

Timothy Carey is...

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SINNER

a
FILM ON FILM
FOUNDATION
presentation

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with music by
FRANK ZAPPA

Also featuring: Timothy Carey in *Cinema Justice*,
Classic Trailers, and a Special Appearance
by the Son of God!

7 & 9:15pm, Saturday, December 15
Roxie Cinema, 3117 16th St., San Francisco



The Film on Film Foundation (www.filmonfilm.org), an organization dedicated to encouraging the exhibition of celluloid motion picture film in the manner it is meant to be screened, launches its new series, "Film Gods Shoot Back", at the Roxie Cinema.

The World's Greatest Sinner

He was just an average, happily married family man. He should never have listened to that snake!

One day the devil, in the form of a snake, manifests himself to insurance salesman Clarence Hilliard (Timothy Carey). In short order Hilliard drops out, re-christens himself **God**, recruits a skid row following, and becomes an atheistic, silver lamé-clad rockabilly evangelist. With his mantra, "There is only one God, and that's Man!" and his wide-ranging sexual deviancy and deranged demagoguery, Carey's blaspheming anti-deity stakes out a position somewhere between **Nietzsche** and **Charles Manson**. Falling for his own opportunistically populist rhetoric, he goes mad with power-lust, abusing and destroying his acolytes with shockingly escalating excesses. Nothing is sacred in this scathing, still-topical indictment of religion, politics, and society!

In its giddy, sensationalistic treatment of themes eschewed in polite discourse even now, *The World's Greatest Sinner* achieves a rough-hewn radicalism unthinkable in a studio picture. It is the archetypal underground film, made outside the establishment and to this day denied a proper release. Nonetheless, this pioneering portrayal of out-of-control youth rebellion presaged the uproar of the '60's and paved the way for emblematic films like *Wild in the Streets*.



Timothy Carey arrived in Hollywood in 1951, fresh out of drama school, intent on showcasing his greatness by whatever means necessary. He conned his way into early bit parts, and spent the next two decades playing heavies and weirdos in genre pictures and cheapies, some of which ended up as drive-in staples, spiced up with added softcore and gore scenes.

"I thought I was a great actor; I'm the only one who did."

During this checkered career, Carey worked with some of the greatest actors and directors of his time: **Clark Gable**, **Marlon Brando**, **James Dean**, **Billy Wilder**, **Elia Kazan**, **Stanley Kubrick**. He would always do his best to upstage or upset the star, to impress or frustrate the director with his unhinged improvisations. Wherever Carey trod, chaos soon followed. At times he would earn grudging respect; more often he would come to blows with the crew. Films that he had to pull out of, for one reason or another, include *Bonnie and Clyde* and the first two *Godfathers*.

"I was probably fired more than any other actor in Hollywood."

Off-screen, Carey's raw primitivism was equally evident. In auditions, media appearances, and in person, he flouted the patience and sensibilities of his audiences, telling crude jokes and breaking into song, or, in keeping with a late-life obsession, into wind. On several occasions, he pulled out a gun loaded with blanks and staged a mock murder-suicide before horrified onlookers.

With his unruly talent, Carey made a mark in all his performances. In a bad movie, his presence in a scene could elevate it to the sublime. Even in great films, his off-kilter characterizations would stand out. Anyone who has seen *The Killing* remembers the quietly sociopathic sharpshooter, an understated role by his standards. In the 1970's **John Cassavetes** recognized Carey's mad brilliance, giving him free reign in a key role in his film *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie*, as well as *Minnie and Moskowitz*.

Carey embarked on *The World's Greatest Sinner*, his most personal project, in 1958. He spent three years filming this epic monument to his own genius, as money and circumstances allowed, like a stateside **Orson Welles**. Among its claims to fame, this production launched the careers of rocker **Frank Zappa**, who composed the soundtrack, and gonzo auteur **Ray Dennis Steckler**. True to form, at the notorious premiere Carey instigated a riot and fired a gun into the theater's ceiling. This time, the bullets were real!

"Oh you're Tim Carey, you made The World's Greatest Sinner! I want to see that picture!" -Elvis Presley

"Carey has the emotional brilliance of an Eisenstein!" -John Cassavetes

Not available on DVD!

1962 B+W/Color 35mm 82 min.

Preceded by: Timothy Carey in *Cinema Justice* (35mm 6 min.), and classic Timothy Carey trailers!

With an introduction and Q&A by the son of God himself, **Romeo Carey!**

Gunfire in the theater will not be tolerated!

