

CHRIST IN CONCRETE

A Blacklisted Director's Suppressed Masterwork

"Of the 'Unfriendly Hollywood Ten,'" Billy Wilder once observed, "Only a few were talented—the rest were just unfriendly." Surely one of the talented few was Edward Dmytryk, director of Raymond Chandler's hardboiled "Murder, My Sweet" and the ground-breaking attack on anti-Semitism, "Crossfire," (for which he received an Academy Award nomination). Forbidden by the blacklist to work in the land he had called his own since childhood, Dmytryk was forced to journey to England. There, he soon fashioned a film which was considered by many to be more genuinely American than most of the routine pictures ground out of Hollywood that year.

From the Classic Modern Novel

Carefully wrought from Pietro di Donato's powerful and poetic novel, "Christ in Concrete" told an unusual story through unorthodox techniques. Di Donato's tale of an immigrant construction worker and his family in Depression-era Manhattan was filmed by Dmytryk entirely indoors on a British soundstage. All of the settings, from the intimate interior of the bedroom to the remarkable exterior of a four-story building under construction, were lit by cinematographer Pennington Richards with scrupulous attention to realistic light sources. The resultant natural look of the motion picture authentically recreated New York's Little Italy, strengthening the conviction of Dmytryk's drama about personal passions and a life-long struggle for survival. One of the most impressive sequences was the graphic staging of a spectacular building collapse and its tragic consequences. None of the meticulous technical care, however, was allowed to overshadow the innate dignity bestowed on the main characters by the compassion of writer di Donato and director Dmytryk.

Released under the title "Give Us This Day" in 1949 ("Salt to the Devil" in parts of America), this picture is a highly praised evocation of universal human values. But despite the film's apolitical nature, the American Legion responded to the director's notoriety and imprisonment by intimidating theatre-owners, with the result that "Christ in Concrete" was quickly withdrawn from circulation and has not been seen in America in twenty-eight years. Its distribution in the rest of the world has been sparse to non-existent.

Multiple Award Winner

This is despite the fact that the film drew extravagant critical praise and won numerous awards, including the Grand Masterpiece Award at the Venice Film Festival, the Paris Press Prize for Direction, and a Czechoslovakian Film Festival Award citing Dmytryk for his "gallant attitude in fighting discrimination against civil rights." The film remains the personal favorite of Dmytryk, who notes that "there are still several books on films which say this is probably the best motion picture made."

Columbia Pictures Television is now proud to announce the availability in new prints of this neglected masterpiece of international cinema.

