



HOLLYWOOD

A to Z



Bank of America


cinema

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FROM THE **BOOTH**

THEY SAID IT WAS CRAZY! They said it couldn't be done! But we proved them wrong, whoever they are. Here's twenty-six weekends of alphabetical entertainment, from the screwball hijinks of Cary Grant and Irene Dunne in *The Awful Truth* to the otherworldly zoological romance of Loretta Young and Gene Raymond in *Zoo in Budapest*, with stops at the other twenty-four letters. There's no cheating with alternate titles (well, if you're willing to overlook *The Black Book*), and you don't even have to watch *Xanadu*! Far from restricting the selection, the new lineup is an all-star affair: we bring Busby Berkeley back to BAC with *Dames*, tough guys from Bogie (*Knock on Any Door*) to Brando (*One-Eyed Jacks*), comedic geniuses from Laurel & Hardy (*Sons of the Desert*) to the Marx Brothers (*A Night at the Opera*), and larger-than-life divas from Rosalind Russell (*My Sister Eileen*) to Joan Crawford (*A Woman's Face*) to the Queen of them all, Gloria Swanson in *Queen Kelly*. For your reading pleasure, the capsules are written by a bevy of current and former (and one non-) Bank of America Cinema employees. And for your additional viewing pleasure, we have all twelve episodes of the best of the Republic serials, 1943's *The Masked Marvel*, starring stuntman Tom Steele under the mask.



Film program by Michael W. Phillips Jr. (MP)
Additional capsules by Becca Hall (BH), Michael King (MK),
Kyle Westphal (KW), and Rebecca Zorach (RZ)

The Awful Truth | 1937

DIRECTED BY LEO MCCAREY

When Leo McCarey went to the podium to accept his Best Director Oscar for this film, he said, "thanks, but you gave it to me for the wrong picture." He was referring to his other 1937 masterpiece, *Make Way for Tomorrow*, and although he's correct that that film was slighted, he's incorrect because Oscar couldn't have gone wrong with either film. *The Awful Truth* is one of the pinnacles of screwball comedy, but it's also a surprisingly mature look at divorce made at a time when the d-word wasn't heard much in American movies. Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, in their first of three screen pairings, are the couple suffering from irreconcilable differences, but they have to last ninety days before their divorce is final, and a lot can happen in ninety days. Ralph Bellamy and Molly Lamont appear as the third and fourth wheels. Grant was so upset with McCarey's intentional disorganization on the set that he begged Harry Cohn to release him from the film, but Cohn wouldn't budge. It was for the best, though: much of Grant's post-1937 screen persona is based on the combination of suavity and nervousness that McCarey brought out in this film. (MP)



COLUMBIA 91 MIN. 35MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 1: THE MASKED CRUSADER" (1943)

The Black Book | 1949

DIRECTED BY ANTHONY MANN

"Anarchy! Misery! Murder! Arson! Fear!" Leave out the location and date (France, 1794), and you might think that this was one of Anthony Mann's hard-hitting, stylized noirs. And you wouldn't be far off the mark: this is surely the most noirish, nightmarish take on the French Revolution ever attempted in American cinema, the back-alley, midnight version of such glossy productions as *A Tale of Two Cities*. Robert Cummings plays an undercover agent trying to overthrow the evil Maximilian Robespierre (Richard Baseheart) by finding the "black book" containing Mad Max's hit list. (Any similarities between Robespierre's black book and a certain blacklist that the studios concocted in response to HUAC's bullying were entirely intentional.) Mann and cinematographic genius John Alton shoot the bloodstained streets of Paris like their postwar American cesspools, and Philip Yordan and Aeneas MacKenzie's script drips with all the madness and desperation we're used to from such Mann masterpieces as *Raw Deal*—the only real difference is the presence of more ruffles and powdered wigs. Note to purists: putting this film under "B" instead of under its better-known title *Reign of Terror* isn't cheating, because it was originally released as *The Black Book* and then quickly retitled. (MP)



EAGLE-LION 89 MIN. 35MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 2: DEATH TAKES THE HELM" (1943)

JANUARY 3, 2009

: A

JANUARY 10, 2009

: B



Claudia | 1943

DIRECTED BY EDMUND GOULDING

Claudia began its life as a popular series of *Redbook* stories by Rose Franken, which prompted a successful Broadway version that attracted Hollywood's attention. Though Joan Fontaine and Katharine Hepburn tested for the title role, Twentieth Century-Fox miraculously chose to let ingénue Dorothy McGuire reprise her stage part. She brings a mousy, homegrown luminance to the part of the child bride Claudia Naughton, a quality she would carry through her mid-40s run of delicate performances in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *The Enchanted Cottage*, and *Gentleman's Agreement*. Robert Young plays her husband, David, an architect who spends his life savings on the Connecticut farm that will serve as their homestead. Their initial tribulations are both typical (learning to live with another's foibles, resisting advances from a duplicitous English neighbor) and more specialized (curtailing party line eavesdropping and outfoxing Olga

Baclanova). The Production Code Administration warned the filmmakers to downplay certain elements from the play, such as "Claudia's interest in the sex life of the animals on the farm, her somewhat naïve discussion of her own sex reactions and interests, and the discussion of her pregnancy," but what was controversial then seems a particularly poignant and idyllic piece of Americana today. (KW)

20TH CENTURY-FOX 91 MIN. 35MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 3: DIVE TO DOOM" (1943)



Dames | 1934

DIRECTED BY RAY ENRIGHT AND BUSBY BERKELEY

Few directors in the history of Hollywood managed to produce four unforgettable triumphs in the space of two years, and Busby Berkeley wasn't one of them, because Warner Bros. kept hiring other guys to "direct" his films. But whatever the name over the title, 1933's *42nd Street*, *Gold Diggers of 1933*, and *Footlight Parade*, along with this lesser-known film are Busby Berkeley films, from the wisecracking backstage antics to the enormous, proscenium-arch-busting productions featuring scores of scantily clad chorines marching to the beat of Berkeley's fevered imagination. This entry shows that Berkeley, whose pre-Code flesh-bearing numbers attracted their share of puritan ire, knew the times were a-changin', and the plot focuses on the efforts of self-important wet blankets to shut down an "indecent" Broadway show that looks suspiciously like something from a Berkeley film. Berkeley vets Ruby Keeler (still watching

her feet while she dances), Dick Powell, and Joan Blondell are the folks with solo numbers, which include an increasingly bizarre take on "I Only Have Eyes for You." So how does it stack up against its predecessors? A savvy Internet Movie Database commenter put it most accurately: "same good, same bad." (MP)

WARNER BROS. 91 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 4: SUSPENSE AT MIDNIGHT" (1943)

Executive Suite | 1954

DIRECTED BY ROBERT WISE

"You can't make men work for money alone—you starve their souls when you try it, and you can starve a company to death the same way!" Robert Wise's first film for MGM, from a script by first-time screenwriter Ernest Lehman, features an all-star cast including Barbara Stanwyck, William Holden, and Fredric March. It's a tense, literate, even exciting melodrama, although it might not sound like that on paper. Most of the action takes place in the hallowed boardrooms of a New York City skyscraper, and the dialog-heavy script contains more than one speech about furniture manufacturing, but *Executive Suite* was considered pretty controversial in its time. Producer John Houseman relates the problem: "Such was Hollywood's timidity during and after the witch hunts that a film about Big Business—a struggle for power among corporate executives—was considered an audacious project," and he had to sign a letter to those witch hunters that he was not nor had ever been a Communist. Maybe it's because it's not just a struggle for power, it's a struggle between greed and humanism for the very soul of postwar America. And if the good guy wins, well, that's Hollywood. (MP)

MGM 104 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 5: MURDER METER" (1943)



The Fountainhead | 1949

DIRECTED BY KING VIDOR

Depending on your political persuasion, *The Fountainhead* is either a stirring milestone in American art or an object of high camp. Despite cutting many incidents the film remains quite faithful to its 900-page source, largely because Ayn Rand adapted it herself—and stipulated in her contract that it could not stray from her script. The best-seller's sentiments remain in the film version, which follows architect Howard Roark as he fights newspaper magnates, pinko pundits, neoclassicists, and all who stand in the way of the undiluted expression of his ego through phallic buildings. Rand found a sympathetic collaborator in King Vidor—a strange partnership indeed between the avarice apologist and a director best for socially conscious pictures like *Our Daily Bread*. Perhaps sensing that Rand's talky script portended a turgid picture Vidor attacked each scene with a graphic vigor that matched the sharp angles of Roark's buildings. Gary Cooper, by 1949 probably too old to play the geeky Adonis of Rand's novel, comes across as a dawdling philosopher-king. He bristled at delivering the climactic ten-minute speech, which he professed to not understand, and also began an affair with co-star Patricia Neal, mirroring and enhancing the erotic bond (some would say rape) of the story. (KW)

WARNER BROS. 114 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 6: EXIT TO ETERNITY" (1943)



The Goddess | 1958

DIRECTED BY JOHN CROMWELL



Stage legend Kim Stanley didn't venture in front of movie cameras very often, but judging by her limited screen legacy, we should all be either a little sad that she didn't decide to do more movies or a little grateful that she deigned to appear at all. Loosely based on the life story of Marilyn Monroe (or maybe it was about Ava Gardner, or maybe, at least according to screenwriter Paddy Chayefsky, it was about the goddess Success as described by the philosopher William James), *The Goddess* features Stanley as a small-town girl turned big-screen sex symbol whose glittering public persona masks a scared, miserable, drug-addled wreck. TV writer Chayefsky wrote the Oscar-nominated screenplay, which contains a savage attack on the Hollywood machine he was just breaking into; however, he proved he could run with the wolves by insisting on the final cut despite no editing experience, which drove

director John Cromwell off the set and out of town. Future Oscar winner Patty Duke plays Stanley as a child, Steven Hill and Lloyd Bridges appear as husbands #1 and #2, and Betty Lou Holland is her rummy-turned-reverent mother. (MP)

COLUMBIA 104 MIN. 35 MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 7: DOORWAY TO DESTRUCTION" (1943)



Home of the Brave | 1949

DIRECTED BY MARK ROBSON

A couple years after *Crossfire* changed a book about homophobia in the military into a movie about anti-Semitism, screenwriter Carl Foreman changed Arthur Laurents' popular play about anti-Semitism in the military into a movie about racism. Released a year after Harry S. Truman's Executive Order 9981, which ordered the desegregation of the US Armed Forces, *Home of the Brave* deals with the horrors of war and the additional horrors African Americans faced under Jim Crow. After a harrowing mission on a Japanese-held island in the Pacific, a black soldier (James Edwards) becomes psychosomatically paralyzed, and a tough-talking psychiatrist (Jeff Corey) helps him get to the root of his illness. The ripped-from-the-headlines subject matter should tip you off that Hollywood's self-appointed conscience, Stanley Kramer, was in the producer's chair, but Mark Robson's sensitive direction and the strength of the performances keep the film from turning into one of Kramer's usual sermons, at least until the end. Given the film's liberal pedigree, it should come as no surprise that the cast and crew list reads like a HUAC unfriendly witness call sheet: writer Carl Foreman and stars Edwards and Corey were blacklisted. (MP)



UNITED ARTISTS 88 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 8: DESTINED TO DIE" (1943)

I Can Get It for You Wholesale | 1951

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL GORDON

Harriet Boyd (Susan Hayward), a ruthless model-turned-designer—with a figure to match her talent—makes her way in the man's world of the New York fashion industry. Obviously, business success will depend on the inevitable choice between the sharp-tongued salesman (Dan Dailey) who trades barbs with her, and the charming plutocrat (George Sanders) who urges her to ditch her business partners and run off with him to Paris. Vera Caspary's story, an extremely loose adaptation of a novel by Jerome Weidman, retained nothing but the setting and the title—even changing the sex of the protagonist. In rehearsal, leading lady Susan Hayward proved as tough as her character: when director Michael Gordon tried to loosen her up by grabbing hold of her arm (a tactic that had worked on Ida Lupino) she snapped, "Don't handle the merchandise." Viewers can judge whether a social critique of the business world underlies the sharp dialogue and sentimentality; Gordon was blacklisted as a former Communist soon after making this movie (as were the two writers, Caspary and Abraham Polonsky) and only returned to Hollywood in 1959 with the frothier, and less feminist, *Pillow Talk*. (RZ)



20TH CENTURY-FOX 91 MIN. 35MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 9: DANGER EXPRESS" (1943)



Jane Eyre | 1944

DIRECTED BY ROBERT STEVENSON

"He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow; his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted just now." If Joan Fontaine doesn't quite fit Charlotte Brontë's description of the mousy title character, at least this prestige adaptation did well by Mr. Rochester in the person of Orson Welles, who was probably still feeling particularly ireful and thwarted after the debacle surrounding *The Magnificent Ambersons*. He broods and thrashes his way through the film as the rich boss with a secret locked in his attic, helped by screenwriters John Houseman and Aldous Huxley (!!!), who bulked up the part for their mercurial star. Welles did so much work behind the scenes that the studio offered him a producer credit, which he declined, but the finished product resembles a Mercury production, from the moody cinematography to the crashing Bernard Hermann score to the presence of Agnes Moorehead in

the cast. Watch for an uncredited Elizabeth Taylor as Jane's doomed school friend Helen. If you're waiting for us to show the 1993 film based on Jean Rhys's prequel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, you'll have to keep waiting, because this cinema is rated PG. (MP)

20TH CENTURY-FOX 97 MIN. 35MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 10: SUICIDE SACRIFICE" (1943)



Knock on Any Door | 1949

DIRECTED BY NICHOLAS RAY

Nicholas Ray's debut feature *They Live By Night* was that rare thing, a tabloid expose treated with tenderness—a genuinely radiant film noir. Humphrey Bogart admired the achievement and recruited Ray to bring a similar sensibility to *Knock on Any Door*, a socially conscious courtroom drama that would establish the prestige of Bogart's new production company, Santana Pictures. In some ways modern Hollywood starts here, with the star dictating his own image rather than leaving it to the studio. Bogart's turn here sidesteps his crabby but ultimately romantic persona of the 1940s and returns to his penny-ante hood roots from the '30s. His Andrew Morton might well be an optimistic extension of the third-billed parts he played for Warner Bros.—a product of the slums who improbably, actually makes good. A one-time gangster-turned-attorney, Morton finds himself

defending petty gangster Nick Romano (John Derek) against the charge of murdering a policeman. He's not sure whether the kid is innocent but he knows the whole society is guilty, sentencing poor kids to rotten lives with long odds. Stirring exclamations of postwar liberalism alternate with crackerjack scenes of juvenile delinquency noir. (KW)

COLUMBIA 100 MIN. 16MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 11: THE FATAL MISTAKE" (1943)



Lydia Bailey | 1952

DIRECTED BY JEAN NEGULESCO



Ah, Hollywood, where even the bloodiest of revolutions can serve as the backdrop for romance amongst American tourists. Though allegedly digested from Kenneth Roberts's sprawling novel of the Haitian revolution, it seems likely that the resulting film is more faithful to the page and a half synopsis 20th Century Fox based their investment on. Director Jean Negulesco (*Road House*) wanted to cast Errol Flynn and Jean Peters as the story's intercontinental lovebirds, but Peters's boyfriend (and Hollywood's own Napoleonic boogeyman) Howard Hughes intervened. The resulting pair of Dale Robertson and Anne Francis have a distinctly second-choice chemistry, but no matter: anyone would be overshadowed by stage actor William Marshall's film debut as revolution leader King Dick. Marshall may have been "the best Othello of our times" according to the *London Times*, but his screen career took a somewhat

different track—his cinematic immortality comes from the title role of blaxploitation classics *Blacula* and *Scream, Blacula Scream*. Children of the 1980s, too, might instinctively bow at the sight of Marshall, who reigned as the King of Cartoons on the Saturday morning acid trip that was known as *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*. (MK)

20TH CENTURY-FOX 89 MIN. 35 MM

SERIAL: "THE MASKED MARVEL, CHAPTER 12: THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK" (1943)

My Sister Eileen | 1942

DIRECTED BY ALEXANDER HALL



A couple of Ohio innocents move to New York City and end up in a basement apartment in Greenwich directly over a subway construction site and surrounded by crazy neighbors—no, it's not exactly a documentary, but this first screen version of Ruth McKenney's *New Yorker* articles and subsequent hit Broadway play is based on her real-life experiences in the Big Apple. The play was still running when the film released, so audiences could take their pick between Shirley Booth on stage and Rosalind Russell on screen as the savvy sister of gorgeous dimwit Eileen (Janet Blair). Russell got her first of four career Oscar nominations, and it was about time—her performance in *His Girl Friday* had been so unjustly snubbed in 1940 that this one couldn't help but feel like an apology. Russell wasn't done with this material, and neither was Broadway

or Hollywood: she appeared in a 1952 stage musical version and won a Tony, but wasn't invited back for Columbia's 1955 screen version, which starred Janet Leigh and legendary choreographer Bob Fosse. Watch for a final-reel surprise appearance by three Columbia stalwarts. (MP)

COLUMBIA 96 MIN. 35 MM

SHORT: "A PLUMBING WE WILL GO" (1940), DEL LORD (THE THREE STOOGES)

A Night at the Opera | 1935

DIRECTED BY SAM WOOD



Staid old studio fuddy-duddy Sam Wood might not top anyone's list of great comedy directors, or even great directors, but hidden among the MGM stalwart's strings of stately costume jewelry are some genuine diamonds in the rough, including *The Devil and Miss Jones* (which would have inhabited the "D" slot this season if we had been able to snag a print) and this early-mid-period Marx Brothers film (post-Zeppo, post-Paramount, pre-not-funny), which Groucho later said was one of the two best films they ever produced, the other being their other MGM outing, *A Day at the Races*. He's wrong, of course, but we've played *Duck Soup* too recently to play it again. This satire of the world of opera boasts one of the strongest storylines of any Marx Bros. film, courtesy of boy genius producer Irving Thalberg, who brought a whole raft of requirements to rein in the anarchy of the earlier films. It also features the two most boring romantic leads in film history, but thank Groucho there are enough memorable gags in the film to make you forget them. The highlight is a little ray of sustained brilliance usually referred to as "the Stateroom Scene," which was designed by uncredited writer Buster Keaton, who knew a little bit about comedy himself. (MP)

MGM 96 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "THE HOUSE OF DARKNESS" (1913), D.W. GRIFFITH (LILLIAN GISH)



Queen Kelly | 1929

DIRECTED BY ERICH VON STROHEIM

"We didn't need dialogue, we had faces." So Gloria Swanson proclaims in *Sunset Blvd.* as she watches footage of herself from twenty years earlier. Ironically the projectionist is Erich von Stroheim and the scene is from *Queen Kelly*, the never-completed high-gloss trash that abruptly ended Stroheim's directing career. Swanson pulled the plug herself, citing fear of censorship trouble, and on that score she was probably correct—the first reel finds Queen Regina (Seena Owen) traipsing around her castle topless but for a strategically placed kitten—but cost overruns and the fickleness of Swanson's producer-paramour probably accounted for the shutdown more than anything else. Intrigue mounts as the queen's fiancé Prince Wolfram (Walter Byron) flirts with convent girl Kelly (Swanson) and then mocks her after she accidentally exposes herself to the cavalry. Favoring the barely post-pubescent naïf over his harpy queen, Wolfram takes matters into his own hands by burning down the convent and kidnapping Kelly. But there's still Regina and her whip standing between the lovers—masochism being intrinsic to Stroheim long before *Sunset Blvd.* The ruins of *Queen Kelly*, which includes fragments of a sequence set in an African brothel, are as exotic and perverse as anything Stroheim ever did. (KW)



GLORIA SWANSON PICTURES 101 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "THE TOY SHOP" (1928), MARTIN JUSTICE (IN TWO-COLOR TECHNICOLOR)

**One-Eyed Jacks | 1961**

DIRECTED BY MARLON BRANDO

Given that world-class eccentric Marlon Brando's sole film as a director is an intimate, psychological western, it seems fitting that the best showdowns took place behind the scenes. Brando cycled through some major up-and-coming talent before taking the reins—the producer/star threw out a draft by Sam Peckinpah in preproduction and canned director Stanley Kubrick just as shooting began. The *Mikey and Nicky* of its day, Brando's VistaVision Method-fest finally came in at triple its original budget and clocked in at five hours. Ever unpredictable, Brando suddenly "got pretty sick of it and turned the job over to someone else," who chopped it in half and tacked on a new ending. But, as with *Mikey and Nicky*, the footage proved resilient, and even in its abbreviated form *One-Eyed Jacks* is a great motion picture: in fact, it's "the motion picture that starts its own tradition of greatness," if Paramount's

tagline is to be believed. That might be a stretch, but in the annals of actor-director one-offs, this is definitely more *Night of the Hunter* than *Harlem Nights*. (MK)

PARAMOUNT 141 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "HIS REGENERATION" (1915), BRONCHO BILLY ANDERSON

**Phone Call from a Stranger | 1952**

DIRECTED BY JEAN NEGULESCO

"We're getting everything this trip," says the pilot of an airliner shortly before it crashes and kills the majority of its passengers, and boy is he right—adultery, buried secrets, and family trauma are all on the menu, along with the salted nuts and \$5 cocktails. A lawyer (Gary Merrill) on the run from his unfaithful wife strikes up a friendship with three fellow passengers (Shelly Winters, Michael Rennie, and Keenan Wynn), but after the crash, which only he survives, he decides to contact the families of his new late friends. He gets sucked into a series of flashbacks (featuring screen newcomer Beatrice Straight and Merrill's wife Bette Davis, among others) that convince him that his life is pretty normal and he should just get over himself. The American press wasn't kind to the film—grumpy old Bosley Crowther dismissed it as "slick" and "mechanical"—but leave it to the Italians to

appreciate Nunnally Johnson and I.A.R. Wylie's back-twisting script and Jean Negulesco's directing: the film was nominated for the Golden Lion at Venice, and won Best Scenario at the same festival. No word on whether the nominees flew over to attend. (MP)

20TH CENTURY-FOX 105 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "THIS MECHANICAL AGE" (1954), ROBERT YOUNGSON

Tobacco Road | 1941

DIRECTED BY JOHN FORD

A year after winning an Oscar for directing *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Ford, working from Erskine Caldwell's controversial bestseller, made this altogether different film about the plight of American small farmers, which trades in the drama and dignity of *Grapes* for hillbilly comedy. Charley Grapewin (who played Grampa Joad in the earlier film) is Jeeter Lester, the layabout patriarch of a dirt-poor Southern family (including the strangely cast Gene Tierney as his dull-witted, slovenly daughter Ellie May!). The Lester farm is in trouble: the land it's on has been repossessed by the bank, Jeeter hasn't gotten around to planting anything yet again, and hunger and poverty are beginning to drive the family to tragicomic desperation. Jeeter's favored solutions seem to be matrimonial: first he marries off his son Dude to a recently widowed (and monied) lady revivalist, and when that plan falls through he tries to unload Ellie May on neighbor Lov (played by Ward Bond). Elevating all this absurdity is the beautiful cinematography by Arthur Charles Miller (who would win an Oscar the following year for his work on Ford's *How Green Was My Valley*). (BH)



20TH CENTURY-FOX 84 MIN. 35MM

CARTOON: "BACKWOODS BUNNY" (1959), ROBERT MCKIMSON (BUGS BUNNY)

The Uninvited | 1944

DIRECTED BY LEWIS ALLEN

Paramount administered CPR to the nearly dead horror genre—poisoned as it was by the mid-1940s with endless money-grubbing franchise films—with this spooky adaptation of the then-popular ghost story by Irish novelist Dorothy Macardle. Eschewing the corny cheapness of the Universal stable, director Lewis Allen, producer Charles Brackett, and perennially Oscar-nominated cinematographer Charles Lang borrowed heavily from the low-budget mood masterpieces produced under Val Lewton over at RKO. A brother and sister (Ray Milland and Ruth Hussey), enamored of a creepy old castle on a Cornish cliff, buy it over the objections of more reasonable folks who know that creepy old castles on Cornish cliffs are always haunted. Much to their surprise, this one is haunted too—as much by the spirits of Sigmund Freud and Daphne du Maurier as it is by the ghost of a murder victim. With all the ghostly footsteps, midnight sobbing, barking dogs, unmotivated cold breezes, and oppressive shadows, the important question is not "who is the ghost?" but "how can anyone expect to get any sleep around here?" That melody you hear constantly, "Stella by Starlight," part of Victor Young's stellar score, became a huge hit for Frank Sinatra a couple years later. (MP)



PARAMOUNT 99 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER" (1928), JAMES SIBLEY WATSON & MELVILLE WEBBER

Reveille with Beverly | 1943

DIRECTED BY CHARLES BARTON

Tap-dancing phenom Ann Miller wrote in her autobiography, "and to think the name Ann Miller (as well as a few others) topped him in the billing. How times do change!" That "him" is a relative newcomer named Frank Sinatra in his first screen appearance without the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, and he's just the tip of this patriotic musical iceberg: he shares screen time with swingin' stalwarts Bob Crosby, Freddie Slack, Ella Mae Morse, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and the Mills Brothers. There's a plot, which concerns the efforts of a switchboard operator (Miller) to become a disc jockey, but it's pretty thin stuff. Good thing we're not here for the generic mistaken-identity-romance subplot or the ladder-climbing intrigue—we're here for the music, from Sinatra's take on "Night and Day" to Count Basie's scorching "One O'Clock Jump" to Ella Mae Morse's suggestive "Cow Cow



Boogie" and the Mills Brothers' two numbers. And Ann Miller is no slouch, either: she nearly gave the ultimate sacrifice when a flame effect during her film-closing production number "Thumbs Up and V for Victory" went wrong, leaving her with singed hair. (MP)

COLUMBIA 78 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "THREE CHEERS FOR THE GIRLS" (1943), BUSBY BERKELEY ET AL.

Sons of the Desert | 1933

DIRECTED BY WILLIAM A. SEITER

"Well here's another fine mess you've gotten me into." Proud members of the eponymous fraternal order, Laurel and Hardy make a solemn pledge to attend the annual convention in Chicago. Of course, nothing comes easy to these two, so they spend the first half of the movie cooking up an elaborate ruse just to fool their wives (Dorothy Christy and Mae Busch) into letting them go. When they finally get there, the boys become fast friends with a particularly raucous member played by fellow Hal Roach veteran Charley Chase, paving the way for pratfalls aplenty while their alibi sinks in the crosscutting. Since unrelated crooning was a necessary component of early comedies, Ty Parvis is on hand to perform "Honolulu Baby," a snappy little number featuring what is quite



possibly the worst choreography ever to grace a Hollywood production. If it all looks irresistible, go ahead and join the actual Sons of the Desert—Laurel and Hardy biographer John McCabe founded the international society in 1965. Membership in the Bacon Grabbers (the Chicago tent) is only \$15, which should leave plenty of money for a new fez. "That's our story and we're stuck with it...in it." (MK)

HAL ROACH STUDIOS 68 MIN. 35MM

MEDIUM: "BEAU HUNKS" (1931), JAMES W. HORNE (LAUREL & HARDY) (37 MINUTES)



Verboten! | 1959

DIRECTED BY SAMUEL FULLER

"Out of the backlines of war's flaming fury comes a picture of tense drama and emotional impact! The story of a man and a woman caught in the backwash of a mighty conflict!" While combing a gutted village for resisters in the chaotic midst of the postwar occupation of Germany, Sgt. David Brent (James Best) is shot in the posterior by a lingering Nazi sniper. He is nursed by Helga (Susan Cummings), a beautiful German fraulein who vows to show him that "there is a difference between a Nazi . . . and a German!" She does, in small ways and in larger ones—like taking her teenage brother to watch the Nuremberg trials when he starts hanging around with the local neo-Nazis. Fuller, who had witnessed the horrors of the Nazi death camps firsthand as soldier in the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, spliced documentary footage of the atrocities in with shots of his characters. The footage came from special effects man Ray

Kellogg, who had been responsible for assembling Nazi propaganda films for use as evidence at the actual trials. Kellogg's affidavit swearing to the authenticity of the films was signed by yet another U.S. Army filmmaker—John Ford. (BH)

COLUMBIA 93 MIN. 16MM

CARTOON: SELECTED WW2-ERA CARTOON

A Woman's Face | 1941

DIRECTED BY GEORGE CUKOR



Floating through a heady and bizarre blend of Cedric Gibbons's glitzy fantasy versions of prisons and roadhouses, and Robert Planck's brooding, noirish camera work, this remake of a 1938 Swedish film follows a hideously scarred woman whose low self-esteem gets her tangled up with blackmailers and crooks (including recent émigré Conrad Veidt) until a chance meeting with a plastic surgeon releases her inner (and outer) Joan Crawford. Stepping into Ingrid Bergman's shoes, working again with George Cukor, and no longer considered "box office poison," Crawford gives one of her best performances, one that she claims was at least as deserving of an Oscar as the one she bagged a few years later for *Mildred Pierce*. Of course things can't stay perfect; as brilliant film blogger

Self-Styled Siren put it, "Crawford shows up at a dance in some kind of Swedish peasant dirndl-drag and it's all over." But even a lame ending can't sink this ship. Crawford was so enamored of the part that she immediately wanted to play the deaf-mute lead in *The Spiral Staircase*, but after Louis B. Mayer yelled "No more cripples or maimed women!" it was back to middle-of-the-road melodramas until her triumph in *Mildred Pierce*. (MP)

MGM 106 MIN. 16MM

CARTOON: "THE PLASTICS INVENTOR" (1944), JACK KING (DONALD DUCK)



X-The Man with X-Ray Eyes | 1963

DIRECTED BY ROGER CORMAN

In its heyday, Roger Corman's American International Pictures wasn't just a breeding ground for up-and-coming directors like Peter Bogdanovich, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese—it was also one of the last stops for former Hollywood luminaries like Peter Lorre, Boris Karloff, and Vincent Price. Of all people, Ray Milland earned a spot in both camps, directing his best feature, *Panic in the Year Zero!*, for American International and starring in this oddly compelling bit of sci-fi claptrap. Milland stars as a scientist who develops a drug that grants him x-ray vision, represented onscreen by an entrancingly cheapo effect dubbed Spectarama. Like *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, this takes a camp premise and dutifully follows it to philosophical extremes: what begins as an excuse to see through pretty girls' clothes evolves into a psychedelic meditation on godliness. Exotica composer Les Baxter's score is appropriately trippy, and has recently been augmented by avant-garage stalwarts Pere Ubu. Though Cleveland's finest rarely perform their roaring live underscore, it does a tremendous job of amplifying the cosmic terror of X's unwieldy power. Unfortunately, our sound system isn't exactly built for the modern dance, so leave your earplugs at home. (MK)



ALTA VISTA 79 MIN. 35MM

SHORT: "HARDWARE WARS" (1977), ERNIE FOSSELIUS

Yankee Doodle Dandy | 1942

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL CURTIZ



As the high-stepping, superpatriotic songsmith George M. Cohan, the best actor in classic Hollywood gives his career-best performance. Strong words, I know, but at least James Cagney agreed with the second half of that sentiment (and probably the other half too). He won his only Oscar in the Michael Curtiz-directed biopic about the showman behind such flag-waving fare as "Over There," "Yankee Doodle Boy," and "You're a Grand Old Flag." Sure, its historically acrobatic scenario played fast and loose with the facts—after a preview, Cohan himself reportedly said "It was a good movie. Who was it about?"—but Cagney makes us forget these minor distractions. His natural exuberance blasts out of the screen like a 21-gun salute, and it's clear that he's relishing his first foray into his musical element since 1933's *Footlight Parade*. There are

other people in the film—including Walter Huston as Cohan's songwriting dad Jerry, and Joan Leslie as Cohan's wife and muse Mary—but it's Cagney's film, his spotlight, and his triumph. Cagney, needing a bit less makeup, would play Cohan again in *The Seven Little Foys* thirteen years later. (MP)

WARNER BROS. 126 MIN. 16MM

CARTOON: "YANKEE DOODLE DAFFY" (1943), FRIZ FRELENG (DAFFY DUCK)



Zoo in Budapest | 1933

DIRECTOR: ROWLAND V. LEE

Jesse Lasky's first production at Fox feels like something Frank Borzage might have directed from a play by Ferenc Molnár, but in fact *Zoo in Budapest* is an all-Hollywood production, a sort of *Grand Hotel*-esque day-in-the-life fantasy, but with bears and gibbons instead of Beery and Garbo. Zani (Gene Raymond), who has lived at the Douanier Rousseau since his father's death at the claws of a lion, divides his time between snatching furs from well-off ladies and defending the animals from visitors' taunts. When orphan girl Eve (Loretta Young) escapes from the orphanage and hides out in the zoo, Zani falls in love with her; joined by a runaway boy, they take up overnight residence in a bear cave and attempt to elude the tightening dragnet of zoo

employees (including O.P. Heggie) and police, until an animal stampede forces the issue. Cinematographer Lee Garmes turns the daytime atmosphere of the zoo into a phantasmagoric tableau of fog and ferns, shadows and starlight. And animals—over three hundred of them by some reports. *Time* informs us that "The animal most amenable to direction was the gibbon (Amos), who is accustomed to camera work. Most intractable was a supercilious warthog." FYI. (MP)

FOX FILM CORPORATION 83 MIN. 16MM

SHORT: "THE HOT SPOT" (1931), DONALD GALLAHER



FILMS START AT 8 P.M.

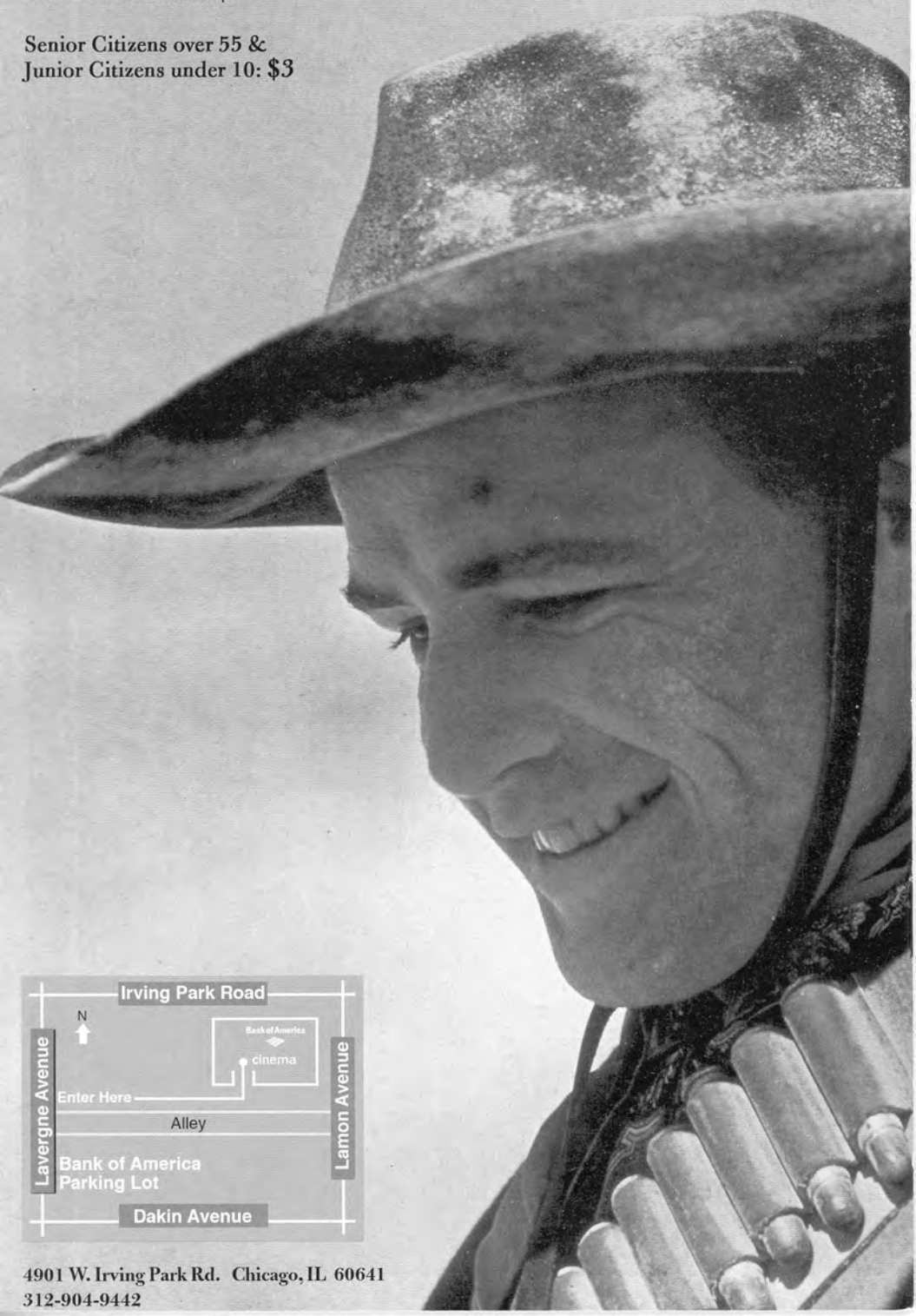
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