

## RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

### DECEMBER, 2018 POST

**Honor Among Lovers (1931) [Claudette Colbert](#), [Fredric March](#), [Monroe Owsley](#), Charles Ruggles, Ginger Rogers, Pat O'Brien**

Jerry, a wealthy executive, is madly in love with his beautiful secretary, but she keeps refusing his advances. He offers her everything but marriage and a family. Only after she secretly marries her boyfriend, does he propose. She, obviously, can't accept and pledges devotion to her new husband. Through the years of her marriage, Jerry continues to pursue her. This is a top notch Pre-Code drama. Claudette Colbert is superb in the lead role, and the supporting cast play their roles well. Pre-Code characteristics of beautiful women, infidelity, lust, alcoholism, violence—it's all here in a suspenseful plot that takes wild swings until the final scene. You will enjoy this film. It's engaging from beginning to end, and I highly recommend this movie. IMDB: [Honor Among Lovers](#)

**The Wonderful Lies of Nina Petrovna (1929) (Die wunderbare Lüge der Nina Petrowna-Original Title) [Brigitte Helm](#), [Francis Lederer](#), [Warwick Ward](#)**

The lonely mistress of a wealthy colonel falls in love with a handsome soldier. When her 'master' catches her in an innocent tryst with her new suitor, he encourages her to leave, but she has to leave with nothing—no jewels, no furs. She leaves to live in poverty but in love with her beau. The colonel plots to ruin them both. This tragic love story stars [Brigitte Helm](#), one of the silent era's great beauties, and a talented actress as well. The production values of this film are excellent for the period, the acting stands up, and suspense as well as tragic love dominate the film.

Although unrealistic at times and a bit overacted, the film is engaging from the start. [Brigitte Helm](#) is the focus of the film, and she makes it the success that it is. You will enjoy this silent classic. IMDB: [The Wonderful Lies of Nina Petrovna](#)

**The Spanish Cape Mystery (1935) [Donald Cook](#), [Helen Twelvetrees](#), [Berton Churchill](#)**

Ellery Queen vacations in a cottage at Spanish Cape. Someone murders a guest in the mansion next door. The guests at the mansion include relatives who stand to inherit a fortune. When the murderer strikes again, the beautiful heiress at the mansion shames Ellery into helping solve the murder. This film delights with its wry humor and puzzling mystery. If you like the standard ‘mansion filled with greedy relatives murder mastery,’ this is a good one. You’ll enjoy it. IMDB: [The Spanish Cape Mystery](#)

**Merry-Go-Round (1923) [Norman Kerry](#), [Mary Philbin](#), [Cesare Gravina](#)**

A loutish count and an abusive merry-go-round operator both have their eye on the pretty organ grinder at the amusement park. This film blends violence such as verbal abuse, cruel selfishness, beatings, whippings, attempted murder, attempted rape (two), and [spoiler] murder-by-ape with tender scenes of longing and romance. (The violence far outweighs the romance.) Despite the violence and some improbable coincidences, this silent film is well done for the time period. Actors are still in the broad expressions and actions period of film making, but they are competent and believable. The film feels too long, but it’s entertaining enough to watch and appreciate. IMDB: [Merry-Go-Round](#)

**Adorable (1933) [Janet Gaynor](#), [Henri Garat](#), [C. Aubrey Smith](#)**

A princess visiting a beer hall in the guise of a manicurist falls in love with a dashing, young man who says he works in a delicatessen. Over time she realizes he's actually a member of her royal guard. A game of cat and mouse ensues until they both finally realize their true identities. Complications arise, however. This romance/musical comedy works well most of the time. The story is syrupy fluff, the acting is hokey at times, but Janet Gaynor is so uber-adorable it's hard to take one's eyes off the screen. Although the film is annoying at times, the pleasure derived from the viewing experience makes the experience worthwhile. IMDB: [Adorable](#)

### **Bad Girl (1931) James Dunn, Sally Eilers, Minna Gombell**

A young girl, modeling in a night club, deftly fends off unwanted passes from the cads with whom she comes in contact. Taking the ferry one day, she accepts a bet from her friend that she can't get a good looking but quietly surly guy to talk to her. She succeeds, wins the bet, and eventually falls in love with the guy. After spending a night in his apartment, her brother, with whom she lives, kicks her out—calling her a tramp. She ends up marrying her socially awkward lover, but finds marriage a confusing journey—particularly with an unwanted baby on the way. This PreCode film surprises with competent acting, an engaging story, and enough conflict to keep the viewer interested. PreCode qualities include a few underwear scenes and the issue of premarital sex. Sally Eilers endears herself to viewers and makes this little gem a delightful movie experience. IMDB: [Bad Girl](#)

### **Berkeley Square (1933) Leslie Howard, Heather Angel, Valerie Taylor, Alan Mowbray**

Peter Standish inherits a house in Berkeley Square, London. When in the house, he time-travels to the time of the American Revolution and interacts with his distant relatives. He has to monitor what he says so as

not to reveal that he is from the future. He attempts to change actions from the past but realizes the paths of people in the past are set. Although there are obviously people who enjoy this award-winning film, I couldn't get into it. It's slow-moving, talk-heavy, and not entertaining. Most contemporary viewers would find this film boring.  
IMDB: [Berkeley Square](#)

### **Ella Cinders (1926) [Colleen Moore](#), [Lloyd Hughes](#), [Vera Lewis](#)**

Ella works slavishly for her mean step-mother and ugly step-sisters. The handsome iceman flirts with Ella, and she dreams of a better life. Her big break comes when she attends the ball with the iceman and enters the local beauty contest. This silent comedy loosely follows the fairy tale plot of Cinderella with Colleen Moore masterfully delivering the humor —and this film does include hilarious scenes. This well-done film equals the best of the comedies from the era. If you like cute, funny, and entertaining, you will love this movie. **Must see** viewing. IMDB: [Ella Cinders](#)

### **Lilac Time (1928) [Colleen Moore](#), [Gary Cooper](#), [Eugenie Besserer](#), [Arthur Lake](#)**

During the Great War an English air squadron lives in a large farmhouse next to their airfield in France. Jeannine, the young girl who lives with her family in the farmhouse, watches over the airmen like a mother hen, feeding them, entertaining them, and counting the planes when they return. When a new airman joins the squad, he and Jeannine butt heads from the start, but they eventually fall in love. This film engages the viewer from beginning to end. The acting is solid with Moore enchanting her way through this drama/romance. The actors engage in some broad histrionics, but, hey, this is the silent era. You will enjoy this film. I highly recommend it. IMDB: [Lilac Time](#)

### **Sky Pilot (1921) John Bowers, Colleen Moore, David Butler**

A sky pilot [preacher] tries to bring religion to the rough crowd in the Canadian wilderness. Nobody wants religion. A crusty woodsman has given up on religion after he lost his wife. He has a young daughter, though, who becomes a cripple after falling from a horse. Religious conversion plays a role in this film, which also includes cattle rustlers, an arsonist, attempted murders, lots of horses and cattle, snow, and a love interest. Closeups of the young and beautiful Colleen Moore highlight this film that, otherwise, consists of a standard plot, mediocre acting, and the histrionics prevalent in the early silents. I'd rate the entertainment value of this film as average—worth a look but not essential. IMDB: [Sky Pilot](#)

### **Flaming Youth (1923) Colleen Moore, Milton Sills, Elliott Dexter**

Unfortunately, Flaming Youth has been lost, as have so many silent films, but one reel has survived. This reel opens with Colleen Moore at her makeup table preparing for a party. Moore has impressive comedic skills, and she aptly displays them in this scene. The remainder of the reel covers a Roaring '20s party with dancing, drinking, wild antics, forward girls, and an invitation for all to get in the pool 'in any way you want.' If you can find this fragment of a film, it's worth watching. The viewer gets a glimpse of the partying life during the '20s.

IMDB: [Flaming Youth](#)

### **Lonesome (1928) Barbara Kent, Glenn Tryon, Fay Holderness, Andy Devine**

A single man and a single woman live desperately lonely lives in the big city. They meet by chance at Coney Island and instantly fall in love. Unfortunately, they lose each other in the crowds without knowing each

other's last name and without any contact information. If you're looking for a sweet, tender romance, you've found it. You'll enjoy this story of two young people looking for love. The acting is adequate, and the only negative with the film is an illogical coincidence that flaws the story. However, this transitional silent experiments with simple sound, simple color, and imaginative cinematography. I consider this experimental silent/talkie gem **must-see** viewing. IMDB: [Lonesome](#)

**A Woman of Paris: A Drama of Fate (1923) [Edna Purviance](#), [Clarence Geldart](#), [Carl Miller](#), [Adolphe Menjou](#)**

Marie lives a wretched life with her callous father, but plans to run away to Paris with her boyfriend. When he doesn't show up at the railway station for their trip to Paris, she leaves on her own. In Paris she becomes the kept woman of the richest bachelor in town. Years later when she coincidentally meets her old boyfriend, she has to choose between marriage to a poor artist and a continued life of luxury to her now-married lover. Although written and directed by Charlie Chaplin, Chaplin does not appear in this film (except for a brief cameo as a railway porter). Chaplin displays his mastery of film making with this drama. Romance, violence, cruelty, beauty, and illicit love all play important parts in Chaplin's first-rate film. Not the typical Chaplin movie, but it's **must see** viewing. IMDB: [A Woman of Paris](#)

**Marriage Circle (1924) [Florence Vidor](#), [Monte Blue](#), [Marie Prevost](#), [Adolphe Menjou](#)**

Shrewish wife Mizzi, mired in a terrible marriage, admires the perfect marriage of her best friend, Charlotte. So much so, in fact, that she shamelessly pursues her husband, Franz. Meanwhile Mizzi's husband hires a detective to prove she has a lover so he can divorce her, and Franz's colleague pursues his wife, Charlotte. Lot's going on here. Mediocre acting from some of the players, but the story holds up and

provides enough interest to make this a movie worth watching.  
IMDB: [Marriage Circle](#)

**Bachelor Apartment (1931) [Lowell Sherman](#), [Irene Dunne](#), [Mae Murray](#), [Kitty Kelly](#)**

This film chronicles the goings-on in a rich bachelor's apartment. Wayne Carter has so many women that when he falls in love with a good girl, he has trouble getting rid of all the others. Precode features include references to marijuana and cocaine, the standard women in underwear, and premarital and adulterous sex. A highlight occurs when a young girl looking for a sugar daddy mistakes the butler for the rich bachelor. Just average entertainment here. Interesting enough to watch, but nothing exceptional. IMDB: [Bachelor Apartment](#)

**A Parisian Romance (1932) [Lew Cody](#), [Marion Shilling](#), [Gilbert Roland](#), [Joyce Compton](#)**

The most immoral philanderer in Paris pursues the young fiancée of a friend. The two embark on a cat and mouse flirtation until he finally wins her over. There is conflict and confrontation involving the friend, and the true feelings of his fiancée remain ambiguous. This film packs an emotional wallop on several levels—romance, generosity, kindness, melancholy. I didn't expect much from this film, but it intrigued me from the start. Well-acted, great story, extremely well-done. You will enjoy this film. Highly recommended. IMDB: [A Parisian Romance](#)

**Sorority House (1939) [Anne Shirley](#), [James Ellison](#), [Barbara Read](#), [Chill Wills](#)**

Alice, the daughter of a grocery store owner, goes to college on a shoestring budget and moves into a boarding house. Many of the girls at

college are dying to get into a sorority, and Alice gets caught up in the frenzy. An influential boy on campus falls for Alice and spreads rumors among the sororities about her 'rich' father. The best sororities on campus rush Alice, prompting her to re-examine her values. I expected 'fluff' when I began watching this film but quickly got caught up in the engaging story. Anne Shirley perfectly portrays the naive, young girl fumbling her way through the college experience. The romance, the moral dilemmas, and sweet narrative make this a film worth watching. In fact, if you're looking for a satisfying 'old movie' experience, you will love this film. IMDB: [Sorority House](#)

## **RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES**

### **NOVEMBER, 2018 POST**

**Command Performance (1931) [Neil Hamilton](#), [Una Merkel](#), [Helen Ware](#), [Thelma Todd](#), [Mischa Auer](#)**

The royalty of two countries consummate a treaty by arranging the marriage of a daughter to a son. Neither of them want to marry. The daughter, in fact, is in love with another. This film is an early talkie when filmmakers were still feeling their way along on how to make good movies. They didn't quite hit the mark with this one. The plot is hokey, and the acting is subpar. Una Merkel stars in this film. I like Una and have seen her perform well in many films, usually as a supporting actress. Unfortunately, she falls flat in this film. The dial on the entertainment meter barely budges for this movie. You can skip it without missing much. IMDB: [Command Performance](#)

**Caught (Wild Calendar) (1949) James Mason, Barbara Bel Geddes, Robert Ryan**

A beautiful, young girl attends charm school and earns a job as a department store model. She's encouraged to find a rich man and marry for money. She does. The results are disastrous. This is the type of movie I enjoy finding because it's a great view. Good acting, interesting plot, high drama, romance, perplexing conflict. You'll stay interested throughout. The ending of the movie is controversial, though. I'm ambivalent, and still sorting out my feelings about whether the ending damages the overall quality of the film. I highly recommend this film. IMDB: [Caught](#)

**Transatlantic Merry-Go-Round (1934) Gene Raymond, Nancy Carroll, Jack Benny, Mitzi Green, Sid Silvers, Ralph Morgan, Shirley Grey**

On a transatlantic cruise, various characters board ship, and as soon as all are on board, gun shots are heard behind closed doors. The film then flashes back to events leading up to the murder. A con man falls in love with the leading actress in the shipboard show, and both have shady pasts. There are other prime suspects in a jewelry theft and a murder, but all are gathered at the end of the film for the grand reveal. The plot of this film supports singing and dancing acts and comedy skits. The singing and dancing are artistic and entertaining, but the comedy is lame. Acting is good, and the film is well done. Overall, this film entertains and is worth watching. IMDB: [Transatlantic Merry-Go-Round](#)

**Man's Castle (1933) Spencer Tracy, Loretta Young, Marjorie Rambeau, Glenda Farrell, Dickie Moore**

Homeless and desperate, Trina meets an irascible flam-flam man on a park bench. He takes her under his wing, protects her, and provides for her. She falls desperately in love with him, but his ever-present wanderlust keeps the relationship tenuous. This PreCode film deals with issues and presents scenes that would not be able to be produced in the next year because of the Hays Code censorship. Loretta Young is so fragile in this film, and she plays her role to perfection. Even at a young age, she displayed her star quality. Spencer Tracy plays the grouchy, insulting lover and is solid in his performance, but Young is luminary. This gritty film is an interesting, engaging romantic melodrama. It's a classic and is **must see** viewing. IMDB: [Man's Castle](#)

**Only Yesterday (1933) [Margaret Sullavan](#), [John Boles](#), [Edna May Oliver](#), [Billie Burke](#), [Reginald Denny](#), [George Meeker](#)**

A teenager has a one-night stand with a dashing soldier. He goes off to war, and she discovers she's pregnant. She has the child and yearns for her lover's return. When the war is over, she waits on the train platform to welcome him home. Upon his return he's surrounded by other young girls kissing him and fawning over him. When she finally gets a chance to speak to him, he doesn't even recognize her. This film is a heartbreaker. [Margaret Sullavan](#) is outstanding in her debut film role as the jilted lover. In fact, acting all around is first rate. The story is engaging and emotional. A key plot twist had me questioning the actions of the character, but it turns out the character's judgment was a brilliant ploy. Keep the tissue handy, and don't miss this Pre-Code gem. It's **must see** viewing. IMDB: [Only Yesterday](#)

**The Informer (1929) [Lya De Putti](#), [Lars Hanson](#), [Warwick Ward](#), [Daisy Campbell](#)**

An IRA group is meeting in an apartment when a group of gunmen across the street opens up on them. The IRA group moves to the top of

the stairs, and Francis shoots the first man to come through the door. It's the chief of police. Francis needs to hide out in the hills, and the others protect his identity as the killer. But Gypo gets jealous when his girlfriend, Francis's ex, is hiding him from the police. Gypo goes to the police, informs on Francis, and collects the reward. Gypo now becomes the target of the IRA members. This is an unusual British transition film in that it starts out as a silent film and, then, half way through turns into a crude talkie. Acting is what you would expect from silent film actors trying to perform in a talking film. It's not pretty at times. (Some of the actors' voices are actually dubbed in this film because they don't sound British.) The story itself is suspenseful and moderately interesting. This is a film you can skip unless you're curious about transition films in Britain. IMDB: [The Informer](#)

## RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

### OCTOBER, 2018 POST

**Teresa (1951) [Pier Angeli](#), [John Ericson](#), [Patricia Collinge](#), [Peggy Ann Garner](#), [Ralph Meeker](#), [Bill Mauldin](#), [Rod Steiger](#)**

During his time in WWII Philip acts not as a soldier but as a coward. He does, however, meet, fall in love with, and marry an Italian teen. After the war, when the newlyweds settle into his parents' apartment, Philip again has to deal with his issues as a failure. This film is one of those 'hidden gems' that no one has heard of but everyone must see. It's three films in one: a psychological drama, a war story, and a romance. Acting is solid all around. Pier Angeli is so young in this film that she has some weak acting moments, but overall she gives a sweet, tender performance. There's a lot of tension and conflict in this film as well as soft, romantic

scenes. This is a solid film I would rate as must see viewing.  
IMDB: [Teresa](#)

**Anything Goes (1936) Bing Crosby, Ethel Merman, Charles Ruggles, Ida Lupino, Arthur Treacher, Margaret Dumont**

Billy Crocker falls in love with a beautiful blonde and follows her onto a cruise ship where he develops conflicted relationships with show girls and crooks. A silly plot covers for the production numbers and Cole Porter songs, which are the highlights of this film. Ethel Merman does most of the singing, and, although she has a powerful voice, you have to be a fan to appreciate her renditions of Porter's songs. Entertainment value is modest in this film, and I'd recommend viewing only if you're a fan of one of the actors or if you want to see Crosby and Merman's renditions of Porter songs from the 30s. IMDB: [Anything Goes](#)

**Diary of a Mad Housewife (1970) Richard Benjamin, Frank Langella, Carrie Snodgrass, Alice Cooper**

Imagine the worst husband on the face of the Earth—rude, demeaning, selfish, cruel and totally clueless to any need his wife might have. Pretty, sweet, unassuming Tina is married to this monster—plus, she's a mother to two bratty little girls. She floats zombie-like through her existence desperately hoping for some normalcy and affection in her life. This film is an interesting psychological drama with excellent acting. Some of the scenes are cringe-worthy because of the cruelty and harshness of both her husband and her lover. The conclusion of the film, however, does not disappoint. After an hour and a half of brutality, there's a soft landing with a feeling of 'Yeah, this was actually a good film.' IMDB: [Diary of a Mad Housewife](#)

**Heart Like a Wheel (1983) [Bonnie Bedelia](#), [Beau Bridges](#), [Bruce Barlow](#), [Anthony Edwards](#), [Hoyt Axton](#)**

As a little girl Shirley Muldowney sat on her daddy's lap as he drove at high speeds the country roads in his coupe. As a teen, when her boyfriend couldn't beat the local champ at street racing, she took the wheel and beat him easily. Racing became her passion. Her husband build her first race car, but she faced incredible odds and discrimination when she tried to compete in a men's only sport. This biopic follows the career and personal life of the first woman professional drag racer. Good acting, good story, good film. Entertaining and well worth watching. IMDB: [Heart Like a Wheel](#)

**They All Kissed the Bride (1942) [Joan Crawford](#), [Melvyn Douglas](#), [Roland Young](#), [Billie Burke](#), [Allen Jenkins](#)**

Maggie runs a transportation company with an iron fist and with nothing but business on her mind. Mike writes an unflattering book about how her business takes advantage of its employees. Make sees Maggie as a machine and not a woman until Maggie inexplicably falls in love with him. Complications and plot twists commence. This fluffy comedy is awkward and of average entertainment value. It has a few funny moments but dwells on conflict, power struggles, and arguing. Watchable but there are better choices elsewhere. IMDB: [They All Kissed the Bride](#)

**Hollywood on Parade (1932-1934) [Fredric March](#), [Ben Turpin](#), [Richard Arlen](#), [Tallulah Bankhead](#), [Lew Cody](#), [Warren William](#), [Joe E. Brown](#), [Maurice Chevalier](#), [Buster Keaton](#), [Warner Baxter](#), [Joan Bennett](#), [Sally Blane](#), [Jackie Cooper](#), [Bing Crosby](#), [Carole Lombard](#), [Buster Crabbe](#), [W.C. Fields](#), [Chico Marx](#), [Stuart Erwin](#), [Bing Crosby](#), [Gracie Allen](#), [Tom Mix](#), [Mary Pickford](#), [Jean Harlow](#)**

Similar to newsreels shown in theaters in the 30s prior to the feature, these shorts present vignettes, novelty acts, singing, dancing, and interviews with Hollywood's top stars. The entertainment value of these shorts is moderate, but there are some gems and there is historical interest in seeing stars early in their careers and others who were silent film stars and are now featured in speaking roles. Worth watching.  
IMDB: [Hollywood on Parade](#)

### **Friday the Thirteenth (1933) [Jessie Matthews](#), [Sonnie Hale](#), [Muriel Ake](#)**

A London bus filled with passengers on a rainy night crashes, killing two and injuring many others. After the opening crash, the film flashes back to review the lives of the passengers. The end of the film reveals the passengers who died in the crash. Many plots running simultaneously throughout this film makes it difficult to keep everyone straight, and the fast-talking characters with their British accents makes dialogue difficult to understand at times. Some of the stories are interesting, and the PreCode relationships and chorus girls add interest, (Jessie Matthews is outstanding) but overall, the entertainment value of this film is moderate.  
IMDB: [Friday the Thirteenth](#)

### **Jungle Bride (1933) [Anita Page](#), [Charles Starrett](#), [Kenneth Thomson](#)**

A luxury liner crashes spectacularly into a reef, and four survivors end up on a remote island off the coast of Africa—a beauty, her fiancée, a man accused of murder, and a jokester. The beauty finds the man accused of murder more attractive and more manly than her fiancée. Highlights include some PreCode allure, hand-to-claw combat with a lion, and Anita Page. However, dialogue is stiff, acting amateurish, and the plot weak. Moviemakers made an effort here to create an adventure/romance, but fell short. I wasted my time watching this primitive talkie to save you from losing an hour of your life. IMDB: [Jungle Bride](#)

**By Appointment Only (1933) [Lew Cody](#), [Aileen Pringle](#), [Sally O'Neil](#), [Marceline Day](#)**

A doctor's receptionist leaves a sick woman waiting until the end of the day to see a busy doctor. When she dies in the reception room, the doctor has to deal with her 14-year-old daughter, who was waiting downstairs. He tells her that her widowed mother was sent to the hospital, and he will take her home and take care of her. He falls in love with her. This film portrays a relationship that would not be filmed today. It's a little creepy, and the film does not develop the plot and the relationship. There's nothing worthy enough about this film to warrant devoting time to watching it. IMDB: [By Appointment Only](#)

**RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES**

**SEPTEMBER, 2018 POST**

**Nancy Drew: Trouble Shooter (1939) [Bonita Granville](#), [Frankie Thomas](#), [John Litel](#), [Willie Best](#)**

The sheriff locks up a local land owner for suspicion of murdering his neighbor, with whom he's had a long-running feud. Carson Drew is his lawyer, but Mr. Drew's daughter, Nancy, is the one to track down all the clues in this murder mystery. With a lot of suspense and some action scenes, this is a fun film to watch. Negatives are the preponderance of coincidences, stereotypical racial behavior, and some weak attempts at humor. Other than that, it's a typical Nancy Drew series offering that's entertaining enough to watch. IMDB: [Nancy Drew: Trouble Shooter](#)

**Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase (1939) [Bonita Granville](#), [Frankie Thomas](#), [John Litel](#)**

Two elderly sisters plan to donate their house to a children's charity, but a will indicates they cannot sell the house without living in the house every night. They have two weeks to go until the conditions of the will expire. Someone commits theft and murder to scare the ladies out of the house before the terms of the will are up. Nancy outshines the police with her detective work. This film is fast-paced and fun. It's a good murder mystery on its own, but it's enhanced with Granville's acting, the story itself, good directing, and loads of humor and suspense. I highly recommend this movie. You'll enjoy it! IMDB: [Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase](#)

**Merton of the Movies (1947) [Red Skelton](#), [Virginia O'Brien](#), [Gloria Grahame](#)**

Merton is the quintessential Born Loser who wants nothing more than to be a movie actor. He worms his way into some scenes, but always klutzes up his dramatic moments, and onlookers just laugh at him. The beautiful girl who falls in love with him tries to convince him that his success will come as a comedian. This film is a pleasant comedy with plenty of physical antics. Skelton is an accomplished comedian, and this format is his forte. Well done and entertaining. IMDB: [Merton of the Movies](#)

**Alibi Ike (1935) [Joe E. Brown](#), [Olivia de Havilland](#), [Ruth Donnelly](#), [William Frawley](#), [Paul Harvey](#)**

The Cubs need a pitcher, and Ike comes up from the minors. He's sensational, but the other players continually prank him and Ike continually makes alibis. Ike falls in love, the mob puts pressure on him

to throw games, and the manager needs to make the playoffs to keep his job. This film is a good comedy with Brown's 'aw shucks' humor and alibis at the center of the story. The alibis get a bit tiresome, but the story is good, the acting is acceptable, and there are enough laughs to make it good entertainment. IMDB: [Alibi Ike](#)

### **The Tenderfoot (1932) [Joe E. Brown](#), [Ginger Rogers](#), [Lew Cody](#)**

A crooked theatrical producer fleeces wealthy Texas rancher, Calvin Jones, shortly after he arrives in New York. The producer's beautiful secretary helps Calvin understand his situation, tells him he's stupid, and scolds him for having no backbone. He's fallen in love with her, so he does whatever is needed to remedy his situation and win the girl. In this film the acting is good, the story line is adequate, and there are enough laughs to make it a good comedy. Ginger Rogers starring in the film bolsters its watchability. This is a solid Joe E. Brown film you will enjoy. IMDB: [The Tenderfoot](#)

### **Riding on Air (1937) [Joe E. Brown](#), [Guy Kibbee](#), [Florence Rice](#)**

Local newsman, Elmer Lane, wins \$5000 in an essay contest and is set upon by swindlers. This Joe E. Brown comedy features aerial stunts and photography as well as Brown's goofiness. It costars the beautiful [Florence Rice](#), has a few laughs, and is mildly entertaining. IMDB: [Riding on Air](#)

### **When's Your Birthday? (1937) [Joe E. Brown](#), [Marian Marsh](#), [Fred Keating](#), [Edgar Kennedy](#)**

[Dustin Willoughby](#) makes all of life's decisions based on astrology. He even puts off his wedding date because the stars are not properly aligned. Gamblers and other opportunists take advantage of him. He

improbably ends up in a world championship boxing match. This film is a rambling farce with some humorous scenes and a lot of slapstick ala Joe E. Brown. There's a romance, of course, and the highlight of the film is the fight scene at the end of the film—actually pretty good. Although this film is watchable, other Joe E. Brown films are much better.  
IMDB: [When's Your Birthday?](#)

**The Gladiator (1938) Joe E. Brown, June Travis, Man Mountain Dean, Dickie Moore**

Hugo Kipp's father and grandfather were athletic standouts at college, but Hugo can't even afford to go to college. When he unexpectedly wins a raffle at a theater, he enrolls in college and tries out for the football team. He's so bad that he becomes the laughing stock of the campus, and his teammates take pleasure in making a fool of him. The scientist with whom Hugo is living has been experimenting with a formula that gives one super-human strength. When he secretly injects Hugo with the formula, he becomes so strong he has to be careful not to hurt anyone. This film is an excellent comedy with lots of laughs, plenty of physical comedy, a romance, and a tender relationship with a crippled orphan. Brown does most of his own stunts, and gets a real workout throughout this film. Solid acting all around, an action-filled story, and romance and pathos make this one of Joe E. Brown's better films. I highly recommend it. IMDB: [The Gladiator](#)

**Wide Open Faces (1938) Joe E. Brown, Jane Wyman, Alison Skipworth, Sidney Toler, Stanley Fields**

Soda jerk, Wilbur Meeks, nearly drives a get-a-way car for the notorious back robber, Duke Temple, before the police capture Duke. Criminals from all over then converge on the town to find the money Duke apparently hid. Wilbur is in the middle of all the action while trying to win over a potential girlfriend. This film is standard Joe E. Brown fare

with lots of complications, some laughs, and a suspenseful, action-packed climax. This film is a 'B' comedy and moderately entertaining. IMDB: [Wide Open Faces](#)

**Flirting with Fate (1938) [Joe E. Brown](#), [Leo Carrillo](#), [Beverly Roberts](#), [Stanley Fields](#)**

Dan Dixon manages a troupe of entertainers as they travel through South America. He can't do anything right and let's the troupe down miserably. He feels the only way to truly serve the troupe is to commit suicide so they can cash in his insurance policy and return to New York. The plot of this film revolves around his attempts to kill himself. Nothing exceptional here. Some laughs and lots of silly action make this merely watchable entertainment. IMDB: [Flirting with Fate](#)

**Earthworm Tractors (1936) [Joe E. Brown](#), [June Travis](#), [Guy Kibbee](#), [Carol Hughes](#), [Gene Lockhart](#)**

Alexander Botts considers himself a super salesman, but he's only selling quirky gadgets. His girlfriend, Sally, won't pursue their relationship until he sells something more substantial and important. He lands a position selling Earthworm Tractors and creates havoc wherever he goes. The plot focuses on Alexander trying to make an impossible sale to the local lumber merchant and, at the same time, win over his daughter. This film is one of Joe E. Brown's best with plenty of laughs, good acting all around, plenty of action, and plenty of suspense. Joe E. Brown can be hokey but he's at his best here. You'll enjoy this movie. IMDB: [Earthworm Tractors](#)

**Daughter of the Dragon (1931) [Anna May Wong](#), [Warner Oland](#), [Sessue Hayakawa](#)**

Fu Manchu seeks revenge in London on those who killed his family in Hong Kong. He kills all but one before he is killed in his final attempt. Dying in his daughter's arms, he secures her solemn oath to carry out his revenge by killing his final target. Trouble is, she falls in love with the object of her mission. This film achieves modest interest with subpar acting and a slow start. Interest increases as the film progresses and ends with a powerful denouement. You should view this film if you are an Anna May Wong completist, as I am, but, overall, the entertainment value is only moderate. IMDB: [Daughter of the Dragon](#)

**The Devil is Driving (1937) [Richard Dix](#), [Joan Perry](#), [Nana Bryant](#), [Ann Rutherford](#), [Paul Harvey](#)**

Paul Driscoll is running for district attorney when he's asked by a prominent citizen and friend to defend his son in a drunken driving case in which he killed a woman and crippled her daughter. Friends and colleagues of the influential citizen, including Mr. Driscoll who defends him in court, lie in court in order to free the young man. When Mr. Driscoll becomes district attorney he atones for his perjury by strictly enforcing driving regulations and, in particular, drunk driving. When he prosecutes the same young man for a second drunk driving murder, he faces perjured testimony from everyone on the witness stand. This film takes a moral stand against reckless driving and drunk driving. The plot is strong and the acting more than competent. Although melodramatic at times, this film is riveting and well worth watching. IMDB: [The Devil is Driving](#)

**Their Own Desire (1929) [Norma Shearer](#), [Belle Bennett](#), [Lewis Stone](#), [Robert Montgomery](#)**

Lally loves her dad, and he's the end-all and be-all of her life—until he decides to divorce her mother for the woman Lally always suspected had her eye on her dad. Lally and her mother take a trip to the lakeshore,

where Lally falls in love with (unbeknownst to her) the son of her father's mistress. Norma Shearer's acting is just goofy throughout this film. Even though there are some bright acting moments, there's a lot of hokey acting—awkward. An improbable plot doesn't help this turkey. (I shouldn't be too hard on this film because it's a transition film from silents to talkies. The actors and filmmakers are trying, and the film is a good study in the difficult transition from silent to talking films.) It's watchable, but painful. IMDB: [Their Own Desire](#)

### **Hollywood or Bust (1956) [Dean Martin](#), [Jerry Lewis](#), [Pat Crowley](#), [Maxie Rosenbloom](#), [Anita Ekberg](#)**

Steve creates counterfeit tickets for a theater raffle to win a car, but Malcolm has the legitimate winning ticket. They both win but have to share the car. Steve needs to flee his bookie, and Malcolm is starstruck about Anita Ekberg. Steve lies about his connections with Anita, so they start off together on a cross-country trip to Hollywood. Most of this film covers their cross-country trip in their shared car. There's a lot of silliness, beautiful girls, romance, and laughs. This fluffy comedy works well for Dean and Jerry. It's their last film together. No thinking involved. Enjoy. IMDB: [Hollywood or Bust](#)

### **The King of Comedy (1982) [Robert De Niro](#), [Jerry Lewis](#), [Diahnne Abbott](#), [Sandra Bernhard](#)**

Rupert Pupkin and his crazy girlfriend, Masha, are obsessed with talk show host Jerry Langford. Rupert's an aspiring comedian and takes extreme measures to get a guest spot on Jerry's show. This is an unusual film with Robert De Niro playing a humorous version of his Taxi Driver character, Travis Bickle. He's obsessive, obnoxious, and laser-focused on his objective. Acting is first rate ([Sandra Bernhard](#) gives a standout performance), the story is engaging, and the entertainment value is high

in this movie. And, it's directed by [Martin Scorsese](#). This is a film you should see. You'll enjoy it. IMDB: [The King of Comedy](#)

**Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye (1950) [James Cagney](#), [Barbara Payton](#), [Helena Carter](#), [Ward Bond](#), [Luther Adler](#), [John Litel](#), [William Frawley](#)**

Ralph Cotter escapes from prison but immediately returns to a life of crime. He bullies, intimidates, and strong arms his way to success as a criminal. He even blackmails the local police inspector. This film is an outstanding crime drama with plenty of action and with James Cagney at his shrewdest, and most brutal. Great story, great acting, great suspense and tension. The only negative is that beautiful women fall hopelessly in love with Ralph. It doesn't ring true. Other than that, this is an excellent film you will enjoy. IMDB: [Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye](#)

**Man Hunt (1941) [Walter Pidgeon](#), [Joan Bennett](#), [George Sanders](#), [John Carradine](#), [Roddy McDowall](#)**

Wealthy English adventurer, Alan Thorndike, stalks the Führer from a hillside and takes aim to assassinate him when he's captured by a patrol of Germans. He escapes, and returns to London, where German spies relentlessly pursue him. A beautiful, young girl, at her own peril, aids him in his efforts to avoid detection. This is a propaganda film that should have more action and more tension. It lazes along without any edge-of-your-seat suspense. Even though some of the best scenes are driven by the lovelorn, Jerry, it's annoying that Thorndike remains oblivious. Joan Bennett does the best job of acting in this film, but she can't turn this into a believable thriller. I had to shake my head during the final scene—it's way beyond lame. Other than the sweet portrayal of Jerry by Joan Bennett, this film is weak. IMDB: [Man Hunt](#)

**Pickup (1951) [Hugo Haas](#), [Beverly Michaels](#), [Allan Nixon](#)**

Local tramp, the beautiful and sexy Betty, looks for a pickup in the diner. She sits next to an old widower, the local railroad station master, with a lot of money in his pocket. Evicted from her apartment, she needs an escape and marries him. After marriage she carries on with the young and handsome railroad worker who sleeps in the shed behind the railroad station where they live. When the widower has a medical problem and goes deaf, they carry on in front of him and plot to kill him, take his money, and run away together. The didn't realize his hearing had come back, but he didn't tell anyone. This sub-'B' film is watchable but bad. Acting is amateurish, and Betty is so bitchy, rude, and nasty it's uncomfortable watching her. Don't waste your time with this one. IMDB: [Pickup](#)

**RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES**

**JULY/AUGUST, 2018 POST**

**The Power and the Glory (1933) [Spencer Tracy](#), [Colleen Moore](#), [Ralph Morgan](#)**

He's the man everyone loves to hate—except one guy. Starting out as an illiterate track walker for the railroad, Tom Garner rises to railroad magnate status initiated by his wife's ambition. In the process, he becomes a different man—a hated, misguided power-lover. This soap opera is a fascinating character study. Spencer Tracy morphs from likable to hated throughout the film, and genuinely portrays both sides of his character. It is gratifying, too, to see silent film star Colleen Moore faithfully portray her role as Garner's wife. This is a good story with good acting from established and emerging stars. I highly recommend this film. IMBD: [The Power and the Glory](#)

**The Reckless Moment (1949) James Mason, Joan Bennett, Geraldine Brooks**

Lucia Harper fights with her teenage daughter over the unsavory older man she's dating. Conflicts abound, and multiple murders ensue. This film is engaging and suspenseful with good acting by Joan Bennett and a featured performance by James Mason in a starring role. It's no award-winner, but it's well worth watching. IMBD: [The Reckless Moment](#)

**The Wayward Bus (1957) Joan Collins, Jayne Mansfield, Dan Dailey, Betty Lou Keim**

Bus driver, Johnny Chicoy, takes a load of passengers in his dilapidated bus to San Juan. Drama, romance, and intrigue ensue among the passengers who each have a compelling story to portray. There's great cinematography and a moody sound track backing this drama. There's a lot of heat—a lot of passion in this movie with Joan Collins and Rick Jason heading an accomplished cast—each carrying out well-developed portrayals of their characters. Jane Mansfield does what she does best—provides the eye candy in what turns out to be a competent acting job on her part. Although this film is based on the classic novel by John Steinbeck, I would strongly urge you to read the book after viewing the film to get the full impact of this often-overlooked character study. If you enjoy films based on literature or if you love a gritty drama, I would highly recommend viewing this film. IMBD: [The Wayward Bus](#)

**The Girl from Chicago (1932) Grace Smith, Carl Mahon, Eunice Brooks**

A government agent tries to save a young girl from a local crime boss and immediately falls in love with her. This film is an early talkie with a predominantly black cast. It's an example of the films produced in the

30s specifically for black audiences. Slim plot with painfully amateurish acting. Showcases some singing and dancing acts. The only reason to watch this film is for historical curiosity. IMBD: [The Girl from Chicago](#)

**Up Pops the Devil (1931)** [Richard ‘Skeets’ Gallagher](#), [Stuart Erwin](#), [Carole Lombard](#), [Joyce Compton](#), **Willie Best**

Anne loves Biney but refuses to marry him out of fear of stifling his career. He suggests they try marriage out for a year to see if it works. They do marry but, of course, complications and misunderstandings abound. This is a romantic comedy bordering on farce. I usually enjoy any movie starring Carole Lombard, and she does well in her part, as usual., but the story itself is weak and predictable and doesn't truly become interesting until well into the film. The entertainment value of this film is only average. IMBD: [Up Pops the Devil](#)

**My Cousin Rachel (1952)** [Olivia de Havilland](#), [Richard Burton](#), [Audrey Dalton](#)

Ambrose raises his cousin, Philip, until he becomes a man. He then leaves for Italy, falls in love with an Italian woman and marries her. When he mysteriously dies, Philip travels to Italy to determine the circumstances of his death. He falls hopelessly in love with Ambrose's widow. This film is a first-rate drama/mystery with top talent and excellent acting—the first movie role for Burton who deftly displays his skill as an actor. Dialogue drags at times, but this drama is well worth watching. IMBD: [My Cousin Rachel](#)

**The Heart Punch (1932)** [Lloyd Hughes](#), [Marion Shilling](#), [George J. Lewis](#)

Jimmy's a prizefighter fighting his good friend, Lefty Doyle. He wins the fight with a heart punch that kills Lefty. Although it was an accident, he feels obligated to travel to explain to Lefty's sister what happened. He falls in love with her, but when she finds out what happened, she hates him. When she's accused of killing her lecherous boss, Jimmy goes to extremes to help her out. This is a well-done film with plenty of action, romance, and suspense. The fight scenes are realistic, the story keeps one's interest, and the acting is first rate. This movie is one that any film fan will enjoy. IMBD: [The Heart Punch](#)

### **Without Honors (1932) [Harry Carey](#), [Mae Busch](#), [Gibson Gowland](#)**

Cowboy hero, [Pete Marlan](#), is superhuman in his endeavors—rescuing a kidnapped girl, punishing her abuser, catching a gambler cheating, uncovering a smuggling operation, and so on. This is a true 'B' picture with all aspects of the film on an amateur level. Watch this only if you have to see every Harry Carey or Mae Busch film. IMBD: [Without Honors](#)

### **Cher Live in Concert from Las Vegas (1999) [Cher](#)**

This filmed HBO special from the MGM Grand in 1999 features Cher singing her greatest hits. Cher is at her best here with amazing energy, beauty, eye-popping costumes, acrobatic performers galore, video montages, and a talented band with backup singers. Many under-appreciate Cher's talent, but she demonstrates in this concert through powerful hit songs and a montage of her film and TV career that she's been a major star over many decades. The concert ends on a crescendo with a performance of 'Believe' that will send chills up your spine (in a good way). Cher delivers a feel-good experience you won't soon forget. It's must see viewing! IMBD: [Cher: Live in Concert from Las Vegas](#)

## **The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) [Tim Curry](#), [Susan Sarandon](#), [Barry Bostwick](#), [Meat Loaf](#)**

Brad's car breaks down on a dark, stormy night in a lonely, wooded area. He and his fiancée, Janet, walk to a nearby castle to phone for help. There they enter the bizarre world of the transvestite, Dr. Frank-N-Furter, who creates life in the form of a perfect young man, intended for his pleasure. Thereafter, nothing goes according to plan. I recently attended a live performance of *The Rocky Horror Show* and was so impressed I had to see the film based on the musical. The stage show was high-energy camp with amazing choreography! The horror musical comedy film mirrors the stage musical but lacks its explosive, imaginative choreography and the audience participation. It makes a difference. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* drags at times, but overall maintains its energy with a powerful rock score. I recommend seeing the film because it is a unique viewing experience, but if you can find a professional stage presentation of the musical, that's a must-see experience. IMBD: [The Rocky Horror Picture Show](#)

## **Age of Consent (1932) [Dorothy Wilson](#), [Arline Judge](#), [Richard Cromwell](#)**

College student Michael's frustrated because he's overwhelmed with all the free love going on among the other students when all he wants is a wholesome relationship with a nice girl. Betty's the nice girl who falls in love with him but won't let loose like the other girls. Michael wants to quit school and marry her right away, but she wants to wait until he graduates. His subsequent drunken fling with an underage girl blows up the relationship. This 'B' movie about free love in college turns out to be a morality play about the need for wholesome relationships before marriage. The film is rather ham-handed and obvious with its message, but the story is well-done, the acting is acceptable, and it's entertaining enough to be watchable. IMBD: [Age of Consent](#)

## **The Crooked Circle (1932) [Zasu Pitts](#), [James Gleason](#), [Ben Lyon](#)**

The Crooked Circle is a secret society involved in all types of criminality. At the beginning of the film the members draw lots to see who will carry out the murder of their next target. The only woman in the society draws the indicative lot and timidly attempts to fulfill her assignment. All the action takes place in an old, dark house with hidden passages, moving walls, mysterious music, skeletons, a dusty attic, and a grave yard. Zasu Pitts provides the humor (?). This is a murder mystery farce, which, seen from today's perspective, is clichéd and predictable. The plot is geared toward scary surprises and corny humor, but the film is interesting enough to watch—once. IMBD: [The Crooked Circle](#)

## **Union Depot (1932) [Douglas Fairbanks Jr.](#), [Joan Blondell](#), [Guy Kibbee](#), [Alan Hale](#)**

A broke chorus girl sits in Union Depot despondent about not being able to get to Salt Lake City to join a show. A hobo with stolen clothes and stolen money appears to be her knight in shining armor. Conflicts galore commence. This film is very well done, and Joan Blondell and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. are magnetic. The PreCode plot deals with some sexuality and violence. The story is strong, and the acting is solid all around. This film is a solid '30s romantic drama you will enjoy. Highly recommended. IMBD: [Union Depot](#)

## **Nancy Drew: Detective (1938) [Bonita Granville](#), [John Litel](#), [James Stephenson](#), [Frankie Thomas](#), [Mae Busch](#)**

A wealthy dowager donates \$250,000 to Nancy's school and then mysteriously disappears the next day. Against all odds, Nancy is determined to find out what happened. This is an interesting film, and Bonita Granville is the perfect actress for this role. Nancy Drew also

serves as a good model for young, strong, independent girls — she even changes her own flat tire. Well-acted, good story. You'll enjoy this film.  
IMBD: [Nancy Drew: Detective](#)

**Nancy Drew: Reporter (1939)** [Bonita Granville](#), [John Litel](#), [Frankie Thomas](#)

Nancy competes with other students to win a contest to write the best news story for the local paper. They're handed lame assignments, so Nancy steals an assignment from a real reporter's desk — to cover a murder trial. She gets involved with the suspects and puts herself in grave danger. This film is a fast-paced crime drama/mystery with talented actors, a great story, humor, suspense, and entertainment from start to finish. Yeah, it's Nancy Drew, but this is a well-made film you'll find yourself watching intently. I consider it must see viewing.

IMBD: [Nancy Drew: Reporter](#)

## RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

JUNE, 2018 POST

**Father is a Bachelor (1950)** [William Holden](#), [Coleen Gray](#), [Mary Jane Saunders](#), [Charles Winninger](#), [Stuart Erwin](#), [Billy Gray](#)

After the medicine show is broken up by the sheriff, Johnny runs off and comes upon a cabin by the river, where five young children live by themselves. (Turns out their parents died in a river accident, and they exist hidden from society.) They slowly suck 'Uncle' Johnny into taking care of them. He tangles with the richest man in town, falls in love with the judge's daughter, but agrees to marry a rich spinster so he can better

take carer of the kids. The first scene of this film finds Holden in black face singing as part of a medicine show. (It does get better from there.) In fact, Holden does a lot of singing in this film—at least his lips move to someone singing pretty well. He does well in the role, and the acting all around is well done. The story is engaging, the kids are cute, there are some truly funny scenes, and there's heartwarming sentiment throughout. Not a great movie but a light diversion. The movie gets more interesting as it moves toward the ending credits, and it's entertaining enough to watch. IMBD: [Father is a Bachelor](#)

**Sinners in the Sun (1932) [Carole Lombard](#), [Chester Morris](#), [Adrienne Ames](#), [Cary Grant](#)**

Doris and Jimmie love each other, but Doris won't marry Jimmie because she doesn't want to live in poverty—he doesn't make enough for them to live comfortably. Jimmie then breaks up with her. She starts dating a rich man, but her father kicks her out of the house for coming home early in the morning after dates with a married man. She then becomes the man's mistress and lives a life of luxury. Jimmie becomes a chauffeur to a rich lady who falls in love with him—they marry. Is all the wealth worth the loss of love? This is actually a very good movie. Carole Lombard is stunning, and she proves her worth as a great actress. The film is a perfect example of a PreCode movie with lots of beautiful girls in their underwear and the focus on unmarried relationships. This is a very engaging film I would consider must see viewing. IMDB: [Sinners in the Sun](#)

**Such Men are Dangerous (1930) [Warner Baxter](#), [Catherine Dale Owen](#), [Hedda Hopper](#), [Bela Lugosi](#)**

A beautiful, young girl marries an ugly but rich and powerful man. However, he has no soul and not as much affection for his bride as he has for his checkbook and his power. She goes through with the

wedding, but realizing the mistake she has made in marrying a man who cannot show her affection, bolts on her wedding night to her home. Humiliated, her husband vows revenge. This film is a primitive, early talkie with equally primitive acting. What makes the movie interesting is the story itself. It portrays a unique approach to revenge and keeps the viewer guessing. [Catherine Dale Owen](#), although not demonstrating her skills as an actress in this movie, carries her role with her beauty. This is an interesting and entertaining film worth the time spent viewing.

IMDB: [Such Men are Dangerous](#)

### **Africa Speaks (1930) [Harald Austin](#), [Paul L. Hoefler](#), [Lowell Thomas](#)**

This documentary, filmed in Africa, traces the expedition of two explorers through the African bush. Billed as the ‘Strangest Adventure Ever Filmed,’ I found it fascinating to view all of the major African animals in their natural habitat and several African tribes going about their daily business. There are also several hunting scenes, both by the animals and the native tribesmen. Animals kill humans, and humans kill animals. For the time period, even with some corny dialogue, this is a well done documentary. If you have an interest in the animals and the tribal culture of Africa, I would highly recommend this film.

IMDB: [Africa Speaks](#)

### **The Sins of the Children (1930) [Louis Mann](#), [Robert Montgomery](#), [Elliott Nugent](#), [Francis X. Bushman Jr.](#), [Mary Doran](#)**

Papa has big problems with all of his grown children—and finances. Heart of gold papa struggles through each of his children’s difficulties, and tries his best to support them in their struggles—until their struggles become his own. This drama has some comedic moments, particularly with kiddie shenanigans, but it’s mostly a drama of struggles. It’s interesting to see Robert Montgomery in an early role and the

accomplished stage actor, Louis Mann, starring in a film, but the entertainment value of this film is low. Worth watching, but contemporary viewers may struggle with it. IMDB: [The Sins of the Children](#)

**The Birds (1963) [Rod Taylor](#), [Tippi Hedren](#), [Jessica Tandy](#), [Suzanne Pleshette](#), [Richard Deacon](#)**

A young lady in a pet shop flirts with a man inquiring about a pair of love birds. When he doesn't buy them, she purchases the birds and motorboats across the bay to deliver the birds to him. While she is visiting in his town, the local birds become violent and go on the attack. Mayhem ensues. This is a standard horror film with the Hitchcock touch. It's interesting, and Hitchcock does as well as he can for the time period in creating vicious birds with mechanical birds and technical tricks. Had he made the film today, technology would have afforded him the ability to create even better birds. Regardless, this is a film you should see because of the entertainment value, because it is a classic, and because it is a Hitchcock film. IMDB: [The Birds](#)

**Strangers of the Evening (1932) [Zasu Pitts](#), [Eugene Pallette](#), [Lucien Littlefield](#), [Tully Marshall](#), [Miriam Seegar](#)**

A murder takes place, and there's a mix-up with bodies at the funeral home. Eugene Pallette is the detective out to solve the crime. This is a crime drama with comedic elements (its' got Zasu Pitts in it, ok?) Bad acting and sketchy plot. As an indication of the quality of this film, Pallette flubs lines and there's no 'cut', no reshoot, and no edit. He just powers through, and the show goes on. The entertainment value of this film is below average and a movie you can skip with no feelings of guilt whatsoever. IMDB: [Strangers of the Evening](#)

## **The Good Companions (1933) [Jessie Matthews](#), [Edmund Gwenn](#), [John Gielgud](#), [Mary Glynne](#)**

Three people leave their unhappy homes to set out on their own. Coincidentally, they all come together working for a traveling musical troupe. The troupe has its troubles, but a star emerges. This film is a British production featuring heavy English accents with rapid-fire delivery. One has to concentrate to understand the dialogue. There's lots of arguing and people yelling at each other. Nevertheless, this musical has its moments—not too many, but a few. It's a long slog through this one to enjoy a few tender moments and some musical highlights. [Jessie Matthews](#) is the primary highlight—she truly shines. Entertainment value of this film is only moderate. IMDB: [The Good Companions](#)

### **RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES**

**MAY, 2018 POST**

## **Night Work (1930) [Eddie Quillan](#), [Sally Starr](#), [Frances Upton](#)**

Department store window dresser, Willie, mistakenly commits to supporting an orphan. While visiting the orphanage regularly, he falls in love with the little boy's nurse. This romantic comedy is one of the best of the early talkies. It's well-written and well-acted. There are typical PreCode scenes and situations, outrageous antics, and hilarious bits. This gem is a tender love story packed with giggles. You'll enjoy this must see viewing experience from opening credits to THE END.  
IMDB: [Night Work](#)

**The Rampant Age (1930) James Murray, Merna Kennedy, Eddie Borden**

Nice girl, Doris, stays at home and pines for Sandy, the man she plans to marry, while he attends wild parties and falls prey to bad girl, Estelle. No longer willing to wait, Doris lets loose with the wild crowd in order to make Sandy jealous. She goes a little too far. This film barely breaks the average barrier, but has some entertainment value. I enjoy peeking into the social life and party lifestyle of the 20s, and this film provides that experience. Watchable, amusing, and entertaining enough to keep you in your chair. IMDB: [The Rampant Age](#)

**Love Me Tonight (1932) Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald, Charles Ruggles, Myrna Loy, Charles Butterworth**

A common tailor disrupts the palace by falling in love with the young princess, who has never known love. (Her previous marriage to an old royal failed when he died.) The princess falls in love with the tailor thinking is also royalty. This film opens with an imaginative sequence which is similar to the opening sequence of Woody Allen's *Manhattan*, although less dynamic. There are also other cinematic delights throughout this so-so musical/romantic comedy. The story itself is rather pedestrian, and there are some silly bits. There are also some amateurish musical sequences balanced by classics such as *Mimi* and *Isn't It Romantic?* Overall, the film is a good introduction to the talents of Chevalier and MacDonald and is entertaining. IMDB: [Love Me Tonight](#)

**Seven Days Leave (1930) Gary Cooper, Beryl Mercer, Daisy Belmore**

An old London charwoman with no family in her life wants desperately to contribute to the war effort, but no organizations will accept her because of her age. She then lies to her friends that she has a son who

serves in the elite Black Watch. When a soldier on leave shows up, who also has no family, she takes him in and treats him like her son. This is a poignant story that delivers an emotional impact. [Beryl Mercer](#) gives a touching portrayal of the patriotic, motherly old woman. Cooper's acting in his first talking picture, although serviceable, is horrible at times and painful to watch. The film, overall, is difficult to warm up to, but if you give it a chance, you'll find it worth the time spent viewing.

IMDB: [Seven Days Leave](#)

**Sing Sinner Sing (1933) [Paul Lukas](#), [Leila Hyams](#), [Don Dillaway](#), [Walter Brennan](#), [Joyce Compton](#), [Ruth Donnelly](#)**

A casino owner, Phil, carries on a love affair with, Lela, the headline singer, while also carrying on with a chorus girl. Lela gets fed up and runs away with a drunken millionaire whom she marries. Phil seeks revenge while Lela tries to steady a rocky marriage. This is a surprisingly engaging film with plot twists and suspense. Plenty of beauty, lots of PreCode partying, and an overabundance of violent emotions. This is a dynamic film and well worth watching. IMDB: [Sing Sinner Sing](#)

**Pandora's Box (1929) [Louise Brooks](#), [Fritz Kortner](#), [Francis Lederer](#), [Daisy D'Ora](#)**

Lulu lives extravagantly as the mistress of wealthy editor, Dr. Ludwig Schön, until he decides to break up in order to marry a wealthy, young socialite. Working as a dancer, Lulu throws a tantrum and refuses to perform when Dr. Schön brings his fiancée to the theater. Caught in an embarrassing embrace with Lulu by his fiancée at the theater, he caves and decides to marry Lulu. Things spin out of control thereafter. This film is the ultimate silent drama. Everything about it is incomparable—the acting, the story, the lighting, the cinematography, the suspense.

Louise Brooks is at her most beautiful and at the height of her career. SEE THIS FILM! It is must see viewing. IMDB: [Pandora's Box](#)

### **City Park (1934) [Sally Blane](#), [Henry B. Walthall](#), [Matty Kemp](#)**

A homeless and hungry young woman tries to get arrested in the park for prostitution so she can have a roof over her head and warm meals. As she is being arrested, three old men become her guardian angels—saving her from arrest and taking care of her until she can thrive on her own. Complications, suspicion, and illegal activity commence. This is a charming romantic comedy. Sally Blane and Henry B. Walthall showcase their talents in strong performances surrounded by pedestrian acting, but the weaknesses do not detract from the value of this film. It's engaging from the first scene, and, although no award-winner, it's a pleasant diversion and well worth watching. IMDB: [City Park](#)

### **Tillie's Punctured Romance (1914) [Charles Chaplin](#), [Marie Dressler](#), [Mabel Normand](#), [Mack Swain](#), [Charles Conklin](#)**

A stranger wanders on to a rich farmer's ranch, discovers the farmer has a lot of cash, convinces the farmer's daughter to steal her father's cash and elope to the city with him. In the city, the stranger's girlfriend is enraged to see him with another woman. When the stranger discovers the farmer's daughter is to inherit millions from an uncle, he hurries to marry her before she realizes he's after her money. Conflicts galore within this threesome. This film is the premier example of a feature comedy of the period. Pure humor with no dialogue cards that I recall. Chaplin is a genius at this type of film, and Normand and Dressler give stand out performances. This film is very slapsticky—it's hard to imagine anything they didn't bump into, fall over, or get hit with. [I estimate 200 falls, and that may be conservative.] The film may be too slapsticky for contemporary tastes, but it's great fun if you give it a

chance. I highly recommend this movie and any Chaplin film, for that matter. IMDB: [Tillie's Punctured Romance](#)

**Minstrel Man (1977) [Glynn Turman](#), [Ted Ross](#), [Stanley Bennett Clay](#)**

A black family is part of a minstrel show, but papa dies in the middle of a performance. One son carries on the minstrel tradition, but the other son is appalled by the minstrel culture and resents his brother for continuing. This film presents blacks in what are stereotypically offensive performances in blackface. Although the movie tries to make a social statement, it is no longer relevant. The movie features good acting and good music, but it's not a film contemporary viewers would enjoy. Spend your time with other films. IMDB: [Minstrel Man](#)

**Paradise Island (1930) [Kenneth Harlan](#), [Marceline Day](#), [Tom Santschi](#), [Betty Boyd](#)**

A young woman arrives on a distant tropical island, as the only white woman, to marry her fiancée—a wealthy plantation owner. Unfortunately, she finds him a broken down alcoholic who sleeps with the native girls and is heavily in debt from gambling. She vows, however, to reform him before marrying him. This is a 'B' movie with mediocre to terrible acting and the fakest fighting I've ever seen on film. Incongruously, there are also musical scenes featuring singing by the principals, which runs contrary to the nature of this gritty film centering on unscrupulous criminals and drunken, libidinous sailors. The film is moderately interesting but can be overlooked without missing much. IMDB: [Paradise Island](#)

**Strictly Personal (1933) [Marjorie Rambeau](#), [Dorothy Jordan](#), [Eddie Quillan](#), [Hugh Herbert](#)**

A married couple runs a lonely hearts club out of their home. He's an ex-con who escaped from prison and is flying under the radar. A teenage girl shows up with a letter from her mother, who is deathly ill, asking the couple to take care of the girl because she is the daughter of the ex-con's pal, who was supposedly killed in the prison break. A huckster blackmails the couple, works his way into the lonely hearts club business, and preys on a rich widow and the teenage girl. Lots of complications and a murder. This is a well-crafted crime drama with good acting. The action moves the plot along quickly, and the film is interesting from the opening scene. This film is well worth watching. IMDB: [Strictly Personal](#)

**The Chinese Bungalow (1930) [Matheson Lang](#), [Jill Esmond](#), [Anna Neagle](#)**

An English cabaret singer in China marries a rich Chinese man who takes her to his cottage in the desolate forests of rural China. She has no human contact with anyone but the servants and her husband. Terribly lonely and unhappy, she has an affair with an English gentleman who knew her from the cabaret and followed her to the cottage. Things get ugly thereafter. This is a well-done film with good acting, a good story, and plenty of suspense. You'll find this movie interesting from the beginning and well worth watching. IMDB: [The Chinese Bungalow](#)

**This Above All (1942) [Tyrone Power](#), [Joan Fontaine](#), [Thomas Mitchell](#), [Nigel Bruce](#)**

A young, ultra-patriotic, English aristocrat joins the WAAF during WWII. She meets a dashing young man on a blind date and falls hopelessly in love. Her beau hates aristocrats and is morally opposed to the war. In addition to those conflicts, he harbors secrets he won't disclose. This movie, made during the war, is an inspirational 'Why We Fight' film disguised as a romance. But it's a splendid romance. Power

and the beautiful Fontaine are exceptional in their roles, and the story is moving, heart-wrenching, and suspenseful. If you're looking for a war-time romance, there is none better. For romance enthusiasts, this is must see viewing. IMDB: [This Above All](#)

## MOVIES: RARE AND SELDOM-SEEN

### APRIL, 2018 POST

**Gallant Lady (1933)** [Ann Harding](#), [Clive Brook](#), [Otto Kruger](#), [Dickie Moore](#)

Sally's boyfriend dies in a plane accident and leaves her pregnant and alone. Unable to raise her child, she gives him up for adoption. Yearning for her lost child, she schemes to get him back in her life. This Pre-Code gem offers great acting with Ann Harding playing a very sympathetic role to perfection. This is an emotional, suspenseful film with its only weakness being the plot line moving too quickly with unlikely coincidences. The film is totally engaging from beginning to end, and I'd deem it **must see** viewing. IMDB: [Gallant Lady](#)

**One Way Passage (1932)** [William Powell](#), [Kay Francis](#), [Frank McHugh](#)

On board the ship from Hong Kong to San Francisco a frail beauty falls in love with a charismatic charmer. She doesn't realize he's a convicted murderer under the watchful eye of the detective on board, and he doesn't realize she's close to death. This is another Pre-Code winner! It's a romantic comedy with a bittersweet twist. You'll laugh, and you'll tug

at the box of tissues. Don't miss this **must see** film. IMDB: [One Way Passage](#)

**It's a Boy (1933) [Leslie Henson](#), [Albert Burdon](#), [Edward Everett Horton](#)**

On Dudley's wedding day a young man shows up claiming to be his son from Dudley's long-ago dalliance with a girl in his office. Twists and complications comprise the plot of this film. The movie is a fast-paced farce with an annoying number of improbable complications arising every few minutes. With only a few bright spots and few laughs, I found myself yearning for the end of this dud. IMDB: [It's a Boy](#)

**Just Imagine (1930) [El Brendel](#), [Maureen O'Sullivan](#), [John Garrick](#), [Mischa Auer](#)**

This early 'talkie' takes place in the distant future (1980) where people get around in flying cars, communicate via TVs, bring the dead back to life, and travel to Mars. People also have numbers instead of names, and the government decides who marries whom. The plot revolves around a young people who are in love but, by government regulation, are destined to marry others. This science fiction, romance, comedy, musical features the charming Maureen O'Sullivan in one of her first feature films. The movie also highlights many primitive futuristic inventions and too many singing and dancing segments. The movie has some cute moments, but the acting is terrible, the plot takes too many diversions, and it doesn't hold up well for today's viewers. You might want to check this out for some innovative cinematic techniques, a 1930s view of the future, and a teenaged Maureen O'Sullivan, but it will appeal to very few modern viewers. IMDB: [Just Imagine](#)

**Just Like Heaven (1930) [Anita Louise](#), [David Newell](#), [Yola d'Avril](#)**

A balloon-man/organ grinder bullies another street troupe, which includes a beautiful, young ballerina. Eventually, he falls in love with her, and her boyfriend complicates matters in a tricky love-triangle. This film is a simple, early talkie with mediocre acting and a weak story. It would be difficult for contemporary viewers to tolerate, but it is watchable. IMDB: [Just Like Heaven](#)

**Beat Girl (Wild for Kicks) (1960) David Farrar, Noëlle Adam, Christopher Lee, Adam Faith, Shirley Anne Field, Oliver Reed**

Serious teenage revolt here! Already rebellious and sneaking out at night to hang with the 'beat' crowd, Jennifer accelerates her misbehavior when Dad brings home his new, French bride. This British film has a John Barry soundtrack (a plus) and the storyline is fairly interesting. Acting is mediocre, there is extreme conflict and tension. Worth a watch.

IMDB: [Beat Girl](#)

**Abraham Lincoln (1930) Walter Huston, Una Merkel, William L. Thorne, Jason Robards Sr.**

This film covers Lincoln's early life through his assassination. The movie is a fascinating look at one of history's greatest leaders directed by the legendary D. W. Griffith. Huston is a perfect Lincoln and Una Merkel distinguishes herself in her dramatic turn as Ann Rutledge. Whether you enjoy biographies or a good time with an old movie, you will enjoy what I consider **must see** viewing. IMDB: [Abraham Lincoln](#)

**Love in High Gear (1932) Harrison Ford, Alberta Vaughn, Tyrell Davis**

Someone steals a gift of valuable pearls at a wedding, and a guest jealously wants his fiancée to elope with him because another guest is her former boyfriend—as well as the boyfriend of many of the other female wedding guests. This comedy turns into a farce when all the principals turn up at the honeymoon hotel and in, out, and through the bridal suite. This film is a weak farce with poor acting, a juvenile storyline, and forced attempts at humor. Don't waste your time with this one. IMDB: [Love in High Gear](#)

### **Parole Girl (1933) [Mae Clarke](#), [Ralph Bellamy](#), [Marie Prevost](#)**

A young woman works the rackets in department stores but eventually gets caught. Although the store manager is willing to give her another chance, the man in charge of store security insists that she be prosecuted. She goes to prison hating the man responsible for sending her there and vows revenge. Going into viewing a movie titled “Parole Girl” I wasn't expecting much, but I was pleasantly surprised. This crime drama/romance is entertaining from beginning to end. Mae Clark is fascinating, and acting all around is spot on. Even with some inexplicable coincidences, the story line works well. This is a solid film. If you're looking for a well-made, highly entertaining PreCode experience, this is **must see** viewing. IMDB: [Parole Girl](#)

### **Paris Bound (1929) [Ann Harding](#), [Fredric March](#), [Carmelita Geraghty](#), [Ilka Chase](#)**

A young couple marry and vow to love one another forever. At the wedding it is obvious that there is a girl who is madly in love with the groom and a guy who is madly in love with the bride. Over time infidelity offers itself up to each of the happily married partners—do they bend, do they break, do they remain faithful? This early talkie offers stilted acting and a simplistic story. It also presents a viewpoint of male superiority all too common for the time period. Although this film

is watchable, your time is better spent watching a higher quality film.  
IMDB: [Paris Bound](#)

**Seas Beneath (1931) [George O'Brien](#), [Marion Lessing](#), [Mona Maris](#)**

A schooner roams the sea with a huge, hidden gun looking for German submarines to sink. The captain falls in love with a beautiful blonde who turns out to be a German spy. This film is directed by John Ford, which is a plus, but the acting is subpar. There is some action at sea and also some intrigue in port, but this is an average film which you can skip without missing much. IMDB: [Seas Beneath](#)

**Sensation Hunters (1933) [Arline Judge](#), [Preston Foster](#), [Marion Burns](#), [Walter Brennan](#)**

A troupe of young girls boards a cruise ship in Los Angeles headed for Panama where they will perform in a nightclub and entertain the male customers. A naive passenger joins the troupe despite warnings from the man on board who has fallen in love with her. This PreCode film features a lot of girls in lingerie, decent acting, and a serviceable story. It's entertaining enough to hold your interest and is well worth watching. IMDB: [Sensation Hunters](#)

**Inside the Lines (1930) [Betty Compson](#), [Ralph Forbes](#), [Montagu Love](#)**

A woman in high society is suspected of being a German spy. Some around her try to determine if she is, while one handsome gentleman falls in love with her. This film is a bad "B" movie with awkward acting. All I can say is "stay away." IMDB: [Inside the Lines](#)

**A Woman of Paris: A Drama of Fate (1923) [Edna Purviance](#), [Clarence Geldart](#), [Carl Miller](#), [Adolphe Menjou](#)**

A jilted young woman flees to Paris and lives a tangled life of complicated romances. This silent drama by Charlie Chaplin is a true classic. Chaplin appears only in a brief cameo, but the performances of Purviance and, particularly, Menjou lift this film above similar films of the period. View this melodrama once to enjoy it, give it a rest, and then return to view it again. You'll appreciate the genius of Chaplin more with every viewing. Of course, this film is **must see** viewing. [A Woman of Paris](#)

**MOVIES: RARE, SELDOM-SEEN AND CLASSIC**

**FEBRUARY/MARCH, 2018 POST**

**Alice Adams (1935) [Katharine Hepburn](#), [Fred MacMurray](#), [Fred Stone](#), [Evelyn Venable](#), [Charley Grapewin](#), [Hedda Hopper](#), [Hattie McDaniel](#)**

This Booth Tarkington story features working class Alice striving to be a part of upper class society. An upper class beau dates her not knowing her true social status. The viewer watching this film will experience those emotions which filmgoers appreciate in great movies. This film offers a family-oriented, Midwestern culture, nostalgic atmosphere as Katharine Hepburn garners empathy from the viewer. Her performance is outstanding, and her talent combined with a delightful story make this a **must see** movie. IMDB: [Alice Adams](#)

**The Little Girl Next Door (1912)**

**William Garwood, Marguerite Snow, Marion Fairbanks, Madeline Fairbanks**

A wealthy couple decide to take their daughter to the park. She wants to bring her friend next door. When the maid takes the girls for a walk in the park, she becomes involved in a lengthy conversation with the policeman. Meanwhile, the girls slip away and take a canoe out on to the lake. The canoe tips over, and bad things happen. Won't spoil the plot too much, but it is a very simple story. This early silent short is mildly interesting and short enough to be entertaining. IMDB: [The Little Girl Next Door](#)

**Afgruden (The Woman Always Pays) (1910)**

**[Asta Nielsen](#), [Robert Dinesen](#), [Poul Reumert](#)**

Beautiful young woman falls in love with a circus performer and runs away with him—leaving behind the man who loves her. After she sees her new lover kissing another performer, she attacks the girl on stage during her act. She and her lover are fired. They now need to earn a living, and one option is prostitution. This silent short is well-acted and interesting enough to watch. The lead actress is particularly good. It's always rewarding to view competent productions from over 100 years ago. IMDB: [Afgruden \(The Woman Always Pays\)](#)

**The Cry of the Children (1912)**

**[Marie Eline](#), [Ethel Wright](#), [James Cruze](#)**

Mom, Dad and two kids work in the mill every day. They leave little Alice, the youngest child, at home. When the wealthy mill owner's wife sees Alice getting water, she falls in love and tries to adopt her. Alice

loves her mother too much to leave, though. When a mill strike comes, and times get tough, Alice also goes to work in the mill. With the family still struggling, Alice sneaks off to try to be adopted by the mill owner's wife. This film is a gritty tale of child labor and a family's struggle to put bread on the table. Although a primitive early silent, this short is emotional and well worth watching. IMDB: [The Cry of the Children](#)

### **Frankenstein (Edison) (1910)**

[Mary Fuller](#), [Charles Ogle](#), [Augustus Phillips](#)

Frankenstein goes to college, becomes a doctor, and discovers the secret of life. He puts his knowledge to work by creating a human monster with an evil brain. This Edison film is a very quick version of the classic by Shelley, but it's interesting to see what Edison did to bring this story to the screen. Of historic interest, as opposed to riveting entertainment. IMDB: [Frankenstein \(Edison\)](#)

### **Silas Marner (1916)**

[Frederick Warde](#), [Louise Bates](#), [Morgan Jones](#)

Poor weaver has a run of bad luck until he 'adopts' a curly-haired toddler who wanders into his home as her mother dies in the snow. This is an early silent that is relatively well done for the time. Based on the classic English novel, this is moderately entertaining. IMDB: [Silas Marner](#)

### **The Vicar of Wakefield (1917)**

[Frederick Warde](#), [Boyd Marshall](#), [Kathryn Adams](#)

A wealthy vicar descends into poverty while continuing to show strength for his family and helping them to deal with misfortune. This early silent film is a decent adaptation of a classic English novel. Although primitive compared to contemporary films, it is watchable. IMDB: [The Vicar of Wakefield](#)

### **Men in War (1957)**

**[Robert Ryan](#), [Aldo Ray](#), [Robert Keith](#), [Vic Morrow](#)**

The story of the foot soldier in the Korean War. A squad of soldiers try to reconnect with their battalion and encounter a number of skirmishes along the way. An average amount of action and a lot of suspense. Incredible cinematography. This is a good war movie. Well worth watching. IMDB: [Men in War](#)

### **City Lights (1931)**

**Charles Chaplin, Virginia Cherrill**

Although the era of silent films had passed, Chaplin refused to make talkies, feeling that silent films were the true film art form. In this film the tramp falls in love with a beautiful blind girl, who has fallen on bad times financially. The film is emotional and beautiful in its own right. Chaplin also wrote the musical score, which adds considerable pathos to the viewing experience. This film marks the high point of Chaplin's films and would be a good introduction to his work. Chaplin fan or not, sit back and revel in the beauty and grace of a film masterpiece. This is a **must see** film. IMDB: [City Lights](#)

### **The Sun Shines Bright (1953)**

**[Charles Winninger](#), **[Arleen Whelan](#)**, **[John Russell](#)**, **[Stepin Fetchit](#)**, **[Milburn Stone](#)**, **[Slim Pickens](#)****

A Southern judge, and patriotic Confederate veteran, takes several unpopular stands against his community despite the approach of election day. This John Ford movie has weaknesses to the extent that I was going to recommend skipping it. However, watching the movie to the end, it has redeeming qualities and is worth watching. Winninger shines in this film. Be warned however: there are really objectionable racial stereotypes presented here. There are moments of weak acting, and there are plot flaws. But Ford presents a sentimental, moralistic story which prevents this from being a bad movie. Give it a try, particularly if you are a Ford completist. IMDB: [The Sun Shines Bright](#)

**So This is New York (1948)**

**[Henry Morgan](#)**, **[Rudy Vallee](#)**, **[Bill Goodwin](#)**, **[Virginia Grey](#)**, **[Leo Gorcey](#)**, **[Arnold Stang](#)**, **[Hugh Herbert](#)**

A contented cigar store worker in Indiana is forced by his wife to travel to New York when she and her sister inherit a large amount of money. He tries to keep track of the money, his wife spends with abandon, and her sister looks for a rich husband. This is a breezy comedy which surprises with wit and laugh-out-loud predicaments. You'll enjoy this well-done film, which is well-worth watching. IMDB: [So This is New York](#)

**The Dark Mirror (1946)**

**[Olivia de Havilland](#)**, **[Lew Ayres](#)**, **[Thomas Mitchell](#)**

Someone murders a prominent physician. The police lieutenant narrows the suspect down to a girl who had been dating the doctor. When he interviews the girl, he finds out she has an identical twin. The girls are uncooperative, he can't tell the difference, and his investigation fails. Great acting here and a great script. [Olivia de Havilland](#) convincingly plays dual roles as the twin sisters. This film is a suspenseful, first-rate whodunit. For mastery fans or those who simply like a good movie, this is **must see** viewing. IMDB: [The Dark Mirror](#)

### **Bad Boy (1939)**

[Johnny Downs](#), [Rosalind Keith](#), [Helen MacKellar](#)

A talented engineer rises quickly in his firm but falls just as fast from gambling, a greedy woman, and embezzlement. This is a morality film with mediocre acting and a predictable plot. A B film at best, you can skip this without missing anything. IMDB: [Bad Boy](#)

### **The Mating Season (1951)**

[Gene Tierney](#), [John Lund](#), [Miriam Hopkins](#), [Thelma Ritter](#), [Jan Sterling](#)

A young married couple deals with the problem of two mother-in-laws living with them. The husband's mother poses as the cook, unbeknownst to the wife. Thelma Ritter is superb, and [Gene Tierney](#) is beautiful. Those are the highlights of this film. This farce gets off to a slow start but warms up about half way through—making it an enjoyable viewing experience. IMDB: [The Mating Season](#)

### **WUSA (1970)**

[Paul Newman](#), [Joanne Woodward](#), [Anthony Perkins](#), Pat Hingle, [Laurence Harvey](#), [Cloris Leachman](#), Wayne Rogers

An alcoholic, liberal radio personality takes a job in New Orleans at the conservative radio station WUSA, gets involved in a conspiracy, and, in the meantime, hooks up with a down-and-out barmaid. Both are seeking things that don't exist for them. The film takes place at the end of the 60s and addresses the social issues relevant at the time. Woodward and Newman are an incredible acting team—as were Tracy and Hepburn and Bogie and Bacall—but they're also outstanding dramatic actors in their own right. This movie is dated, slow-moving and confusing at times, but enjoy this character study for the strong acting from all involved—but particularly Woodward and Newman. IMDB: [WUSA](#)

**Poppy (1936)**

[W.C. Fields](#), [Rochelle Hudson](#), [Richard Cromwell](#)

Fields adopts Poppy as a little girl and raises her in the circus where he works as a medicine salesman. As a young woman Poppy falls in love with the mayor's son but is seen by many as not worthy because of her background. There are also complications regarding an inheritance. This movie is funny and tender. Fields does well as a dramatic actor as well as a comedian, and Hudson is adorable and gives an engrossing performance. This film is a classic and a **must see** movie. IMDB: [Poppy](#)

**MOVIES: RARE, SELDOM-SEEN AND CLASSIC**

**JANUARY, 2018 POST**

## **It's In the Bag (1945)**

[Fred Allen](#), [Jack Benny](#), [Don Ameche](#), [William Bendix](#), [Rudy Vallee](#), [Binnie Barnes](#), [Robert Benchley](#), [Jerry Colonna](#), [Sidney Toler](#)

Flea circus ringmaster, Fred Floogle, inherits \$12,000,000 from his deceased uncle, only to find that the lawyers embezzled the money and left him only a few chairs and a phonograph record. The record is a recording of his uncle telling him there is \$300,000 hidden in one of the chairs. The rest of the film follows Floogle going through outlandish and hilarious scenarios trying to find the chair with the money. Although outdated with corny humor, this film is packed with stars and comedians and is a lot of fun if you give it a chance. IMDB: [It's in the Bag](#)

## **Magic Town (1947)**

[James Stewart](#), [Jane Wyman](#), [Kent Smith](#)

Pollster, Rip Smith, sees Grandview as having perfect demographics for polling, so he works undercover in insurance as he secretly conducts his polls. Turns out, he embarrasses the town nationally. This, in addition to the city leaders of Grandview making disastrous decisions pushes the town nearly into bankruptcy. Rip Smith then steps in to dramatically turn things around. Simple plot here—political arrogance and shenanigans, disaster, hero enters, feel-good recovery. I either viewed a “cut” version of this film, or there were serious plot omissions. It was difficult to connect some plot actions to others. Jimmy Stewart plays his “gee whiz,” optimistic character as he does in many films. This film is no award-winner, but it's passable entertainment. IMDB: [Magic Town](#)

## **Look Back in Anger (1989)**

[Kenneth Branagh](#), [Emma Thompson](#), [Gerard Horan](#)

A weak, downtrodden housewife lives with a brutish husband. A girlfriend steps in to “help” her. This is a powerful drama with superb acting. The entire filmed play takes place in a one-room apartment. At times it is difficult to hear the dialogue because of fast-talking British dialect and some mumbling. The raw emotionality and the presentation, however, make this a riveting drama that is well worth watching.

IMDB: [Look Back in Anger](#)

### **Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe (1985)**

[Ben Kingsley](#), [Jenny Agutter](#), [Patrick Ryecart](#)

This poor guy can't catch a break. Falsely accused of theft, Silas Marner's community banishes him. In addition to an odd, non-communicative personality, he also startles others with a condition in which he looks dead. When a woman dies in the snow in front of his house, Marner fights to keep her toddler daughter he found in his house. He's robbed of his fortune and later in life threatened again with the loss of his “daughter.” This is a dreary film with a powerful but equally dreary soundtrack. I can see viewers bailing on this film early thinking the film boring, but if one sticks with it to the end, it will be a rewarding viewing experience. Kingsley is excellent as Marner, and the cast of actors is equally as compelling. There are some emotional and heart-breaking moments, and if you watch to the end, you'll realize you've watched a very well-done film. This is an excellent adaptation of Eliot's classic novel. IMDB: [Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe](#)

### **The Woman in White (1997)**

[Tara Fitzgerald](#), [Justine Waddell](#), [Andrew Lincoln](#), [Simon Callow](#), [Ian Richardson](#)

Half sisters lead a privileged life until one marries and moves out. Strange things happen: the married sister has changed and no longer talks with her sister; their tutor is fired in disgrace over an inappropriate act with the housekeeper; and a woman in white roams the woods with a devastating secret. Murder, greed, deceit, intrigue, romance, illicit love, and so many unexplained circumstances. This film is truly a great mystery and engaging from start to finish. It's a wonderful adaptation of the classic novel by Wilkie Collins, and if you enjoy films based on literature—this is **must see viewing**. IMDB: [The Woman in White](#)

### **In the Wake of the Bounty (1933)**

[Arthur Greenaway](#), [Mayne Lynton](#), [Errol Flynn](#)

This film is a combination travelogue, drama, and documentary. It presents dramatic scenes from the mutiny, including contemporary scenes shot in Tahiti. It also highlights current life on Pitcairn Island, showing the day-to-day functions and struggles of the descendants of the mutineers. The dramatic scenes are amateurish and actually painful to watch. The Tahitian scenes and the contemporary Pitcairn scenes are only of historical interest. Most interesting are the views of the beautiful Tahitian women. View this film only if you have an historical interest in the events and the legacy of the mutineers. IMDB: [In the Wake of the Bounty](#)

### **Letter From an Unknown Woman (1948)**

[Joan Fontaine](#), [Louis Jourdan](#), [Mady Christians](#)

A teenage girl has an obsessive crush on a concert pianist who lives in her building. The crush grows into an affair and a life-long adoration. The young girl's romance is bittersweet because of the many women in his life. This film is a standard romance/melodrama with good acting and a good story. Nothing truly exceptional here, but it is worthwhile entertainment. IMDB: [Letter from an Unknown Woman](#)

### **Harlow (1965)**

[Carol Lynley](#), [Efrem Zimbalist Jr.](#), [Ginger Rogers](#)

This film is a biopic of Jean Harlow from her first screen test to her death. Considering the subject matter, this could have been a great movie. However, it's a bad movie. Production values are zero. Acting is subpar. If you choose to watch this movie, be prepared to cringe a lot. IMDB: [Harlow](#)

### **Sleep, My Love (1948)**

[Claudette Colbert](#), [Robert Cummings](#), [Don Ameche](#)

Is Alison going crazy and doing unusual and dangerous things, or is there a conspiracy? This is a well-done Gaslight-type thriller. Suspenseful and engaging from the action-filled opening scene. Acting is superb, and the plot twists entertaining. As a bonus, there are snippets of humor throughout. Great movie. **Must see viewing.** IMDB: [Sleep, My Love](#)

### **Ruthless (1948)**

[Zachary Scott](#), [Louis Hayward](#), [Diana Lynn](#)

[Horace Woodruff Vendig](#) uses friends, family, women, and business associates to advance in life. He's ruthless and feels he can get absolutely anything he wants. This is a fast-moving, interesting film with good acting and an engaging plot. It's well worth watching.

IMDB: [Ruthless](#)

### **Treasure of Fear (Scared Stiff) (1945)**

[Jack Haley](#), [Ann Savage](#), [Barton MacLane](#)

Chess reporter for a newspaper is suspected of murder and gets involved with thieves looking for hidden jewels in a chess set. This farce tries for laughs, but the weak acting and humorless scenes all fall flat. I kept waiting for a redeeming moment, but then 'The End' appeared. This is lame. Skip it. IMDB: [Treasure of Fear \(Scared Stiff\)](#)