

WITH THE COOPERATION OF THE MURNAU HEIRS,
MILESTONE FILM & VIDEO PRESENTS:
F. W. MURNAU'S LAST MASTERPIECE

TABU A STORY OF THE SOUTH SEAS

"All great art is simple, but simplicity requires the greatest art."

—F. W. Murnau

"The last moments of TABU contain the essence of tragic experience, the sense of the potential value of existence expressed and affirmed even through irreparable loss."

—Robin Wood, FILM COMMENT

"The finale, in its visual perfection, is the apogee of the art of the silent film."

—Lotte Eisner, FILM KURIER, August 28, 1931

A Milestone Film Release
P.O. Box 128 • Harrington Park, New Jersey 07640-0128
Phone (201) 767-3117 • Fax (201) 767-3035 • Email: milefilms@aol.com
www.milestonefilms.com

CREDITS:

Directed by	F. W. Murnau
Produced by	Murnau and Robert J. Flaherty
Story by	Murnau and Flaherty
Photographed by	Floyd Crosby and Flaherty
Edited by	Murnau
Musical setting by	Hugo Riesenfeld

CAST:

The Girl	Reri (Anne Chevalier)
The Boy	Matahi
The Old Chieftain	Hitu
The Policeman	Jean
The Captain	Jules
The Chinese Trader	Kong Ah

Silent with synchronized music score. Black and White. 35mm. 81 minutes. 7383 feet.

Shot on location in Tahiti, Bora Bora and Morea 1929-1931.

Released by Paramount on March 18, 1931 at the Central Park Theatre, New York, NY.

Restored in 1973 by the UCLA Film and Television Archive with financial support from Floyd and David Crosby.

Re-released by Milestone Film & Video in 1991 through contractual arrangement with Murnau's heirs. Floyd Crosby won the 1931 Academy Award for Best Cinematography for TABU.

SYNOPSIS:

Chapter 1—"Paradise"

On the sunlit island of Bora Bora live two happy people: Matahi, a handsome young fisherman, and his love, the beautiful Reri. The young lovers swim in the waterfalls and pools of their South Sea paradise and

give each other gifts of floral wreaths and shells. One day a sailing ship arrives, bearing Hitu, a tribal elder sent by the chief of all the islands. Hitu brings a message: the chief has chosen a sacred maiden from the island. The chosen one is Reri and from this day forward “man must not touch her or cast upon her the eye of desire for in her honor rests the honor of all her people.” She is tabu to all men and to break the tabu means death. Hitu must bring Reri to the chief or answer with his life.

The village prepares a great celebration and the sorrowful Reri, dressed in floral leis and a grass skirt, is called upon to dance the hula. She performs with her eyes downcast, until Matahi appears before her. The two dance joyously with abandon until Hitu angrily orders Reri taken away to the sailing ship. That night, Matahi steals out to the ship and the couple flee the island in his canoe.

Chapter 2—“Paradise Lost”

Fearing Hitu’s wrath, Matahi and Reri travel to a distant island where the tabu is unknown. On this island, white men govern and Matahi must work as a pearl diver for money to live. Although he is a great diver, the work is play to him, and when he finds a great pearl, Matahi is delighted to join in the celebration. While the happy crowd drinks and dances, Matahi makes his mark on the slips of paper that Kong Ah, the Chinese trader, hands to him. He does not realize that they are bills for the bottles of champagne his friends are drinking. In the midst of the festivities, a ship sails into the harbor—it is Hitu’s ship and the couple race to their hut. While they are packing, a policeman arrives with a letter from the governor offering a reward for their arrest. Matahi gives the policeman his pearl in exchange for their freedom.

There is a rich pearl bed which the divers refuse to work because they believe it is “tabu.” One day an experienced diver is killed by an enormous man-eating shark in this area. As a warning to other divers, the local officials place a floating sign that reads “tabu.”

One moonlit night, while her lover sleeps, Reri sees Hitu in the doorway of their hut. Hitu leaves her a message that if she does not go with him in three days, Matahi will die. The next day the terrified Reri goes to the shipping agency—the next ship out is in three days. The couple pool their savings and Matahi goes to book passage. When Matahi offers the clerk the money, Kong Ah submits his enormous bills for the champagne and takes Matahi’s savings as a down payment. Heartbroken, Matahi returns to their hut where Reri is happily singing and playing the guitar. He cannot bear to tell her the truth and hides the empty money box from her.

That night Matahi dreams of stacks of bills. He sees the “tabu” pearl bed and an oyster with a huge pearl inside. He dreams of Kong Ah ripping up all his unpaid bills. While he sleeps, Reri awakens to find Hitu aiming a spear at Matahi. She shields him with her body and begs Hitu to return later. She feigns sleep as Matahi awakens and sets out to live his dream. At the “tabu” pearl bed he finds a beautiful black pearl and escapes the great shark. But when he returns Reri has left him a note—she has gone with Hitu to save Matahi’s life. Matahi drops his pearl and Reri’s flower in the sand and races to save her. He paddles his canoe out after Hitu’s sailboat. At a sandbar he abandons the boat and swims after them. In the sailboat, Hitu closes the hold where Reri lies. As the exhausted swimmer grabs at the rope on the side of the boat, Hitu cuts the line. The sailboat pulls further and further away as Matahi sinks beneath the waves.

PRODUCTION HISTORY:

By 1929, F. W. Murnau, the *wunderkind* of German cinema and Robert J. Flaherty, the explorer turned filmmaker, had both soured on Hollywood in general and on the Fox Film Corporation in particular. After great success with *SUNRISE*, Murnau was reduced to fighting the studio heads for control of *THE FOUR DEVILS* and *OUR DAILY BREAD*. Similarly, M-G-M had replaced Flaherty as director of *WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS* and Fox had recently shut down production of his latest effort, a film about the Pueblo Indians of Acoma, New Mexico. Both men were ready for a change and for some freedom.

After a series of frustrations and setbacks in Hollywood, Murnau decided to buy a yacht and sail to Bali by way of Tahiti. When he heard that Flaherty would soon be released by Fox, Murnau contacted him and

proposed that the two disaffected directors should collaborate on a South Sea Island film. Flaherty had lived in Samoa while working on *MOANA* and *WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS* and was familiar with local customs—he would work with the native actors and Murnau would set up the financing and handle the technical details. They even sat down and outlined a screenplay, “Turia,” about a half-caste woman and her pearl diver lover.

Thus Flaherty-Murnau Productions, Inc. was born. Murnau quickly put the word out that the two renowned directors were joining forces to make independent films in exotic and far-off places and he soon had a deal with a new production company, Colorart. With a signed production contract and the financing set, Murnau sailed for Tahiti and Flaherty followed a month later by steamer.

Almost immediately Colorart missed scheduled payments and deliveries. After several months of cabling back and forth Murnau and Flaherty decided that they could no longer rely on Colorart’s financial backing. Flaherty was broke, so Murnau took the savings from his Hollywood successes and bankrolled the project. To save money he sent the American crew back home and trained natives to help with the filming. He also scrapped plans to shoot the film in color and revised and renamed the screenplay, so that Colorart could not claim ownership to the film.

As they began production, tensions between Flaherty and Murnau began to rise. Flaherty was unhappy with Murnau’s new script, “Tabu,” which he felt was westernized and overly plotted. He found the German director “to an extreme degree inhibited—nervous and at times so much so that it drives me almost to distraction.” Also, Flaherty felt ill used when Murnau spent the film’s housing budget on a one bedroom house for himself and bought a roadster with the transportation budget. Worse yet, Flaherty was losing out to Murnau creatively. While Flaherty favored loosely-scripted films shot slowly with input from the native actors, Murnau was a perfectionist who carefully plotted every scene and every shot. As soon as the cameras began to roll, the film was under Murnau’s total control.

Although Flaherty was originally slated to shoot *TABU*, he was forced to send for help when the film started tearing in his Akeley camera. Flaherty contacted cameraman Floyd Crosby who had worked with him in New Mexico and Crosby ended up shooting all but one or two scenes. Even when he was sick and exhausted, Murnau did not feel that he could turn over the film to Flaherty. Flaherty was left with little to do and little to live on—he earned only \$40 a month (compared to Crosby’s \$140) and was even forced to sell a small share of the film to his cameraman for living expenses.

When the film completed shooting in October 1930 Flaherty was totally broke and in debt. As the company prepared to sail for California, Flaherty sold his stake in the film to Murnau for \$25,000, with \$3,000 to be paid immediately (less the money Murnau had already advanced him). Murnau spent the winter editing the film in Los Angeles and commissioning a synchronized music score. With his savings almost exhausted, Murnau needed to get distribution for the finished film. Finally he negotiated a deal with Paramount and the film was scheduled to open March 18 in New York. On March 10 Murnau’s car went off the coast highway north of Santa Barbara. Three other occupants of the car (along with a German sheepdog) were unscathed. Murnau died the next morning and his body was shipped back to his mother in Berlin.

After Murnau’s death Colorart sued Flaherty-Murnau Productions claiming that it owned *TABU*. The court ruled for the defendants, finding that the final film was substantially different from the script the directors agreed to film for Colorart. When Colorart threatened to appeal to the California Supreme Court (and thus tie up the disposition of Murnau’s estate) Murnau’s brother Robert Plumpe settled out of court for \$625.

In his book, *The American Cinema*, Andrew Sarris caught the essential, insoluble conflict between these two cinematic geniuses: “Where Flaherty expressed man’s adaptability to nature, Murnau pondered on man’s place in the universe. Where Flaherty was concerned with the rhythm of living, Murnau was obsessed with the meaning of life.” While the critical debate still rages over the relative contributions of

Flaherty and Murnau to the finished *TABU*, the film embodies aspects of both Flaherty's lyrical romanticism and Murnau's technical craftsmanship and powerful expressionism.

FRIEDRICH WILHELM MURNAU

(December 28, 1888-March 11, 1931)

F. W. Murnau was born Friedrich Wilhelm Plumpe in Bielefeld, Germany, to a family of remarkable education and culture. Although his father lost most of the family fortune on an unsuccessful invention, Murnau and his brothers and sisters were always well supplied with books and art supplies. For Christmas one year Wilhelm (as his family called him) received a puppet theater, which he used to dramatize fairy tales. As his brother Robert recalled, Wilhelm "soon found this too childish. The tiny stage was not large enough for *William Tell* or *The Brigands*." Robert and his brothers joined forces to build the unmechanical Wilhelm a larger stage. The new theater was a great success and Wilhelm organized carefully rehearsed performances every Sunday.

Murnau was an excellent student and his father encouraged him to pursue his education. While at the University of Berlin, Murnau began acting in plays under an assumed name. The tall blond Murnau was easily identifiable by his height, and when his father heard about his son's activities he cut off his finances. Secretly, however, Murnau's mother and grandfather continued to support him. After studying philology in Berlin, Murnau went on to the University of Heidelberg to study art history and literature. While performing in a play in Heidelberg, Murnau was noticed by the great theater director Max Reinhardt, who offered him a place in his newly founded theater school. As a student under Reinhardt and later as a member of his theatrical company, Murnau became more interested in directing than in acting. Murnau's mother, recalled that her son knew that his height would always be a stumbling block to getting parts.

In 1914 Murnau was called up for military service. He saw heavy fighting as a foot soldier and was commissioned an officer. After transferring to the air force, Murnau crashed eight times without being wounded. In 1917 he crash landed in a fog and was interned in Switzerland. During his internment Murnau directed several independent theatrical productions and even won first prize in a national theatrical competition. Major Wolfgang Schramm, who knew Murnau during the war remembered him as "a curious mixture of wandering gypsy and cultivated gentleman...in spite of the toughness of our job he managed to bring to things a touch of beauty, even or tenderness...he is not easily forgotten."

When he returned from Switzerland at the end of World War I, Murnau turned his attention to film. In 1919 he founded a film company with several colleagues from the Reinhardt school. He completed his first film, *THE BOY IN BLUE* (*Der Knaube in Blau*) in 1919 and shot 21 films in Germany by 1926. Unfortunately, most of these films are lost or exist only in fragmentary form. Fortunately, however, several masterpieces survive. Murnau's chilling *NOSFERATU* (1921) was a brilliant expressionistic version of the Dracula story which used stop motion, unusual camera angles, staccato editing and ominous shadows to build suspense and fear.

In 1924 Murnau teamed up with scriptwriter Carl Mayer to make the film that would bring him worldwide acclaim. *THE LAST LAUGH* (*Der Letzte Mann*) (1924) was the tale of a proud doorman reduced by old age to work as a menial bathroom attendant and starred Emil Jannings. The story was simple but the storytelling was masterful—Murnau made full and exciting use of the moving camera and oblique camera angles. The film was a great hit in the United States and attracted the attention of the Hollywood studio heads. Before leaving Germany, Murnau made two more films with Emil Jannings, *TARTUFFE* and *FAUST*, in which he further refined his use of pantomime, meticulously scripted and planned scenes and expressionistic dream imagery.

In 1926 Murnau arrived in Hollywood under contract to the Fox Film Corporation. His first film there was *SUNRISE*, the story of a marriage threatened by infidelity and anger and redeemed by love. Murnau shot the film at Lake Arrowhead with all the advantages of a full-scale Hollywood production. One of the most beautiful uses of the moving camera in all of film is the long uninterrupted tracking shot of the husband and wife aboard the trolley as it pulls into the city. To achieve the shot's breathtaking depth of focus Murnau used an enormous set with false perspective buildings, real streetcars and a cast of dwarfs to

heighten the sense of distance. The film was a critical success, winning a special Academy Award for “Artistic Quality of Production.” Star Janet Gaynor won the best actress award that year for her roles in three films, including *SUNRISE*. Cinematographers Charles Rosher and Karl Struss and interior decorator Harry Oliver also won Oscars. However, despite its critical acclaim, the film was not a box office success and the studio decided that Murnau would require additional supervision in the future.

Murnau’s next film, *THE FOUR DEVILS* (1928) was set in the world of circus acrobats and told the story of a love triangle. Under pressure from the Fox executives, Murnau shot two separate “happy endings” to try to make the tragic film more commercial. His troubles with the studio increased with his next film, *OUR DAILY BREAD*. As he conceived of it, the film was to be “a tale about wheat, about the sacredness of bread, about the estrangement of city dwellers and their ignorance about Nature’s sources of sustenance.” Murnau wanted to trace the production of bread from the wheat field to the finished loaf and hoped to shoot on location in the farms of Oregon and in the dark, cramped apartments of Chicago. The studio was worried from the start—the script was long and uncommercial, Murnau was spending exorbitant sums (he bought a farm in order to be able to haul cameras on sledges through the oceans of ripe wheat) and the film was being shot silent just as talking pictures were proving to be much more than a fad. When the studio hired gag men to add more comedy, Murnau ended his five year contract with Fox and left for the South Seas. The studio shortened the film, reshot several scenes, added synchronized dialogue and released it under the title *CITY GIRL*.

Murnau spent the last three years of his life producing, directing and editing *TABU* (see *PRODUCTION HISTORY* above). He loved the South Sea islands and planned to return there to make more films, including adaptations of *The Island of the Demons* and Herman Melville’s *Typee*. However, even in Paradise, Murnau felt himself an outsider. Although he was “bewitched” by Tahiti, he wrote his mother “I am never at home anywhere—I feel this more and more the older I get—not in any country or in any house or with anybody.”

Shortly before the accident that took his life, Murnau hired a handsome young Filipino valet named Garcia Stevenson and arranged for a car and chauffeur to take him to Santa Barbara to meet with a writer. Some stories say that either Murnau’s secretary or an astrologer had foretold that he was in danger and that Murnau planned to travel on to Germany by boat rather than plane because of the prediction. In any event on March 10, 1931, Murnau; Stevenson; Ned Maris, manager of the company that had done the synchronization for *TABU* and Pal, a German shepherd, set out for Santa Barbara via the coast highway, with the chauffeur at the wheel. According to court proceedings after the accident, when the car stopped at a gas station, Stevenson took the wheel and told the chauffeur that “the old man” had told him drive. Stevenson was a wild and fast driver and the car skidded off the road and crashed down the shoulder. Everyone was thrown from the car. Murnau, the only one seriously hurt, suffered a skull fracture and other serious internal injuries and died the next morning. He was 42 years old.

Rumors about Murnau’s private life and public death began circulating soon after the accident. Only eleven people attended Murnau’s funeral in Hollywood, among them Greta Garbo, who kept the director’s death mask for many years. When Murnau’s body returned to Berlin, his friends and family held a second ceremony there. One of the mourners recalled director Fritz Lang’s speech at the funeral: “As he described himself, he was Murnau’s old adversary, but now he spoke in sincere praise.... ‘Many centuries hence, everyone would know that a pioneer had left us in the midst of his career, a man to whom the cinema owes its fundamental character, artistically as well as technically...Let all sincere creators take the dead man as their example ..Aloha oe Murnau.’”

ROBERT JOSEPH FLAHERTY

(February 16, 1884-July 23, 1951)

Bob Flaherty was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan and spent most of his childhood in mining towns and camps. For several years Flaherty lived in an isolated community without a school and there he learned how to hunt and track in the wild from local Indian friends. Flaherty was later sent to board at Upper Canada College in Toronto, which was modeled after the English public school system. He soon drifted back north to his father, the mines and the wilderness. In a last ditch effort at an education, Flaherty attended the

Michigan College of Mines. There he met Frances Hubbard, the Bryn Mawr-educated daughter of a noted geologist. The two shared a love of the wilderness and for each other. However, after seven months Flaherty left the school and returned north to work with his father, exploring iron deposits. There he learned to map, to prospect and most importantly, to travel and survive in unknown country. Over the next few years he worked for various mining expeditions and (between travels) became engaged to Frances. Then, in 1910, he was hired by Canadian railroad builder William Mackenzie to explore the east coast of the Hudson Bay—a journey that would introduce him to the Eskimos of the region.

Between 1910 and 1912 Flaherty made two explorations of the islands of the eastern Hudson Bay. Traveling by foot, by sled and by canoe he mapped the region (one of the Belcher Islands is now named for him), took still photographs and got to know the native Eskimos. When Flaherty set off on his third journey in 1913, Mackenzie suggested that he bring along a motion picture camera. The novelty appealed to Flaherty, who bought a Bell and Howell and took a three week course in camera technique. During the expedition, he filmed some 70,000 feet (more than 17 hours worth). When he returned from his travels, Flaherty made one print of the footage in Toronto, but accidentally dropped a cigarette and burned the nitrate negative—only an unedited print survived. Flaherty also took time out to marry Frances. Encouraged by his wife, Flaherty determined to make a new film and looked for financial backing for the project. He found a patron in John Revillon of Revillon Frères, the French furriers. Flaherty returned to the Hudson Bay in 1920 with the sole purpose of making a motion picture.

NANOOK OF THE NORTH, the film Flaherty shot for Revillon Frères, tells the story of the Eskimos' struggle to survive under almost unimaginably severe Arctic conditions. Although it was not the first "documentary," or even the first film shot on location with native actors, *NANOOK* was the first film of its kind to achieve mass popularity and critical acclaim. Hollywood director Rex Ingram praised the film: "*NANOOK* is one of the most vital, dramatic and human films that has ever flashed across the screen." The film's success opened the door to a new era of filmmaking by establishing that "non-fiction" films could be both low cost and highly profitable (in terms of both box office and prestige) for the studios. While the Hollywood moguls invested millions to make blockbusters like *BEN HUR* and *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*, they found that for less than a tenth of the amount they could finance films like *CHANG*, *THE SILENT ENEMY* and *SIMBA*, and reap benefits far beyond the profit line. In a sense, *NANOOK OF THE NORTH* created an excitement and appetite for documentaries both with filmgoers, filmmakers *and* studio heads.

In 1923, Jesse Lasky of Paramount offered Flaherty the opportunity to shoot a film anywhere in the world—so long as it turned out to be another *NANOOK*. Flaherty, along with his wife and family, traveled to the village of Safune on the Samoan island of Savi'i to record the traditional culture of a civilization which was rapidly changing and becoming westernized under British rule. The result was *MOANA: A ROMANCE OF THE GOLDEN AGE*. Shot in black and white on panchromatic film, *MOANA* has an almost stereoscopic look—the figures seem solid and real and the colors of the island foliage appear as varying shades of silvery-gray. The film explores the lives of the lovely and gentle Samoans and culminates in a ritual tattooing. Although not on the same level as *NANOOK* or some of Flaherty's later work, *MOANA* was received with critical acclaim and popularity on its release. In fact, John Grierson coined the term "documentary" to describe the film. During the making of *MOANA*, Flaherty, the independent filmmaker, had his first conflict with the studio system when Paramount insisted he cut the film for a slightly shorter running time.

After *MOANA*, Flaherty was commissioned by actress Maude Adams to make a short film for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *THE POTTERY MAKER* (1925). That same year he also made an impressionistic study of Manhattan, *TWENTY-FOUR DOLLAR ISLAND* (released in 1927). Irving Thalberg, M-G-M's boy genius, then approached Flaherty to make another Pacific island film, an adaptation of Frederick O'Brien's *WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS*. On location in Tahiti, Flaherty found himself utterly out of his element. He was uncomfortable co-directing with W. S. Van Dyke II and couldn't produce at the pace that the M-G-M studio system required. Eventually, discouraged by how little he was contributing to the film, Flaherty left the production: the finished film is largely Van Dyke's work.

In 1929, the Fox Film Corporation hired Flaherty to make a film on the Acoma Indians of New Mexico. But once again, his difficulties working under studio conditions, along with the advent of sound films, scuttled the project. It was at this point that Murnau and Flaherty joined forces to make *TABU*. Their partnership was fraught with serious personal and professional conflicts. Ultimately Murnau took creative control of the film, but controversy still remains on each man's contribution to the final production. Flaherty himself confused the issue several times. Later in life he stated to Georges Sadoul that *Tabu* was "Murnau's film." But in letters to his wife in 1930, Flaherty claimed with some pride the authorship of *Tabu's* story and always referred to *TABU* as "our" picture. Historian Mark Langer notes that the similarity of *TABU's* storyline to those of *MOANA* and (more significantly) *ACOMA*, proves Flaherty's original assertion (see *PRODUCTION HISTORY* above).

After *TABU*, Flaherty was broke and discouraged—there was no future for him in Hollywood, but where could he make his kind of films? When negotiations fell through for making a documentary in the Soviet Union or Germany, Frances Flaherty contacted her husband's old friend and champion, John Grierson, now the head Empire Marketing Board Film Unit in London. For Grierson's unit, Flaherty shot the footage for *INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN*, but due to overspending the budget and time allotment, he did not write the narration or edit the film. In London, Flaherty met Michael Balcon of British-Gaumont who agreed to back an unscripted film to be shot in the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland. *MAN OF ARAN* chronicled the lives of the fishermen who eked out a living on the rocky islands. It was the first film Flaherty had complete control over since *NANOOK* and it proved to be a masterpiece.

With the success of *MAN OF ARAN* came the offer from British producer Alexander Korda to film Rudyard Kipling's novel *ELEPHANT BOY* in India. Like all Flaherty's previous contacts with studios films, the production proved to be a disaster. Korda took over the footage after the completion of shooting, added dialogue and scenes (directed by Zoltan Korda) and reworked the film into a mixture of melodrama and star vehicle for newcomer Sabu.

Two years later (1939), Pare Lorentz, then head of the US Film Service, invited a bankrupt and angry Flaherty back to America to direct a feature about the problems of erosion. Typically, Flaherty proved unable to make a propaganda piece and instead questioned the success of the New Deal's, "modern" farming methods and focused on America's dispossessed. *THE LAND* was released quickly (nontheatrically only) and then effectively pulled from distribution by the government (it did not appear overseas). Edited by Helen van Dongen and scored by Richard Arnell, it is interesting to note that one of the cinematographers hired for the project was Floyd Crosby.

In 1948, with funding from Standard Oil, Flaherty set off to explore the Louisiana bayous. *LOUISIANA STORY* centers around a young local boy and his interactions with the drillers working the towering oil derricks. The film features magnificent night shots of the rig (including footage of a real gas blow) and beautiful sequences involving the wildlife of the bayou. Virgil Thomson's masterful score, Helen van Dongen's brilliant editing and young Richard Leacock's beautiful cinematography added to Flaherty's magnificent poetry. *LOUISIANA STORY* won the Venice Film Festival's International Prize that year for its "lyrical beauty." It was to be Flaherty's last film. He died on July 23, 1951 having only directed seven features and two short films. His ashes were scattered across his beloved Black Mountain, Vermont.

FLOYD CROSBY

(December 12, 1899-September 30, 1985)

Floyd Delafield Crosby was born in New York City on December 12, 1899. His father was treasurer of the Union Pacific Railroad. In his late 'teens Crosby worked briefly as a clerk at the Banker's Trust Company, then for five years at a cotton business in South Carolina, and finally at a New York brokerage firm. In 1925, Crosby went on a cruise around the world and finally found his true vocation taking photos of his trip. Crosby returned to the city where he studied at the New York Institute of Photography. After six months there, he met famed explorer and naturalist William Beebe who offered the young photographer a chance to join his expedition to Haiti. In 1928, Crosby met an entirely different explorer by the name of Robert Flaherty. Crosby and Flaherty were destined to be lifelong friends and collaborators, working

together on *ACOMA*, *TABU* and *THE LAND*. Although Crosby's Oscar for *TABU* should have launched him on a long and prosperous career in Hollywood, in fact it did just the opposite. Crosby was not to shoot in Hollywood for the next twenty years. He spent most of the '30s travelling in North and South America, working for various explorers and expeditions. One project was *THE WHITE CRUISE*, an unfinished film of Charles Bedaux's sub-arctic expedition by Citröen, recently re-discovered by Canadian filmmaker George Ungar.

Crosby returned to the US to shoot *THE RIVER* for Pare Lorentz. The two worked together on several critically acclaimed films — helping to establish Crosby as one of America's finest cinematographers. In 1950, Crosby photographed Robert Rossen's *THE BRAVE BULLS* — his first real chance prove himself on a major Hollywood film. His next job firmly established Crosby's reputation — Fred Zinnemann's classic western *HIGH NOON*.

In 1955, Floyd Crosby shot *FIVE GUNS WEST* for a young director named Roger Corman. Their association lasted eight years, culminating in the classic series of Edgar Allan Poe horror features. During the 1950s and '60s, Crosby photographed such cult classics as *SHE GODS OF SHARK REEF*, *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS*, *MACHINE GUN KELLY*, *HOUSE OF USHER*, *THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM*, *THE RAVEN*, *X — THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES*, *PAJAMA PARTY*, *BEACH BLANKET BINGO* and *HOW TO STUFF A WILD BIKINI*. Crosby retired in 1967 and died on September 30, 1985. He is survived by his wife Betty and sons Ethan and David (of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young).

RESTORATION HISTORY

The legal history of *TABU* is a long and tangled one. Less than a month before his death, director F. W. Murnau signed a five-year distribution contract with Paramount Pictures. At the end of five years, the rights (including the copyright) were to revert to Murnau. When the Paramount contract did expire in 1936, Murnau had been dead for years and his mother, Otilie Plumpe was his sole heir. At that time, the original negative was returned to Germany, where it was later destroyed during World War II. In 1940, Otilie Plumpe sold all world rights to *TABU* to two American brothers, Rowland and Samuel Brown. During the war, the United States government seized the rights to the film, under the impression that it was owned by German citizens. After the war, the Brown brothers successfully demonstrated to the government that they had owned *TABU* before Pearl Harbor and regained rights to the film. In 1948, the Browns arranged for a theatrical release of *TABU*, but the film was heavily censored to remove "objectionable" material, mainly shots of bare-breasted women. The re-release of the shortened film was not a success and in the 1960s Murnau's nieces, Eva Diekmann and Ursula Plumpe bought back the rights to the film and the film once more dropped out of legal distribution. In 1973, a complete nitrate print was discovered and shown at the American Film Institute in Beverly Hills. Cinematographer Floyd Crosby recognized it as an original print from the 1931 release. *TABU* was unique in that the original prints were struck from the camera negative. Usually a "lavender" print was made from the camera negative, then a "lavender" positive and then finally a negative used to strike release prints. Since the release prints of *TABU* came directly from the camera negative, they were of stunning quality—three generations better than standard release prints of the 'thirties. Using funds donated by Crosby, the UCLA Film Archive carefully prepared a preservation negative. Naturally, this was closer to Murnau's ideal than any one could have hoped for. A 1948 reissue print was compared for reference and was shown to be inferior printing and at least five minutes short.

In 1990 Milestone Film & Video acquired the distribution rights to *TABU* from Murnau's nieces, Eva Diekmann and Ursula Plumpe. The brand-new Milestone print is struck from UCLA's preservation negative and the quality is dazzling. Murnau expert and film archivist Enno Patalas has confirmed that it is the best existing material on the film. Now for first time since *TABU* was first released in the thirties, audiences can see Floyd Crosby's Academy Award-winning photography and the legendary last work of one of cinema's finest directors, F. W. Murnau.

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Film Notes by Amy Heller and Dennis Doros

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