

Lower Your Score *Today!*

Click Here



**TCM TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES**

SUGGEST A MOVIE | MOVIE MORLOCKS

SCHEDULE | THIS MONTH | GAMES, TRIVIA & FUN STUFF | MULTIMEDIA | COMMUNITY | MOVIE NEWS | SHOPPING

VIDEOS | TRIVIA | PHOTOS | MONTH SCHEDULE | WALLPAPER | DISCOUNT DVD's | MESSAGE BOARDS | POLL | NOW PLAYING GUIDE



Movie Database Site  
(Over 150,000 titles)

TOP SEARCHES: The Women (1939), That Kind of Woman (1959), [More>>](#)

MEMBER SERVICES *Join!*  
[sign in](#) | [sign up](#)

TCM THIS MONTH



SPOTLIGHT

ALSO PLAYING ON TCM



75th Anniversary of the Screen Actors Guild - 6/23 & 6/30

TCM celebrates SAG and some of its most famous members with a two-part festival that includes such notable Screen Actors Guild supporters as Patty Duke (on the right) in *The Miracle Worker* (1962) and Ronald Reagan in *Stallion Road* (1947).

[MORE >](#)

MORE ARTICLES THIS MONTH

TCM Imports - June Schedule

Starring Leslie Caron - 6/7

The Battle At Little Big Horn - 6/9

Race & Hollywood: Asian Images in Film

- Tuesdays & Thursdays in June

Starring Ethel Barrymore - 6/28

OPEN TCM SHOPPING

Frank Sinatra: Nothing But the Best on CD

This new collection of essential tracks from the Chairman's portfolio boasts a previously unreleased rendition of "Body and Soul," as well as remastered favorites like "Come Fly With Me," "Summer Wind," and more!

On Sale: \$18.99

[MORE >](#)



High Noon (2-disc Collector's Edition) - Available 6/10!

Gary Cooper stars as a frontier marshal on the verge of retirement who must face an outlaw and his gang seeking revenge for a past arrest. Winner of 4 Oscars®

Was: \$19.99

Now: \$16.99

[MORE >](#)



Thank You, Mr. Moto



Mr. Moto began life in the serialized tales of J.P. Marquand, columnist for the *Saturday Evening Post* and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Late George Apley*. He conceived of the Mr. Moto series while traveling in Japan, a journey partly sponsored by the *Post*, who hoped to capitalize on the success of Charlie Chan with a series featuring another Asian character. During the Japan visit, a slightly-built and impeccably polite detective followed Marquand everywhere he went, trying to assess whether he really was just a harmless tourist. In return, Marquand built an entire book series around him. Though his cinematic character is not always completely faithful to the literary version, Mr. Moto is a deadly jack of all trades; He doesn't mind having to kill, but also prefers milk as a refreshing beverage. World-traveled, multi-lingual, refined and quiet, Mr. Moto is so lethal because he is so often underestimated.

With the death of Earl Derr Biggers, author of the Charlie Chan stories, Twentieth Century-Fox also felt it should expand its inventory of what were then referred to as "Oriental Sleuths" and purchased the Marquand stories in 1937. The screen version of Mr. Moto was initially envisioned as a one-off A-list project, but when more established producers passed, it was given to the "sausage factory" of executive producer Sol M. Wurtzel, with the thought that it might be serialized.

Fox was having trouble casting Peter Lorre at the time, and his small stature and reserve were considered a good match for the Moto character. Actor-turned writer/director Norman Foster, eager to step up the studio ladder, was offered the chance to direct. Foster was a world traveler and ex-husband of Claudette Colbert.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLES

Asian Images in Film Introduction

Race & Hollywood: Asian Images Photo Gallery

June 3rd Program

The Slanted Screen

The Cheat

Broken Blossoms

The Dragon

Painter

Mr. Wu

The Bitter Tea of General Yen

June 5th Program

Anna May Wong - Frosted Yellow

Willows: Her Life, Times & Legend

The Toll of the Sea

Old San Francisco

Piccadilly

Daughter of the Dragon

<b>Shanghai Express</b>	He objected to Wurtzel's preference for Lorre in the role, hoping to go against the tradition of the time and cast an Asian actor.
<b>June 10th Program</b>	Instead, he was overruled and had to rewrite most of the inferior scripts, in most cases reworking the original stories into unrecognizable adaptations, which nonetheless played well onscreen.
<b>Charlie Chan at the Circus</b>	
<b>Charlie Chan in Honolulu</b>	Lorre was born László Löwenstein in what was then Austria-Hungary. He spent time on the stage in Europe and made several films in Germany, including the career-making <i>M</i> (1931), fleeing the country when Hitler took power in 1933. By all accounts, morphine addiction was a big part of Lorre's life during the Moto years. What began as pain relief for a gallbladder condition became a habit that had him in a number of sanitariums, and it was during one of these visits that he was approached for the Moto role. Both his health and his career were on the decline and so he accepted.
<b>The Scarlet Clue</b>	
<b>Thank You, Mr. Moto</b>	
<b>Daughter of Shanghai</b>	
<b>June 12th Program</b>	As did most white actors playing Asians in that era, Lorre donned some "yellow-face" for the role. His face and hair were slightly darkened and he reportedly wore a mouthpiece for some close-ups though other accounts state that the teeth were his own. With eyeliner and steel-rimmed glasses, the Mr. Moto look was complete. Lorre resisted the heavy makeup and putty common at the time, preferring to create the role of Moto internally. In Stephen D. Youngkin's biography <i>The Lost One: A Life of Peter Lorre</i> , Lorre explains:
<b>The Good Earth</b>	"Mr. Moto is a Japanese, a clever, swift-thinking rather suave person. Well, then, I become that person and what I do is right. I do not need to study a real Japanese man to know what to do. That is wrong. There is a typed idea of each nationality and actors think they must imitate that idea, as if Japanese or Chinese men were not as varied as we are ourselves!....Each man moves according to what he is. When you have imagined what he is, you must move as he does."
<b>Dragon Seed</b>	
<b>China Sky</b>	
<b>First Yank into Tokyo</b>	
<b>June 17th Program</b>	
<b>Go For Broke!</b>	
<b>The Teahouse of the August Moon</b>	
<b>Walk Like a Dragon</b>	
<b>Bad Day at Black Rock</b>	Moto was also supposed to be a deadly martial arts expert and invincible in combat. At the time, due to his health problems, Lorre had trouble climbing stairs, let alone defeating international villainy, so he was paired with the perfect stunt double - Harvey Parry, a living legend known as "Dean of the Hollywood Stuntmen." Together they imbued Moto with enough deadly agility to put a serious dent in international intrigue.
<b>June 19th Program</b>	
<b>Bridge to the Sun</b>	
<b>China Doll</b>	
<b>Sayonara</b>	
<b>The World of Suzie Wong</b>	<b>Thank You, Mr. Moto</b> (1937), the second film in the series, is considered one of the best. In the books, Moto is not known as a detective, but that is one of the personas he picks up in the films, along with that of importer and international policeman. In <b>Thank You, Mr. Moto</b> , no one knows who exactly Moto works for, but his connections always get him what he needs, enabling him to be everywhere at once. The film is violent and fast-paced, with Mr. Moto's motives in question for the first third. As he kills and buries an assailant in the opening of the film and racks up another homicide shortly thereafter, it's unclear whose side this man is on. By the film's climax, when the body count really soars, we're secure in knowing that Moto is essentially working on the side of good. In subsequent Moto movies, hoping to make the protagonist more mainstream, the casualty count drops considerably. At the end of <b>Thank You, Mr. Moto</b> , our unconventional hero preserves cultural integrity by forever erasing the path to Genghis Khan's treasure, destroying the priceless map scrolls that the villains sought.
<b>June 24th Program</b>	
<b>The Crimson Kimono</b>	
<b>The Mountain Road</b>	
<b>Flower Drum Song</b>	
<b>Enter the Dragon</b>	
<b>June 26th Program</b>	
<b>Rush Hour 2</b>	
<b>The Killing Fields</b>	
<b>The Joy Luck Club</b>	Foster, who wrote and directed six of the eight Moto movies and several of the Charlie Chan films, said that he worked hard to distinguish Moto from Chan. Certainly Moto is more proactive and violent than Chan, preferring to attack, rather than systematically plod his way to the story's solution. He also tried to boost the production values and populate the Moto films with new faces and high quality character actors. John Carradine appears in several of the films, including <b>Thank You, Mr. Moto</b> , as the antiques dealer, as does Sig Ruman (Colonel Chernov), among others.
<b>Mr. Baseball</b>	Opinion varies on whether or not Lorre's drug problems affected the quality of his Moto performances. Though Foster says that the number of retakes needed to get Lorre to do anything dexterous was so excessive he gave up on it, Leon Ames, who joined Lorre in several Moto movies, found him unfailingly precise in the non-physical aspects of the role: "He was sharp. That man never missed a word or a line in his performance, ever. He was like a

computer." Lorre's moods at the time, however, were rumored to be erratic and unpredictable. In *The Lost One*, Robert Anthony Foster, the director's son, recounts an incident in which Lorre, depressed and sequestered in his trailer, listening with obsessive horror to Hitler's speeches, bellowed, when called back on set, "The whole world is falling apart and you want me to make a picture!"

By 1937, the Moto series had to contend with the wave of anti-Japanese feeling that was spreading over the country after Japan's brutal invasion of China that year. Yet the series persisted in its essentially positive representation of its main character. More refined and educated than most of the Anglo characters he encounters, Moto uses the condescension of foreigners to his own aims, relishing the patronization that will prove their undoing.

Two years and eight Moto films later, Lorre wanted out of the role. He had initially been looking for escape from the villainous persona of his early career and instead found himself trapped in a new one. Though the Moto films were popular, they didn't take themselves seriously and neither did critics. Freed up for other work, Lorre went on to a long, if varied career, with two of his most memorable films - *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Casablanca* (1942) - being made after the Moto series.

Producer: Sol M. Wurtzel

Director: Norman Foster

Screenplay: Willis Cooper, Norman Foster; John P. Marquand (story)

Cinematography: Virgil Miller

Art Direction: Bernard Herzbrun, Albert Hogsett

Music: Samuel Kaylin

Film Editing: Nick DeMaggio, Irene Morra

Cast: Peter Lorre (Mr. Kentaro Moto), Thomas Beck (Tom Nelson), Pauline Frederick (Madame Chung), Jayne Regan (Eleanor Joyce), Sidney Blackmer (Herr Koerger), Sig Ruman (Colonel Tchernov), John Carradine (Periera), Wilhelm Von Brincken (Schneider)  
BW-69m.

by Emily Soares



EMAIL THIS ARTICLE



PRINT ARTICLE

Our International Sites: [TCM UK](#) | [TCM Spain](#) | [TCM France](#) | [TCM Latin America](#) | [TCM Asia](#) | [TCM Germany](#)

Turner Entertainment Sites: [cartoonnetwork.com](#) | [tbs.com](#) | [tnt.tv](#) | [trutv.com](#) | [adultswim.com](#)

[home](#) | [contact us](#) | [site map](#) | [recommended links](#) | [now playing guide](#) | [top movie picks](#)

[TCM Canada Schedule](#) | [RSS](#) | [archives](#) | [help](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [TV Parental Guidelines](#)

[terms of use](#) | [code of conduct](#) for this site

TM & © 2008 Turner Classic Movies, A Time Warner Company. All rights reserved.



**Tcm.com is part of the Turner Sports and Entertainment Digital Network.**