



## TCM BREAKFAST CLUB SCREENING

### The Misfits | 1961

Directed by John Huston

**The Misfits (1961), a moving and original drama set against the death of the old West, brought together an unbeatable partnership – that of director John Huston and screenwriter Arthur Miller, both with distinguished pedigrees in their respective fields. Miller was married to the film’s female lead, Marilyn Monroe from 1956-1960, when he wrote the film for her, but their marriage was on the brink of collapse during the film’s production. The irony of the movie being set in Reno, Nevada, America’s divorce capital, would thus have not been lost on Miller. The year it premiered, the couple were finally divorced. The Misfits turned out to be the last fully-completed film to be made by both Monroe, 35, and her co-star, 59 year-old-Clark Gable. TCM writer David Humphrey assesses the movie, being shown in a new 35mm print as part of the BFI’s John Huston season on tour.**

In *The Misfits*, Monroe plays ex-stripper and divorcee Roslyn Taber who has travelled to Reno for a “quickie” divorce. She rehearses her lines to the divorce judge with her sympathetic landlady Isabelle Steers (Thelma Ritter) as she prepares to show the door to husband Raymond (Kevin McCarthy). Isabelle introduces her first to ex-mechanic, former wartime pilot and widower Guido Racanelli (Eli Wallach) and then in a local bar to

ageing cowpoke Gay Langland (Clark Gable). Both men are aroused by the dazzling blonde, but she eventually falls for Langland despite their considerable age difference. Taking up together, they are offered an unfinished house in the desert, abandoned by heartbroken Guido after the death of his wife, and they duly move in. Roslyn loves the freedom of the wide open spaces, and she enjoys her growing passionate relationship with

Langland. Then trouble looms when Langland, Guido and injured rodeo cowboy Perce Howland (Montgomery Clift) team up to go after a herd of wild horses, taking Roslyn along. After Guido's small plane guides and terrorises the animals down from the hills, the others lasso and roundup the 'misfit' horses from a speeding pick-up truck. For Roslyn, it is a shocking experience to learn that these free and wild creatures will be slaughtered and their carcasses sold to a dog food company. Screaming at the men, she labels them murderers as she desperately tries to persuade Langland to call off the roundup. When he refuses, she successfully appeals to Perce to release the animals that have already been captured. Furious, Langland recaptures the leader of the horses after a rough struggle. After he has proved he is the boss, he frees them and then reconciles with Roslyn. From the ordeal, Roslyn and Langland make a new start together. According to some reports, Gable's subsequent heart-attack was caused by his insistence on doing his own strenuous stunts without a double. Meanwhile, a doctor was on call 24 hours a day for both Marilyn Monroe and Montgomery Clift during the filming. The film was a troubled production in many other ways: United Artists executives were unhappy with the rough cut, so Huston, Miller and producer Frank E. Taylor agreed to reshoot several scenes. Clark Gable had script approval, however, and he rejected the idea. Other disagreements led to the elimination of a shot of Marilyn Monroe's naked breast from the bedroom scene. While *Something's Got to Give* (1962) is listed as Monroe's last film, it was never completed because she was fired, and *The Misfits* was her last completed movie before her death from a drug overdose in 1962. Gable and Monroe's relationship during

the shoot had been far from cordial. Bored while waiting for Monroe to arrive on the set, Gable volunteered to do a number of hazardous routines which included being dragged by a truck travelling at 30 mph.

On the last day of filming, he said, "Christ, I'm glad this picture's finished. She [Monroe] damn near gave me a heart attack." The next day, he suffered a massive heart coronary which led to his death eleven days later. According to Miller, Clark Gable had already seen a rough cut of the movie by the last day of filming, and said: "This is the best picture I have made, and it's the only time I've been able to act." Huston liked to emulate Alfred Hitchcock in appearing in his own movies, and duly collected \$250 by casting himself as an extra in the blackjack scene.

Further reading:

John Huston's Filmmaking by Lesley Brill (Cambridge University Press);  
The Hustons: The Life and Films of a Hollywood Dynasty by Lawrence Grobel (Cooper Square Press); The Films of John Huston by John McCarty (Citadel Press)

Clark Gable: A Biography by Warren G Harris (Aurum Press)

Marilyn Monroe by Barbara Leaming (Orion)

## ESCAPE TO A WORLD OF FILM THIS FEBRUARY WITH TCM.

TCM has dedicated every day from **5th – 25th February** to two of the most prestigious film awards of the year – **The Orange British Academy Awards** and **The Academy Awards®**, showing the acclaimed films that won these coveted awards. To top this season off, we have a very special guest **Barry Norman**, one of the UK's most distinguished film critics, to introduce some of the films within the season, as well as giving a unique insight into some behind-the-scenes moments at both of the awards.

From **25th February – 3rd March**, TCM 2 celebrates the **75th Birthday of Elizabeth Taylor**, whose 63 year career has cemented her status as a legendary star. To pay homage to this screen siren, TCM 2 has plucked three films from her archive – **The Last Time I Saw Paris**; **Cat on a Hot Tin Roof** and **The Comedians**. Catch these and more on TCM 2 from 7pm every day.