

SterlingHayden1957TextTVS

by Tim Van Schmidt

Sterling Hayden

In the midst of rock and roll mania, here comes actor Sterling Hayden. I ran across him in two 1957 productions and he is an interesting leading man indeed. Not particularly handsome, or bright, Hayden comes on in both "Five Steps to Danger" and "Crime of Passion" with good old boy charm with a surprising capacity to go with the flow.

In "Five Steps", Hayden is a guy on the road with a broken down car- kind of a wise guy, down on his luck. In "Crime" he's a dogface flatfoot who likes the suburbs and his job. In both cases, his characters are willing to go out on the limb for a woman, but it may not be his idea and he might not like it either.

And is it a coincidence that both women in his 1957 movies are nuts? Actually, in "Five Steps," Ruth Roman plays a woman everyone says is nuts, but isn't. In "Crime," Barbara Stanwyck plays a suburban wife who is supposed to be in control but really isn't. All the while Hayden's characters stand back in disbelief, but melt every time the ladies turn on the water works. What a softy, despite the rough exterior- and he gets married quickly in each feature.

Or is Hayden a softy? Not when escorting Stanwyck's character down the hallway leading to the Homicide division at the police station.

Five Steps to Danger **

Two things in particular stood out here for me. The first was the mode of transportation of the vital information- a small card-like mirror with a fine engraving- a kind of micro-chip. The one thin slice of metal supposedly carried years worth of scientific material vital to the missile project at hand. The second was a chilling conversation between two cops about what was going on, in which they underscore the high stakes at hand- the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles- ICBMs.

Directed by Henry S Kesler...1957...81 min...featuring Ruth Roman, Sterling Hayden, Werner Klemperer, Jeanne Cooper, John Mitchum.

Crime of Passion **

There is a sense of rebellion here as Barbara Stanwyck's character cracks under the strain of dull suburban life. It's really unbelievable that the self-assured woman with a well-read advice column in the beginning of the movie becomes this raving Looney-tunes killer by the end, but that must be a comment on the insidious power of suburban living- sweet and deadly for some.

Directed by Gerd Oswald...1957...84 min...featuring Barbara Stanwyck, Sterling Hayden, Raymond Burr, Fay Wray, Royal Dano.