



Our Cinema Heritage
presented by LaSalle Bank



Three double features, a Halloween 3-D show, a guest musician... Where else but the LaSalle Theatre—Chicago's longest (and I daresay *only*) continuously-running revival house. This time it's a more diverse lineup as we look back on our cinema heritage. We begin this unprecedented 29-film series with July a tribute to D.W. Griffith, a very Victorian and old-fashioned filmmaker. Originally, I had considered the early films of Frank Capra and King Vidor, but if there's one director we are the most indebted to, it's Griffith—the first to see the medium as an art form. Alas, his *Romance of Happy Valley*, *America*, and *The Sorrows of Satan* are not available on 16mm, so this is a condensed retrospective, which kicks off with a movie event—a summer blockbuster worth seeing.



In the second phase of our program we'll be playing overlooked titles from the 1930s that deserve to be screened, such as John Ford's *Steamboat Round the Bend* and James Whale's *The Great Garrick*. On August 11th it's a salute to early Warner Bros. with 2 films for the price of 1! But why this decade? Roger Dooley's excellent book *From Scarface to Scarlett* could tell you, but I prefer to show you. Contrary to what the AFI (and their "greatest" lists) would have you believe, our most memorable films came in the first half of the 20th century, and in no decade was this more apparent than in the '30s. You'll see early pre-Code cinema, musicals, melodramas, a rare bio-pic, fantasies (with visions of Heaven and Hell), a murder-mystery, an adventure film... From August to October, something for everyone.

In November, we'll be focusing (sharply) on the best of silent cinema. Though it is a dead art form, Alfred Hitchcock once said, "Silent pictures were the purest form of cinema." On November 3rd it's a special presentation of *Grass*. (Not to be confused with the Ron Mann film, so potheads stay home.) This show will be preceded by a restored version of Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*. On November 10th we honor Veterans Day with Lon Chaney's *Tell It to the Marines*. Local pianist David Drazin will be performing a musical accompaniment.

The fourth phase of our series, showcasing the great comedy teams of the '30s and '40s, begins December 1st. On December 8th, a double feature with the Marx Brothers! And we'll be screening Laurel & Hardy's *Babes in Toyland* for the big December 22nd Christmas show. For New Year's, however, I thought I'd bookend the 6-month series on a positive note with *Stars in My Crown*, a film I was determined to book during my tenure here. So we end 2001 with something wonderful.

Of the three programs I have had the pleasure to put together, I am proudest of this one. This is the art of the silver screen with moments of visual magic and beauty that transcend mere entertainment. (Mitchell Leisen's *Murder at the Vanities* comes to mind.) These remarkable films need to be preserved on film—restored, but not "enhanced"—so that for centuries to come later generations can appreciate actresses like Lillian Gish and Loretta Young, and actors like Fredric March, William Powell, Claude Rains, and Ronald Colman—the one actor who, more than any other, helped us glimpse the eternal.

I want to thank Jim Healy of the Chicago Film Festival for helping me track down a couple titles I really wanted to play. Also, I would like to thank Mr. Joe Dante for lending us one of his excellent prints, and David Drazin for making the silent film experience all the more memorable. As always, I'm grateful to the diligent Pete Fazio (& LaSalle Bank) for giving me the creative freedom to do this, and to my parents for helping me serve you. Thanks go to the *Chicago Reader*, John Petrakis, *Newcity*, Dann Gire, and to our dedicated (and understanding) regulars like Tom, John, Phil, George, Les, Dana, Gene, Cora, "Voltaire," and Murray (laughing at the fade-outs). Lastly, I'd like to thank the late Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., a class act, and William K. Everson (a historian/critic who *should* have a film center named after him). As the bank series heads into its 30th anniversary, I know this film society will continue to move forward.

Matthew C. Hoffman

Intolerance (1916)

D.W. Griffith

Wark Producing Corporation / 124 min. (Killiam version)

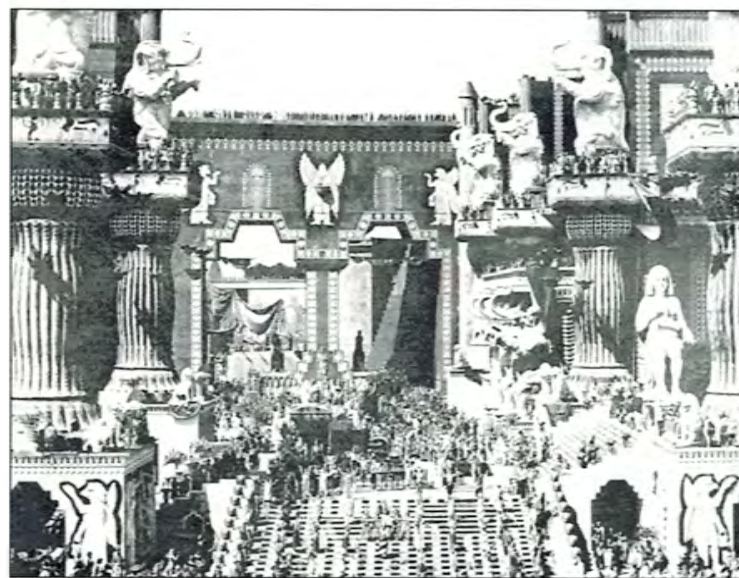
Short: D.W. Griffith Interview (1930)

"I studied Griffith as though I had never seen him before. He was leaning casually against a parapet, his cheap straw hat shoved back on his head, his mouth slightly open in a grin of purest delight. The man was actually enjoying the situation. Then I happened to remember. This, in principle, was what he had been doing in one way or another as far back as I could remember, betting everything he had, including his life, on an all-or-nothing gamble. A Kentucky aristocrat, scornful of fate."

~assistant cameraman Karl Brown on the Babylonian set



D.W. Griffith's second-best historical epic (behind *The Birth of a Nation*) is an ambitious spectacle of drama and opulence—and a major influence on world cinema. Initially an eight hour film in its rough cut phase, "Love's Struggle Throughout the Ages" tells of four interlocking stories, a "film fugue" that jumps from one to the next with the Eternal Mother (luminous Lillian Gish) as the transitional beacon. These stories are: Belshazzar's feast and the fall of Babylon in 538 BC by the attacking Persians, the tale of the Nazarene in Roman Judea, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day in 16th century France, and the 'present day' story called "The Mother and the Law"—originally made separately—which reflects Griffith's own disdain for social workers. *Intolerance* combines the director's knack for small-scale urban realism with his grand spectacle leanings, and the crosscutting in the final race to the gallows sequence is a maelstrom of emotion and technique. All these stories are thematically linked, but despite the film's title, this was in no way an apology for his previous film. With Mae Marsch (the Dear One), Robert Harron (the Boy), Howard Gaye (as Christ), Constance Talmadge, Miriam Cooper, Margery Wilson, Eugene Palette, and Tod Browning as the owner of the racing car. Photographed by Billy Bitzer and Karl Brown. Monumental set construction by Frank Wortman with Walter "Spec" Hall. (It was during this time Griffith considered filming *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, but nothing became of it.)





The Avenging Conscience (1914)

D.W. Griffith

Mutual/58 min.

Short: "The Adventures of Dollie" (1908), D.W. Griffith

"The film does substitute psychological tension for physical action; the ghostly apparition that accompanies the killer's guilt pangs is smoothly done; crosscutting for emotional suspense rather than thrill is often quite creative (especially in a Raskolnikov/Porfiri-like encounter between a detective and the man he is sure is a murderer); and at times, the film has much of the doom-laden power of the celebrated German films of the twenties."

~William K. Everson

Griffith's last film prior to *Birth of a Nation*. This is one of the first—if not the first—important horror films which was actually based on three Edgar Allan Poe stories: "Annabel Lee," "The Pit & the Pendulum," and "The Tell-Tale Heart." Henry B. Walthall, a figure well suited for the Romantic ideal (and Griffith's strongest leading man at Biograph), portrays the young nephew of a possessive—but not altogether bad—uncle (Spottiswoode Aitken). The older man has raised him since childhood and reacts strongly when the young man falls in love and is drawn away from his writing. The bitter, one-eyed uncle objects to the romance and insults the sweetheart (Blanche Sweet, providing the melodramatic flare-ups). What follows will be no surprise to Poe admirers. Walthall's derangement is chilling, the interview with the detective tense—with more than just skeletons behind the door! The resolution is to be expected (in hindsight), but the final shot is a precursor of imagery to come—a pattern reflecting the director's moral vision. With George Siegmann (as the offensive Italian), Ralph Lewis, and Bobby Harron and Mae Marsh at the extraneous garden party.



Way Down East (1920)

D.W. Griffith

119 min.

Short: "The Lonely Villa" (1909), D.W. Griffith

"First the snowstorm, then the foaming, swirling river in thaw, packed with ice blocks that rage yet wilder than the storm, and finally the mighty waterfall, conveying the impression of death itself. In this sequence of events is repeated, on large scale as it were, the same line of the increasing despair—despair striving to make an end, for death, that has irresistibly gripped the chief character. This harmony—the storm in the human heart and the storm in the frenzy of nature—is one of the most powerful achievements of the American genius."

~V. I. Pudovkin

D.W. Griffith had an eye for beauty, and nowhere is it more apparent than in this, his most expensive film up until that time (due to pre-production costs). The saintly Lillian Gish portrays a poor lass by the name of Anna Moore who, living down east of Boston, is sent to her rich, snobbish relatives. There she meets Lennox Sanderson (Lowell Sherman)—the archetypal villain of melodrama (without the mustache to twirl). He tricks her into a fake marriage so that he may have his way with her. When he discards Anna she leaves disgraced and travels alone to a rooming house where she bears a child. Shortly after, she takes to the road and finds refuge at Squire Bartlett's (Burr McIntosh) farm. David Bartlett (Richard Barthelmess) falls in love with her, but when neighbor Sanderson shows up, Anna is cast out from her Eden. From the smaller, poignant moments such as the baptism of her sickly child, to the spectacle of the blizzard—a real snowstorm with the actors doing their own stunts—this pastoral romance is Griffith's best work of the 1920s. And no film better reflects his nostalgia for a simpler time. With Kate Bruce, Creighton Hale, Porter Strong, Vivia Ogden (as busybody Martha Perkins) and Mary Hay (who would soon marry Barthelmess). Photographed by Billy Bitzer and Henrik Sartov.

Abraham Lincoln (1930)

D.W. Griffith

Art Cinema Corporation/81 min.

Short: "The Battle" (1911), D.W. Griffith



"He achieved what no other known man has ever achieved. To watch his work is like being witness to the beginning of melody, or the first conscious use of the lever or the wheel; the emergence, coordination, and first eloquence of language; the birth of an art; and to realize that this is all the work of one man."

~ James Agee on David Wark Griffith

Abraham Lincoln—a well-needed reminder of what makes a President—is an episodic, sometimes mythic film which holds its own against Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*—with the emphasis more on the Civil War. Despite the interference from typical studio producers like John Considine, Jr., Griffith's first foray into sound must be judged a success (though it did little to restore him to the vanguard of filmmaking). The other vital forces involved were Walter Huston (who played Abe not as one with a halo over his head, but as a real human being determined to preserve the Union) and writer Stephen Vincent Benet, the distinguished poet of "John Brown's Body." (A deal to hire Carl Sandburg as consultant fell through.) This was the first major historical film in the sound era, so it may appear static to contemporary viewers, but there are more strengths at play than weaknesses—strong scenes such as Sheridan's ride, and Abe's discriminative use of his power to pardon a soldier. With Una Merkel (as Ann Rutledge), Kay Hammond, E. Alyn Warren, Hobart Bosworth, and Henry B. Walthall as Colonel Marshall. Stylish production design by William Cameron Menzies. Photographed by Karl Struss.

Safe In Hell (1931)

"Wild Bill" Wellman

First National (Warner Bros.)/73 min.

Cartoon: "Red Hot Mama" (1934),

Dave Fleischer (Betty Boop)



"His (Wellman's) most sophisticated offering at this time is Safe in Hell, from a play by Houston Branch which is one of several copies of 'Rain.' The loose, lost lady is Dorothy Mackaill, making a living, as she puts it, 'the only way I could', as the one white woman in a Caribbean hotel patronized by men as frustrated as they are crooked."

~ David Shipman

Better leave the kiddies at home for this rare pre-Code drama. Dorothy Mackaill is a New Orleans prostitute who, believing she was responsible for the death of her customer, flees to the island of Tortuga (where she cannot be extradited). However, historian Leonard Maltin overstated it a bit when he wrote, "the island is populated by every form of slobbering lech and pervert imaginable." The hotel is composed of derelicts and degenerates, but oddly, they are her strongest allies. When the island executioner, a lascivious reprobate, puts her on trial for killing a familiar face, it's Charles "Ming" Middleton who's actually in her corner! The ending certainly is a surprise in a film that is, at times, as slimy as the wigglers in the drinking water. Donald Cook is the sailor-husband trying to steer her out of this earthly hell. With Ralf Harolde, John Wray, Ivan Simpson, Gustav von Seyffertitz, the multi-talented Clarence Muse, and Nina Mae McKinney as the hotel mistress singing "When It's Sleepytime Down South." (Film was known as *The Lost Lady* in Great Britain.)

A Salute to Warner Brothers

★ ★ ★ DOUBLE FEATURE ★ ★ ★

(With 10 Minute Intermission)



August 11

Wonder Bar (1934)

Lloyd Bacon

Warner/84 min.

Cartoon: "The Night Club" (1929), Foster, Davis
(Aesop's Fables)

"Berkeley is at his best in 'Don't Say Goodnight,' which grows out of Del Rio and Cortez's pas de deux into a staggering geometry of whiteclad dancers and columns (which turn into trees), set off by a Cinderella bit involving a woman's lost slipper. At the height of it all, eight mirrors enclose a circle of dancers, the reflections turning a hundred people into a thousand, the whole shot from an overhead angle so the mirrors can't pick up the camera."

~ Ethan Mordden

Al Wonder (Al Jolson) welcomes you to the Wonder Bar for a good time in Gay Paree. But beneath the high style and glamour, there's plenty of sin going on. There's Kay Francis sitting forlornly at a table with gigolo Harry (Ricardo Cortez) on her mind. (He's busy peddling her necklace for some easy travel cash.) Meanwhile, Al and Tommy (good-natured Dick Powell as the bandleader) are making plays for jilted lover Ynez (Dolores Del Rio). And at another table, two drunk businessmen (Guy Kibbee, Hugh Herbert) are enjoying the French girls' passes while their not-so-innocent wives look on. This musical is pretty bizarre and dirty—from Al's surreal nonsense in a Russian accent to Harry and Ynez's masochistic gaucho dance. The main character is hardly sympathetic, though—take the morbid shallowness of Harry's fate—but nevertheless, Busby Berkeley's wonders with mirrors and blondes more than make up for the abrasive Jolson. And "Goin' to Heaven on a Mule," one of Al's "characteristic numbers," has to be seen to be believed.



High Pressure (1932)

Mervyn Le Roy

Warner/74 min.

"Sensing that Powell's first picture for Warners, *The Road to Singapore*, had been an unworthy showcase for his stellar talents, for which they were paying him a fabulous weekly salary courtesy of his high-powered agent, the producers went all-out to make *High Pressure* a picture worthy of its title in every way." ~ Lawrence J. Quirk

This is a mighty fine film, and Heaven knows there are few of them around. Gar Evans (the dapper William Powell) is the greatest promoter that ever lived. (Pay no attention to that drunken visage in the speakeasy.) With two partners, "Colonel" Ginsburg (George Sidney) and Mike (Frank McHugh), Gar will show the world that his Golden Gate Artificial Rubber Co. can make rubber out of sewerage—even though "there's no romance in sewerage." He gathers shareholders and dynamic salesmen and brings in an old crony to be the ideal president (Guy Kibbee). Soon the rubber interests (represented by Charles Middleton) are after him as well as the Better Business League. And luck charm Francine (Evelyn Brent) loses faith in him. To save the day, though, Gar puts his elusive inventor to work on the artificial rubber. (But his ace in the hole turns out to be a joker.) This comedy is a first-class entertainment guaranteed to make you smile, smile, smile. With Evalyn Knapp, John Wray, and Ben Alexander. Based on Abem Kandel's play *Hot Money*.

August 18

Zoo in Budapest (1933)

Rowland V. Lee

Fox/83 min.

Cartoon: "A Day at the Zoo" (1939), Tex Avery



"Richly composed impressionistic images, assisted by highly imaginative use of sound and background music, create a poem that Murnau himself would have envied."—NFT, 1971

Loretta Young is Eve, an orphan with a bleak future ahead of her. During a visit to the zoo in Budapest, she runs away, encouraged by the other girls. While in hiding from the orphanage matrons and zoo officials, she meets and falls in love with Zani (Gene Raymond). He's as protective of her as he is toward the nervous deer. But Zani, too, is wanted (for swiping the furs off the elitist visitors). This is one of the most beautiful films you will ever see here. The photography by Lee Garmes establishes a lyrical mood; the scenes with Eve and Zani in this nature refuge have the atmosphere of early *Creation*. Perhaps only *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934) can equal this kind of fairy tale romance. Not to be missed. With O.P. Heggie (playing a zoo director as gentle and kind as his blind hermit in *The Bride of Frankenstein*), Wally Albright, Paul Fix, and Murray Kinnell. Director Lee also contributed to the screenplay.

August 25

Murder At The Vanities (1934)

Mitchell Leisen

Paramount/95 min.

Short: "A Date With Duke" (1947) with Duke Ellington



"I think I stole the wild wave idea in 'Live and Love Tonight' from Sally Rand. Those fans were six feet across, green tipped with white. They were beautiful, but they must have cost a fortune. That number was the only thing that was inconsistent with the stage, because it went too far back. I think if you are showing a stage show that's supposed to be in a theatre, you should stay within the bounds of the proscenium arch, and not do a Buzz Berkeley routine with a stage set that's acres big."

~ Mitchell Leisen

Under the studio system art did not disappear completely; this murder mystery (with the Paramount look) clearly reflects the degree of effort Leisen put into this entertainment. Jack Oakie is preparing for the Broadway opening of Earl Carroll's *Vanities*, but when the lead actress (Kitty Carlisle) is endangered, the police are brought in. However, Lt. Bill's (Victor McLaglen) police work involves ogling the most beautiful girls in the world. With his goofy grin he tells Jack, "Them babies looks like they got clues or something." Soon, a dead woman is found up in the theatre flies—the revelation by the horrified chorus girl is brilliantly executed. Then the interrogation of suspects begins. Who's the killer? Is it the lead actor (Carl Brisson, the "Bing Crosby of Sweden") killing in-between performances? Or the old wardrobe woman (Jesse Ralph) with the dark past? Or Rita (Gertrude Michael), the she-devil blackmailer? There's some astonishing musical numbers in this one, including "Sweet Marijuana" and "The Rape of the Rhapsody" with Charles Middleton's own answer to the *Ebony Rhapsody*! With Dorothy Stickney, Toby Wing, and Duke Ellington's Orchestra. Look fast for Ann Sheridan as a chorus girl and director Leisen as the orchestra leader. (Bela Lugosi had starred in the original Broadway play, but the movie deal to reprise his role fell through.)



Death Takes A Holiday (1934)

Mitchell Leisen

Paramount/78 min.

Short: "How to Take a Vacation" (1941) with Robert Benchley

"The son of a very dear friend of mine had committed suicide, and she was terribly broken up over it. I took a flying chance one day. I took her to the projection room and left her there alone and had Death Takes A Holiday run for her. She came out a completely different person. She said, 'You've explained death, you've made it beautiful to me. I no longer feel the way I did.' This was worth a great deal to me, and made the effort of doing it worthwhile if you could affect that many people and explain something they have been horrified of. As Death himself says, 'Why do men fear me?'"

~ Mitchell Leisen

Mitchell Leisen, with full control from the studio, directed this, one of the most stylish and enduring films from Hollywood's greatest era. This is the beautiful fable about the manifestation of Death in our world. In an Italian palazzo, the Shrouded One (played by Fredric March, who had starred in *The Eagle and the Hawk* the year before) reveals to the Duke (Sir Guy Standing) his intentions. He will take on the personage of the continental Count Sirki, and for three days he will try and understand why death is feared. While in human form, he discovers a force more powerful than death—the love of Grazia, portrayed by the angelic Evelyn Venable. She is a girl possessed by a desire to see what lies beyond existence. Based on a 1920s play by Alberto Casella and adapted by Maxwell Anderson, Gladys Lehman and Walter Ferris. With Henry Travers (introduced in an opening credits sequence typical of the time), Katherine Alexander, Gail Patrick, and Kent Smith as the anti-Sirki. Fluid photography by Charles Lang. Art direction by Ernst Fegte.



The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1935)

Stuart Walker

Universal/87 min.

Short: "Mystery of the Leaping Fish" (1916) with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.

"Mystery of Edwin Drood marked Rains' fourth consecutive venture into the neighborhood of madness, and three of those had been for the Laemmles. The actor would leave the studio—but not the throes of cinematic dementia—after the picture opened to less than total enthusiasm. In light of the varied opportunities which were his during his lengthy stay at Warners, however, Universal's unwillingness to commit for the long haul was a blessing in disguise. The roles of Jack Griffin, Paul Verin, and John Jasper had been verified and yet it seemed that the studio was grooming Rains to be a tertiary bogey, on call to fill in the spaces left vacant by Karloff and Lugosi."

~ John T. Soister

Charles Dickens started it, but Universal finished it. Claude Rains (in a role originally slated for Karloff) is the opium-addicted John Jasper, the choirmaster with an unsettling interest in young Rosa Bud (Heather Angel). She is betrothed to John's nephew, Edwin Drood (David Manners), but the two lovers part amicably enough when it's obvious she loves the tempestuous Neville Landless (Douglass Montgomery). When Edwin mysteriously disappears, however, the town of Cloisterham suspects Neville of foul play. John Jasper seeks to find his nephew's killer, convinced the foreigner is the culprit. All the high standards of production that made the studio's horror films so memorable are evident in this atmospheric tale of madness and passion. John L. Balderston was one of four writers contributing to a script directed by the forgotten Stuart Walker. (He had made a decent version of *Great Expectations* the year before and would go on to make *Werewolf of London*.) With Valerie Hobson, Francis L. Sullivan, Zeffie Tilbury (as the "Opium Den Hag") and E.E. Clive rounding out the British cast with ??? as Mr. Datchery. Make-up by Jack Pierce. Art direction by Albert S. D'Agostino.

Dante's Inferno (1935)

Harry Lachman

Fox/89 min.

Cartoon: "The Underground World" (1943), S. Kneitel (Superman)

"As Sidney Kent pondered a merger with Darryl Zanuck's Twentieth Century Pictures, Sol Wurtzel produced the only blockbuster of his career, Dante's Inferno. The imaginative film was directed by Harry Lachman and photographed by Rudolph Mate. Its magnificent re-creation of the Gustave Dore engravings was the work of art director Willy Pogany, scenic designer Ben Carre, dance advisor Hubert Stowitts, and special effects director Fred Sersen; they deserved credit for showing the most naked extras the Code would allow for the next forty years."

~ Mark A. Vieira

Spencer Tracy is Jim Carter, a rather wily coal stoker who winds up at an old-time amusement park. There, (while in blackface, fittingly) he meets the Little Colonel himself, Henry B. Walthall. "Pop" McWade offers Jim a job which turns to barker. He talks people into Hell—Pop's attraction called Dante's Inferno. Jim soon marries Betty McWade (Claire Trevor) and builds the park up into an empire. He surrounds himself with money and "society background," but all this comes with a terrible price. From the first image of the camera traveling through a steamship furnace to the blazing "Paradise" cruise, this star vehicle is guaranteed to hold your attention. The projection into Hell is one of the ten most amazing sequences captured on film. Sadly, the part of the reverent, Virgil-like Pop would be one of the last roles for the gentle Walthall. With Alan Dinehart as Jonesy and Rita Hayworth in her first screen role as a dancer. This '30s oddity was directed by a well-traveled artist whose primary interests were in painting. Lachman had been a production manager on Rex Ingram's remarkable silent *The Magician* and was no doubt inspired by that film's nightmarish imagery.



Clive of India (1935)

Richard Boleslawski

Twentieth Century/90 min.

Short: "The March of Time: India" (1944)

"Originating in a London play called Clive, which had been a big hit, it was purchased by Zanuck expressly for Colman, who was so enthused by the role of Clive, and so mesmerized by its mystique, that he read everything he could find on the man, and researched Clive and his period in every detail so as to be flawless in his interpretation."

~ Lawrence J. Quirk

Ronald Colman (sans the mustache) is the famed English imperialist Robert Clive in this historical romance—the emphasis on romance. "I must keep faith with my dream, for India is a sacred trust," said the driven man of destiny, who sacrificed all he had in his endeavors. Though it's a Hollywood-ized biography, there are nevertheless several potent elements, such as the battle of Plassey, and the re-creation of the notorious Indian prison—the Black Hole of Calcutta. The New York Times would call Clive "a handsome tribute to the glory of British rule in India." And again, Colman turns in a thoughtful performance in a film you won't find on video. With Loretta Young (who had recently co-starred with Ronald in the wonderful *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back*), Colin Clive (a descendant of Robert), Francis Lister, Cesar Romero, and the living embodiment of Britishness, C. Aubrey Smith. Music by Alfred Newman. Film was nominated for art direction.





Steamboat Round the Bend (1935)

John Ford

Twentieth Century-Fox/80 min.

Cartoon: "I Like Mountain Music" (1933), R. Ising

"*'Steamboat Round the Bend should have been a great picture,' grumbled Ford in 1965, 'but at that time they had a change of studio and a new manager came in who wanted to show off, so he recut the picture, and took all the comedy out.'* Such acerbic sarcasm thirty years after the event... suggests Zanuck's editing was significant. We shall never know. *Steamboat has less comedy than other Fords, and little of his characteristic wackiness. Zanuck's defenders, Dan and Barbara Ford among them, suggest Zanuck quickened Ford's pacing and eliminated the inconsequential. Yet good Fords are often the sum of their inconsequentialities, and there is a peculiar episodic quality to Steamboat.*" ~ Tag Gallagher

This is as much a Rogers film as it is a Ford film, and a cynic could argue that the extent of Ford's auteurism, at least on this set, was setting up the camera for Rogers to do his improvisation in long takes. Yet, the evocation of a cherished past and the communal theme have the director's personal stamp. Set in the 1890s, this third teaming with Ford has Will playing "Doc" John Pearly, a salesman of "Pocahontas Remedies." Onboard his own riverboat—*Claremore Queen* (Claremore, OK, being Rogers' hometown)—he learns his nephew (John McGuire) killed a man in self-defense over a swamp gal, Fleety Belle (Ann Shirley). When Duke is sent to jail, it's up to Doc to find the "New Moses" (Berton Churchill)—a hilarious preacher who was the lone witness to the crime. But first Doc must race his floating museum against the *Pride of Paducah* in the film's climactic race down the Mississippi. (The race afterward owes something to D.W. Griffith and *Intolerance*.) Tragically, *Steamboat*, a real pleasure to watch, would be the last film for our friend, Will Rogers. With Irvin S. Cobb, Francis Ford (as a drunk), Eugene Pallette, Charles Middleton, Hobart Bosworth, Stepin Fetchit (as the undigested Jonah), and two wax prophets as Frank and Jesse James.



The Great Garrick (1937)

James Whale

Warner/91 min.

Cartoon: "What's Cookin' Doc?" (1944), Bob Clampett

"*Cinematographer Ernest Haller proved adept at the tracking shots Whale required, managing a particularly effective opening that began in the noisy streets of Covent Garden and continued on into the Theatre Royal... Whale, with his penchant for intimacy and the*

details of everyday life, crafted a velvety 18th-century comedy on the principles of his late mentor, Sir Nigel Playfair. The Great Garrick is, in tone and staging, a glowing reflection of Playfair's influence on the work of James Whale and—whether conscious or not—an impressive tribute to his memory." ~ James Curtis

"You've never seen a picture quite like Garrick! It's gay, it's funny, it's romantic... it's swell!" The studio publicity may not lure you in, but you won't see this one anywhere else. Though he would go on to direct 1939's *The Man in the Iron Mask*, *Garrick* would be one of the last films James Whale enjoyed making. Conceived first as a play by Ernest Vajda, this costume picture is a fictionalized account of the 18th century British actor, David Garrick (Brian Aherne). The plot concerns an attempt by the French Comedie-Francaise to humiliate this grandiose, self-absorbed actor. The film was well-received by critics—"a jestful and romantic piece," wrote Frank Nugent—but failed at the box office. (Jack Warner supposedly told Aherne's agent he never wanted to see him on the studio lot again.) With Olivia de Havilland (as Germaine Dupont), Edward Everett Horton, Melville Cooper, Lionel Atwill and Lana Turner. Art direction by Anton Grot, who successfully recreated the Theatre Royal at Drury Lane.

If I Were King (1938)

Frank Lloyd

Paramount/101 min.

Short: "His Royal Slyness" (1920) with Harold Lloyd



"*If he was no more worthy than many others, at least he was by happenstance, by opportunity, by genetic fruition, by cultural exposure, by inclination, by effort, by appearance, or perhaps only by an accident of time, the one who most embodied a role-model for those of us who, amidst the negative realities of injustice, war, poverty, illness or death, were awed into silence by the rare genius of those who could give us some sense of beauty, meaning and value to a universe of unlimited dimension and complexities.*" ~ George E. Schatz on RC

In a time when Paris is besieged by the armies of the Duke of Burgundy, honest men turn thieves when faced with starvation. One such man is that beloved rogue, that "tinker of verses," Francois Villon (portrayed by Ronald Colman). But when he shares his stolen goods with wanton friends in a tavern, little does he know that King Louis XI, in search of a traitor, is there incognito. (Oscar-nominated Basil Rathbone, as the king, turns in a quirky performance both sinister and comical with his high-pitched, old codger laugh.) Though the idealistic Villon had insulted Louis, he is nevertheless rewarded for disposing of the traitor. He is made Grand Constable with power to govern, believing kindness will bring decency. With only a week before he must pass judgment upon himself, he has to deal with the bloated bourgeoisie and the skeptical masses. Yet if there is one man who can bring out the best in people, it is Francois. This is the sort of beautiful production we miss so dearly, and Colman, who proved he could be a lightweight adventure hero, makes it all so endearing with his ability and charm. With Frances Dee as Katherine de Vaucelles, Ellen Drew, C.V. France, Henry Wilcoxon, and Sidney Toler. Screenplay by Preston Sturges.

On Borrowed Time (1939)

Harold S. Bucquet

MGM/99 min.

Cartoon: "Betty Boop and Grampy" (1935), Dave Fleischer

"*A weird, wild, totally unpredictable fantasy with dream sequences more like Bunuel than anything in the cinema.*"

~ John Russell Taylor, 1965



A distinctly American fable about the figure of Death being stuck up in the apple tree. Lionel Barrymore is wonderful as the wheelchair-bound grandfather. He's raising his grandson—his own way—after the parents are claimed by "Mr. Brink" (calmly portrayed by the distinguished Sir Cedric Hardwicke). However, the self-interested aunt (Eily Malyon), a real "pismire," tries to take the boy away. She brings in the authorities when the obstinate Gramps starts talking about the unseen visitor up in the tree. Bobs Watson as Pud can be a bit trying at times—"You don't love me anymore, Gramps!"—but this is a whimsical, sentimental work of great warmth. Seen today, the film is a nostalgic elegy of an America that no longer exists. Based on Paul Osborn's 1938 Broadway success, from a play by Lawrence Edward Watkin. With Beulah Bondi, Una Merkel, Ian Wolfe, and Henry Travers. Music by Franz Waxman. Art director Cedric Gibbons. (British director Bucquet was mostly known for his *Dr. Kildare* series.)

October 27



It Came From Outer Space (1953)

Jack Arnold

Universal-International/81 min.

Cartoon: "Lumber Jack Rabbit" (1954),

Chuck Jones

Short: "Pardon My Backfire" (1953), Jules White
(Three Stooges)

"It is of historical importance because it was the first science fiction film to be directed by Jack Arnold, the first using the Southwestern desert as a location... the first starring Richard Carlson, and the first actual SF film made by Universal-International... But it is often revived, usually in 3-D (the Polaroid prints having been reprinted into the inferior red-green process some years ago) and was influential. For example, Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) owes something to *It Came From Outer Space*."

~ Bill Warren

Shown on television, 3-D never seemed to work, but when

The Creature From the Black Lagoon played here, the effect on the big screen was truly three-dimensional. For the last time on 16mm, we'll be passing out those gimmicky cardboard glasses. Richard Carlson, that '50s B movie mainstay who would also star in the 3-D film *The Maze*, plays Johnny Putnam, the amateur astronomer with the sophisticated pipe. One night while studying the expanse overhead with local schoolteacher Ellen (Barbara Rush), he notices something blaze across the Arizona sky. When he investigates the crash site he becomes convinced it was no meteor. A landslide soon covers up the ship—but not what was inside it. One of the better sci-fi entries with its creepy use of the alien's bubble eye point of view and the distinct theremin musical sound, but Jack Arnold's atmosphere—from fantastic Joshua trees to lonely highways—is what really sets this one apart. Based on Ray Bradbury's story "The Meteor." With Charles Drake as close-minded Sheriff Matt, Joe Sawyer, Russell Johnson and Kathleen Hughes.



November 3

Grass: A Nation's Battle For Life (1925)

Merian C. Cooper & Ernest B. Schoedsack

Famous Players-Lasky/64 min.

Print Courtesy of George Eastman House

Nanook of the North (1921)

Robert Flaherty

Revillon Freres/65 min. restored version



"For five days Schoedsack and I, rushing about with the cameras, watched the greatest piece of continuous action I have ever seen. Long before dawn it started. Sometimes it lasted until late in the night; once it went on all night. Shouting women, squalling children, calves, colts, goats, lambs, saddle-bags, cradles, babies—all piled helter-skelter on the rafts. Out into the stream and off! ... The current has them! Then down-stream, down, down, like birds blown in a hurricane, down they go... Out into the current and speeding, speeding, speeding down the stream."

~ Merian C. Cooper, from his book *Grass*

Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, the makers of *King Kong*, were also "dramatists of reality" in the 1920s. Cooper, the visionary showman, and Schoedsack, one of the finest of outdoor cameramen, made an excellent team, though the emphasis was always more on adventure than ethnography. This nature drama follows the Baba Ahmedi tribe of the Bakhtiari on their yearly migration in search of grass for their herds. Accompanied by journalist Marguerite Harrison—striking a glamour pose early on—the trio journeys with the nomadic "Forgotten People" of Persia, now Iran. The crossing of the River Karun—50,000 tribesmen using goatskin rafts—and the climbing of the 15,000 foot Zardeh Kuh are the film's most memorable images. Despite the physical demands they suffered, Cooper claimed they never lost one frame of film. *Grass* also introduces us to Haidar Khan, the tribal leader, and his son, and the filmmakers had intended on building up the family element for a longer project, but the money ran out. Cooper & Schoedsack wound up developing and editing it themselves in Paris. Though *Nanook* is the more well-known "documentary"—Cooper had not seen it prior to his film—*Grass* is second to none.



With Guest Musician David Drazin



November 10

Tell It To The Marines (1927)

George Hill

MGM/75 min.

Short: "Soldiering For Uncle Sam" (1917)

"The Marine Corps base in San Diego along with the local train station and several streets in the city were used as a location for much of the film. The battleship USS California was an impressive set where the scenes at sea were filmed, with Lon, Haines, and Gribbon actually participating in the firing of one of the ship's 5-inch guns during target practice. The ship later fell victim to the Japanese during their attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941."

~ Michael F. Blake

Anyone expecting quaint melodrama or sentimentality in this one has another thing coming! In honor of our veterans, the LaSalle Theatre salutes the Marine Corps under the command of Sergeant O'Hara (Lon Chaney, Sr.). Story follows the training of a lazy, crude recruit named George "Skeet" Burns (William Haines) who has his eye on Navy nurse Norma (Eleanor Boardman). O'Hara, meanwhile, is determined to make a man out of Skeet. Though some of the lines are dated with that '20s vernacular—"I'll knock the block off the first man I catch with those goo-goo dames!"—and though it's Chaney we want to see climb into the boxing ring, this is still a remarkable film that becomes stronger as the reels unroll. The staging of the fight with the Tongo natives vividly stands out, as do the quieter moments with O'Hara and Norma in the Shanghai restaurant. Director Hill, who had been in the employ of D.W. Griffith, was known for the intensity of his action sequences. The film was so well done in fact that the Marine Corps made Chaney an honorary member, and during Chaney's funeral in 1930, full military honors were given. With Warner Oland (as the Chinese Bandit Chief), and Eddie Gribbon.

November 17



He Who Gets Slapped (1924)

Victor Seastrom

MGM/80 min.

Cartoon: "Ha! Ha! Ha!" (1934), Dave Fleischer (Betty Boop)

"He Who Gets Slapped was the first feature to be produced and released by the fledgling company. The play on which it was based, by Russian writer Leonid Andreyev, had a successful run

on Broadway in the early 1920's. The film version, directed by Victor Seastrom, starred Chaney, John Gilbert, and Thalberg's future wife Norma Shearer, and marked the beginning of Lon's six-year association with M-G-M."

~ Michael F. Blake

"What is it in human nature that makes people quick to laugh when someone else gets slapped—whether the slap be spiritual, mental, or physical?" So the title card asks in this surreal tragedy. Lon Chaney Sr. portrays Paul Beaumont, an unknown scientist who is betrayed by his wife (Ruth King) and his friend, Baron Regnard (Marc McDermott). Broken, he retreats to a circus where he works up a successful routine as a clown always being slapped, always being met with laughter—"the bitterest and most subtle death to hope." The Baron returns and tries to break up the love between Consuelo, the bareback rider (Norma Shearer), and Bezano, the daredevil rider (John Gilbert). But HE who gets slapped... gets the last laugh (in an ending that anticipates the Browning/Chaney collaborations). With Chaney starring, Hollywood 'feel good' conventions go out the window. Is there anything more tragic than HE's plea of love to Consuelo—and her response? With Tully Marshall and Ford Sterling.

The King of Kings (1927)

Cecil B. DeMille

Pathe/115 min.

Short: "Hollywood Extra Girl" (1935), H. Moulton



"During the making of The King of Kings, DeMille not only utilized religious advisors but also encouraged worship on the set. The first day of shooting opened with a prayer service involving participants not only of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths but of the Muslim and Buddhist traditions as well. Father Lord celebrated mass every morning outdoors when the company was on location on Catalina Island; and, at DeMille's behest, the entire cast paused for silent prayer after the shooting of the crucifixion scene in the Hollywood studio on Christmas eve, 1926. Years later, DeMille movingly recalled the latter experience as one of the high moments of his life."

~ W. Barnes Tatum

There have been various cinematic distortions of the life of Christ in recent decades, but DeMille's silent film (his personal favorite) is the most reverent and pictorially beautiful of any. When you think of spectacles you think of two names, and DeMille was the only one who could rival Griffith. After a wild opening involving Mary Magdalene—"Harness my zebras, gift of the Nubian king!"—the film chronicles the life of Jesus of Nazareth (with Scripture-based title cards). His story begins with the healing of a blind child—still impressive to those of us less jaded. Equally effective are the sets, such as the Temple and Pontius Pilate's throne. But beyond its visual design—the color Resurrection—and lavishness, one respects the film's hallowed tone. In this day of televangelism, fanatical cults, and commercialized religion, this 74 year old picture reminds us of the real message: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." With H.B. Warner as Jesus, Jacqueline Logan, Joseph Schildkraut (Judas), Rudolph Schildkraut (Joseph's father as Caiaphas) and William Boyd as Simon, the Cyrenian. Photographed by J. Peverell Marley. Art direction by Mitchell Leisen.

December 1

Horse Feathers (1932)

Norman Z. McLeod

Paramount/68 min.

Short: "Violent Is the Word For Curly" (1938), Charley Chase



"It is a measure of just how lowly the Marxes looked on college that Harpo is allowed to sign his enrollment papers with an 'x.' In a number of Marx Brothers' films, Harpo is cast as not only dumb but totally unlettered. This suits his character as the instinctive, natural and lovable childman, but beyond this, it suited Harpo as Harpo. He never got past the second grade, the victim of a bully who would drop him out the second-floor window: Harpo, as he explains it in his autobiography, simply got tired of trying to explain to the teacher on his return from the pavement how he had left the room without permission."

~Paul D. Zimmerman & Burt Goldblatt

The inimitable Marx Brothers (and Zeppo) go to college (with the expectant results) in this, their fourth outing. An examination of plot would be as useful as a Groucho anatomy lesson, but for the record, Groucho is Wagstaff, the professor who must do something about the condition of Huxley College. It seems the institution has been neglecting football for education. Pinky the dogcatcher (Harpo) and Baravelli (Chico) are eventually recruited for the team (as easily as they were enrolled) in their game against rival Darwin University. However, scheming seductress Thelma Todd is out to steal the football signs. This satiric screenplay is by humorist S.J. Perelman with songs ("I'm Against It," "Everyone Says I Love You") by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. With David Landau as Jennings. (\$1 off admission if you say the password.)

(With 10 Minute Intermission)



December 8

Diplomaniacs (1933)

William Seiter

RKO/61 min.

Cartoon: "Duck Soup to Nuts" (1944), I. Freleng

"Of all their vehicles, *Diplomaniacs* allows Wheeler and Woolsey the greatest chance to display the range of their performance skills and devotes the least time to plot development. Each sequence invites its own distinctive type of performance: crossfire comedy, Busby Berkeley-style choreography, tearful Irish ballads, knockabout romantic duets, parodic operetta, comic acrobatics, and minstrel cakewalk. Everywhere they go, Wheeler and Woolsey stumble upon spaces ideally suited for performance."

~ Henry Jenkins

With chief nemesis David O. Selznick gone, Bert Wheeler and Robert Woolsey returned home to RKO. In *Diplomaniacs*—originally called *In the Red* and then *A Five-Cent War*—the boys are two nitwit barbers on an Indian reservation until The Big Chief sends them off to represent the Indian nation at the peace conference in Geneva. ("Where the nations of the world fight over peace.") Louis Calhern (as the dastardly Winkelreid, General Manager of the High Explosive Bullet Company) and his Yiddish-speaking "Chinaman" sidekick (Hugh Herbert) are the villains out to stop this outrageous mission of peace. Plenty of nonsense, in-jokes, and girls in this "anarchistic" comedy where anything goes. Along with *Cockeyed Cavaliers* and *Kentucky Kernels* (their best film), this is a pretty good representative of W&W's vaudeville shtick. Oomph! Co-written by Joseph L. Mankiewicz (!), who was "accused" of stealing from *Duck Soup*, and Henry Myers. With Marjorie White, Phyllis Barry, and Edgar Kennedy making up the excellent supporting cast.



Duck Soup (1933)

Leo McCarey

Paramount/70 min.

"But soon they were reconciled with Paramount and I found myself directing the Marx Brothers. The amazing thing about that movie was that I succeeded in not going crazy. They were completely mad. I enjoyed shooting several scenes in the picture, though. My experience in silent films influenced me very much, and so usually I preferred Harpo."

~Leo McCarey

No capsule review could adequately do justice to this, the most-beloved Marx Brothers film—and the zenith of high style in American screen comedy. A response in part to fascism—Harpo would change his name in real life from Adolph to Arthur—this uncompromising satire is a prescient response to so much more than just politics. Rufus T. Firefly (Groucho) has been appointed the new dictator of Freedonia thanks to million dollar heiress Mrs. Teasdale (Margaret Dumont). But Ambassador Trentino of Sylvania (Louis Calhern) has a plan to undermine Rufus with the aid of two spies—Chicolini (Chico) and Pinky (Harpo)—who are really undercover Freedonians. Some of the highlights include the 'master of the slow bum,' Edgar Kennedy (and his lemonade stand), patriotic Harpo's Paul Revere ride (before getting sidetracked) and the Berkeley-style musical number "We're Going to War." Unfortunately, critics—lacking our historical perspective—were less than enthused with this romance-less insanity, which would be the last film for Zeppo; this attack on government (in general) would fail in the face of the New Deal. With Raquel Torres and Charles Middleton. Music by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. (The film's original title had been *Cracked Ice*.)

Hold That Ghost (1941)

Arthur Lubin

Universal/86 min.

Short: "Spook Louder" (1943), Del Lord (Three Stooges)



"When we saw the first cut of *Hold That Ghost* in the projection room, we were almost so upset that we considered taking our names off it... But when we saw the picture with an audience, we were rolling in the aisles along with everyone else. You see, it was all in their timing. Something absolutely happens with an audience and Abbott and Costello. So Fred and I said to ourselves, 'We must have been crazy. We didn't realize how funny this thing really is!'"

~Robert Lees

In their films, Abbott (the greatest straight man) and Costello were experts at what they did, whether it was those methodical word games or the timing of their lines. Their appeal rested in the stage routines where it didn't matter who the director was. They were the most popular comedy team until post-war America sought uninhibited, unhinged, and juvenile behavior in their entertainers. This early outing is in some ways the quintessential A&C comedy. You've got the music of the Andrews sisters and Ted "Is EVERYbody happy?" Lewis, and you've got more of A&C's vaudeville routines, most notably the "Moving Candle" gag—repeated in the definitive horror spoof, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Chuck (Bud) and Ferdie (Lou) are relief waiters at a nightclub frequented by Moose Matson (William Davidson)—a gangster who keeps his money "in his head." When Moose is fatally wounded in a shootout, our boys are there at the time of his death and become the beneficiaries of his will. They inherit a spooky hotel out in the country but are eventually stranded there along with the ungainly Camille Brewster, radio scream queen (Joan Davis), the "Queen of the Horrors" Evelyn Ankers, and the doctor (Richard Carlson) who "assimilates plenty of calcium" in his spare time. With Marc Lawrence, Misha Auer, and Shemp Howard as the soda jerk. Screenplay by Robert Lees, Fred Rinaldo and John Grant. Excellent score by Hans Salter. (During production, film was known as *Oh, Charlie!* and *Don't Look Now*.)

Babes In Toyland (1934)

Gus Meins, Charles Rogers

Hal Roach/77 min.

Cartoon: "The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers" (1933),

Dave Fleischer (Betty Boop)

Shorts: "Blotto" (1930), James Parrott (Laurel & Hardy)

"The Stolen Jools" (1931) with Buster Keaton (and the rest of Hollywood)



"On all accounts, this Hal Roach version is infinitely superior to Disney's gaudy, jazzed-up remake, which not only re-arranged and modernized the music, but rewrote the lyrics and added new songs as well. Here, apart from the briefest snatch of 'The Cuckoos' in the main titles, and the use of Disney's 'Three Little Pigs' theme, the music is all vintage Herbert, charmingly and faithfully rendered."

~ William K. Everson

If there were ever two comedians who should be canonized—for the universal good cheer they have brought to millions (with an almost magical ease with which they accomplished this onscreen)—it surely would be Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. Also known as *March of the Wooden Soldiers*, this is their most endearing operetta. Based on Victor Herbert's 1903 work, the story follows the nursery-rhyme characters of Toyland—Widow Peep (Florence Roberts) and her daughter Bo-Peep (blonde Charlotte Henry, who had been *Alice in Wonderland*). The treacherous Silas Barnaby (played to perfect exaggeration by twenty-something Henry Kleinbach/Brandon in his screen debut), though, threatens to boot them out of their shoe if Bo-Peep does not marry him. Then when Barnaby further terrorizes this Germanic Mother Goose Land with his simian-like bogeymen, it's up to Stannie Dum, Ollie Dee, and the wooden soldiers to save the day... with the help of Mickey Mouse, of course. Written by Nick Grinde and Frank Butler. With Felix Knight, Marie Wilson, William Burgess (as the toymaker), and director Charley Rogers as Simple Simon.

December 29



Stars In My Crown (1950)

Jacques Tourneur

MGM/89 min.

Cartoon: "In the Good Old Summertime" (1927), Fleischer (Screen Songs)

"Stars in My Crown" is one of the stars in the crown of Joel McCrea. The role of the strong, likeable pastor fits him like a glove. It is quintessential McCrea, thoroughly American and straight as an arrow. This pastor is no mere Holy Joe; when he strides into a saloon and slams a pistol on the bar the patrons pay attention. And when he faces

down the Klanners there is no doubt that this is the man who could do it. He knows about prejudice and greed and ignorance, and how to do something about it. Josiah Doziah Gray is Joel McCrea at his best."

~ Tony Thomas

Winner of the Freedom Foundation Award, this episodic "Western" is a supreme entertainment that is thoroughly refreshing in today's cynical times. This is the story of a town, Walesburg, as told by the narrator. It's more than nostalgia for childhood, but for a special time and place fondly remembered. There were problems to be sure—town bullies, typhoid fever, lynch mobs—but there was the parson who guided the community through the hardships (while confronting self-doubt in the darkest hours). Joel McCrea as Josiah Gray is a man of integrity and inspiration, and we in turn have faith in him and in what he has to say. Tourneur's artful hand and rural compositions make this American tale one of the best films of the 1950s. Based on the book by Joe David Brown. With Ellen Drew (as Harriet Gray), Dean Stockwell (John Kenyon), James Mitchell (as the practical doctor with more faith in medicine than in prayer), Amanda Blake, Juano Hernandez (as Uncle Famous Prill), Alan Hale, and Louis Stone. Photographed by Charles Schoenbaum. Art direction by Cedric Gibbons. Music by Adolph Deutsch. (McCrea would go on to play Wyatt Earp in Tourneur's *Wichita*.)

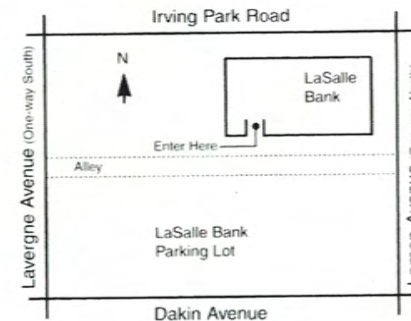


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