



The film required more special effects than a typical Hitchcock film (both mechanical and live birds were used) and, therefore, production costs were higher than usual. The *Birds* was financed by the success of the director's television series, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. The movie became Hitchcock's only true horror film.



Much of the film was shot on location in the Bay area, at Bodega Bay and in San Francisco, but interiors were shot on Universal Studios' soundstages. The selection of Bodega Bay was not accidental. It was the result of a real-life incident that took place in Northern California.

Residents in Capitola (south of Bodega Bay) woke up on a brisk Friday morning on August 18, 1961 to the sound of thousands of seabirds attacking their community. Apparently these feathered creatures had just finished indulging on a school of contaminated anchovies in Monterey Bay. Terrified witnesses saw flocks of crazed birds flying into windows, smashing into cars and buildings, breaking television aerials and streetlamps and even tried to enter houses. When homeowners ran outside to investigate, they quickly retreated after our sown-called "fine feathered friends" flew towards the beams of their flashlights.

Hitchcock, who had a vacation home near Capitola, recalled reading about this anomalous incident and decided to combine this real life avian event with du Maurier's fictional tale resulting in another Hitchcock classic, *The Birds*. ■



In the fall of 1960,

Paramount executives were celebrating the box office success of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Hitchcock, however, was worried. How was he going to top *Psycho*? Audiences would expect his next film to be even more thrilling.

Although originally he had planned to shoot Winston Graham's novel, *MARNIE*, he postponed the production and instead searched for something not just suspenseful, but truly horrifying. He found what he was searching for in a short story by Daphne du Maurier titled *THE BIRDS*. Hitchcock had already had tremendous success filming an earlier du

Maurier tale, *Rebecca*, in 1940. Hitchcock relocated the story from the Cornish coast to California's Bodega Bay and exchanged the author's peasant farmer for an elegant blonde, but the attack by murderous birds remained the same.



Icy cool blonde perfection with a hint of the Bad Girl; this was the archetypical Hitchcock

heroine. Tippi Hedren was the last in a long line of actresses selected by director Alfred Hitchcock not only for their talent, but also for their physical presence. Hitchcock portrayed women as captivating, yet dangerous.

Could you trust her or not?

Hitchcock first spotted Tippi Hedren on TV when she appeared in a commercial for a diet drink. He arranged a screen test, and she won the lead in his latest film, *The Birds*. Universal Studios did not approve of

Hitchcock casting a novice in a lead role, but the director was determined to play Svengali. He argued that the birds would be the real stars of the film, not the actors.

Hitchcock's Trilby was born Nathalie Hedren in Lafayette, Minnesota, but as a child was nicknamed Tippi, a Swedish endearment meaning "little girl. She left Minnesota for a modeling career in New York, working as a single mother (her daughter is actress Melanie Griffith). Knowing that a model's shelf life is limited, she was eager to accept Hitchcock's unexpected offer of screen stardom.

Filming the picture was a grueling experience for Hedren. Not only was she required to be in every scene, but there were also the birds themselves she had to deal with. For the film's climactic scene,

live birds were loosely tied to the peck holes in Hedren's dress. Unfortunately, one of the birds clawed her in the eye. The injury added to the stress and exhaustion Hedren was already experiencing and she collapsed, spending a week in bed before shooting could resume.

The tension on the set is not reflected in Hedren's performance, though. And the master himself must have been pleased with both her work and stamina, because he hired her for his next film, *Marnie* (1964). So, in one respect, *The Birds* had a happy ending. ■



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Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man

is the last of the really good Universal monster features. Wonderful opening sequence in the graveyard, plenty of atmosphere, typically gorgeous Universal studio sets and its famous monsters! A direct sequel to both *The Wolf Man* and *Ghost of Frankenstein*, the plot follows Larry Talbot (played again by Lon Chaney Jr.), the werewolf, who realizes that he can't die. In order to find inner peace, Maleva, (Maria Ouspenskaya) the gypsy, takes him to find Dr. Frankenstein. Talbot instead finds the Creature (Bela

Lugosi), now with Ygor's brain but severely damaged. When a doctor teams up with Talbot in order to help him, the Wolf Man sadly discovers the doctor's true intentions. Along the way the plot includes Lionel Atwill, Ilona Massey, Dwight Frye and Patric Knowles, all of whom contribute topnotch performances. Universal (1943).

Short films underwritten by DAVID & CATHERINE STROHMAIER

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