

SKH Note: Below section edited out of original MOST EVIL(I) due to space limitations.

1930s films as M.O.

We have examined two 1930s-period films, *The Most Dangerous Game* (1932) and *Charlie Chan at Treasure Island* (1939) and I have suggested that Zodiac, in his 1960s murders, was borrowing themes and characters from each film. Let us now examine two additional films from that period, which I believe buttress my theory.

In February, 1934, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) studio distributed a U.K. made film, *The Mystery of Mr. X*. The film starred a young Robert Montgomery, as Sir Nicholas Revel. The story involved a mad serial killer, "Mr. X", who uses a rapier-like sword to stab and slay unsuspecting uniformed policemen, walking their beats in different sections of London. Mr. X, after slaying his victims, then mails taunting cut-and-pasted notes to the press, and as the film rushes to its climax, our hero, Sir Nicholas, by plotting the locations of the murder victims on a city map, cleverly deduces that the killer is constructing a giant letter X, with only one killing more needed to complete his "project." Sir Nicholas, disguised in the uniform of a Bobbie, decides to use himself as bait, and drives

to the anticipated final location, where he confronts Mr. X for a fight-to-the-finish finale.¹



a

b



¹ In 1952, the film was remade for the big screen as, *The Hour of 13*, this time starring Peter Lawford as, Sir Nicholas. In the remake, the serial killer, renamed "The Terror" chose his victims locations throughout 1890 London town, to form the letter "T".

In the above film clips, we see: (a) Mr. X's cut and pasted notes, mailed to the police, which read: "Tonight X", and "With kindest Regards from X." In (b) we see Mr. X slaying a downed policeman with his long sword,² and Sir. Nicholas, using a London town map to deduce the exact location where Mr. X is planning to slay his final victim.

Just 14-months prior to the release of *The Mystery of Mr. X*, the same studio (MGM) released another film. The name of this film was, *Red Dust* (1932). The film starred, Clark Cable and Jean Harlow, in a romantic drama which takes place on a rubber plantation in Indochina. The story line as best I can tell, is unimportant to our investigation. However, there is a scene in the film that I consider to be exactly-on point. Again, I believe Zodiac has *plagiarized* and incorporated a small scene from the film and incorporated it into his real life killing spree.

In *Red Dust*, a man-eating tiger has attacked some villagers, and the protagonist, Dennis Carson (Clark Gable) is determined to hunt it down. He solicits the help of a plantation visitor, Gary Willis (co-star, Gene Raymond) and together they set out into the jungle, to track and kill the beast.

² "By Knife"- I believe Zodiac used a sword to stab his victims in the Shepard-Hartnell crimes, because-*the script called for it!* Mr. X used a sword, and so too would Zodiac.

They decide of a set trap by tying an animal to a tree in hopes that the tiger will attack the prey by night and they can shoot it. They stake-out the location by climbing the tree (a blind) and wait for nightfall. Because it would be a difficult shot in the dark of night, Gable shows his younger, inexperienced hunter an old trick. He attaches a flashlight to both of their rifle barrels, so they can simply point and shoot. The below clips from *Red Dust*, show their plan worked. In pitch dark, the tiger moves in for the kill, they turn on their flashlights and shoot it dead. The villagers are avenged and safe.



Red Dust (1932)

Gable attaching the flashlight to his weapon for a night shot and the kill

Let us reexamine some excerpts from Zodiac's boastful handwritten, three-page letter to the *San Francisco Examiner* on 8/4/69:

...

Last Christmass

In that episode, the police were wondering as to how I could shoot & hit my victoms in the dark... What I did was tape a small pencil flash light to the barrel of my gun. ... When taped to a gun barrel, the bullet will strike exactly in the center of the black dot in the light. All I had to do was spray them as if it was a water hose; there was no need to use the gun sights.

Throughout the 1930s, while attending medical school, George Hodel maintained close personal ties and connections to the Hollywood film studios. His high school friend, John Huston was a screenwriter and in 1932 had just completed writing the script dialogue for *Universal's*, *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, released in February of that same year. At that time, my mother, still married to Huston, was also a screenwriter (uncredited) doing freelance writing for: Universal, MGM and RKO. By 1932, Dorothy and John, after a very rocky six-year marriage, were on the verge of divorce. By then, both had been long involved in multiple affairs. Dorothy was intimate with a number of celebrity actors, which, by her own account included: Johnny Weissmuller, Sam Jaffe, and noted screen writer/director, Rowland Brown.³ In both the *Dahlia* and now the *Zodiac*

³ Rowland Brown, though mostly unknown today, in the 1930s was a true rebel, and quite well known to the public. In the 20s he had been a Chicago sportswriter, and like his good friend, Ben Hecht, had come west to check out the birth of Hollywood and filmmaking. Like most of the "Front

investigation, I keep returning to a statement made by Joe Barrett, who was a roomer/tenant at the Franklin House from 1948-1950, and in a 1999 conversation with me, shortly after my father's death, made, what I now consider an exceptionally astute observation. Joe in describing my father's mental brilliance and genius-- put it this way: [*Black Dahlia Avenger*, pg. 211]

You know Steve, George was gifted with a perfect photographic memory, that permitted him to absorb ideas from other people, and make them sound as if they were his own. He was super intelligent, but not particularly original.

Joe's description is exactly what has been presented to us. Zodiac's mind is not original, but, rather it is a moviola.⁴ Cursed with "a perfect photographic memory" he has extracted

Page" pioneers, he was a hard drinking, pugnacious, iconoclast. Brown loved women, gangsters, (credited with discovering George Raft) and fast horses. He would fight to the death for "the little guy" which was oftentimes the theme in his films. Brown's filmology included such greats as: *Quick Million* (1931)), *States Attorney* (1932), Oscar nominated, *What Price Hollywood* (1932, co-written with Gene Fowler), *Blood Money* (1933) and *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938, co-written with Ben Hecht.) Brown and Huston would be regular attendees at my father's Hollywood parties, at his Franklin House during the mid-to-late 1940s, and in the spring of 1950, the DA surveillance tapes would capture my mother in conversation with Rowland Brown, just prior to Father fleeing the country. Shortly after the 1947 Black Dahlia murder, two of Hollywood's top screenwriters, Ben Hecht and Steve Fisher, (*Lady in the Lake*, 1947, *Song of the Thin Man*, 1947) would both provide their "expert opinions" in separate newspaper articles. Both indicated they believed they knew the identity and actual name of the Dahlia killer, and reassured the public that the police were just about to arrest him. Steve Fisher, (also a good friend of Rowland Brown), in his article wrote, "...I think I know who the killer is. I'm sure the police do, too, and that in a very short time, they will have his name....When the killer-suspect's name is published, a lot of people who know him, and who do not now suspect he has anything to do with the case, are going to be surprised and terrified...The man will have to flee...he will never get out of the city."

⁴ **Moviola** - A special projection machine (used by film editors) that holds several reels of film simultaneously and can run at variable speeds, backward or forward, and stop at any frame.

scenes and frames from this film and that one, and edited them into his own-noir horrors.

Zodiac's 1960s serial killings are a diabolical remake of his past favorites, using real locations, real crimes, and real victims!