

RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2019 POST

Little Women (1933) [Katharine Hepburn](#), [Joan Bennett](#), [Paul Lukas](#), [Edna May Oliver](#), [Francis Dee](#), [Jean Parker](#), [Spring Byington](#)

Little Women remains faithful to the autobiographical classic by Louisa May Alcott. The March sisters grow up in a simple, loving home with mother, the maid, and no father. The focus of the film is Love—love among the sisters, reverence for their mother, and budding romances with those outside the family. Tragedy also figures large in this film and threatens love in many instances throughout. Although two silent versions of this film were made before and many versions after, this 1933 version seems to be the quintessential version. Personal tastes differ, of course, but it would be difficult to find fault with this film or to dislike it. Superb acting throughout this film makes it a classic, and Katherine Hepburn is riveting! She plays Jo as Alcott intended the character and with exceptional ability. See the film for her performance, if for nothing else. Sentimentality and emotionality permeate this film—be prepared with your box of tissues. Great Sunday afternoon, late night, rainy day, or family viewing. A good movie for your collection, and **Must See Viewing**. IMDB: [Little Women](#)

Little Women (1949) [June Allyson](#), [Peter Lawford](#), [Margaret O'Brien](#), [Elizabeth Taylor](#), [Janet Leigh](#), [Rossano Brazzi](#), [Mary Astor](#), [C. Aubrey Smith](#), [Leon Ames](#)

The heartwarming story of family life in New England with Jo March and her sisters as the focus. The novel provides a microscopic view of family life at the time of the Civil War, in particular, the life among

young girls coming of age. It's one of the best of this genre and a book that everyone should read. The film delivers a love story—love among sisters, love of family, and love for young suitors. This color version provides star power among the actors, with Taylor and O'Brien, above all, making this film a classic. (Spoiler alert: Be prepared for one of the most heartbreaking scenes ever filmed.) Allyson delivers a competent performance, but if you've seen the 1933 version of the film, Hepburn's performance looms large over Allyson's. Overall, however, the novel finds faithful representation in this film, the stars shine bright, and this classic entertains. Viewers **must see** this film. IMDB: [Little Women](#)

Marianne (1929) [Marion Davies](#), [George Baxter](#), [Lawrence Gray](#), Cliff Edwards, Benny Rubin

Lovely French girl, Marianne, sees her fiancé off as he goes to war. Injured in the war, he tells his friend to tell Marianne he was killed in the war so she won't have to marry 'half a man.' His friend and the bistro owner where she works conspire to tell her that her fiancé met and married another girl. She then agrees to marry the bistro owner. Meanwhile, American soldiers have occupied the town, and they vie for Marianne's favors. Marion Davies, in her first talkie, basically spends the film yelling in a bad French accent at the men pursuing her. The film provides a modest level of entertainment with a few comedic bits that work, but Marion Davies completists will appreciate this film most. IMDB: [Marianne](#)

Peacock Alley (1930) [Mae Murray](#), [George Barraud](#), [Jason Robards Sr.](#), [Richard Tucker](#), Billy Bevan

A young woman meets a wealthy man in a hotel lobby and goes up to his room. He tries to convince her to become his mistress and explains why he doesn't believe in marriage. She indicates she'll only be his partner in marriage...but she stays the night. She then marries her long-time friend,

and they register in the same hotel for their honeymoon. The house detective visits their room and kicks them out of the hotel indicating the young woman spent the night with another man and is not the type of woman who can stay in the hotel. The new husband is enraged and unreasonable, so the young woman takes him to her friend's room so he can explain that nothing happened between them. The friend will not defend the young lady, and her new husband storms out. This short, simple, primitive talkie, despite some ham-handed acting, entertains. Tension and a narrative that moves quickly, as well as a beautiful heroine, of course, make this film one worth watching. IMDB: [Peacock Alley](#)

The Benson Murder Case (1930) [William Powell](#), [William 'Stage' Boyd](#), [Eugene Palette](#), [Paul Lukas](#)

Despised banker, Mr. Benson, invites a friend to his country estate, but a number of others show up also. On a dark, stormy night, the guests all witness his murder as they hear a shot and he comes tumbling down the stairs. Philo Vance, one of the guests, enters a duel of wits with the local detective to solve the murder. Standard mystery with a clever method of murder. Mildly entertaining, but you won't miss much if you skip this one. IMDB: [The Benson Murder Case](#)

Relay, The (Short) (1927) [George J. Lewis](#), [Eddie Phillips](#), [Dorothy Gulliver](#)

Hot college girls running a relay race with a large crowd of fans in the stands start this film. The freshmen girls beat the sophomores. After the race, the students gather at a road house, where the sophomores haze the freshmen and the freshmen retaliate. A brawl breaks out. That's it. That's the entire film. Other than for the beautiful coeds, no redeeming qualities qualify this film for serious viewing. IMDB: [Relay](#)

Young and Beautiful (Wampas Baby Stars) (1934) William Haines, Judith Allen, Joseph Cawthorn, Ted Fio Rita Orchestra

A group of young ladies vie for the opportunity to star in the entertainment industry and the movies. The viewer sees them in such venues as the chorus line of a night club and even dancing on a table at a prize fighter's training camp. One of the girls, more enterprising than the others, utilizes her press agent boyfriend to keep her in the headlines with schemes they concoct. This film features the Wampas Baby Stars of 1934. Starting in 1923 studio heads featured in films the most promising young actresses each year, calling them the Wampas Baby Stars. Loretta Young, Clara Bow, Colleen Moore, Joan Blondell, and Ginger Rogers, for example, rose to fame starting as Wampas Baby Stars. In this 1934 film, the last to feature Wampas Baby Stars, none of the actresses rose to prominence in films. The film serves as a means of promoting this group of young actresses, and, as such, singing and dancing predominate punctuated by lame comedy routines. Worth watching for its historical significance, some decent musical acts, and moderate entertainment value. IMDB: [Young and Beautiful](#)

The Iron Man Master (1933) Reginald Denny, Lila Lee, J. Farrell MacDonald

Newly hired foundry worker, Steve, gets off on the wrong foot with the entitled daughter of the wealthy iron foundry magnate, J.C., by ordering her around when she breaks the rules at the plant. She orders her dad to fire Steve, he does, but rehires him when she leaves because he admires his gumption. Steve turns out to be a brilliant worker, eventually takes over the business when J.C. dies, and takes charge of J.C.'s estate and finances. As overseer of the family's wealth, he butts heads with J.C.'s daughter, son, and wife, who conspire to ruin his career. Surprisingly, this movie entertains with a fast-moving plot, genuine conflict, decent

acting, and good production values for the time. You will enjoy this film.
IMDB: [The Iron Master](#)

Loudspeaker (1934) [Ray Walker](#), [Julie Bishop](#), [Charley Grapewin](#),
Noel Francis

Loud, obnoxious, jokester, Joe Miller works at the railroad station. When he sees a pretty girl asleep on the observation platform of an arriving train, he slips an engagement ring on her finger—the ring he had planned to use to propose to a girl he lost to another guy. Fired from his railroad job, Joe goes to New York and coincidentally sees the girl on the train, Janet, working in an automat. He pursues her so relentlessly that he offends her, and she disappears from his life. Joe breaks into radio, becomes a star, and works behind the scenes to get out-of-work singer/actress Janet on his show. Even though she works on the show, Joe is so conceited and obnoxious, Janet still won't accept his advances. Things get more complicated with the show and their relationship as Janet's popularity grows. The film begins with a lot of corny jokes and bits and looks to be a fluffy comedy. As the film progresses, it develops more depth and turns into a film that entertains. Well worth watching.

IMDB: [Loudspeaker](#)

The Vagabond Lover (1929) [Rudy Vallee](#), [Sally Blane](#), [Marie Dressler](#), [The Connecticut Yankees](#)

Rudy and his band, desperate to get their big break, actually break into a famous movie producer's house to force him to listen to them. Once in, they're confronted by a cop and the neighbors who reported their break in—a dowager and her beautiful niece. Backed into a corner, his band mates swear Rudy is the home owner. Complications ensue as the band continues the ruse, as Rudy falls in love with the young niece, and their masquerade unravels. Rudy Vallee walks through this film emotionless and expressionless. Sally Blane provides the beauty and the love

interest. Marie Dressler overacts, but delivers the only real acting in the film—a great comedic contribution. Despite this movie's flaws, see this film for its historic significance—Rudy Vallee and his Connecticut Yankees on full display throughout. The talented Rudy and his band deliver the entertainment for which they're famous. Well worth watching. IMDB: [The Vagabond Lover](#)

West of Broadway (1931) John Gilbert, El Brendel, Lois Moran, Madge Evans, Ralph Bellamy, Hedda Hopper

War hero, Jerry, severely wounded, thinks only of returning home to his fiancé. When he returns and meets his fiancé, she offers a handshake and a cold shoulder. She's engaged to another. Devastated, Jerry, goes to the club with a blind date, down-and-out Dot. When he sees his fiancé with her new fiancé at the club, he gets drunk and proposes marriage to his date. She likes Jerry, accepts his proposal, and they marry that night. The next morning Jerry tells Dot he's divorcing her and will make a nice settlement for her. When he tells her to leave, she won't. He leaves for his ranch in Arizona. She follows and won't leave. This film entertains. Tight plot, captivating acting from Lois Moran (she provides all the spark), and a fast pace make this film a winner. John Gilbert's career evaporated in talkies, but he provides a serviceable performance in this outing. You'll enjoy this film—well worth watching. IMDB: [West of Broadway](#)

Risky Business (1926) Vera Reynolds, Ethel Clayton, Kenneth Thomson, Zasu Pitts

Rich girl, Cecily, loathes her rich suitor but loves the handsome, country doctor. While her rich suitor pursues her relentlessly, the doctor feels Cecily could not adjust to the life of a country doctor's wife. Cecily's mother schemes with the rich suitor to sabotage Cecily's relationship with the doctor by setting up a visit to the doctor's sister and her family

—a harried husband, two demanding toddlers, a bumbling maid, and the scattered sister herself. The film starts as comedic fluff, but morphs into a serious drama with emotional depth. Vera Reynolds surprises as an accomplished actress, and the supporting cast excels. This unique silent film delivers with spot-on comedic bits and even with imaginative, funny title cards. The poignant scenes in the latter part of the film seal this film's significance as a work of art. Don't miss this film. It's **must see viewing**. IMDB: [Risky Business](#)

Adorable Cheat, The (1928) [Lila Lee](#), [Cornelius Keefe](#), [Burr McIntosh](#)

Wealthy factory owner Cyrus Dorsey tries to convince his son to go to work in the family business. His son wants only to play, and has no interest in work. Dorsey's beautiful, young daughter, on the other hand, wants to work in her father's factory and one day take over the business. She applies under an assumed name to work as a clerk. She works closely under the supervision of George Mason, and over time they fall in love. They attend a party at a rich friend's house, and the guests work to humiliate George and even blackmail him regarding a theft of money and jewels. All the while, he never knew he was dating the boss's daughter. An engaging and entertaining movie, this silent romance works well on all levels. Lila Lee shines in her role. Well worth watching; you'll enjoy this film. IMDB: [The Adorable Cheat](#)

RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2019 POST

Dance, Girl, Dance (1933) [Alan Dinehart](#), [Evalyn Knapp](#), [Edward J. Nugent](#), [Mae Busch](#)

Young girl, Sally, runs away with a vaudevillian, Joe, who heads a lame comedy act. He's attracted to the magician's assistant, Claudette, dumps Sally, and makes Claudette his partner in his act. He fails miserably, Claudette dumps him, and he moves from one low level job to another. Meanwhile, Sally joins a chorus line, even though she's pregnant, has to leave to have the baby, and then returns to become a cabaret star and the light in the eye of the producer. The plot of this film could work well, but it's not well-developed nor executed well. (I'm sure I saw a cut version of this film, which is common with these PreCode dramas.) The acting also falls short in this film. Singing, dancing, and chorus girls provide a moderate level of interest, but, overall, this is a film for viewers desperate for entertainment. IMDB: [Dance Girl, Dance](#)

Beauty Parlor (1932) [Barbara Kent](#), [Joyce Compton](#), [John Harron](#), [Mischa Auer](#)

Sally works as a manicurist in a beautify shop/barber shop awash in licentiousness. The men want manicures and dates with the manicurists that include dinner and breakfast. Sally remains the good girl, rebuffing all advances. When her friend quits her manicurist job to take a job that pays well and provides good clothes and good times ends up in jail, needs bail money, and the beauty parlor lays off Sally, Sally looks for a way to survive. This film deals with PreCode issues in an interesting and entertaining way. Barbara Kent corners the market on cuteness, and nails her role in this film (as in her other films)—she's a good actress. The film is well-done, entertaining, and, although frivolous, is **must-see viewing**. IMDB: [Beauty Parlor](#)

Behind the Make-Up (1930) [Hal Skelly](#), [William Powell](#), [Fay Wray](#), [Kay Francis](#)

Failing vaudevillian, Hap, on his way home after a performance, helps a man out of the gutter, takes him home and feeds him. The man turns out

to be the once-famous vaudevillian, Gardoni. They decide to team up, fail, and Gardoni abandons Hap. Hap falls in love with the waitress at the restaurant where he ends up washing dishes. At the theater one night, they see Gardoni, who has stolen Hap's ideas for an act. They go backstage to see Gardoni, who instantly falls in love with Hap's girl. The fortunes of the three rise and fall throughout the rest of the film with one heart of gold, one cold heart, and one confused romantic. This film did not look appealing at first, but, despite mediocre acting, the interplay of the characters created the interest. As in most of the Precode films, a dazzling beauty plays the lead, and Fay Wray fits the bill in this one. The plot plods along, but the interest never fades in this one. The entertainment value is moderate, but it's well worth watching.

IMDB: [Behind the Make-Up](#)

Broadway (1929) Glenn Tryon, Evelyn Brent, Merna Kennedy

All of the action in this film takes place in a nightclub. The bootlegger for the club bullies everyone and pursues the cute, naive chorus girl who keeps insisting she's a 'good girl.' The lead singer at the club also loves her and tries to protect her from the womanizer. The bootlegger has also moved into another bootlegger's territory, and conflicts result for the intrusion. A couple of murders occur during the action, and the film ends in a flourish with a primitive color scene. No recognizable actors star in this film besides Evelyn Brent, and the acting across the board suffers—some scenes are so bad it's painful to watch. The film focuses on the chorus girls, who perform a number of dancing acts in the club. The entertainment value of this film registers as moderate. It's worth watching, but nothing extraordinary here. IMDB: [Broadway](#)

Dancing Man (1934) Reginald Denny, Judith Allen, Edmund Breese

Gigolo, Paul, dances with many older women for obvious benefits. When he runs into a young woman he'd known previously, they fall in

love. She eventually learns of his dicey profession and that her father's much younger wife is also in love with the 'dancing man.' A murder involves all the principals in this cast, and the soap opera turns into a murder mystery. Other than Reginald Denny, there are no accomplished stars in this film, and the mediocre acting reflects that fact. Despite the acting, the plot delivers the interest in this film. It moves quickly, creates suspense, and produces a film worth watching. IMDB: [Dancing Man](#)

Daring Daughters (1933) [Marian Marsh](#), [Kenneth Thomson](#), [Joan Marsh](#), [Bert Roach](#)

It's a cynical world with the women thinking all the men are after sex, and the men thinking all the women are after money. Terry, who works at the cigar counter of a swanky hotel, gets hit on continually and keeps most men at bay with her story of a sick grandmother at home. When she meets a legitimate guy, she's overly suspicious and has to deal with his wealthy uncle who threatens her to stay away from his nephew. Additionally, her little sister comes to live with her, and Terry tries to protect her from the predators. As with many of the films of this era, mediocre acting reigns, although Marian Marsh performs at a level above the rest.. The story engages the viewer, suspense grows, and the relationships intrigue. You'll enjoy this film. I consider it **must see viewing**. IMDB: [Daring Daughters](#)

Safety in Numbers. (1930) [Charles 'Buddy' Rogers](#), [Kathryn Crawford](#), [Josephine Dunn](#)

Bill works in his uncle's business and boosts office morale by organizing games that show off the office girls' legs and underwear. His uncle finds him too immature to handle the \$25 million he'll inherit when he comes of age. Therefore, he sends him to New York to mature in his relationships with girls before he inherits his money. His uncle has arranged for Bill to be supervised by three trusted women. Bill assumes

they will be dowagers, but they turn out to be three young women who compete for Bill's affections. This film appears promising at the beginning, but takes a nosedive quickly. Corny songs dominate this romantic comedy, and only a few of the comedic moments work. An imaginative silhouette of dancers superimposed over city scenes illustrates a cinematic innovation of the period. The best quote from the film regards a well-mannered girl who doesn't drink or smoke. A male acquaintance quips, 'It isn't natural for a girl to be so nice.' Average entertainment value here. Buddy Rogers and Carole Lombard working together make the film interesting, and it may be worth a try, but don't expect an award-winner. IMDB: [Safety in Numbers](#)

Sally in Our Alley (1931) [Gracie Fields](#), [Ian Hunter](#), [Florence Desmond](#)

Before George goes off to war, he promises to marry Sally on his return. She keeps his photo on her mantle and his promise in her heart. Injured in the war, George asks his buddy to tell Sally he died because he felt she deserved better than half a man. Those in Sally's neighborhood, including his buddy and the proprietor of the restaurant where she works and who wants to marry her, spread the lie that George married a girl he met in the war. Many factors work against a reunion with George, including a conniving young girl Sally takes in because of an abusive father. (Florence Desmond plays the young girl to perfection and scores one of the film's highlights with an impersonation of Garbo.) This romantic drama works well and stars a renowned British actress and singer. There's tension throughout, adequate acting, and a plot that keeps the viewer's interest. Viewing the great Gracie Fields at work makes this film worthwhile. If you can wade through the British accents, you'll enjoy this film. IMDB: [Sally in Our Alley](#)

Secret Sinners (1933) [Jack Mulhall](#), [Sue Carol](#), [Nick Stuart](#), [Cecilia Parker](#), [Bert Roach](#)

Margie leaves home and won't return. In her new city she finds work as a cleaning lady in a rooming house. Fired on her first day, she meets chorus girl, Susan, who gets her into the chorus line at the theater. Margie meets wealthy Jimmy outside the theater, dates him for a month, and then, after a confrontation with his wife and her boyfriend in a nightclub, realizes she loves a married man. Meanwhile, Jimmy's wife and her boyfriend hire a detective to catch Margie and Jimmy in a compromising situation so Jimmy's wife can get all of his money instead of half in a divorce. This film features chorus girls, nightclub performances, and complicated romantic entanglements. Amateurish acting, a passable storyline, and an average level of entertainment make this film watchable but not essential. IMDB: [Secret Sinners](#)

RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

JULY, 2019 POST

Forgotten Women (1931) [Marion Shilling](#), [Beryl Mercer](#), [Rex Bell](#), [Virginia Lee Corbin](#)

Young movie actress, Patricia, loves struggling newspaper reporter, Jimmy and plans to marry him. Jimmy breaks a big story and becomes the paper's hero. He also attracts the attention of the rich, boss's daughter, who sets her sights on Jimmy. Jimmy learns to love the lives of the rich and famous and leaves poor, devoted Patricia in the dust. Mediocre acting doesn't detract from the fast pace, engaging story, and suspenseful romantic entanglements. This early talkie will win you over and is well worth watching. IMDB: [Forgotten Women](#)

From Hell to Heaven (1933) [Carole Lombard](#), [Jack Oakie](#), [Adrienne Ames](#), [Shirley Grey](#)

The residents of a hotel and a fired jockey all have stakes in the upcoming horse race. The mixed plot lines in this film all merge at the big horse race. The racing scenes lend some excitement to the film, but the movie never rises to the level of a first-rate film. Carole Lombard shines in an early role for her, but the movie meekly mimics the Grand Hotel of the same period. Better films warrant your viewing time.
IMDB: [From Hell to Heaven](#)

Midnight Girl, The (1925) [Lila Lee](#), [Gareth Hughes](#), [Dolores Cassinelli](#), [Bela Lugosi](#)

Complicated soap opera here. Wealthy Nicholas Harmon supports the opera house and also supports the leading lady as his lover. His son, Don, secretly also loves the star. After a falling out with his father, Don stalks out and starts life without his father's support. He becomes the band leader in a cafe, discovers a beautiful singer to star in his show, and falls in love with her. Meanwhile, Don's fiancé, who plans on marrying him for his father's money, interferes in his relationship with his beautiful new star. In addition, Nicholas wants to make his son's discovery the new star in his opera. In trying to woo her away from his son, he wines, dines, and attempts to rape her. Obviously, this film has a lot going on plot-wise. There are also attempted murders, salacious relationships, and a violent rape attempt. Bela Lugosi plays the weasely womanizer to perfection, and, although, this is a mediocre silent soap, it generates enough interest to keep the viewer glued to the screen. Give it a try. You'll enjoy it. IMDB: [Midnight Girl, The](#)

Welcome Danger (1929) [Harold Lloyd](#), [Barbara Kent](#), [Noah Young](#) |

Harold's train to San Francisco breaks down, he walks to a meadow to pick a flower, and the train leaves without him. He meets a beautiful girl (dressed in coveralls and a cap so she looks like a man—not really) with a disabled car. He bullies the girl he assumes is a man, but agrees to ride

in his/her car because she also is going to San Francisco. When he discovers she's a woman, he falls in love with her. They separate when he again takes the train to San Francisco but pledge to meet up. Called to San Francisco to help solve a crime, Harold becomes obsessed with taking finger prints and creates chaos everywhere. Lamé jokes and silly bits dominate this comedy. Add a heavy dose of racial stereotyping and this film can irritate more than it entertains. Truly funny bits appear infrequently. Super cute Barbara Kent, with her appeal and spot-on acting, provides the primary reason to watch this film. (Or one may want to watch Harold Lloyd's first talkie, which was originally shot as a silent.) IMDB: [Welcome Danger](#)

City Limits (1934) Frank Craven, Ray Walker, Sally Blane, George 'Gabby' Hayes

Railroad magnate, J. B. Matthews, endangers his health from overwork and involvement in high-risk financial deals. While taking a trip in his private railroad car in order to relax, he literally falls off the train and rolls down an embankment into a hobo camp. He learns a lot about what's important in life from his new friends. Meanwhile a reporter doggedly tries to locate J. B. in order to save his business from competitors. Acting is competent, there's some suspense, a romantic side-plot—but not enough to make this film entertaining. Not one you want to waste your time on. IMDB: [City Limits](#)

Consolation Marriage (1931) Irene Dunne, Pat O'Brien, John Halliday, Myrna Loy

In love with his sweetheart, Elaine, since childhood, Steve travels to London, where Elaine went to finishing school, to surprise her and ask her to marry. Unfortunately, when he gets there, she tells him she just got married a few days ago. Broken hearted, he mourns his loss for a year before meeting Mary, who also lost her love to another. Although

not in love, they decide to marry with the understanding that if love happens in the future for either one, the one left out will understand. As time goes by, a baby enters the equation, both of their fervent loves divorce, and they each want their original loves back. Major conflicts here, heartbreak, sorrow, tears—you get the picture. Rather a soapy love story, but this film satisfies. Top notch acting, an overdose of sentiment, and extreme conflict make this a winner. You won't take your eyes off the screen. **Must see viewing.** IMDB: [Consolation Marriage](#)

RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

MAY-JUNE, 2019 POST

Carnival Lady (1933) [Boots Mallory](#), [Allen Vincent](#), [Donald Kerr](#), [Jason Robards, Sr.](#)

Tom's wealthy and hangs out with the elite, but when his bank goes bust, he loses everything. He leaves his present life and sets off for the unknown—ending up as a high diver in a carnival. When Tom falls in love with a beautiful dancer in the carnival, complications abound. This film features unknown actors, amateurish acting, and primitive production values. HOWEVER...it turned out to be highly entertaining. This PreCode drama/romance presents fight scenes, chorus girls, a clever novelty dance routine, daredevil diving, a murder, pickpocketing, behind-the-scenes carnival intrigue, and a beautiful leading lady. Surprisingly interesting and remarkably entertaining. You'll enjoy Carnival Lady. IMDB: [Carnival Lady](#)

Cheating Blondes (1933) [Thelma Todd](#), [Ralf Harolde](#), [Inez Courtney](#), [Mae Busch](#)

Factory girl, Ann Merrick, refuses her reporter boyfriend's proposal because she feels he doesn't love her. He vows revenge. Her drunken neighbor sexually assaults her. Her screams draw a crowd in the hallway outside her apartment, and the neighbors then hear a gun shot. When the police arrive, they break down the door, find the drunken neighbor dead, and Ann gone. Her reporter boyfriend tries to get to the bottom of the story. Because the available version of this film is missing scenes, the plot gets confusing at times. The story involves a twin sister and registers only moderate entertainment value. Production values and acting are mediocre, at best. (When actors flub their lines, they simply repeat the line correctly. No editing here.) Worth watching, but there are certainly better films with which to occupy your time. IMDB: [Cheating Blondes](#)

Sister to Judas (1932) [Claire Windsor](#), [Holmes Herbert](#), [John Harron](#)

Anne lives in a dysfunctional family, experiences a crisis at work, and attempts suicide. Rescued by a handsome, young man, she ends up marrying him. Although she loves him deeply, he quickly disintegrates as a human being. This early talkie suffers from poor production values, weak acting, and a contrived plot, but, as with many PreCode films, it features a beautiful heroine and delivers satisfying entertainment. IMDB: [Sister to Judas](#)

Sky Devils (1932) [Spencer Tracy](#), [William 'Stage' Boyd](#), [George Cooper](#), [Ann Dvorak](#), [Billie Bevan](#)

Wilkie and Mitchell work as lifeguards at the local beach and pay more attention to the babes than to swimmers in distress. Drafted into the Army, they find the work too hard and try to desert. Thwarted in their attempt, they get transferred to the Army Air Corps, where they are just as incompetent as they'd always been. Spencer Tracy plays the arrogant

know-it-all, while George Cooper plays his dimwitted sidekick. You'll get a few chuckles out of this, a chance to ogle PreCode beauties in their underwear, and an opportunity to see Tracy in one of his early films, but, given all that, this is a film that only mildly entertains and will sometimes make you cringe. The first half of the film involves a lot of silliness that does not entertain. The last half of the film actually contains quality aerial scenes, a decent plot, and better humor than in the first half. Overall, it's worth a view. IMDB: [Sky Devils](#)

Strange Marriage (Slightly Married) (1932) [Evalyn Knapp](#), [Walter Byron](#), [Marie Prevost](#), [Jason Robards, Sr.](#)

Mary's destitute, standing on a corner waiting for her fiancé, who said he'd meet her there. He doesn't show up, but an undercover cop asks her if she wants some money. She naively says, 'Yes,' and is arrested for prostitution. In court, a man she's never met stands up and says he's the man she was waiting for. The judge makes him prove it by marrying her on the spot. He does. Turns out, he's very wealthy, falls in love with Mary, but fears she wants to stay married because of his money. His mother also thinks she's after his money, and things get very complicated. Fast moving and strangely entertaining, this PreCode romance/comedy/drama is well worth watching. Light entertainment with suspense and sentiment. Give it a try. IMDB: [Strange Marriage](#)

Gambling Sex (1932) [Ruth Hall](#), [Grant Withers](#), [Maston Williams](#)

College student Sheila's wealthy father owns race horses and gambles excessively. When her father dies after being crushed by one of his horses, she lives a life of abandon—gambling, partying, love. She ultimately must decide on her multiple marriage proposals when the money from her father's estate dwindles away. This routine drama lacks any real emotional punch, and simply tells a story that interests but

doesn't excite. Worth watching, but don't expect too much.

IMDB: [Gambling Sex](#)

Half Marriage (1929) [Olive Borden](#), [Morgan Farley](#), [Ken Murray](#), [Sally Blane](#), [Hedda Hopper](#)

Wealthy Judy loves penniless architect, Dick. They want to marry, but Dick wants to wait until he can support Judy properly. Judy proposes a half marriage, in which they marry secretly, don't tell her parents, who would object, and live off her allowance. Complications arise and tragedy ensues when Judy's parents and their chosen spouse for Judy, the womanizer, Tom, interfere. This comedy, drama, romance (with some music and dancing—yes, it has it all) really delivers. It gets really silly and syrupy at times, the acting ranges from serviceable to awful, but the story is solid, engrossing, suspenseful and highly entertaining. (Ken Murray, most famous for his home movies of early Hollywood, plays a substantial supporting role in this film). For overall entertainment value in an early talkie, this is **must-see viewing**. IMDB: [Half Marriage](#)

Her Secret (1933) [Sari Maritza](#), [William Collier, Jr.](#), [Alan Mowbray](#)

Wealthy young man, Johnny, carouses, drinks, and spends so much time in jail his father decides to send him to Arizona to run a gas station, establish a normal life for himself, and find a nice girl. Even in a new environment, he continues his bad behavior. He does, however, meet a nice girl, Waffles, who runs the waffle restaurant across from his gas station. Will he ever reform?

Don't watch this film. The plot itself wanders, and it lacks interest. The worst part of the film is Waffles' Southern accent. As a girl from Georgia, she speaks with an affected accent that is so grating and irritating that, even if this were a good film, it would be hard to watch. I

rate it as the worst Southern accent on film. It certainly ruins this movie. The only redeeming qualities in this film are the glimpses the viewer gets of college life at the time and also the realistic, hair-pulling cat fight in a bar. Don't waste your time, though. Skip this film. IMDB: [Her Secret](#)

Dirigible (1931) [Jack Holt](#), [Fay Wray](#), [Ralph Graves](#)

Crack pilot 'Frisky' Pierce competes with dirigible pilot, Jack Bradon, to garner the most honors for their exploits. When an expedition to the South Pole is proposed, conflicts arise as to who will go. Meanwhile, Frisky's beautiful wife fears his dangerous adventures, and thinks of divorce—not wanting to be married merely to a 'headline.' I thought going into this film, 'Do I really want to watch a movie about a dirigible?' Well, glad I did. The film entertains with adventure, romantic complications, and suspense. Actors perform only adequately, and the trip to the South Pole unrealistically portrays the conditions, but the movie wins under the direction of Frank Capra. The overall entertainment value of this film qualifies it for a **must see** movie recommendation. IMDB: [Dirigible](#)

RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

JANUARY-APRIL, 2019 POST

A Fool There Was (1915) [Theda Bara](#), [Runa Hodges](#), [Mabel Frenyear](#), [Edward José](#)

A devoted wife plans to accompany her husband on a trip to Europe, but her sister falls from an auto and the wife has to stay behind to care for her. In Europe the husband falls in love with a beautiful vamp who leads him astray. Theda Bara plays the heartless, man-eating bitch in this film.

Stark melodrama here with no subtlety. Overly dramatic acting. (The child is the most natural actor in this film.) Primitive silent drama with moderate entertainment value. Film aficionados or those interested in seeing Theda Baba at her most evil will find this movie interesting enough to watch. IMDB: [A Fool There Was](#)

A Woman's Man (1934) [Kitty Kelly](#), [John Halliday](#), [Marguerite De La Motte](#), [Wallace Ford](#)

Film director, Tom Cleary, loves his leading lady, but his petulant leading lady makes filming nearly impossible. She, on the other hand, seeks to improve her status in life by pursuing a millionaire and a championship prize fighter. Nothing exceptional here, but there are some funny moments in this comedy. Kitty Kelly's performance stands out, and the prizefighting scene provides an apt climax. The breezy action throughout makes this film worth watching. IMDB: [A Woman's Man](#)

Alimony Madness (1933) [Helen Chandler](#), [Leon Ames](#), [Edward Earle](#)

A woman marries a successful architect but doesn't love or respect him. After a year, she colludes with a dishonest lawyer to set her husband up, falsely accuses him of having a mistress, and then divorces him. The husband gets bled dry with an outrageous alimony settlement, and his wife lives like a princess while his life disintegrates. This film focuses on the evils of unfair alimony laws by staging an over-the-top morality play. Weak acting, improbable coincidences, and extreme circumstances make this film a watchable but irksome viewing experience.

IMDB: [Alimony Madness](#)

Are These Our Children? (1931) [Eric Linden](#), [Beryl Mercer](#), [Billy Butts](#), [Mary Kornman](#)

Ernest high school student, Eddie, feels cheated and disappointed when he delivers a poorly received speech in class. A fast girl encourages him to go out with the gang later that night to make him feel better. From that point on Eddie's life descends into sex, booze, and criminality. Over-dramatization, over-acting, extreme plot stretches, and amateurish acting dominate this truly bad movie. This morality play masquerades as a drama intended to graphically display the evils of alcohol. [Interesting highlight: Mary Kornman, silent film child star, plays a dim-witted floozy in this film.] A hoaky scene ends the film with the image of a minister in the pulpit and Eddie reciting the Lord's Prayer with a church choir singing in the background. Some entertainment value if you can tolerate the negatives. IMDB: [Are These Our Children?](#)

The Doll (1919) [Ossi Oswalda](#), [Hermann Thimig](#), [Victor Janson](#)

The Baron wants his son to marry in order to continue the family lineage, but when confronted with 40 local maidens from which to choose a bride, the son bolts. He hides out in the local monastery, but when the brothers discover the enormous sum of his dowry, they get him to promise to turn over his dowry in exchange for a referral to the doll maker, who makes lifelike dolls. The son can then buy the doll, pretend he has married a real girl, and collect his dowry. The doll maker has created his masterpiece—a doll based on his beautiful daughter. Unfortunately, the clumsy apprentice breaks the doll, and to cover the mistake, the daughter pretends she is the doll. The son buys her, and she continues to play the role of the doll. Although the actors play their parts broadly in this early silent and the story is simplistic, the film entertains. The actress playing the doll, [Ossi Oswalda](#), goes all out and creates many laugh-out-loud moments. [Ernst Lubitsch](#) masterfully directs this German classic. You'll enjoy it. **Must see viewing.** IMDB: [The Doll](#)

Feel My Pulse (1928) [Bebe Daniels](#), [Richard Arlen](#), [William Powell](#)

According to her father's will, Barbara Manning, multi-millionairess, must be kept under continual medical care until she turns 21 because of a suspected weak heart. When she turns 21, her uncle from Texas turns up to take custody. Horrified of her crude uncle, she runs away to a distant sanitarium for rest and continued medical care. William Powell runs the defunct sanitarium as a rum-running center, but acts as the lead doctor and continues the charade of running a sanitarium when he learns of Barbara's millions. This silent comedy entertains with plenty of action and some laugh-out-loud moments. Bebe Daniels shines in this feature, and William Powell deftly plays the heavy. Entertainment value registers only at average. Worth seeing, however, for Daniels' performance. [IMDB: Feel My Pulse](#)

It Pays to Advertise (1931) [Norman Foster](#), [Carole Lombard](#), [Richard 'Skeets' Gallagher](#), [Louise Brooks](#), [Eugene Palette](#)

A wealthy soap magnate insists his spoiled son go to work. The son starts a soap business in competition with his father but struggles to keep the company afloat. The father's attractive assistant, behind the son's back, has arranged (for a large sum of money) with the father to get the son to fall in love with her and to keep the son working for six months. This sappy comedy about soap relies on lame jokes and improbable situations. Highlights are a brief appearance by Louise Brooks as a beautiful chorus girl and the performance by the center of attention—Carole Lombard. Light entertainment value and not worth watching unless you're a Brooks or Lombard completist. [IMDB: It Pays to Advertise](#)

Iron Man (1931) [Lew Ayres](#), [Robert Armstrong](#), [Jean Harlow](#)

Kid Mason struggles with his boxing career while trying to keep hold of his beautiful but two-timing (or three-timing...or more) wife. When he

becomes champ, the title goes to his head, and his wife goes elsewhere. Jean Harlow and Lew Ayres star in this fight drama. Ayres comports himself well as an actor. Harlow does not. She keeps the viewer's attention though, commanding the screen and providing the primary reason for watching this film. A decent film worth viewing. IMDB: [Iron Man](#)

Kathleen Mavourneen (1930) [Sally O'Neil](#), [Charles Delaney](#), [Robert Elliott](#)

Beautiful, dark-haired Irish immigrant, Kathleen, arrives in New York and gleefully wraps herself in the arms of her middle-class fiancée. When they attend a high-class party at the home of a wealthy bachelor, the bachelor connives to get the fiancée removed from the party so he can be alone with Kathleen. Promising her jewels, riches, a mansion and a happy life, the bachelor proposes. This primitive talkie is a musical showcase for [Charles Delaney](#)—for Irish dancing and singing. The weak plot includes significant sentimentality but lacks believability. Sally O'Neill, however, commands the screen with her presence and beauty. If not for O'Neill, there would be no reason to view this. IMDB: [Kathleen Mavourneen](#)

Lady and Gent (1932) [George Bancroft](#), [Wynne Gibson](#), [Charles Starrett](#), [John Wayne](#), [Joyce Compton](#)

Washed-up prize fighter, Stag Bailey, comes to the aid of his manager when the manager seeks needed cash by committing a robbery. After the police kill his manager during the robbery, Stag and his live-in girlfriend tell the manager's young son his father is not coming back. Sentimental and unwilling to send the young lad to an orphanage, Stag and his girlfriend decide to raise him. Not a lot to recommend here, but the artists involved deliver a competent film with a moderate level of viewing interest. IMDB: [Lady and Gent](#)

Broken Dreams (1933) [Randolph Scott](#), [Martha Sleeper](#), [Beryl Mercer](#)

When Dr. Morley's wife dies in childbirth, he can't even look at his newborn son and leaves the country for several years. Dr. Morley's aunt and uncle raise the boy until Dr. Morley remarries and wants his son back, who is now six years old. The aunt and uncle do not want to give up the boy, and the boy does not want to leave his only home. His wife, in addition, does not want children. This melodrama lacks dramatic punch and plays on the sentiments of the situation. This mediocre film provides only passable entertainment. IMDB: [Broken Dreams](#)