



CLASSIC
FILM SERIES

JANUARY - JUNE
2008

FROM THE BOOTH

WEEK IN, WEEK OUT, we dig through the vaults to bring you the finest treasures from the farthest reaches of the Hollywood dream factory—everything from Esther Williams's lavish submarine ballets to Jean Harlow in the tub—but who says we don't have local pride? Watch our fair city go up in flames in *In Old Chicago*, only to be resurrected as a haven for criminals in *The Narrow Margin* and corruption in *Call Northside 777*. As if that weren't enough, we've got a couple of extrasensory treats on the horizon: local treasure David Drazin will be tickling the ivories for a two-strip Technicolor print of *The Black Pirate*, and who knows what tactile surprises will be in store for *The Tingler*. And, to save the best (or at least most controversial) for last: beginning April 5th, Princess Aura, Ming the Merciless, and the rest of the shabbily costumed gang make their hallowed return to our screen for a thirteen-week stand of the original *Flash Gordon* serial.



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

NO GREATER GLORY | 1934

DIRECTOR: FRANK BORZAGE

Frank Borzage's antiwar parable takes international conflict out to the schoolyard without being reductive. George Breakston stars as a handicapped outsider who enlists to serve in what is surely the most elaborate game of capture the flag ever committed to the screen. Like William Wellman's similarly heartfelt and well-considered depression-era coming-of-age film *Wild Boys of the Road*, this is a rare youth film that opts to immerse itself in the world of its subjects rather than objectify them. Frankie Darro (Eddie of *Wild Boys of the Road*), Jackie Searl, Jimmy Butler, and Donald Haines (the latter two tragic casualties of WWII) round out the rugrats, none of whom ham it up. Praised by Andrew Sarris as "that rarest of rarities, an uncompromising romanticist," Borzage's best works "reverberate with privileged moments of extraordinary intimacy and vulnerability." Or, as *Chicago Tribune* critic Mae Tinée summed up *No Greater Glory* back in the day (in a review that recommended it to the Legion of Decency): "Clean, inspiring, actionful, 'different,' smutless. As for sex, there's only one woman in it, and she's a mother." (MK)

COLUMBIA 74 MIN. 35MM

CARTOON: "TULIPS SHALL GROW" (1942), GEORGE PAL



BORN YESTERDAY | 1950

DIRECTOR: GEORGE CUKOR

The best "dumb blonde" in the history of the cinema? Judy Holliday has my vote. She's the dim-bulb chorus-girl "fiancée" of boorish scrap metal magnate Broderick Crawford, who's in our nation's capital to take part in democracy in action (i.e., bribing politicians) and wants his tough-talking dame to learn some "couth" so she doesn't embarrass him. Too bad he hires the suave William Holden to Henry Higgins her Eliza Doolittle: Holden teaches her a thing or two about grammar and civics, but Crawford didn't expect the lessons to include the birds and the bees too. Reprising her four-year Broadway triumph against the wishes of studio honchos (Harry Cohn bought the play with Rita Hayworth in mind), Holliday overcame head-office insults, camera fright, battles with her fluctuating weight, and extensive rewriting (and censoring) of the material to score an Oscar against the toughest lineup in Academy Awards history, including Anne Baxter and Bette Davis in *All About Eve* and Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Blvd.* Director George Cukor, re-cementing his reputation as Hollywood's finest "women's director," was happy to let everyone in on the secret behind Holliday's brilliant performance: "It was all me." (MP)

COLUMBIA 103 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "SO YOU THINK THE GRASS IS GREENER?" (1956), RICHARD L. BARE (JOE MCDONALD)





THE TINGLER | 1959

DIRECTOR: WILLIAM CASTLE

"SCREAM FOR YOUR LIVES!!!" Publicity stunt artist William Castle's indisputable masterpiece, *The Tingler* turns on the gimmick-friendly premise that murderous crustaceans thrive in each of our spinal columns. Naturally, the only way to save yourself is by SCREAMING FOR YOUR LIFE!!! To drive the point home, Castle rigged random cinema chairs across the country with handshake buzzers, giving unsuspecting filmgoers a little extra jolt in the name of Percepto (you've been warned: be careful where you sit). Another, less publicized bit of trickery: Castle achieved blood red effects in a black and white film by painting his set monochrome and shooting in color. This could only star Vincent Price, already a veteran of Castle's *House on Haunted Hill*. Unsurprisingly, all this made quite an impression on a young John Waters, who referred to Castle as God in *American Film* magazine and considered

this "the fondest moviegoing memory of my youth. I went to see it every day. Since, by the time it came to my neighborhood, only about ten random seats were wired, I would run through the theater searching for the magical buzzers. As I sat there experiencing the miracle of Percepto, I realized that there could be such a thing as Art in the cinema." (MK)

COLUMBIA 82 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "THE LIVE GHOST" (1934), CHARLEY ROGERS (LAUREL & HARDY)

HOLIDAY | 1938

DIRECTOR: GEORGE CUKOR

Six months after *Bringing Up Baby* (screening here in June) left audiences scratching their heads, Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant were at it again, only with less wildlife (unless you count Edward Everett Horton). Grant plays a freethinker engaged to society girl Julia Seaton (Doris Nolan), but she pishposhes his dreams of taking a long-term holiday to find the meaning of life. Good thing for him there are sympathetic ears around, two of them belonging to Julia's free-spirit big sister Linda (Hepburn). Hepburn, fresh off being labeled "box office poison" by independent theater owners (her reaction: "If I weren't laughing so hard, I'd cry.") thrives in the capable hands of her favorite director, George Cukor, in the fourth of their nine films together. It might have helped that she was back on familiar ground: she had understudied the same part in the original 1928 Broadway run of Philip Barry's

play. Of course, she's not the only one experiencing déjà vu: Horton was reprising his role from the 1930 film version that had starred an Oscar-nominated Ann Harding and an ill-fated Robert Ames. (MP)

COLUMBIA 95 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "A SCOUNDREL'S TOLL" (1916), GLEN CAVENDER (RAYMOND GRIFFITH)



THE WHOLE TOWN'S

TALKING | 1935

DIRECTOR: JOHN FORD

In his earlier days, John Ford was a far more versatile director than the wild-west elder statesman he became, but certain genres—say, gangster comedies and mistaken identity capers—never quite seemed up the autuer's alley. But back in 1935, Ford tried his hand at both, working with Frank Capra's house scribes Robert Riskin and Jo Swerling on a story by the hardboiled W.R. Burnett, and hiring an extra Edward G. Robinson as insurance. Fearful of playing Little Caesars until his dying day, Robinson took a misguided stab at career rehabilitation with a parade of gangster parodies, effectively retypecasting himself as the quintessential mock Caesar. Here he does double duty as a pair of dead ringers, one a milquetoast file clerk and the other a mobster on the lam. Considerably darker than its hokey brethren, the film practically endorses criminal behavior—it is only by adopting his doppelganger's amorality that the file clerk is able to shed his inhibitions, save the day, and win the girl (Jean Arthur). That kind of confidence boost usually reserved for True Love—here it's the means to that end. (MK)

COLUMBIA 93 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "DOLLARS AND SENSE" (1916), WALTER WRIGHT (ORA CAREWE)



SECRET BEYOND

THE DOOR | 1948

DIRECTOR: FRITZ LANG

"This is not the time to think of danger . . . this is my wedding day." After the trifecta of *Man Hunt*, *Scarlet Street*, and *The Woman in the Window*, Fritz Lang's fourth thriller with Joan Bennett followed *Gaslight*'s model of newlywed panic, with Bennett discovering the gruesome hobby practiced by ostensibly erudite hubby Michael Redgrave. Given that his idea of pillow talk includes casual misogyny and architecture-based metaphysical conspiracy theories, you'd think she'd have seen it coming . . . but voice-over can rationalize anything. The then-fashionable Freudian mumbo jumbo that bogs down the plot proves to be a double-edged sword, as Lang capitalizes on the dream imagery to indulge in some of the most evocative cinematography of his formidable career, courtesy of the master Stanley Cortez (*The Magnificent Ambersons*, *The Night of the Hunter*). After failing to match the success of *Scarlet Street*, *Secret Beyond the Door* became the second and last film to bear the name of Lang and Bennett's startup Diana imprint, sinking the venture only two films in. (MK)

UNIVERSAL 99 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "OLIVER THE EIGHTH" (1934), LLOYD FRENCH (LAUREL & HARDY)





THE EGG AND I | 1947

DIRECTOR: WILLIAM A. SEITER

Wide-eyed optimist Bob MacDonald (Fred MacMurray) returns from the Army and decides to chuck city life in favor of a chicken farm in wildest Washington, dragging his skeptical but dutiful city-bred wife Betty (Claudette Colbert) along for the ride. Despite leaky roofs, self-aware stoves, and all those chickens, country life agrees with them—until gorgeous, tech-savvy neighbor Louise Allbritton decides to steal MacMurray. Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride were so popular as local yokels Ma and Pa Kettle (whom Bosley Crowther dismissed as “old-time bumpkin burlesque”) that they spun off into a series of nine films that took them as far from the farm as Paris and Hawaii. Betty MacDonald based her best-selling 1945 novel on her own experience running a chicken farm, but not everyone was happy with the success of the book, the film, the sequels, or the short-lived TV series: a bunch of

residents of the real town of Chimacum sued her for a cool million, claiming that she had made them look like a bunch of hayseed yahoos. They lost. So did Marjorie Main, who was nominated for Best Supporting Actress but came away empty-handed. (MP)

UNIVERSAL 108 MIN. 16MM

CARTOON: “BILLY BOY” (1954), TEX AVERY

BOOM TOWN | 1940

DIRECTOR: JACK CONWAY



Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy costarred for the third and last time in this rough-and-tumble tale of wildcat oil strikes and romantic intrigue. It's the timeless tale of male bonding over knock-down, drag-out fights and drinking bouts that traces the friendship between “Big John” (Gable) and “Square John” (Tracy) as they trade punches, hearty back-slaps, and love interests (Claudette Colbert and Hedy Lamarr) over the years. The size and scale of the \$2 million production wowed audiences and critics alike: Bosley Crowther enthused that, “like a gusher, it comes in with a blast, backed by the volcanic energy of Mr. Gable and Mr. Tracy,” and local composite Mae Tinée of the *Tribune* marveled at “an oil field fire that looks for awhile as if it could successfully defy a couple of oceans.” The two tough guys had shared screen time in 1936's *San Francisco* and 1938's *Test Pilot*, but both were chafing a bit by this

time: Tracy was tired of playing the “eunuch” who has to stand by and watch Gable get the girl, and Gable was tired of sharing top billing—so much so that he engineered a new contract that would ensure his place as the only name above the title. (MP)

RKO 106 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: “OIL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL” (1958), JULES WHITE (THE THREE STOOGES)

ODD MAN OUT | 1947

DIRECTOR: CAROL REED

Trumpeted by the ever-hyperbolic British press as “the best film of all time” upon its initial release, Carol Reed's postwar return to narrative filmmaking considered the human toll of the IRA conflict, pledging an apolitical stance over the opening credits. Left for dead after botching the quietest holdup in screen history, Johnny McQueen (James Mason) bounces between chiaroscuro hideaways with a bullet in his arm. Anchored by Mason's nuanced performance, Reed is free to indulge his trademark knack for omniscient paranoia, oscillating between vertiginous hallucinations and slice-of-life interludes, introspective monologues and ensemble scenes. Sensitively adapted by F.L. Green from his own novel, beautifully lensed by Robert Krasker, and nimbly edited by Oscar-nominee Fergus McDonell, this is superior in every way to Reed's more celebrated *The Third Man* (okay, except for the latter's infallible zither score and Orson Welles soliloquy). *Odd Man Out* was named Best British Film at the first annual BAFTA awards; working with Graham Greene, Reed made it a threepeat the next two years with *Fallen Idol* and *The Third Man*. (MK)



UNIVERSAL 116 MIN. 35MM

CARTOON: “THE WEARING OF THE GRIN” (1951), CHUCK JONES (PORKY PIG)

ROBERTA | 1934

DIRECTOR: WILLIAM A. SEITER

Six months after *The Gay Divorcee* cemented their superstardom, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were back on the big screen, this time with a little help from a top-billed Irene Dunne. A Russian princess (Dunne), a football player (Randolph Scott), an American bandleader (Astaire), and a fake Polish countess (Rogers) walk into a Parisian hat shop—why do these plots sound like setups for bad jokes? In reality, they're setups for amazing productions of Jerome Kern's timeless songs and Hermes Pan's deft choreography: Fred and Ginger tear up the floor in “I'll Be Hard to Handle” and steam up the room in “I Won't Dance,” and Irene Dunne shows off her impressive pipes on “Yesterdays” and “Lovely to Look At,” the latter a Best Original Song nominee. The dynamic duo are especially inspired together, perhaps because they were shooting this film while the spectacular box-office numbers from *The Gay Divorcee* poured in, but perhaps because they knew their next outing would be one of the greatest screen musicals of all time, Irving Berlin's *Top Hat*. (MP)



RKO 106 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: “AIR PARADE” (1938), AL CHRISTIE (NIELA GOODELLE)

THE MAN FROM LARAMIE | 1955

DIRECTOR: ANTHONY MANN

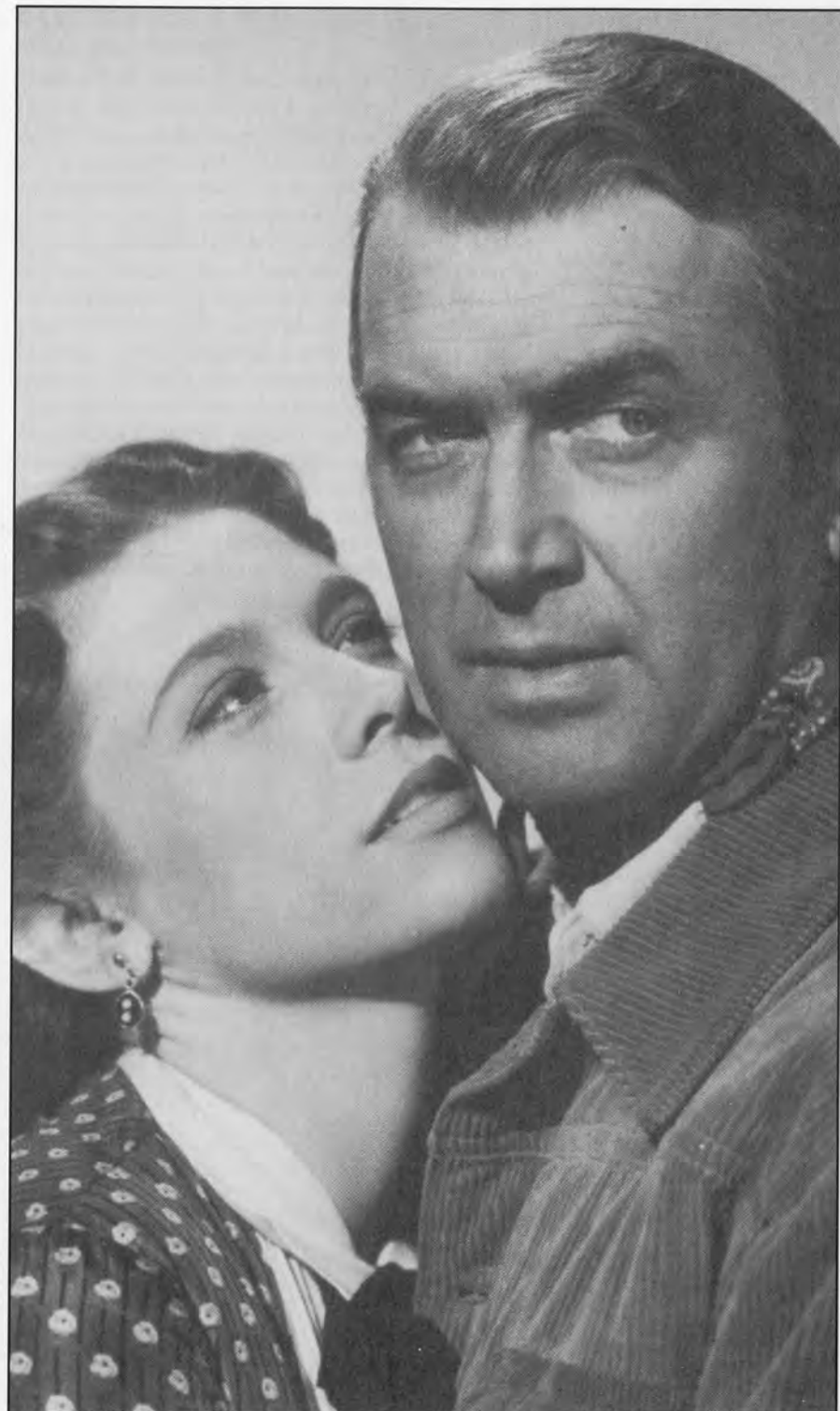


Back when he was Mr. Smith, who would've pegged Jimmy Stewart to play a man so unknowable that even the title song can't get a bead on him ("he was not inclined to speak his mind / he had an air of mystery / the man from Laramie")? Riding into a podunk hellhole with a score to settle (aren't we all), Stewart is promptly sidetracked by the all-consuming Waggoman family feud. It's a nasty one: Donald Crisp's the town patriarch with the iron fist and the receding vision, Alex Nicol's the bratty heir with the itchy trigger finger, Arthur Kennedy's his competition, and poor you-know-who's the eponymous punching bag everyone takes their frustrations out on. Mann had been eyeing a western spin on *King Lear* ever since *The Furies*, and this go-round was exceptionally brutal—amid myriad beatings, Stewart is dragged by a horse through a campfire, a stunt voluntarily performed by the star himself ("It's a

short scene, and you'll be able to use close-ups. I'm not going to die," Stewart counseled his hesitant director). After having given both the genre and Stewart's aw-shucks persona a determined postwar makeover with *Winchester '73* (which screened here last July), the director-star duo had developed one of the most fruitful rapports in Hollywood history: *The Man From Laramie* was their fifth standout western and eighth film overall in just five years. Unfortunately, when Mann balked on Stewart's suggested followup (*Night Passage*), it also became their last. Despite having matured into one of the western's worthiest icons, Stewart didn't saddle up again until 1961, when John Ford came knocking. (MK)

COLUMBIA 104 MIN. 35MM TECHNICOLOR

SHORT: "NUGGET JIM'S PARDNER" (1916), FRANK BORZAGE



THE MISFITS | 1961

DIRECTOR: JOHN HUSTON

"How do you find your way in the dark?" Marilyn Monroe asks, to which Clark Gable responds, "Just head for that big star straight on." Make that three big stars: Montgomery Clift, as an addled rodeo rider, joins the beautiful divorcee and aging cowpoke on a modern-day Western roundup. Famous for its difficult production—the battles between Monroe and soon-to-be ex-husband Arthur Miller; Monroe's increasingly erratic behavior, addiction to sleeping pills, and stint in rehab; and director John Huston's efforts to gamble away the budget—and for being the last completed film for both Gable and Monroe, it's also a mature, literary effort that's fascinating for how it mirrors the lives of its actors. Miller aired the disintegrating couple's dirty laundry in his constantly rewritten dialogue, which further pushed Monroe toward the edge, and Clift plays a character that's eerily close to biography. Released at a time when the Production Code was on life support, the film helped usher in a new era as its characters—and the people who played them—rode off into the sunset. (MP)



UNITED ARTISTS 124 MIN. 35MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 1: THE PLANET OF PERIL
(DIRECTED BY FREDERICK STEPHANI, STARRING BUSTER CRABBE)



IN OLD CHICAGO | 1937

DIRECTOR: HENRY KING

Disaster sells, and after the success of MGM's *San Francisco*, about the 1906 earthquake, Fox responded with its own highly fanciful tale of the Midwest's closest comparator, Chicago's Great Fire of 1871. (We're still waiting on the definitive film account of another Great Fire that occurred on the same day in Manistee, Michigan.) Going with the popular notion that Mrs. O'Leary's cow ignited the conflagration, Fox fleshed out the story, providing the O'Leary matriarch (Alice Brady) with two sons, a street tough (Tyrone Power) and a dedicated reformer (Don Ameche). They both get tangled up with a crooked politician (Brian Donlevy) when Power falls for a dance-hall dame (Alice Faye) and Ameche tries to pasteurize the political machine. Cue the irritable cow. *Variety* might have put it best: "It is historically cockeyed in the placement of its main characters, and its story is mere rehash of corrupt



political mismanagement of a growing American city. But as a film entertainment it is socko." Brady won an Oscar for her performance, but she never saw the award: a clever thief managed to accept it on her behalf, and Brady died before the Academy could issue her a replacement. (MP)

20TH CENTURY FOX 111 MIN. 35MM

CARTOON: "MICKEY'S FIRE BRIGADE" (1935), BEN SHARPSTEEN (MICKEY MOUSE)

THE BLACK PIRATE | 1926

DIRECTOR: ALBERT PARKER

Starring in a film he produced that's based on one of his story ideas, Douglas Fairbanks plays a young nobleman who infiltrates the pirates who murdered his father in a crazy plan to destroy them from within. In addition to the "bleached skulls, Buried Treasure, the Plank, dirks and cutlasses, Scuttled Ships, Marooning, Desperate Deeds, Desperate Men, and—even on this dark soil—ROMANCE" that the prologue to this iconic swashbuckler promises, it delivers a couple more things of interest. First is color: it was one of the first feature-length films shot in two-strip Technicolor, which fused red-orange and blue-green exposures of the same action together to produce an eerie, semi-lifelike color dream world. Second is controversy: amid all the amazing stunts of his career, surely the most astonishing occurs here, when he leaps from a mast, sticks his sword



into a sail, and slides down to the deck holding the pommel. But was that really Fairbanks? Experts disagree, and we'll probably never know. And, as an added bonus, avast all that pre-recorded sound, ye scallaws! The inimitable Dave Drazin will be accompanying the film live on piano. (MP)

UNITED ARTISTS 94 MIN. 16MM TECHNICOLOR
SHORT: "LA CUCARACHA" (1934), LLOYD CORRIGAN

LIVE
Accompaniment

BATHING BEAUTY | 1944

DIRECTOR: GEORGE SIDNEY



Having conquered land and air, MGM sought to take the movie musical to the last remaining terrestrial plane, co-opting Billy Rose's popular Aquacades for the big screen. In her first starring role, million dollar mermaid Esther Williams stays mysteriously dry for the bulk of the running time, doing a few laps in the opening number before rushing off to the chapel with composer beau Red Skelton. Keen on bilking a few more boogies out of Red before he settles down, producer Basil Rathbone busts up their marriage before it begins, sending a distraught Esther fleeing back to women's college and leaving Red with no choice but to enroll in pursuit. Doesn't sound like much, but it nevertheless required the services of SEVEN credited writers. And say what you will about Skelton, at least he manages to stay out of a tutu (for the first hour anyway).

All is forgiven by the grand finale, a Technicolor revamp of "By a Waterfall" that celebrates the performer rather than the choreographer and is guaranteed to leave you with pruned fingertips. The dry numbers prominently feature organist Ethel Smith performing her hit "Tico Tico," trumpeter Harry James, and Wong Kar Wai favorite Xavier Cugat. (MK)

MGM 101 MIN. 16MM COLOR

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 2: THE TUNNEL OF TERROR**RED DUST | 1932**

DIRECTOR: VICTOR FLEMING



Clark Gable stars as a cranky lothario torn between his sick employee's wife (Mary Astor) and a prostitute on the lam (Jean Harlow)—a.k.a. the only two women on his Indochinese rubber plantation. Sudsing up in a barrel, Harlow solidified her reputation as America's favorite floozy, or, as *Time* magazine put it, "her effortless vulgarity, humor, and slovenliness make a noteworthy characterization." Either way, it's safe to say that nary a frame of this would have gotten past the Hayes office just two years later. Production was temporarily shut down when Harlow's husband of two months, MGM executive Paul Bern, committed suicide, but the show must go on—not only did Harlow return to the set like a trooper, she married the cinematographer (Harold

Rosson) less than a year later. In a neat illustration of Hollywood's double-standard on aging, Gable returned to the same part twenty years later when John Ford remade this as *Mogambo*. His costars, on the other hand, remained roughly the same age, with Ava Gardner and Grace Kelly stepping in for Harlow and Astor. (MK)

MGM 83 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 3: CAPTURED BY SHARK MEN**RIDE THE PINK HORSE | 1947**

DIRECTOR: ROBERT MONTGOMERY



"You're looking at a guy named Gagin. Gagin didn't like to be pushed around, so he pushed back, but he picked on a big man, someone out of his league." Sure, the trailer for *Ride the Pink Horse* could be used to describe any number of postwar noirs (just change the protagonist's name), but how many of them prominently feature a pink carousel horse? The same year as his truly weird first-person noir *Lady in the Lake*, multi-hyphenate Robert Montgomery enlisted screenwriting heavyweights Ben Hecht and Charles Lederer (whose *Kiss of Death* had introduced the giggling Richard Widmark earlier that year) to adapt Dorothy Hughes's (*In a Lonely Place*) novel—with that pedigree, does it matter what it's about? It's about tough, monosyllabic guys in felt hats (Montgomery) and mysterious dames (Wanda Hendrix and Andrea King), innocent bystanders (Thomas Gomez) and vicious gangsters (Fred Clark); it's also about unmotivated shadows, labyrinthine cities (well, if Santa Fe counts), and desperation so tangible that it leaks off the screen into a puddle. Please watch your step. Thomas Gomez was nominated for Best Supporting Actor for his performance, but he didn't win. That's because people in film noir are doomed. (MP)

UNIVERSAL 101 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 4: BATTLING THE SEA BEAST**THE LETTER | 1940**

DIRECTOR: WILLIAM WYLER



"With all my heart, I still love the man I killed." Whoa—leave it to Bette Davis to suck the air out of the room. Though not a sequel, *The Letter* picks up almost exactly where *Red Dust* (screened here two weeks ago) leaves off: on a secluded rubber plantation, a jilted lover (Davis) ends her extramarital affair with a pistol. James Stephenson's the lawyer her husband (Herbert Marshall) hires to get her off on self-defense, at least until a certain eponymous piece of evidence turns up. But you know what they say: "if you love a person, you can forgive anything." Well... they also say be careful what you wish for. W. Somerset Maugham's novel had previously seen the screen as a silent/talkie twofer (in which Marshall played the victim) starring Jeanne Eagels, whose tragic death came so soon afterward that her Oscar nomination was posthumous. Wyler's remake got nominated for just about every prize in the book, but picked up none. That included a nod to supporting actor Stephenson, who died suddenly just a year later, making this the most eerily cursed script this side of *On High in Blue Tomorrows*. (MK)

WARNERS 95 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 5: THE DESTROYING RAY



TIN PAN ALLEY | 1940

DIRECTOR: WALTER LANG

Following the historical jukebox pattern it set in *Alexander's Ragtime Band* (and featuring the same female lead), Fox threw its musical might at the screen again, teaming top-billed Alice Faye with pin-up girl extraordinaire Betty Grable as a pair of sisters singing and dancing their way through the Great American Songbook during the years surrounding World War I. The story follows a songwriting team (the handsome John Payne and the, uh, Jack Oakie) and their up-again, down-again fortunes in the hotbed of American tunesmithing, New York's Tin Pan Alley. Those fortunes are considerably brighter when assisted by the "fettlesome wriggling" of Faye and Grable, and considerably dimmer when the sisters head off to war with the American Expeditionary Force. Censors had a field day trimming shots of the leggy leads from some numbers and consigning at least one entire song ("Get Out and

Get Under") to the dustbin, but there's a solid decade's worth of songs here, from "Sheik of Araby" and "Goodbye Broadway, Hello France" to "Moonlight Bay" and the happily anachronistic "Honeysuckle Rose" (which was actually written in 1928, ten years after the film takes place). (MP)

20TH CENTURY FOX 94 MIN. 35MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 6: FLAMING TORTURE



PLATINUM BLONDE | 1931

DIRECTOR: FRANK CAPRA

For one of their first collaborations, Capra regulars Robert Riskin and Jo Swerling cooked up a story about a wisecracking newspaperman (Robert Williams) who falls for an heiress (Jean Harlow)—sound familiar? This precursor to *It Happened One Night* essentially picks up where its descendent leaves off, following the socially mismatched couple ("like a giraffe marrying a monkey") through their turbulent honeymoon. Before Harlow came along and stole the limelight, this was intended as a vehicle for Loretta Young, who plays the requisite tomboy our hero should have been with all along. Williams shares some of Clark Gable's smirkingly antagonistic charm, but without a consistent leading lady to bounce off of, the dazzling onscreen rapport later shared by Gable and Claudette Colbert (or Gable and Harlow, for that matter, in their subsequent pairings) remains on the horizon. Despite the surface similarities, there is very little Capracorn to be found in *Platinum Blonde*—here the class barriers are irreconcilable, resulting in an odd prototype for the social makeover comedies John Hughes would specialize in fifty-odd years later. A year after *Hell's Angels*, Harlow's star was on the rise, but her costar wasn't as lucky—tragically, Williams died mere days after the film's release. (MK)

RKO 103 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 7: SHATTERING DOOM



THIS LAND IS MINE | 1943

DIRECTOR: JEAN RENOIR

When his grand plan to follow up *Swamp Water* with a Deanna Durbin musical (!!!) didn't work out, French master of the cinema Jean Renoir decided to make a film to counteract Hollywood's simplistic portrayal of France's capitulation to the Nazis. "The story was intended to show that life for the citizen of a country occupied by an enemy power was not as simple as Hollywood in the year 1943 seemed to think," he wrote in his autobiography. "It is not hard to be a hero when the enemy is 10,000 kilometres away." Charles Laughton plays a meek schoolteacher, secretly in love with a beautiful coworker (Maureen O'Hara), who becomes a reluctant hero in a terrible new world of Nazis, collaborators (including George Sanders), resisters, and aerial bombings that shakes a small town to its core. When it was finally released in France after the Liberation, angry denunciations poured in from all sides, for not including Communists among the Resistance and for portraying the Nazi commander sympathetically. Renoir was no stranger to outraged receptions, but this one hurt: "For once, I was sincerely distressed not to have been understood." (MP)

RKO 103 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 8: TOURNAMENT OF DEATH



**D.O.A. | 1950**

DIRECTOR: RUDOLPH MATÉ

Workaday accountant Frank Bigelow (Edmond O'Brien) skips town looking for a week away from his girl and promptly ingests a slow-acting poison leaving him with days to live—that'll teach him. But rather than use his final worldly hours to for quiet reflection (what kind of noir would that be?) Bigelow feverishly hunts his killer, unearthing enough farfetched intrigue to make Raymond Chandler blush. A former cameraman for international heavyweights Carl Dreyer and Fritz Lang, Maté pulls off some inventive shots, even ambushing pedestrians for an extensive chase-free running sequence, shot documentary-style on the sidewalks of San Francisco. His sound design, on the other hand, could use some work, cueing a slide-whistle every time a dame walks by. Despite its killer premise, *D.O.A.* is distinctly a noir about navigating the modern world—the plot hinges on an outrageously

innocuous bit of paperwork, and paper trails are pored over like fingerprints. Loaded with oblivious passersby, everyday public locations like buses and stores become safe havens— anonymity is a privilege that can be revoked by something as menial and senseless as notarizing a document. You may not know it yet, but your daily routine is fraught with peril. (MK)

MGM 83 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 12: TRAPPED IN THE TURRET**BRINGING UP BABY | 1938**

DIRECTOR: HOWARD HAWKS

One of the biggest flops to ever achieve classic status, Howard Hawks's hysterical comedy features Cary Grant as a klutzy paleontologist, an unusually flaky Katherine Hepburn as a kleptomaniac motormouth, and, rounding out the ensemble, a leopard. A comedy neophyte before Spencer Tracy came along, Hepburn wasn't used to playing for laughs (the supporting cast of ex-vaudevillians helped hone her chops), making the terrier (Asta of *The Thin Man* series) one of the most accomplished comedy veterans on the set. Grant and Hepburn deliver what are easily the most maniacal performances of their respective careers, resulting in the screwiest of all the screwball comedies by a long shot. Hawks later attributed the film's initial commercial failure to its hyperactivity: "I think it would have done better at the box office if there had been a few sane folks in it—everybody was nuts. Harold Lloyd told

me, though, that he thought it was the best constructed comedy he had ever seen." Fitting praise, as Grant's character was reportedly based on a combination of Lloyd and, if you can believe it, John Ford. (MK)



RKO 102 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: *FLASH GORDON* (1936), EPISODE 13: ROCKETING TO EARTH



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