

Some interesting films on US television, July 4-10

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4 July 1998

Asterisk indicates a film of exceptional interest

Saturday, July 4

6:00 am (TCM) -- *How I Won the War* (1967) -- British director Richard Lester's somewhat overdone and fragmented comic anti-war film. A self-important middle-aged veteran recounts his experiences in the war. Michael Crawford, Roy Kinnear, Jack MacGowran and John Lennon, in one of his few acting roles.

12:00 pm (TNT) -- *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980) -- Sissy Spacek, who did her own singing, is excellent in this slightly sanitized biography of country singer Loretta Lynn, born in poverty in Kentucky. Tommy Lee Jones as her husband, Beverly D'Angelo as Patsy Cline and Levon Helm as her coal-miner father also stand out. Directed by Michael Apted.

12:15 pm (TCM) -- *Mister Roberts* (1955) -- Henry Fonda is an officer aboard a World War II cargo ship, contending with an eccentric captain (James Cagney). Remarkable cast includes William Powell, Jack Lemmon, Ward Bond and Nick Adams. John Ford began as director, but was replaced by Mervyn LeRoy.

12:30 pm (AMC) -- *River of No Return* (1954) -- Otto Preminger directed this interesting, relatively somber story. Robert Mitchum rescues a man (Rory Calhoun) and a woman (Marilyn Monroe) from drowning. Calhoun promptly steals his horse and takes off. Vengeful Mitchum, with his young son, and Monroe pursue him by raft.

2:05 pm (AMC) -- *A Shot in the Dark* (1964) -- Blake Edwards directed the second of the Inspector Clouseau films, starring the inimitable Peter Sellers. With Elke Sommer, George Sanders and Herbert Lom. (Also, Sunday at 7:00 am.)

3:00 pm (Lifetime) -- *Postcards from the Edge* (1990) -- Occasionally amusing and occasionally telling film, based on a presumably semi-autobiographical novel by Carrie Fisher, about an aspiring actress (Meryl Streep), battling drug problems and living in the shadow of a famous, fairly impossible mother (Shirley MacLaine). Mike Nichols directed intelligently, but as always, with a certain amount of calculation.

6:30 pm (Com) -- *Diner* (1982) -- Barry Levinson wrote and directed this sympathetic account of a group of young men who hang out in a diner in 1950s' Baltimore. With Steve Guttenberg, Daniel Stern, Mickey Rourke, Kevin Bacon, Timothy Daly, Ellen Barkin. (Also, Sunday at 4:30 pm; Tuesday at 8:00 pm.)

8:00 pm (TCM) -- *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941) -- Amusing tale of a boxer (Robert Montgomery) called to heaven too soon, who has to return to earth in another body. With Evelyn Keyes, Claude Rains, Edward Everett Horton. Confusingly, Warren Beatty and Buck Henry's 1978 *Heaven Can Wait* is a remake of this film and not Ernst Lubitsch's 1943 *Heaven Can Wait*.

*8:00 pm (WGN) -- *El Dorado* (1967) -- Robert Mitchum, a drunken sheriff, and John Wayne, a gunfighter, join forces to defeat a rapacious rancher and keep peace on the range. Directed by Howard Hawks; one of his last significant films.

10:00 pm (TCM) -- *A Guy Named Joe* (1943) -- Spencer Tracy is a

World War II pilot who is killed and comes back to earth to whisper advice in the ear of his replacement, Van Johnson, in the affections of Irene Dunne. Sentimental as can be, but affecting. Directed by Victor Fleming. (Also, Wednesday at 6:00 pm.)

Sunday, July 5

8:30 am (TCM) -- *The Thing* (1951) -- Remarkable, tense science fiction film about an Arctic outpost threatened by a creature that inadvertently gets thawed. Christian Nyby is the nominal director, but the Howard Hawks touch is unmistakable. With Kenneth Tobey, Dewey Martin and James Arness, as the creature.

12:00 pm (Com) -- *High Anxiety* (1978) -- Uneven, to say the least, Mel Brooks comedy, but with rewards for the patient. Brooks is the new chief of a sanitarium, in this homage to and spoof of Hitchcock. With Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman and Harvey Korman. (Also, Sunday at 7:00 pm.)

1:45 pm (TCM) -- *The Tender Trap* (1955) -- Liable film, real 1950s fare, about a 'swinging' bachelor (Frank Sinatra) and a determined young woman (Debbie Reynolds) out to 'snare' him. Charles Walters directed; memorable Cahn-Van Heusen title song.

*6:00 pm (AMC) -- *Winchester '73* (1950) -- Remarkable Western, directed by Anthony Mann, about a man (James Stewart, in the first of his films with Mann) tracking down a stolen Winchester rifle and the man who took it. The gun is the connection between the different episodes. With Shelley Winters, Dan Duryea and Stephen McNally. Script by Robert L. Richards and Borden Chase.

*6:00 pm (TCM) -- *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) - John Huston classic, based on the Dashiell Hammett novel, with Humphrey Bogart as private detective Sam Spade. Sidney Greenstreet, Mary Astor and Peter Lorre brilliantly co-star.

9:30 pm (TCM) -- *Random Harvest* (1942) -- Ronald Colman is a World War I veteran who loses his memory. Greer Garson is a music-hall entertainer who brings him back to life. Hard to take in parts, but it has perceptive moments. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy.

Monday, July 6

12:00 am (TCM) -- *A Woman of Affairs* (1928) -- A late-silent melodrama with Greta Garbo as a reckless rich girl who goes from one man to the next and finally dies in a car crash. With Lewis Stone and John Gilbert; directed by Clarence Brown, Garbo's favorite. (Also, Friday at 7:30 am.)

1:00 am (AMC) -- *Niagara* (1953) -- Marilyn Monroe is an adulterous wife planning to kill her husband (Joseph Cotton) on their honeymoon at Niagara Falls, in this somewhat overwrought, but tense film, directed by Henry Hathaway.

1:45 am (TCM) -- *As You Desire Me* (1932) -- Fairly inept version of a Pirandello play, directed by George Fitzmaurice, about an amnesiac returning to a husband she doesn't remember. Greta Garbo has some memorable moments as the woman, with Melvyn Douglas and Erich von Stroheim.

2:35 am (AMC) -- *Bright Leaf* (1950) -- Michael Curtiz directed this

interesting saga about the tobacco industry in the 19th century. Gary Cooper, seeking revenge on old enemies and old lovers, builds a cigarette empire. With Lauren Bacall, Patricia Neal, Jack Carson.

*3:45 am (TNT) -- *High Noon* (1952) -- Gary Cooper stars in this Fred Zinnemann-directed Western about a sheriff who, on his wedding and retirement day, has to confront a gunman seeking revenge. With Grace Kelly, Thomas Mitchell, Lloyd Bridges, Katy Jurado et al.

4:30 am (AMC) -- *Dead End* (1937) -- The first appearance of the Dead End Kids (Huntz Hall, Leo Gorcey et al) in a film about the Lower East Side slums of New York. Scripted by Lillian Hellman, directed by William Wyler.

*4:00 pm (AMC) -- *Touch of Evil* (1958) -- Orson Welles directed and acted in this extraordinary film about the withering effect of money and corruption on a cast of characters on both sides of the US-Mexico border. Charlton Heston is a Mexican cop, Janet Leigh his new wife, Welles a crooked American cop, Akim Tamiroff a crime boss, Marlene Dietrich Welles' lost love. Not to be missed.

4:00 pm (TCM) -- *Scaramouche* (1952) -- Lively swashbuckling in 18th century France, with Stewart Granger and Eleanor Parker; also Janet Leigh and Mel Ferrer. The film, directed by George Sidney, boasts the longest sword fight in movie history.

8:00 pm (AMC) -- *Friendly Persuasion* (1956) -- William Wyler directed this film about a family of Quakers and, therefore, pacifists, trying to survive with dignity during the Civil War. With Gary Cooper, Dorothy McGuire and Anthony Perkins.

8:00 pm (TCM) -- *Two O'Clock Courage* (1945) -- Tom Conway, George Sanders' brother, plays an amnesiac who finds himself a suspect in a murder case. With Ann Rutherford as a helpful cab driver. One of Anthony Mann's first directorial efforts.

*9:30 (TCM) -- *He Walked by Night* (1948) -- Officially credited to Alfred L. Werker, Anthony Mann directed some of the most visually interesting scenes in this *film noir* about the police hunt for a psychotic killer, excellently played by Richard Basehart.

10:30 pm (AMC) -- *Them!* (1954) -- One of the extraordinary 1950s black-and-white science fiction films, products of Cold War paranoia and insecurity, among other things. This one is about giant ant mutations terrorizing the Southwest and ultimately Los Angeles. Directed by Gordon Douglas. James Whitmore and Edmund Gwenn co-star.

Tuesday, July 7

12:30 am (TBS) -- *Year of the Dragon* (1985) -- Michael Cimino directed this violent, wildly uneven film about a New York cop, a Vietnam veteran, going up against the Chinese Mafia. It contains both convincing and unconvincing elements. Mickey Rourke, John Lone, Ariane. Oliver Stone wrote the script. (Also Friday, at 12:55 am.)

2:00 am (AMC) -- *Champion* (1949) - Effective boxing drama, with Kirk Douglas as selfish, ambitious fighter determined to get to the top and stay there. Paul Stewart is his friend whom he betrays. Directed by Mark Robson.

2:00 am (Com) -- *Ishtar* (1987) -- One of the most famous failures in recent Hollywood history, Elaine May directed this \$40 million picture, which stars Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman. Interesting as an historical curiosity.

6:00 am (TCM) -- *Arsene Lupin* (1932) -- Jack Conway directed this entertaining trifle about detectives and jewel thieves in Paris. The first film pairing of John and Lionel Barrymore; with Karen Morley.

9:00 am (TCM) -- *Two Seconds* (1932) -- This takes literally the notion that your life flashes before you as you face death. Mervyn LeRoy directed this film that tells the life-story of Edward G. Robinson in the two seconds it takes for him to die in the electric chair! With Vivienne Osborne and Preston Foster.

10:30 am (TCM) -- *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) -- Teresa Wright is a young girl who comes to realize that her amiable uncle is the Merry

Widow murderer, in this remarkable Alfred Hitchcock work. Playwright Thornton Wilder helped write the script.

4:00 pm (TCM) -- *After the Thin Man* (1936) -- Nick and Nora Charles (William Powell and Myrna Loy), the urbane detectives, go after a murderer in San Francisco. Based on the characters created by Dashiell Hammett. James Stewart is in this one, one of the better in the series. Directed by W.S. Van Dyke.

10:00 pm (TCM) -- *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945) -- If you can bear the sentimentality of this Leo McCarey film about the doings of priests and nuns, it has its pleasures. With Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman. The sequel to *Going My Way*.

Wednesday, July 8

12:00 am (TNT) -- *American Graffiti* (1973) -- A film that probably had a negative effect on the course of American film-making, this is director George Lucas' entertaining fantasy about teenage life in California in the 1950s. With Richard Dreyfuss, Ron Howard, Paul LeMat, Cindy Williams, Candy Clark.

12:45 am (AMC) -- *Hollywood or Bust* (1956) -- Frank Tashlin directed this film about starstruck Jerry Lewis teaming up with gambler Dean Martin to make the cross-country trek to Hollywood; their last film together. With Anita Ekberg.

2:30 am (AMC) -- *Detective Story* (1951) -- William Wyler's somewhat dated film about the activities inside a New York City police station. Kirk Douglas is a bitter cop, Eleanor Parker his wife, William Bendix another detective. The good cast also includes Horace McMahon, Lee Grant and Joseph Wiseman.

*2:30 am (TNT) -- *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) - Nicholas Ray's socially conscious portrait of disaffected youth, with James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo. Memorable scene in a planetarium.

*9:30 am (TCM) -- *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) -- John Garfield and Lana Turner play the illicit and doomed lovers in the film based on James M. Cain's novel. They kill her husband, the owner of a roadside diner, and suffer the consequences of nearly getting away with it. Tay Garnett directed.

10:30 (AMC) -- *Unfaithfully Yours* (1948) -- Not Preston Sturges at his best, but still amusing. Rex Harrison is a symphony conductor convinced of his wife's (Linda Darnell's) infidelity.

*11:30 am (TCM) -- *Mildred Pierce* (1945) -- Powerful melodrama, directed by Michael Curtiz, about a woman (Joan Crawford) who goes from rags to riches and her ungrateful daughter.

2:15 (AMC) -- *Love Letters* (1945) -- Joseph Cotten plays a soldier writing letters to his friend's fiancée, Jennifer Jones. Later he cures her amnesia. Directed by William Dieterle. Ayn Rand wrote the script!

10:00 pm (AMC) -- *Breaking Away* (1979) -- Intelligent story of group of 'townies' in Bloomington, Indiana, home of Indiana University. Directed by Peter Yates.

Thursday, July 9

*12:00 am (AMC) -- *I Was a Male War Bride* (1949) -- Cary Grant is a French officer marrying a WAC (Ann Sheridan) and encountering a series of dilemmas. The film is very funny, and it also provides director Howard Hawks an opportunity to examine sexual roles, and subvert them.

4:00 am (A&E) -- *Eternally Yours* (1939) -- David Niven is a magician, Loretta Young his wife who thinks he is straying from her, in Tay Garnett's quirky film. With Billie Burke, C. Aubrey Smith.

7:45 am (AMC) -- *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) -- Andy Griffith, in his film debut, as country boy made into a huge television star. With Lee Remick, also in her debut. Directed by Elia Kazan, script by Budd Schulberg (same team as *On the Waterfront*).

10:00 am (AMC) -- *Arch of Triumph* (1948) -- Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman falling for each other in wartime France, from the novel by Erich Maria Remarque. Directed by the stolid Lewis Milestone.

*10:00 am (TCM) -- *Woman of the Year* (1942) -- Katharine Hepburn as

a globe-trotting political commentator and Spencer Tracy as a sports reporter, in their first film together. Entertaining film, directed by George Stevens, marred by a conformist ending.

12:00 pm (AMC) -- *Canyon Passage* (1946) -- Stylish Jacques Tourneur directed this Western set in Oregon about settlers facing Indian attacks and the consequences of white man's greed. With Brian Donlevy, Susan Hayward and Dana Andrews.

1:35 pm (AMC) -- *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) -- Elia Kazan's version of the Tennessee Williams drama about the strong and the weak in a New Orleans tenement. Marlon Brando, Vivien Leigh, Kim Hunter and Karl Malden.

4:00 pm (TCM) -- *Pat and Mike* (1952) -- Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy play a leading female athlete and her manager, respectively, in this lightweight piece. Directed by George Cukor.

Friday, July 10

2:45 am (AMC) -- *The Blue Dahlia* (1946) -- Raymond Chandler scripted this melodrama which sees discharged serviceman Alan Ladd come home to his unfaithful wife. When she is murdered, he becomes a suspect. With Veronica Lake and William Bendix. George Marshall directed the film, and John Houseman produced.

9:00 am (AMC) -- *Christopher Strong* (1933) -- Katherine Hepburn stars as an aviatrix in love with a married man. A dated film, the work of one of Hollywood's first female directors, Dorothy Arzner.

9:30 am (TCM) -- *Queen Christina* (1933) -- Greta Garbo is memorable as the 17th century Swedish queen who gave up her throne for love. John Gilbert, one of her real-life amours, plays her aristocratic lover. Rouben Mamoulian directed.

10:30 am (AMC) -- *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) -- William Wyler's occasionally affecting drama about ex-servicemen in postwar America. With Fredric March, Dana Andrews, Myrna Loy, Virginia Mayo and Teresa Wright.

11:15 am (TCM) -- *Lolita* (1962) -- Relatively daring film version of the Vladimir Nabokov novel about a middle-aged English academic who develops a passion for a young girl. Stanley Kubrick directed James Mason, Sue Lyon, Shelley Winters and Peter Sellers.

12:00 pm (TNT) -- *No Time for Sergeants* (1958) -- Occasionally funny film about hillbilly Andy Griffith and his adventures in the US Air Force. Myron McCormick is memorable as his harried sergeant. With Nick Adams and Don Knotts. Directed by veteran Mervyn LeRoy.

1:30 pm (AMC) -- *Battle Cry* (1955) -- Raoul Walsh World War II melodrama, about the lives and loves of a group of Marines getting ready for battle, with Van Heflin, Aldo Ray, Tab Hunter and Dorothy Malone.

2:00 pm (TCM) -- *Seven Women* (1966) -- John Ford's last hurrah as a director, a melodrama about missionaries in China in the 1930s. With Anne Bancroft, Sue Lyon, Margaret Leighton, Flora Robson, Mildred Dunnock. Better than its reputation.

4:00 pm (TCM) -- *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954) -- A lively musical directed by Stanley Donen. When Howard Keel decides to find a wife, his brothers follow suit. With Jane Powell, Russ Tamblyn, Virginia Gibson. A Johnny Mercer-Gene DePaul score and Michael Kidd's choreography.

6:30 pm (AMC) -- *Springfield Rifle* (1952) -- Andre de Toth's film about a Union officer (Gary Cooper) who goes undercover to expose a Confederate horse-stealing ring. Dark and spare, with an exemplary performance by Paul Kelly as the chief villain.

9:00 pm (History) -- *Zulu* (1964) -- In 1879 British soldiers hold out against Zulu warriors. One's sympathies lie with the Zulus, but the massive battle scene is spectacular. Directed by Cy Enright.





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