

lbc
Classic
Film
Series

july -
december
2005



FROM THE BOOTH

Okay everybody, hang on tight...there is no theme for this schedule. Or is there? Come up with a good unifier for these 26 films and submit it in writing at our admissions counter: our favorite entry will get a free admission pass for the next season, and everyone else who enters will get to accuse us of favoritism. One entry per person, and we'll pick the winner in December. In the meantime, here's a checklist to help you navigate six months of cinematic free-fall: we've got four films pairing Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre, three noirs directed by Phil Karlson (who? – wait and see), three screenplays by Preston Sturges, a *Lovely Ladies of Horror* double feature for Halloween, and one film in which Bette Davis goes totally bonkers. I know, I know...only one.

Features Program by Michael King

Shorts Program by Michael W. Phillips Jr.

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

July 2



FOOTLIGHT PARADE (1933)

Lloyd Bacon

Warner Bros./104 min..

35mm

Short: "Movie Pests" (1944), Will Jason (Pete Smith)

"Aw, talking pictures, it's just a fad." James Cagney applies his trademark rat-a-tat delivery to idea-man Chester Kent, a stage producer who copes with the advent of sound in cinema by franchising live musical prologues. Good luck keeping up with the myriad subplots; all the backstage backstabbing is really just an excuse for hilarious supporting turns by Joan Blondell, Dick Powell, Frank McHugh, Ruth Donnelly, and Guy Kibbee, to name a few. Besides, you came here for the musical numbers, and Busby Berkeley delivers: the shallow-end spectacular "By a

Waterfall" simply has to be seen to be believed, with 100 chorus girls wading through a flooded soundstage in a synchronized-swimming fever dream. Cagney started in showbiz as a song-and-dance man, and pleaded with Jack Warner for a chance to finally strut his stuff onscreen. He got his wish, stomping on tabletops with Ruby Keeler in the famed "Shanghai Lil" finale. Along with *42nd Street* and *Gold Diggers of 1933*, *Footlight Parade* completed Busby Berkeley's legendary 1933 tri-fecta, cementing his revolutionary spot in musical history. Modern audiences might recognize Chester Kent's name and borderline psychotic entrepreneurial spirit from Guy Maddin's sidesplitting homage in his modern classic *The Saddest Music in the World*. (MK)



THE POWER AND THE GLORY (1933)

William K. Howard

Fox Film Corp./76 min.

16mm

Cartoon: "Reducing Creme" (1935), Ub Iwerks
(Willie Whopper)



"This is unusual in the annals of story-telling!" remarked a shocked *Hollywood Reporter* about *The Power and the Glory*. They were talking about the way Preston Sturges had written the story, but they could have been talking about the film itself. Sturges had revolutionized the screenwriting process: most films were written by a bevy of writers on payroll who worked in committee, but Sturges had written a detailed shooting script and sold it to Fox in exchange for royalties ("It was the most perfect script I'd ever seen," said Jesse Lasky. "I wouldn't let anyone touch a word of it."). Also unusual was the structure: the film tells the story out of sequence, as a series of anecdotes that, together, sum up the life of Tom Garner (Spencer Tracy), who rose from nothing to become a railroad tycoon—shades of *Citizen Kane*, which was clearly influenced by this film. After Garner's death, his childhood friend Henry (Ralph Morgan) pieces together his life story, which was very loosely based on the life story of Sturges's grandfather-in-law, the breakfast-cereal magnate C.W. Post. Colleen Moore and Helen Vinson appear in flashback as wives #1 and #2. Sturges was itching to direct after having directed the dialog for this film, but he wouldn't get his chance until *The Great McGinty* seven years later. (MP)

July 16

HUSH...HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE (1964)

Robert Aldrich

20th Century Fox/134 min.

35mm

Cartoon: "Gerald McBoing Boing" (1950),
Robert Cannon



A 30-year-old murder hangs over Robert Aldrich's follow-up to his Grand Guignol classic *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* Bette Davis is Charlotte Hollis, a semi-deranged Southern Belle who is widely believed to have gotten away with the murder of her lover (Bruce Dern). When the state seizes her property for development, her cousin Miriam (Olivia de Havilland) and her longtime doctor (Joseph Cotton) try to keep her from going off the deep end, but the past has a tendency of rearing its ugly head. Aldrich, who described the film as "cannibalism in Dixie" (which isn't literally true), keeps us on edge with lots of high-angle shots and ominous lighting, inviting us to decide whether Davis is really crazy by treating us to her subjective reality. The film was supposed to re-team Aldrich, Davis, and Joan Crawford, but the legendary feud between the two grand dames of Hollywood culminated in Crawford reportedly playing sick until Aldrich gave up on her. He convinced de Havilland to take over after Katharine Hepburn, Vivien Leigh, Barbara Stanwyck, and Loretta Young all turned him down. The film received an impressive seven Oscar nominations, including one for Agnes Moorhead as Davis's crotchety housekeeper and another for Joseph Biroc's melancholy cinematography. (MP)



THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT (1956)

Frank Tashlin

20th Century Fox/99 min.

35mm CinemaScope

Short: "So You Want to Be in Pictures" (1947), Richard Bare (Joe McDoakes)

Fifty years on, Frank Tashlin's warmup for *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* seems downright prescient, outlining a dead-on satirical template for generations of manufactured pop sensations.

Fresh from fending off Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*, unwitting bombshell magnet Tom Ewell stars as a talent agent who makes a star out of mobster/songwriter Fatso Murdock's (Edmond O'Brien) talentless girlfriend (Jayne Mansfield in her first leading role) using that simple, prophetic equation of a flimsy dress and the perfect one-liner: "Ask my agent." Somewhere amidst a relentlessly freewheeling stream of gags transplanted from Tashlin's Warner Brothers cartoons, a love triangle develops. The French, of course, went crazy: *Cahiers du Cinema* called it "One of the most virulent criticisms made by intelligent Americans about their own civilization." Jean-Luc Godard referred to it in the same breath as *Design for Living*, and François Truffaut's review condensed reads: "I won't say too much about this film other than that I like it very much...of all the American films now being shown, it happens to be the best." Better bring your dancing shoes for this one: the soundtrack is jam-packed with a veritable wish list of early rock 'n' rollers, including appearances by Little Richard, Fats Domino, and the Platters. (MK)



PASSAGE TO MARSEILLE (1944)

Michael Curtiz

Warner Bros./110 min.

16mm

Cartoon: "The Ducktators" (1942), Norm McCabe

Warner Bros. decided to roll with *Casablanca*'s success by re-teaming much of that film's cast and crew in another WW2 drama. The story,

recounted by a French bomber captain (Claude Rains) in layers upon layers of flashbacks, has Humphrey Bogart (*sans* accent) playing a French newspaperman framed for murder and imprisoned on Devil's Island. He escapes along with several other patriots (including Peter Lorre) hoping to return to France to fight the Nazis. A French ship rescues them just before the Vichy government signs on with Hitler, and they must fight to keep the pro-Nazi Major Duval (Sydney Greenstreet) from surrendering the ship. Following *Casablanca*'s formula, there's a romantic subplot, but Bogie's love interest (Michele Morgan) takes a back seat to his love for France. Director Michael Curtiz's hands-on nature caused problems on the set: one crewmember complained, "If Mike would only be patient and not try to run the Camera Dept., the Effects Dept., the Electrical Dept., and all the other departments...everyone would be able to function much more efficiently," and legendary cinematographer James Wong Howe threatened to leave the set after clashing with Curtiz. A young Don Siegel shot the battle scenes. (MP)

THE GUARDSMAN (1931)

Sidney Franklin

MGM/82 min.

16mm

Short: "The Life and Death of 9413: A Hollywood Extra" (1928), Robert Florey



The illustrious stage couple Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne appear in their only sound starring roles in this Sidney Franklin-directed farce, reprising the roles they made famous in the 1924 Broadway version of Ferenc Molnár's play *Testör*. He's "the actor" and she's "the actress," a stage couple (not much of a stretch for Lunt and Fontanne), and he suspects her of infidelity. To test her loyalty, he disguises himself as a mustachioed Russian guardsman and attempts to seduce her. Roland Young, as a theater critic, and Zasu Pitts, as their maid, round out the small cast. The film is a funhouse mirror of self-reference: Lunt and Fontanne, basically playing themselves, reprise stage roles they made famous, and there's a play-within-the-film that recreates another Lunt-Fontanne Broadway hit, Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*. MGM's "boy genius" Irving Thalberg had to do a lot of prodding to convince Lunt and Fontanne to appear in this film; they found the work tedious and refused subsequent offers aside from cameos in 1943's *Stage Door Canteen*, Lunt saying, "We can be bought but we can't be bored." Both Lunt and Fontanne received acting nominations at the fourth Academy Awards. (MP)

49th PARALLEL (1941)

Michael Powell

Ortus Films/123 min.

35mm

Cartoon: "Spinach fer Britain" (1943), Izzy Sparber (Popeye)



"And so the curtain rises on Canada." When their U-boat sinks on Canadian shores, the stranded Nazi crew led by Eric Portman embarks on a clumsy odyssey toward the still-neutral American border. As their ranks thin along the way, the Germans encounter a winning cross-section of Canadian eccentrics—Leslie Howard, Raymond Massey, and Anton Walbrook among them.

But it's Laurence Olivier who steals the show in a hilarious turn as a news-deprived French Canadian fur trapper who sums up the film's attitude with this great stumper to his Nazi captors: "Don't any of you guys ever laugh?" Indeed, the greatest merit of Emeric Pressburger's Oscar winning screenplay is the tonal array it employs to make its argument. No straight propaganda piece, this is by turns a serious inquiry into the nature of nationalism, an adroit spoof of Canadian hospitality, and a valuable humanization of the enemy (Powell and Pressburger's favorite trick and a controversial element in all their wartime collaborations, from *The Spy in Black* to *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*). Check out the big names behind the scenes: pushing 70, legendary British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams made his first foray into film scoring here, and Freddie Young's beautiful location cinematography must have made quite an impression on the editor, a young David Lean—twenty years later, Young earned three Oscars shooting Lean's massive epics. (MK)

**99 RIVER STREET (1953)**

Phil Karlson
United Artists/83 min.
35mm

Short: "A Desperate Scoundrel" (1915),
Charley Chase (Ford Sterling)

A disillusioned ex-prizefighter avenging his unfaithful wife's murder just to clear his name: this is about as grimy as it gets, folks—in other words, perfect fodder for director Phil Karlson on the hardboiled heels of *Kansas City Confidential*.

Also returning from that film is John Payne, here playing a boxer-cum-cabbie with an inexhaustible supply of bad luck: right off the bat, he's betrayed by his wife (Peggie Castle), humiliated by his closest confidant (Evelyn Keyes), and *still* gets beaten up mercilessly for the rest of the movie. No wonder he's so cynical about a world that "knows you only if it can exploit you." Brad Dexter, Jay Alder, and Jack Lambert turn up as the "bad" guys, which is certainly a relative term in this cast—"even worse" guys might be more apt. Take it from critic Jack Shadoian, who noted that Karlson "uses the American dynamism to condemn it...yet films like *99 River Street* have no obvious moral ax to grind—one has to feel their bitterness." Nihilistic, sure, but this is by no means a drag: it's packed with action and boasts all-around great performances and stark cinematography by Franz Planer. Karlson once again proves his mastery of the streamlined noir. (MK)

**THE FURIES (1950)**

Anthony Mann
Paramount/109 min.
16mm

Short: "Keno Bates, Liar" (1915), William S. Hart

Anthony Mann directed *The Furies* at the beginning of his transition from the mean streets of film noir (such as *T-Men* and *Raw Deal*) to the hostile frontiers of the western. In the film, the expressionistic look of his noirs collides with wide-open spaces, with a dash of Greek tragedy thrown in for good measure. Walter Huston is T.C. Jeffords, a ruthless rancher who has a...well, a complex relationship with his daughter Vance (Barbara Stanwyck). Their love-hate relationship takes a turn for the tragic

when Vance disapproves of T.C.'s future wife (Judith Anderson) and hooks up with Rip Darrow (Wendell Corey), a rancher involved in a long-running feud with her father. Mann and cinematographer Victor Milner, who received an Oscar nomination for his work here, throw all the visual devices of noir at the screen: depth of field, chiaroscuro lighting and oppressive shadow, and crazy camera angles. The western allowed Mann to explore many of the themes of his noirs in even more stark locations; Jean-Luc Godard wrote that Mann's westerns presented "both beautiful landscapes and the explanation of this beauty, both the mystery of firearms and the secret of this mystery, both art and the theory of art." This was Huston's last film, as he died two months before it was released. (MP)

THE GAY DIVORCEE (1934)

Mark Sandrich
RKO/104 min.
35mm

Short: "A Prodigal Bridegroom" (1926),
Mack Sennett (Ben Turpin)



After Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were such a hit in 1933's *Flying Down to Rio*, RKO decided to pair them again in this effervescent musical comedy, wherein they could demonstrate once again their "distinct tendencies towards terpsichorean excellence." Based on the Cole Porter stage musical *The Gay Divorcee* (the Hayes Office insisted on a title change), the film features Astaire as a dancer (surprise, surprise) courting Rogers (taking over Claire Luce's stage role), a married woman seeking a divorce. After the expected plethora of mistaken identities and amusing misunderstandings, the two of them end up at a resort in the company of Eric Rhodes, a professional co-respondent in divorce cases ("Are you a union man?" he asks Astaire). The musical numbers include a ravishing version of Cole Porter's "Night and Day," the only song retained from the Broadway show, as well as the Oscar-winning "The Continental." Even Eric Blore, as his usual ill-tempered servant, and Edward Everett Horton, as Fred's usual slow-on-the-uptake friend, get in on the dancing. Things worked out so well on this film that the producers decided to do it again the next year in *Top Hat*, which also features Astaire, Rogers, Horton, Blore, and Rhodes, again directed by Mark Sandrich. (MP)

THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS (1944)

Jean Negulesco
Warner Bros./95 min.
16mm

Cartoon: "Racketeer Rabbit" (1946),
Friz Freleng (Bugs Bunny)



When a corpse washes ashore with the name Dimitrios stitched into the lining of his jacket, that's good enough for Colonel Haki (Kurt Katch), who makes no bones about his eagerness to close the book on the slippery master criminal, remarking "we'll probably never know who killed him, but whoever it was did us all a favor." Finding Dimitrios's globetrotting rap sheet well-suited to Cornelius Leyden's (Peter Lorre) taste for other people's flashbacks, Haki enlists the mystery writer/audience surrogate to find out "not who fired the shot, but who paid for the bullet." Flashbackers Faye Emerson and Victor Francen dish obligingly, but with Sydney Greenstreet waving pistols around while talking in circles of cryptic alliances and large sums of money, it appears old Dimitrios (Zachary Scott) might have a posthumous plot twist left in him yet. Upon finding out that Jean Negulesco had invested extensive preproduction work in *The Maltese Falcon* before being unceremoniously dropped by Jack Warner, John Huston secured this adaptation of Eric Ambler's novel *A Coffin For Dimitrios* for Negulesco's big-time feature directing debut as a consolation. As some gutsy insurance, Negulesco's agent boldly guaranteed Warner that there would be a Best Director Oscar in store if his client got the gig. While that didn't exactly pan out this time around, the director was nominated four years later for *Johnny Belinda*. (MK)



THE PHENIX CITY STORY (1955)

Phil Karlson
Allied Artists/100 min.
16mm

Short: "Crime Control" (1941), Leslie Roush
(Robert Benchley)

You know you're in "the wickedest city in the United States" when new attorney general Albert Patterson's (John McIntire) pledge to clean up crime gets him assassinated before even taking office, leaving it up to his son John (Richard Kiley) to pick up the slack and run the mob (led by Edward Andrews) out of town. Daniel Mainwaring (gearing up for *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) sure didn't waste any time hammering out this intense script (coauthored with Crane Wilbur)—the film was released a mere sixteen months after the true events that inspired it. From this sordid template, director Phil Karlson concocts a head-spinning blend of fact and fiction, infusing the already sensational premise with on-location shooting, nonprofessional acting, and a spoiler-laden semi-documentary prologue. The story's sleaziness must have been contagious: Karlson even manages to up the ante by perversely indulging in morbid details like making John McIntire wear the same clothes the real Albert Patterson was murdered in. The real-life John Patterson was a hard-lined segregationist who used his heroic depiction in *The Phenix City Story* as a virtual campaign commercial in his successful bid for Alabama governor in 1958. Meanwhile, Karlson was back on small-town cleanup detail twenty years later with his man-with-a-big-stick saga *Walking Tall*. (MK)



THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN (1935)

Josef von Sternberg
Paramount/79 min.
16mm
Short: "Nifty Nurses" (1934), Billy Gilbert

Amid a torrent of streamers at a Spanish carnival, wanted man Antonio Galvan (Cesar Romero) makes eyes at Concha Perez (Marlene Dietrich), and basically, it's all over. But when his old friend Don Pasqualito (Lionel Atwill, looking pretty darn von Sternberg...hmmm) treats him to a few flashbacks detailing his own pathetic tenure as Concha's favorite sugar-daddy boy-toy—will Antonio take the hint? Not a chance: get ready for the most stone-faced love triangle since, well, *Morocco*. Notoriously difficult director Josef von Sternberg also served as cinematographer on this film, and his singular vision is evi-

dent in every frame; from the opening claustrophobe's nightmare of a carnival through to the finale's relentless monsoon, jaw-dropping setpieces abound. Plus, Edward Everett Horton wears a funny beard as a Spanish police chief whose idea of crowd control is to suggest shooting lawbreakers on sight as a timesaving alternative to actually making all those boring arrests. That's just that kind of detail that caused the Spanish government to muscle *The Devil Is a Woman* right out of circulation, where it remained until 1959. This was Dietrich and von Sternberg's seventh and last film together; neither's career ever fully recovered, and it can be safely said that (regrettably) no one ever made films quite like this again. (MK)

HANDS ACROSS THE TABLE (1935)

Mitchell Leisen
Paramount/81 min.
16mm

Short: "100% Service" (1931), Ray Cozine
(Burns & Allen)



Carole Lombard and Fred MacMurray play a pair of social climbers in this elegant romantic comedy directed by Mitchell Leisen. She's a manicurist looking to marry a rich man, and he's a playboy whose family fortune disappeared in the Crash. Ralph Bellamy completes the love triangle as a disabled millionaire with his eye on Lombard, who only has eyes for MacMurray, despite the fact that he's broke and engaged to an heiress. This film was the first to be tailored expressly for Lombard, and Leisen asked Ray Milland, of all people, to star opposite her. Milland turned him down, and Fred MacMurray, then a little-known sax player with two films under his belt, got the nod and never looked back, teaming with Lombard three other times and working with Leisen on seven other films. Leisen, who started as a set designer under Cecil B. DeMille, said, "Light comedy is a state of mind. You can't really direct it, the actors just have to feel it." But sometimes your costars can help: Lombard helped MacMurray hone his comic timing by sitting on top of him, pounding his chest with her fists and saying, "Now Uncle Fred, you be funny or I'll pluck your eyebrows out." Judging from the film, it worked. (MP)

5 FINGERS (1952)

Joseph L. Mankiewicz
20th Century Fox/108 min.
16mm

Short: "The Cloudbopper" (1925),
Larry Semon



Authenticity is the word in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *5 Fingers*. Based on the story of the highest paid spy in history, the film trumpets its realism: its exteriors were filmed on the same locations in Turkey where the British ambassador's valet sold Allied secrets to the Nazis, who were so sure that the spy was in fact a double-agent that they failed to act on anything he sold them, including the plans for the invasion of Normandy. Underneath the dead-serious presentation, though, is an absurdist farce (where James Mason, as the spy, seems to be the only one who's in on the joke) about people who are so paranoid that they can't believe that anyone would tell the truth. Of course, this is Hollywood, so the names were all changed and a love interest was added. Mason becomes a spy because he wants to retire to South America with the fictional Countess Staviska (Danielle Darrieux), and Michael Rennie is a counter-espionage agent sent to track him down. In researching the film (and doing an uncredited rewrite of the script), Mankiewicz met the real spy, Eliaza Bazna, who was "the most obvious-looking villain I've ever met. He was almost bald, with wisps of hair across his head, gold teeth, and two different-color eyes." (MP)

October 15



THREE STRANGERS (1946)

Jean Negulesco
 Warner Bros./92 min.
 16mm
 Short: "Twice Two" (1933),
 James Parrott (Laurel & Hardy)

An ancient Chinese legend/get-rich-quick-scheme requiring three strangers to make a wish and split their good fortune...what could go wrong? Plenty, especially when two of the strangers are Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet, as Geraldine

Fitzgerald soon finds out. Actually, Lorre is the sympathetic leading man in this one; his part was intended for Humphrey Bogart (with Mary Astor in mind for the Fitzgerald role) in a marquee-recreation attempt for the box-office boffo of *The Maltese Falcon*. As it turns out, the casting of Lorre is the film's biggest asset, valuable not only for his nuanced performance but also as an inspired, thematically relevant bit of typecast-thwarting—and if you ever wanted to see a Hollywood starlet give Peter Lorre the time of day, here's your big chance. He also gets to say "don't ever get mixed up with a Chinese goddess. That's the worst thing that can happen, the very worst" with a straight face. John Huston wrote the deliberately *Maltese Falcon*-esque script for Jean Negulesco's third consecutive Lorre/Greenstreet film, and was initially attached to direct. Huston sure couldn't get enough of greed and corruption in those days; he was also busy at Warner, directing *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. (MK)

October 22



UNFAITHFULLY YOURS (1948)

Preston Sturges
 20th Century Fox/105 min.
 35mm
 Cartoon: "Music Land" (1935), Wilfred Jackson

Rex Harrison has a field day as paranoiac conductor Sir Alfred de Carter, suspicious of his wife's (Linda Darnell) fidelity to the brink of hysteria. His jealousy fueled by the music of Rossini, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner, Sir Alfred plots revenge in increasingly deranged fantasies, only to find his protracted attempt at retribution foiled in a hilariously extended bout

with technology. In a stylistic departure from the signature chaos of his ensemble comedies, writer/director Preston Sturges gracefully reflects Sir Alfred's arrogance by precisely coordinating his diabolical visions with a near-constant musical underscore, only to pull the rug out with reality-driven slapstick in the haywire finale. The cast includes Kurt Kreuger as the alleged romantic adversary, and Rudy Valle and Edgar Kennedy as the brother-in-law and private detective whose intrusiveness sets Sir Alfred's imagination ablaze. The first film Sturges managed to get released after quitting Paramount four years earlier, this unfortunately turned out to be a last gasp, garnering a mixed reception that may have been a case of bad timing: audiences probably weren't too keen on watching Harrison fantasize about adultery and murder six months after his affair with Carole Landis ended in her suicide. Remade in 1984 with the, er...imaginative casting of Nastassja Kinski as hopelessly infatuated with Dudley Moore. (MK)

HALLOWEEN HORROR SHOW

October 29

BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935)

James Whale
 Universal/75 min.
 16mm

Cartoon: "Bottles" (1936), Hugh Harman



"I squeezed the idea dry on the original picture, and never want to work on it again." So responded director James Whale to requests that he helm a sequel to his groundbreaking 1931 film *Frankenstein*. He changed his mind after the studio gave him complete control over the film: from title, script, cast, and crew down to the Bride's makeup and the props in Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory. In the process, he made one of the greatest horror films of all time, full of shocks and a surprising amount of humor. Having survived the fire at the end of the first film, the lonely monster (Boris Karloff) is in the midst of an existential crisis. He befriends a blind hermit (O.P. Heggie) who teaches him how to talk, smoke, and drink, and later he decides that what he really wants is female companionship. Meanwhile, the newly reformed and easily excitable Dr. Frankenstein (Colin Clive) is led astray by the flamboyant Pretorious (Ernest Thesiger), and sooner than you can scream, "It's alive! Alive!" the two of them are manufacturing a mate for the monster: Elsa Lanchester, who based her performance on the behavior of mating swans, and who also appears in a prologue as Mary Shelly, author of the original novel. (MP)

DRACULA'S DAUGHTER (1936)

Lambert Hillyer
 Universal/71 min.
 16mm



"Why should Cecil B. DeMille have a monopoly on the great box office values of torture and cruelty?" asked the writer of a first draft of this long-delayed sequel to the iconic, if somewhat tepid, 1931 version of Bram Stoker's famous novel. He envisioned a grisly horror film, full of the shrieks and cries of the damned, but his version didn't make the cut. Instead, this version, based on one of Stoker's stories, finally hit the screens in 1936, heavy on atmosphere and shocking (for its time) sexuality. Gloria Holden is Countess Zaleska, the titular daughter. Seeking a cure for her vampirism, she attempts to enlist the aid of Dr. Garth (Otto Kruger), who is busy trying to prove that Dracula's killer, Von Helsing (Edward Van Sloan), is neither crazy nor a murderer. Meanwhile, Zaleska's body count is on the rise. Marguerite Churchill is Garth's chipper assistant, and Irving Pichel (who co-directed *The Most Dangerous Game*) appears as Zaleska's heavy. Zaleska wasn't the only one who was cursed: the film was late and over budget, and during filming, a heavy lamp fell onto director Lambert Hillyer's head, putting him in the hospital. It was supposed to save Universal, but it failed; Carl Laemmle had to sell the studio before the film even opened. (MP)



RUGGLES OF RED GAP (1935)

Leo McCarey
Paramount/90 min.
16mm

Short: "The Pip from Pittsburgh" (1931),
James Parrott (Charley Chase)

In the third filming of Harry Leon Wilson's 1915 novel, the great British thespian Charles Laughton, scion of a long line of butlers and hoteliers, plays Ruggles, a staid English butler who is transported into the American West after his master (Roland Young) loses him to a hick cowboy (Charlie Ruggles) in a game of cards. His absentminded new boss insists on calling him Colonel, which encourages "Bill" Ruggles to reinvent himself as a retired soldier, and, most importantly, to loosen up a bit, with the help of Mary Boland, Zasu Pitts, and Leila Hyams. The film is pretty equal with the targets for its comedy: English stuffiness and American gung-ho nationalism are pilloried, but the idea of America as a place where everyone can start over wins in the end. Reportedly Laughton's favorite of all his parts, the film, which received a surprise nomination for Best Picture, was close to his heart. As he said in his autobiography, "Although *Ruggles*...takes place during the robust 1900s, many English and colonial filmgoers will take it as a true picture of current life in the West. When I first came to California, I rather expected to see stagecoaches and scalp-collecting redskins as soon as I crossed the Rocky Mountains." (MP)



SCANDAL SHEET (1952)

Phil Karlson
Columbia Pictures/82 min.
16mm
Cartoon: "It's a Bird!" (1930),
Charley Bowers

The film noir staple that the past is never past gets a workout in this film, the first of a string of noirs that poverty-row king Phil Karlson directed in the 1950s. Mark Chapman (Broderick

Crawford), the slimy editor of a sensationalist tabloid, *should* be ecstatic when his star reporter Steve McCleary (John Derek) figures out that a woman (Rosemary DeCamp) who turned up dead after a dance sponsored by the paper was, in fact, murdered, but there's one problem: the victim was Chapman's estranged wife, and Chapman killed her. He has plenty of time to wish he hadn't trained his protégé so well, as McCleary slowly tracks the case back to him. Donna Reed supplies the film's only shred of conscience, as McCleary's girlfriend and fellow reporter. Hard-hitting writer-director Samuel Fuller based his 1944 novel *The Dark Page* on his experiences as one of the nation's youngest crime reporters for a New York tabloid whose guiding principle was "creative exaggeration." When the film version finally hit the screens in 1952—after Howard Hawks toyed with the idea of refitting it as a vehicle for Bogie and Bacall—Fuller's friend Karlson was tapped to direct, with Oscar-winner Burnett Guffey supplying the claustrophobic cinematography. (MP)

THE VERDICT (1946)

Don Siegel
Warner Bros./86 min.
16mm
Newsreel: "News Parade of 1946"



After winning two short-subject Oscars in 1945, montage-specialist Don Siegel finally graduated to feature directing with this locked-room mystery, the final installment of Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet's nine pairings in the five years following *The Maltese Falcon*. Canned when the hanging of an innocent man negates his 30 years of loyal service in Scotland Yard, superintendent Groden (Greenstreet) plots an elaborate revenge on his cocky successor (George Coulouris), whom he suspects of facilitating his fall from grace—and worse yet, having "misjudged the size of my britches." Lorre figures in as an artist illustrating Groden's criminology study, prompting exchanges like this: "Come Victor, I have a delightful stabbing for you to illustrate." "Oh, no, I've done three stabbings in a row. How about a nice strangulation?" Joan Loring, Rosalind Ivan, and Paul Cavanagh turn up in supporting roles, if you can find them in the dense fog that apparently enveloped London in 1890, if Ernest Haller's beautiful cinematography is any indication. Siegel saved Israel Zangwill's source novel *The Big Bow Mystery* from striking out on the big screen; it had already been filmed twice before with less memorable results (and even less memorable titles), first in 1928 as *The Perfect Crime* and then in 1934 as *The Crime Doctor*. (MK)

THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS (1946)

Lewis Milestone
Paramount/116 min.
16mm
Cartoon: "When the Cat's Away" (1935),
Rudolph Ising



Sick and tired of running away from a guardian wicked enough to deserve her own fairy tale, the adolescent Martha Ivers inadvertently kills her Aunt (Judith Anderson) in a stormy prologue that packs an extremely high thunderclap-per-minute ratio. Eighteen years later, the three living witnesses reconvene for some good old-fashioned double-crossing. Barbara Stanwyck reprises her *Double Indemnity* act as the grown-up Martha, puppet-master to boozier Walter O'Neill's (Kirk Douglas in his impressive screen debut) political career. The couple's best efforts to will amnesia regarding Martha's crime and Walter's subsequent coverup go down the drain when an unlikely traffic accident lands Martha's childhood sweetheart Sam Masterson (Van Heflin, returning from the war) back in town. Uh oh...something tells me it's gonna take a suicide pact to get out of this one. Elizabeth Scott (in her second film) gets caught in the crossfire as Toni, an ex-con who directs most of her conversations at the horizon and looks pretty darn good on her first day out of jail. Writer John Patrick earned an Oscar nomination for his original short story "Love Lies Bleeding"; too bad they don't give out prizes for Best Title—this would have been a shoo-in. Keep your eyes peeled for Blake Edwards in a bit part as a hitchhiking sailor. (MK)

**EASY LIVING (1937)**

Mitchell Leisen

Paramount/88 min.

16mm

Cartoon: "Boop-Oop-A-Doop" (1932),
Dave Fleischer (Betty Boop)

Fed up with his wife's (Mary Nash) extravagant spending, J.B. Ball (Edward Arnold) throws one of her fur coats out the window, starting a chain reaction that whisks Mary Smith (Jean Arthur) from busting piggy banks to a virtual free ride at a chi-chi hotel. Along the way, she starts an epic

food fight in her meet-cute with Ball's recovering idle rich son (Ray Milland) and becomes a favorite target of the paparazzi (William Demarest) and an unwitting spokesmodel for Mr. Louis Louis's (Luis Alberni) struggling luxury hotel. It's like Franklin Pangborn (in a great character turn) says: "wherever there's smoke, there must be...smoking." Adapting Vera Caspary's story was Preston Sturges's first writing assignment at Paramount; he reputedly threw out everything but the title and gave his screenplay to director Mitchell Leisen directly, going over the head of his producer, who had since decided that "1936 was not the time for comedies and wanted to abandon the whole project. I disagreed. Any time was a good time for comedies." In Leisen's expert hands, one of the best films from a Preston Sturges screenplay emerged, a hysterical collision of slapstick and wordplay. (MK)

**LAURA (1944)**

Otto Preminger

20th Century Fox/88 min.

35mm

Cartoon: "The Stolen Heart" (1934), Lotte Reiniger

In Otto Preminger's *Laura*, which lifts film noir from the gritty streets and into high society, Detective Mark McPherson (Dana Andrews) tries to solve the murder of Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney). There are plenty of suspects: Laura's dapper Svengali Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb); Laura's dilettante fiancé Shelby Carpenter (Vincent Price); Carpenter's jealous suitor Ann Treadwell (Judith Anderson)—and even Laura herself, who returns from a vacation to find that she's gone from murder victim to murder suspect. McPherson brings the acerbic Lydecker

along on his investigation in this tale of dueling obsessions. It's also a tale of backstabbing, lies, and betrayal—much of it behind the scenes. Preminger had to fight to get the film made, then to direct, and then to have Webb (who was deemed too effeminate) and Andrews ("an agreeable schoolboy," said studio head Darryl Zanuck) be in the film. Zanuck still wasn't pleased, and only gossip columnist Walter Winchell, attending a screening, saved the film from an "it was all a dream" ending. Preminger got the last laugh, as the film was a hit, he and Webb earned Oscar nominations, and the gorgeous cinematography, by newcomer Joseph LaShelle, won. David Raskin's ever-present title song (with lyrics added later by Johnny Mercer) went on to become a standard. (MP)

THE LOVE PARADE (1929)

Ernst Lubitsch

Paramount/107 min.

16mm

Short: "Multiple SIdosis" (1970),
Sid Laverents

Ernst Lubitsch ushered in the 1930s with this archetypal pre-code musical, the standard-bearer for all things frothy. The plot kicks off with Count Alfred's (Maurice Chevalier) state-mandated return to Sylvania (it's fake) after an amorously reckless tenure as ambassador to France. But wouldn't you know it, Sylvania Queen Louise (Jeanette MacDonald) needs a husband, and pretty soon it's swoonsville all around, with the Queen belting out "Dream Lover" at the top of her lungs. Not so fast, Louise...once wedded, latent chauvinist Alfred finds he isn't exactly the stay-at-home-royalty type, expressing his woes in the strictly pre-Code libidinal lamentation "Nobody's Using It Now." Lupino Lane and Lillian Roth appear as servants in a parallel romance with far lower expectations: their duet is called "Let's Be Common." This was the 25-year-old Jeanette MacDonald's screen debut and only the second American film for Maurice Chevalier, whose successful reinvention as a sophisticated playboy gave him cause to abandon his Parisian working-stiff routine once and for all. *The Love Parade* racked up an impressive six Oscar nominations, including Best Picture, Director, and Actor. Despite offscreen feuding, the stars knew better than to mess with onscreen success: they paired up for three more musical comedies, two of them with Lubitsch. (MK)



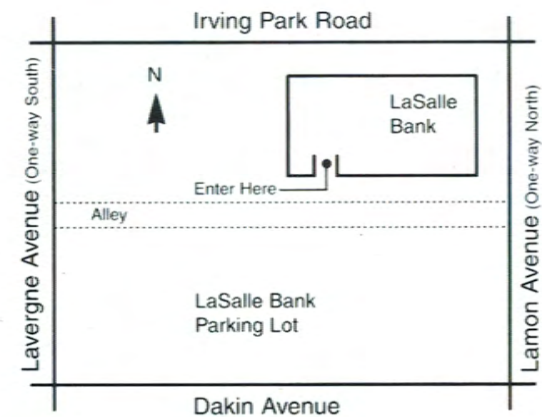


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