

*The Marie Dressler Foundation*

# VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL

In Historic Cobourg & Port Hope

**October 29, 30 & 31, 2010**

18<sup>TH</sup> Season

**EMMA**

RICHARD  
**CROMWELL**  
JEAN  
**HERSHOLT**  
MYRNA LOY

STORY BY FRANCES MARION  
ADAPTATION AND DIALOGUE BY  
LEONARD PRASKINS - ADDITIONAL  
DIALOGUE BY ZELDA SEARS  
DIRECTED BY  
**CLARENCE BROWN**

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Metro-  
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**SILENT FILMS CLASSIC MOVIES EARLY TALKIES**

# A Message from the Chair of The Marie Dressler Foundation

Welcome to Cobourg and our 2010 Vintage Film Festival.

The Marie Dressler Foundation for many years has assisted talented, young scholars the opportunity to pursue their dreams. They have been able through the Foundation's scholarships to further their careers in the arts fields. This has only been possible through the continued support of our patrons, sponsors and the general public.

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy this year's line-up of classic films which include silent films, a Fred Astaire musical and romance and drama. We have tried to cater to your myriad tastes and wishes.

Thank you all for making a difference in these young people's lives.

Delphine Patchett,  
Chair, Marie Dressler Foundation

The Marie Dressler Foundation was established in 1989 to preserve the house where Marie Dressler is believed to have been born. The Foundation, led by Bob Amsbury and Bill Patchett, raised about \$400,000 to buy and repair the building, which is now the home of the Marie Dressler Museum and the Town of Cobourg Visitor Information office. Our film festival celebrates the unique place Marie Dressler occupies in film as we screen her films and those of her contemporaries.

## DIRECTORS OF MARIE DRESSLER FOUNDATION

Honorary Chairman	Angus Read	Chairman	Delphine Patchett
Vice-Chairman	Murray Dillon	Treasurer	William Patchett
Foundation Coordinator	Gael Moore	Financial Director	Adrian Langhorne
Scholarship Coordinator	Alma Draper	Memorabilia	Cecilia Nasmith



# A Message from the Chair of The Vintage Film Festival

Welcome to our eighteenth annual Vintage Film Festival!

Our Friday night reception is sponsored by RBC Dominion Securities, and once again we thank them for their long time and continued support. Special thanks again to Cathie Houston for organizing the reception.

We would like to welcome Andrei Streliaev, our pianist this year. Andrei will be the accompanist for our silent films, *Tillie Wakes Up & Nosferatu*.

This year, we would like to extend a very special thank you to the Rotary Club of Cobourg. Through their very generous donation we were able to purchase several Marie Dressler posters and assorted memorabilia, which we acquired from the collection of Rob Brooks. This collection is on display at the Marie Dressler House and a photo of one of the posters “EMMA” is being used this year for our programme cover.

Thank you to Terry Foord for the wonderful selection of films we are showing this year and to Cathie Houston for all her help in obtaining films and screening rights.

Thanks to Alma Draper for once again organizing the scholarship presentation and also to her husband John Draper for the amazing work he has done and continues to do with our website, [www.vintagefilmfestival.ca](http://www.vintagefilmfestival.ca).

Thanks to all of our reviewers for their modern day reviews on our films and to Chris Worsnop, Michael Hanlon and Phyllis Hendry for their much appreciated editorial assistance with the reviews and programme.

Thanks to Jack Houghton for photographing and providing the visuals on screen.

Thanks again to Peter McLachlan of Ready Print for sponsoring our brochures and printing all of our material, and George Atto for text. Thanks also to Doug Haddow and George Atto, and all of our committee members for distribution.

Thank you to the accounting firm of Langhorne Irwin Wharram-Spry, in particular Adrian Langhorne and Sharron Wharram-Spry for maintaining our books and keeping our finances on track.

Thanks to Victoria Hall and the Capitol Theatre for assisting with the sale of tickets and their beautiful venues. Also, thanks to John Draper for providing ticket purchasing capabilities through our website.

In addition, we would also like to thank Dennis Atkinson of the Michigan Great Lakes Cinephile Society for the early Marie Dressler films.

Finally, my biggest thank you must be to our sponsors and to all of you – you are why we are here.

On behalf of the Marie Dressler Foundation and the Vintage Film Festival Committee, I would like to thank you for joining us again this year.

Lynn Hardy  
Chair



# PROGRAMME



## Friday, October 29th

VICTORIA HALL, COBOURG

- 4:15 p.m. Doors Open
- 5:20 p.m. Town Crier/Announcements
- 5:30 p.m. Easy Living (1937)
- 7:00 p.m. Reception
- 8:00 p.m. Presentations
- 8:15 p.m. The Great Garrick (1937)
- 9:45 p.m. Break
- 10:00 p.m. Tillie Wakes Up (1917) \*

## Saturday, October 30th

CAPITOL THEATRE, PORT HOPE

- 9:00 a.m. Doors Open
- 9:15 a.m. Huckleberry Finn (1939)
- 10:45 a.m. Break
- 11:05 a.m. Red Dust (1932)
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 2:15 p.m. Mogambo (1953)
- 4:10 p.m. Break
- 4:30 p.m. Anything Goes (1936) aka "Tops is the Limit"
- 6:05 p.m. Dinner
- 8:00 p.m. Nosferatu (1922) \*
- 9:15 p.m. Break
- 9:35 p.m. Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)

## Sunday, October 31st

CAPITOL THEATRE, PORT HOPE

- 9:30 a.m. Doors Open
- 10:00 a.m. The Grubstake (1922)
- 11:45 a.m. Lunch
- 1:45 p.m. I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang (1933)
- 3:15 p.m. Break
- 3:30 p.m. Murder at the Vanities (1934)

Program subject to change without notice.

\* Silent films accompaniment by Andrei Streliaev

Brochure sponsored by Ready Print, Cobourg



*In consideration of others, please refrain from wearing fragrance, turn off your cell phone and, please, no talking during the films. Thank you for your understanding. Enjoy the Festival.*

# FILM SPONSORS

Thank you to our sponsors whose generosity  
makes the Festival possible.

## SPONSORS FOR 2010 VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL



### *Easy Living*

PATRICK HOULIHAN, RBC DOMINION SECURITIES



### *The Great Garrick*

BILL & DELPHINE PATCHETT  
DR. TOM & MRS. HELEN HAWKE



### *Tillie Wakes Up*

LYNN HARDY, RBC DOMINION SECURITIES



### *Huckleberry Finn*

LYNCH RUTHERFORD TOZER

### *Red Dust*

DAVID WEIR  
EDWARD CUNNINGTON – MEET AT 66 KING



### *Mogambo*

HILL & DALE BED & BREAKFAST



### *Anything Goes*

SHEILAGH FLETCHER & PHIL CARTER  
LANGHORNE IRWIN WHARRAM-SPRY

### *Nosferatu*

LES & CATHIE HOUSTON

### *Rocky Horror Picture Show*

HILL & DALE BED & BREAKFAST



### *The Grubstake*

JAMES GORDON INSURANCE  
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### *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*

WILLIAM G. MACDONALD &  
HELEN CHARETTE – BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS



### *Murder at the Vanities*

BARBARA GARRICK  
MARGARET BAILY



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## ADDITIONAL SPONSORS & FRIENDS OF THE 2010 VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL

Thank you to these benefactors, sponsors and friends for lending their support.



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# 2010 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER



**This year's \$1,000 Scholarship winner is Melissa MacCoubrey from Cobourg**



Melissa was a student at Trinity College School in Port Hope who this fall will be attending Bishop's University in Quebec where she will pursue courses in English and Drama.

Melissa is no novice when it comes to participation in the performing arts as she has performed with the Northumberland Players; acted in Trinity College productions; has been a member of the LaJeunesse Choir for ten years, and participated in many vocal competitions. She has studied acting in London, England, and placed second at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, Under 20's Playwright's competition . . . all this because Melissa watched Donald O'Connor walk into a brick wall in the movie *Singing in the Rain!*

Melissa has also been able to maintain high academic standards, and was the Winner of the Trinity College School Silver Pin for over 120 hours of Community Service this past year.

Congratulations, Melissa.

## INTRODUCING...

### PIANIST: ANDREI STRELIAEV



Andrei Streliaev became interested in silent film music after taking a course at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto, and since then has regularly accompanied silent films in Toronto, GTA and in Europe. He has appeared in Cinematheque Ontario screenings, Nuit Blanche and Organix Festivals in Toronto, "Music Inspiration Landscape" and "Attractive Organ 220" Festivals in Riga, Latvia.



Pianist generously sponsored by Cameco

# EASY LIVING (1937)

Directed by Mitchell Leisen

No contemporary review available

## Cinema Styles Website review by "Greg"

Made in 1937, *Easy Living* was written by Preston Sturges who was still more than a couple of years away from directing his scripts and so directing duties fell to renowned Hollywood director Mitchell Leisen, director of such films as *Death Takes a Holiday*, *To Each His Own* and *Captain Carey, U.S.A.* The question is, "Can a comedy be too screwball?"

Edward Arnold plays J.B. Ball, a wealthy banker. His son, John Ball, Jr. is played by Ray Milland. Jean Arthur is Mary, the girl who famously gets a fur coat dumped on her head to get the whole story rolling.

Apropos of the finest tradition of screwball comedy the plot is absurd in the extreme. . . . Frankly, it's no more absurd than *Libeled Lady* or *My Man Godfrey* or *The Awful Truth* but it feels more absurd, or at least more frantic.

There's a breathlessness to the film that's expected from a screwball comedy but Mitchell Leisen makes the mistake of keeping the pitch at fever level from opening frame to last, not just in pace but in attitude. There's nary a moment in the film when the characters aren't yelling their lines. . . . At least half the movie involves long sequences of falls, food fights and tumbles down stairs. Everyone falls all the time and when they're not falling, they're yelling about falling, or yelling that someone else yelled that they yelled about falling. You get the point. Yelling and falling. They're in ample supply throughout.

All the Preston Sturges trademarks are here, including a little sex. . . . What's not here is Preston Sturges the director, pulling on the reins tightly. Sturges' movies were barely contained free-for-alls but they were contained. This one is just a free-for-all. Think about *Sullivan's Travels* or *The Lady Eve* and think about all the

craziness that's broken up by all the non-craziness. In *Sullivan's Travels* there's the poolside scene, several moments on the bus. Each wacky scene is broken up by three or four sedate scenes to draw the audience back into the story. But here there is one sedate scene that I recall, and only one. A brief scene in Mary's suite where she and John talk about life and work. For a couple of minutes. Then it's back to yelling and falling.

. . . There are many scenes in the film that should be played sedately and aren't. There are scenes between J.B. and his wife Jenny (Mary Nash), in his office, or with his secretary in his office, that could've and should've been played straight but Leisen has them yell their lines throughout. I believe Leisen was under the mistaken conclusion that for screwball to work it had to be played at the top of one's lungs. Sturges understood you have to pull it in so that the audience relaxes. Then you uncork the dam again and drown your audience in fits of laughter. . . .

## Radio Times review by AT

A smashing slapstick comedy, due mainly to the cracking script by Preston Sturges, then still three years away from taking the director's chair himself in *The Great McGinty*. The story is simple: a fur coat thrown out of a window gets simple stenographer Jean Arthur mistaken for a millionaire's mistress, leading to all sorts of misunderstandings. As with her films for director Frank Capra, Arthur shows what a gifted comedienne she was, coping beautifully with the wisecracks and pratfalls Sturges provides. Edward Arnold as the Wall Street powerbroker and Ray Milland as his son, who's become a waiter, also give spot-on performances and there's a spectacular update on the old custard pie fight set in a New York automat.



# EASY LIVING

USA, 1937, Directed by Mitchell Leisen, b/w, 88 min

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Penny Hozy

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Who doesn't love Jean Arthur? With those apple cheeks and that luscious voice that went from soft to squeaky with perfect comic timing, Jean Arthur (1905-1991), along with Carole Lombard, Irene Dunne, and Claudette Colbert, helped define screwball comedy in the 1930s. She was a favourite of directors Frank Capra and George Stevens (she was nominated for an Oscar for Stevens's *The More The Merrier* in 1943), and she had all the qualities of a Howard Hawks woman—brash and funny, feminine and desirable—but with an aspect of niceness and that uncertainty that was always there in a Jean Arthur character (Arthur herself was famously insecure and almost pathologically shy). Unlike her screwball contemporaries, Arthur never went “wild” in her films, but she could do confusion, surprise, and vulnerability better than anyone. Her delayed reaction double takes—stopping mid-sentence and giving a sidelong glance, followed by a single word: “Say ...”—were priceless moments of comic genius. If one word exemplifies Jean Arthur, it's “Golly,” her only remark after being shown the sumptuous hotel suite in *Easy Living*.

Arthur's character in *Easy Living*, Mary Smith, becomes the victim of mistaken identity when she is thought to be the mistress of J.B. Ball (Edward Arnold), a wealthy investment banker known as “the Bull of Broad Street.” After an argument with his wife (Mary Nash) about her spending habits, Ball throws an expensive fur coat off the roof of their penthouse and it lands on Mary's head just as the open double-decker bus she is riding in passes by. She tries to return the coat but Ball insists she keep it. Mary doesn't even have a dime for bus fare, so Ball takes her to work in his limousine (stopping on the way to buy her a new hat because the falling fur coat ruined her old one), and she loses her job when her employer assumes she's a kept woman.

Events just keep piling up on poor Mary, and before she knows it, she's installed in the Hotel Louis, given a car and expensive jewellery, and being asked for stock tips because of her supposed relationship with Ball.

Directed by Mitchell Leisen (1898-1972), from a screenplay by Preston Sturges (1898-1959), *Easy Living* reflects the talents of both men. Sturges wrote a screenplay (very loosely based on a Vera Caspary play) that he could have (and perhaps should have) directed. It's intelligent (in a zany sort of way), and unfolds with a mix of slapstick humour and social realism that results in his own brand of political satire. You can see the Sturges touch in the limousine scene where Ball tries to explain compound interest to Mary. Leisen, a costume designer and an art director before directing his first film in 1933, was known for being a careful and methodical director, who managed to elicit strong performances from actresses such as Carole Lombard, Claudette Colbert, and, of course, Jean Arthur. If Leisen's direction in *Easy Living* is a little stolid, it is lightened by Sturges's fluid, “anything can happen” script.

Ray Milland (1907-1986), who appears as Ball's son, John, played debonair leading men until his Oscar-winning performance in *The Lost Weekend* in 1945 as an alcoholic writer. Milland continued working into the 1980s, and, like Arthur, had a brief run with his own television show in the 1950s. Arthur's last film was *Shane* in 1953, directed by George Stevens. It was the only colour movie she appeared in.

Penny Hozy is an award-winning Canadian sound editor and the author of three novels (as S. P. Hozy). She currently lives in Malaysia.



# THE GREAT GARRICK (1937)

Directed by: James Whale

No contemporary review available. All Movie Guide review by: Mark Deming

Director James Whale, well known for his witty horror films, tackled comedy head-on in this period piece, set in the 18th Century. David Garrick (Brian Aherne) is a gifted but supremely arrogant British actor whose fame is exceeded only by his ego. After finishing a starring run at London's Drury Lane Theatre, Garrick informs the audience his next engagement will be at the Comedie Francaise in Paris, and adds that he plans to use the opportunity to teach the French a few things about acting.

Stung by the insult, the Comedie Francaise company plan to take their revenge against Garrick by pulling an elaborate prank; on his first night in France, Garrick is taken to an inn where, unbeknown to him, the staff and clientele have been taken over by actors, who stage a lively evening for his benefit.

Garrick soon sees through the ruse but plays along, and acts cool towards a lovely young woman, Germaine De La Corbe (Olivia de Havilland), even though he's smitten with her. After giving Germaine the brush off, Garrick informs the assembled thespians that he saw through their trick, only to discover that Germaine happened upon the inn by accident and wasn't part of the act.

Garrick realizes he's alienated the woman who has stolen his heart, and his grief begins to effect his performance as Don Juan. *The Great Garrick* also features Lionel Atwill, Edward Everett Horton, and Melville Cooper; a young Lana Turner has a bit part.

## Radio Times review by AT

Brian Aherne is the famous 18th-century actor David Garrick, who tells his London audience that he's been invited to perform at the Comédie Française and intends to give the French a lesson in acting. Hearing this, French actors hatch a plot to discredit Garrick as he spends a night in Calais. This is a bright and breezy affair, although it amounts to little more than a charade. It's lavishly made by Warner Bros, with Aherne's future sister-in-law, Olivia de Havilland, adding to the fun, plus, in her second featured role, Lana Turner. The stylish direction is by James Whale, who remains best known for *Frankenstein* (1931)

## Four-word Film Reviews

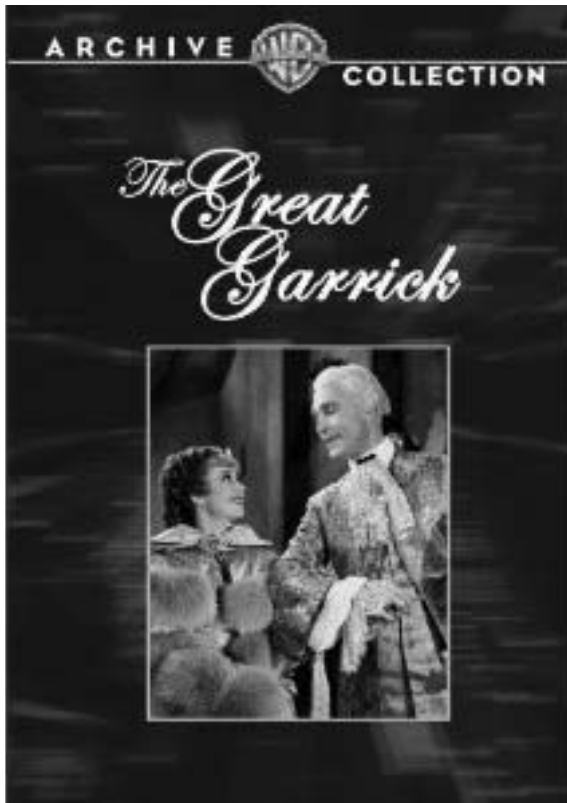
There is a current craze for writing four word film reviews. Even shorter. Look at the Website, <http://www.fwfr.com/> or read the book *The Four Word Film Reviews: The Book*. ISBN 978 1440505652

Meanwhile, why not have a try at your own four word (or fewer) review of some of the films in our program this year:

Here are the titles with a couple of our own attempts to get you started:

- *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* "A-musing down the river"
- *Anything Goes* "Boat show"
- *Easy Living*
- *Great Garrick*
- *Grub-Stake*
- *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* "Hammer slammer lammer."
- *Mogambo*
- *Murder at the Vanities*
- *Nosferatu* "A biting post mortem."
- *Red Dust*
- *Rocky Horror Picture Show*
- *Tillie Wakes Up* "Funfair fanfare"

CMW



# THE GREAT GARRICK

USA, 1937, Directed by James Whale, b/w, 91 min

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Michael Hanlon

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Brian Aherne's debut on the London stage came at the age of 11 in a piece of froth named *Where the Rainbow Ends*. It was playing at the Garrick Theatre, named for the legendary David Garrick, considered by all to be the greatest actor of his generation. Now here's Aherne 24 years later in another piece of froth, this time starring as Garrick himself. Froth perhaps, but an amusing conceit that has Aherne foiling a plot – by the entire French theatrical troupe Comedie Française, no less – to shame him for bragging that he would teach them to act.

To do so, they take over a country inn on the road to Paris and stage a series of tableaux designed to deflate his ego. But both Garrick and his dresser, played by Edward Everett Horton – that master of the double-, triple- and even quadruple-take – have been forewarned. Thus, each party to the plot can set about trying to outwit the other. Director James Whale, perhaps best known for *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, wallows in comic extravagance here and has allowed those handed the French roles to overplay them so outrageously that even Horton seems restrained by comparison. Melville Cooper as the president of La Comedie Française outdoes them all, Luis Alberni goes mad nicely, Marie Wilson does her usual eyelash-batting and a teenaged Lana Turner has such a small part you can waste the

whole movie trying to spot her. And that would be a pity, for it's all a silly and delightful romp, awash in hammy actors showing off in crowded, bursting scenes carefully controlled by the skilful Whale.

The plot thins somewhat when a young countess, played by Olivia de Havilland (sister of Joan Fontaine, to whom Aherne was briefly married), turns up seeking a room. None available, she's told, thus allowing Garrick to offer his. He assumes she's one of the actors and sets about seducing her, as he believes is expected of him. She recognises him, falls for his charm and tells him her dirty little secret (actually, it's not very dirty or much of a secret, but it is little). The ending is predictable but satisfying.

The English-born Aherne was unspeakably handsome and a veteran romantic lead when he played Garrick. He later became typecast as "a tweedy, pipe-smoking gentleman of the British school," Ephraim Katz tells us in *The Film Encyclopedia*. He had a distinguished stage career in the West End and on Broadway, where he played in *Romeo and Juliet* opposite the American actress Katherine Cornell, who, as it happens, had a summer home in Cobourg.

Michael Hanlon is a member of the Vintage Film Festival Committee.



# TILLIE WAKES UP (1917)

Directed by William Watson

No contemporary review available. Internet Movie Data Base review by: drednm

The same year that Roscoe Arbuckle and Buster Keaton invaded Coney Island (1917), Marie Dressler also had a comic romp at that famed playground. Harold Lloyd would be there again in 1928 in *Speedy*.

In her third and final outing as Tillie, she plays an unhappy wife who decides to have fun and teams up with her henpecked neighbor (Johnny Hines) to have a whirl. No real plot but lots of slapstick action and terrific views of 1917 Long Island and Coney Island.

The rides are primitive but good enough to allow Dressler to fall and tumble and mug for the camera. Hines is not so funny (and certainly no Chaplin, Dressler's co-star in *Tillie's Punctured Romance*) but is an OK foil. Dressler was 49 when she made this film; Hines was 22.

Frank Beamish is the husband, Rubye de Remer the wife, and Nora Cecil can be seen at the ice cream stand. Dressler may well have been the funniest woman in the history of films, so it's nice to be able to see her early slapstick silents.

By 1918 her film career was gone. She returned at the end of the silent era, had a notable hit in *The Patsy* with Marion Davies, made the transition to talkies and would win a 1930 Oscar for *Min and Bill*.

By the time of her death in 1934 she was the biggest box office draw in the country.

Not a great comedy, but it's a miracle a print of this still exists.

## All Movie Guide review by Janiss Garza

If the name "Tillie" appears in the title and the film is made in the latter half of the 1910s, it's a sure bet that Marie Dressler is starring. Here, she plays Tillie Tinkelpaw, the put-upon family breadwinner, and her foil is Johnny Hines as henpecked husband Mr. Pipkins.

The pair decide to escape for an afternoon from their horrendous mates (Frank Beamish as Mr. Tinkelpaw and Rubye DeRemer as Mrs. Pipkins) and go to Coney Island. They arrive via an ice wagon and have a bit of Scotch to take away the chill.

Naturally, the liquor revs up all the slapstick antics to come. This was a great two-reel idea stretched out to five (how many times can Dressler sit on Hines and have it be funny?), but the stars' talents and some very funny titles carry it through. Dressler's good friend Frances Marion wrote the scenario.

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### FALL 2010 SERIES

Oct. 31, MICMACS; Nov. 14, MAO'S LAST DANCER; Nov. 28, TAMARA DREWE; Dec. 5, NOWHERE BOY; Jan. 16, 2011....TBA

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### DATES FOR THE 2011 WINTER WEEKEND FILM FESTIVAL

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For updated information as movies are confirmed, please visit  
the website: [WWW.NORTHUMBERLANDFILM.CA](http://WWW.NORTHUMBERLANDFILM.CA)



FILM CIRCUIT

AND

# TILLIE WAKES UP

USA, 1917, Directed by Harry Davenport, b/w, 48 min, silent

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Victoria Sturtevant

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Marie Dressler starred in a Broadway show called *Tillie's Nightmare* in 1910. A Cinderella story about a naïve frump who falls asleep and dreams of wild adventures, the musical play was a tremendous hit, and inspired three movies that used the Tillie character: *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (Keystone, 1914), *Tillie's Tomato Surprise* (Lubin, 1915), and *Tillie Wakes Up* (Peerless/World, 1917). Although they all star Dressler in the title role, these three films aren't exactly sequels of one another. Like Charlie Chaplin's character of the Tramp, Dressler's Tillie was a portable persona, a gullible but spunky bumpkin who could be dropped into a variety of unconnected situations. There is no continuity in the plots, so spectators who haven't seen the first two need not fear that they are missing anything going into *Tillie Wakes Up*.

Here, Tillie Tinkelpaw is a mousy, neglected wife who reads in a newspaper advice column that making one's husband jealous is a sure-fire way to recapture his wandering attention. Nervous but inspired, Tillie puts on her best hat and goes out to find a suitable Romeo. He soon materializes in the form of her hen-pecked neighbor, J. Mortimer Pipkins (the petite Johnny Hines), who is also fleeing a miserable married life. Together the two run into trouble with the law, revive their spirits with strong drink, and then have a wild spree at Coney Island. A great time is had by all, except the jilted spouses, who do indeed learn to appreciate their better halves in time for the happy ending.

The Coney Island scene is the heart of the film, and Dressler is clearly in her element exploiting the potent mix of intoxication and derring-do as Tillie samples the various carnival rides. Hines is a model of undersized chivalry as he tries to rescue his tipsy companion from tall slides, a nauseating wave machine, the interior of a rotating

barrel, a passenger train, and some kind of giant spinning plate that was designed to unseat intrepid patrons through the power of centrifugal force. (Clearly, the designers of carnival rides in the 'teens had no respect for life and limb.) Tillie's hat, audaciously unfashionable from the start, is slowly pulverized in the gaudy jumble of activity.

But delightful as the fairground scenes are, to my mind they are matched by the slangy, energetic intertitles, written by Dressler's dear friend Frances Marion, soon to become the highest-paid screenwriter in Hollywood. When the two teetotalers warm themselves with hot toddies, a title informs us that they "fell off the wagon with a splash that scared all the mackerel out of the harbor." Although some of the puns may induce groans from modern audiences, much of Marion's dialogue still bursts with wit almost a hundred years after it was written.

*Tillie Wakes Up* is also notable for its unexpected pathos. Unlike its predecessors, this Tillie film makes liberal use of close-ups, which give Dressler a chance to register sorrow at her husband's neglect, joy at her liberation, and sweet affection for her partner in crime. The final shot of the film shows Tillie in medium shot, aglow with a tender gratitude for her spouse's returned affection. Dressler fans will recognize what would become a trademark of the star's performances in the talkies: the ability to mix slapstick comedy with a touching empathy. It was a potent combination.

Victoria Sturtevant is a film professor and the author of a new book about Marie Dressler, *A Great Big Girl Like Me: The Films of Marie Dressler*. Autographed copies of the book are on sale at the VFF table in the theatre lobby.



A younger Marie Dressler

# THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN (1939)

*Directed by Richard Thorpe*

*Original review from the New York Times, March 3, 1939, by Frank S. Nugent*

Regarded as a preliminary workout for Mickey Rooney, the Falstaff of 1960, Huckleberry Finn, at the Capitol, is an average, workmanlike piece of cinematic hokum. Pared down to its melodramatic essentials, or non-essentials, depending on how you look at it, Master Rooney's latest vehicle affords little, if any, insight into the realistic boyhood world of which old Mark wrote with such imperishable humor. How could the story be Mark Twain when the river isn't the Mississippi (it's the Sacramento, if you can stand it) and when the Finn part of the proceedings is more Mickey than Huckleberry?

The screen adaptation by Hugo Butler is full of cute twists which are definitely not Twain. For example, it is interesting to note how Huck has progressed ideologically since his last two cinema incarnations: now, it appears, he is a convinced abolitionist, and not only persuades the Widow Douglass to free Rex Ingram but makes a little speech allowing how it ain't right for one human being to own another. Surely we can all applaud this sentiment without feeling compelled to endorse the

socially-conscious Huck who gives it utterance. The next thing you know, they'll be using Master Finn to promote Votes for Women propaganda, for which it ought to be safe for the screen to come out strongly by 1944.

But the most logical objection to recent cinema translations of Twain, including the present exhibit, is the slight importance they have attached to the world of adult authority of early Mississippi days. Instead of the stern, moral-bound disciplinarians they were, susceptible of infinite shock at the doings of the young, the parents, teachers and guardians seem to exist merely as comic foils for the outlaws, a circumstance which lessens the comic and dramatic significance of the outlawry itself. Metro's Huckleberry Finn is considerably more faithful to the blood-and-thunder letter than to the nostalgic spirit of its eminent source, and the characters suffer in consequence. Walter Connolly as the King, William Frawley as the Duke and Victor Kilian as Pap Finn would be delightful, too, if only they were a little more plausible.



# THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

USA, 1939, Directed by Richard Thorpe, b/w, 89 min

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Doug Haddow

Many vintage film enthusiasts will remember Mickey Rooney's portrayal of the character Andy Hardy in the MGM series of the late 1930s and early 1940s. In those films young Andy was the quintessential American teenager who endlessly struggled with life's complexities. Movie reviewer Clyde Haupt has said of Rooney's portrayal of Huckleberry Finn, "Huck is exactly the same temperament, and in exactly the same situation, that Andy Hardy would have gotten into had he lived in a pre-Civil War Mississippi River town".

Hollywood had a spectacular year of box office successes in 1939, the year *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was made. MGM led all studios with such memorable films as *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*. This movie, then, was neither a high-budget MGM production nor a memorable one. Yet, for me, seeing it again revealed an entertaining and fast-moving story with fine acting and a lively plot.

Huckleberry Finn is a runaway from home. He is escaping the love and kindness of the widow Douglas, and the senseless brutality of his drunken "Pap" by faking his own death. Rafting down the Mississippi, Huck and his mismatched friend, a fugitive slave named Jim, take what is to be a metaphorical journey. From the moment they board the raft, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* becomes like a road picture, with Huck and Jim periodically going ashore to deal with the very sort of dishonesty and manipulation that they are boldly trying to escape.

Although this film version of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is probably the best known adaptation of Mark Twain's popular novel, other versions were made in the 1920's and in recent years for television and special school showings. However, Mickey Rooney's screen portrayal of Huckleberry Finn remains the most memorable.

At first consideration, Rooney seems an excellent choice to play Huckleberry Finn. As mentioned earlier, he was already a box-office name in 1939 and was the stereotypical All-American Boy. Yet I found a certain show-business theatricality in his performance instead of the more normal and natural scruffy youngster described in the book. But he does have a definite presence that keeps the film lively and entertaining.

I was somewhat puzzled, however, by the fact that Twain's more prominent character, and Huck Finn's best friend, Tom Sawyer, is nowhere to be seen in the film. The Sawyer character has been written out of the plot. A possible explanation, and the only one I can think of, is that this may have been MGM's desire to emphasize the central character in the movie without competition from any major supporting roles.

This adaptation to the screen of Mark Twain's novel is entertaining, though in many places unfaithful to the original story. MGM studio heads, like others in the movie industry, placed marketability far ahead of authenticity when adapting novels to the screen. Movies of the period had difficulties dealing with racial themes. And while the book is filled with them, the producers of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* seem to be able to walk a fine line between preaching tolerance and not offending Southern theatre owners who often refused to feature films that were too sympathetic to black characters.

This movie, therefore, appears to make the attempt by sacrificing some authenticity in both plot and character to achieve its goal of being pure entertainment.

Doug Haddow is a member of the Vintage Film Festival Committee.

## How long is a film?

One of our reviewers emailed our editors with the question: "When checking out the running time of my film, I was told it was 8,061 feet long! How long is that?"

One editor replied: "At sound speed, 24 fps, 1000 ft of 35mm film lasts approx. 11 minutes. If shown at silent speed (anything above 16 fps, but usually 18fps) the same length of film would last 33% longer. I think I've got the arithmetic right.

But . . . Modern projectors do not have a setting to run at silent speed, so silent films are always shown at 24fps. To compensate, some silent films are reset to 24fps by duplicating a frame here and there to retain the original running time without distorting the movement in the film.

Close to 90 minutes seems OK.

The other editor replied: "About a mile and a half."

The reviewer, undaunted, responded with another question: "I was reflecting on movie lengths. At what point in their history did a standard of 90 to 120 mins become the average?"

The first editor above, ever pedantic, replied: "I can't really answer this one. I think it emerged as distribution and exhibition got mature. B features were often shorter than 90 min - but usually 60 min+. A two hour feature would have extra publicity, and would not likely be shown (on first release) as a double feature, but have some accompanying shorts, etc. The length of a complete program dictated the number of times the program could be played in the cinema, and thus the number of possible ticket sales.

Super-duper long films were sometimes sold as a "hard ticket" or "road show" with premium ticket prices. They were usually 150 minutes or longer, were shown in discrete performances, with numbered-seat sales and had overtures and intermissions built into the film.

CMW

# RED DUST (1932)

Directed by Victor Fleming

Original review from **the New York Times**, November 5, 1932, by: **Mordaunt Hall**

Life on a rubber plantation in French Indo-China receives attention in *Red Dust*, a pictorial adaptation of a play by Wilson Collison which is now at the Capitol. It is a far from pleasant spot, with its heat and sudden deluges of rain, its blinding sand storms and jungle beasts. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of this tale is more interesting than its story, especially the glimpses of the men at work.

Dennis Carson, played by Clark Gable, who is in charge of the plantation, avers that so long as people in other countries want balloon tires and hot-water bottles such toil must go on. The natives are indolent, which causes Carson to use the lash on them, but no sooner have they settled down to labor than they are forced often to seek shelter from a sand storm.

To this uninviting area comes the immodest Vantine, a woman from Saigon. She at least makes existence more lively for Carson, who is not precisely hospitable to her. There is trouble on all sides for Carson. When a bright young engineer named Gary Willis comes out to assist Carson, he (Willis) falls a victim to fever. It is out of the question to get a doctor quickly enough, so Carson looks after Willis, who is accompanied by his pretty wife, Barbara, a rôle acted by Mary Astor.

After having rebuked Carson, for kissing her, Barbara, possibly because of Carson's revealing himself to be master of every situation, becomes enamored of the stalwart manager. It is thought at this time that the last has been seen of Vantine's white-gold head, but later she turns up again, explaining that the boat on which she was a passenger had stuck in the mud. Vantine is a fearless young person, who has to brave wild beasts in returning to the plantation, where she soon is almost as much at

home as if she were on her native heath. It is she who succeeds in setting matters right, which is done possibly through selfishness. Be that as it may, Barbara and her husband eventually leave the plantation and Vantine takes up her abode in Carson's comfortless shack.

The dialogue is not especially bright or strong, but some of the lines spoken by Vantine, who is impersonated by Jean Harlow, aroused laughter from the audience. Miss Harlow's presence in the picture apparently attracted a host of other platinum blondes, for on all sides there were in the seats girls with straw-colored hair. Miss Harlow's performance suits the part. Mr. Gable is efficient in his rôle. Miss Astor offers a striking contrast to Miss Harlow. Tully Marshall makes the most of a minor rôle, as does Gene Raymond, who appears as Willis.

RED DUST, adapted from the play by Wilson Collison; directed by Victor Fleming; a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production. At the Capitol.

Dennis Carson .....	Clark Gable
Vantine .....	Jean Harlow
Gary Willis .....	Gene Raymond Gary
Barbara Willis .....	Mary Astor Dennis
Guidon .....	Donald Crisp
McQuarg .....	Tully Marshall
Limey .....	Forrester Harvey
Hoy .....	Willie Fung



# RED DUST

USA, 1932, Directed by Victor Fleming, 83 min

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Don Ciaschini

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The year is 1932 and Hollywood again accomplishes what it does so well. *Red Dust* was another of those movies that helped the American public forget the drudgery and troubles of the Great Depression. A young guy with no job and no prospects manages to scrape together enough money to buy his way into a movie house and within five minutes of the opening credits, there on the screen is Jean Harlow. On a bed. Wearing a silk and lace nightgown that rides up around her thighs showing off her great legs. What Depression?

Or you're a woman worried about scraping together next month's rent. Clark Gable, bare-chested and all machismo leans back on his bed and stares at you with smouldering eyes and that inviting grin. Your problems are suddenly gone.

Dennis Carson (Gable) is the macho owner/manager of a rubber plantation. Vantine (Harlow), on the lam from the Saigon police, arrives on the supply boat. With sex appeal and wise cracks Vantine soon breaks down Carson's initial wariness. They bicker; call each other "Fred" and "Lilly" as part of their banter and Vantine ends up on Carson's lap as we knew she would. We're swept quickly into a close-up shot of Polly, the caged parrot screaming, "Hello, Lilly, hello Lilly, Ha, Ha, Ha" and a not-so-subtle fade to black.

Cut to several weeks later. Vantine is about to return to Saigon on the same supply boat that's bringing in Gary Willis (Gene Raymond) and his new wife, Barbara (Mary Astor). Carson kills any notions of romance that Vantine may have had by insisting on giving her money. "G'bye, kid." he says, "Been nice havin' ya." Harlow proves she can do more than deliver a quick, funny wisecrack at this point. Her expression goes from flirtatious expectation to disappointment to sadness to anger in seconds. The disappointment in the line, "Aw, Denny, please don't. This wasn't like that." is palpable.

The Wallises are a young, innocent, inexperienced couple who naively bring their tennis racquets to this inhospitable place. The strong contrast between the dark, macho Carson and the pale, naïve Gary is almost too obvious. Although Barb is very much in love with her husband she can't help being attracted to Carson, and he to her.

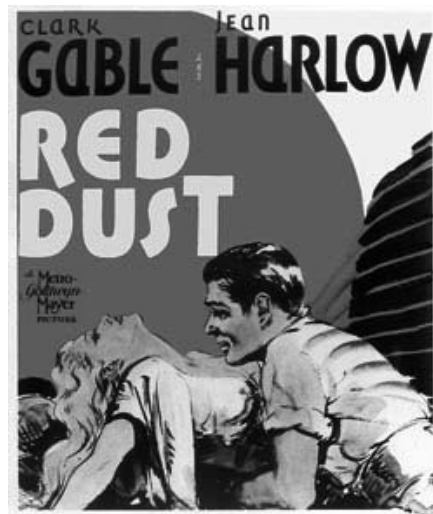
Vantine's supply boat runs aground and she is forced to return to the plantation, setting up the inevitable triangle with all its complications.

Guidon (Donald Crisp), a drunken unlikeable guy, moves the plot forward by telling Wallis that Carson has been fooling around with his wife. Carson calls him, "Guidon, that squealing liar". The first time we see Guidon he's passed out drunk at the table. Mac (Tully Marshall) is the old sidekick father-figure. Limey (Forrester Harvey) is the captain of the supply boat. Hoy (Willie Fung) is the houseboy. Lisa See describes him and his stereotype in her novel *Shanghai Girls* (2009). She writes, "Every single Chinese in this film is portrayed as backward. We're made to giggle like idiots and show our teeth. They make us pantomime because we're supposed to be stupid. Or they make us speak the worst sort of pidgin English."

*Red Dust*, is based on Wilson Collison's play of the same name. Although shot on an MGM soundstage, it gives a realistic and convincing picture of a rubber plantation in the jungles of Indochina complete with monsoons and a wandering tiger. The violent, stormy weather - "wallowing in dust one month, wallowing in mud the next" - serves as an apt background for the story, mirroring the emotions of the three characters involved in a headlong plunge into a steamy love triangle.

Director Victor Fleming began in the movie business around 1910 as a chauffeur and stuntman. He eventually became a cameraman, and worked on D.W.Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) before directing his first film, *When the Clouds Roll By*, for United Artists in 1919. Fleming has an impressive list of films to his credit. As well as *Red Dust*, three other well known movies are, *The Virginian* (1929), *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* (both 1939). These last two were listed in the top 10 of the American Film Institute's 1998 list of the 100 greatest American films.

Don Ciaschini is an actor, artist, teacher and all-round film buff..



# MOGAMBO (1953)

Directed by: John Ford

Original review from the **New York Times**, October 2, 1953, by: **Bosley Crowther**

Another cinema safari to Africa, sponsored by M-G-M, with Director John Ford, Clark Gable and Ava Gardner in the van, has brought back, alive and kicking, another outdoor adventure-romance—this time entitled *Mogambo*—which was deposited at the Music Hall yesterday. While its trophies of African fauna are not as dazzling as those brought back in *King Solomon's Mines* and the torrid tableau of a wild region is mostly set up as backdrop atmosphere, there is one distinction accomplished by this expedition, at least. The hunted returns with the hunter—or Miss Gardner brings back Mr. Gable's head.

That is an observation that is meant to be taken two ways: Miss Gardner gets the best of the long-drawn bargain and she easily steals the show. As an international play girl who lands on a big-game hunter's ranch in the Kenya veld and systematically goes about the business of bagging this lordly human specimen as her man, Miss Gardner has received the advantage of shooting position and priority from the start. And she is nothing loath to take it—one might almost say, with both barrels.

### *She Moves in for Kill*

While Mr. Gable as the hunter is fumbling around manfully to maintain his prestige and authority as the master of local humans and beasts, Miss Gardner is meticulously peppering him with taunting and aggravating words. She has him six ways from Sunday, including her better looking legs. And when he disasterously stumbles over another propinquant dame—an English lady, very stuffy and chin-uppish—she carefully moves in for the kill. With the skill of the age-old huntress (and the help of the very obliging script) she appeals to the mere man's noble nature. And she drops him, hit smack between the eyes.

If this makes it sound as though *Mogambo* has a great deal more to do with the low-down romantic maneuvering of two colorful and popular stars than with the thrills of adventuring in Africa, it hits the nail on the head. For *Mogambo*, we're sorry to tell you, is incidentally a film about big game.

When the story was first used for a picture, back in 1932, it was called *Red Dust* and the setting was French Indo-China—all right, too. Incidentally, Mr. Gable was in it, only he was snagged by Jean Harlow then. This time the script has been polished by John Lee Mahin's able hand and the locale has been switched to an area that Producer Sam Zimbalist knows, he having been the chief gaffer on the popular *King Solomon's Mines*.

Under Mr. Ford's sturdy direction, the area's atmosphere of lush and forbidding enclosure is reasonably pushed into the film. Some handsome color shots of open country are slipped in from time to time, and the animals roaming the landscape are picked out as on a guided tour. One big donnybrook with angry natives shoots a tingle of menace in one phase, and a big scheme to trap a gorilla provides the picture with its best adventure thrill. But the interest is basically centered in the civilized stalking of the stars. And it is meant as no insult to Mr. Gable to say that he is the most important gorilla bagged.

In the advancement of the romance, which itself is hot stuff, for what it is, several capable actors do entertaining jobs. Mr. Gable is beautifully commanding, in his vicious, sardonic way, and Miss Gardner, as we say, is as enticing as any calculated vampire can be. One scene in which she plays cozy with a pigmy elephant might have been left out, in the interest of good taste. But that is by the by.

Philip Stainton as an English hunter, Grace Kelly as the stuffy English dame, Donald Sinden as her pip-pip hubby and Eric Pohlmann as a hand are all right, too. The trouble is simply that more of them meant less of the animals.

**MOGAMBO**, screen play by John Lee Mahin, based on a play by Wilson Collison; directed by John Ford; produced by Sam Zimbalist Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. At the Radio City Music Hall.

Victor Marswell ..... Clark Gable  
Eloise Y. Kelly ..... Ava Gardner  
Linda Nordley ..... Grace Kelly  
Donald Nordley ..... Donald Sinden  
John Brown-Pryce ..... Philip Stainton  
Leon Boltchak ..... Eric Pohlmann  
Skipper ..... Laurence Naismith  
Father Josef ..... Denis O'Dea



# MOGAMBO

USA, 1953, Directed by John Ford, col, 115 min

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Neil Andersen

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Clark Gable is Victor Marswell, the salty owner of a Kenyan safari company that specializes in capturing and selling animals to zoos and circuses. Marswell returns to base camp from capturing a panther to find that Kelly (Ava Gardner) has arrived from New York on the weekly boat to consort with a recently-departed maharajah. Both Marswell and Kelly are peeved about having to put up with one another until the next boat, but during the week they discover each other's softer sides and become lovers.

Their attraction is not enough to keep Kelly in camp, and she departs on the same boat that brings a gorilla-mad anthropologist named Donald Nordley and his wife Linda (Grace Kelly). Just as Marswell and the lovely and vulnerable Mrs. Nordley develop a mutual interest, Kelly returns to camp after the water taxi is damaged. It will take weeks to repair, so Kelly is conscripted into the gorilla-hunting safari, to be dropped at the first outpost. This second separation is foiled by a native uprising, and Kelly is forced to complete the gorilla expedition.

The stress of the safari brings up emotions and passions, and Marswell and Mrs. Nordley advance their affair, to Kelly's distress. She tries to tell the lovers that neither Marswell nor his primitive lifestyle is suited to the aristocratic and fragile Mrs. Nordley, but they don't listen. During a candid conversation with Nordley, Marswell realizes how much damage he is doing to their marriage and breaks it off. Bereft, Mrs. Nordley shoots Marswell. Kelly helps Marswell invent a lie that allows the Nordleys to re-unite with dignity, and Marswell and Kelly realize that, even though they are cat and dog, they're meant for each other.

What compels today's viewers of *Mogambo* are the explorations of masculine and feminine stereotypes and relationships. Gable is the great white hunter, complete with gruff manner, safari jacket, smokes, booze and guns. He knows how to handle employees, animals and fever, but not his own feelings for women. Viewers watching him also knew him as the male leads in *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *It Happened One Night*, and *Gone with the Wind*, each of them powerful statements about masculinity. Ava Gardner was at the peak of her stardom, beautiful and street-wise. Viewers watching her recalled her leads in *The Killers*, *One Touch of Venus*, and *Showboat*. Grace Kelly had done mostly TV before *Mogambo*, but had also played Gary Cooper's wife in *High Noon* the previous year. Finally, John Ford was no stranger to male character foibles. He had explored masculinity in *Stage Coach*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *How Green Was My Valley*, and *My Darling Clementine*.

Each of *Mogambo*'s principals brings to the love triangle representations that are both quaint and familiar, and were updates of the same characters presented in *Red Dust*, the movie of which *Mogambo* is a remake (with Gable as the same male lead). The two provide a most interesting opportunity to examine how the macho star evolved over 21 years.

Live footage of African animals frequently punctuate the story, and viewers might find their jungle antics curious analogies to the ongoing human drama. They might also find it curious to see how political correctness has significantly re-defined audiences' responses to Marswell's behaviors towards women and the way that he treats his employees, especially Boltchak, his driver.

As an historic footnote, Ava Gardner's then-husband was trying a career comeback in Hawaii while she was filming in Africa. She had used her star power to get him the role, and they were both nominated for Oscars: she as Best Actor, he as Best Supporting Actor. She lost; he won.

Neil Andersen is a long time member of the executive of the Ontario Association for Media Literacy. He is also a free-lance writer and speaker on media literacy.



# ANYTHING GOES (1936)

Directed by: Lewis Milestone

No contemporary review available

All Movie Guide review by: Hal Erickson

*Anything Goes* is a fun-filled but hardly faithful adaptation of the same-named Cole Porter Broadway musical, with additional songs by Hoagy Carmichael, among many many others. Set on a luxury liner, the story gets under way when Moonface Mullins (Charlie Ruggles), Public Enemy No. 13, slips on board disguised as a bishop. As he weaves in and out of the story, Billy Crocker (Bing Crosby) romances Hope Harcourt (Ida Lupino), titled Englishman Evelyn Oakleigh (Arthur Tyreacher) also pursues Hope, and brassy entertainer Reno Sweeney (Ethel Merman) chases after Sir Evelyn. Critics in 1936 complained that the original Broadway production's Victor Moore was replaced by Charlie Ruggles, but none could fault Ethel Merman's rendition of *I Get a Kick Out of You*, nor her duet with Bing Crosby, *You're the Top* (the only two songs retained from the Porter score!) *Anything Goes* was remade in 1956, again with Bing Crosby, and again with little fidelity to the original (this remake required MCA Television to retitle the 1936 version as *Tops is the Limit*).



## Radio Times review by DP

Eight writers, including PG Wodehouse (who co-wrote the original stage show), collaborated in adapting this Cole Porter smash for the screen. In the end, this shipboard story of a romantic stowaway who's forced to pose as a criminal is pretty lightweight, but there's still plenty to enjoy, particularly with Ethel Merman repeating her Broadway triumph by belting out such classic tunes as *You're the Top*, *I Get a Kick Out of You* and the title song. A relaxed Bing Crosby and a radiant Ida Lupino play the lovers, while Charles Ruggles enjoys himself enormously as "Public Enemy #13".

Director ..... Lewis Milestone  
Producer ..... Benjamin Glazer  
Art Director ..... Ernst Fegte  
Screenwriter ..... Guy Bolton  
Cinematographer ..... Karl Struss  
Composer (Music Score) ..... Cole Porter  
Art Director ..... Hans Dreier  
Composer (Music Score) ..... Frederick Hollander  
Costume Designer ..... Travis Banton  
Composer (Music Score) ..... Hoagy Carmichael  
Radio Times review by DP



# ANYTHING GOES

USA, 1936, Directed by Lewis Milestone, b/w, 92 min.

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Allison Beula

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The original Broadway stage production of *Anything Goes* opened at the Alvin Theater in New York City on November 21, 1934 starring Ethel Merman and ran for 420 performances.

Two film versions of the show were made, both starring Bing Crosby, the first in 1936 and the second in 1956. According to several reviews, including Leonard Maltin's, Bing's work is considerably stronger in the first version. As well, the second version bears almost no resemblance to the first, nor to the original musical on which it was based. The first film also pays little attention to the original Broadway musical mostly due to strong film censorship in the early-mid thirties, however it does contain the same basic plot points. It is mostly the songs that suffered the wrath of censorship as many of Cole Porter's songs were considered too racy for film audiences and were either cut, or largely sanitized. (You will note in Porter's famous *I Get A Kick Out Of You* that "cocaine" becomes "perfume from Spain"). Even the title song "*Anything Goes*" appears in the 1936 version only over the opening credits and is cut down considerably.

Apparently when the 1936 film version was first in production, they had already cast Bing Crosby and it is said that he had originally insisted that his then wife, Dixie Lee, be cast as the lead, however she dropped out and Merman was given the role.

When the film was released in 1936, The New York Herald Tribune described it as "dull and commonplace," with Merman doing "as well as possible" but unable to register "on the screen as magnificently as she does on the stage."

The film includes character actor favourites Charlie Ruggles and Margaret Dumont.

Be on the lookout for Jane Wyman who was an uncredited chorus girl.

Bing Crosby (1903-1977) "Der Bingle" started appearing in films as early as 1930 and rapidly became exceptionally popular as a crooner known for his relaxed, easy vocal style. He remained a major box-office draw from the thirties through the fifties and was also incredibly popular on radio programs. Amongst many career accolades, he won an Oscar for *Going My Way* (1944) and in 1962, Crosby became the first recipient of the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

On the day of his death in 1977 he played and won a full game of golf in Spain, where he was vacationing. Then, according to his biographer Gary Giddens, Crosby's last words were, "Let's go get a Coke", which he uttered before suffering a massive heart attack. At the time of his death he was the biggest selling recording artist of all time.

Ethel Merman (1909-1984) was quoted as saying, "I can hold a note as long as the Chase National Bank" and she could! Known for her strong, loud, and brassy singing voice (the complete opposite styling of Crosby) Merman often boasted that she never had a singing lesson. She originated many iconic roles on Broadway including Annie in *Annie Get Your Gun* and Mama Rose in *Gypsy*. Incidentally she lost out on both of the film adaptations of the roles for these characters. Her career was largely on stage, she seemed to be better suited for live performance and concert work. Most of her numerous films are largely forgotten or are poorly reviewed.

Allison Beula is a director, choreographer and performer as well as a theatre/dance/film instructor.



# NOSFERATU, A SYMPHONY OF HORRORS (1922)

Directed by F. W. Murnau

No contemporary review available. Internet review by: AJ

Celebrated German director FW Murnau plundered Bram Stoker's Dracula without permission for this 1922 ground-breaker, and was successfully sued by Stoker's wife — all prints were ordered to be destroyed, but a few survived.

The result is the most frightening incarnation of the vampire count in horror history. With his grasping claws, pointed fangs, bald pate and white cadaverous features, Count Orlock, played by the hideous Max Schreck, creeps through Murnau's archetypal silent imagery with a mesmerising authority that retains a surprising amount of tension.

The chilling finale, highlighted by Schreck's terrifying shadow outside his victim's door and enhanced by Hammer composer James Bernard's new, specially commissioned score for this restored print, is one of the classic sequences in the genre and packs a powerful punch even by today's standards.



## 3D

Like many cinema innovations, three-dimensional images have been around for a long time. Would you believe 150+ years?

Perhaps the earliest and best known photographic example is the Stereoptican, a device that looks like a swimming mask at one end, with a stick connecting it to a frame at the other. At some point along the stick there is a fence that ensures that each eye can see only one half of the frame. In the frame is placed a two-part still photo of a scene taken on a camera with two lenses spaced exactly the same distance apart as human eyes. The two



pictures are slightly different as a result. Each image corresponds to the scene as viewed by one eye, and when they are viewed through the Stereoptican, with each eye looking at only the one image, the brain blends them into a single three-dimensional image. All 3D imagery

depends upon these same principles. There must be separate images for each eye, corresponding to the scene as seen only by that eye, and when the images are viewed there must be a device that blocks each eye from seeing the image for the other eye. In moving pictures, there is the added technical issue of synchronizing the two images and registering them accurately on the screen.

The earliest photographic 3D systems photographed the image for one eye through a green (or blue) filter and the other through a red filter. The two are superimposed on each other either on a page or a movie screen and the viewer wears glasses with one red and one green (blue) lens. Each lens filters out the image photographed through the lens of the same colour leaving each eye able to view only one of the two superimposed images. The brain does the rest. This system was used exclusively in 3D movies until the early 1950s.

The Polaroid company used its patented process of polarizing light through lenses oriented either horizontally or vertically to move 3D ahead and make true colour 3D movies possible. The polarized lenses in the viewing glasses allowed only the image with the same polarization to be seen so 3D was possible in the same way as the red/green process. Perhaps the most famous film made in this process was Kiss Me Kate (1953).

The problem with 3D movies has always been that special equipment is needed. Two projectors are running all the time, and when films were shown from reels (before the use of platters) there was a limitation to the number of minutes that could be shown before a reel change was needed. Worse, the two projectors had to be kept in total synchronization. If the film in one projector broke and some frames were lost, the operator had either to locate the exact same frames in the film on the other projector and remove them, or insert the exact number of blank frames in the damaged film.

Because IMAX cinemas specialize in complex equipment there is a chance that the modern bout of 3D-movie fever will last longer than the one of the 1950s. Still, the maxim has always been that the first aspect in determining a film's success is its overall quality as cinema rather than its use of whoopee technology.

CMW

# NOSFERATU A SYMPHONY OF HORRORS

Germany, 1922. Directed by F. W. Murnau. b/w, (tinted) 88 min, silent

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Pauline Janitch

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Fans of vampire movies and novels should brace themselves for German director F.W. Murnau's 1922 depiction of Dracula in the film, *Nosferatu*. This vampire will truly chill your bones. *Nosferatu* is considered one of the best horror movies made as well as a classic of German Expressionism in which the exterior world mirrors a character's moods including love, longing and nightmares.

Count Orlok or Nosferatu is a thin, shadow of a man/rat/ghost. He has a shockingly white face, and swabs of black kohl under his eyes - an iron deficiency, perhaps? Playing the part is the mysterious actor Max Schreck, (Schreck is a stage name meaning terror) who is so convincing that the film, *Shadow of the Vampire* (2000), guessed that he really was a vampire.

Born into a wealthy, middle-class family in Germany, Murnau (1888-1931) studied art history, joined an Expressionist stage company, and moved to film, first as a screenwriter, and then director.

Although the German film industry was riding high in the post-war years, aided by a government subsidized studio system, the largest and best-equipped in the world, Murnau took the rare step of bypassing the controlled environment of the studio, filming much of *Nosferatu* outdoors in northern Germany and Romania. His cinematographer was the established Fritz Arno Wagner.

Perhaps it is Murnau's background in art and theatre, and his exposure to Scandinavian films with their love of landscape (the only foreign films allowed in Germany during the Great War) that result in a movie filled with stunning compositions, "creating some of cinema's most lasting and haunting imagery." (Joshua Klein: 1001 Movies).

There is our first glimpse of the ship Empusa carrying Count Orlok to Wisborg, and Ellen, his prize victim. It is a tableau of light and shadow, ghostly white sails and a network of ropes like a glistening spider web. Other scenes have been compared to nineteenth century Romantic paintings and, the scene of Hutter awakening in the castle, to a Goya

called Caprichos.

For extra effect, Murnau frames many of his images with gothic arches, windows, and entryways. When the innocent Hutter first meets the Count at his castle, Orlok is set off by a large arch, as if welcoming Hutter to the great abyss. In much of the film, the background has equal visual weight with the foreground, an opportunity for Murnau to add visual information including symbolism. Camera angles, editing, the play of light and shadow, and the choreography of his characters' movements contribute to a poetic feel.

Murnau and Wagner used relatively new special effects, to create their supernatural world. Dracula, for example, dissolves in the sunshine, an effect achieved with double exposure. We are introduced to the land of unnatural deeds with a negative exposure of the Carpathians. Sepia, ice-blue and rose tints signal the change of moods, time and realms, including the gnawing invasion of the spectral. However, the stop-motion photography, making Orlok's movements jerky, is distracting.

In his brief life, Murnau produced 21 films. Four of them including *Nosferatu* are considered masterpieces. Nine are lost or exist only as fragments.

Murnau moved to the United States to work for Fox in 1926. *Cahiers du cinema* called his first American film *Sunrise* (1927) "the single greatest masterpiece in the history of cinema" It failed at the box office, but won several of the very first Oscars. After two more films with Fox, Murnau went his own way, producing *Tabu* (1931), his fourth masterpiece. Murnau died in a car crash shortly before its premier

Pauline Janitch is the programmer and host of the Cobourg Public Library Friday afternoon film program.



# THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW (1975)

Directed by: **Jim Sharman**

*No contemporary review available*

All Movie Guide review by: **Derek Armstrong**

This low-budget freak show/cult classic/cultural institution concerns the misadventures of Brad Majors (Barry Bostwick) and Janet Weiss (Susan Sarandon) inside a strange mansion that they come across on a rainy night. After the wholesome pair profess their love through an opening song, their car breaks down in the woods, and they seek refuge in a towering castle nearby.

Greeting them at the door is a ghoulish butler named Riff Raff (Richard O'Brien), who introduces them to a bacchanalian collection of partygoers dressed in outfits from some sort of interplanetary thrift shop. The host of this gathering is a transvestite clad in lingerie, Dr. Frank N. Furter (Tim Curry), a mad scientist who claims to be from another planet.

With assistants Columbia (Nell Campbell) and Magenta (Patricia Quinn) looking on, Frank unveils his latest creation - a figure wrapped in gauze and submerged in a tank full of liquid. With the addition of colored dyes and some assistance from the weather, Frank brings to life a blonde young beefcake wearing nothing but skimpy shorts, who launches into song in his first minute of life.

Just when Brad and Janet think things couldn't get any stranger, a biker (Meat Loaf) bursts onto the scene to reclaim Columbia, his ex-girlfriend. When Frank kills the biker, it's clear that Brad and Janet will be guests for the night, and that they may be next on Frank's list -- whether for murder or carnal delights is uncertain. And just what is that mystery meat they're eating for dinner, anyway?

In addition to playing Riff Raff, O'Brien wrote the catchy songs, with John Barry and Richard Hartley composing the score.



# THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

UK, 1975, Directed by Jim Sharman, col, 100 min

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Rick Kelly

This movie is an adaptation of a stage play produced by Lou Adler, who was also the executive producer of the film. The title is a bit deceiving as it is not a horror movie but a parody of sci-fi and B-movie horror films. The movie critics gave it a poor reception. They did however love the music and Tim Curry's performance. Ironically, it is now considered to be the longest-running release in film history as Twentieth Century Fox has kept it in continuous circulation since 1975. Richard O'Brien (Riff Raff), who wrote the stage play, also wrote the movie script. One wonders if it would have been such a success under its original title (*They came from Denton High*).

A newly engaged couple have a car breakdown in an isolated area and go to the bizarre residence of Dr. Frank-N-Furter (Curry), who describes himself as "just a sweet transvestite from transsexual Transylvania". Janet (Susan Sarandon, Academy Award winner for *Dead Man Walking*) is the naive fiancée, who succumbs to temptation. An interesting aside is that Susan Sarandon developed pneumonia after the pool scene. Brad (Barry Bostwick) is the naïve and arrogant fiancé, who Frank initiates in the ways of the world. Meatloaf (*Bat out of Hell* fame) plays Eddie, a Rock singer who loves motorcycles (no great stretch there). Dr. Frank-N-Furter uses half of Eddie's brain to create Rocky Horror (Peter Hinwood). Frankenstein anyone?

When New York City fans came to the 1976 screenings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* dressed in costumes the film had officially developed a cult status. Devout fans bring water guns, newspapers, rice, toast and hot dogs to theatres, depending on what individual theatres allow. Many dance *The Time Warp* in the aisles

Why do people go to see this movie repeatedly? Richard O'Brien said it best by stating "it's a guaranteed party". The longest running showing is owned by the Germans. At the Museum Lichtspiele in Munich, daily shows have occurred since September 1976. The theatre has been decorated to match the castle ballroom.

The UK version to be shown at the Vintage Film Festival has the full rendition of the closing musical number *Superheroes*. The US version omits most of the musical as the studio thought it too depressing for American audiences. Given the opportunity, I recommend seeing both versions and making up your own mind.

Rick Kelly is a movie fan who lives in Cobourg



**THE GRUB-STAKE (1922) also known as (UK) THE GOLDEN YUKON  
and (re-release, 1927) THE ROMANCE OF LOST VALLEY**

*No contemporary review available All Movie Guide review by: Hans J. Wollstein*

*Directed by: Nell Shipman and Bert Van Tuyle*

Filmed at Minnehaha Park near Spokane, Washington (with interiors made at Lionhead Lodge in Idaho), this outdoor melodrama starred enterprising Canadian actress Nell Shipman, who also served as producer, writer, and co-director.

She played Faith Diggs, a naive girl tricked into a fake marriage to Alaska-bound gambler Mark Leroy (Alfred Allen). In Klondike, she finally learns about her husband's treachery and flees into the wilderness along with her invalid father. Living from the bounty of the land and caring not only for her father but various injured wildlife, Faith survives handsomely until rescued by Jeb (Hugh Thompson). They fall in love, stake a claim together, and repulse the nefarious Leroy, who accidentally falls to his death.

An independent spirit who made her films far away from Hollywood, Nell Shipman is perhaps best remembered for starring in *God's Country* and *The Women* (1916), during the filming of which she began her lifelong love affair with the Great Outdoors.

Shipman's autobiography, *The Silent Screen and My Talking Heart*, was published 18 years after her death in 1970.

**Toronto International Film Festival Group** *review by ?*

In The *Grub-Stake*, Shipman plays Faith Diggs, a beautiful young woman who supports herself and her ailing father by taking in laundry and modelling for artists. Enter the villain

Leroy who agrees to back her plan to open a laundry in gold rush country. Once in the Klondike, Faith discovers Leroy's true and dastardly schemes. Faith flees with her father in a dogsled and gets hopelessly lost. A series of Shipman's trademark animal and wilderness scenes ensue before Faith is rescued in what Shipman described as a 'sockeroo finish.'

**International Movie Data Base** *review by MGMEMAX*

This 1923 Nell Shipman production is a rip-snorting action movie with enough plot for two or three ordinary Shipmans, happily has print quality that does full justice to its Alaskan photography.

At first it's a bit dismaying to see feminist role model Shipman trying to protect her virginity from a rotter who lured her to Alaska to become a dance hall girl. Virginity is for other silent actresses to worry about; Nell Shipman should be worrying about grizzly bears and rockslides.

But soon she's got her invalid father lashed to the dogsled and she's off looking for gold, taking time out along the way to curse God face to face and to frolic amid nature's larger mammals (at which point God is let off for good behavior) before a two-fisted finale with a literal cliffhanger.

This picture had everything but the Johnstown Flood in it, . . . The only pity is that some of the titles were noticeably jittery, an easily remedied glitch.



# THE GRUB-STAKE

USA, 1923, Directed by Nell Shipman and Bert Van Tuyle, b/w, 95 mins, silent.

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: George Atto

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*The Grub-Stake* is a typical Shipman movie in which the heroine, Faith Diggs (Nell Shipman), is challenged by a variety of crises in her life. In her attempt to build a new life in Alaska — actually she ends up in the Yukon — she is deceived by a con artist, flees, gets lost in a hidden valley, communes with wild animals, falls in love with a painter and finds the lost gold claim of Mamalute Mike. She is arrested by a Mountie, escapes, is pursued by the con man and arranges his death. Finally, she and her partner set up house along with a baby and an admiring audience of bears.

The intriguing Nell Shipman, *The Grub-Stake*'s co-director, writer and leading actress, was born Helen Barham in Victoria, B.C. in 1892. She began her acting career in the American Northwest at the age of 13. When she was 18 she married 39-year-old Ernest Shipman, a theatrical and movie entrepreneur. Over the next ten years, she either wrote, directed, produced, and or starred in 20 movies, including one of her most successful films, *Back to God's Country*. Following her divorce from Shipman in 1920, she created her own company, Nell Shipman Productions. In 1922 Nell and a fellow crew member Bert Van Tuyle moved to Spokane, Washington, and set about raising the capital for their first major film, to be called *The Grub-Stake*.

Reprised in this film are a number of themes which appear with some regularity in many of Nell Shipman's films. These include an enterprising and resourceful woman, dishonest and corrupt men (shades of Ernest Shipman?), perilous journeys in wild landscapes and a close relationship with a number of animals

(Nell Shipman was a fierce advocate for the protection of animals in filmmaking, and owned her own Zoo).

Much of this film was made on location in Washington State and Idaho. The location work was extremely arduous, including the climax on Lookout Mountain which required transporting all of the then cumbersome equipment over five miles of unbuilt trail.

Unfortunately for Shipman, her attempts at marketing this film proved disastrous. By the early 1920s the Big Five studios and their distribution arms had made it very hard for a small company such as Shipman's to arrange for widespread release. In addition she made a serious mistake in choosing the American Releasing Company to distribute *The Grub-Stake*: They not only defrauded her out of the British sales, but then went bankrupt. On top of all this her partner Bert Van Tuyle was in a serious stage of mental deterioration.

Because of her financial woes, Nell Shipman was forced to send her private menagerie to the San Diego Zoo, and although she made a number of films in the 1920s she never regained the prominence of her early years. She was married shortly to the artist Charles Ayers and also wrote a number of scripts for Hollywood, including *Wings in the Dark* (1935) with Cary Grant and Myrna Loy. She was reputed to be destitute at the time of her death in 1970.

George Atto is a member of the Vintage Film Festival Committee.



# I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG (1932)

Directed by Mervyn LeRoy

No contemporary review available All Movie Guide review by: Hal Erickson

Warner Bros.' hard-hitting chain-gang movie was a faithful adaptation of the similarly titled autobiography of Robert Elliot Burns. Paul Muni plays World War I veteran James Allen, whose plans of becoming a master architect evaporate in the cold light of economic realities.

Flat broke, Allen is forced to pawn his war medals, which have become a glut on the market. When Allen is innocently involved in a restaurant holdup, the police don't buy his story that the robber (Preston S. Foster) had forced him to clean out the cash register and Allen is sentenced to ten years on a chain gang.

The brutal scenes that follow make the later chain-gang movie *Cool Hand Luke* (1967) look like a picnic in the country. Unable to stand any more, Allen escapes and heads to Chicago. Using an alias, he builds a new life for himself and within five years is the respected president of a bridge-building firm.

His landlady (Glenda Farrell), learning about his past, forces Allen to marry her. When he falls in love with another girl (Helen Vinson) and asks for a divorce, his wife turns him over to the authorities.

The real-life Robert Elliot Burns was still a fugitive when he wrote his exposé of the chain-gang system; the publication of Burns' book led to the abolishment of that system and an erasure of Burns' sentence.



## What are you looking at?

The shape of the movie screen you watch has changed over the years. Originally the standard shape was almost square: a ratio 1.37 – 1. This was convenient for the space available in a 35mm camera frame after allowing room for sprocket holes down each side of the film and a sound track down one side. What you saw on the screen was a straight magnification of what was on the film.

In 1952 the Cinerama process was introduced. It used three synchronized 35mm cameras shooting side by side. The image in the theatre from three synchronized projectors was essentially three standard screens wide and one standard screen high. It was a cumbersome process that lasted only a very short while. Abel Gance had used a similar triptych arrangement in parts of his 1927 film *Napoleon*.

20th Century Fox's 1953 release of *The Robe* in wide-screen CinemaScope (and stereophonic magnetic sound – but that is another story) introduced a new aspect ratio, 2.35 – 1. This was achieved by optically squeezing the image horizontally (but not vertically) in the camera, and unsqueezing it in the projector. A big fuss was made about the new Bausch and Lomb anamorphic lenses used in this process, but really the optics had always been available. CinemaScope was like a single camera version of Cinerama.

Paramount replied to CinemaScope within a year with its own system that did no squeezing and unsqueezing and didn't require cinemas to refit their projection equipment or restrict the seating to accommodate a new screen. It was called VistaVision. It used a ratio of 1.85 – 1. VistaVision increased the size of the negative in the camera by using 55 mm film instead of 35 mm. The negative was printed in standard 35 mm for distribution. Because of the larger negative, the positive was more detailed, especially more detailed than a CinemaScope positive, which had been squeezed onto the print and then expanded onto the screen. CinemaScope responded by shooting some of its films in 55 mm.

Wide screen ratios have varied from the 1.85 – 1 of VistaVision to as much as 2.55 – 1 in some later Panavision films. Modern digital and high definition TV screens are in a ratio of 16 – 9 or 1.78 – 1, very close to the VistaVision ratio.

CMW

# I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG

USA, 1932, Directed by Mervyn LeRoy, b/w, 93 min.

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Chris M. Worsnop

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To say that films are political is to stir up controversy. When faced with a claim that 1950s Hollywood films for instance were largely either propaganda or sedatives for the cold war, many people adamantly insist that they were just entertainment. Could the same claims be made of films of the Great Depression? Was there Soma in Busby Berkeley's musical numbers proclaiming, "We're in the Money"? Did *Our Daily Bread* (King Vidor, 1934) proselytize for communism by showing a successful American Depression-era commune? Was Hollywood commenting on Depression-era USA in the way films like *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) and *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) had commented on Germany and Russia during their crisis years?

Herbert J. Biberman tried to make *Salt of the Earth* (1954) using Hollywood professionals blacklisted by McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee. The production was starved of funds; Biberman was arrested; the lead actress was deported; the camera rolls had to be smuggled into laboratories to be processed. When it was finally released, *Salt of the Earth* was suppressed in the United States until the early 1960s. Hollywood of the 1950s tolerated only certain kinds of politics in films.

*I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* has the look of a political interpretation of the American Dream. Twenty years after it was made, it would quite possibly have attracted the attention of the HUAC, but in the 1930s small 's' socialism was not a dirty word. If the 1950s film-going public needed to be coached, coaxed and protected into thinking right, the 1930s were open to made-in-USA political commentaries that might relieve its Depression depression.

A down-on-his-luck World War 1 veteran is caught in a robbery and, though only a bystander, he gets a ten-year chain gang

sentence. We witness as he suffers the corruption and violence a state can inflict upon its citizens in the name of justice. He escapes, makes a good life for himself but is later betrayed by his jealous, gold-digging wife. He eventually turns himself in, naively trusting a Kafkaesque promise of quick pardon.

His second escape puts him constantly on the run. In a furtive meeting with his former lover – an urgent and hurried sequence worthy of the darkest film noir — his two-word answer to her frantic question, "How do you live?" is a powerfully condemning piece of dialogue. He whispers in despair, as he scuttles off into the feral darkness, "I steal."

This film eschews the melodramatic style common in the early talkie era, delivering a drama with three-dimensional characters and engagingly real situations. (The story is based on real events.) The script often allows visuals to make a story point that a lesser film would cover with static dialogue, and is very economical in covering the parts of the plot that could, if expanded, plunge into embarrassing soap opera. The camera-work and editing at times evoke some of the flowingly rhythmic work of the best silent films. A chase through a swamp during the first escape is a prime example. The use of sound and silence during this sequence is original and striking.

Director Mervyn LeRoy would perhaps disclaim any political interpretation of this, his sixth feature film since his debut, *Little Caesar* (1931). After all, his next film was *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933), the one that opens with that Busby Berkeley number, *We're in the Money*.

Chris M. Worsnop is a member of the Vintage Film Festival Committee.



# MURDER AT THE VANITIES (1934)

Directed by: Mitchell Leisen

Original review from the *New York Times* May 21, 1934, by: Mordaunt Hall

At the Rivoli is a screen version of Earl Carroll's stage offering *Murder at the Vanities*, which on the screen appeals rather to the eye than to the ear. It can boast of its lavish staging, certain tuneful melodies, and its host of attractive girls. But the mystery concerning its two murders is never particularly disturbing.

Occasionally there is a flash of good comedy, such as when one reads over a stage door the Carroll line: "Through these portals pass the most beautiful girls in the world," and an instant later one beholds the figure of an adipose charwoman with her weapons in the doorway. Jack Oakie as a harried press agent and Victor McLaglen as a busy police lieutenant also amused an audience yesterday afternoon.

Carl Brisson, a Continental player who achieved distinction as a pugilist before taking up acting, plays Eric Lander, the leading man of this *Vanities* show, which in the story is supposed to be under the Carroll management. The excuse for Carroll not appearing on the screen is that he has decided to stay in Florida because he is indisposed. So far as Mr. Lander is concerned, he has a prepossessing appearance and sings pleasantly. Not much can be said for or against his acting, for he is thrust into a rôle which scarcely gives an actor any opportunity to distinguish himself, beyond going about his performance in a routine musical comedy manner.

It falls to the lot of Kitty Carlisle to portray Ann Ware, who is head over heels in love with Lander. She and Lander are somewhat late for the first night of the show and at the moment Jack Ellery (Mr. Oakie) is quite agitated because of their tardiness in comes Lieutenant Murdock (Mr. McLaglen) in evening attire, complaining loudly because the press agent has completely forgotten to set aside seats for the policeman and his inamorata.

The bewildered Ellery is relieved eventually by the sight of Lander and Ann, who report that they are going to be married after the show. It is then that the mysterious incidents occur. Ann is almost killed by a falling spotlight; her door mirror is shattered by somebody slamming it, and a sandbag drops from the flies. It looks as though something were rotten in Denmark and any spectator of the film could give odds on knowing who is responsible for the dirty work.

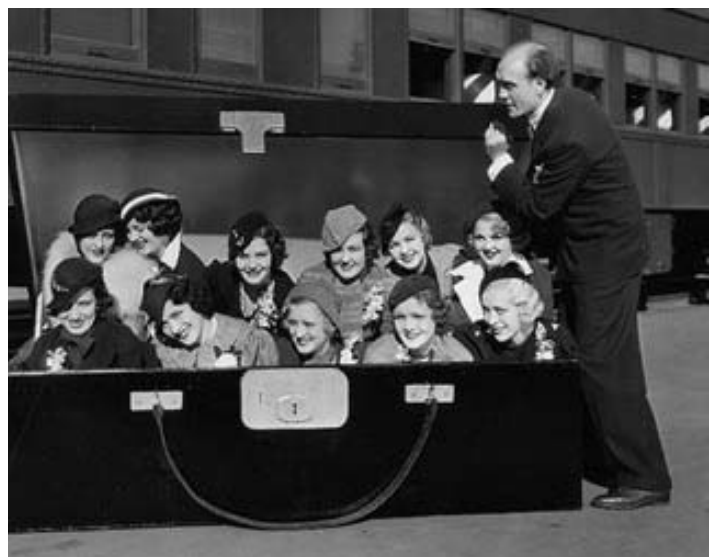
Then blood drips on Ann's hand, and notwithstanding that there is a suggestion that it is nothing but paint, one knows better. Therefore it is not really surprising when the body of a young woman, a private detective, is discovered in the rafters. It is then that Lieutenant Murdock threatens to close down the show, but Ellery prevails upon him to let it go on. A dagger, a half of a pair of scissors and a pistol are employed to help curdle the blood of the onlooker.

Yes, the spectacular items are far more interesting than the story. There is the fan waving by a group of girls who succeed in giving with the feathers an impression of lazy waves on an ocean beach. Besides those already mentioned, other players who give valiant support to this blood and thunder musical comedy are Gertrude Michael, Dorothy Stickney, Gail Patrick and Barbara Fritchie.

*MURDER AT THE VANITIES*, an adaptation of the stage work by Earl Carroll and Rufus King; music and lyrics by Arthur Johnson and Joseph Gollomb; directed by Mitchell Leisen; a Paramount production. At the Rivoli.

Eric Lender.....	Carl Brisson
Bill Murdock.....	Victor McLaglen
Jack Ellery.....	Jack Oakie
Ann Ware.....	Kitty Carlisle
Norma Watson.....	Dorothy Stickney
Rita Ross.....	Gertrude Michael
Mrs. Helene Smith.....	Jessie Ralph
Homer Boothby.....	Charles B. Middleton

Sadie Evans.....	Gail Patrick
Dr. Saunders.....	Donald Meek
Walsh.....	Otto Hoffman
Ben.....	Charles McAvoy
Beryl.....	Beryl Wallace
Vivien.....	Barbara Fritchie
Nancy.....	Toby Wing
Lona.....	Lona Andre
Stage manager.....	Colin Tapley



# MURDER AT THE VANITIES

USA, 1934, Directed by Mitchell Leisen, b/w, 95 min

VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW BY: Cathie Houston

A musical show and murder mystery with an effective comedy flavour, *Murder at the Vanities* is 95 minutes of worthwhile entertainment.

Based on the play by Earl Carroll (creator of the Vanities, a Broadway institution that boasted “Through these portals pass the most beautiful girls in the world”) and Rufus King, the film stars comedian Jack Oakie as stage manager Jack Ellery, Victor McLaglen as crusty police detective Bill Murdock, Carl Brisson (a Danish actor in his first American film) as Eric Lander and Kitty Carlisle (later in life from the 1960s-1970s Quiz Show *To Tell The Truth*) as Ann Ware.

The police are investigating a series of murders during the opening night of a new edition of the Vanities when the first murder victim is found. It is Sadie Evans (Gail Patrick) a private detective. Lt. Murdock must investigate between musical numbers to find the killer.

As well as being a good musical, the film is a well crafted murder mystery with several of the characters making veiled threats and brandishing scissors or foot-long hat pins. Carl Brisson’s wavy hair and what must be truly beautiful big blue eyes, together with his toothy beaming smile make you sure he could never be the murderer, even though he is accused and has to sing an entire musical number in handcuffs hidden beneath his singing partner’s mink muff. Kitty Carlisle’s character Ann Ware narrowly escapes being cut by a shattering full-length mirror and boffed by a falling

light and sand bag, all the while maintaining complete composure on stage and singing her heart out. Intrigue builds as two women are murdered, one by stabbing, the other by gunshot, while the show must go on in a flurried backstage frenzy.

The sets are 1930s modern art deco lavish. The Vanities girls are beautiful and very scantily clad; foliage and hands placed strategically leaving little to the imagination; gorgeous girls housed in massive gilt oyster shells that open with mirrored revelations. The most impressive set accompanies the musical number *Live and Love Tonight*, an especially creative seashore interlude with the Vanities girls as mermaids sporting long blonde tresses and manipulating ostrich feather fans to simulate rolling waves. Next best is the Duke Ellington band popping up sporadically during the Franz Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody* number turning it into the *Ebony Rhapsody*, with the Franz Liszt character chopping the entire orchestra with a machine gun at the end. Not to be missed is the musical number *Marijuana*. Bluesy Gertrude Michael serenades marijuana to put her to sleep so she may dream about her lost love. Marijuana was not an illegal substance in 1934, but the funny bit is that Gertrude Michael thought marijuana was a Mexican musical instrument.

Sit back and enjoy the show. It’s not the most cerebral film you’ll ever watch, but it is fun and bizarre.

Cathie Houston is a member of the Vintage Film Festival Committee

## The Hollywood Star System

When Marilyn Monroe appeared with Jane Russell in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* in 1953, Russell was paid a fee of \$200 000 while Munroe earned her studio contract rate of \$500 a week. Russell was a star; Munroe was a rookie contract actor.

It was Charlie Chaplin who first pushed the film makers to hand over more than a pittance to the actors, and started the ball rolling for films to be marketed in terms of the public’s favourite star. He was one of the founders of the United Artists Studio, which first existed to market his films together with those of D.W. Griffith, Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Mary Pickford. The stars had their own studio – and all the money.

From the 1920s to the early 1960s the major studios hired actors on contracts, often with a seven-year term. These contracts bound the actors to their home studio at pay rates that grew slowly. Getting out of the contract was easy for the studio and difficult for the actor. Life as a studio actor was often rugged, with one film wrapping (up) only days before the actor had to report for the beginning of the next shoot. Studios often released 50 feature films a year and the actors worked hard.

Once an actor became an undeniable box office draw, that was the time for an agent to negotiate a new contract with the studio with the star treatment and pay built in.

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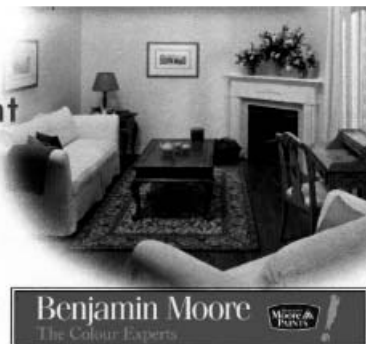
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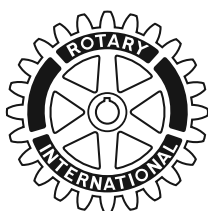
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# 2010 VINTAGE FILM FESTIVAL

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# Vintage Film Festival

## **On behalf...**

... of RBC Dominion Securities we are very proud to continue our support of the Vintage Film Festival.

*Lynn Hardy - RBC Dominion Securities, Cobourg*



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