

For Immediate Release

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“R O S E B U D...”

Orson Welles’ Academy Award for ‘Citizen Kane’ Highlights Christie’s Sale of Entertainment Memorabilia in New York

Entertainment Memorabilia

July 25, 2003

New York – “Rosebud” – arguably the most enigmatic word ever spoken in cinema history and the first line of a movie that millions of cinéasts unanimously still regard as the best film ever made. ‘Citizen Kane’ was a tour de force and the opus magnum of a legendary man: Orson Welles. In 1941, Welles personally was nominated for four Academy Awards – Best Actor, Best Director, Best Picture and Best Writing – and won the latter. It is this icon of film achievement that Christie’s New York will be offering on July 25 as the star lot of the Entertainment Memorabilia sale. The Orson Welles Oscar is estimated at \$300,000-400,000.

Citizen Kane, RKO, 1941

In his castle Xanadu, dying newspaper magnate Charles Foster Kane whispers “Rosebud” during his last moments and this single word becomes the focal point for the entire film. A curious reporter who wants to unearth the meaning of Kane’s last word dives into his life and starts interviewing former friends and colleagues of the publisher. He discovers both the professional and personal details of Kane’s life; a life that ultimately turns out to be tragic. Kane’s background starts simply as a ‘rags to riches’ story, but quickly escalates to massive importance due to his intense personality and ego. A strong current of corruption, self-destruction, denial and plain unhappiness permeates his life. At the end of the movie, the identity of “Rosebud” is revealed, but only to the film audience.

A classic cinematic masterpiece if ever there was one, 'Citizen Kane' has been on top movie compendiums for decades, most notably on the American Film Institute's "Greatest American Movies of All Time" list where it was ranked #1. The film and Orson Welles only seem to attract more praise as time goes on. The movie is as sophisticated and topical today as it was in 1941. The cryptic opening scene, and every one that follows, owes its grandeur entirely to the vision and guts of an unfathomably young Orson Welles. Only 25 years old when working on 'Citizen Kane,' he broke virtually every long-standing rule of filmmaking during the production. The release of this movie irrevocably changed the film industry. Its earth-shattering quality was acknowledged with nine Academy Award nominations – Best B/W Cinematography, Best B/W Interior Decoration, Best Sound Recording, Best Dramatic Picture Score, Best Film Editing, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay - with the last four nominations for Orson Welles personally. He became the first individual to receive simultaneous nominations in those four categories.

Besides causing waves on the filmmaking front, the movie also had enough suggestive powers to outrage one of America's most influential men, the publisher and media tycoon William Randolph Hearst. Because Hearst recognized negative portrayals of himself in the film, he blacklisted "Citizen Kane" from all mention and advertising in his newspapers around the United States. Not surprisingly, the film did not have commercial success when released in 1941; it only gained full momentum upon re-release (after World War II) when Europeans and academics recognized it.

Hearst had reasons for concern. The 'Citizen Kane' plot certainly did evoke situations and characters that were devilishly similar to those in Hearst's real world. Kane's profession, his bid for politics, his magnificent mansion and his love affair with a "none-to-talented" blonde performer were the most recognizable elements. Although this resemblance to real life spiced the movie up and caused endless controversy for Welles, RKO and the film industry as a whole, 'Citizen Kane' remains a masterpiece. It is one of those movies that will never fail to do what movies are meant to do: provide three-dimensional portraits of a characters and situations that resonate as strongly today as they did when the film was first made over 62 years ago.

Auction: Entertainment Memorabilia

July 25 at 10 a.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries in Los Angeles

June 24-27

Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

July 18-24

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