



A Milestone Film Release  
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Milestone Film & Video and Image Entertainment present  
Michael Powell's classic 1937 film  
***THE EDGE OF THE WORLD***  
For the First Time Ever on DVD!  
December 9th release.

Shot over four arduous months in the wild, windswept Shetland Islands, Michael Powell's first independent production established the daring techniques and experimentation that would later become familiar hallmarks of his career. The director of such classics as *The Red Shoes* and *Peeping Tom*, it was Powell's dream to have his first great film available to the public, and now, the DVD will be released on December 9th.

*The Edge of the World* tells the moving story of a remote island and its inhabitants, whose traditions and way of life are threatened by a rapidly industrializing world. To settle an argument over whether the islanders should give up their livelihood and move to the mainland, two childhood friends follow an ancient tradition and climb the island's highest cliff face. The outcome shatters the island's peace and splits the two clans apart.

Making the film proved so demanding and sensational that its 32-year-old director was moved to write a full-scale book about his obsession with the tragic grandeur of Scotland's Outer Isles and his struggle to film it, *200,000 Feet on Foula*, which Academy Award(r)-winning actor Daniel Day-Lewis reads from on this DVD. Also on the commentary track telling about the film's history are Powell's widow, Thelma Schoonmaker and film historian Ian Christie.

Restored by the National Film and Television Archive in 1990 and with its picture and sound further restored this year digitally by bfi Video for this DVD release, *The Edge of the World* is a Martin Scorsese presentation.

**DVD Bonus Features:**

- 1) Daniel Day-Lewis reading extracts from *200,000 Feet on Foula*, (Michael Powell's book of their adventures on the island)
- 2) Commentary featuring Thelma Schoonmaker (Michael Powell's widow and Martin Scorsese's editor) and film critic and Powell & Pressburger scholar Prof. Ian Christie
- 3) The documentary: *Return to the Edge of the World* (1978, approx. 25 minutes) made for BBC TV when Powell and some of the surviving cast and crew returned to the island 40 years later.
- 4) Powell short film, *An Airman's Letter to His Mother* (1941, 5 minutes)
- 5) Stills gallery

"An irresistible gem: not just one of the earliest and best films by the great British director, but a bona fide cinematic legend." - William Arnold, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

"*The Edge of the World* was chosen the year's Best Foreign Film by the New York Film Critics Circle in 1937 (and might well have been again today)." - Jim Hoberman, *Village Voice*

**DVD is a Image Entertainment release from The Milestone Collection: Price: \$29.99**

**VHS is a Milestone Film & Video release: Price: 29.95**

**UK / 1937 / black and white / 74 mins + extra material / Academy Radio**

## *The Edge of the World*

1937. Great Britain. Running Time: 73 minutes. Aspect ratio: 1:1.33. Black & White.  
Restored by the British Film Institute.  
35mm print struck from the original nitrate 35mm negative.

### Crew:

Production Company .....Rock Studios  
Producer .....Joe Rock  
Story and Direction by.....Michael Powell  
Musical Director .....Cyril Ray  
Choral Effects by.....The Women of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir  
Conductor.....Sir Hugh S. Robertson  
Orchestrations.....W. L. Williamson  
Camera.....Ernest Palmer, Skeets Kelly, Monty Berman  
Editor .....Derek Twist  
Assistant Editor.....Bob Walters  
Production Manager .....Gerard Blattner  
Production Assistants .....A. Seabourne, Vernon C. Sewell, W. H. Farr, George Black, Jr.  
Chief of Construction.....Sidney S. Streeter  
Sound.....L. K. Tregellas  
Recording Engineer .....W. H. O. Sweeny  
Props.....W. Osborne

### Cast:

#### The Manson Family

John Laurie.....*Peter Manson*  
Belle Chrystall .....*Ruth Manson*  
Eric Berry .....*Robbie Manson*  
Kitty Kirwan.....*Jean Manson*

#### The Gray Family

Finlay Currie.....*James Gray*  
Niall MacGinnis.....*Andrew Gray*

Grant Sutherland.....*The Catechist*  
Campbell Robson.....*The Laird*  
George Summers.....*The Trawler Skipper*  
Margaret Grieg.....*Baby*  
Michael Powell.....*Yachtsman*  
Frankie Reidy.....*Yachtsman's wife*

And all the people of the lonely island of Foula where this story was made.

*"In most films the credit titles, no matter how ingeniously presented, are a dull interlude. But behind those sober names lie concealed for me... old friends, loyalties and adventures."*

— Michael Powell, *200,000 Feet on Foula*

## An Airman's Letter to His Mother

*Date of Release: June, 1941. Produced by the RAF. Written, photographed and directed by Michael Powell. Additional cinematography: Bernard Browne. Narrator: John Gielgud. Running time: 5 minutes. B&W. Screen Ratio: 1:1.33. Mono. Restored by the Imperial War Museum, London.*

This short film was produced by Britain's Royal Air Force for the war effort and directed by Michael Powell. Based on a letter in *The Times of London* from a pilot who had since been killed in action, many of the props in this film are from Powell's own childhood and the two dogs were Powell's as well. The original letter had a huge effect upon war-torn England, so it became an obvious choice for a RAF propaganda short. But Powell's sensitive direction along with a brilliant reading by John Gielgud created a film that still resonates today with its sense of bravery, sacrifice and loss.

### From the Distributor

I thought I would tell you how *The Edge of the World* came to Milestone. I was a ne'er-do-well student in Athens, Ohio when I first encountered a Powell-Pressburger film. *I Know Where I'm Going!* was at the local film society and, bored, I went to see my first "foreign" film. It was a revelation — film could be an art! The combination of story, movement, poetry, music and acting with astonishing images affected me like no other experience in my life up to that point. I began watching every film I could and soon I was running the film society and that led me to my first job in New York. Kino International had quite a few Powell films, and perhaps because of my pleading, acquired some more. My love for all things Powell-Pressburger came to the attention of the wonderful William K. Everson, who one day invited me to a screening of *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* at New York University to meet "Micky." Hovering around the age of eighty, Powell was a spry, energetic man with brilliant, sparkling eyes. He loved talking to the students but was quick to silence fools. (I had already been warned of this by my mentor and Powell's close friend and biographer, Ian Christie — which made me even more terrified.) After the screening, I was introduced to him and invited to walk with them as they left the building. He mentioned the student who insisted that *The Edge of the World* and *I Know Where I'm Going!* were based on a cinematic influence that Powell angrily denied. He quickly turned to me, focused those eyes on mine and asked what I thought. It wasn't the most difficult question, but it seemed so at the time. Tongue-tied and scared, I murmured almost inaudibly, "Robert Flaherty?" He smiled, his eyes twinkled and we walked on as he told me a story about *Bob Flaherty*. I floated home to my apartment.

A little while later, I received some mail with a bull's-eye and a just-slightly-off-center arrow. It was from The Archers! I was thrilled when I opened it. Unfortunately, it was not what I expected. It was a letter berating me for *my* terrible print of *The Red Shoes*. Moira Shearer's hair was *titian*—not mouse-brown! The colors were all wrong, and the letter went into great detail on just how bad the print had become.

It was a dreadful error. The theater had been shipped an old, faded print that was not supposed to be in use. I didn't know how to reply and spent a sleepless night trying to write an apology. The next morning I got a call from Powell's wife, Thelma Schoonmaker Powell, who put me immediately at ease. *She* apologized and after a while I almost had forgotten that it *was* my company's fault. Michael had mistaken my importance in the company, had written the letter to me in the heat of the moment, and she knew that it was all a misunderstanding. We got out Kino's one original Technicolor print and shipped it express to make the screening. I even got a thank-you note! From then on, I did everything I could to help set up Powell festivals around the country — *always* opening, of course, *I Know Where I'm Going!* I made sure that Michael and Thelma traveled to some of the better cities to present his films and receive awards for his remarkable career.

When Powell died in 1990, I had never told him how important his films were to my life. However, he mentioned once or twice that it would be great to show *The Edge of the World* again since it was such an important film in his career. At that time, the rights were disputed by Raymond Rohauer and no one was willing to challenge his claim. Fifteen years later, with magnificent work from the British Film Institute to restore the original negative and soundtrack and again, with the kind help of Thelma, I'm glad to say that "Micky" finally got his wish, and that Milestone has its first Michael Powell film.

— Dennis Doros, Milestone Film & Video

### Background

(all quotes from *A Life in Movies* by Michael Powell)

When this seemingly simple film about the de-population of the Scottish Isles finally took shape in 1936, its filmmaker, Michael Powell, was only 32 years old. At the time he was working on what was to be his last "quota quickie" titled *The Man Behind the Mask* — by then he had already shot two dozen of these cheap productions in only five years!

Powell started out in the film industry as an assistant and bit actor for the great silent film director Rex Ingram. At the dawn of the sound age, he began working as a still photographer and scriptwriter on numerous British films. By 1936, Michael Powell had finally solidified his career as a director, churning out what he later described as "embarrassments." Of course, the quickies he denounced as junk were not as bad as he claimed. In fact, most critics were quick to recognize Powell's obvious talent as a director with a light touch in comedy, a steady hand on thrillers, and a natural ability to tell a story. As more have been discovered over the past two decades, modern audiences have delighted in these films as well. *The Man Behind the Mask*, however, was to serve a different purpose altogether for the young director.

*"They had a very poor script. I did my best to make it [The Man Behind the Mask] into a rather German-type expressionistic thriller. It was hard work indeed because we had no money and were working in the Rock studios at Elstree which had been the Blattner Studios. The only good thing that came out of it was that I met Joe Rock."*

It was that meeting which would change Michael Powell from "sorcerer's apprentice" to "sorcerer."

Powell originally conceived of the idea for the movie from a 1930 newspaper item about the island of St. Kilda off the coast of Scotland. A small island occupied for many centuries by its fearless inhabitants, it was to be abandoned as life had simply become too hard to endure. Powell carried the clipping from that newspaper for six years without getting any interest from a producer.

But Rock had a love for "exterior pictures" and not only encouraged Powell but promised to back him with the money for the production. The film at this point was without title or script. That would soon change.

*"[The title] came from a book about the early European navigators who sailed up the West Coast of Europe as far north as the Orkneys. Beyond that, reported the Roman general Agricola, was nothing but hairy Vikings and shocking weather, which he dismissed as Ultima Thule, the last landfall, the edge of the world."*

Next came the task of writing a script. Most people misunderstood his plans and assumed that the film would be not unlike Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran*, much to Powell's chagrin.

*"I was livid. 'No, not at all like Flaherty's picture. He hasn't got a story, just a lot of waves and seaweed and pretty pictures. This is a Drama! An Epic! About People!! I want to dramatize it and use actors mixed with real people.'...I sputtered. 'You've got no imagination. I don't want to make a documentary. Documentaries are for disappointed feature film-makers or out-of-work poets.' I said 'I see I'll have to write it,' and I did."*

As soon as finances were agreed upon, Powell began dictating his script to a typist. Never having actually dictated a script before, he found the chore decidedly easy. Unlike most scriptwriting sessions, Powell's ideas were so well worked out in his head, it took him only eight days to complete the entire script.

Powell then began to compile his cast and crew, which swelled to twenty-three people. He wanted more, but the producer insisted on twenty (twenty-three was a compromise). Powell admitted that he had a habit of bringing along everyone he admired and respected, adding that he looked at a production in the same way "an explorer surveys an empty portion of a map and vows to fill it." With his hand-picked cast and crew in tow, he was ready to begin production. No one, including Powell, could know or be prepared for the hardships that lay ahead. It was destined not to be an easy production. Indeed the film grew into a laborious, all-consuming, treacherous, five-month adventure that helped make Powell the great director he became.

### Production Details

(Unless noted, all quotes from the original 1937 press kit of *The Edge of the World*)

One of the first problems of the production was finding a location. Powell was dead set on filming it on the same island, St. Kilda, that had inspired his story. Unfortunately, the island had become a bird sanctuary, and according to Lord Dumfries, the owner of St. Kilda, the birds would be disturbed by a movie shoot. Powell begged him, but Dumfries refused to budge on his decision. With no choice but to desperately set about finding a replacement location, Powell, with the assistance of local authority John Mathieson, searched high and low before coming upon the island of Foula. The moment he set foot on the magnificent island that thrust out proudly from the treacherous North Sea below, he knew he had found his Ultima Thule, the edge of the world. The decision turned out to be a blessing, for the islanders were most pleasant and helpful throughout. Almost all of them appeared in the finished film, and all enjoyed the experience.

*"This drama was to be enacted against the awe-inspiring, tremendously impressive natural beauty of Foula. Imagine for an instance, a cliff whose summit towers into the sky and juts out like a tremendous diving board so that it overhangs the sea for nearly a quarter of a mile sheer drop."*

The cast and crew set out for Foula in June 1936, and were not to return to the mainland until October. The cast was a mixed lot, ranging from experienced actors like John Laurie, Belle Chrystall, and Finlay Currie, to the native islanders. The crew was composed mainly of young technicians with a hunger to learn their craft. For the photography, Powell utilized three cameramen (from novice to pro) to produce the strikingly clear, and beautifully composed images, which were unanimously praised by critics.

Immediately after they arrived on the island, the production team encountered difficulties. Due to the constantly inclement weather, cast and crew found themselves completely isolated for weeks on end. Scheduled boat trips to purchase supplies, collect rushes, and send exposed film to the labs were, more often than not, abandoned. Almost everyone on the production slept in wooden huts, which were specially constructed for the "comfort" of the film unit. The two women in the unit, Belle Chrystall and Frankie Reidy (later Mrs. Michael Powell), were given more comfortable accommodations. Others in the unit preferred to sleep on board the company's steamer, rather than brave the ferociously cold and stormy nights inside the huts.

*"It was a hard and grueling task, the filming of The Edge of the World. We were cramped into small, uncomfortable quarters. None of the comforts that we were used to could be had. Our lives were often endangered. Actors frequently had to be rescued from perilous positions while making sea and cliff sequences."*

The storms quickly put the shoot behind schedule. By mid-October the national press reported that the company was marooned without radio and that perilous seas prevented their escape. In London, Joe Rock declared that they were to be evacuated as soon as it was safe. Powell and crew, unaware of the headlines, were finally airlifted from Foula after eleven days of continuous storms. This, however, did not stop Powell from stealing a few necessary key shots on the morning they were rescued.

*“Despite the hardship however, despite the lack of comfort, and the cold winds that blew away our huts and our equipment, those of us who have lived through the experience of shooting a picture on Foula, remember it fondly... We emerged with a picture of which I think we can be justly proud, and we came away with a knowledge of good simple folk, kindly in their ways and gentle in their thought, a valuable knowledge which we could never have acquired in the cleanly swept streets of Mayfair and West End.”*

Even after the stressful and grueling shoot, Powell’s problems were hardly over. The editing of the film proved to be almost as difficult as the filming itself. He ended up with 200,000 feet of exposed film that he had to edit down, and had no idea how to shape it into the film he desired.

*“The Edge of the World was entirely saved for me by the editor. I’d lived on the island with my crew for four months and shot a great deal of footage. I knew what I was doing, and that it needed a bloody good editor. I mean, Flaherty with no story — at least I had a semblance of a story — took about six months to cut Man of Aran, and it wasn’t any good. He had to go away, have a refresher course, and come back and cut it again. But I didn’t have six months, I had to get it cut quickly and I tried with the cutter who was on the film...After months, I went to Joe Rock and said, ‘Joe I need an editor’, and he said, ‘Jesus Christ! What have you been doing for the last two months?’ I said, ‘I want this boy Derek Twist’, who was one of Ian Dalrymple’s men from Gaumont British and who had saved Phantom Light... So he came in on the final cut of The Edge of the World and did a great job.” — from *A Life in the Movies**

### Afterthought

*The Edge of the World* premiered to rave reviews both in England and America and was chosen Best Foreign Film in 1937 by the New York Film Critics. Powell wrote the following year an extremely interesting book about the hectic production, cryptically titled *200,000 Feet on Foula* (referring to the amount of footage shot). Unfortunately the film sank into obscurity due to the vagaries of distribution and Rock’s financial troubles. A 1978 BBC TV transmission resurrected a shortened version of the film and gave Powell the chance to go back to the island of Foula to shoot a reunion with all the people who were involved in the original production. In the United States however, *The Edge of the World* was rarely ever shown — screening only in rare archival showings for most of the past sixty years.

But it did manage to help Powell in furthering his career. *The Edge of the World* was greatly admired by famous producer Alexander Korda who hired Powell to work at Denham studios in 1938. This step would lead directly to his esteemed eighteen-year collaboration with screenwriter Emeric Pressburger. As the production team known simply as “The Archers,” Powell and Pressburger would go on to create some of the best films to ever come out of England. With *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *A Canterbury Tale*, *I Know Where I’m Going*, *A Matter of Life and Death*, *Black Narcissus*, and *The Red Shoes* (to name but a few), their films would eventually go on to inspire many young filmmakers including Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola.

*The Edge of the World* helped launch Powell into the forefront of British Cinema and its themes would be found in films throughout his career.

## Synopsis

*“The slow shadow of death is falling on the outer isles of Scotland.  
This is the story of one of them — And all of them.*

*When the Roman fleet first sailed round Britain they saw from the Orkneys a distant island,  
like a blue haze across a hundred miles of sea. They called it —*

### *ULTIMA THULE The Edge of the World”*

— from the introduction to the movie, *The Edge of the World*

*“The story I had decided on was the story of strong hardy people, faced by insurmountable natural odds. The peat beds, were giving out, trawlers had destroyed the fishing beds, inadequate harvests made bread scarce and the inhabitants were finding it more difficult to live from day to day.” — from *A Life in the Movies**

A yacht is seen approaching a majestic but lonely and deserted outpost in the Shetland Islands off the Scottish mainland. Aboard are a young man, a young woman and the skipper, Andrew. The yacht owner asks the skipper what the island is and Andrew tells him it is the island of Hirta, which means “death.” Wandering around the deserted island, the yachtsman finds a tombstone with the words “Peter Manson — Gone Over” engraved on it. He asks the skipper what it means and Andrew tells him the story of this desolate island.

Ten years ago, Andrew and almost a hundred other people are living happily on the island. Robbie Manson, Andrew’s best friend, has just returned from six months on the Mainland.

Andrew is in love with Robbie’s sister Ruth, and the three friends rejoice in being together again. Robbie says that he has found a girl on the Mainland, but he will not bring her to Hirta to live. The island has grown fallow and the commercial trawlers from the Mainland are overfishing the island waters. Andrew grows indignant over Robbie’s remarks. An argument develops about the future of the island and the two young men decide to settle their differences according to Hirta tradition— a race to climb the steepest and most dangerous cliff on the island without ropes.

The wager is discussed at the work parliament the next morning. It develops that the islanders themselves are split on whether to remain on the island or to leave. The race is finally approved after Peter Manson — the father of Robbie and one of the most influential members of the community — makes an impassioned address against his own son’s point of view.

The two young men take to the cliff. Andrew warns Robbie to avoid the left channel of the cliff, but Robbie is anxious to win and prove his courage. He takes the left channel. Andrew wins the bet, but finds Robbie is in trouble. Andrew races back to save his best friend. But tragically, despite his efforts, Robbie falls to his death on the rocks below.

Life goes on on Hirta. Andrew finds that Peter Manson has developed a deep-seated hatred for him, and refuses to allow Ruth, his daughter, to marry him. In despair, Andrew leaves the island to take a job on the Mainland not knowing of Ruth’s secret. Soon, it is apparent that Ruth is pregnant. Her father angrily confronts her and finding out the truth, moves toward her. He takes the young girl in his arms, holds her, and comforts her.

Ruth bears child and the entire island helps care for the infant. The two grandfathers are reconciled over the cradle.

On the mainland, Andrew is out of work and desperate. He is approached on the docks by a skipper and is given a “boat letter” from home. Conditions on Hirta have become increasingly difficult. Andrew finds that he has a child who is dangerously ill with diphtheria. He finds a doctor and hurriedly ships for home on the first trawler. A terrific gale blows up.

The trawler manages to breast the storm and arrive at Hirta in time to save the child. At last, when the wind dies down, the islanders realize that life has become too difficult for them on the land of their fathers. They petition the Laird of the island to remove them to the Mainland.

In a heavy fog, the few families trundle their household goods, their livestock, and their few personal belongings across the narrow gangplank to the steamer. Peter Manson, forced to bow before the will of the majority, makes his way down the side of a cliff, looking for a rare bird’s egg to sell to the greedy mainlanders. His rope snaps. The picture ends with a close-up of his tombstone “Peter Manson — Gone Over.”

*“I do not think that the last word on The Edge of the World will be said for many years. When a theme has beauty, integrity and a national, as well as human, importance, it is apt to last a long time, even in such a brittle and ephemeral shape as eight cans of celluloid; and when you add the spirit of an old land and its people, strong enough to influence the shaping of the theme, you have something more. In making our film many of us formed ties of sympathy and friendship that will never be broken, that are stronger than many we have had all our lives.”*

— Michael Powell

**Michael Powell, Director & Writer  
1905–1990**

Born in 1905 in Bekesbourne, a small town near Canterbury, England, Michael Powell was the youngest son of Thomas Powell and Mabel Corbett. He grew up on his family’s hop farm and was formally educated at King’s School in Canterbury. Tragedy struck in 1918 when his elder brother died from a ruptured appendix. That year, Powell started at Dulwich College. Thomas Powell had been stationed in France at the beginning of World War I, and chose to stay there permanently — a decision that quickly ended his marriage. Michael remained in England with his mother while beginning his career at the National Provincial Bank. But the young man became obsessed with films after reading *Picturegoer* magazine and in 1921, he decided to devote his life to the medium.

In 1925, Powell went to visit his father in the south of France. His father promptly introduced him to Harry Lachman, an artist and filmmaker who was working with Rex Ingram, the great American director. By this time, Ingram had abandoned Hollywood and had created Victorine Studios in Nice, so he could work and live in France. Powell immediately joined the production of *Mare Nostrum* — his first job was “to stick around.” Soon he moved up to grip and eventually began performing in Ingram’s films as “comic relief.” He also starred in a series of comic adventures called *Travelaugh*s directed by Lachman, but “talkies” came in, and the Victorine closed down. Lachman joined Elstree studios in England where he helped Powell get a job as stills photographer on Hitchcock’s *Champagne*, then as a cutter on *A Knight in London*. It was at Elstree that Powell contributed (uncredited) script ideas for Hitchcock’s *Blackmail*.

In 1930 Powell met an American producer named Jerome Jackson who was just entering into the “quota quickie” market. Because of America’s dominance in the world film market, England created a quota system that guaranteed a certain percentage of films playing in the theaters would be of British origin. Faced with complying with these quotas, American and British studios came up with short, cheap programmers called “quota quickies” that would fulfill their obligation to run British product. Powell’s first assignment was as a scenarist, but before long he was directing his own features. In 1936, he began

production on his own personal project, *The Edge of the World*. The film brought him out of the “quota quickies” and into more substantial and fulfilling work.

In 1938 Alexander Korda gave Powell a job making a propaganda film for the British government titled *The Lion Has Wings*. Next, he worked collaboratively as director on the epic fantasy film, *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940). The year before, Korda had introduced Powell to a young and talented Hungarian scriptwriter, Emeric Pressburger. Their first two films together were *The Spy in Black* and *Contraband*. Their next, *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, was a big success and won its screenwriter, Pressburger, an Oscar. The collaboration between Powell and Pressburger lasted nearly two decades and under the banner of their production company, The Archers, the two friends shared credit as co-writers, co-producers, and co-directors. Together, they created more than a dozen films that have become favorites with audiences and scholars alike.

After the team split up in 1957, Powell kept the Archers name and insignia, and continued to make films on his own. His most infamous production was *Peeping Tom*, an exploration into voyeurism and the psychosexual mind of a serial killer. The unsettling and strangely sympathetic story that Powell presented was too horrifying for the film critics in 1960 and the film was loudly denounced in the British papers and magazines of the day. A viewing today reveals the film to be ahead of its time and has become an influence on such filmmakers as Martin Scorsese and David Lynch. Due to the poor critical notices *Peeping Tom* received, Powell had trouble finding financial backers and would never match the success of his previous work.

In 1979, Scorsese, who had grown up seeing the films of The Archers on local television, helped to restore *Peeping Tom* and bring it back into distribution. He became the main force in re-introducing Michael Powell to American audiences. In 1980, Powell went to Hollywood where he served as Senior Director-in-Residence at Francis Ford Coppola’s Zoetrope studios. But the major Hollywood studios worried about the cost of insuring a 75 year-old filmmaker, and would not offer Powell any directing work. However, Powell was far from inactive during this period. He lectured at Dartmouth College, worked on various script ideas, and became a confidante to Scorsese. The 1980s brought numerous tributes to The Archers and the British Film Institute began to restore many of their great films. These films toured in retrospectives around the world and brought Powell and Pressburger back to the forefront of cinema history. The Archers’ brilliant, passionate, highly literate — and at the same time highly experimental — film style created a furor among the young film directors and audiences which continues to this day.

It was while working with Scorsese that Powell met, and fell in love with, the Oscar®-winning editor, Thelma Schoonmaker. They were married on May 19, 1984 and spent happy years together. He wrote and she helped edit his two remarkable autobiographies, *A Life in Movies* and *Million Dollar Movie*. Sadly, on February 19, 1990, Michael Powell, after suffering from cancer for several years, passed away at his beloved home in Lee Cottages, England, at 2:30 in the afternoon.

#### **Michael Powell: Selected Filmography**

*The Edge of the World* (1937); *The Spy In Black*, *The Lion Has Wings* (1939); *Contraband*, *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940); *An Airman’s Letter To His Mother*, *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941); *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942); *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *The Volunteer* (1943), *A Canterbury Tale* (1944); *I Know Where I’m Going!* (1945); *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947); *The Red Shoes* (1948); *The Small Back Room* (1949); *Gone to Earth*, *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1950); *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951); *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, *Oh...Rosalinda!!* (1955); *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956), *Ill Met By Moonlight* (1957); *Honeymoon* (1959); *Peeping Tom* (1960); *The Queen’s Guard* (1961); *Bluebeard’s Castle* (1964); *They’re A Weird Mob* (1966); *Age of Consent* (1969); *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* (1972); *Return to the Edge of the World* (1978)

(All quotes in the following biographies are from Michael Powell's *200,000 Feet on Foula*)

### Ernest Palmer, Cinematographer

*"Ernest Palmer was Rock's chief cameraman; he was an old friend of mine; but he was not available, working at Shepperton on another job..."*

But the first cinematographer on *The Edge of the World*, a friend of Palmer's, Monty Berman, proved to be a problem. Soon, Powell was desperate, Palmer became available, and the cinematographer came in to "supervise." As Berman's work proved still not adequate and time was running short, Palmer took over and did some of the best work of his career, often in physically difficult situations.

*"The days closed down. Ernie had put away nearly all his filters except the neutral density '5N5' and '3N5.' He used them constantly in the pale, low sunlight of those days and the negatives he got were astonishing, rich and brilliant. He never made a mistake. There were days when he had ten different conditions in one hour. There were fog scenes in bright sunlight, in soft sunlight, in no sunlight at all and practically no light at all; they all had to match and intercut — and they do. He had new experiences every second that nothing but a genuine instinct could have solved. I have seen him change the aperture four times during one shot, as the weather changed with it. Glass to eye, long fair hair brushed back over his head, oilskin flapping buttonless, legs well apart, slow grin on his face and slow eyes that never missed a thing — Caddy Palmer!"*

### Ernest Palmer: Selected Filmography

*Zoo Baby (1960); Hidden Homicide (1959); Scudda-Hoo! Scudda-Hay! (1948); Centennial Summer (1946); Coney Island, Sweet Rosie O'Grady (1943); Song of the Islands, My Gal Sal, Springtime in the Rockies (1942); Blood and Sand (co-phot), Belle Starr (1941); The Great Profile (1940); Hollywood Cavalcade (co-phot) (1939); Kentucky (1938); The Edge of the World (1937); Under Two Flags, Banjo on My Knee (1936); Way Down East (1935); Music in the Air (1934); Cavalcade, Berkeley Square, Hoopla (1933); Down to Earth (1932); A Connecticut Yankee, City Girl (1930); The River, Sunny Side Up (co-phot) (1929); Street Angel (co-phot), Four Devils (co-phot)(1928); Seventh Heaven (1927); Wings of Youth, Wages for Wives, (1925); Flames of Desire, (1924); The Wanters (1923); The Song of Life (1922); Prisoners of Love (1921); The Miracle Man (1919); Hypocrites (1918); Mother (1917); The Prisoner of Zenda, Ivanhoe (co-photo) (1913).*

### John Laurie (*Peter Manson*)

*"One man had been told of my plans and that was John Laurie. I had met him on Red Ensign, in which he played a small part; his crofter in The Thirty-Nine Steps nearly stole the picture; his innkeeper in another of my films was grand larceny; so that ever since the birth of the story he had been pencilled in for a part, though I hadn't yet decided which one. He came from the town of Dumfries..."*

*"I was determined to have John in the picture, so John became Peter Manson; and a wonderful performance he gave..."*

*"John Laurie had the hardest physical work of his life. With his shoulder still painful [the injury earlier in the production had sidelined him in a hospital for a month], he had to carry sheep, hammer in the staves, coil and uncoil his heavy ropes, as well as carry them ... he had to climb and descend perpendicular cliffs on the strength of his own arms and had to act important scenes on crumbling ledges a foot wide. The way he kept to his true characterization, through all these scenes which required in themselves complete attention, was beyond praise."*

### John Laurie: Selected Filmography

*The Prisoner of Zenda* (1979); *Don't Bother to Knock* (1961); *Kidnapped (as Ebenezer Balfour)* (1960); *Richard III (as Lord Lovel)* (1955); *Hobson's Choice* (1954); *Laughter in Paradise, Pandora and the Flying Dutchman, Encore* (1951); *Treasure Island (as Blind Pew), Madeleine* (1950); *Hamlet* (1948); *Uncle Silas/The Inheritance, Mine Own Executioner* (1947); *School for Secrets/Secret Flight* (1946); *I Know Where I'm Going!*, *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945); *The Way Ahead, Henry V* (1944); *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943); *Convoy* (1940); *The Four Feathers* (1939); *The Edge of the World* (1937); *Tudor Rose/Nine Days a Queen, As You Like It* (1936); *The 39 Steps* (1935); *Juno and the Paycock* (1930)

### Finlay Currie (James Gray)

A well-respected actor who went on to appear in some of the finest British films through the next thirty years (including *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* and *I Know Where I'm Going!* for the Archers), the hiring of Finlay Currie as James Gray tells much of the independent nature of the production.

*There was no James Gray!... I was at my wit's end... Then I got a hurry-call from Picot, rushed to her office, and there, in the largest chair, beaming all over, in grey tweeds, grey-hair and glorious suede shoes, sat Finlay Currie.*

*'Finlay!' I cried, 'is this true? Would you play this part? It doesn't carry anything like your money, you know.'*

*He waved his hand in a lordly manner. 'I hate the stuff, chief,' he said. 'It's the wonderful summer and the wonderful part in a fine film I'm after... Michael, I have been to Foula.'*

*'You haven't!'*

*'Aha, that shook you! Thirty years ago in a wee boat. So you see it's fated.'*

### Finlay Currie: Selected Filmography

*Bunny Lake is Missing* (1965); *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964); *Cleopatra, Billy Liar* (1963); *Francis of Assisi* (1961); *Kidnapped, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1960); *Ben Hur, Solomon and Sheba* (1959); *The Tempest* (1958); *Saint Joan* (1957); *Captain Lightfoot* (1955); *Rob Roy* (1954); *Ivanhoe* (1952); *Quo Vadis* (1951); *Treasure Island, The Black Rose* (1950); *Bonnie Prince Charlie, Sleeping Car to Trieste* (1948); *Great Expectations* (1946); *I Know Where I'm Going!* (1945); *The Day Will Dawn/The Avengers, Thunder Rock* (1942); *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941); *The Edge of the World* (1937); *The Good Companions, Orders Is Orders* (1933); *The Frightened Lady/Criminal at Large, Roman Express* (1932)

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\* Originally published as *200,000 Feet on Foula* (London: 1938. Faber & Faber)

## Milestone Film & Video

“Since its birth the Milestone Film & Video Co. has steadily become the industry’s foremost boutique distributor of classic and art films — and probably the only distributor in America whose name is actually a guarantee of some quality.”

— *William Arnold*, Seattle Post-Intelligencer

*Milestone is a boutique distribution company with more than 13 years experience in art-house film distribution. The company has earned an unparalleled reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to Milestone’s rediscovery, restoration and release of such important discoveries as Mikhail Kalatozov’s award-winning I am Cuba, Jane Campion’s Two Friends, and Alfred Hitchcock’s Bon Voyage and Aventure Malgache, the company now occupies an honored position as one of the most influential independent distributors in the American film industry. In 1999, the L.A. Weekly chose Milestone as “Indie Distributor of the Year.”*

*Amy Heller and Dennis Doros started Milestone in 1990 to bring out the best films of yesterday and today. The company has released such remarkable new films as Manoel de Oliveira’s I’m Going Home, Bae Yong-kyun’s Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?, Hirokazu Kore-eda’s Maborosi, and Takeshi Kitano’s Fireworks (Hana-Bi).*

*Milestone’s re-releases have included restored versions of Luchino Visconti’s Rocco and His Brothers, F.W. Murnau’s Tabu, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack’s Grass and Chang, Henri-Georges Clouzot’s The Mystery of Picasso, and Marcel Ophuls’ The Sorrow and the Pity (a Woody Allen presentation). Milestone is also working with the Mary Pickford Foundation on a long-term project to preserve, re-score and release the best films of the legendary silent screen star. In recent years, Milestone has re-released beautifully restored versions of Frank Hurley’s South: Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition, Kevin Brownlow’s It Happened Here and Winstanley, Lotte Reiniger’s animation masterpiece, The Adventures of Prince Achmed, Michael Powell’s The Edge of the World (a Martin Scorsese presentation), Gillo Pontecorvo’s The Wide Blue Road (a Jonathan Demme and Dustin Hoffman presentation), Conrad Rooks’ Siddhartha and Rolando Klein’s Mexican classic, Chac.*

*Since its beginning, Milestone has had a fruitful collaboration with some of the world’s major archives including the British Film Institute, UCLA Film & Television Archive, George Eastman House, Museum of Modern Art, Library of Congress, Nederlands Filmmuseum and the Norsk Filmintitutt. In August 2000 the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York premiered Milestone’s 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Retrospective. During the New York run and the nationwide tour that followed, all revenues from retrospective screenings were donated to four major archives in the United States and England to help restore films that might otherwise be lost.*

*In 2003–2004, Milestone will be releasing an important series of great silent films restored by the world’s foremost film historians and preservationists, Photoplay Productions. These stunning versions, never before available in the United States, include the horror classic The Phantom of the Opera; André Antoine’s early neorealist adaptation of Emile Zola’s La Terre; and an astonishing historical epic of Polish independence by Raymond Bernard, The Chess Player. Video highlights for this year also include a special DVD series of incredible animation including Cut-Up: The Films of Grant Munro; Norman McLaren: The Collector’s Edition; and Winsor McCay: The Master Edition.*

*In theaters, Milestone will be releasing Tareque Masud’s remarkable The Clay Bird from Bangladesh and The Big Animal, directed by and starring Jerzy Stuhr, from a script by Krzysztof Kieslowski.*

*Milestone received a Special Archival Award in 1995 from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of I am Cuba. Eight of the company’s films — Charles Burnett’s Killer of Sheep, F.W.*

*Murnau's Tabu, Edward S. Curtis' In the Land of the War Canoes, Mary Pickford's Poor Little Rich Girl, Lon Chaney's The Phantom of the Opera, Clara Bow's It, Winsor McCay's Gertie the Dinosaur, and Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack and Marguerite Harrison's Grass — are listed on the Library of Congress' National Film Registry.*

*Cindi Rowell, director of acquisitions, has been with Milestone since 1999. In 2003 Nadja Tennstedt joined the company as director of international sales.*

*"Milestone Film & Video is an art-film distributor that has released some of the most distinguished new movies (along with seldom-seen vintage movie classics) of the past decade"*  
— Stephen Holden, *New York Times*

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In Memory: Michael Powell and Bill Everson.

**Film Notes by Carl Pidhajny, Milestone Film & Video**  
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