

RARE, SELDOM-SEEN, AND CLASSIC MOVIES

JANUARY-JULY 2021 POST

Midnight (1934) Sidney Fox, O.P. Heggie, Humphrey Bogart

Mr. Weldon serves as jury foreman, delivering the murder verdict for a woman convicted of murder in a crime of passion. Without considering extenuating circumstances, Mr. Weldon believes “The law is the law.” On the night of the murderess’s execution, Weldon’s own daughter confesses to murdering her lover. Humphrey Bogart plays a pivotal role in this film. This tense drama makes imaginative use of photography, and despite mediocre acting, viewers will find this film entertaining. **IMDB:** [Midnight](#)

Dynamite (1929) Conrad Nagel, Kay Johnson, Charles Bickford, Julia Faye, Joel McCrea, William Holden

Wealthy socialite, Cynthia, loves and wants to marry Roger, a man married to another wealthy socialite, Marcia. Even though Marcia has her own lover on the side, she extorts Cynthia for money in order for her to divorce Roger. In the mean time, Cynthia is in line for an extraordinary inheritance which carries the stipulation that she be married by a particular date. With the date fast approaching, she realizes she can’t marry Roger in time to collect on the inheritance. She decides to marry an accused murderer on death row, Hagon, who is about to be executed. Cynthia endures the marriage ceremony in front of Hagon’s jail cell in order to collect her inheritance and marry Roger at a later time. After the legal ceremony, and minutes before the execution, the actual murderer confesses, and the warden releases Hagon from prison. He intends to claim his bride. Superb acting, particularly by Kay Johnson, and the tension between her character and Charles Bickford’s Hagon highlight this incredibly engaging film. Head-snapping plot twists, occasional humor, sexy flappers, and warm sentiment keep viewers’ attention throughout. This film ranks as one of the PreCode films I’ve enjoyed most, and, directed by Cecil B. DeMille, viewers will find this extraordinary film to be **MUST SEE VIEWING**. **IMDB:** [Dynamite](#)

Hot Pepper (1933) Edmund Lowe, Lupe Velez, Victor McLaglen, Boothe Howard

After their discharge from the Marines, Quirt and Flagg compete over the years for money and women. When bootlegger Flagg unwittingly imports a sexy spitfire from South America, the boys focus their attention and their futures on her whims. This film showcases the talents of Lupe Velez and the comedic repartee between Edmund Lowe and Victor McLaglen. The humor borders on silliness, but Velez shines in a high-powered, talented tour-de-force. Entertainment value—worth watching. **IMDB:** [Hot Pepper](#)

Lady in Danger (1934) Tom Walls, Yvonne Arnaud, Anne Grey, Hugh Wakefield

Suave Englishman, Richard Dexter, travels to Ardenberg to surreptitiously extricate the queen from the danger of the revolution in her country. He smuggles her out of the country, hides her in his apartment and later in his country house. Not surprisingly, Dexter, develops a close relationship with the queen, who is not familiar with the customs and everyday lives of ‘normal’ people. The relationship also raises the suspicions and ire of

Dexter's fiancé. This British comedy elicits a few titters, but there are so many better films from this period to watch. Don't waste your time. **IMDB:** [Lady in Danger](#)

Dancers in the Dark (1932) Miriam Hopkins, Jack Oakie, William Collier Jr., Eugene Pallette, George Raft

Men pay for dances with women at the dance hall. Gloria dances with the men and sings with the band. Despite her sinful reputation, the band leader loves her and the local gangster considers her 'his girl.' Gloria, however, falls in love with the band's saxophone player, and they plan to marry. Tension, deceit, threats, misunderstandings, and murder ensue. The film showcases Miriam Hopkins' talents, Jack Oakie puts in his usual, strong performance, and George Raft authentically plays the gangster. This outstanding film entertains. **IMDB:** [Dancers in the Dark](#)

Delicious (1931) Janet Gaynor, Charles Farrell, El Brendel, Virginia Cherrill, Mischa Auer
Heather's excited to immigrate to America, but a letter from her sponsor awaits her in New York harbor. He can no longer support her, and she's to remain in immigration's custody for her trip back to Scotland. She escapes the authorities and finds adventure and love ashore—all the while frantically eluding immigration authorities. This lightweight film starts slowly and builds throughout to a suspenseful conclusion. Gaynor pushes cuteness to its limits, musical numbers achieve only mediocrity, and the humor at times elicits groans. Nevertheless, the film entertains at a moderate level. **IMDB:** [Delicious](#)

Honey (1930) Nancy Carroll, Harry Green, Lillian Roth, Mitzi Green, Zasu Pitts, Louise Beavers

Once wealthy sister and brother rent out their mansion and pose as the cook and the butler. Some of the genuinely wealthy tenants fall in love with the 'servants.' This unusual farce with musical numbers may have served as a time-passer in 1930, but contemporary viewers will find this film too aggravating to watch. Avoid a disjointed plot, unnecessary and inexplicable musical numbers, an annoying brat, forced coincidences, and unrealistic relationships by avoiding this dud of a film. **IMDB:** [Honey](#)

Beauty for Sale (1933) Una Merkle, Madge Evans, Alice Brady, Otto Kruger, May Robson, Hedda Hopper, Harley Grapewin

Flat broke Letty asks her friend to get her a job in the beauty salon, where many of the girls make their way in life by hooking up with sugar daddies. Letty finds her man. He's wealthy, in love with her, and married. She struggles with her decision regarding her path forward. This engaging film provides competent acting, imaginative cinematography, a solid plot, suspense, and a high level of entertainment. You'll enjoy this **must-see viewing** film.

IMDB: [Beauty for Sale](#)

City Streets (1931) Gary Cooper, Sylvia Sydney, Paul Lukas, William 'Stage' Boyd, Guy Kibbee

As a hit man for the mob, "Pops" uses his daughter, Nan, to assist him as needed. When she takes the rap for him and goes to prison, her carnival barker boyfriend joins the mob to improve his status and help Nan—on the advice of "Pops." Uneven acting in this potboiler

fails to detract from the power of the narrative. Cooper, as usual, delivers a solid performance. A strong, suspenseful plot keeps viewers' eyes on the screen, and the inventive cinematography enhances the viewing experience. A dramatic, unique climax tops off this this **must see** film. **IMDB:** [City Streets](#)

24 Hours (1931) Kay Francis, Clive Brook, Miriam Hopkins, Regis Toomey
Fanny and Jim live a listless, loveless marriage. Both alcoholic Jim and beautiful Fanny find companionship with lovers. After a night at the club, Jim falls drunk on his lover's couch and wakes in the morning to find her dead. This well-done film offers quality acting, suspense, heartbreak, and hopelessness. Entertaining and well worth watching. **IMDB:** [24 Hours](#)

The Hole in the Wall (1929) Claudette Colbert, David Newell, Nellie Savage, Edward G. Robinson, Donald Meek
Using a spiritualist as a front for their criminal activities, a gang teams up with a young woman, Jean, to seek revenge on the grandmother who falsely accused her of crimes that sent her to prison. Jean plans on kidnapping her young granddaughter and raising her as a criminal. If the *Golden Raspberry Awards (Razzies)* existed in 1929, this film would win. A cringe-worthy plot accompanies a primitive presentation with no redeeming qualities. Skip this one. **IMDB:** [The Hole in the Wall](#)

After Tomorrow (1932) Charles Farrell, Marian Nixon, Minna Gombell, William Pawley, Ralph Morgan
Sydney works against all odds to bring about her marriage to her lovable mug, Peter. His mother challenges the marriage, her mother runs off with the border, her father fights heart failure, the couple pinch pennies to pay for a wedding, and Peter looks in earnest for a better job. This bittersweet romance entertains. Marian Nixon's sweetness shines and Charles Farrell's "aw shucks" portrayal provides a perfect counterpoint. Solid acting, a great story, and emotional conflicts make this romance **Must See viewing**. **IMDB:** [After Tomorrow](#)

The Mad Whirl (1925) May McAvoy, Jack Mulhall, Myrtle Stedman, Barbara Bedford, Alec B. Francis, Marie Astaire, Grady Sutton
The wealthy Herringtons host wild parties regularly. Mom and Dad provide the booze and entertainment and each have lovers on the side. Son, Jack, a neer-do-well partier with a fiancée falls in love with the malt shop owner's daughter, Cathleen—a virginal, church-going young girl devoted to her dad. Her dad forbids her to see Jack, but she's torn between her love for Jack and her devotion to her father. Even with marginal acting, a slim plot, and an annoying soundtrack that doesn't match the action, this film entertains enough to be watchable. **IMDB:** [The Mad Whirl](#) Whirl

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AUGUST-DECEMBER 2021 POST

Horse's Mouth, The (1958) Alec Guinness, Kay Walsh, Renee Houston

In this British farce, famous painter, Gulley Jimson, when released from prison struggles to find and recover his appropriated masterpieces. He also can't resist his craving to cover any blank surface with paint. Guinness delivers a quirky, but amusing performance, although some may find his strange voice off-putting. Kay Walsh, Gulley's domineering girlfriend, puts in an hilarious, stellar performance. Viewers will find this film well worth watching. **IMDB:** [The Horse's Mouth](#)

Long Night, The (1934) Henry Fonda, Barbara Bel Geddes, Vincent Price

Factory worker, Joe, meets a young, beautiful and innocent girl delivering flowers to the plant office. Their relationship develops with the promise of an idyllic future. Then Joe begins to question her mysterious past and her supposed innocence. A murder takes place, and all hell breaks loose. This film features incredibly powerful performances from a cast of A-list actors. Breath-taking drama with artistic cinematography make this film **must-see viewing**. **IMDB:** [The Long Night](#)

Lady of Burlesque (1943) Barbara Stanwyck, Micheal O'Shea, J. Edward Bromberg

Based on the book, *The G-string Murders* by Gypsy Rose Lee, this inside look at burlesque theater life with the acts, the songs, the vaudeville routines and the chorus girls shows the interactions and the conflicts among the performers. Those conflicts lead to suspicions when someone secretly starts murdering chorus girls. Barbara Stanwyck leads the cast with her unique style in a stellar performance. Viewers will find the film interesting and entertaining. **IMDB:** [Lady of Burlesque](#)

I Was a Male War Bride (1949) Cary Grant, Ann Sheridan, Marion Marshall

In occupied Germany after World War II French captain, Henri, and US Army lieutenant, Catherine, get paired up for a mission. They have an acrimonious past and try unsuccessfully to get reassigned. Despite constant bickering, they fall in love and decide to marry. In order to qualify for immigration to the US, though, Henri must register as a war bride. Although the concept and story are interesting, this comedy falters with weak humor and an unrealistic conversion from a battling couple to lovebirds. Moderately interesting but entertaining enough to watch. **IMDB:** [I Was a Male War Bride](#)

A Lady Takes a Chance (1943) Jean Arthur, John Wayne, Charles Winniger

A young, New York woman with multiple, uninspiring suitors seeks adventure on a Western bus tour. Out West she instantly falls in love with a cowboy who travels the rodeo circuit and refuses to even consider getting 'hitched.' This breezy comedy features the comedic talents of Jean Arthur in an entertaining, humorous film. Her understated style shines and interest never wains in this **Must See** viewing experience. **IMDB:** [A Lady Takes a Chance](#)

Bathing Beauty (1944) Red Skelton, Esther Williams, Basil Rathbone

Song writer, Steve, adores his bathing beauty fiancé, Caroline. His agent sabotages their marriage because he wants more songs from Steve. Caroline retreats to become a teacher at an all-girls college. Finding a loop hole in the school's charter, Steve enrolls as the only male at the school in order to win back Caroline. Viewers will appreciate a bevy of bathing beauties in this film, and the thin plot serves mostly to showcase the talents of the Xavier Cugat band, the Harry James band with Helen Forrest, the artistic swimming of Esther Williams, the silliness of Red Skelton, and a number of singing and dancing acts. Viewers will find this musical comedy highly entertaining. **IMDB:** [Bathing Beauty](#)

Dangerous When Wet (1953) Esther Williams, Fernando Lamas, Jack Carson

The Higgins family practice swimming together every day, but sister Katie excels. Windy Weebe arrives in town with his medicine show and woos Katie. To promote his elixir and enhance his chances with Katie, he enrolls the family in an English Channel swimming contest. In England Katie meets a millionaire, who pursues her as well. Mediocre acting, a pedestrian plot, and slow pace make this film one to skip. Watch this film only if you're an Esther Williams completist. **IMDB:** [Dangerous When Wet](#)

3 Penny Opera (Die 3 Groschen-Oper) (1931) Rudolf, Lotte Lenya, Carola Neher

Local crime boss, Mack the Knife, exits a London bordello and notices a beautiful, young girl walking with her friend. He follows the girl, asks her and her friend to go to a club, dances with the girl, asks her to marry, and she accepts. Unknown to Mack, he's married the daughter of another crime boss, the King of the Beggars. The great, German filmmaker G. W. Pabst creates an interesting, tension-filled film with touches of humor. Pabst displays outstanding cinematography to make this film compelling. Despite typical early-talkie acting, the film works. Exemplary and representative German film of the early 30s. **Must-See Viewing.** **IMDB:** [3 Penny Opera](#)

The Tollgate (1920) William S. Hart, Anna Q. Nilsson, Joseph Singleton

Vicious outlaw, Black Deering, urges his gang to disband, but he's outvoted, and they plan a major heist of a train. One of his gang members turns him in during the raid and collects the reward. Black Deering escapes and wreaks havoc on a local town before fleeing the local sheriff and his posse. This adventure entertains and serves as an example of Hart's best work. Action, adventure, and tenderness when a woman helps shelter him from the authorities. Well worth watching. **IMDB:** [The Tollgate](#)

His Bitter Pill (1916) Mack Swain, Louella Macam, Ella Haines

This Mack Sennett short features Sheriff Jim pursuing local beauty, Nell, while local cad, Diamond Dan, tries to steal her from Jim. Complications arise when Nell falls for Diamond Dan and Jim attempts to regain her affection. This typical Sennett short includes all the Sennett components of fights, romance, humor, chases, and redemption. Worth watching. **IMDB:** [His Bitter Pill](#)

Hot Spell (1958) Shirley Booth, Anthony Quinn, Shirley MacLaine

Beleaguered housewife, Alma, turns a blind eye to her demeaning and demanding husband's philandering and the struggles her three grown children face. Shirley Booth shines in her lead role, but strong acting across the board makes this a film viewers should see. **IMDB:** [Hot Spell](#)

Emperor Jones (1933) Paul Robeson, Dudley Digges, Frank H. Wilson
[Spoiler Alert] Doorman, Brutus Jones's, huge ego leads him to use others to move upward in society until an accidental murder sends him to prison. After escaping prison he takes a position in the boiler room of a freighter, jumps ship near a Caribbean island, and rises from prisoner, to slave, to self-titled 'Emperor.' This film makes liberal use of the 'N' word, and the predominantly Black cast speaks in the stereotypical dialect of the period. The film, however, delivers a faithful version of Eugene O'Neill's play supported by impressive acting. Well worth watching. **IMDB:** [Emperor Jones](#)

Jitterbugs (1943) Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Vivian Blaine
Laurel and Hardy run out of gas in the desert and are rescued by a con man selling tubes of pellets that turn water into gasoline. They team up with this 'miracle worker' and chaos ensues. This film features the beauty and talent of Vivian Blaine as the love interest. Well-acted, funny, and typically Laurel and Hardy. **IMDB:** [Jitterbugs](#)

Diamond Horseshoe (1945) Betty Grable, Dick Haymes, Phil Silvers
Joe Davis drops out of medical school to pursue a career in show business like his father. His father does what he can to dissuade his son, and his father's fiancé devises a scheme to get him out of show business as well. Joe falls in love with the star of the Diamond Horseshoe nightclub and faces obstacles rather than finding true romance. This splashy MGM musical features amazing costumes, beautiful show girls, and extravagant routines. It features the talents of Betty Grable and Dick Haymes with 80% of the film consisting of singing and dancing. This musical gets off to a slow start but builds interest and ends with a powerful, endearing conclusion. Well worth watching. **IMDB:** [Diamond Horseshoe](#)