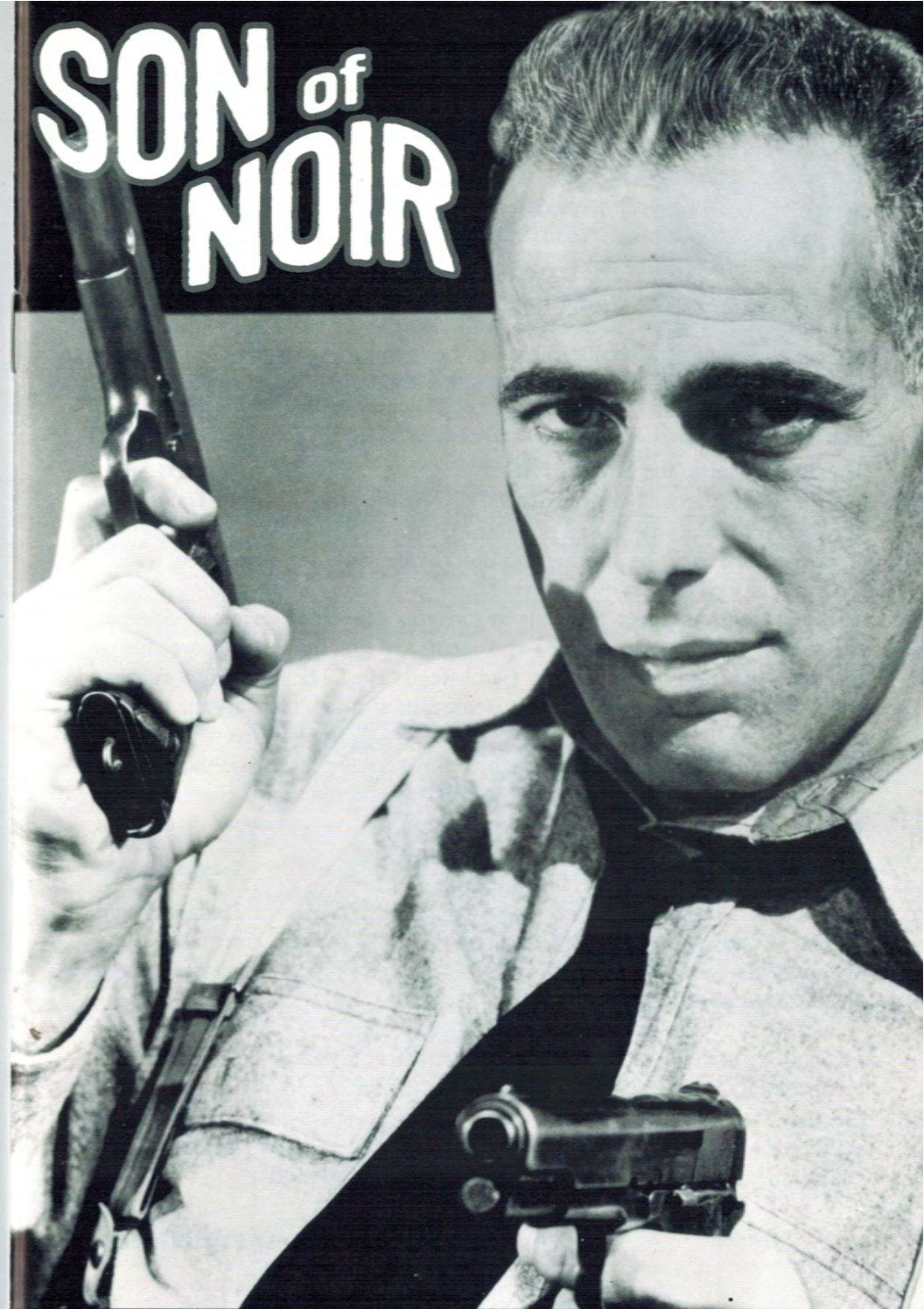


SON^{of} NOIR



Classic Film Series presented by LaSalle Bank

FROM THE BOOTH

What is "film noir"? It's a universe of fallen angels and black angels, raw deals and pitfalls, roadblocks and detours... and cities that never sleep. Film noir (or "black film") is a French term describing the dark side of American movies throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Many of these creative films were more ambiguous extensions of the 1930s gangster dramas, but noir is not a genre (as Paul Schrader pointed out). It's a visual style that incorporates more than just crime films. The style, made up of such elements as low-key lighting, night settings, and compositional tension, can be found in many genres. Film noir persists today to a lesser degree, though many of these efforts are conscious of what came before and are quickly forgotten.

This is a sequel to the original Film Noir series that played here a few years back. This time around we've concentrated on the classic period. Though we only go up to the early '50s, a possible "Ghost of Noir" could be somewhere down the alley. We'll be offering two films by the great German stylist, Robert Siodmak, as well as ones by Anthony Mann (with John Alton's visions of light) and Fritz Lang. And there are films by directors who could be just as gifted as any auteur, such as Robert Wise, who seemed to excel in every genre. We've also secured a rare British noir by Carol Reed called *The Fallen Idol* starring "Son" of Noir's poster child, Bobby Henrey. In addition, there are the offbeat, early noirs such as Edgar G. Ulmer's *Bluebeard*. Finally, there's the out of sequence *Portrait of Jennie*, a valentine to my regulars. (And you thought you had seen the last of William Dieterle!) In short, there's not a clunker in the series—26 reasons to skip the *disease* of television and spend a night at Chicago's longest-running revival house.

Let Robert Mitchum, Ida Lupino, Robert Ryan, Veronica Lake, Richard Widmark and Joan Crawford be your guides through cinema's seamy underworld—a dark city of carnival hustlers, psychotic killers, and disillusioned artists.

I would like to thank Pete Fazio (& LaSalle Bank) for his dedication and hard work behind the scenes (and for being an all-around nice guy). Thanks to the *Chicago Reader* and to John Petrakis for their support during the previous retrospective. And to all my dear regs, from the friendly older couples to the young cineastes, I say thank you.

Matthew C. Hoffman

HIGH SIERRA (1941)

Raoul Walsh

Warner/100 min.

Short: "Dillinger: Public Enemy No. 1" (1934)

"Genres were never rigid. Creative filmmakers kept stretching their boundaries. This was a classical art, where personal expression was stimulated rather than inhibited by discipline. Take Raoul Walsh, the most gifted apprentice and disciple of Griffith. His strongest films were variations on a few themes and characters. The figure of the sympathetic outlaw... inspired him time and again."

— Martin Scorsese

One of the finest films ever, and the one that made Humphrey Bogart a star. With this (and *White Heat*), director Walsh would bookend the fall of the gangster and bring closure to the cycle. Bogart is Roy Earle, a small town guy at heart with big city bad habits—an A-1 gangster perceived as both a mad dog and "the best man who ever lived." After a *pardon* arranged by Big Mac (Donald MacBride), Earle is asked to do one more heist. This time he's got to contend with two hotheads (Alan Curtis, Arthur Kennedy) and Marie (Ida Lupino), the woman who loves him even though his heart is elsewhere. Bogart is at his best as the Dillinger-like, mythic figure rushin' toward death. All areas of Warner production were in top form in this story based on W.R. Burnett's novel. With Joan Leslie (crippled Velma), Henry Travers (Pa), Henry Hull (Doc, the Col. Sanders look-alike), Zero (as Pard) and the politically incorrect Willie Best. Walsh later remade this with *Colorado Territory* (1949).





THIS GUN FOR HIRE (1942)

Frank Tuttle

Paramount/80 min.

Cartoon: "Fifth Column Mouse" (1943), F. Freleng

"This Gun For Hire was one of the most important early film noirs... for its strong Paramount style, particularly John F. Seitz's exotic, atmospheric photography, and of course, the performances of Alan Ladd, Veronica Lake and Laird Cregar. The film's overall theme of self-destruction... is here developed to a degree it had not been before, but would become more familiar as noir matured."

— Michael L. Stephens

Alan Ladd is Raven, a professional gunman who pulls his .45 on just about anything that moves (except cats). He's out to get the man who double-crossed him, Gates (Laird Cregar)—a nightclub owner who loves peppermints but hates violence. And Veronica Lake is the girl trying to break through Raven's tough exterior and finding it's no easy trick. But there's a lot at stake in this WWII-influenced crime film. This was the first teaming of Ladd & Lake, and the nice location touches away from the studio add a lot. Ladd (with his "radio noir" voice) may have been a one-note actor, but no one played that note better. With Robert Preston (as Lake's cop boyfriend), Tully Marshall (as Brewster, the old man with one foot in the grave), and Marc Lawrence. Written by W.R. Burnett and Albert Maltz and based on Graham Greene's cynical *A Gun For Sale*. Remade in 1957 as *Short Cut to Hell* (James Cagney's only directing credit).



JOURNEY INTO FEAR (1942)

Norman Foster/Orson Welles

RKO/69 min.

Short: "News Parade of 1942"

"That picture was also ruined by the cutting... It was the opposite of an action picture, since it was based on the kind of thing that Ambler does so well, which is anti-action, anti-heroics, and all that. And they just took out everything that made it interesting except the action—trying desperately to turn it into an action-B—and made quite a lot of nothing out of it. They even have a man looking through a porthole two reels after he's supposed to be dead. You could hardly even call it cutting—you know, run through a broken lawnmower."

— Orson Welles

Joseph Cotten (who co-wrote the screenplay with Welles) is Howard Graham, an oft times complaining American munitions expert who gets dragged around Turkey. He's there to help the Turks, allies during World War II, with armament. The Germans respond by sending out an unpleasant assassin (Jack Moss) to slow Graham down, but Colonel Haki (Welles), the head of the secret police, plans on getting the American safely out of the country. Graham is then forced to board a cargo ship headed across the Black Sea, but whom can he trust? This unique film begins quickly (after an opening shot recalling *The Rules of the Game*), and we are thrown in medias res. The frenetic Wellesian touches, though, make you forget this is a serious espionage story. Cotten is quite good as the agent, as when he's asked about the pointed umbrella he feebly uses against his captors. "I don't know," he responds like a dejected child. "I just thought I'd bring it along." With the exotic Dolores Del Rio and Agnes Moorehead. From a novel by Eric Ambler. Photographed by Karl Struss (who had shot DeMille's *The Sign of the Cross* ten years earlier).

BLUEBEARD (1944)

Edgar G. Ulmer

PRC/73 min.

Cartoon: "Bye Bye Bluebeard" (1949), Art Davis

"The collaborative work of Ulmer and Schufftan registers stunningly, comparing favorably with the more celebrated teamings of director William Wyler and cinematographer Gregg Toland. Schufftan, whose groundbreaking miniature background process is integral to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, worked prolifically on an international scale following *Bluebeard*. He eventually won Best Black-and-White Photography Oscar for *The Hustler* (1961)."

— George Turner, Michael Price



Edgar G. Ulmer, the director of the noir classic *Detour*, again proves (with this Poverty Row work) that you don't need a million dollar budget to make an effective film. (Ulmer had been slated to adapt a version of *Bluebeard* at Universal with Karloff prior to his departure.) John Carradine, in one of his best characterizations, portrays Gaston Morrell, a 19th century "bluebeard"—named for a folkloric killer of women. While making a living as a puppeteer—putting on performances of *Faust* with his marionettes—he also creates disturbing paintings of women. But these female models wind up strangled and fished out of the Seine. Despite playing another madman role, Carradine turns in a chillingly subdued performance as the artist haunted by corrupted innocence. With Jean Parker, Nils Asther, Sonia Sorel (Mrs. Carradine) and Ludwig Stossel as the Caligari of art dealers. Music by Erdody (a score partially based on Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*) and photographed by Eugen Schufftan (whose name only appeared on overseas prints).

PHANTOM LADY (1944)

Robert Siodmak

Universal/87 min.

Cartoon: "Tin Pan Alley Cats" (1943), Bob Clampett

"Phantom Lady is the first picture produced by Joan Harrison, who worked with Hitchcock as secretary, idea woman, and script writer from 1934 to 1941. Much of it is good. It is also a pleasure to see because Miss Harrison got to make it, apparently, through a combination of the strong arm, luck, and the sensible willingness of Universal's executives to take a chance on a B thriller..."

— James Agee



After spending a harmless evening with a woman who simply wishes to disappear into the night, engineer Scott Henderson (Alan Curtis) returns home to find his wife strangled. Those witnesses who had seen him that night, however, tell the police he was alone, which seals his fate in court. It's up to Scott's admiring secretary, Kansas (Ella Raines), to find the answers (and the woman with the elegant hat) in a film that renders the male helpless and pushes the strong female to the forefront. Based on a novel by Cornell Woolrich, this is one of the most stylish of all '40s noirs, which makes up for a too easy resolution. The frenzied jazz session—supposedly played by Buddy Rich—is one of the highlights; the innuendo is unmistakable. The over-the-top Franchot Tone is the Orlac-like artist with the hand fixation. With Thomas Gomez, Aurora (the sister of Carmen Miranda), and Elisha Cook, Jr. as the drummer.



PORTRAIT OF JENNIE (1948)

William Dieterle

David O. Selznick/86 min.

Cartoon: "Arts and Flowers" (1956), P.J. Smith (Woody Woodpecker)

"Filming on *Portrait of Jennie* was finally completed in November, after several stops and starts, but Selznick wasn't entirely confident in the fragile story's ability to attract an audience. He scrapped some footage, filmed additional scenes, added a pretentious prologue (narrated by Ben Hecht), expanded the storm climax to a sepia-toned, wide-screened hurricane, and succeeded only in holding up the film's release for another year."

—Jeffrey L. Carrier

One of the best ghost stories to come out of Hollywood. This visually-rich love story is more a fantasy picture than a noir, but the New York location footage and broodish photography should alibi me. Joseph Cotten is Eben Adams, a lonely, near destitute artist whose only sketches are of forlorn places and soulless images. Then he meets a girl out of time (Jennifer Jones) who ages every time she appears. Her strange, spiritual beauty brings him out of his wintry isolation. This is the story of the timelessness of women, and how artists are inspired by them. Based on the Robert Nathan novella. With Ethel Barrymore, Lillian Gish, David Wayne, and Henry Hull. Photographed by Joseph August (who was nominated for an Academy Award) with music by Dimitri Tiomkin—based upon themes by Claude Debussy.



MURDER, MY SWEET (1944)

Edward Dmytryk

RKO/95 min.

Short: "Dizzy Detectives" (1943), Jules White (Three Stooges)

"*Murder My Sweet*, taking the sleazy underbelly of glamorous Hollywood as its setting and a complex mystery peopled by weaklings and savages, generally unworthy of Marlowe's help, but worth no more than the '\$25 a day and expenses' he charges, established a whole new mood for the 'detective film noire' of the forties. Unlike *The Maltese Falcon*, which avoided the seedy back alleys of life...*Murder My Sweet* was dark, full of hints of degeneracy, drugs, a nightmare world as enclosed and as escape-proof as that of Fritz Lang."

—William K. Everson

Dick Powell is Raymond Chandler's sardonic Philip Marlowe in Dmytryk's groundbreaking film noir. After a visit from the well-named client, Moose (a height-enhanced Mike Mazurki), Marlowe goes in search of "Velma." Running into a dead end there, he takes another case revolving around a stolen jade necklace, but he soon discovers that both cases are really one—a complex tale of murder. Getting beaten, drugged and blinded was a far cry from his crooner days, but Powell turned out to be the favorite choice of author Chandler. (The title had been changed from *Farewell, My Lovely* for fear it would be mistaken for a musical!) Though Hawks' brilliant *The Big Sleep* is the more well-known Marlowe story, Dmytryk's expressionistic classic was the first to contain all the noir ingredients, from the first person voiceover to 5 o'clock shadows. With Claire Trevor as the femme fatale, Anne Shirley (who wanted Claire's part!), Miles Mander, and Otto Kruger as Amthor. Music by Roy Webb. (A rough draft of this film appeared in 1942 with *The Falcon Takes Over*.)

THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE (1945)

Robert Siodmak

RKO/83 min.

Cartoon: "I'm Afraid to Come Home in the Dark" (1930)

Fleischer (Screen Songs)

"Siodmak was particularly pleased that he was able to edit the film as he wanted: 'There was a strike on in Hollywood when I was cutting *Staircase*, so they let me alone.' He got along famously with Ethel Barrymore; in 1964 he said, 'I'm still grateful to *Staircase* for giving me a chance to know Ethel B.' Barrymore herself remarked in 1949 that Siodmak was 'the only movie director who gave me the same feeling I had when working on the stage.' The two would work together again on *The Great Sinner* (1949)."

—Deborah Lazaro/Alpi

Dorothy McGuire is silent Helen, a young woman who has lost her voice. She helps to nurse Mrs. Warren (Oscar-nominated Ethel Barrymore), a sickly, bed-ridden woman with warnings for Helen—she must leave the house; her life depends on it. A maniac with voyeuristic impulses is loose in the area—a killer who believes there can be "no room for imperfection." Robert Siodmak directed this first-rate old dark house thriller—his biggest box office success—and even though there's little mystery behind the killer's identity, it hardly matters. The simple horror of not being able to cry out when one has to is far more terrifying than any of today's scary movie conventions. This is gothic suspense par excellence. With George Brent as Professor Warren, Kent Smith as Dr. Parry, and Elsa Lanchester as the brandy-swipin' Mrs. Oates. Art direction by Albert S. D'Agostino and Jack Okey. Photographed by Nicholas Musuraca and music (with eerie use of theremin) by the neglected Roy Webb. Story based on Ethel Lina White's *Some Must Watch*.



HANGOVER SQUARE (1945)

John Brahm

Twentieth Century-Fox/77 min.

Cartoon: "Rhapsody Rabbit" (1946), F. Freleng

"I also found this, um, newspaper article—'Methods of Murder by the well known home office analyst Allan Middleton.' I wonder if you kept that because I wrote it or because, uh, of this picture of a thuggee cord. I describe where the knots are placed and how it's used. I wonder if that sank into your mind? Barbara was, uh, attacked with a cord like that. Did you ever make a thuggee cord? Did you?... Did you?"

—George Sanders to Laird Cregar

This is the story of George Harvey Bone (Laird Cregar), a composer in Victorian London who, at times of stress and discordance, transforms into a psychotic killer. His 24 hour mood swings leave him in a mental (as well as a literal) ditch. Netta (Linda Darnell) is the opportunistic saloon singer who hates symphonies (almost as much as she would a Guy Fawkes bonfire). Director Brahm superbly evokes the gaslit aura of George's world—a world all the more haunting with Bernard Herrmann's score. Tragically, this would be the final role for Cregar—a fine talent who had slimmed down for the part. With George Sanders (as the understanding doctor), Faye Marlowe, Glenn Langan, and Alan Napier. Based (rather loosely) on the Patrick Hamilton novel, but style transcends story with Joseph LaSelle's photography.





MILDRED PIERCE (1945)

Michael Curtiz

Warner/109 min.

Cartoon: "Betty Boop's Rise to Fame" (1934), D. Fleischer

"The first days of filming Mildred Pierce were catastrophic. Curtiz raged over Crawford's lip makeup and elaborate hairstyle. When a dress designer arrived on the set with Joan in one of the costumes he had designed, the director was sitting on a camera boom ten feet above the floor. Curtiz glared down and bellowed at the designer: 'No, you son of a b-, I told you no shoulder pads!' When Joan reappeared in another frock, Curtiz again exploded. 'You and your damned Adrian shoulder pads! This stinks!' He began tearing the dress."

—Bob Thomas

The kind of motion picture Hollywood excelled at under the studio system. Joan Crawford, far removed from her MGM glamour days, gives what is considered to be her strongest performance as the title character. (She won an Oscar for it.) Mildred is a Southern California housewife who spoils her kids, especially Veda, played by Ann Blyth. When she separates from husband Bruce Bennett, she must raise the kids herself. With the help of her husband's business partner (Jack Carson) and a rich heir, played by Zachary Scott (the screen's quintessential weasel), she rises to become an entrepreneur. However, Mildred's success is jeopardized by snobbish Veda (a shallow human being who puts money above family) and her romantic entanglements. Though a melodrama, this James M. Cain-based story has the hallmarks of noir, such as the flashback, with Mildred (in her big-shouldered mink) telling her story while seated in a cavernous police station. With Eve Arden, Lee Patrick, and Butterfly McQueen. Music by Max Steiner.



SCARLET STREET (1945)

Fritz Lang

Universal/103 min.

Cartoon: "Porky's Romance" (1937), Frank Tashlin

"All the technical contributions were outstanding. The sets owed a large debt to the director's imagination. The office complex, the cashier's flat, the Greenwich Village apartment—these were outfitted with all the clutter and trimmings of Fritz Lang's aesthetic. All the exteriors were of course soundstage recreations; it was not only easier and less expensive but, as usual, Lang, the celebrated realist, preferred an indoor shoot. The Greenwich Village of Scarlet Street would prove all the more effective for seeming eerily artificial and claustrophobic."

—Patrick McGilligan

A sort of follow-up to Lang's *The Woman in the Window*, this is the story of an average citizen—a meek, hen-pecked husband, Christopher Cross (Edward G. Robinson). He's a melancholy cashier who paints a little. When he meets Kitty (Joan Bennett), though, he thinks he's found the romance missing from his life. Little does he know he's being taken for a ride by "Lazy Legs" and her slick, con man lover, Johnny (the excellent Dan Duryea). With his straw boater and Bowery Boy maturity level, he's a villain who fascinates us despite his sleazy intentions. Lang's film is, at certain moments, a black comedy, but in the end, it's a tragic noir that evokes the echoes of guilt while condemning the man who deserves it least. Dudley Nichols adapted this story, which was filmed in 1932 by Jean Renoir. With Jess Barker, Margaret Lindsay, and Rosalind Ivan. Photography by Milton Krasner.

THE HOUSE ON 92ND STREET (1945)

Henry Hathaway

Twentieth Century-Fox/88 min.

Serial: **DICK TRACY'S G-MEN** (1939)

William Witney, John English

Chapter 1: "The Master Spy"



"As it was readied for release in 1945, the Allied triumph in Europe seemed imminent. To stay current, he (Louis de Rochemont) transformed the Nazi spy ring into a band of nebulous subversives, who could easily be interpreted as the nation's next enemy du jour, the Communists."

—Eddie Muller

Long before today's reports of foreign espionage fronts rampant in the U.S., American theatergoers believed the FBI could (and in fact did) wipe out saboteurs and subversives. Hathaway's straightforward direction, reminiscent of a WWII newsreel—it was produced by *March of Time*'s Louis de Rochemont—follows (on location) a G-Man (William Eythe) as he infiltrates a band of Nazi spies operating in New York. Lloyd Nolan, a more than capable actor who never received much acclaim, plays Briggs, the head FBI agent who leads his men in search of sleeper agents, memory artists, and the stolen "Process 97." Predating *The Naked City* by three years, this docudrama won an Academy Award for Charles G. Booth's original story. With Signe Hasso, Leo G. Carroll, and Gene Lockhart as the man with 14 games of chess going at the same time.

THE BIG CLOCK (1948)

John Farrow

Paramount/95 min.

Chapter 2: "Captured"



"John Farrow is one of the neglected masters of film noir and The Big Clock is one of his best films. Farrow was a devout Roman Catholic and he found, in these crime films, the perfect genre to explore the nature of man and his moral destiny. While these are the underlying themes of all of Farrow's work, it does not overwhelm the entertainment value of his movies."

—Michael L. Stephens

Ray Milland has a date with suspense in this film based on the Kenneth Fearing crime novel. He plays George Stroud, the editor of "Crimeways Magazine" who, at the behest of his boss, Janoth (Charles Laughton), finds himself in the middle of a search for the elusive "Jefferson Randolph." Janoth is determined to find Randolph after his mistress (Rita Johnson) is murdered. However, all the clues point to Stroud—a pawn of the corporate world. (He should've skipped the stinger and gone on his belated honeymoon with faithful Maureen O'Sullivan.) The egomaniac Laughton, a metaphoric clock whose life is ruled by the cold hands of time, finds new uses for sundials in this superb thriller. With the batty Elsa Lanchester, George Macready, and the mute Harry Morgan.



NIGHTMARE ALLEY (1947)

Edmund Goulding
Twentieth Century-Fox/111 min.
Chapter 3: "The False Signal"

"Nightmare Alley is unique among noirs. There's no gunplay, no gangsters, and the lone 'crime' is handled with great ambiguity... In spirit it most closely resembles

Force of Evil... And just as Polonsky's film presciently envisioned a future filled with mob-infested lotteries and a criminal pox on Wall Street, so Nightmare Alley presages a world of televangelists, home shopping hucksterism, New Age charlatans, and the Psychic Friends Network."

— Eddie Muller

William Lindsay Gresham's *Nightmare Alley* is one of the finest of all crime novels—experimental and ahead of its time. Though the screen version tones the story down, it nevertheless emerges as one of the darkest alleys 1940s Hollywood ever went down. Tyrone Power plays Stan Carlisle, a carnival hustler who rises in stature (by exploiting the wealthy) to become a famous spiritualist. Power, an imperfect hero offscreen with his own demons, is excellent while on the road to personal dissolution. However, Fox did little to hype their star's diversity. With Joan Blondell (as Zeena), Coleen Gray, Taylor Holmes, and Helen Walker. Screenplay by Jules Furthman. Photographed by Lee Garmes.



DESPERATE (1947)

Anthony Mann
RKO/73 min.
Cartoon: "Easter Yeggs" (1947), Bob McKimson (Bugs Bunny)
Chapter 4: "The Enemy Strikes"

"He (Anthony Mann) chose to confront the self-evidence of 'B' material directly, giving it unexpected urgency through a visceral, and at times brutal, style... Unlike Robert Siodmak, who stood at a dignified remove from the travails of his characters, Mann dragged viewers headfirst into a maelstrom that, for the times, was unrivaled in its intensity."

— Eddie Muller

Some of the best crime films of this era were second features from RKO—the most important noir studio. In this one, Steve Brodie plays Stephen Randall, a trucker who just wants to spend his four-month anniversary at home with pretty wife Audrey Long. Soon, though, Steve unknowingly gets involved in a heist masterminded by Walt Radak (Raymond Burr). He nearly gets framed by the gang before escaping. With his pregnant wife, Steve goes on the run, encountering shady car salesmen, unsympathetic policemen, and one really dumb bus driver. The lighting in this one tells it all, and with our first sight of Radak's pulp world hive, we know that there's no ambiguity to these characters. With Jason Robards, Sr. as Ferrari. Story by Anthony Mann & Dorothy Atlas. Photographed by George E. Diskant with music by Paul Sawtell.

DESERT FURY (1947)

Lewis Allen
Paramount/96 min.
Chapter 5: "Crack-Up"



"In this air-conditioned desert, everyone saunters around in fabulous Edith Head fashions, pondering all kinds of offbeat sexual desires. The film, directed by Lewis Allen, is saturated—with incredibly lush color, fast and furious dialogue dripping with innuendo, double entendres, dark streets, outraged face-slappings, overwrought Miklos Rozsa violins. How has this film escaped revival, or cult status? It's Hollywood at its most gloriously berserk."

— Eddie Muller

The terse dialogue in this one is a real riot, and if anyone wants to speak the noir vocab, just follow Eddie Bendix (John Hodiak) and Johnny (Wendell Corey) into Chuckawalla, Arizona. Eddie, a gambler with a bad brand of hospitality, soon falls for local girl Paula, played by sultry Elizabeth Scott. But why love a man who barks at you when there's Deputy Tom (Burt Lancaster), honest with guts—and a desire to just smack that mustache off of racketeer Eddie. And where does possessive Johnny fit into all this? (I'd elaborate more on his close relationship with Eddie, but I'll save that bunk for the cine-mah theorists.) Beautiful location filming highlights this color noir. With Mary Astor (as Fritzie, Paula's dominating mother and owner of the Purple Sage bar). From the novel *Desert Town* by Ramona Stewart.

CALL NORTHSIDE 777 (1948)

Henry Hathaway
Twentieth Century-Fox/111 min.
Chapter 6: "Sunken Peril"



"Stewart left Harvey to take on the somewhat self-effacing role of a reporter in Call Northside 777 for 20th Century-Fox. It was one of Fox's documentary-style dramas like The House on 92nd Street, Boomerang and Kiss of Death. The screenplay was based on fact and filmed by a unit of seventy people where the original story took place, in Chicago. It was a new experience for Stewart, working almost entirely on location with the Chicago Times journalist that he was portraying, James P. McGuire, on hand as consultant and advisor."

— Allen Eyles

This "newspaper noir" is as relevant today as when it came out 52 years ago. James Stewart is Jim McNeil, a reporter for the Chicago Times who investigates a washerwoman's reward she placed in the paper. The woman (Kazia Orzazewski) is looking for information that can free her son (Richard Conte). McNeil is skeptical at first, believing this cop killer deserves his 99 years in the pen. But McNeil is on a mission to find the truth after seeing first hand the political corruption and police cover-ups he's up against. Similar in some ways to Elia Kazan's excellent *Boomerang*, this thriller stands apart with its evocation of kinetic news offices, quiet prisons, and old Polish neighborhoods. Only the wife (Helen Walker) and the narration seem extraneous. With Lee J. Cobb (as Stewart's editor), Betty Garde, and E.G. Marshall. Photographed by Joe MacDonald, who would later shoot Hathaway's color noir, 1953's *Niagara*.



ROAD HOUSE (1948)

Jean Negulesco
Twentieth Century-Fox/95 min.
Chapter 7: "Tracking the Enemy"

"Road House impresses first of all with its sharp dialogue exchanges between the characters and the bizarre look of the interiors. The road house itself is designed in such a way as to conjure up a synthetic vision of the postwar period, seeming at once modern and rustic. The ambience of the scenes in these interiors is strongly supported by the characteristically moody noir lighting of LaShelle."

— Blake Lucas

Ida Lupino is Lily Stevens, a singer from Chicago who, during the course of the film, performs a couple of numbers, shows off her legs, and smokes a few packs of cigarettes. She's an independent woman who falls for Pete (Cornel Wilde), the manager of a road house near the Canadian border. But Jefty (a distant cousin of Tommy Udo and owner of the place) has other ideas. "All gals want the same thing, Pete—a guy to take care of them." He winds up using the legal system to his advantage—making everyone's life miserable. Richard Widmark as the obsessive Jefty is a psychotic marvel, single-handedly pushing this melodrama over the edge into noir's deep valley. With Celeste Holm. Photographed by Joseph LaShelle (who added so much to Otto Preminger's noirs).



THE FALLEN IDOL (1948)

Carol Reed
British Lion/94 min.
Chapter 8: "Chamber of Doom"

"British film noir is particularly fascinating not only because it has never been officially acknowledged to exist, but because its peak period parallels that of American noir... it has always been influenced by the French cinema of the 30's rather than the German cinema of the 20's."

— William K. Everson

We proudly present this British film from the director of *The Third Man*. Based on Graham Greene's "The Basement Room," this is the story of an ambassador's son, Phile (Bobby Henrey), who idolizes a servant of the embassy, Baines (Ralph Richardson). Baines, though, has a miserable wife (Sonia Dresdel) who wants to know more about "the secret" her husband and Phile share. After a death in the house, suspicion falls on Baines, and young Phile becomes disillusioned by this adult world of lies. Called *The Lost Illusion* in the U.S., this is a masterpiece of nuance and detail... with the most dangerous paper airplane in cinema! With Michele Morgan, Denis O'Dea, Jack Hawkins, and Bernard Lee as Detective Hart. Photographed by Georges Perinal (who had worked with Jean Cocteau and Rene Clair) with set design by Vincent Korda. Carol Reed and Graham Greene (who wrote the screenplay) were nominated for Academy Awards.

THE BLACK BOOK (1949)

Anthony Mann
Eagle-Lion/88 min.
Chapter 9: "Flames of Jeopardy"

"From the highly exciting pacing and sureness of action and the stylistic command evident in the visuals, *Reign of Terror* (the British title) must surely be judged a success. A film without real characters... *Reign of Terror* can be seen as a stylistic watershed summing up everything the director had learned about the possibilities of the camera to that time. In this respect it is quite similar to his even more baroque *The Furies* (1950) where psychological intensity as well is explored."

— Robert E. Smith

Those who doubt the cinema as a valid art form need not look further than to John Alton's photography. Anthony Mann directs a fast-paced account of Maximilian Robespierre's (Richard Basehart) "Reign of Terror" in France. But Robert Cummings poses as Citizen Duvall in order to aid the opposition and find the black book of enemies; its fear-inducing contents can be used against its author, the power hungry Robespierre, at the next convention. From the opening montage to the in-your-face close-ups, this is historical noir at its very best. The 'going undercover' plot is reminiscent of *T-Men*; but the twist is that those working against the government are now the heroes. Muskets substitute for .38s and the narrow Parisian streets replace those of urban America. With Arnold Moss (as Poucher, the wicked chief of secret police), Arlene Dahl, Richard Hart, and Charles McGraw as a henchman of Robespierre. Written by Philip Yordan and Aeneas Mackenzie and produced by William Cameron Menzies.

WHITE HEAT (1949)

Raoul Walsh
Warner/114 min.
Chapter 10: "Crackling Fury"

"Jack (Warner) called us in and he said, 'The script's pretty good but it's expensive. That scene in the mess hall—can you play it in the chapel?' We said, 'Jack, what's Cody Jarrett doing in the chapel? Praying?'... As I recall, Raoul Walsh finally said, 'Give me three hundred extras and the machine shop, which we'll convert into a mess hall, and we'll be out by noon so the men can go back to work.' Warner said, 'You got it.' So Walsh did it in three hours and was out for lunch. One take."

— screenwriter Ben Roberts

From the opening robbery of a mail train to the famous climax in a chemical plant, this explosive post-war crime film wastes no time under the expert direction of Raoul Walsh. Mr. James Cagney returns to the genre as the unrelenting Cody Jarrett—a homicidal gangster loyal only to his Ma (played by Margaret Wycherly). Edmond O'Brien is the dutiful Fallon/Pardo, the undercover copper onboard for the big payroll heist. (Cody's "wooden horse" shows how an understanding of classic literature can be profitable.) The film strays from writer Virginia Kellogg's glorification of the methodical T-Men, and the agents are hardly sympathetic characters to the viewer. The emphasis is instead on the tragic Jarrett who, despite being a psychopath, is able to make us feel for him, such as in the masterful, cafeteria scene. Not to be missed (no matter how many times you've seen it). With Virginia Mayo, John Archer, and Steve Cochran as Big Ed. Music by Max Steiner.





THE SET-UP (1949)

Robert Wise

RKO/72 min.

Chapter 11: "Caverns of Peril"

"It was (Dore) Schary's tenacity which resulted in Wise getting the job, since before leaving, he had insisted on Wise to (Howard) Hughes. But it was an insane period at RKO, and with people coming and going due to what Wise termed, 'Hughes's Don Quixote-like way of running a studio,' Wise believed his days at RKO were numbered. His premonition came true; *The Set-Up* was his last film for the studio."

— Franklin Jarlett

In the noir universe, no one could be meaner gritting his teeth than Robert Ryan, but here, he has a sympathetic role as a 35 year old boxer "one punch away" from the title shot. Ryan, himself a former heavyweight champion at Dartmouth, was well-suited to play Stoker Thompson (complete with cauliflower ear). He gives the character a quiet nobility. Little does Stoker realize that he's supposed to take a fall. When the fight goes the distance, he must face gangsters who can hit just as hard. Director Wise structures the story in real time, and though it's only 72 minutes, this noir packs a powerful punch with its depiction of a pulp world—Paradise City—a place of cheap motels and penny arcades. With Audrey Totter, George Tobias, Wallace Ford, and Alan Baxter as the lowlife mobster in the good suit. Photographed by Milton Krasner with fight scenes choreographed by Ryan and former boxer John Indrisano. Art direction by Albert S. D'Agostino and Jack Okey. Based on the poem by Joseph Moncreur March.



THE BIG STEAL (1949)

Don Siegel

RKO/72 min.

Chapter 12: "Fight in the Sky"

"Naturally my attitude toward the picture had to be one of fun because I didn't take the story and the whole situation seriously. It amused me that Mitchum, in the picture,

would come running into a sequence and the trees would be green with full leaves, and Bendix would be right on his heel and the trees would be bare. We shot this picture in the heart of the marijuana district in Mexico, halfway between Vera Cruz and Mexico City. When Mitchum showed up for work, he was absolutely out cold, having drunk a bottle and a half of tequila with his probation officer, who if anything was drunker than Mitchum."

— Don Siegel

This fast-paced, enjoyable film re-teams the stars of *Out of the Past*, Robert Mitchum and Jane Greer. Mitchum is Lt. Holliday, an Army finance officer who is framed for stealing the payroll. Pursued by Capt. Blake (William Bendix), Holliday sets out to find the real thief (Patrick Knowles), who also cheated Greer out of \$2,000. From Veracruz, Mexico, to the countryside highways, this is a wonderfully scenic adventure by the same man who gave us *Private Hell 36* and *The Line-Up*. Mitchum is fortunate to have Greer in hand—the one American who doesn't butcher the Spanish language!—and so are we. (What man wouldn't be?) With Ramon Navarro as the English-speaking Inspector General. Based on the story *The Road to Carmichael's* by Richard Wormser.

THIEVES' HIGHWAY (1949)

Jules Dassin

Twentieth Century-Fox/94 min.

Chapter 13: "The Fatal Ride"

"*Thieves' Highway* is unjustly overlooked, bookended in limbo between director Jules Dassin's more famous *Naked City* (1948) and *Night and the City* (1950). It didn't have a high-powered producer like *Naked City*'s Mark Hellinger, nor a high-powered visual style like *Night and the City*. What it did have was a perfectly-honed screenplay by A.I. Bezzerides, a fantastic cast, and Dassin's most graceful, light-fingered direction (something he'd rarely be accused of again)."

— Eddie Muller

Jules Dassin was one of the most important directors of film noir, and before his career was cut short by the anti-commie purges of HUAC, he made four examples of provocative noir reflecting his own vision—this one being his least known. Nick Garcos (Richard Conte) is an ex-G.I. who teams up with his dad's former partners to transport apples to San Francisco. This dark journey away from home—accentuated by the gradual "closing in" of the camera—takes him to Figlia (Lee J. Cobb), a wholesaler who exploits his workers and who arranges "accidents" for those who oppose him. Valentina Cortesa (in her American debut) is the amoral Rica, the foreigner worthy of Nick. With Barbara Lawrence as WASPish Polly, Millard Mitchell as Ed, and Jack Oakie and Joseph Pevney as Slob and Pete. Photographed by Norbert Brodine and written by A.I. Bezzerides, from his novel *Thieves' Market*.



THE NARROW MARGIN (1952)

Richard Fleischer

RKO/70 min.

Chapter 14: "Getaway"

"Ideally cast as a tough moll, Marie Windsor performs the role broadly. Her dialogue sounds like a parody of the hard-boiled schools, and the exaggeration is a tip-off that noir conventions are being burlesqued... Like *The Prowler*, *The Narrow Margin* depends for its full impact on audience familiarity with earlier noir stories—both films are echoes of a fading genre."

— Foster Hirsch



Made at a cost of \$230,000, this taut thriller (by the son of Max Fleischer) does not waste a single frame in its 70 minutes. Charles McGraw is noir's kind of tough guy—a gravel-in-his-throat, hook-nosed cop who isn't crooked. Detective Brown has to safely escort a gangster's sarcastic moll (Marie Windsor) who is to testify in a graft probe; she knows mobster Frankie Neall's pay-off list. But onboard the Golden West Limited are some killers intent on making sure she never reaches L.A. alive. This film's as tough as a kick to the camera, and some of those camera movements have a certain hand-held feel within the cramped corridors—making the viewer feel as though onboard. Well-crafted by the man who made *Trapped* and *Armored Car Robbery*. Nominated for its original story. With Jacqueline White, Gordon Gebert, and Queenie Leonard. Photographed by George Diskant, a collaborator of Nicholas Ray. The film's working title was *The Target*. (There was a remake in 1990—a hundred times more expensive, a hundred times less suspenseful.)



CLASH BY NIGHT (1952)

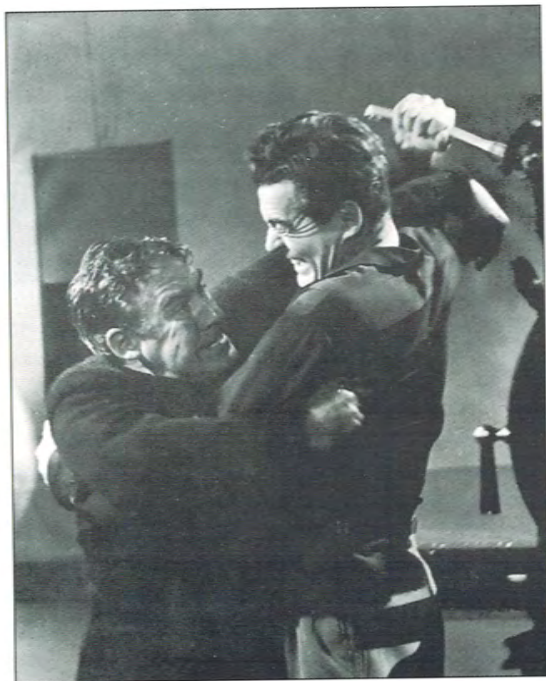
Fritz Lang
RKO/105 min.

Chapter 15: "The Last Stand"

"Barbara Stanwyck has a quality of basic loyalty that is devastatingly attractive. When she falls in love with a man she makes you feel that she is going to make him happy. Even in Double Indemnity, when she plotted murder, you were strongly pulling for her... No woman who is as honest with herself as Stanwyck can fail to have charm."

— Fritz Lang, 1954

Another Lang masterpiece—this one about a world-weary woman (Barbara Stanwyck) who returns home to the seaside town of San Xavier. She is dulled by life until a good-natured, teddy bear of a fisherman (Paul Douglas) offers her a chance at happiness. However, she is quickly drawn to Earl (Robert Ryan), the sarcastic misogynist who does bad impersonations of Chinese people. (But he *is* a movie projectionist, so he can't be that bad.) A young Marilyn Monroe and newcomer Keith Andes are the couple in the sub-plot. Lang presents us with an unsettling picture of marriage framed by adultery, but ultimately, this film is about the responsibility of belonging to someone. Similar in some respects to the Anna Christie story but actually based on a stage play by Clifford Odets. With J. Carrol Naish as Uncle Vince. Photographed by Nicholas Musuraca.



THE LAST CHAPTER

The LaSalle Theatre is interested in *cinema*, whether it's a studio film of personal vision or a well-crafted chapterplay (which has value in different ways). I take serials as seriously as animated cartoons or comedy shorts; that's why it was disturbing to see Columbia's rather inept *Batman* (1943), which recently played in Chicago, laughed at and treated as camp, which it isn't. Screening a good print of *Dick Tracy's G-men* (1939) is my response to that. No studio made higher quality serials than Republic, thanks to directors like William Witney.

Decades before Spielberg ripped off the cliffhangers, Bill Witney and co-director/friend John (Jack) English were making outstanding adventure films filled with great action and pacing, nice location shooting, and rousing music. Some of the best stuntmen and technicians in Hollywood worked at "the little studio in the valley." The three Tracy serials Witney & English did, as well as *Drums of Fu Manchu* and *The Mysterious Dr. Satan*, are prime examples of the studio's best work. And *Spy Smasher*, which Witney directed solo, rivals Universal's *Flash Gordon* as the finest serial ever.



Ralph Byrd (1909-1952) was the screen's one and only Dick Tracy. With his view that "All criminals are rats and should be treated as such," Tracy was the symbol of decency and authority in the eyes of Saturday matinee audiences of the 1930s. Outside of serials and B movies, Byrd had many supporting roles in "A" films such as *A Yank in the RAF* (1941), *Moontide* (1942), and *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943). Also starring in *G-men* is future director Irving Pichel as Zarnoff, and Phyllis Isley as Gwen Andrews. (Perhaps you know her by her other name—Jennifer Jones!)

I've been fortunate to have corresponded with Bill Witney and now, due to his health, his wife Beverly, as well as Ralph Byrd's 86 year old widow, Virginia, a remarkable lady. It was important to me to preserve the accomplishments of their husbands. (For further information, check out Mr. Witney's memoir, *In a Door, Into a Fight, Out a Door, Into a Chase*.) Since many of you requested a serial on our movie surveys, I thought I'd give you one of the best.



DICK TRACY'S G-MEN

A B. M. RELEASE



RALPH BYRD
 JENNIFER JONES
 PHYLLIS ISLEY
 IRVING PICHEL
 TED PEARSON

Directed by WILLIAM WITNEY - Screenplay by JOHN ENGELER
 Based on the story by BOBBY CONRAD. Adapted by BOBBY CONRAD and BOBBY CONRAD
 BY BOBBY CONRAD. Screenplay by BOBBY CONRAD

A
 REPUBLIC SERIAL
 in 15 CHAPTERS
REPUBLIC PRESENTS A WILLIAM WITNEY PRODUCTION

CHAPTER
8

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SON OF NOIR

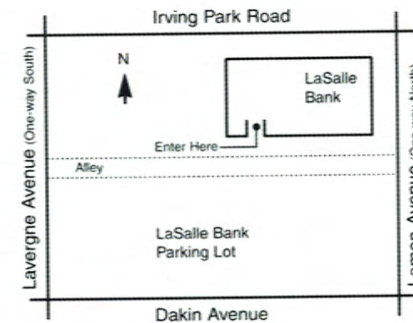


1939's Dick Tracy's G-Men

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