



DVD press release – Film Noir Collection

Kiss of Death

**A film by Henry Hathaway
Victor Mature, Richard Widmark**

The BFI adds more titles to its DVD Film Noir Collection on 15 October with the release of three films in conjunction with Twentieth Century Fox: *Kiss of Death* (Henry Hathaway, 1947), *Cry of the City* (Robert Siodmak, 1948) and *Night and the City* (Jules Dassin, 1950).

Kiss of Death is a semi-documentary thriller, one of a cycle of documentary-based noirs, which began life not as pulp fiction but as a version of the facts, derived from the case files of Eleazar Lipsky, an aspiring novelist and Manhattan Assistant District Attorney. Ben Hecht, screenwriter of *The Front Page* and *Scarface*, and Charles Lederer, a frequent collaborator, delivered the script.

Sharing with the later *On the Waterfront* (1954) the theme of heroic informing, the film was a huge hit for Fox. The giggling psycho killer, the old lady in the wheelchair pushed down the stairs – this is the film wherein Richard Widmark became a star, Victor Mature became an actor, sadism came to the big screen and Hollywood neorealism got tangled in the dreamscape of noir.

Richard Widmark, then a radio actor, made his film debut, stealing every frame as the terrifying, grinning, snickering killer Tommy Udo. Udo, with his animal ferocity and vicious *joie de vivre*, is clearly a spiritual nephew of *Scarface*'s Tony Camonte, but Widmark himself is to be credited with many of the inspired details of his performance.

Extras

- Interview with Richard Widmark
- Original theatrical trailer, presented by famed commentator Walter Winchell

The DVD also contains a fully illustrated 14-page booklet – whose cover features the original film poster artwork – with an essay by Lee Server, author of *Ava Gardner* and *Robert Mitchum: Baby, I Don't Care*; Henry Hathaway's comments on the closing scenes of *Kiss of Death*; cast and credit details.

Release date: 15 October 2007

RRP £19.99 / cat. no. BFIVD676 / cert 12

USA / 1947 / black and white / 95 mins / ratio 1.33:1

This disc contains optional subtitles for the hearing-impaired on all items
BFI DVDs are available from the Filmstore at BFI Southbank, all good retailers, by mail
order from 0845 458 9910 or online at www.bfi.org.uk/video

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