
The Third Man: A look behind the scenes

25 September 2013 | Jan Baedeker

Carol Reed's film noir classic 'The Third Man' was famously shot in Vienna, a few years after the end of WWII. We take a look behind the scenes of this eerie thriller, and uncover some facts almost as gripping as the film itself...

Author Graham Greene had originally planned for shooting to take place in either Rome or Paris

The story of American writer Holly Martins - travelling to a post-War Vienna on a childhood friend's invitation, and subsequently sucked into a whirlpool of crime - is without doubt one of the greatest thrillers in film history. Anyone who has seen the film will never forget the expressionist monochromatic imagery, Orson Welles' sad yet menacing expressions, or the haunting score played solely on a zither. Interestingly, though the dark alleys, amusement park and sewage system of a war-ravaged Vienna played a central role in the film, author Graham Greene had originally planned for shooting to take place in either Rome or Paris - it was producer Alexander Korda's assistant who conjured up the switch to Austria.

Welles, water and the fire department



Despite production in Vienna lasting seven weeks, Welles was only on set for two, with a double completing the scenes for which he was absent. However, while only on location for a fortnight, he was still able to ad-lib one of the film's most famous scenes: the 'cuckoo clock speech'. One of the three on-location teams filmed only at night, and a fire engine was permanently on call to hose down the streets to enhance the already dramatic mood. Only certain parts of the sewer scene were filmed in Vienna - many were completed in a studio once the crew arrived back in London.

<https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/classic-life/third-man-look-behind-scenes>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.