

Production Context of Citizen Kane

Orson Welles and RKO:

Citizen Kane was released by RKO Studios in 1941 and was directed by Orson Welles, which happened to be his first feature film. The context of the film's production heavily influenced the look and feel of the final product. Orson Welles co-founded the Mercury Theatre and additionally showed that he had great experience directing and acting as he worked as an actor, director and producer in radio. One of his most famous works on radio albeit his most controversial was the War of the Worlds in which Welles narrated an adaptation of H.G Wells' novel of the same name which led many listeners to believe that what Welles described on the radio was actually real. This led to widespread outrage across the media, however, this actually pushed Welles career forwards as he was funded by RKO Studios, a major film studio at the time, to direct, produce, write and star in his first feature film. Due to the film being funded by RKO, it had an extremely high budget of close to 700,000 dollars. This meant that the film could utilise expensive technology as well as have a large cast of characters.



Influence:

The film's story may have been inspired by William Randolph Hearst, although this is unconfirmed. Hearst shares many parallels with Kane, such as the fact that both men owned a multi-million dollar newspaper company and both attempted to become involved in politics. Additionally, both characters would live extremely lonely lives, using money as their only source of solace. Hearst was actually aware that he film may have taken inspiration from his life as he attempted to destroy the film's chances of success by boycotting the film and by disallowing many newspapers to mention the film. However, this only caused the public to become more interested in the film and it became critically acclaimed.



Technology:

The film was able to incorporate sound into it as sound in films were common during this time. However, the film was not able to incorporate colour due to the budget already being spent on props, cameras, actors and set design. This meant that the film would have to utilise the use of High Key Light and Low Key Light in order to create a certain tone or mood within a scene. This actually worked in the film's favour as it was able to create amazing scenes in which lights contrasted to show Charles' greed as well as how his greed affected other characters.