

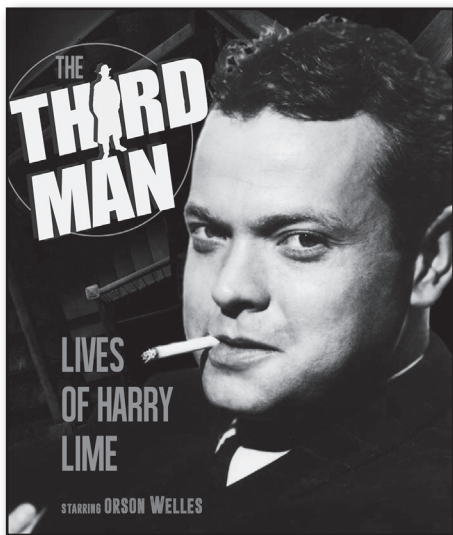
# THE THIRD MAN

## Lives of Harry Lime

Program Guide by Elizabeth McLeod

It's a hard job being a middle-aged wunderkind, especially in show business -- where you're only as good as your last big success. And as Orson Welles moved into his mid-thirties, the triumphs of his youth seemed increasingly remote. The Mercury Theatre was just a memory, and so was the bold 1930s experimental theatre scene that gave it life. Postwar America, with its increasing restrictions on intellectual freedom and its suspicion of anyone who dared to color outside the lines, had little use for a superannuated boy wonder...especially one who'd made a career of antagonizing the Establishment. Orson Welles may have been a genius, but it didn't take a genius to know that there wasn't much call anymore for the kind of work that he did so well. He'd burned his bridges in Hollywood -- and the radio networks, seeing the approaching

torches of the blacklists blazing over the horizon, were purging themselves of free-wheeling intellectuals like his as quickly as they possibly could.

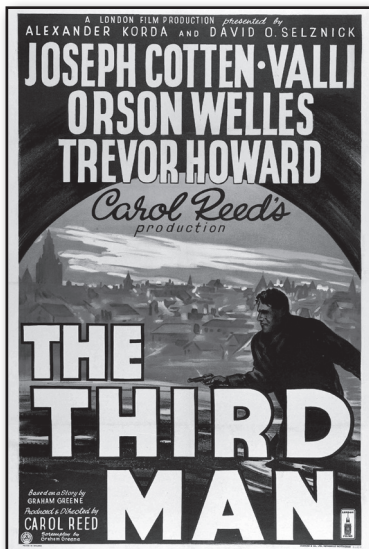


As the 1940s turned into the 1950s, it wasn't a good time to be Orson Welles. Especially not in the United States, where the lives of anyone who wanted to work in film, radio, or television were being carefully combed in search of evidence that they might once

have eaten a sandwich served with Russian dressing. The chilling of the American intellectual climate wasn't the only reason Welles decided to move his base of operations to Europe in 1948...but all things considered, he knew that he could find a far more hospitable working climate abroad. (This was especially true after the commercial failure of his low-budget, brooding film version of *Macbeth* put an apparent end to his American movie career that same year.)

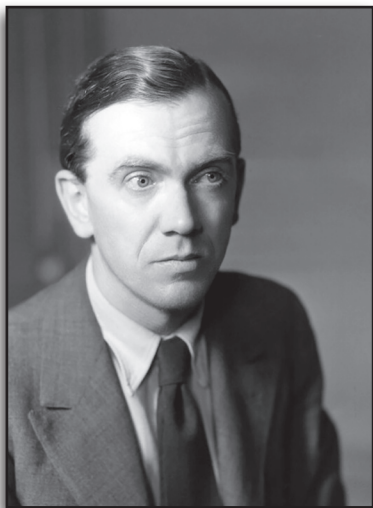
Welles had friends in Europe, among them Joseph Cotten. Colleagues from the Mercury Theatre days, they worked together in late 1948 on a dark, moody film directed by Carol Reed. The script, written by British novelist Graham Greene, told the story of an American author who arrives in postwar Vienna. The character is in search of one Harry Lime, a childhood friend whom he learns has died under mysterious circumstances. Investigating the circumstances of the death, the author is drawn into a web of intrigue, deception, and corruption. He eventually discovers that Lime is, in fact, alive...and that this old chum is at the very center of the web. The complexity of the plot and the heavy, oppressive

atmosphere of the visuals in the film, were counterpointed by the musical score -- performed in a distinctive, even sprightly manner by its composer, zither virtuoso Anton Karas. Although Welles had nothing to do with the direction or production of the film, his influence permeated it -- and his performance as the scabrous Harry Lime burst from the screen. *The Third Man* was a major success on British screens in 1949. An American release in 1950, slightly revised from the original (under the auspices of co-producer David O. Selznick), proved a surprise hit with stateside audiences.



The visuals were a vital element in the success of *The Third Man*, but the distinct sound of the film offered much as well. The Karas zither score coupled with intense, colorful dialogue and impassioned narration seemed a natural for radio. So a hard-driving British producer named Harry Alan Towers decided he'd better do something about that before someone else did. Towers was a freewheeling independent, who avoided the strictures of the BBC. He marketed his own series of transcribed dramas to commercial broadcasters who beamed their signals into Britain from the Continent. The producer soon discovered that independent American stations offered an equally hungry market, especially for programs where the sheen of Britishness gave them a certain distinctive air of class. Towers had connections to author Graham Greene through his agent -- and when he learned that Greene controlled the rights to the Harry Lime character, he capitalized on the opportunity. He also capitalized on the availability of Orson Welles. It was clear to Towers that the actor needed money...and that knocking off a quick series of recorded dramas would be an easy way for him to get it. And finally, knowing that the music was as much a part of *The Third Man*'s charms as anything else, Towers made a deal with Anton Karas.

With these deals in place, Towers built a concept around them. Since Welles was on board, it was obvious that Harry Lime would be at the center of the series. The idea of a prequel surfaced – stories that would reveal exactly what Mr. Lime was up to in the years before the events of the film. Indeed, this proved to be a successful approach to the material. Although Towers engaged Welles strictly as an actor, it didn't take long for Welles to assert himself in the production. In fact, he offered to write several scripts himself...for a flat rate of \$1,000 per episode. Whether he



Author Graham Greene

actually did so (after accepting a \$6,000 advance payment) remains a point of contention. However, he did appear in all fifty-two episodes produced under the contract. Welles turned in performances that, while not at the level of much of his own earlier independent work, still made for compelling listening. Karas' music, heavily featuring the iconic "Third Man Theme," gave the programs a sound unlike anything else on the air. Towers knew, after producing a years' worth of shows, that he had a winner.

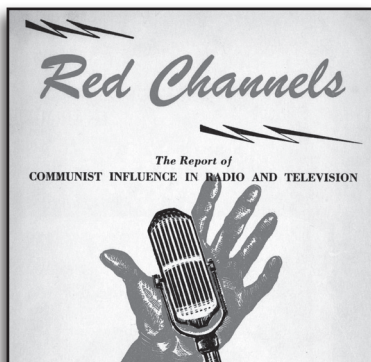
The series went into distribution in Europe in mid-1951 under the title *The Adventures of Harry Lime*. The prestige of the production earned for it an unprecedented limited run on the BBC itself -- Britain's national broadcaster had never before offered a program that it had not itself produced. When the series sold in the United States, it carried a snappier title: *The Lives of Harry Lime*. Under either title, it offered stories well-suited to the mood of the times. Harry Lime -- con man, thief, manipulator, black marketeer, and master of deception -- lived his life in a constant state of paranoia. (Although...is it accurate to call it paranoia when people actually *are* out to get you?) Harry never told the truth when a lie would do, and he could prevaricate his way out of (or into) any conceivable situation. He always managed to remain one step ahead

of his adversaries. Of course, at any given time those adversaries might include law enforcement authorities of any number of nations, international spies, saboteurs, swindlers, jewel thieves, and/or blackmailers. Harry's adventures carried him around the globe and back again -- but wherever he landed, intrigue and zither music were sure to follow. Welles brought the character to vivid life in his performances and, when the scripts were at their best, Harry Lime's lives offered listeners impressive entertainment.



Orson Welles

Having scored an impressive triumph by placing the program on the BBC -- albeit just for sixteen episodes -- Towers turned his attention to North America. He proceeded to sell the series to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and then to the Mutual network in the United States. The program premiered over Mutual in August of 1951, just two months after Welles received nearly two full pages in the scurrilous



Red Channels

blacklisters' handbook *Red Channels*. In fact, the actor hadn't been heard on American radio in nearly four years. The success of this new show proved that, in spite of the political chill of the era, Welles' name was still capable of attracting positive notice. Mutual ran the series for a year, after which the fifty-two episodes of the show were packaged for sale to individual stations. In this format, the recordings continued to circulate from station to station and market to market well into the 1960s.

*The Lives of Harry Lime* turned out to be the most successful of the many series Towers produced during his career -- and with all global sales reckoned in, the producer turned a handsome profit. Welles was pleased enough with the results to continue his collaboration with Towers, serving as narrator for *The Black Museum*. He also took on the choice role of Professor Moriarty in a Towers-produced series of Sherlock Holmes adventures. While these projects did little to improve Welles' financial standing -- he went through money nearly as quickly as he made it (in pursuit of various film projects) -- they did keep his name before the American public at a time when his personal legend was in decline. They also proved an impressive finale to his distinguished radio career.

Harry Alan Towers turned his radio profits toward other projects in television and in film. To help raise money for these ventures, Towers sold the American distribution rights to several of his series to California-

based distributor Charles Michelson in 1963. Michelson found *The Lives of Harry Lime* to be a popular feature for public radio and nostalgia-oriented stations right through the 1990s. The series may have come at the very tail of Orson Welles' radio career, but the adventures of Graham Greene's sardonic international con man may have become his longest-lasting latter-day radio presence. It was a far cry from the glory days of the *Columbia Workshop* and the *Mercury Theatre*, but *The Lives of Harry Lime* was a true homecoming for radio's prodigal son.

**HARRY ALAN TOWERS**  
presents  
**ORSON WELLES**  
in  
**THE LIVES OF HARRY LIME**

**Based on the character originated by  
Graham Greene**

**Music composed and performed by  
Anton Karas and Sidney Torch**

**Directed by  
Tig Roe**



Producer Harry Alan Towers

**CD 1A: "Too Many Crooks" - 08/03/1951**  
Harry is recruited by a banker...to prevent an upcoming bank robbery!

**CD 1B: "See Naples and Live" - 08/10/1951**  
A trip to sunny Italy offers Harry a solid crack at a priceless emerald.

**CD 2A: "Clay Pigeon" - 08/17/1951**  
A New York politician hires Harry to extricate him from a blackmail racket.

**CD 2B: “A Ticket to Tangier” - 08/24/1951**

A classified ad in a Paris paper sends Harry off on a moneymaking adventure in Morocco.

**CD 3A: “Voodoo” - 08/31/1951**

An overbearing American attracts Harry’s notice in Haiti, and he decides to put the fellow in his place.

**CD 3B: “The Bohemian Star” - 09/07/1951**

Harry goes on a quest to recover the crown jewels of an obscure European state, including a notorious (and enormous) diamond.

**CD 4A: “Love Affair” - 09/14/1951**

Operating in oil-rich Saudi Arabia, Harry becomes enmeshed in a battle between foreign agents looking to corner the market.

**CD 4B: “Rogue’s Holiday” - 09/21/1951**

It’s a working vacation for Harry as he sails on a luxury liner...with his eyes on a wealthy socialite, her impressive bankroll, and her intriguing companion.

**CD 5A: “Work of Art” - 09/28/1951**

In wartime Argentina, Harry has his hands full with a big-money art swindle and a reluctant collector.

**CD 5B: “Operation Music Box” - 10/05/1951**

All Harry knows is that the secret he seeks is hidden in a music box!

**CD 6A: “The Golden Fleece” - 10/12/1951**

In Spain, Harry is drawn into a quest that carries him all the way to the dangerous waters of the far China Sea.

**CD 6B: “Blue Bride” - 10/19/1951**

In France, Harry makes more money than ever...as a counterfeiter.



Composer Anton Karas

**CD 7A: “Every Frame Has a Silver Lining” - 10/26/1951**

Passing through Iran, Harry becomes involved in an opium-smuggling operation.

**CD 7B: “Mexican Hat Trick” - 11/02/1951**

Down on his luck in Mexico, opportunity beckons Harry...thanks to a pickpocket!



Orson Welles in *The Third Man*

**CD 8A: “Art Is Long and Lime Is Fleeting” - 11/09/1951**

The painting Harry’s trying to sell isn’t really a Renoir, but does that really matter?

**CD 8B: “In Pursuit of a Ghost” - 11/16/1951**

Harry is caught up in a rush of events and finds himself in the middle of a banana-republic revolution!

Elizabeth McLeod is a journalist, author, and broadcast historian. She received the 2005 Ray Stanich Award for excellence in broadcasting history research from the Friends Of Old Time Radio.

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