



## Joseph Losey Bio

Losey was born in 1909 in La Crosse, Wisconsin to an upper-middle-class family. Acquiring a taste for literature, cinema, music, and art while still a child, after high school (Nicholas Ray, two years his junior, and a friend of his sister, attended the same school), Losey studied theater at Dartmouth, where he began to develop his directorial skills, and was a member of the post-George Baker version of the “47 Workshop” during his graduate studies at Harvard. Moving to New York in the early 1930’s, Losey found work as a theater critic, plunged deeply into a life-long love of jazz, and alternated early attempts at theatrical productions with trips to Europe (including an extensive stay in Russia, where he met Bertolt Brecht), and Marxian studies. Working for the WPA’s Federal Theatre Project, Losey was involved in the creation of the *Living Newspaper*, for which he directed two notable productions. Beginning to direct short commissioned films, he also worked in radio, and capped his theatrical career by directing the American version of *Galileo*, collaborating with Brecht and Charles Laughton.

His work as a director of Hollywood features started with *The Boy with Green Hair* (1948, starring a young Dean Stockwell), which was followed by four brilliant productions – *The Lawless* (1950, dealing with the travails of Mexican-Americans caught up in racist mob violence), *The Prowler* (1951, with Van Heflin – one of the key works of film noir, and featuring the theme of sexual violence and power games which would continue throughout Losey’s work), *M* (1951, a remake some consider superior to the original Fritz Lang masterpiece), and *The Big Night* (1951, a noir forerunner to the James Dean cycle) – before leaving for Rome to direct Paul Muni in *Stranger on the Prowl* (1952), a commissioned work Losey found uninspiring, but which served the purpose of helping him to evade a summons by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) he had gotten word was in the offing.

After a period of near-desperation, Losey's work as a filmmaker was revived in Great Britain in 1954 with *The Sleeping Tiger* (which auspiciously began his five-film collaboration with Dirk Bogarde). Although unable to sign a British feature film with his real name until 1957, a reputation as an ambitious, skilled, and passionate artist quickly took hold with such films as *Time without Pity* (1957, Michael Redgrave, Leo McKern, Peter Cushing, Joan Plowright) and *Blind Date* (US title: *Chance Meeting*, 1959, with Hardy Kruger, Stanley Baker, and Micheline Presle – this was the first of four films with Baker). The international reach of Losey's reputation as a brilliant stylist with a distinct, hysteria-ridden world-view was advanced by the superb prison/mob melodrama *The Criminal* (1960, Stanley Baker, Patrick Magee), and his sole work of science fiction, the nuclear-threat themed *The Damned* (US title: *These are the Damned*, 1961, featuring Viveca Lindfors and Oliver Reed in supporting roles).

Losey broke into the festival scene and the international spotlight as an art-film director with *Eve* (1962, Stanley Baker, Jeanne Moreau), which, unfortunately, proved a traumatic experience for the director due to rampant interference from its producers. His first collaboration with Harold Pinter, *The Servant* (1963, Dirk Bogarde, James Fox, Vera Miles), however, was a watershed effort for all involved: commercial success was the icing on the cake of almost-universal acclaim, Bogarde won the reputation of being the greatest English film actor of his generation, and Losey and Pinter found with this project a working relationship important to the development of their mutual themes of private power games, class war, and sexual aggression. Losey followed this with *King and Country* (1964, Dirk Bogarde, Tom Courtenay, Leo McKern), a look at justice gone woefully awry in the British trenches during WWI, and *Modesty Blaise* (1966, Monica Vitti, Terence Stamp, Dirk Bogarde), a pop-art influenced comic-book adaptation, before teaming-up again with Pinter to produce *Accident* (1967), which, like *The Servant*, is one of the key works of art filmmaking in the 1960's. Losey launched into a modular collaboration with Richard Burton and/or Elizabeth Taylor with his adaptation of Tennessee Williams's *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, re-titled *Boom!* (1968, featuring both the aforesaid stars, as well as Noel Coward in a supporting role). The bizarre and beautiful *Secret Ceremony* (1968, Taylor, Mia Farrow, Robert Mitchum), like its immediate predecessor, failed to generate much appreciation – this despite both being major works. *The Go-Between* (1970, Julie Christie, Alan Bates), winner of the *Grand Prix* at Cannes, marked the final realized collaboration between Losey and Pinter (there was an unfiled script which adapted all of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*), and is quite fine, though arguably not on the level of their previous efforts together. Losey went on to direct at least four more important films – *The Assassination of Trotsky* (1972, Richard Burton, Alain Delon, Romy Schneider), *Mr. Klein* (1976, Alain Delon), *Don Giovanni* (1979 – one of the great opera films), and *La Truite* (1982, with Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Jeanne Moreau – a profound meditation on male subservience to female sexual power) – before his death in 1984.

