

Game Changers

In the early days of filmmaking—before and after sound—directors were constantly finding new ways to do things and expanding the possibilities of the young medium. In this selection of rare set shots, their sense of discovery is almost palpable.



EGYPTIAN GODDESS: (opposite) Cecil B. DeMille directs Claudette Colbert as “the wickedest woman in the world” in *Cleopatra* (1934). The director had already set the standard for historical epics in early Hollywood with a mix of sin, sex, and spectacle. (above) The social commentary of Mervyn LeRoy’s *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932), with Paul Muni (right), was uncommon in films of the time and helped establish the signature Warner Bros. style of the '30s.





FREAKED OUT: When Irving Thalberg wanted MGM to produce a film even more horrifying than *Dracula*, he called in *Dracula*'s director, Tod Browning. But Browning's critique of conventional beauty in *Freaks* (1932) proved too much for a squeamish public, shocking even hardened showbiz vets on the lot.



TOUCH UP: The horror film had been around since the early 1920s, but James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), with Boris Karloff, helped popularize the genre. Whale drew much of his inspiration from German expressionism, as evidenced by the film's ominous shadows and forced perspectives.



NO TALKING: Although it had no spoken dialogue, Alan Crosland's *Don Juan* (1926), with John Barrymore, was the first feature-length film synchronized with a Vitaphone musical soundtrack. It was a precursor to Crosland's next film the following year, *The Jazz Singer*, the first talking picture.



FLY BOYS: Founding member Howard Hawks directs Richard Barthelme in *The Dawn Patrol* (1930). The director piloted a plane for some scenes with the camera up front. "It was all real," he said, "even the forced landings." It was Hawks' first talking picture and established his economical visual style.



FLOWER POWER: Charlie Chaplin, directing Virginia Cherrill, was criticized for being arrogant when he insisted on making *City Lights* (1931) as a silent film. "I did not wish to be the only adherent of silent pictures," he said. "Nevertheless, it was an ideal silent picture and nothing could deter me from making it."



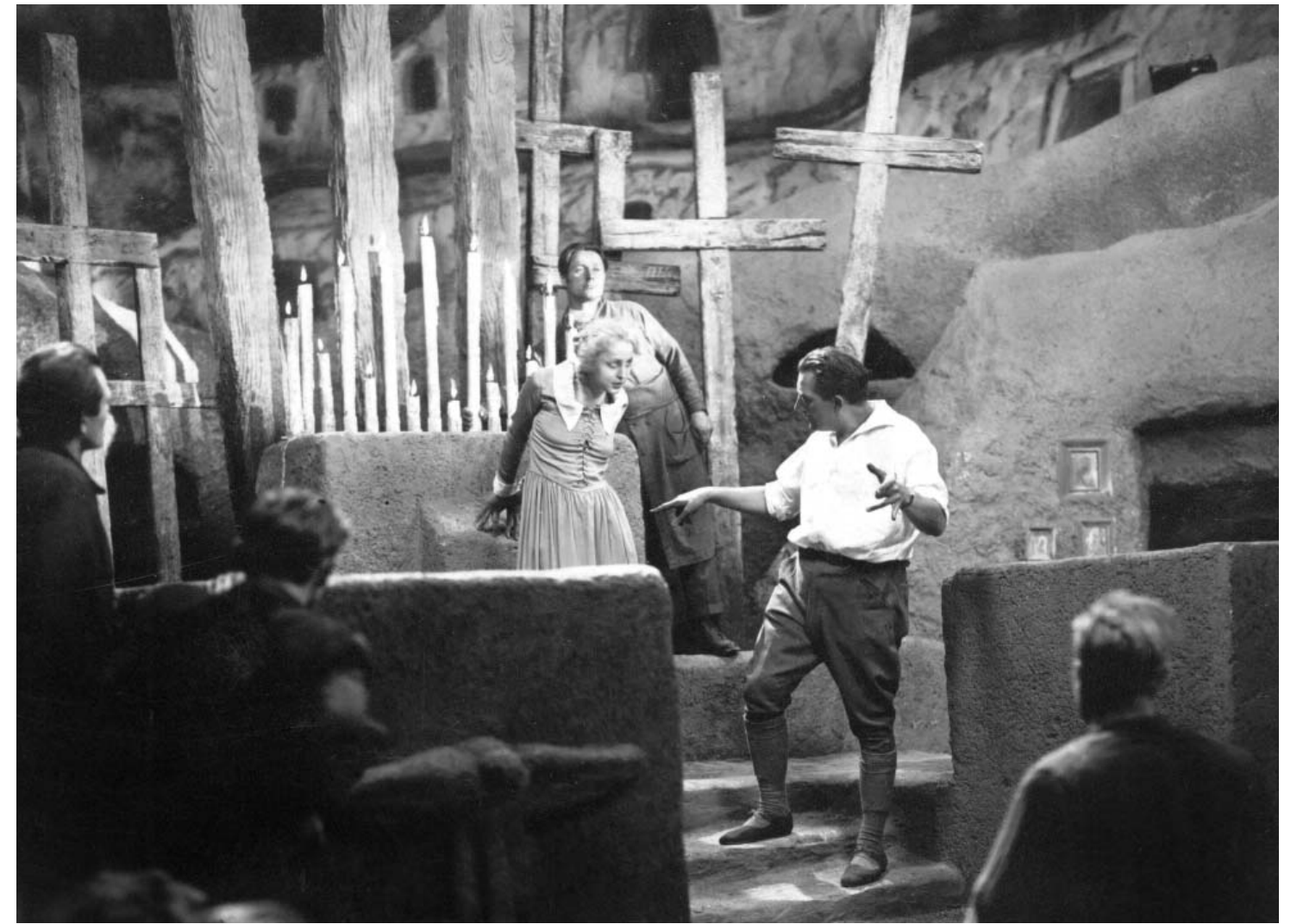
CHEEK TO CHEEK: Future Guild President Mark Sandrich created the height of modern elegance and perhaps the greatest of all Astaire and Rogers vehicles with *Top Hat* (1935). A satire of the upper class, it was the perfect wish-fulfillment fantasy for Depression-ravaged audiences in the '30s.

PHOTOS: AMPAS; (BOTTOM RIGHT) EVERETT

PHOTOS: (TOP) EVERETT; (BOTTOM LEFT) SEAWER CENTER FOR WESTERN HISTORY RESEARCH, LA COUNTY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY; (BOTTOM RIGHT) EVERETT



DERRING-DO: Michael Curtiz's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), with Errol Flynn, was the first Warner Bros. film shot in the three-strip Technicolor process. It used all 11 of Technicolor's cumbersome cameras and a lot of extra lights, but produced a richness of color that modern films can't approach.



TIMELESS: The influence of Fritz Lang's expressionistic classic *Metropolis* (1927) cannot be overestimated. Inspired by Lang's first sight of New York skyscrapers, it spawned the cinema of futurism and one can see traces of everything from *Frankenstein* to *Blade Runner* to *The Matrix* in its shadows.

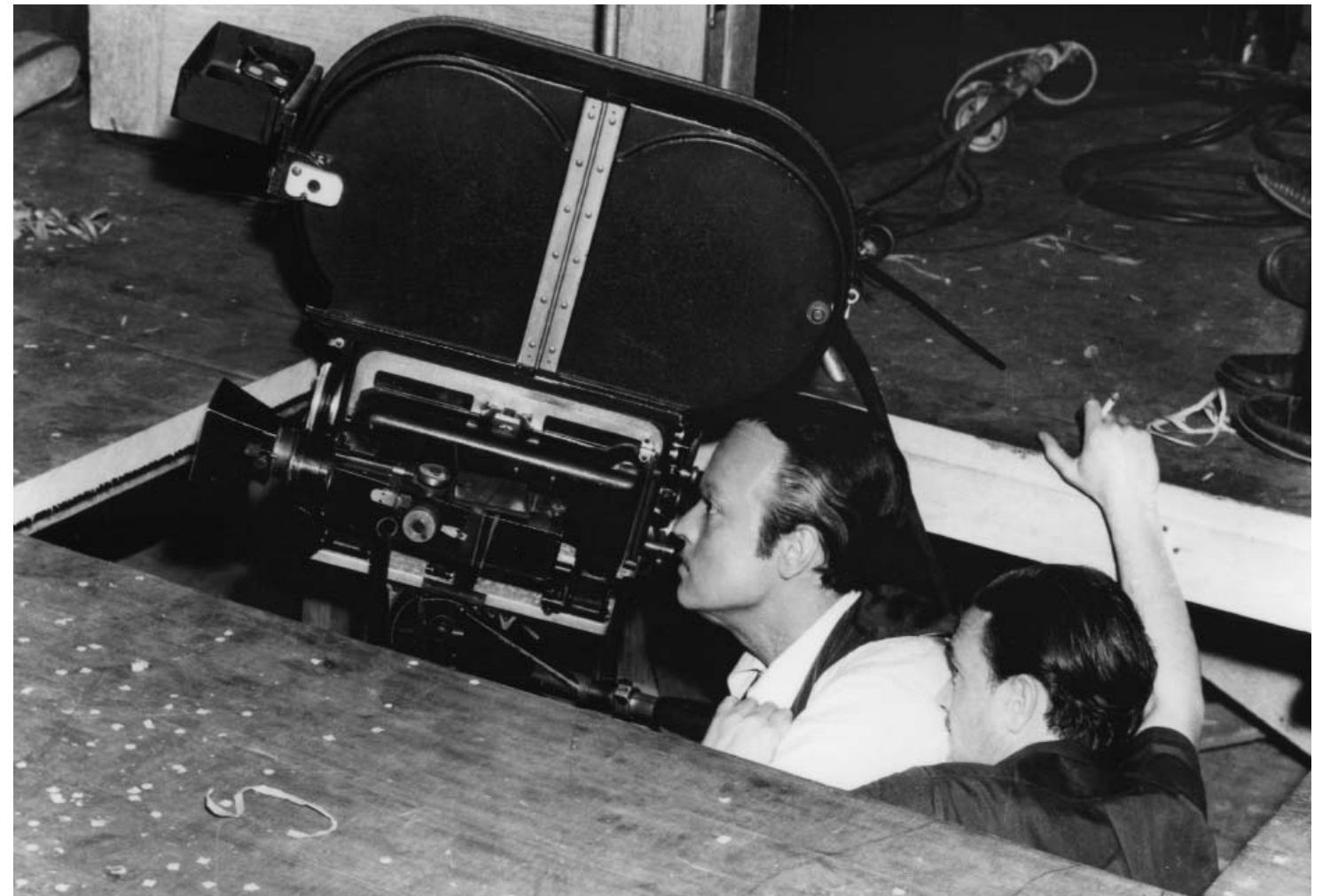


PERIOD PIECE: *Little Women* (1933) was an example of the well-crafted studio picture of the day. Katharine Hepburn, in her second of eight features with George Cukor, said he was "perfect" to work with. Its more traditional, wholesome story was a counterpoint to the growing sex and violence in pre-Code Hollywood.

PHOTOS: (TOP) PHOTOFEST; (BOTTOM) EVERETT; (OPPOSITE) EVERETT



NOT KANSAS: Victor Fleming, with Judy Garland and munchkins, set out to make *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) “a picture that searched for beauty and decency and love in the world.” When Fleming went off to do *Gone with the Wind*, King Vidor did the remaining sequences, mostly the black-and-white scenes in Kansas.



LOOKING UP: Orson Welles and cinematographer Gregg Toland pioneered deep-focus photography on *Citizen Kane* (1941), creating the illusion of a huge set in a small room. The use of directional sound and overlapping dialogue made it the first film to allow the audience to hear as they do in real life.



STEAMY: The Guadalupe-Nipomo Sand Dunes in Santa Barbara County doubled for the Sahara in Josef von Sternberg’s *Morocco* (1930), with Marlene Dietrich. Von Sternberg was one of the first directors to combine the fluidity and visual beauty of the late silent period with the aural possibilities of talkies.



COFFEE BREAK: Preston Sturges made *Sullivan’s Travels* (1941), with Joel McCrea and Veronica Lake, about a successful director who sets out to discover the “real” America, as a response to the “preaching” he found in other comedies “which seemed to have abandoned the fun in favor of the message.”



DOUBLE ENTENDRE: Ernst Lubitsch applied his famed “touch” to the then-risky *Design for Living* (1933), with Miriam Hopkins and Gary Cooper. Lubitsch practically invented the sexy, urban adult comedy that is often imitated and rarely equaled. Not surprisingly, the film was banned by the Legion of Decency.

PHOTOS: (TOP) EVERETT; (BOTTOM) KOBAL

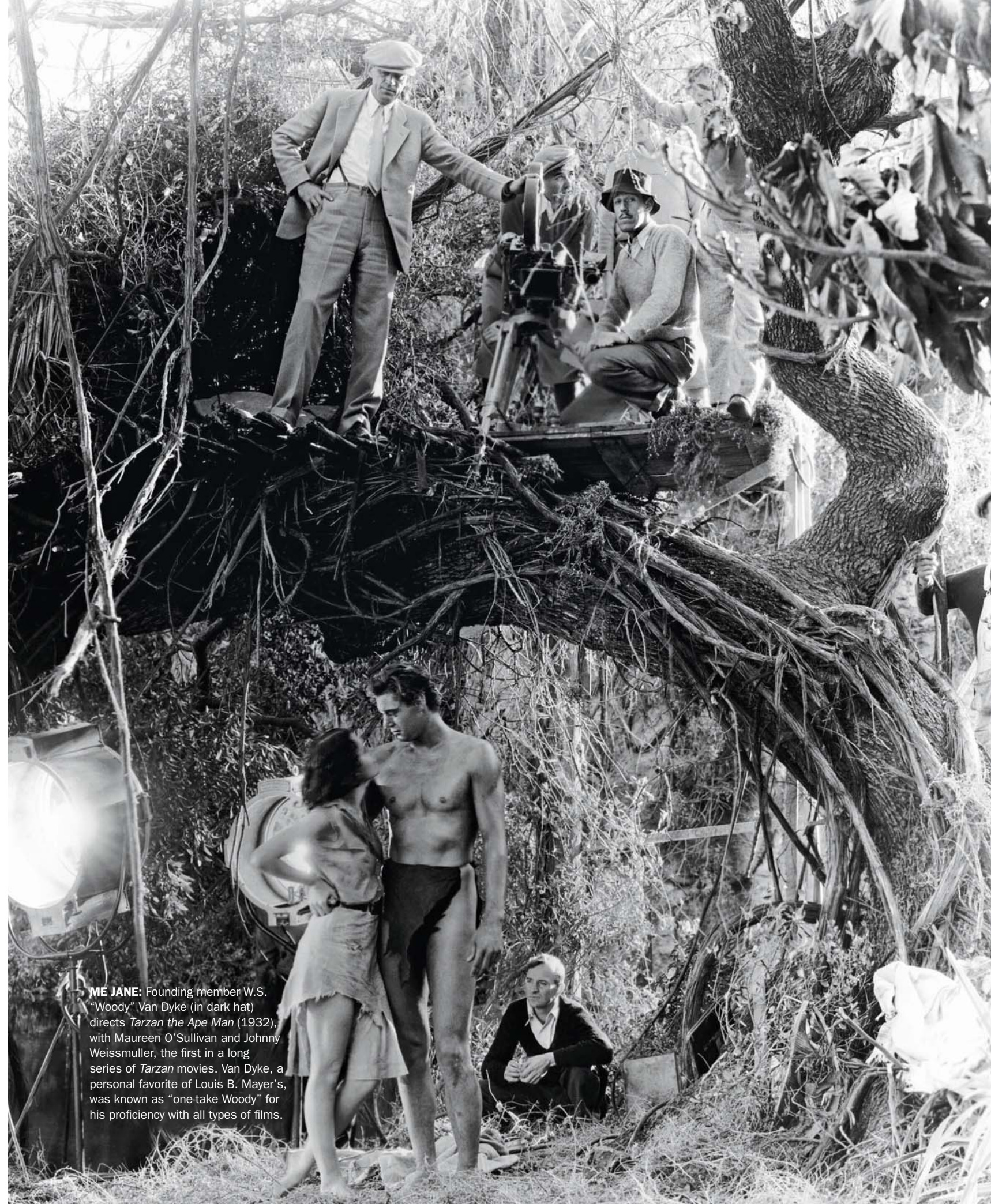
PHOTOS: (TOP) EVERETT; (BOTTOM LEFT) AMPAS; (BOTTOM RIGHT) PHOTOFEST



INNOVATOR: Founding member Rouben Mamoulian paved the way for the dramatic use of color with *Becky Sharp* (1935), the first feature-length three-color film. Despite the problems of early sound films, he experimented with different ways to move the camera, including unconventional dolly shots.



DANCE MAN: Busby Berkeley directed the musical numbers while Robert Z. Leonard handled the dramatic scenes in *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941), with Lana Turner (left) and Hedy Lamarr (right). Berkeley's creative use of geometric patterns in his choreography derived in part from his experience directing parades in the Army during WWI.



ME JANE: Founding member W.S. "Woody" Van Dyke (in dark hat) directs *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), with Maureen O'Sullivan and Johnny Weissmuller, the first in a long series of *Tarzan* movies. Van Dyke, a personal favorite of Louis B. Mayer's, was known as "one-take Woody" for his proficiency with all types of films.

PHOTOS: (TOP) AMPAS; (BOTTOM) KOBAL; (OPPOSITE) EVERETT