INVALIDED OUT THE FOLLOWING YEAR. HIS FIRST INVOLVEMENT WITH THE FILM BUSINESS WAS AS MANAGER OF A SMALL THEATRE IN COVENTRY, WHERE HE WORKED DURING THE EVENINGS. IN THE DAYTIME, HE WAS EMPLOYED IN A FILM DISTRIBUTION OFFICE. FROM 1917, SAVILLE WORKED IN THE FEATURES AND NEWSREELS DEPARTMENT OF THE PATHÉ ORGANISATION IN LONDON. JUST TWO YEARS LATER, HE CO-FOUNDED VICTORY PICTURES IN CONJUNCTION WITH MICHAEL BALCON. HE PRODUCED HIS FIRST FILM, *WOMAN TO WOMAN*, WITH MICHAEL BALCON IN 1923, AND ON THE BACK OF ITS SUCCESS PRODUCED PICTURES FOR THE VETERAN DIRECTOR MAURICE ELVEY, INCLUDING THE CLASSIC BRITISH SILENT *HINDLE WAKES* (1927). HIS FIRST PICTURE AS DIRECTOR WAS *THE ARCADIAN* IN 1927. IN 1929 HE AND MICHAEL BALCON WORKED TOGETHER AGAIN ON A TALKIE REMAKE OF *WOMAN TO WOMAN* FOR BALCON'S COMPANY, GAINSBOROUGH PICTURES, THIS TIME DIRECTED BY SAVILLE HIMSELF. FROM 1931, AS GAINSBOROUGH PICTURES AND THE GAUMONT

BRITISH PICTURE CORPORATION JOINED FORCES, VICTOR SAVILLE PRODUCED A STRING OF COMEDIES, MUSICALS AND DRAMAS FOR GAINSBOROUGH AND GAUMONT-BRITISH, INCLUDING THE POPULAR JESSIE MATTHEWS PICTURES. IN 1937 HE LEFT TO SET UP HIS OWN PRODUCTION COMPANY, VICTOR SAVILLE PRODUCTIONS, AND MADE THREE PICTURES FOR ALEXANDER KORDA'S LONDON FILMS AT DENHAM STUDIOS.

AS AN INDEPENDENT PRODUCER HE HAD PURCHASED THE FILM RIGHTS TO A. J. CRONIN'S NOVEL *THE CITADEL*, AND WAS PERSUADED TO SELL THEM TO METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER IN RETURN FOR THE CHANCE TO PRODUCE THE FILM AND ANOTHER BIG-BUDGET ADAPTATION, *GOODBYE MR CHIPS* (1939). BOTH FILMS STARRED ROBERT DONAT AND WERE A GREAT SUCCESS IN THE USA AS WELL AS IN BRITAIN, PROVIDING SAVILLE WITH A PASSPORT TO HOLLYWOOD. WHEN THE WAR BROKE OUT HE WAS IN AMERICA AND WAS ADVISED TO REMAIN THERE, PRODUCING PICTURES IN SUPPORT OF THE WAR EFFORT SUCH AS *THE MORTAL STORM* AND *FOREVER AND A DAY* (IN WHICH HE WORKED FOR THE LAST TIME WITH HIS FORMER STAR JESSIE MATTHEWS), AND IN 1945 *TONIGHT AND EVERY NIGHT*, BASED ON THE WINDMILL THEATRE IN LONDON.



AFTER THE WAR HE CONTINUED DIRECTING FILMS FOR MGM BUT EVENTUALLY RETURNED TO BRITAIN. SAVILLE ACQUIRED PRODUCTION RIGHTS FOR MICKEY SPILLANE'S *MIKE HAMMER* AND PRODUCED A FEW FEATURES, THOUGH SPILLANE THOUGHT HE ONLY WAS INTERESTED IN DOING SO TO ACQUIRE THE MONEY TO PRODUCE *THE SILVER CHALICE*.<sup>[1]</sup> HE PRODUCED TWO FINAL FILMS IN THE 1960s, *THE GREENGAGE SUMMER* (1961) AND *MIX ME A PERSON* (1962).



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Legends of Balsall Heath