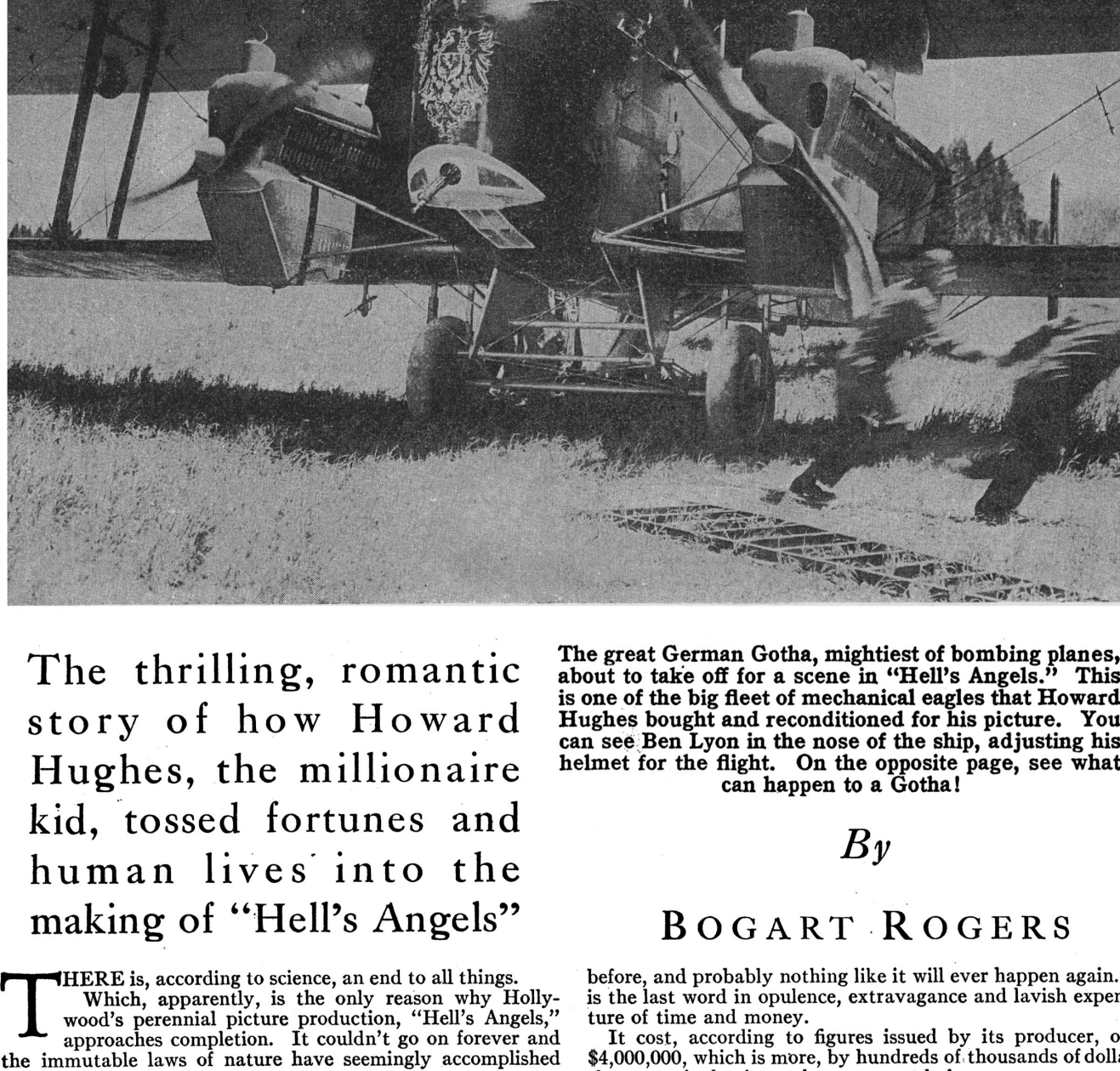


4 Million Dollars



The thrilling, romantic story of how Howard Hughes, the millionaire kid, tossed fortunes and human lives into the making of "Hell's Angels"

THERE is, according to science, an end to all things. Which, apparently, is the only reason why Hollywood's perennial picture production, "Hell's Angels," approaches completion. It couldn't go on forever and the immutable laws of nature have seemingly accomplished what man was unable to do.

And even now, with "Hell's Angels" practically in the can, Hollywood's mad wags won't let it alone. The latest—and I hope the last—of the gags at its expense has been going the rounds.

"Well," say the wise-crackers, "now that the talkie version of 'Hell's Angels' is finished, they're waiting for television!"

For over two years, "Hell's Angels" has had the cinema industry gossiping, scoffing, laughing up its sleeve and right out in public, admiring, doubting, amazed, astonished, goggle-eyed and simply flabbergasted. Nothing like it has ever happened

The great German Gotha, mightiest of bombing planes, about to take off for a scene in "Hell's Angels." This is one of the big fleet of mechanical eagles that Howard Hughes bought and reconitioned for his picture. You can see Ben Lyon in the nose of the ship, adjusting his helmet for the flight. On the opposite page, see what can happen to a Gotha!

By

BOGART ROGERS

before, and probably nothing like it will ever happen again. It is the last word in opulence, extravagance and lavish expenditure of time and money.

It cost, according to figures issued by its producer, over \$4,000,000, which is more, by hundreds of thousands of dollars, than any single picture has ever cost before.

To the intense joy of the laboratories and the Eastman Kodak Co., 2,254,750 feet of film were exposed—another record.

Thirty months were required to produce it—surely a record. It was written, produced and directed by one young man who, when he started it, had practically no previous experience in the business. This may or may not account for its tremendous cost.

Every dime of the \$4,000,000 was right out of this same young man's trousers pocket.

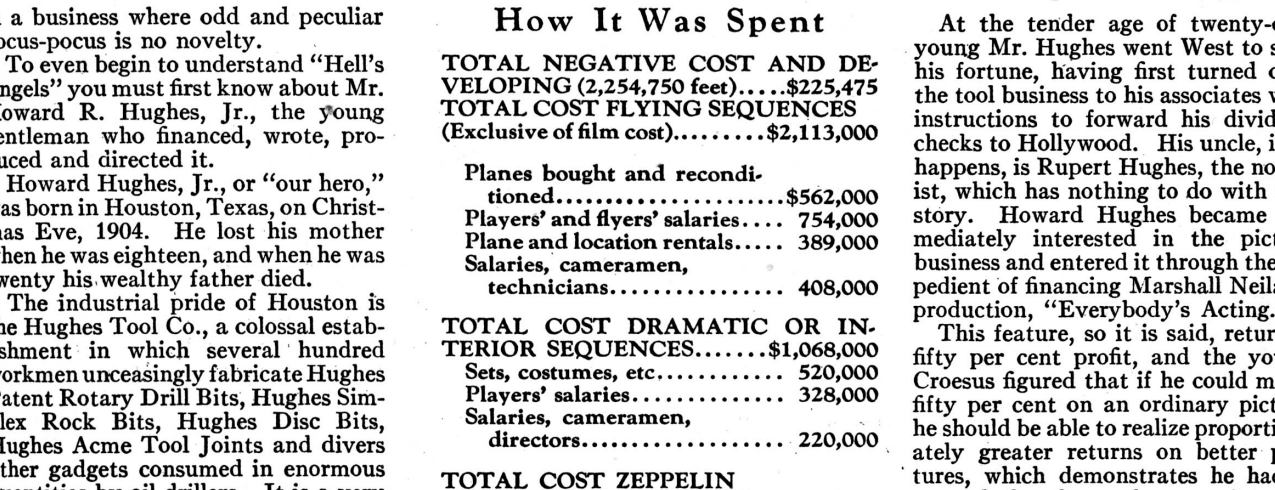
It is surely the most amazing thing that has ever happened

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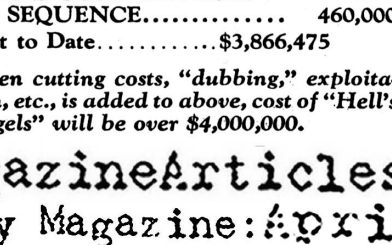
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-the second of six pages-

and 4 Men's Lives



All that was left of the big Gotha after stunt flier Al Wilson crashed it for "Hell's Angels." Mechanic Phil Jones lost his life in this smash. Wilson saved himself by leaping out with a parachute.



Howard Hughes, the 25-year-old Texas millionaire who wrote, produced and directed the stupendous air picture, "Hell's Angels," that is costing about \$4,000,000. Will he get it back? He doesn't care!

in a business where odd and peculiar hocus-pocus is no novelty.

To even begin to understand "Hell's Angels" you must first know about Mr. Howard R. Hughes, Jr., the young gentleman who financed, wrote, produced and directed it.

Howard Hughes, Jr., or "our hero," was born in Houston, Texas, on Christmas Eve, 1904. He lost his mother when he was eighteen, and when he was twenty his wealthy father died.

The industrial pride of Houston is the Hughes Tool Co., a colossal establishment in which several hundred workmen unceasingly fabricate Hughes Patent Rotary Drill Bits, Hughes Simplex Rock Bits, Hughes Disc Bits, Hughes Acme Tool Joints and divers other gadgets consumed in enormous quantities by oil drillers. It is a very profitable enterprise—about two million dollars a year worth of profitability—and now it all belongs to Howard R. Hughes, Jr., including the annual profits.

How It Was Spent

TOTAL NEGATIVE COST AND DEVELOPING (2,254,750 feet).....\$225,475
TOTAL COST FLYING SEQUENCES (Exclusive of film cost).....\$2,113,000

Planes bought and reconditioned.....\$562,000
Players and flyers' salaries..... 754,000
Plane and location rentals..... 389,000
Salaries, cameramen, technicians..... 408,000

TOTAL COST DRAMATIC OR INTERIOR SEQUENCES.....\$1,068,000
Sets, costumes, etc..... 520,000
Player salaries..... 328,000
Salaries, cameramen, technicians..... 220,000

TOTAL COST ZEPPELIN SEQUENCE..... 460,000
Cost to Date.....\$3,866,475

When cutting costs, "dubbing," exploitation, etc., is added to above, cost of "Hell's Angels" will be over \$4,000,000.

At the tender age of twenty-one, young Mr. Hughes went West to seek his fortune, having first turned over the tool business to his associates with instructions to forward his dividend checks to Hollywood. His uncle, it so happens, is Rupert Hughes, the novelist, which has nothing to do with this story. Howard Hughes became immediately interested in the picture business and entered it through the expedient of financing Marshall Neilan's production, "Everybody's Acting."

This feature, so it is said, returned fifty per cent profit, and the young Croesus figured that if he could make fifty per cent on an ordinary picture he should be able to realize proportionately greater returns on better pictures, which demonstrates he had a great deal to learn about motion picture finance. Anyway, with the enticing fragrance of new gold tickling his nostrils he organized the Caddo Company (Caddo is an oil field from which, I believe, some of his income

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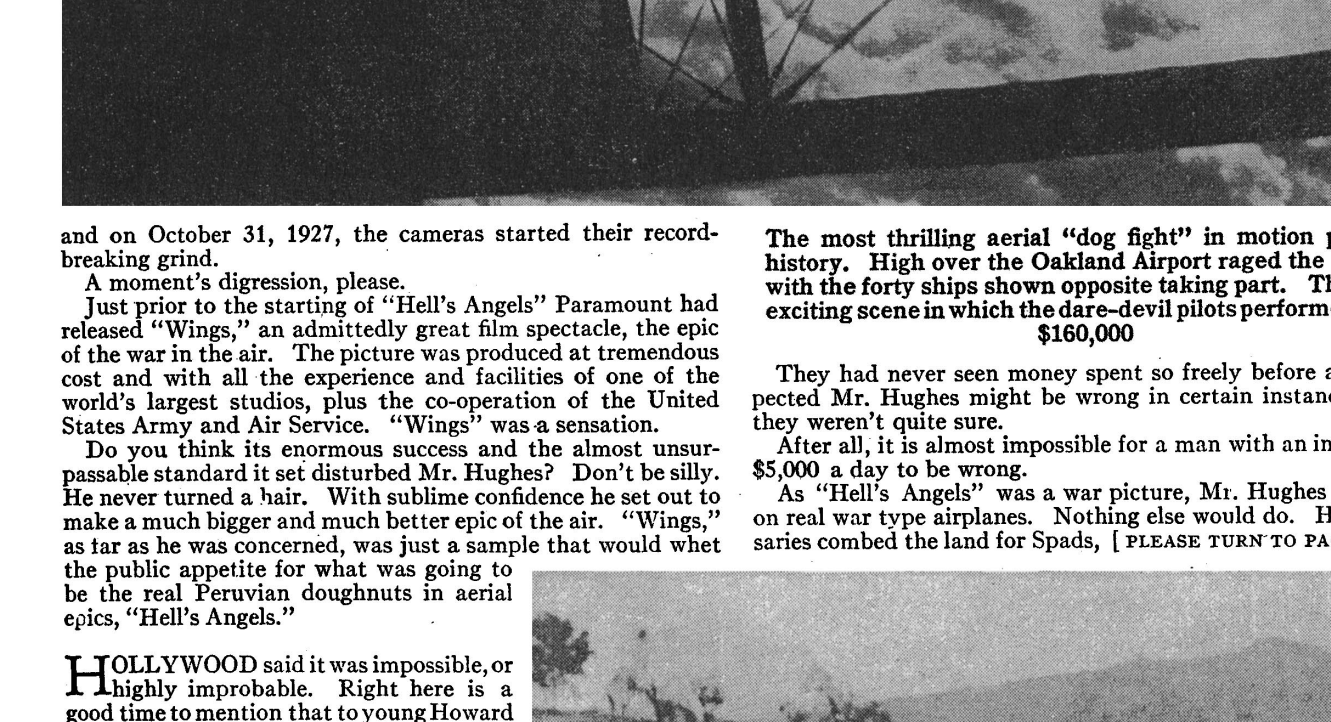
Howard Hughes' own war fleet! Forty planes of all types, with their pilots, assembled at the airport, Oakland, Calif. Shortly after this picture was taken, the ships took off for the most spectacular air battle of "Hell's Angels," a picture that abounds with thrills.

Jean Harlow (a newcomer) and Ben Lyon, below, in one of the romantic episodes in "Hell's Angels." All these were done in silent form when the talkies came. Out they went, and a talking version was made, with Miss Harlow playing the part done silently by Greta Nissen.



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and on October 31, 1927, the cameras started their record-breaking grind.

A moment's digression, please.

Just prior to the starting of "Hell's Angels" Paramount had released "Wings," an admittedly great film spectacle, the epic of the war in the air. The picture was produced at tremendous cost and with all the experience and facilities of one of the world's largest studios, plus the co-operation of the United States Army and Air Service. "Wings" was a sensation.

Do you think its enormous success was the least unsurpassable standard it set disturbed Mr. Hughes? Don't be silly. He never turned a hair. With sublime confidence he set out to make a much bigger and much better epic of the air. "Wings," the public appetite for what was going to be the real Peruvian doughnuts in aerial epics, "Hell's Angels."

HOLLYWOOD said it was impossible, or highly improbable. Right here is a good time to mention that to young Howard Hughes nothing is impossible, or at least not until he has spent all of money proving it to his complete satisfaction. The word "can't" is an anathema. He knows what he wants and he will exhaust every resource in an effort to get it. Many times he has failed, but he also has done a lot of things the wisenheimers said could not be done. You have to give him credit for that.

In January, 1928, after some vicissitudes, the dramatic sequences of "Hell's Angels" were completed. None of the aerial scenes had yet been filmed. In those good old days talking pictures were unknown, so "Hell's Angels" was silent. Close to \$400,000 had been spent with a lot yet to be done.

Some of Mr. Hughes' assistants became perturbed. They made so bold as to suggest he might be spending a bit too much money.

He replied that it was his own money. They couldn't think of a comeback to that one!

is derived), and prepared to take the picture business unlimbered his talents, so to speak, by making a picture called "Two Arabian Knights," and very good, too. It materially enhanced the reputations of Louis Wolheim and William Boyd, its stars, and Lewis Milestone, its director. It also made money and strengthened Mr. Hughes' belief in the theory that the more you spend the more you make.

We come now to "Hell's Angels," which started its historic voyage across the cinematographic seas some time in 1927.

The legend is that Howard Hughes bought an idea from Marshall Neilan—for cash. I don't know what the idea was, but it was a little bit of a rascal that developed into four million dollars' worth of movie. The archives reveal that Harry Behn and Howard Hughes wrote the original script, which was subsequently pencilled out of all resemblance to its original self.

IN October, 1927, the thing started to jell. Paramount, Mr. Hughes borrowed Luther Reed, a director. I case Mr. Reed needs further identification I refer you to "Rio Rita" and "Hi the Deck," his latest directorial specimens. He was also an aviation nut, as had been the first aviation editor of the *New York Herald*.

Mr. Hughes also borrowed Jean Harlow from Paramount and Ben Lyon from First National. They were loaned, I believe, for only two three months. They were still working "Hell's Angels" nearly two years later.

Greta Nissen, if you remember she was selected for the leading feminine rôle, the remaining cast was assembled

The most thrilling aerial "dog fight" in motion picture history. High over the Oakland Airport raged the battle, with the forty ships shown opposite taking part. This one exciting scene in which the dare-devil pilots performed cost \$160,000.

They had never seen money spent so freely before and suspected Mr. Hughes might be wrong in certain instances, but they weren't quite sure.

After all, it is almost impossible for a man with an income of \$5,000 a day to be wrong.

As "Hell's Angels" was a war picture, Mr. Hughes insisted on the services of Louis Wolheim and Lewis Milestone, and technicians and assistants to Oakland, California, and established headquarters at Oakland Airport. Incidentally, Oakland Airport is one of the few municipal airports in the country to show an operating floor. Per-

FINALLY the proper sort of clouds appeared and the 40 planes climbed to their appointed heights. The picture was now being taken at a thrilling "dog-fight" that is said to be worth every dollar the trip cost. If that is true, as I am reliably informed it is, it must be a great dog-fight. The trip cost scores of thousands of dollars.

Another digression, if you don't mind. During all this time "Hell's Angels" was not Mr. Hughes' only activity. He found time to buy Thomas Meighan's contract from Paramount at a very tidy figure and make two pictures with this star, one of which, "The Racket," was excellent. It is said he was also realizing a handsome profit from renting out the services of Louis Wolheim and Lewis Milestone, both of whom he held under contract—a profit that was probably offset by a loss of more than \$75,000 which he paid Raymond Griffith whom he had placed under contract and then found he couldn't use.

After the Oakland delay the company came home to really finish the picture. The last important thing to be done was crash the bomber. This spectacular scene called for spinning the huge plane down several thousand feet and then pulling it out, the actual crash to be made by other means.

Here Mr. Hughes struck the other snag. Captain Turner, who had flown the thing under the most hazardous conditions, begged to be excused. He not only begged, he insisted. The bomber, he said, might be spun, but not with his own hands. He was convinced that if it was ever put into the air it would be a complete and utter disaster. A lot of other fliers agreed. Mr. Hughes was undaunted. He wanted the bomber to spin, therefore it was

wasn't large enough for that particular shot, he bought, at famine prices, a bumper crop of Irish potatoes that were ripening in an adjoining field and leveled and graded the new terrain—and then decided not to take the shot. A chicken rancher collected handsomely because he "Hell's Angels" planes made his White Leghorns scamper so frantically for cover that many were killed in the rush.

At Caddo Field, and several other places, Mr. Hughes put the prodigal Eric Von Stroheim's nose completely out of joint. I refer to his proclivities for exposing astonishing lengths of film for what anyone else would have regarded as trivial scenes. For one little close-up of the valves of an airplane engine—it would run more than 25 feet in the finished picture—Mr. Hughes and a corps of cameramen consumed 20,000 feet of film. How horrified Von Stroheim must have been when he heard about that! On another insert scene, a close-up of a length of cable running off a reel, he got what he wanted with a mere 18,000 feet of film.

THERE was a small scene in the Zeppelin sequence that, so his assistants tell me, Mr. Hughes took over 100 times before it was to his liking. When the cameraman asked which of the 100 scenes should be printed Mr. Hughes replied in an amazingly retentive mind by promptly replying "Number one and number sixteen."

In October, 1928, after a year's continuous shooting, the picture was nearly finished—so everyone thought. There were just a few aerial shots to be made. They involved a mere 40 airplanes and required clouds for their effective filming. For the first time since he had started Mr. Hughes was stymied.

He could buy almost anything he wanted, but not clouds. He simply had to have them. Southern California is notoriously free from them in the fall. In Northern California they abound—cirrus, nimbus, cumulus, any kind you want.

If the clouds wouldn't come to Mr. Hughes, Mr. Hughes would go to the clouds, so he packed his 40 planes and 40 pilots and cameramen and technicians and assistants to Oakland, California, and established headquarters at Oakland Airport. Incidentally, Oakland Airport is one of the few municipal airports in the country to show an operating floor. Per-

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going to spin.

"Daredevil Al" Wilson, who had done much spectacular flying in "Hell's Angels," volunteered for the job—for a cash bonus. When he left the ground with a mechanic named Phil Jones inside the fuselage where he was to work smoke pots that would give the effect of a falling burning plane, Mr. Hughes had no idea his thirst for realism would be so thoroughly assuaged. Wilson climbed to 5,000 feet, kicked the bomber into a spin and promptly bailed out with his parachute. Jones, inside the body of the craft and apparently unaware that Wilson was no longer at the controls, stayed until it was too late and was instantly killed in the crash.

OFFICIAL investigations followed. Wilson was officially absolved from blame, but the Department of Commerce revoked his pilot's license for a period and the Professional Pilot's Association, of which he was a member, requested his resignation, which shows how they felt about it. Anyway, Mr. Hughes got his spin and his crash and it's a good one.

Wilson figured in another sensational accident while working in the picture. He was flying a German Fokker which was not, as subsequent events proved, mechanically in the pink. Just above a heavy blanket of fog that covered Hollywood, the propeller decided to part company with the engine, and did. Whereupon Wilson parted company with the plane, taking his crash with him. The Fokker landed in the back yards of the Hollywood Boulevard homes of Frank Spearman, the author, and Joseph Schenck, the producer, routing a great deal of shrubbery. Wilson landed on a house roof three blocks away, fell off and injured his arm. Which proves a roof is no place for an aviator.

"Hell's Angels" may or may not have been responsible for the death of Burton Skene, an expert cameraman who photographed many of the aerial scenes. Skene, it is said, suffered from a bad heart and high blood pressure. A tempting salary kept him on the job while his friends were advising him to quit, and a severe stroke finished him.

There were several intentional crashes. With the bomber crashed, the picture was finished, except for some minor details. That was in March, 1929. Mr. Hughes had only spent somewhere around \$3,000,000 in his year and a half on the job. "Hell's Angels" was cut, edited and previewed in a suburban theater. Lo and behold, something was radically wrong!

It was silent. None of the actors uttered a syllable.

WITH talkies the rage, Mr. Hughes decided that little shortcoming must be rectified. He would throw away the entire original dramatic sequences, made at a cost of nearly \$400,000, and do it all over with sound. Dialogue

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