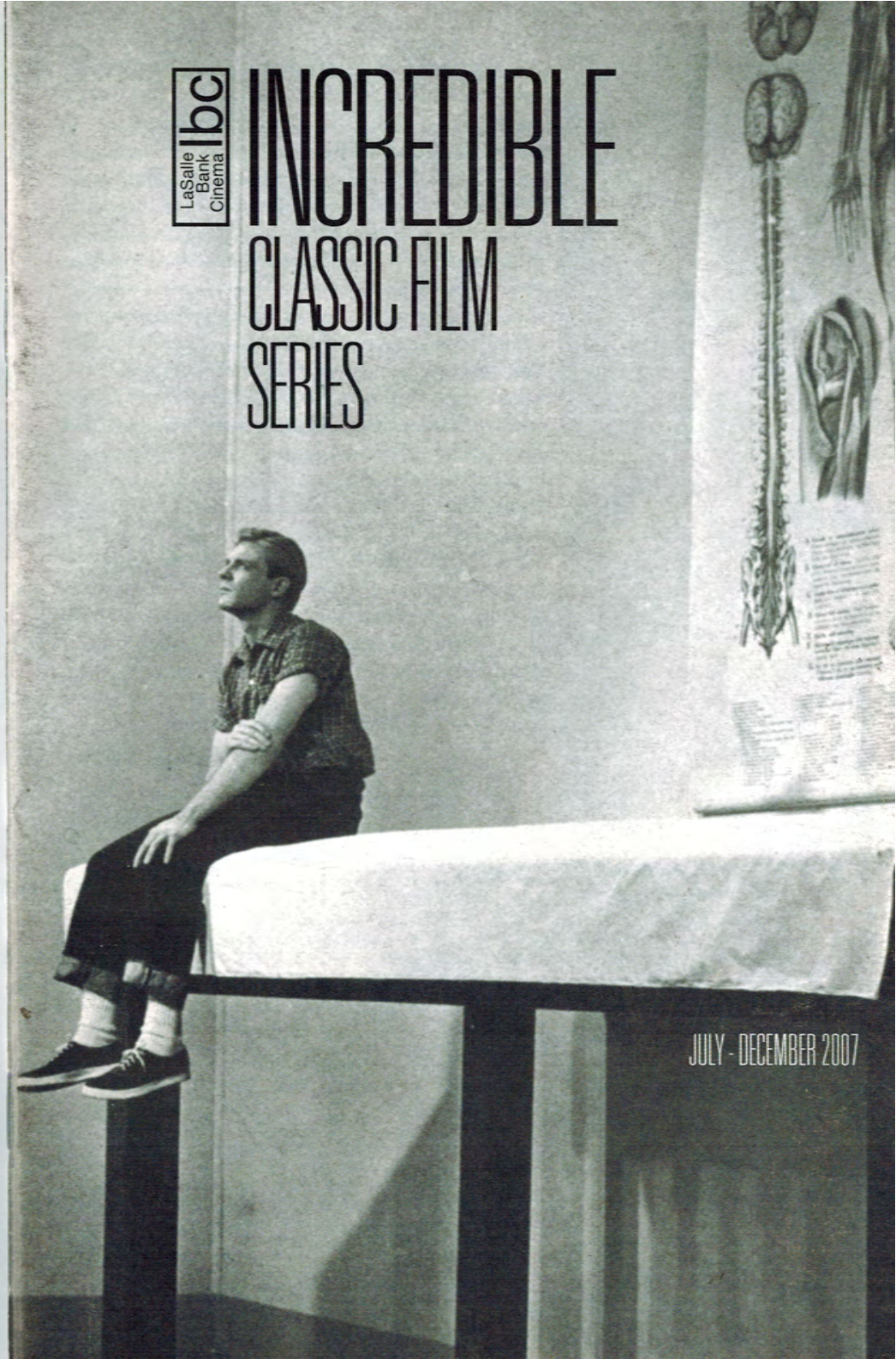
LaSalle Bank Cinema lbc

INCREDIBLE CLASSIC FILM SERIES



JULY - DECEMBER 2007

FROM THE BOOTH

It's a busy year for birthdays: John Wayne, Laurence Olivier, Barbara Stanwyck, Fay Wray, Burgess Meredith, Katharine Hepburn, Gene Autry, and Rosalind Russell, among others, would have turned 100 this year. We're celebrating by NOT slavishly following the mob of classic-movie stations that will be running *King Kong* and *His Girl Friday* and *Git Along Little Dogies* in 'round-the-clock birthday bashes. Instead, we're doing what we do best: dig through the vaults for unheralded gems and seldom-screened classics. So instead of Fay Wray screaming and John Wayne shooting, we have Walter Huston saving America (again!) in *Gabriel Over the White House*, Henry Fonda winning World War II in *The Immortal Sergeant*, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney putting on a show (again!) in *Strike Up the Band*, and Judy Holliday foreseeing *American Idol*'s cult of instant celebrity in *It Should Happen to You*. And, for a change of pace, we've got giant grasshoppers, giant scorpions, giant creatures from Venus, and one tiny, tiny man in a handful of 1950s sci-fi classics scattered throughout the season. (Speaking of anniversaries, if you blinked, you probably missed the 35th anniversary of this very theater back in May. Happy birthday to us.)

Program by Michael King (MK) and Michael W. Phillips, Jr. (MP)

CHRISTMAS IN JULY | 1940

Director: Preston Sturges

Striking while the iron was hot, America's foremost cinematic satirist rushed his second feature as director intro production before his debut had even opened. Preston Sturges was eager to make use of a story he had been kicking around Universal for a decade: a regular go-getter (Dick Powell) is duped into thinking he's won $25,000 in an advertising slogan contest with his asinine entry. Except, of course, he didn't—pandemonium ensues. Moving his target from politics to advertising, Sturges adopted a gentler satirical tone than the searing *The Great McGinty*, but was no less incisive (and just as full of old men yelling). Ably spoofed by William Demarest and Raymond Walburn, big business is seen as a web of circular logic, chest-puffing territoriality, and deep insecurity, while Powell's small-scale delusions of grandeur are downright Capraesque. Look out for the director himself getting a shoeshine in a Hitchcock-style cameo. (MK)

Paramount 67 min. 16mm
Cartoon: "Robin Hood Daffy" (1957), Chuck Jones (Daffy Duck)
Short: "Healthy, Wealthy, and Dumb" (1938), Del Lord (Three Stooges)

JULY 7, 2007

20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH | 1957

Director: Nathan Juran

"SEE outerspace monster tear huge elephants apart! SEE space-beast defy modern weapons! SEE space-beast battle a billion volts of electricity!" Oh, come on. It wasn't a *billion*. Ray Harryhausen's *20 Million Miles to Earth* depicts the sad fate of the Ymir, a creature from Venus that starts out a wee lizard and ends up battling giant pachyderms and the combined forces of the Italian military. Harryhausen's trademark model work, stop-motion animation, and rear-projection—a combination of effects dubbed "electric dynamation" by Columbia's pressbook—are on full display here, to the point where one might wonder whether even the actors are real, and, well, a few of them are. When Harryhausen couldn't get a 15-foot elephant for the Ymir's big fight scene, he settled for an 8-foot one and hired a 4-foot actor to play the keeper. Why, you may ask, was it shot in black and white, what with all the other sci-fi extravaganzas being shot in garish Technicolor? Harryhausen explained, "[With Kodak's new black and white stock] I could intercut an original negative with a second generation negative from a background plate and there would be hardly any difference between the two." OK, then. (MP)

Columbia 82 min. 35mm
Cartoon: "Woodpecker from Mars" (1956), Paul J. Smith (Woody Woodpecker)

JULY 14, 2007

JULY 21, 2007

WINCHESTER '73 | 1950

DIRECTOR: ANTHONY MANN

"Talking is alright, but in a western, the story is told visually. If you've got a lot of people sitting around talking and everything, you don't have a good western." Easy for Jimmy Stewart to say, discussing the first of his five westerns with visual maestro Anthony Mann. Ostensibly following a coveted rifle as it is passed between owners, the sophisticated plot eagerly scrambles the conventional story arc: all the requisite raids, hideouts, and showdowns are accounted for, but seem to take place out of order. That meandering narrative makes for an outstanding roll call: beyond Shelly Winters and Stephen McNally, you get Dan Duryea, John McIntire and Jay C. Flippen in especially indelible character turns, and glimpses of a young Tony Curtis and an even younger Rock Hudson (as a Native American chief!). Beautifully photographed in black and white by veteran William H. Daniels, this marks visually Mann's thematic transition from claustrophobic noir alleys to expansive, vacant frontiers. Justly praised for introducing heady psychological overtones and shaky morality to cowpokes, *Winchester* '73's great secret strength lies in its pragmatic modesty; the self-conscious revisionism plaguing many of the fashionable westerns that cropped up in its wake is completely absent. A triumph. (MK)

UNIVERSAL 92 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "LIFE OF AN AMERICAN COWBOY" (1906), EDWIN S. PORTER

JULY 28, 2007

BUCK PRIVATES | 1941

DIRECTOR: ARTHUR LUBIN

Twenty-seven Universal writers turned down producing gigs when told that their first assignment would be a film featuring "a couple of cheap burlesque comics who will never get anywhere." In their first starring vehicle, Abbott and Costello inadvertently enlist in the Army in order to elude their nemesis (Nat Pendleton). They end up entangled in boot camp highjinks with a spoiled playboy (Randolph Parker) and the Andrews Sisters, whose "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B" and "Apple Blossom Time" became signature hits. Studio cheapskates pinched their pennies on the production—the Andrews Sisters had to pay for their own dancing lessons—but Universal changed its tune when the film became their biggest money-maker of all time. The justly famous drill routine was a hit overseas, too—the Japanese army showed it to soldiers as an example of how inept U.S. troops were. The *New York Times* may have overstated things a bit when they said "If the real thing is at all like this preview of Army life ... It's going to be a merry war, folks." (MP)

UNIVERSAL 84 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "THE ALL STAR BOND RALLY" (1945), MICHAEL AUDLEY

GABRIEL OVER THE WHITE HOUSE | 1933

DIRECTOR: GREGORY LA CAVA

In 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, the same year that Hitler seized power in Germany, a glad-handing party hack is visited by the angel Gabriel and transformed into a crusading dictator who fixes the country's problems by doing away with such pesky things as democracy and Congress. Walter Huston, Hollywood's early-1930s go-to guy when there were problems to be solved (he saved the banking industry and the criminal justice system in a double feature here last season), is the messianic president with the thousand-yard stare, Franchot Tone is his angry right hand, and Karen Morley is his Monica Lewinsky. The word of the day is "bonkers": how else to describe a film that features angry bootleggers ordering a drive-by on the White House? The independent production, shot on the MGM lot, so shocked Louis B. Mayer (a diehard Hoover supporter) that he ordered his underlings to "put that picture in its can, take it back to the studio, and lock it up," where it stayed until a couple of months after FDR's inauguration essentially neutralized its lightning-bolt politics. (MP)

MGM 86 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "THE OLD WAY AND THE NEW" (1912)

AUGUST 4, 2007

DEEP VALLEY | 1947

DIRECTOR: JEAN NEGULESCO

On a remote mountain road, a shy country girl with a stammer (Ida Lupino) sees the man of her dreams (Dane Clark), and from there it's all downhill—and sometimes uphill, since they're in the mountains. Sure, he's a convict on a chain gang, but why should that stop true love, especially when convicts tend to escape in the movies? Fay Bainter is her ailing and abused mom, Henry Hull is her abusive pop, and Wayne Morris is in there as the third wheel. Because Lupino's contract stipulated that she got paid whether she worked or not, Warner's dusted off the script to a never-filmed Bogart vehicle so they wouldn't have to pay her for nothing, but this was the end of their relationship: Jack wanted her to sign a four-year exclusive contract, but she refused, and he told her to pack her bags. She'd probably had enough after the grueling shoot: she cut her foot, which got infected; suffered from swollen ankles; had a flare-up of chronic bronchitis; and strained her back and had to be carried off set on a stretcher. And her dog died. (MP)

WARNERS 104 MIN. 16MM

CARTOON: "CELL BOUND" (1955), TEX AVERY

AUGUST 11, 2007

30s COMEDY DOUBLE

MILLION DOLLAR LEGS | 1932

DIRECTOR: EDWARD F. KLINE
PARAMOUNT 64 MIN. 16MM
CARTOON: "DON QUIXOTE" (1934), UB IWERKS

Long before Jospeh L. Mankiewicz made his name scribing Important Movies for Darryl Zanuck like *No Way Out* and *All About Eve* (screening here in December), he was busy scribbling madcap comedy vehicles for ex-vaudevillians. *Million Dollar Legs* marked W.C. Fields' first feature at Paramount, and found him president of an impoverished nation of misfits and second banana to Jack Oakie. Confronted with a quaint $8,000,000 deficit ("We've got the zeros, what's bothering me is the eight" worries Fields), the pair mobilizes the local athletes for a solid Olympics performance to repay the debt. How exactly that equation works is conveniently, mercifully overlooked by the casually absurd script. Mankiewicz went on to rack up ten career Oscar nominations, but one wonders if all that could possibly have meant as much as the appropriately peculiar accolade this early work earned: according to a news item in the *Hollywood Reporter*, the script for *Million Dollar Legs* was placed under glass in Exposition Park and labeled "This is a Perfect Script." An explanation of the title, however, was conspicuously absent. Released in July of 1932 to coincide with the Los Angeles Olympics—do I smell a local remake in 2016?

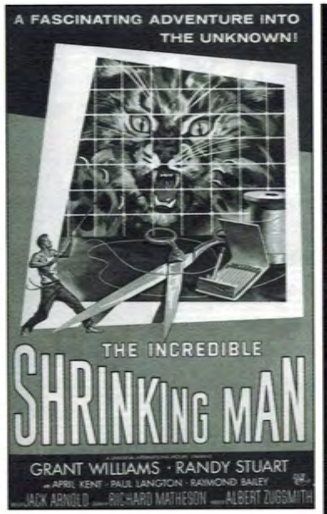
THE DIPLOMANIACS | 1933

DIRECTOR: WILLIAM SEITER
RKO 61 MIN. 16MM

Mankiewicz also wrote the story for *Diplomaniacs*, a showcase for the once-popular, long-forgotten comedy team Wheeler & Woolsey. Operating in the zany free-associative mode of the Marx Brothers, the inept duo crashes the League of Nations with a surprisingly heavy-duty mission: collect signatures for a worldwide peace treaty on behalf of a shut-out tribe of Native Americans. As you can imagine with a premise like this, the humor often veers far beyond any semblance of political correctness into flat-out tastelessness. Nevertheless, Wheeler & Woolsey seem ripe for rediscovery; as in 1933's other great war satire *Duck Soup*, *Diplomanics* finds a seemingly innocuous comedy team wringing laughs from international conflict with shocking aplomb. (MK)

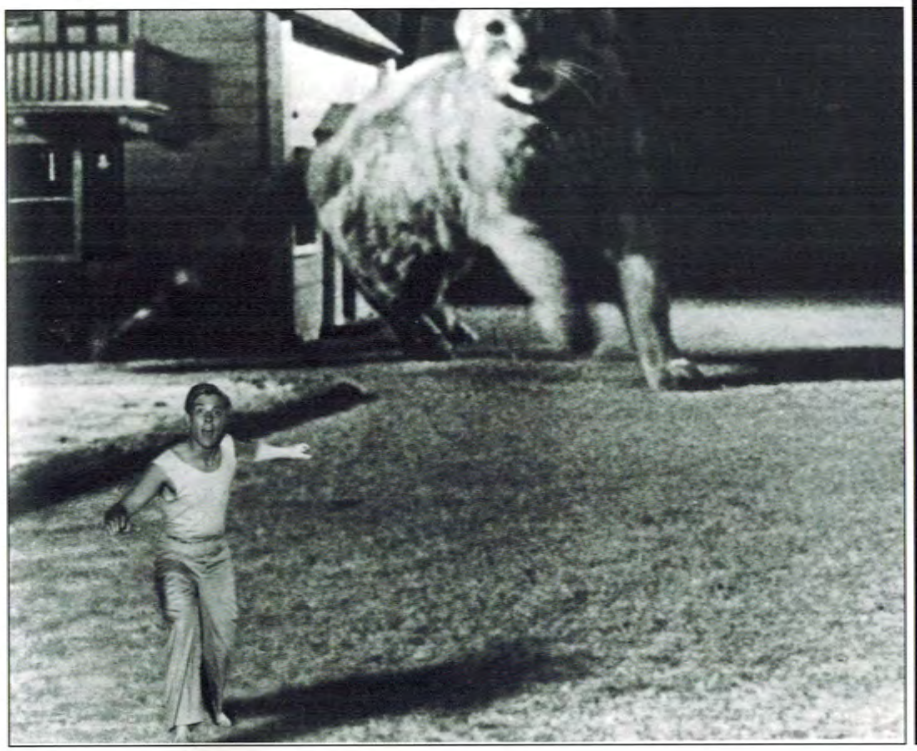
THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN | 1957

DIRECTOR: JACK ARNOLD



"Easy enough to talk of soul and spirit and existential worth, but not when you're three feet tall..." There was no shortage of size-shifting sci-fi flicks in the mid-1950s, but few in any genre were as boldly philosophical as *The Incredible Shinking Man*. Enveloped by a mysterious radioactive cloud while innocently catching some rays, Grant Williams has the unlucky job of fulfilling the title's promise, shrinking irreversibly until he becomes "the loneliest and most frightened creature on earth, living a nightmare in a world of giants," as Orson Welles put it in the film's minimalist trailer. Household pests (including a certain veteran of director Jack Arnold's previous *Tarantula*) become super-sized menaces through a clever combination of rear projection, little people, and really big props, while our hero provides voice-over updates on his increasing alienation. Richard Matheson (author of *I Am Legend*, which hit the big screen as *The Last Man on Earth* and later *The Omega Man*) adapted his own novel for the screenplay; like the best sci-fi, it remains open-ended enough to have generated a variety of proposed subtexts, ranging from cold war paranoia to male anxiety. A remake (gulp) starring Eddie Murphy (double gulp) has been kicking around in development for years. (MK)

UNIVERSAL 81 MIN. 35MM
CARTOON: "KING SIZE CANARY" (1947), TEX AVERY (TWEETY BIRD)



SEPTEMBER 1, 2007

YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG | 1955

DIRECTOR: NORMAN TAUROG

This bizarre inversion of Billy Wilder's classic *The Major and the Minor* puts Jerry Lewis in the Ginger Rogers role and, depending on your perspective, has either Dean Martin or Diana Lynn (a veteran of the original) filling in for Ray Milland. Lewis goes into slapstick overdrive in a role with built-in carte blanche for hyperactivity: a grown man pretending to be a 12-year-old. Lynn (having built up her tolerance for this kind of thing in the *My Friend Irma* series) plays along as the object of his affection, with Martin hanging around as her croon-happy husband. Veteran Martin and Lewis director Norman Taurog keeps the duo's patented nonsense flying fast and furious, while Raymond Burr tags along as a jewel thief whose loot is unfortunately hidden in Jerry's pants. "Paramount has put it together with a slingshot, a squirt gun, and a trowel," observed Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times*, conveniently overlooking the dazzling VistaVision photography the studio had bestowed upon the film. But there's no arguing with Crowther's main point: "*You're Never Too Young* is on a mental level that will not demand an exertion from anyone." (MK)

COLUMBIA 97 MIN. 35MM
SHORT: "CAUGHT IN THE ACT" (1936), DEL LORD (ANDY CLYDE)

SEPTEMBER 8, 2007

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN | 1936

DIRECTOR: NORMAN Z. MCLEOD

"I'm the last of the troubadours, the friend of man," says ex-con and former smuggler Bing Crosby. "I envy nobody and I'm sure nobody envies me." Well, I'm sure *some* people envied Crosby (of course his character's innocent), especially with his career trajectory pointed steadily upward. When a condemned murderer asks him to take a message to his victim's family, Der Bingle sets off, lute in hand, to do his duty to his cellmate and mankind, both onscreen and off. His onscreen antics include wooing former child actor Madge Evans, opening a nightclub to keep current child actor Edith Fellows out of the orphanage, and joining the circus. Offscreen, Crosby used his newfound clout to assail the color line, forcing the studio to give Louis Armstrong ("the beginning and the end of music in America" in Bing's words) not only a part, but equal billing with his white costars, the first time a black performer received such credit in a white film. It's too bad they didn't get a chance at a duet on the title song, which netted an Oscar nomination. (MP)

WARNER BROS. 81 MIN. 16MM
SHORT: "BLUE OF THE NIGHT" (1933), LESLIE PEARCE (BING CROSBY)

BIG BUG DOUBLE FEATURE

SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

BEGINNING OF THE END | 1957

DIRECTOR: BERT I. GORDON
SHORT: "A LOST WORLD" (1948), ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITTANICA

It's a question that has haunted mankind through the ages: which would be worse, an attack of giant grasshoppers or giant scorpions? After tonight's atomic-age double feature, we will have our answer. *The Beginning of the End* gives the grasshoppers home-field advantage, as the radioactive buggers descend upon the deserts (?!) and mountains (?!?!) of central Illinois, just before swarming the fair city we at the LaSalle Bank Cinema call home. And you thought the cicadas were bad—after witnessing a giant grasshopper climb a picture of the Wrigley building, you may never go downtown again.

Meanwhile, down in Mexico, a volcano eruption unearths another breed of oversized pests in *The Black Scorpion*. ¡Dios mío! ¡Escorpiones gigantes! ¡Huyan! Pioneering effects wizard Willis O'Brien (*The Lost World*) contributes more of his gold-standard animation, and finally got to make good use of some scary old spider props he originally created for *King Kong*. Taken together, these films should make for a truly *newmendous* evening, as in *The Beginning of the End*'s inspired tagline: "So Big, we had to coin a new word for it: NEWMENDOUS!" Don't bother looking it up—thus far, the term "newmendous" has yet to make it into the OED. (MK)

THE BLACK SCORPION | 1957

DIRECTOR: EDWARD LUDWIG WARNERS 88 MIN. 35MM

SEPTEMBER 22, 2007

BROTHER ORCHID | 1940

DIRECTOR: LLOYD BACON

Edward G. Robinson is a gangster on the lam who holes up in a monastery and learns to be a monk and cultivate flowers, becoming the titular Brother Orchid. Of course his gangsterly past catches up with him when the mob (including Humphrey Bogart, chafing a little more every time he had to play second-fiddle) corners the flower market. Yes, this is a comedy. Jack Warner and co. sure knew how to negotiate (read, blackmail): Robinson had to appear in *Brother Orchid* before he could make his dream project, *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet*. Years later, evaluating the film after catching it on late-night TV, Robinson said, "I thought both Bogart and Robinson overacted, shouted a little too much, and occasionally were very good indeed." By 1936, Robinson had been sick of playing serious gangsters, so he got a new contract that allowed him to branch out—to playing spoof gangsters, apparently. He was sick of that by 1940, and he notes that "I was prepared to put on my private walk-out act on Hal Wallis and Jack Warner when they came at me, like gangbusters, with two new scripts: *A Dispatch from Reuters* and *The Sea Wolf*." He changed his mind about the walk-out act, see? Nyeah. (MP)

WARNER BROS. 88 MIN. 16MM
CARTOON: "CATTY CORNERED" (1953), FRIZ FRELENG (TWEETY BIRD)

SEPTEMBER 29, 2007

DAUGHTERS COURAGEOUS | 1939

DIRECTOR: MICHAEL CURTIZ

When studio head Jack Warner demanded a sequel to *Four Daughters*, his multi-Oscar-nominated film of 1938, screenwriters Julius and Philip Epstein compromised by writing a new script that used the same actors playing different roles. (This was good news for top-billed John Garfield, whose character died at the end of the first film. The real sequels, absent Garfield, would come later.) Claude Rains is a deadbeat dad who returns 20 years later only to discover that his ex-wife (Fay Bainter) is about to marry a captain of industry (Donald Crisp), while Garfield is a restless young man who's interested in one of Rains's four daughters (Pricilla Lane; the other three are Lola and Rosemary Lane and Gale Page). When Rains can't convince his wife to come back to him, he decides to sabotage his daughter's relationship with the guy who resembles him a little too much. The low-key film, which director Michael Curtiz liked to call his "obtuse masterpiece," eschewed the earlier film's saccharine worldview for one that's more melancholy; its theme that one must compromise between idealism and reality didn't often find its way into mainstream studio output. Just about everybody liked it better than its predecessor—except Oscar and audiences, who stayed away in droves. (And nobody liked the title.) (MP)

WARNER BROS. 107 MIN. 16MM
SHORT: "THE TOWN" (1943), JOSEF VON STERNBERG

OCTOBER 6, 2007

IT SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU | 1954

DIRECTOR: GEORGE CUKOR

Judy Holliday stars as Gladys Glover, the wholesome, idealist, naïve—and thus clearly fictional—ancestor to real-world professional celebrities Edie Sedgwick, Paris Hilton, et al. Glover's road to fame is remarkably straightforward: she simply plasters her name on a Manhattan billboard and lets the media take care of the rest. It isn't long before she's a staple of the TV talk-show circuit, occasioning some of the earliest sequences dedicated to cinema's simmering resentment of its new rival. In today's age of reality TV and *US Weekly*, the earnestness with which Jack Lemmon (playing the love interest in his film debut) picks apart the vacancy of Gladys's dubious ambition is painfully quaint (He: "I'm just trying to bring you back down to Earth." She: "What's so great about Earth?"). Even then, director George Cukor could see where all this was headed: "The idea of becoming a great celebrity without being able to do anything is a very important notion…today it makes presidents. It's really the name of the game." *It Should Happen to You* was Holliday's fourth consecutive film with Cukor and writer Garson Kanin; she continued on with her costar in George Axelrod's *Phffft*. (MK)

COLUMBIA 86 MIN. 35MM
CARTOON: "BILLBOARD FROLICS" (1936), FRIZ FRELENG

OCTOBER 13, 2007

STORMY WEATHER | 1943

DIRECTOR: ANDREW L. STONE

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Lena Horne top-line an all-star, all-black cast in this tale of romance and music between the wars. The slim plot, which is basically a few lines of expository dialogue squeezed in between numbers, recounts Robinson's attempts to win Horne's heart and make it big. When he succeeds, he asks her to quit her career and become a housewife—wait, who in his right mind would ask Lena Horne to do that? I bet they work everything out in a huge musical number. It doesn't seem to matter that Robinson was 65 and Horne was only 26, a fine tradition that continues in the films of Sean Connery and Harrison Ford. The whopping sixteen numbers, including the title song, "Ain't Misbehavin'," and "Diga Diga Do," are performed by the cream of the crop of 1940s black entertainers: the cast includes Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Ada Brown, Dooley Wilson (although he never sings), tap dancers the Nicholas Brothers (Fred Astaire called their "Jumpin' Jive" the greatest movie musical number ever filmed), and modern dancer Katherine Dunham. Jazz fans: watch the bands for such luminaries as Coleman Hawkins, Illinois Jacquet, and Benny Carter, among others. (MP)

FOX 78 MIN. 35MM
SHORT: "BOOGIE WOOGIE DREAM" (1944), HANS BURGER (LENA HORNE)

OCTOBER 20, 2007

BODY AND SOUL | 1947

DIRECTOR: ROBERT ROSSEN

Finally out of his Warner Brothers contract, Hollywood maverick John Garfield started his own independent production company and set out to make the films he wanted to make. First on the list was a biopic of famed Jewish boxer Barney Ross, which writer Abraham Polonsky morphed into this ringside classic. The impact of *Body and Soul* on *Raging Bull* is palpable: Garfield's charming palooka swagger, director Robert Rossen's detail-oriented downtown milieu, the fatalism embedded in Polonsky's rags-to-riches story arc, the visionary work of cinematographer James Wong Howe. Once a professional flyweight himself, Howe went the extra mile to achieve the raw immediacy of the much-heralded fight scenes—donning a pair of roller skates, he handheld his camera while a grip pushed him around the ring. Still not satisfied, Howe took it a step further: "when I used the handheld camera in *Body and Soul*, the unsteady effect was desirable. When a fighter would get a hard punch, I would even shake the camera a little, and the audience would get a jolt too." It worked—Howe remembers movie theater audiences standing up and rooting for Garfield. Despite the film's credits reading like a HUAC hit list, Garfield and Polonsky each nabbed much-deserved Oscar nominations. (MK)

WARNER BROS. 85 MIN. 16MM
SHORT: "NO MORE WEST!" (1934), NICK GRINDE (BERT LAHR)

OCTOBER 27 2007

HALLOWEEN HORROR SHOW: HORROR OF DRACULA | 1958

DIRECTOR: TERENCE FISHER

Hammer Films, eager to follow up the success of *Curse of Frankenstein*, made the obvious choice in filming and updating Bram Stoker's magnum opus. They did some streamlining: Harker's a vampire hunter (but not a very good one) working for Peter Cushing's Van Helsing, who is reimagined as a bouncy ball of manic vampire-killing skills. He had to be, because his opponent, Christopher Lee as Count Dracula, is so imposing. Gone is the vaguely quaint Eastern European vampire à la Lugosi: this vamp is a lean, mean sexiness machine, and his female victims seem pretty OK with the idea of him putting the bite on them. Sure, he's only on screen for seven minutes, but this is Lee's film, and for better or worse (often worse), it's the role he was identified with for most of his long career. Hammer cut some corners—no nighttime voyage at sea, no Renfield, no supernatural transformations—but it didn't look like it after designer Bernard Robinson worked his magic on the elaborate castle sets. The film modernized the genre, but also modernized the industry, as its success opened the doors for gorier and racier content on screen, much to the British press's chagrin: the *Observer's* C.A. Lejune felt "inclined to apologize to all decent Americans for sending them a work in such sickening bad taste." (MP)

HAMMER 78 MIN. 35MM
SHORT: "SPOOKS" (1953), JULES WHITE (THE THREE STOOGES)
CARTOON: "THE TELL TALE HEART" (1953), TED PARMALEE (NARRATED BY JAMES MASON)

YOU WERE NEVER LOVELIER | 1942

DIRECTOR: WILLIAM SIETER

"Now look," Fred Astaire tells nightclub owner Adolphe Menjou, "I don't like to dance, see? As a matter of fact I came down here to get away from it." *Suuuure*, Fred. You don't like to dance. Riiiight. Astaire plays a dancer who goes to Argentina to loaf and gamble but ends up having to look for a gig after he loses his shirt at the track. He stumbles into a convoluted plot involving Menjou's attempts to marry off his oldest unmarried daughter to a likely fellow. But when that daughter is Rita Hayworth—who, incidentally, was just as lovely in each of her other films—how could it be that hard to find a prospective hubby? This second Hayworth-Astaire teaming might seem like déjà vu, but that film we showed last year was their *other* film with a title that starts with "you" in which Astaire plays a guy named Robert. Keep a sharp lookout: some sources claim that a 15-year-old Fidel Castro appears as an extra; I'm sure it won't be hard to notice a teenager with *that* beard. (MP)

COLUMBIA 97 MIN. 35MM
CARTOON: "ALONA ON THE SARONG SEAS" (1943), ISADORE SPARBER (POPEYE)

NOVEMBER 3, 2007

HANGOVER SQUARE | 1945

DIRECTOR: JOHN BRAHM

After earning critical praise for his flamboyant Jack the Ripper impersonation in *The Lodger*, star Laird Cregar reteamed with director John Brahm to see if it was possible to make an even more excessively baroque protoslasher. This time Cregar plays George Harvey Bone, a psychotic composer suffering from dissonance-prompted blackouts, while a serial killer is on the loose in London. As in *The Lodger*, atmosphere is the key here, ably supplied by two future Hollywood heavyweights: cinematographer Joseph LaShelle drenches Brahm's old *Lodger* sets with unmotivated shadows, and Bernard Hermann's score can only be described as thunderous. With so much musically deranged melodrama flying around, there's little doubt that *Hangover Square* served as an inspiration for Guy Maddin's *The Saddest Music in the World*. Fearful of being perpetually typecast as a murderous heavy, Cregar famously attempted to hijack his career by crash dieting. Intending to reemerge as a lean leading man, he recklessly dropped a third of his weight, and Vincent Price was reading his eulogy two months before *Hangover Square* opened. (MK)

20TH CENTURY FOX 77 MIN. 35MM
CARTOON: "BATON BUNNY" (1959), CHUCK JONES (BUGS BUNNY)

NOVEMBER 10, 2007

IMMORTAL SERGEANT | 1943

DIRECTOR: JOHN STAHL

In his autobiography, Henry Fonda didn't have much good to say about *The Immortal Sergeant*. "It was a silly picture. You want to hear the plot? I won World War II single-handed!" He was irritated because he had enlisted in the Army after shooting *The Ox-Bow Incident*, but studio head Darryl F. Zanuck pulled some strings and had him deferred long enough to do this film. Fonda later said "I was never so mad in my life." Now, Fonda doesn't win the entire war single-handed—that's silly. He just wins the North African campaign. He's a shy young Canadian journalist who has to lead his British troops through the desert after his sergeant (Thomas Mitchell) is killed—but not gone: the titular "immortal sergeant," he sticks around like Obi-Wan Kenobi to dispense fatherly advice. Maureen O'Hara is Fonda's flashback sweetheart, and Reginald Gardiner, Melville Cooper, and Bramwell Fletcher play his grunts. Director John Stahl pissed off the entire cast and crew early on: when asked why he wanted so many takes, he replied, "Well, I have to do it over again because they gave me lousy actors." Fonda eventually earned an engraved silver cigarette case from his adoring costars for giving Stahl the what-for. (MP)

20TH CENTURY FOX 91 MIN. 16MM
SHORT: "LISTEN TO BRITAIN" (1942), JENNINGS & MCCALLISTER

DOUBLE FEATURE
WILLIAM POWELL IS ON THE CASE

THE THIN MAN | 1934

DIRECTOR: W.S. VAN DYKE
MGM 93 MIN. 16MM
SHORT: "THE MYSTERY OF THE LEAPING FISH" (1916), CHRISTY CABANNE (DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS)

A crackpot inventor disappears, his ex-wife wants more cash, his mistress turns up dead, his daughter takes the blame, and Nick and Nora Charles float their way through *The Thin Man*'s convoluted plot on a cloud of alcohol fumes and witty banter, their faithful terrier Asta in tow. William Powell and Myrna Loy teamed up for the first of a whopping fourteen films (six of them in this series), showing the world that not all detectives are street-savvy and tough, or old and British. Some of them are young, wealthy, American, and intoxicated. Maybe the film should have been titled "Murder, They Drank"—Dashiell Hammett's favorite sophisticates even throw a cocktail party and invite all the suspects to hash things out. Director "One-Take Woody" Van Dyke helped cement his nickname on the sixteen-day shoot, which resulted in a comedy classic that netted four Oscar nominations including Best Picture.

THE KENNEL MURDER CASE | 1933

DIRECTOR: MICHAEL CURTIZ
WARNERS 73 MIN. 16MM

But Powell didn't always need help from attractive brunettes. Over at the Warner lot, he traded in his martini glass for antique porcelain and went solo as Philo Vance in *The Kennel Murder Case*, where he's sure that a well-to-do dog fancier who supposedly offed himself in a locked room was in fact murdered—a logical assumption, because, you know, he's the lead in a murder mystery. Eugene Pallette bumbles as Detective Heath, and Mary Astor's along for the ride as the love interest. Powell had played S.S. Van Dine's supercilious detective in three earlier films (and Basil Rathbone took a shot in 1930), but they all suffered from creaky-early-talkie syndrome. Michael Curtiz helmed Vance's return to the screen, using a roving camera, wipes, dissolves, and all his usual tricks to keep the action moving. Six more actors, including Paul Lukas and Warren William, tried Vance on for size in ten more films during the 1930s and 1940s, but Powell's interpretation is the one that stuck. (MP)

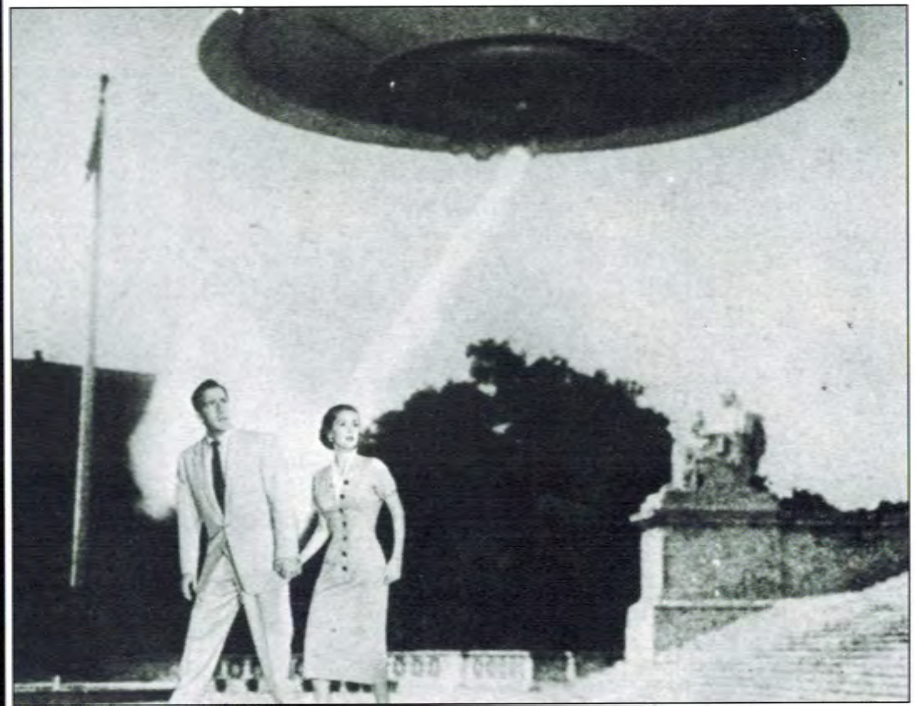
DECEMBER 1, 2007

EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS | 1956

DIRECTOR: FRED SEARS

"Character takes time to develop, and when you're trying to tell a tale such as we do with the saucer picture, you either spend time trying to develop characterization, or you spend time developing the destruction, which is what these pictures are all about." Leave it to the special-effects guy (living legend Ray Harryhausen) to put it all on the line. Capitalizing on the popularity of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and Harryhausen mentor George Pal's Techicolor *War of the Worlds*, Columbia cashed in with its own cheapie Martian invasion, a charming mashup of stock footage, hokey dialogue, and awesome effects. Gone are the usual heavy-handed pleas for intergalactic diplomacy—as an army general says, "when an armed and threatening power lands uninvited in our capitol, we don't meet it with tea and cookies." Hmmm…best not read too far into that one. Without his usual creatures to labor over, Harryhausen had to find a way of infusing flying saucers with some personality: "The challenge on *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*, of course, was to see if you could make a mechanical-looking object have some sort of interest to the public for an hour and a half." Looks like he succeeded—when Orson Welles needed some vintage space invaders to illustrate his infamous "War of the Worlds" broadcast in *F For Fake*, he swiped them from this film. (MK)

COLUMBIA 83 MIN. 35MM
SHORT: "FLYING SAUCER DAFFY" (1958), JULES WHITE (THE THREE STOOGES)



DECEMBER 8, 2007

STRIKE UP THE BAND | 1940

DIRECTOR: BUSBY BERKELEY

"You asked for *another* 'Babes in Arms,'" trumpeted MGM. "Here it is!" Here it is indeed: the studio realized it had struck gold when it put Andy Hardy and his schoolyard crush together in a musical, so they rushed to get another one onto American screens. *Strike Up the Band* was an obvious choice, having already been a hit on Broadway thanks to the score by George and Ira Gershwin. Rooney's a school bandleader whose band auditions for a big radio contest, and Garland is yet again the doe-eyed, lovestruck girl from next door who has to look on as Rooney chases empty-headed beauty queens. Busby Berkeley was back aboard too, working Garland to hysterics and packing the musical numbers to the gills: one number included Garland and Rooney, Paul Whiteman's orchestra, Six Hits and a Miss, and 115 dancers. (And that's not even the finale.) Poor Judy: she got paid less than a third of what Rooney made, Berkeley was so awful to her that she had nightmares of him with a bullwhip, and her reward in the film? "You're as important to me as a brass section," Rooney confides in her. How romantic. (MP)

MGM 120 MIN. 16MM
CARTOON: "WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO RIO" (1944), I. SPARBER (POPEYE)

DECEMBER 15, 2007

THE DARK CORNER | 1946

DIRECTOR: HENRY HATHAWAY

Mark Stevens stars as a private investigator who finds himself on the wrong end of a case when William Bendix mysteriously starts tailing *him*. It isn't long before he's mixed up in *Laura*'s nefarious world of rich people (Clifton Webb, Kurt Kreuger, and My *Darling Clementine* herself, Cathy Downs) and their art collections, but he still finds time to get busy with his secretary-cum-sidekick (Lucille Ball). On the heels of *The House on 92nd Street*, director Henry Hathaway continued his pursuit of noir-realism, forgoing a standard score in favor of incidental music and ramping up the street noise during dialogue scenes in defiance of Hollywood's standard pin-drop atmosphere. Then again, Hathaway's adherence to realism only goes so far—the tough-guy speak is absolutely through the roof in this one ("I could be framed easier than Whistler's mother!"), and we're not complaining. But it's cinematographer Joseph MacDonald who steals the show with his habit of manipulating single light sources to ratchet up the tension. (MK)

20TH CENTURY FOX 99 MIN. 35MM
SHORT: "SNUG IN THE JUG" (1933), BEN HOLMES (CLARK & MCCULLOUGH)

DECEMBER 22, 2007

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE | 1946

DIRECTOR: JOHN FORD

Sooner or later, John Ford was bound to get around to the Gunfight at the OK Corral. *My Darling Clementine* was only Ford's second oater since the silent era, and saw the American mythmaker forsake the Duke and enlist his other favorite leading man to play Wyatt Earp. Finished with Dodge City, the Earp brothers (Henry Fonda, Tim Holt, and Ward Bond) arrive in Tombstone, a town so run into the ground by local infighters Doc Holliday (Victor Mature) and Old Man Clanton (Walter Brennan) that "a man can't get a shave without gettin' his head blown off." Jean-Luc Godard located the roots of cinema verite in Ford's observational westerns; similarly, Andrew Sarris noted that Ford downplays *Clementine*'s big showdown in favor of "the usually neglected intervals between the gun-shots, when men received haircuts, courted their sweethearts... what Ford makes us remember most vividly about Fonda's Earp is not his skill with a gun, but his lack of skill on the dance floor." Of course, ladies were never the director's strong suit: good girl Clementine (Cathy Downs) and bad girl Chihuahua (Linda Darnell) are, in typical Ford fashion, judged at arm's length. Despite rampant historical liberties, Ford stuck to his guns on *Clementine*'s authenticity, leaning on one imposing alibi: "I knew Wyatt Earp (who had served as a technical advisor on silent-era westerns), and he told me about the fight at the OK Corral. So we did it exactly the way it had been." If you say so. (MK)

20TH CENTURY FOX 103 MIN. 35MM
SHORT: "JEFFRIES, JR." (1924), LEO MCCAREY (CHARLEY CHASE)

DECEMBER 29, 2007

ALL ABOUT EVE | 1950

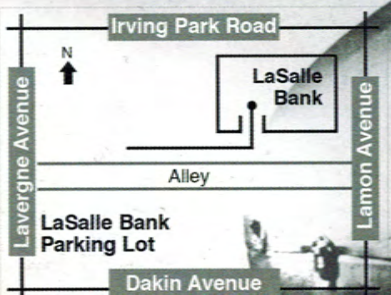
DIRECTOR: JOSEPH MANKIEWISCZ

"Everybody has a heart, except some people"—and most of them are in this movie. The only thing Hollywood relishes more than looking in the mirror is a light spanking, so it accordingly showered *Sunset Blvd.*'s catty evil twin with Oscars for Best Picture, Director, Writer, etc., for delivering both (despite mocking the very notion of such awards in its opening scenes). Tracking the falling star of Broadway sad-sack Bette Davis against the rising one of Anne Baxter (canceling each other out for Best Actress), writer/director Joseph L. Mankiewicz's backstage nightmare delves into the desperate need for validation that fuels the entertainment industry. Caught in the crossfire are Best Supporting Actor George Sanders, Marilyn Monroe, Celeste Holm, and Thelma Ritter (canceling each other out for Best Supporting Actress). Davis and her character had so much in common that she decided to take it one step further, marrying her onscreen love interest Gary Merrill once shooting completed. Decades later, the character of Eve finally received a certain poetic justice for all her careerist backstabbing—when her former personification returned to *All About Eve* in its Broadway incarnation, *Applause*, it was in the Bette Davis role. "Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night." (MK)

20TH CENTURY FOX 138 MIN. 35MM
CARTOON: "MOVIE STAR MICKEY" (1936) (MICKEY MOUSE)

LaSalle Bank
ABN AMRO

Films start at 8 p.m.

General Admission: $5
Senior Citizens over 55 &
Junior Citizens under 10: $3

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