
FORBIDDEN PARADISE

American cinema seemed to achieve perfection at that time: perfection of the cut, perfection of the stitching, perfection of the fabric. There is not haute couture only in Paris, just as there is not 'haute production' only in Hollywood. The perfection of taste and technique, absolute mastery, discretion in daring. Ernst Lubitsch was, in our memory, the man whose oeuvre will someday symbolize this perfection, this flawless style that was the distinctive feature of this art¹.

Henri Langlois



In celebrating Henri Langlois, it is impossible to forget the prince of American comedy. It was François Truffaut who came up with the 'prince' expression, in February 1968, in an article in *Cahiers du Cinéma* that has since become famous, written just after the major (re)discovery retrospective organized by Henri Langlois at La Cinémathèque française. Truffaut insisted on the place that Lubitsch gave the public: 'No Lubitsch without a public but mind, the public is not in addition, it is *with*. It is part of the film.'

It was in Max Reinhardt's German stage production of *Sumurun* that Pola Negri met Ernst Lubitsch, who was working as a director of short films at UFA. Lubitsch managed to convince UFA to make a film adaptation in costumes, starring Pola Negri. *Sumurun* (1920) was a huge success, so much so that their collaboration would continue on different films, culminating in the production of *Madame Du Barry* (1919), a worldwide success that brought Lubitsch and Negri international fame. He left for Hollywood in 1922 and made some ambitious films as well as, and above all, daring, sophisticated comedies such as *The Marriage Circle*, *Three Women*, *Lady's Windermere's Fan* and the least seen, *Forbidden Paradise*. Made in 1924, *Forbidden Paradise* was the eighth and last film with Pola Negri, their sole Hollywood collaboration and a great public success.

¹ Henri Langlois, *Écrits de cinéma*, texts collected by Bernard Benoliel and Bernard Eisenschitz, Ed. Flammarion / Cinémathèque française, 2014

FORBIDDEN PARADISE

United States, 1924 – 78 minutes

Direction: Ernst Lubitsch

Script : Hans Kraly, Agnes Christine Johnson

From the play by Lajos Biro and Melchior Lengyel « The Czarina »

Artistique director : Hans Dreier

Production : Famous Players-Lasky

Photography : Charles J. van Enger

Cast : Pola Negri, Rod La Rocque, Adolphe Menjou, Pauline Starke, Fred Malatesta

Somewhere in Central Europe. Alexei, a young officer, is loved by two women. How do you say no to the advances of a tsarina when you are in love her lady's companion?

In 1963, Henri Langlois duplicated this film from a very damaged Czech print, conserved in Prague. In 2010, La Cinémathèque française made a new print from the duplicate element established at the time. The footage of this incomplete print is 1,784 metres (out of the original 2,299 metres).

