



GREED

MGM 1924

DIRECTED BY ERICH VON STROHEIM

CAST

McTeague....Gibson Gowland
Trina.... Zasu Pitts
Marcus....Jean Hersholt
Maria ...Dale Fuller
Mother McTeague...Tempe Pigott

Scenario.... Erich von Stroheim
Settings/design.... Cedric Gibbons
Photography....
Ben F. Reynolds & William H. Daniel
Editors.... Jos. W. Farnham

Duration: 135 minutes
plus interval
Projection speed: variable
Aperture: full

**SCORE BY CARL DAVIS
(23 PLAYERS)**



LIVE CINEMA

GREED

'The filthiest, vilest, most putrid picture in the history of the motion picture business,' *Greed* was anything but the ubiquitous Hollywood fairytale. The plot reads like a soap opera: thwarted sexuality, unhappy marriage, greed, jealousy and murder amongst ordinary people. Add to this the flawed genius of Erich von Stroheim and three of the most intense performances of the silent era and you have the recipe for modern success.

Von Stroheim's obsession with truth and authenticity made for powerful, hard-hitting films. Mostly they involved sumptuous reconstructions of European decadence but *Greed* is set in down-town San Francisco. Far from the Golden Gate city of opportunity, Von Stroheim shows a city of lost souls, immigrants, dreaming of past – richer – lives. He takes the ordinary obsession – with money – and develops it to extraordinary proportions. With *Greed*, Von Stroheim gives an American story universal significance and makes an epic out of one man's life.

The film is based on Frank Norris's epic novel *McTeague*. McTeague and Marcus's friendship is destroyed by jealousy over a girl, Trina, and the fortune she wins in a lottery. When married to McTeague, Trina becomes more and more obsessed with money. Penny-pinching to protect her hoard, she denies herself and McTeague even the lowliest of creature comforts. Money usurps the place of her husband, she even sleeps with it. Any love between them thwarted, McTeague kills her and steals the money. He flees with it, only to be pursued by Marcus into the desert...

There ensues a sort of dance of death: two men and a donkey, a never ending landscape and a relentless sun. Filmed where it was set in Death Valley, the final sequence is terrifyingly stark. Likewise interiors were filmed in real houses in San Francisco even that in which the murder that inspired Norris's book had taken place. *Greed* gives a modern audience an extraordinary insight into the threadbare interiors and humdrum existence of ordinary people in the early 20th century.

The casting is ideal. Gibson Gowland, a golden lion of an actor, displays McTeague's bumbling innocence and brute strength. Jean Hersholt's sharp features suit perfectly the street-wise and jealous Marcus. But it is Zasu Pitts' film. Tiny and wan with darting black eyes, her physical frailty belies Tina's feral cunning when in the grips of her fatal obsession.

Carl Davis's score follows the film both geographically and psychologically. For the urban American West he uses bar-room music played on honky-tonk piano. For the downward spiral of the protagonist's lives he uses dissonant themes. His musical inspiration was early 20th century American composer, Charles Ives.