Muni, Paul (1895-1967) Encyclopedia Article

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Muni was considered the foremost serious character actor of 1930s cinema. He came to prominence with a number of contemporary issue movies, including *Scarface* (1932) and *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932), and maintained his success through biographical pictures such as *Pasteur* (1935), *Zola* (1937) and *Juarez* (1939). He approached each of his roles with unprecedented research into makeup, character, dialect, and background. However, though his professionalism is to be admired, even by the 1940s his style was considered by many to be overstated, trite, and dated. A major source of his unprecedented success was, perhaps, a depression-era audience in dire need of uplifting through simple stories about larger-than-life heroes.

Further Reading:

Druxman, Michael B. *Paul Muni: His Life and His Films.* New York, Barnes, 1974.

Lawrence, Jerome. *Actor: The Life and Times of Paul Muni.* New York, Putnam, 1974.

Paul Muni (right) in a scene from the film *The Good Earth.*