Cotten, Joseph (1905-1994) Encyclopedia Article

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One of Hollywood's most versatile actors, Joseph Cotten is chiefly associated with the films of Orson Welles. Cotten was a latecomer to Hollywood, arriving at age thirty-six after acting on Broadway in Welles's Mercury Theatre. In 1940, Cotten made his first film—Welles's *Citizen Kane*—a film that would come to be regarded as the greatest film ever made. For the remainder of the decade, it seemed as if the talented actor could not turn in a bad performance. Although Cotten continued to work with Welles—starring in *Journey into Fear* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*—many A-list directors clamored to work with the versatile star. Cotten appeared in such classics as George Cukor's *Gaslight,* Carol Reed's *The Third Man,* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt.* With his offbeat good looks and exceptional acting ability, Cotten soon evolved into one of Hollywood's most sought-after leading men, appearing opposite such top stars as Ingrid Bergman, Jennifer Jones, Loretta Young, and Joan Fontaine. Although his career continued well into the 1980s, the good parts were fewer and farther between. Through his association with Welles, however, his movie immortality remains assured.

Further Reading:

Callow, Simon. *Orson Welles: The Road to Xanadu.* New York, Viking, 1995.

Cotten, Joseph. *Joseph Cotten: An Autobiography.* New York, Avon Books, 1987.

Leaming, Barbara. *Orson Welles: A Biography.* New York, Viking Press, 1985.