



September - December 2019

# CHICAGO FILM SOCIETY



## WHAT IS THIS?

The Chicago Film Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Founded by projectionists in 2011, the Chicago Film Society exists to promote the preservation of film *in context*. Film prints capture the past uniquely. As physical artifacts, they hold the stories told by films, but also the stories of the industries that produced them, the labs that printed them, the places where they were exhibited, and the people who watched them. All of this history—not just of film, but of industry, labor, recreation, and culture—is more intelligible when it's grounded in unsimulated experience: seeing a film in a theater, with an audience, and projected from film stock.

## SCREENING VENUES

### Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU)



*The Chicago Film Society is proud to be NEIU's first film programming organization in residence.*

**Ticket price:** General Admission: \$7; NEIU Students with ID: \$3

If you need reasonable accommodations to attend the screenings at NEIU, please contact Student Disability Services at least 72 business hours in advance. 773-442-4595 or SDS@neiu.edu

**Location:** The Auditorium, Building E, 3701 W Bryn Mawr Ave  
Building E is adjacent to the NEIU Student Union and is located one block south of the 3701 W Bryn Mawr entrance to campus, slightly northwest of the WTTW studios.

**Questions?** Call CFS at (773) 850 0141 or visit [neiu.edu/about/campus-map-and-directions](http://neiu.edu/about/campus-map-and-directions)

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### Music Box Theatre



**Ticket price:** \$10 or \$11 as noted

**Location:** 3733 N Southport Ave

**Questions?** Contact the Music Box at (773) 871 6607 or visit [musicboxtheatre.com](http://musicboxtheatre.com)

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### Chicago Filmmakers



**Ticket price:** \$8

**Location:** 5720 N Ridge Ave

**Questions?** Contact Chicago Filmmakers at [info@chicagofilmmakers.org](mailto:info@chicagofilmmakers.org) or (773) 293-1447

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### filmfront



**Ticket price:** FREE

**Location:** 1740 W 18th St

**Questions?** Contact Filmfront at [info@filmfront.org](mailto:info@filmfront.org)

**All programs begin with a short introduction and a short subject — plan accordingly!**

## FROM THE BOOTH

If you wanted to borrow a book that has been out of print since the 1970s, you could hop onto WorldCat and instantly find libraries (public, college, and

otherwise) with copies on their shelves and request an interlibrary loan. Institutions large and small share their records because it furthers their mission of making their collections accessible to all.

There's no comparable clearinghouse for exploring the holdings of film archives, studio vaults, print depots, and private collections in one fell swoop. Some institutions are better than others about divulging their holdings. Assembling a program like ours requires a ramshackle determination to sift through kludgy databases, clandestine spreadsheets, old program notes and PDFs, and enough Microsoft Word documents to fill a 3½" floppy disk. We collate all of this information into our own spreadsheet (which also includes many audience suggestions that we genuinely try to hunt down).

If we're lucky, an archive will premiere a new restoration at a festival with deserved fanfare. Or a funding institution, like the National Film Preservation Foundation or the Film Foundation, will issue a press release touting its latest effort. But much more often, preservation happens in the shadows, with hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars devoted to saving a film with nary a peep. (If a film gets preserved in the woods and no one is around to see it, will it ever get projected?)

Often our best hope of finding out about interesting prints is following the programming at other like-minded venues. We learned we could book a 35mm print of *Ghost Catchers* when it turned up on a University of Wisconsin Cinematheque schedule. We noticed *The Signal Tower* in this year's San Francisco Silent Film Festival lineup and thought it looked interesting. We liked *Poppy* so much when we saw it at a private screening in 16mm that we immediately decided to book it for you in 35mm.


But just because a print hasn't been seen doesn't mean it can't be shown. All recent screenings of *Louie Bluie* have been digital projections, so we assumed that no prints were extant—until we wrote to director Terry Zwigoff, who offered to let us show his own 16mm print. We had never even heard of *Drive-In* until we learned from a Sony Pictures employee that they possessed a vault print that had never been loaned out before. There's always more where that came from!

One reason that we cite the source of every print we show (with rare exceptions) is to make these prints as accessible as possible to other programmers and organizations. You can't show what you don't know.

## PROGRAMMED AND PROJECTED BY

**Julian Antos, Becca Hall, Rebecca Lyon, Kyle Westphal, and Cameron Worden.**  
**Intern: Clayton Mills — Additional Capsules: Vincent Mollica, Julia Reinitz**

— write to us at our offices at 1635 E 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615 —  
or email us at [info@chicagofilmsociety.org](mailto:info@chicagofilmsociety.org)

 **FIELD TRIP!** — Do you love the Chicago Film Society but wish it didn't have to be in Chicago? Mosey on up to Madison for "Chicago Film Society Presents," a sixteen-program series at the University of Wisconsin Cinematheque that will screen a print from our collection at the Chazen Museum of Art each Sunday from September 1 to December 16. It includes films we've shown before—*Turn the Key Softly*, *Sweetie*, *Trust*, *The Ladies' Man*—and others that are still awaiting Chicago projections, including *Interlude*, *Shy People*, and Stephen Chow's *The King of Comedy*. All in 35mm. Details at [cinema.wisc.edu](http://cinema.wisc.edu)

WED • SEP 4 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



and exuberant. Initially considered miscast for a role that Paul Muni played on stage, Barrymore's natural patina of "you've-got-to-be-kidding-me" drunk exhaustion could not be more perfect. (JA)

82 min • Universal Pictures • 35mm from Universal

**Short:** Zazu Pitts & Thelma Todd in "The Soilers" (George Marshall, 1932) - 18 min - 35mm from Library of Congress

WED • SEP 11 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



questionable riding skills, but the highlight is, of course, the music, including the singular "Barnyard Boogie" and the cold-blooded realism of "Don't Burn the Candle at Both Ends," with lyrics like "See your dentist twice a year / And stay away from root beer / But then again you might have bad luck / And walk out in the street and get hit by a truck." (KW)

63 min • Astor Pictures • 35mm from Library of Congress

**Short:** Louis Armstrong in "A Rhapsody in Black and Blue" (Aubrey Scotto, 1932) - 10 min - 35mm from Library of Congress, permission Cohen Media

**Presented with the Jazz Institute of Chicago as part of JIC's 50th Anniversary.**

**COUNSELLOR AT LAW**

**Directed by William Wyler • 1933**

In an undisclosed suite near the top of the Empire State Building, Isabel Jewell performs triage at the switchboard for attorney John Barrymore while the law office of Simon & Tedesco bustles with sandwich deliveries, leftist radicals, and flirty paralegals. Raised in poverty, Barrymore charges his wealthy clients double to cover his pro bono work for struggling immigrants, but he faces disbarment for a mistake made early in his career and is too crazed with work to do anything as his marriage disintegrates at the hands of Melvyn Douglas. A devastating and sympathetic portrayal of a workaholic about to lose everything, *Counsellor at Law* captures the controlled chaos of the law office with a pin-sharp understanding of the pleasure and pain of running a business without sacrificing your ideals. Former lawyer and playwright Elmer Rice wrote the script, based on his play of the same name, and William Wyler applied the necessary pre-Code pressure, delivering a faithful 82-minute screen adaptation which is simultaneously gut-wrenching

**LOOKOUT SISTER**

**Directed by Bud Pollard • 1948**

R&B legend Louis Jordan stars as R&B legend Louis Jordan, a hard-charging and magnanimous professional who plays so many benefit concerts that he winds up in a sanitarium for overwork. With eleven songs crammed into a running time of just over an hour, *Lookout Sister* might merit the same diagnosis, but if this joyously ingratiating, loose-limbed musical is sick, then we don't want to be well. Jordan cameoed in two Hollywood features, but the core of his movie career is a trio of low-budget musicals produced by Astor Pictures for African American audiences. The final entry, shot while a real-life union contract dispute kept the band out of the recording studio, *Lookout Sister* finds the recuperating bandleader dreaming of wide-open spaces and ten-gallon hats, with Jordan and his Tympany Five ensemble reimagined as Two Gun Jordan and His Jivin' Cowhands. Two Gun has been brought out to Lookout, Arizona, by the sibling proprietors of the H & H Ranch ('H & H Means Health & Happiness') to save the property from an unscrupulous oil speculator. Jordan shows off his

## FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE

Directed by Sam Taylor • 1926

Harold Lloyd's iconic screen persona—the earnest innocent next door, forever striving to make good in a boisterous and vulgar world—gets a hilarious but impolitic update in *For Heaven's Sake*. The first of Lloyd's features to be distributed under a lucrative deal with Paramount, *For Heaven's Sake* casually flaunts the comedian's plenty in the caricatured form of J. Harold Manners, a stuffed-shirt scion who thinks nothing of dropping cash on a new car to match his trousers, nor of walking away from the heap within ten minutes. But soon “the man with a mansion” meets “the miss with a mission,” tossing Jobyna Ralston some scratch after destroying her foursquare father's coffee cart and inadvertently providing the seed money for a new parish. A relentless comedy that also finds room to shoehorn in born-again hoodlums, speakeasy socialites, and roadside mayhem in a double-decker bus, *For Heaven's Sake* remains unjustly obscure, sandwiched between *The Freshman* and *The Kid Brother*. A connoisseur's delight, it was perhaps best summed up by the historian William K. Everson: “Like all Lloyd films, it is constructed rather than written, and assembled rather than directed. But since there is virtually no plot, and the mechanical elements aren't strained in order to make a plot, it has a grace and fluidity that many Lloyds lack.” (KW)

57 min • Paramount Pictures • 35mm from Harold Lloyd Entertainment

**Short:** “An Eastern Westerner” (Hal Roach, 1920) - 23 min - 35mm

SAT • SEP 14 • 11:30 AM

At the Music Box • \$11



Live organ accompaniment  
by Dennis Scott!

## DRIVE-IN

Directed by Rod Amateau • 1976

What may appear at first glance to be a mere regional *American Graffiti* impersonator, hoping to nab some leftover dollars from that 1973 cash cow, is, in fact, a little-seen rowdy ode to movies, moviegoers, and small-town Texas weirdos. Directed by the decidedly not-Texan Rod Amateau (also responsible for the pile of gross that is *The Garbage Pail Kids Movie*) and penned by Bob Peete (known for his writing on “Good Times”), *Drive-In* is a frenetic mess of characters and plotlines all crashing into one another eventually at The Alamo, a local drive-in screening “Disaster 76” (possibly the greatest action film never made). Energized by a soundtrack of nonstop country hits and swarming with mostly unknown Texan actors - though some may recognize character actors Trey Wilson, Bill McGhee, or future Playboy Bunny Ashley Cox - you may ask after the credits roll, “What actually happened in this film?” The answer is both nothing and everything. Complete with an attempted robbery, a hostage situation, a minor teenage feminist awakening, not one but two vans filled with delinquent teen gang members, and a gasp-inducing scene at the local roller rink, this film, to use the local parlance (as one must), “is busier than a belly dancer with a case of crabs.” (RL)

96 min • Columbia Pictures • 35mm from Sony Pictures Repertory

**Short:** McQ: A Condensation (Unknown Artist, c. 1974) - 18 min - 35mm

WED • SEP 18 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



WED • SEP 25 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



**THE DEVIL, PROBABLY**  
Directed by Robert Bresson • 1977

*In French with English subtitles*

"The void around you makes the void within you." Robert Bresson uttered this characteristically koan-like pronouncement in an interview while in pre-production for *The Devil, Probably*. This would prove an apt distillation of a film French minors would be barred from seeing upon its release for fear of inspiring mass suicides. Trudging through a Paris fogged with political disillusionment, a group of youths for whom May '68 only existed as a forsaken generational myth try on various political and intellectual identities, finding all to be spiritually bereft. The chaotic center around which the rest of this clique moves, Charles takes his peers' disaffection to another level, shrugging off all the belief structures he's faced with, treating every woman who crosses his path as a potential sexual conquest, and only expressing engagement in the moments he spends planning his own death. A terrifyingly lucid portrait of a world undone by avarice, wanton environmental destruction, and the death of intellectual curiosity, Bresson's penultimate masterpiece diagnoses the fervor of discontent that pilots his young subjects as the only sane response to

a world plagued evermore by a deep, cosmic sickness. Some things never change. (CW)

95 min • Sunchild / G.M.F. Productions • 35mm from The Film Desk

**Short:** "Whatever Happened to Honesty?" (Alfred Higgins, 1977) - 13 min - 16mm from Chicago Film Archives

MON • SEP 30 • 7:00 PM

At the Music Box • \$10



**MIRACLE MILE**  
Directed by Steve De Jarnatt • 1988

Hip-to-be-square trombone player Harry (Anthony Edwards) and genuinely hip diner waitress Julie (Mare Winningham) meet cute at the La Brea Tar Pits, liberate a tank of lobsters, and plan a date after she gets off work at a quarter past midnight. The self-declared King of the Glenn Miller Impersonators naps too long and misses their date, but arrives at Johnnie's Coffee Shop just in time to pick up a ringing pay phone. Wrong number—a panicked man in a North Dakota missile silo trying to warn his father of an imminent nuclear exchange. If it's not a prank, Harry has 70 minutes to find Julie, hire a freelance helicopter pilot, and escape to Antarctica with the night owls from Johnnie's. This propulsive, real-time journey through nocturnal Los Angeles glows like an atomic Lite-Brite and gambols to the ambient drone of Tangerine Dream. Though it begins as a rom-com with a stealth agenda, this masterful and sharply funny thriller ultimately earns a place alongside such landmark social disintegration freakouts as Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*,

and its East Coast contemporary, Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. A legendary script that floated around Hollywood for a decade, *Miracle Mile* finally detonated in theaters in spring 1989, the last fallout of Cold War cinema. Tragically and inexplicably, writer-director Steve De Jarnatt's career would remain stuck in the TV tar pits, with this and *Cherry 2000* his only features to date. (KW)

87 min • Hemdale Picture Corporation • 35mm from Park Circus

**Short:** "Journey to Tomorrow: Communication" (Fern Field, 1983) - 18 min - 16mm

## HELL TO ETERNITY

Directed by Phil Karlson • 1960

With considerable distance from its subject material, the World War II epic *Hell to Eternity*, directed by Chicago-born Phil Karlson (*The Phenix City Story*), marries a frank look at anti-Japanese hate in the United States with a patriotic "true" story. Based on the life of real soldier Guy Gabaldon (Jeffrey Hunter), whose own Mexican American heritage is eliminated from the film, *Hell to Eternity* divides evenly into two halves. The first part focuses on Gabaldon's experience growing up with a Japanese American adoptive family in the years leading up to World War II. The second depicts a gruesome campaign in which Gabaldon's ability to speak Japanese results in surrender. The film is one of remarkably few Hollywood films concerned with Japanese American life during WWII, and one of even fewer to address Japanese American internment camps. A brief, frank, scene in which Gabaldon sees his family carted away to concentration camps is especially shocking to watch in 2019. Indeed, Karlson spoke of his attempts to get his "little pieces of truth" into films, sneaking past a conservative studio, and he considered *Hell to Eternity* to be "one of his most important pictures." This was also the final film for silent era actress Tsuru Aoki, who plays Gabaldon's mother, as well as the final film featuring both her and her husband Sessue Hayakawa. (VM)

131 min • Allied Artists Pictures • 35mm from Chicago Film Society Collections, permission Swank  
**Short:** Frank Sinatra in "The House I Live In" (Mervyn LeRoy, 1945) - 11 min - 16mm

WED • OCT 2 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



## QUEEN OF DIAMONDS

Directed by Nina Menkes • 1991

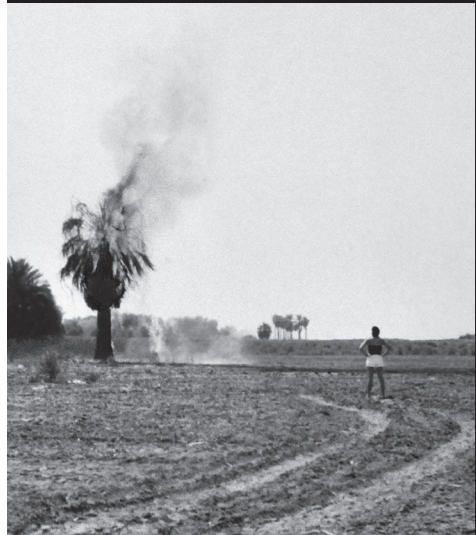
While the Sundance brand is most closely associated with churning out Academy Award alternates these days, Nina Menkes's *Queen of Diamonds*, which premiered at the film festival in 1991, is a reminder that the American independent cinema can be a lot of things outside of "quirky," namely "challenging" and "intensely personal." Made for the craft services budget of a film like *Little Miss Sunshine*, Menkes's first 35mm film and breakout feature found the director drawing on the work of Chantal Akerman to explore the rhythms of the life of a woman at work. Following the daily grind of Las Vegas blackjack dealer Firdaus, Menkes observes as Firdaus's life reaches a zenith of surreal, despairing nonchalance in the desolation of a Nevada desert dotted with cheaply furnished, linoleum-lined apartments, burned-out mobile homes, and dried-up lakes. Shot in a series of long takes with little of the connective ligature commercial cinema typically relies on, *Queen of Diamonds* piles on plot detours and unresolved mysteries with each new scene, wallowing in all the gaudy allure and sunburnt drudgery of life in the margins of Sin City. (CW) Restored by the Academy Film Archive and The Film Foundation, with funding provided by the George Lucas Family Foundation.

77 min • 35mm from Academy Film Archive, permission Arbelos

**Short:** "Babobilicons" (Daina Kruminis, 1982) - 16 min - 16mm from Canyon Cinema

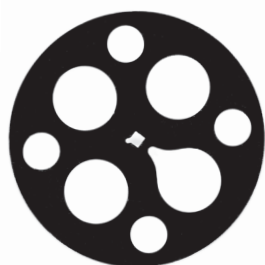
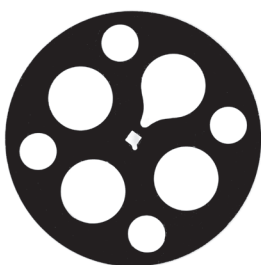
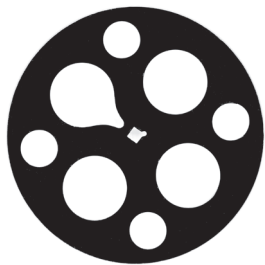
WED • OCT 9 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



# HOME MOVIE DAY

at the Chicago History Museum • 1601 N Clark  
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presented by the Chicago Film Archives & the Chicago Film Society



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[www.chicagofilmarchives.org/current-events/chicago-home-movie-day-2019](http://www.chicagofilmarchives.org/current-events/chicago-home-movie-day-2019)

TUE • OCT 22 • 7:00 PM

At the Music Box • \$10



## JAZZ '34: REMEMBRANCES OF KANSAS CITY SWING

Directed by Robert Altman • 1997

Don't ask us how, but one way or another Robert Altman, patron saint of anarchist stoners everywhere for gifting the world *Brewster McCloud* and *O.C. and Stiggs*, once wound up directing an episode of the PBS culture-culture staple *Great Performances*. (The series would get back to business the following season with *Henry V* and an opening-night gala from the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.) *Jazz '34* was conceived as an exploratory footnote to Altman's 1996 narrative feature *Kansas City*, reusing its sets and some of its cast to fashion a memory piece based on the director's boyhood recollections of his hometown's hottest clubs. Harry Belafonte narrates, but mostly stays out of the way of the performances, which need no elaboration. Employing some of the finest jazz interpreters of the '90s (including Joshua Redman, James Carter, Geri Allen, and David "Fathead" Newman) as stand-ins, surrogates, and reanimators of the '30s sound, *Jazz '34* is a concert film of ghostly exuberance. Originally stuffed into an hour-long TV slot, *Jazz '34* was expanded slightly to a 'theatrical' version that never actually saw

theatrical release in the US; nevertheless, the VHS release of the extended version was greeted by a lengthy celebration in the *Chicago Reader* from Jonathan Rosenbaum, who regarded this "awesome existential endeavor" as "the best Robert Altman feature in more years than I care to remember." (KW) 72 min • Sandcastle 5 Productions/CiBy 2000 • 35mm from UCLA Film & Television Archives, permission Sandcastle 5

Short: Betty Boop & Cab Calloway in "Minnie the Moocher" (Fleischer Studios, 1932) - 35mm - 8 min  
Presented with the Jazz Institute of Chicago as part of JIC's 50th Anniversary

## THE SIDESHOW

Directed by Erle C. Kenton • 1928

One of a handful of surviving silent features from Columbia Pictures, and made when Frank Capra was just another name on the call sheet and not yet the Poverty Row studio's ticket to respectability, *The Sideshow* is the kind of unpretentious, bread-and-butter entertainment that regularly tumbled out of the Gower Gulch assembly line to meet the demands of small-town exhibitors. After the dissolution of her family's trapeze act, Queenie (Marie Prevost) takes up with the traveling sideshow troupe of P. W. Melrose ("Little Billy" Rhodes), a circle of social outcasts harboring a saboteur. Melrose suspects carnival barker Ted Rogers (Ralph Graves) to be the culprit, an accusation that could also serve as a swift resolution to their mutual pursuit of Queenie. *The Sideshow* offered a role with rare dramatic shading for Rhodes, a little person who built his career on stereotyped gigs in *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Terror of Tiny Town*. Alas, the uncommon respect went little noticed because the film itself was treated like a sideshow on the fringe of a changing industry.

"Here is a picture made last winter by Columbia before the talking era really hit," observed *Motion Picture News*. "It's too bad. [The] story and scenario ... would go across strong with dialogue ... The picture should go over quite well in those houses which are denied the feature talkies." (KW)

67 min • Columbia Pictures • 35mm from Sony Pictures Repertory

**Cartoon:** "Felix the Cat Trumps the Ace" (Otto Mesmer, 1926) - 8 min - 16mm

SUN • OCT 26 • 11:00 AM

At the Music Box • \$11



Live organ accompaniment  
by Dennis Scott!

## GHOST CATCHERS

Directed by Edward F. Cline • 1944

Somewhere between Abbott & Costello and Wheeler & Woolsey in the pantheon of classic Hollywood comedy duos reside the brilliantly anarchic vaudevillians Olsen & Johnson, best known for their first screen vehicle *Helzapoppin'* but for whom wacky meta-farces would become something of a stock-in-trade. Their third film for Universal Pictures, *Ghost Catchers* found the pair plopped into the sort of creaky haunted house creepshow the studio was furiously churning out at the time. (It would arrive in theaters a week after *The Invisible Man's Revenge* and three weeks before *The Mummy's Ghost*.) Employed to help a pair of singing sisters exorcise a paranormal pest from their rented mansion, nightclub owners Olsen and Johnson cook up a series of delightful and ghastly musical numbers (including a ludicrous swing dance routine inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven") chaotic enough to drive out any ghoul holding himself to a haughty standard of good taste. Featuring appearances by Andy Devine, Lon Chaney, Jr., and Ed Wood stalwart Tor Johnson as self-conscious horror movie heavies, *Ghost Catchers* anticipated the likes of *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* and sundry other horror-comedies and proved the Olsen & Johnson brand could be pushed to glorious new heights of spooky stupidity. (CW)

68 min • Universal Pictures • 35mm from Universal

**Short:** Andy Clyde in "Spook to Me" (Harry Edwards, 1945) - 35mm - 17 min

WED • OCT 30 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



MON • NOV 4 • 7:00 PM

At the Music Box • \$10

**OVER THE EDGE**  
Directed by Jonathan Kaplan • 1979

Inspired by a local newspaper article about a rash of juvenile crimes in the suburbs, writers Charles Haas and Tim Hunter created a script about the implosion of a middle-class planned community in Colorado and rounded up a crew of very young and eerily talented nonactors, including the burning ember that was a 14-year-old Matt Dillon. Jonathan Kaplan (of *White Line Fever* and *Truck Turner* fame) signed on to direct, and what resulted was one of the most beautiful and respectful films about teenage rebellion ever made. Amidst the soul-sucking prefabs and potential real estate developments of New Granada, CO, is a seething, angry mass of kids: ignored by their parents, sick with boredom, deeply loyal to each other, distrustful of authority, and not a whole lot to do except cause a whole lot of trouble. Roger Ebert aptly called it, "depressing and harrowing and often very real... the other side of the coin of *Breaking Away*." Woefully mismanaged by a studio that made weak attempts to market it as a horror film before dropping it from theaters altogether, the true-to-form *Over the Edge* refused to be ignored, eventually entering heavy rotation on cable, becoming a well-deserved cult classic, and influencing celebrity slackers from Kurt Cobain (who claimed, "That movie pretty much defined my whole personality") to Richard Linklater, who cited it as an inspiration for his stoner odyssey *Dazed and Confused*. It's the sort of film that can still reach you from the small screen, but will wreck you in the theater. And the Cheap Trick-heavy soundtrack will be much, much louder. (RL)

95 min • Orion Pictures • 35mm from the Academy Film Archive, permission Warner Bros.

**Cartoon:** "Back Alley Oproar" (Friz Freleng, 1948) - 7 min - 16 mm

*This short was personally selected by Tim Hunter, co-writer of Over the Edge.*



## THE SIGNAL TOWER

Directed by Clarence Brown • 1924

Orson Welles famously described a film studio as the greatest toy train set a boy could have, but Clarence Brown lived the dream in reverse a generation earlier, turning a working rail line into his studio for *The Signal Tower*, a mountain melodrama shot entirely on location in California's redwood country, hundreds of miles from Hollywood. "The whole railroad was ours," beamed Brown. "They had one train a day. Once we let that through, it was our set." Switch operator Dave (Rockcliffe Fellowes) works a 12-hour shift at the signal tower, then goes home to his wife Sally (Virginia Valli) and Sonny (Frankie Darro) in their made-to-order cabin. Still in debt to the lumber company, the family takes on a new boarder, Joe (Wallace Beery), the dandified city boy who alternates shifts with Dave at the signal tower and aspires to do so in the homestead too. A stunningly photographed and emotionally direct saga of man and machine, *The Signal Tower* survives thanks to Universal Show-at-Home 16mm prints, which retained the tints and much of the original photographic quality. Restored by the San Francisco Silent Film Festival in conjunction with Photoplay Productions. (KW)

84 min • Universal • 35mm from SFSFF Collection, Library of Congress

**Short:** "Jane's Declaration of Independence" (Charles Giblyn, 1915) - 20 min - 35mm

SAT • NOV 9 • 11:30 AM

At the Music Box • \$11



Live organ accompaniment  
by Dennis Scott!

## DANIEL

Directed by Sidney Lumet • 1983

Adapted by E. L. Doctorow from his roman à clef *The Book of Daniel*, about the aftermath of the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, this Reagan-era tribute to the Communist Party USA is one of the most neglected films of its era. Mandy Patinkin and Lindsay Crouse star as Paul and Rochelle Isaacson, City College radicals of the 1930s who eventually settle down in a Bronx radio repair shop where father lovingly deconstructs the structure of capitalism for his son with nothing more than a box of Wheaties. The arrest, trial, and eventual execution of these alleged atomic spies reverberates across the decades, as their grown children Daniel (Timothy Hutton) and Susan (Amanda Plummer) struggle to carve usable history out of this unique family cataclysm. Structured like a longhair *Citizen Kane* with grad student Daniel piecing together the meaning of his parents' lives through contradictory interviews with Old Left acquaintances, Lumet's film is an act of radical remembrance on a grand scale. (It helps that Lumet himself grew up in a Yiddish-labor milieu, working as a teenage actor in the WPA's Federal Theatre Project, and could probably recite Paul Robeson ballads in his sleep.) Pettily lambasted upon its release for its refusal to render judgment on a three-decade-old espionage case, *Daniel* is ultimately about the inscrutability and ambiguity we all must abide when regarding our parents. (KW)

129 min • Paramount Pictures • 35mm from Paramount

**Short:** Willie Howard & Al Kelly in "Come the Revolution" (1941) - 3 min - 16mm

Presented in conjunction with *HotHouse* as part of "On Whose Shoulders?," a series dedicated to re-examining the legacy of the Communist Party USA

WED • NOV 20 • 7:30 PM

At NEIU • \$7



SAT • NOV 23 • 7 PM & 9 PM

**LOUIE BLUIE**

**Directed by Terry Zwigoff • 1985**

**At filmfront • FREE**

Terry Zwigoff's first film follows Howard "Louie Bluiie" Armstrong as he hangs out, plays music, and, anecdote by anecdote, recounts his life. There's the time a drunk undertaker's daughter told him he wasn't Louie Armstrong, he was just "Louie Bluiie," originating the film's titular moniker. Or the time Armstrong's father became a preacher, gave up string instruments as the devil's music, and thus unintentionally prompted young Howard to start playing. Born in 1909, Armstrong played 22 instruments and, by the time the film was made in 1985, was among the last members of a fading generation of black string musicians. Told to the camera in between musical numbers played live for the film by Armstrong and longtime bandmate Ted Bogan, Armstrong's story is remarkable both for its charm and for its evocation of a grim and not-so-distant Jim Crow past. Armstrong's life was a story of joy and music, but it was also inseparably a story about the challenges a black



man faced moving through white spaces. From well-heeled white events in LaFollette, TN, to rough-and-tumble white immigrant dives in Chicago, Armstrong used music not only to survive but to thrive in highly adverse environments. Sometimes wrongly credited at 75 minutes, the film has always clocked in at a brief hour, according to Zwigoff due to his own erroneous belief at the time that the film could get a TV release if it was kept to sixty minutes. (JR)

60 min • Superior Pictures • 16mm from Terry Zwigoff, permission Janus Films

**Preceded by:** Assorted Musical "Soundies" - 10 min - 16mm

**Presented with the Jazz Institute of Chicago as part of JIC's 50th Anniversary**

WED • NOV 27 • 7:30 PM

**POPPY**

**Directed by A. Edward Sutherland • 1936**

**At NEIU • \$7**

Snake oil salesman Prof. Eustace P. McGargle (W.C. Fields) travels from town to town with his adopted daughter Poppy (Rochelle Hudson), who really deserves better than being chased around by bamboozled yokels. Following *Sally of the Sawdust* (1925), the second adaptation of the 1923 Broadway show that brought W.C. Fields to fame was produced with the star nearly at death's door. Suffering from multiple medical conditions exacerbated by years of continuous drinking, rumor has it that most of Fields's long shots were actually his stunt double John Sinclair (all the more reason to cement Fields's reputation as Chicago Film Society's go-to hero for Thanksgiving Eve). Production issues aside, Fields still plays a mean game of croquet, and *Poppy* is both spit-out-the-mustard-you-snuck-in hilarious and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a very affectionate and genuine film about how to make the best of the family you're stuck into. Not another peep until you put your foot in it. (JA)



73 min • Paramount Pictures • 35mm from Universal

**Short:** W.C. Fields in "The Fatal Glass of Beer" (Clyde Bruckman, 1933) - 18 min - 16mm

## DRUMLINE

Directed by Charles Stone III • 2002

Nick Cannon stars as an incoming freshman and talented snare drum player at the fictional Atlanta A&T University, a place where the halftime shows far outshine the football (which you won't see any of in this film). In a beautiful trifecta of egos, he's also an incorrigible show-off who clashes with his controlling percussion leader (Leonard Roberts) and his band director (Orlando Jones), a man so dead set against modern music he counters their rival band's au courant hip-hop compositions with "Flight of the Bumblebee." *Drumline's* depiction of black college life is a rare and much needed addition to Hollywood cinema, yet its most tremendous achievement may lie in its production, shooting with a marching band built from scratch out of mostly high school musicians, and a drumline composed of real HBCU drummers and the actors who trained incessantly alongside them. The competition scenes showcase some of the greatest real-life marching bands of the South, and they are beautifully shot, heart-pounding affairs, with the final showdown being well worth the price of admission. Though some bands declined to be part of the final scenes, as band consultant Don Roberts remembers they responded politely, "Thank you for the invitation to participate, however, we don't lose. Not in real life and not in fiction." (RL)

118 min • 20th Century Fox • 35mm from Fox Library Services

Short: TBA

MON • DEC 2 • 7:00 PM

At the Music Box • \$10



## PETER PAN

Directed by Herbert Brenon • 1924

Theatrical convention dictated that the eponymous lead of J.M. Barrie's 1904 play *Peter Pan*; or, *the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, be played by a girl. Every actress in Hollywood eyed the role, but Barrie himself insisted on casting the unknown seventeen-year-old dancer Betty Bronson over the likes of Gloria Swanson and Mary Pickford. Here and elsewhere, Herbert Brenon's glorious adaptation benefits from its peculiar fidelity to the stage version: the Darling family dog is played by a man in a mutt costume and the very theatrical moment when Peter begs the audience to clap to save Tinker Bell (Virginia Browne Faire) is imported wholesale to the cinema. As curator James Card, who saved the last surviving copy of the film from the antechamber of the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, put it, "The greatness of *Peter Pan* resides in its magic, the roots of which stretch back three decades and across the ocean. The beauty of *Peter Pan* derives directly from Georges Méliès and, like his films, and like *Caligari*, too, demonstrates anew that film is not part of photography—that its goal need not be banal realism." By locating the magic in plain sight, Brenon fashions an unassuming masterwork of silent cinema. (KW)

102 min • Paramount Pictures • 35mm from Kino Lorber

Short: "Peter Pan Handled" (Walter Lantz, 1925) - 7 min - 16mm

MON • DEC 9 • 7:00 PM

At the Music Box • \$11



Live organ accompaniment  
by Dennis Scott!

SAT • DEC 14 • 7:00 PM

At Chicago Filmmakers • \$8



## Jazz & the L.A. Rebellion

A loose collective of students and faculty working out of UCLA's graduate film program, the group of filmmakers who comprised the L.A. Rebellion would produce a body of work that was wide-ranging in its aesthetic strategies and generic interests but maintained a consistent focus on the African American experience and artistic life. Undergirding so much of the work produced by this diverse group of filmmakers was the influence of jazz. One of the most indelible films made by *Killer of Sheep* director Charles Burnett, **When it Rains** (1995) follows a saxophonist as he does his best to help his community throughout one very hectic day. *Daughters of the Dust* director Julie Dash has long cited jazz as a primary influence and one need look no further than her dance film **Four Women** (1975) and **Illusions** (1982), her breakout short on passing for white in Hollywood, for evidence. Inspired by musicians like Wayne Shorter and employing an associative, exploratory

structure, Ben Caldwell's **I & I: An African Allegory** (1979) searches for a cinematic analog for jazz's expressive freedom through improvisational actions and documentary insertions, resulting in a maximalist experimental masterpiece. The Chicago Film Society is proud to present this collection of essential short subjects in collaboration with the Jazz Institute of Chicago. (CW)

~88 min • 16mm from Milestone Film and the UCLA Film & Television Archive

Presented with the Jazz Institute of Chicago as part of JIC's 50th Anniversary

## COLLECTIONS & PRESERVATION NEWS

We don't just show films here at the Film Society—we also collect them and preserve them. Sometimes an unassuming acquisition turns into a preservation project that takes years to research, fund, and complete. **The Spider and the Fly**, our most recently preserved film, arrived as part of a large collection of 16mm films, most of them copies of Hollywood features. Hand-written notes left in the film can helped us identify it as the work of Chicago amateur filmmakers Harry and Lill Fulscher, shot in 1938. Using the then-new RCA Sound Camera, one of the first 16mm cameras able to record picture and sound simultaneously, they made a film demonstrating the new technology in charming and inventive ways.

Thanks to a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation and the skilled work of the film lab technicians at Colorlab in Maryland, we have made a new 16mm picture and soundtrack negative for this one-of-a-kind film for preservation, as well as two new 16mm prints that will be available to lend to other film exhibitors. We'll be debuting this preservation at the Los Angeles edition of Home Movie Day on October 12, then bringing it back home for Chicago Home Movie Day on October 19.

In July, we received a new NFPF grant to preserve two additional films. Our 35mm diacetate reel of **Doll Messengers of Friendship** is all that appears to survive of this haunting 1929 newsreel, which presents the results of an ambitious diplomatic doll exchange between the US and Japan. We're also thrilled to be preserving Fred Camper's 1969 avant-garde film **Bathroom** from the original 16mm A & B rolls. **Bathroom** is especially important to us because it is the fifth and final of his 16mm works to be preserved by the Film Society. We expect to debut new prints of **Doll Messengers** and all of Fred Camper's 16mm shorts in 2020.



## SEASON AT A GLANCE

### SEPTEMBER

Wed 9/4 at 7:30 PM ..... *Counsellor at Law*..... NEIU  
Wed 9/11 at 7:30 PM ..... *Look Out Sister*..... NEIU  
Sat 9/14 at 11:30 AM..... *For Heaven's Sake* ..... Music Box  
Wed 9/18 at 7:30 PM ..... *Drive-In*..... NEIU  
Wed 9/25 at 7:30 PM ..... *The Devil, Probably*..... NEIU  
Mon 9/30 at 7:00 PM ..... *Miracle Mile* ..... Music Box

### OCTOBER

Wed 10/2 at 7:30 PM ..... *Hell to Eternity* ..... NEIU  
Wed 10/9 at 7:30 PM ..... *Queen of Diamonds*..... NEIU  
Sat 10/19 at 1:30 PM..... Home Movie Day..... Chicago History Museum  
Tue 10/22 at 7:00 PM ..... *Jazz '34: Remembrances of Kansas City Swing*..... Music Box  
Sat 10/26 at 11:00 AM..... *The Sideshow* ..... Music Box  
Wed 10/30 at 7:30 PM ..... *Ghost Catchers*..... NEIU

### NOVEMBER

Mon 11/4 at 7:00 PM ..... *Over the Edge* ..... Music Box  
Sat 11/9 at 11:30 AM..... *The Signal Tower* ..... Music Box  
Wed 11/20 at 7:30 PM ..... *Daniel* ..... NEIU  
Sat 11/23 at 7:00 & 9:00..... *Louie Bluie* ..... filmfront  
Wed 11/27 at 7:30 PM ..... *Poppy* ..... NEIU

### DECEMBER

Mon 12/2 at 7:00 PM ..... *Drumline*..... Music Box  
Mon 12/9 at 7:00 PM ..... *Peter Pan* ..... Music Box  
Sat 12/14 at 7:00 PM..... *Jazz & The L.A. Rebellion*..... Chicago Filmmakers

## CONSIDER DONATING TO THE FILM SOCIETY!

**All donations are tax deductible and will be used towards general operating costs – including film archive loan fees, shipping, projection and house management costs, publicity costs, and equipment maintenance costs.**

**We are able to provide films of unusual interest to all at a reasonable cost thanks to the generosity of our donors. Thank you!**

**Donate in person at one of our screenings via our “donation box” or:**

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**phone:** (773) 850 - 0141

**email:** [info@chicagofilmsociety.org](mailto:info@chicagofilmsociety.org)  
**web:** [chicagofilmsociety.org/support](http://chicagofilmsociety.org/support)

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In residence at Northeastern Illinois University  
Sponsored by the Department of Communication, Media, and Theatre: neu.edu/cmt

*LOOKOUT SISTER*, screening September 11



## HEARTFELT THANKS TO

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