



# The Beat of His Own Drum

With one of the most singular careers in cinema, Orson Welles is best known as the director of two undisputed masterpieces—*Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*. But he continued to make interesting and innovative, if often troubled, films around the world for many years. Here are some portraits of the genius at work.



PHOTOS: PARAMOUNT/EVERETT, (OPPOSITE) COURTESY OF MARC WANAMAKER/BISON ARCHIVES

**OUT ON A LIMB:** (opposite) Along with cinematographer Gregg Toland (right), Orson Welles pioneered “deep focus” photography on *Citizen Kane* (1941), in which the foreground, center and background are simultaneously in focus. It was not uncommon for Welles to do more than 50 takes of a scene. (above) Welles went off to Brazil to make a goodwill film about life in South America for the U.S. government in 1942. The film, entitled *It's All True*, grew in size and scope and was never completed, although some of the surviving footage was used in a documentary of the same name released in 1993.



**NIGHT CALLER:** Welles (in the window) directs Edward G. Robinson in *The Stranger* (1946), a studio picture with a very un-Wellesian linear story. Welles claimed it was the least favorite of his films, but it was the only picture he directed that made a profit in its original release.



**BETRAYED:** *The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice* (1952) was one of the European films Welles described as "desperate adventures." It was a complicated production, largely because of failing finances, and shot for three years on locations including Morocco, Rome, Tuscany and Venice.

PHOTOS: (TOP) COURTESY OF MARC WANAMAKER/BISON ARCHIVES; (BOTTOM) AMPAS; (OPPOSITE) CINÉMATHEQUE FRANÇAISE



**OLD WORLD:** Welles shot *The Immortal Story* (1968), based on an Isak Dinesen story, in Madrid for French TV. Contractually, he had to shoot in color, but later griped that "color enhances the set, the scenery, the costumes, but mysteriously enough it only detracts from the actors."



**MAN OF MYSTERY:** *Mr. Arkadin* (1955) was based on three episodes of the radio program *The Lives of Harry Lime*, the character Welles portrayed in *The Third Man*. Welles lost control of the film in postproduction. The Criterion Collection released three cuts of the picture on DVD.



**KID STUFF:** Welles directing Booth Tarkington's *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), about the decline of an upper-class Midwest family. Some winter scenes were shot in the Glendale Ice House so the actors' breath would be visible, but the intense cold caused lights to pop.



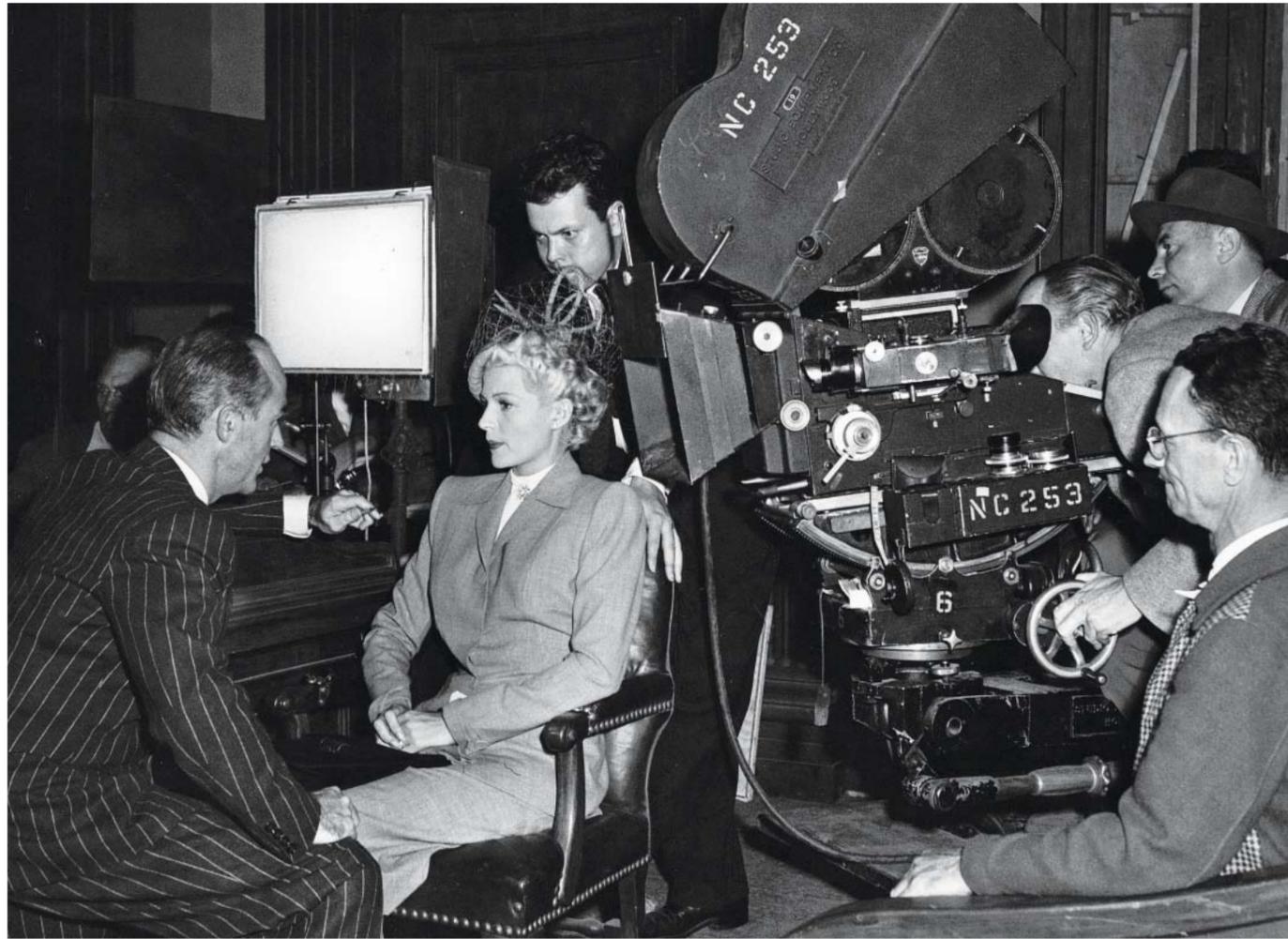
**DOWN AND OUT:** *Touch of Evil* (1958), with Charlton Heston (right), was set in a fictional Mexican border town, but filmed in Venice, California, because it looked convincingly run-down and seedy. Welles shot most of the film at night to keep executives from Universal away from the set.



**HOME TURF:** The set for the *Ambersons* mansion was one of the most elaborate and expensive ever built at the time. Welles insisted that it be constructed like a real house with continuous rooms with four walls and ceilings, enabling the camera to roam around freely and shoot from any angle.

PHOTOS: (TOP) CINÉMATHÈQUE FRANÇAISE; (BOTTOM) BFI

PHOTOS: (TOP) EVERETT; (BOTTOM) RKO



**FUN HOUSE:** Welles had his then-estranged wife Rita Hayworth cut her red hair and bleach it blonde for *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947). The film's maze finale used 80 mirrors, each 7 feet high, and another 24 distorting mirrors, all rigged as one-way mirrors so they could be filmed through.

**TOIL AND TROUBLE:** Welles shot *Macbeth* (1948) entirely on the CBS soundstage in 23 days on a budget of \$700,000. The dialogue was prerecorded, leaving the actors to mime their lines. He later said he was unhappy with the costumes and should have sent his back because "I looked like the Statue of Liberty."

PHOTOS: KOBAL COLLECTION; (OPPOSITE) BFI



**LARGER THAN LIFE:** Welles' *Chimes at Midnight* (1965), about Shakespeare's character Falstaff, condensed the Bard's two *Henry IV* plays, *Henry V* and *Richard II* into one story. This is Welles' favorite of his own films. "If I wanted to get into heaven on the basis of one movie, that's the one I'd offer up."