

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

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Films from THE THIRTIES: PART II 1935-39

The Museum of Modern Art, will present a retrospective of films from the thirties beginning August 23, and running through October 6. The Thirties, according to Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Department of Film, will consist of 39 pictures, representing some of the richest creative talent in American cinema at a time that has been called "the dear, dead days not beyond recall."

Two years ago the Museum presented The Thirties, U.S.A., Part I, covering the first half of the decade. The films being shown now as Part II were made from 1935 to 1939. Among the pictures to be shown are: Frank Capra's "Lost Horizon"; Paul Muni in "The Life of Emile Zola," the Story of a Northern Jew's lynching in the South; the great thriller "Night Must Fall," an adaptation of the Emlyn Williams play starring Robert Montgomery; and "The Good Earth," a spectacle film in black and white, from Pearl Buck's popular novel, for which Luise Rainer won her second Academy Award, with Paul Muni in the starring role.

The latter part of the thirties was characterized by further achievements in the musical film, largely due to the talents of Fred Astaire, who with Ginger Rogers starred in "Top Hat," and "Shall We Dance," both of which are in the retrospective.

The most important contributions to the annals of films made in the thirties was the series of "snowball" comedies Hollywood turned out at a time of grim, economic hardships. These pictures, among them "Nothing Sacred," starring Carole Lombard and Fredric March, from a script by Ben Hecht, directed by William Wellman, reinforced the American reputation for comedy, established earlier by the great silent screen comedians. The great comedy directors were Frank Capra and Leo McCarey. Capra is represented in this retrospective with "You Can't Take It With You," "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," and "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington." McCarey works that are included are:

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"The Awful Truth," with Irene Dunne and Cary Grant, and "Ruggles of Red Gap," in which Charles Laughton recited the Gettysburg address.

"The most fertile talent of the American film scene functioned at this time, when the economy was fallow," Mr. Van Dyke points out. "The deeper the Depression became, the more the movies made Americans laugh and cry and consoled the public with giddy, unrealistic dreams, then known as 'escapist' entertainment."

Today the films of the thirties are being shown not only for nostalgic and sociological reasons, but also to inform young film-makers and enthusiasts of the heritage of American films. The program was prepared under the supervision of Adrienne Mancina, Assistant Curator, Film Department.

The current revival of interest in the 30's is chronicled in numerous recent books and articles. Louise Tanner, in All The Things We Were, declares, "I don't care if Jean Harlow wasn't a very good actress. My eyes fog up at the mention of Bogart, and I marvel at whatever keeps Cary Grant looking just as he did on the Dixie cup top."

"These were the years which changed the very structure of the American personality," Mrs. Tanner claims. She refers to the free dishes, the movie bank, a cinema lottery, and tin can shows in California, admitting free anyone with a can of food for the needy. For ten cents a child could see a double feature, three cartoons, one of the two serials and a Pete Smith specialty. The same program was offered to the adults for twenty-five cents at night.

It was the period of the newsreel and the amateur snap shot. It was also the time of "clean cut killers," when Sinclair Lewis' warning, "It Can't Happen Here," was abandoned as a Hollywood film because it would offend Hitler and Mussolini. Because of the delicate public sensibilities of the time during this decade of social change, Hollywood generally preferred to deal with "the hi-jinks in the high surtax brackets." Few indeed belonged to the latter category, so few sensibilities were affected in that way. Shirley Temple, who was Number One at the box office made more money than

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President Roosevelt.

At a time when prices had dropped to the bottom, and furniture went unsold in the stores, the movie palaces indulged in exotic decor and architecture, Egyptian, Hindu, Chinese, Hispano Persian, French Baroque, Siamese. It was a way of making the customer feel that he was on a magic carpet taking him away from the somber realities of the Depression.

In the latter part of the thirties, there was great emphasis on morals. Censorship thrived, Hollywood policing itself, at the same time that many states had their own censorship boards, since declared unconstitutional. In view of these handicaps the wonder is that the movies thrived as well as they did, but they brought out eight million Americans twice a week which prompted Willard Van Dyke, head of the Museum's Department of Film to remark, "For those who look backwards the Thirties Series may produce a sentimental lump or two." He also added, "For those who never knew the thirties, the reactions will probably be devoid of nostalgia, but they may contain elements of surprise, of amusement, and even of unsuspected emotions."

The Thirties program follows:

- August 23 "Alice Adams" (1935). With Katharine Hepburn, Fred MacMurray, Hedda Hopper and Hattie McDaniel; directed by George Stevens, from the novel by Booth Tarkington. 94 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- August 24 "Young Mr. Lincoln" (1939). Directed by John Ford, with Henry Fonda. 101 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- August 25 "The Roaring Twenties" (1939). By Mark Hellinger, with James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart and Gladys George. 106 min. Directed by Raoul Walsh. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- August 26 "Marked Woman" (1937). With Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart, directed by Lloyd Bacon, from a script by Robert Rossen and Aben Finkel. 96 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- August 27 "Stage Door" (1937). Directed by Gregory La Cava, from a play by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman, with Katharine Hepburn, Adolphe Menjou, Ginger Rogers. 83 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- August 29 "Jezebel" (1938). With Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, George Brent and Fay Bainter, directed by William Wyler. 100 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- August 30 "The Life of Emile Zola" (1937). With Paul Muni, Joseph Schildkraut, and Gale Sondergaard, directed by William Dieterle. 123 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.

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- August 31 "Lost Horizon" (1937). Produced and directed by Frank Capra, from James Hilton's novel, with Ronald Coleman, Jane Wyatt, Edward Everett Horton, Thomas Mitchell, Margo and Sam Jaffe. 125 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- September 1 "Bringing Up Baby" (1938). With Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, Charlie Ruggles, Barry Fitzgerald, May Robson, directed by Howard Hawks, from a script by Dudley Nichols and Hager Wilde. 102 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- September 2 "You Can't Take It With You" (1938). Produced and directed by Frank Capra, with Jean Arthur, Lionel Barrymore, James Stewart, Edward Arnold, Mischa Auer. From the Pulitzer Prize Winning play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. 126 min. Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.
- September 3 "They Won't Forget" (1937). Produced and directed by Mervyn LeRoy, from a screen play by Robert Rossen and Aben Kandel, with Claude Rains and Otto Kruger. 95 min. Courtesy of Brandon Films.
- September 5 "Night Must Fall" (1937). With Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell, Dame May Whitty. Directed by Richard Thorpe. From Emlyn Williams' story, with a screen play by John Van Druten. 115 min.
- September 6 "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer" (1935). With Gary Cooper, Franchot Tone, C. Aubrey Smith, Monte Blue, Akim Tamiroff, Mischa Auer. Directed by Henry Hathaway. 112 min.
- September 7 "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937). The first Walt Disney feature. 80 min. Courtesy of Buena Vista Distribution, Walt Disney Productions.
- September 8 "Top Hat" (1935). With Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Helen Broderick, Eric Blore, directed by Mark Sandrich. 70 min.
- September 9 "Baboona" (1935). An aerial travelogue over Africa by Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson. 75 min.
- September 10 "The Devil is a Woman" (1935). With Marlene Dietrich, Lionel Atwill, Cesar Romero, and directed by Josef von Sternberg, from a novel by Pierre Louys, adapted for the screen by John Dos Passos. 76 min.
- September 12 "Nothing Sacred" (1937). Produced by David O. Selznick, directed by William Wellman, with a screen play by Ben Hecht, with Carole Lombard, Fredric March, Walter Connolly. 75 min.
- September 13 "Made for Each Other" (1939). With Carole Lombard, James Stewart, Charles Coburn, directed by John Cromwell, produced by David O. Selznick. 90 min.
- September 14 "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town" (1936). With Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur, produced and directed by Frank Capra, from a Clarence Budington Kelland story, adapted for the screen by Robert Riskin. 115 min.
- September 15 "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" (1939). Directed and produced by Frank Capra, with Jean Arthur, James Stewart, Claude Rains and Edward Arnold. 120 min.
- September 16 "Texas Rangers" (1935). Directed by King Vidor, with Fred MacMurray and Jack Oakie. 97 min.
- September 17 "On the Avenue" (1937). With music by Irving Berlin, starring Dick Powell, Madeleine Carroll, Alife Faye, and the Ritz Brothers. Directed by Roy Del Ruth. 90 min.

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- September 19 "The Awful Truth" (1937). Produced and directed by Leo McCarey, from a screen play by Vina Delmar. With Irene Dunne, Cary Grant, Ralph Bellamy. 92 min.
- September 20 "100 Men and a Girl" (1937). With Deanna Durbin. Leopold Stokowski, Adolphe Menjou, Mischa Auer. Directed by Henry Koster. 85 min.
- September 21 "Ruggles of Red Gap" (1935). Directed by Leo McCarey, with Charles Laughton, Mary Boland, Charlie Ruggles and ZaSu Pitts. 90 min.
- September 22 "The Good Earth" (1937). With Paul Muni and Luise Rainer, directed by Sidney Franklin from the Pearl S. Buck novel. 140 min.
- September 23 "Make Way For Tomorrow" (1937). Produced and directed by Leo McCarey with Victor Moore, Beulah Bondi, Fay Bainter and Thomas Mitchell. 91 min.
- September 24 "Marie Antoinette" (1938). Adapted in part from a Stefan Zweig biography, with Norma Shearer, Tyrone Power, John Barrymore, Robert Morley, Anita Louise and Joseph Schildkraut. W.S. Van Dyke directed. 160 min.
- September 26 "Shall We Dance" (1937). With Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Directed by Mark Sandrich with the music of George and Ira Gershwin. 100 min.
- September 27 "The Bohemian Girl" (1936). With Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. Produced by Hal Roach. 80 min.
- September 28 "The Little Colonel" (1935). With Shirley Temple, Lionel Barrymore, Bill Robinson. 80 min. Directed by David Butler.
- September 29 "Destry Rides Again" (1939). With Marlene Dietrich, James Stewart, Una Merkel, directed by George Marshall. 90 min.
- September 30 "Little Lord Fauntleroy" (1936). With Freddie Bartholomew, Dolores Costello, C. Aubrey Smith, Guy Kibbee, and Mickey Rooney, directed by John Cromwell, from the Frances Hodgson Burnett story. David O. Selznick produced. 95 min.
- October 3 "Wuthering Heights" (1939). Adapted from Emily Bronte's classic, with Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, David Niven, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Flora Robson and Donald Crisp. Directed by William Wyler for Samuel Goldwyn.
- October 4 "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" (1939). With Edward G. Robinson, Francis Lederer, and Paul Lukas. Directed by Anatole Litvak.
- October 5 "Easy Living" (1937). With Jean Arthur, Ray Milland and Edward Arnold. Directed by Mitchell Leisen from a screen play by Preston Sturges.
- October 6 "Romeo and Juliet" (1936). With Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard and John Barrymore, Edna May Oliver, Basil Rathbone, C. Aubrey Smith. George Cukor directed the Irving Thalberg production of the Shakespeare play.

Daily showings are at 2:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. weekdays except Thursdays, when films are also presented at 8:00 p.m. with showings on Saturday at 3:00 and 5:30 p.m.; on Sunday at 2:00 and 5:30 p.m.

The films in the program, The Thirties, are shown at the Museum through the courtesy of Brandon Films, Columbia Pictures, Buena Vista, and The Museum of Modern Art Archive.

 Additional information and stills available from Lillian Gurrard, Coordinator Film Press/Promotion, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.