

Michael Rennie - Plq94

Michael Rennie (25 August 1909 – 10 June 1971) was a British film, television and stage actor, who had leading roles in a number of Hollywood films, including his portrayal of the space visitor Klaatu in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. In a career spanning more than 30 years, Rennie appeared in more than 50 films and in several English and American television series.

Rennie was born in Idle near Bradford in the West Riding of Yorkshire. He was the second son of a Scottish wool mill owner. The Rennie business had operated for over 150 years. He was educated at the Leys School in Cambridge. He went to work at the family mill in Bradford but did not enjoy it. He worked in a number of occupations, before eventually deciding when he was 26 to pursue a career in acting. He retained his surname but adopted Michael as his professional name.

He began his career with British Gaumont working as an extra but gained considerable experience of acting in repertory theatre. He gained prominence with the York Repertory Company where he played leading roles. He began to be offered larger film roles, including at Ealing and Paramount Studios

During the war he enlisted with the RAF Volunteer Reserve and was sent to Canada to be trained as a fighter pilot. After the war he resumed his acting career and was give leading roles by Gainsborough Studios, including *The Wicked Lady* in 1945. Rennie was one of a number of English actors cast in the *The Black Rose* for 20th Century Fox in 1950. As a result, he was offered a 7-year contract by Darryl Zanuck.

In 1951 he was given the leading role in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. This is the film for which he is perhaps best remembered. Thereafter he continued to star as a top supporting actor at Fox making films such as *Les Misérables*, *Sailor of the King*, *The Robe* and *The Rains of Ranchipur*.

Rennie became a familiar face on television, taking the role of Harry Lime in *The Third Man*, an Anglo-American production which ran between 1959-65, based very loosely on the original film.

Under three years after leaving Hollywood, he journeyed to his mother's home in Harrogate, following the death of his brother. It was there that he died suddenly of an aortic aneurysm on 10 June 1971. After his cremation, his ashes were interred in Harlow Hill Cemetery, Harrogate.

David Rennie September 2023