

Some interesting films on US television, October 31-November 6

Marty Jonas (MJ), David Walsh (DW)
31 October 1998

Asterisk indicates a film of exceptional interest. All times are EDT.

Saturday, October 31

5:40 a.m. (AMC)-- *Cat People* (1942)--The first of the Val Lewton-produced horror films, directed with considerable elegance by Jacques Tourneur. Extraordinary moments of psychological terror. (DW)

6:00 a.m. (FXM)-- *The Gang's All Here* (1943)--Delightful Busby Berkeley film, with the usual lush and intricate musical sequences, but this time in rich Technicolor. Watch for the not-so-subliminal chorus line of bananas in Carmen Miranda's 'The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat' number. (MJ)

2:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Body Snatcher* (1945)--One of the Val Lewton-produced thrillers, with Henry Daniell as a doctor forced to deal with the nefarious Boris Karloff to obtain cadavers for his work. Based on the Robert Louis Stevenson short story; directed by dull Robert Wise. (DW)

2:35 p.m. (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 costar. (DW)

6:00 p.m. (Comedy)-- *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975)--A cult film that is actually quite good, in a campy way. The performance by Tim Curry is particularly outrageous. (MJ)

*8:00 p.m. (Encore)-- *The Shining* (1980)--Stanley Kubrick departed from Stephen King's bestselling thriller and came up with a film totally his own about slow madness in a snowbound hotel in the Rockies and the violent dissolution of a family. With Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall and Scatman Crothers. (MJ)

9:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943)--One of the Val Lewton-Jacques Tourneur collaborations, a stylish horror film about a nurse who turns to voodoo to cure a patient. Francis Dee and Tom Conway costarred. (DW)

10:30 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Seventh Victim* (1943)--Unusual film about a satanic cult in midtown Manhattan. One of the better Val Lewton productions. With Kim Hunter and Tom Conway. Directed by Mark Robson. (MJ)

10:45 p.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Gallipoli* (1981)--Peter Weir's antiwar film about Australian soldiers caught in a major battle of World War I. With a young Mel Gibson. (MJ)

12:00 a.m. (Comedy)-- *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975)--See 6:00 p.m.

1:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *Captain Horatio Hornblower* (1951)--Raoul Walsh directed this sea epic set in the Napoleonic wars, based on the C.S. Forester novels, in his vivid, muscular style. Some remarkable sequences. The normally dull Gregory Peck is well-cast as Hornblower. (DW)

2:15 a.m. (Encore)-- *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977)--One of the best bad movies ever made. Preposterous and misguided, it is nonetheless rich with images and vision. Nominally the sequel to the original *Exorcist*, this film bears a thin relationship to it. Starring Linda Blair, Max Von Sydow,

James Earl Jones and Richard Burton. Directed by John Boorman. (MJ)

4:05 a.m. (AMC)-- *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936)--Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur play the leading roles in one of Frank Capra's Depression parables. Longfellow Deeds (Cooper) has \$20 million and wants to give it away to those in need; Arthur is the hard-boiled reporter trying to figure him out. (DW)

5:50 a.m. (AMC)-- *The Old Dark House* (1932)--A group of travelers comes together in a sinister house. Cast includes Charles Laughton, Boris Karloff and Melvyn Douglas. Directed by James Whale. (DW)

5:05 a.m. (Showtime)-- *The Cotton Club* (1984)--Richard Gere stars in Francis Ford Coppola's sometimes successful attempt to capture the music and gangster violence of Harlem in the 1930s. The production was riddled with problems and the often rewritten screenplay is by novelists William Kennedy and Mario Puzo. (MJ)

Sunday, November 1

12:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965)--Norman Jewison directed this film about a big poker game in New Orleans. The performances of Steve McQueen, Tuesday Weld and Edward G. Robinson are the best things in the film. (DW)

*12:30 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962)--One of John Ford's best films. The story of a man whose fame rests on his having shot a notorious outlaw, though the shooting was actually done by someone else, embodies Ford's philosophy of myth and the West. Starring Jimmy Stewart and John Wayne, in fine performances. (MJ)

1:30 p.m. (HBO Plus)-- *Young Frankenstein* (1974)--One of Mel Brooks's funnier and more successful parodies, this time of the classic horror film by James Whale. Particularly effective because it uses many of the original sets. With Peter Boyle (as the monster) and Gene Wilder (as Dr. Frankenstein). (MJ)

2:30 p.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Frantic* (1988)--Roman Polanski's failed attempt to make a Hitchcock-type suspense film. With Harrison Ford. (MJ)

*3:00 p.m. (A&E)-- *The Getaway* (1972)--Steve McQueen as a convict who gets out of jail and immediately takes part in a bank robbery. With Ali McGraw. Directed by Sam Peckinpah, from the novel by Jim Thompson. (DW)

*6:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Thing* (1951)--Remarkable, tense science fiction film about an Arctic outpost threatened by a creature frozen in ice 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. (DW)

9:00 p.m. (HBO Plus)-- *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)--Steven Spielberg's special-effects-filled take on UFO sighting as a religious experience. Starring Richard Dreyfuss. (MJ)

12:20 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *The Godfather, Part III* (1990)--Not the best of the *Godfather* trilogy, but a cut above most current films. This time, the Corleone family, led by Michael (Al Pacino), gets involved with

the sinister machinations of the Vatican and international finance. With Andy Garcia, Diane Keaton and Sophia Coppola. Directed by Francis Coppola. (MJ)

10:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *Captain Horatio Hornblower* (1951)--See Saturday, at 10:00 a.m.

10:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Pirate* (1948)--One of Vincente Minnelli's classic MGM musicals, with his wife, Judy Garland. Gene Kelly is a circus clown she mistakes for a pirate. Cole Porter wrote the songs. (DW)

12:45 a.m. (TNT)-- *The Player* (1992)--Another film from the uneven output of prolific director Robert Altman. This one exposes the venality of Hollywood deal-making. A producer murders a writer and tries to cover it up. Though the film is brilliant in parts, it often descends into puerile humor. Starring Tim Robbins, along with many familiar filmland faces wandering by the camera. (MJ)

4:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *Captain Horatio Hornblower* (1951)--See Saturday, at 10:00 a.m.

*4:00 a.m. (Bravo)-- *The Beggar's Opera* (1953)--Laurence Olivier in something of an oddity, John Gay's eighteenth century work, brought to the screen by famed theater director Peter Brook (Marat/Sade, et al). Play that inspired Brecht/Weill's Threepenny Opera. (DW)

Monday, November 2

5:05 a.m. (Encore)-- *Gypsy* (1962)--Unfortunate film adaptation of the great Jule Styne-Stephen Sondheim musical. Rosalind Russell does not have the necessary fire in her belly for the role of Mama Rose. Worth seeing for the music, but look for the recent, far better, made-for-TV version with Bette Midler. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy. Also starring Natalie Wood and Karl Malden. (MJ)

*6:00 a.m. (HBO Plus)-- *Super Mario Brothers* (1993)--Underrated, highly imaginative film version of the popular video game, to which it bears only a slight resemblance. The two plumber brothers (Bob Hoskins and John Leguizamo) visit an alternate universe in which evolution took a different course, leaving dinosaurs as the dominant species. Dennis Hopper overacts wonderfully as the dinosaur dictator of this world. (MJ)

*6:40 a.m. (TMC)--*12 Angry Men* (1957)--Gripping film that takes place in only one room as 12 jurors struggle to reach a verdict. During the process each reveals his character. Adapted from one of the finest plays of the Golden Age of TV in the 1950s. Great cast headed by Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb and E.G. Marshall. Directed by Sidney Lumet. (MJ)

*7:15 a.m. (AMC)-- *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947)--Chaplin plays a Parisian Bluebeard who murders women for their money. His famous courtroom speech, in which he describes himself as a small fry among mass murderers, did not endear him with US authorities. With the unlikely Martha Raye. (DW)

9:30 a.m. (HBO Plus)-- *Frantic* (1988)--see Sunday, at 2:30 p.m.

*12:30 p.m. (Bravo)-- *The Beggar's Opera* (1953)--See Sunday, at 4:00 a.m.

4:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *I Walk Alone* (1948)--Interesting film noir, with Burt Lancaster as a man out of prison after 14 years, looking to settle some scores or at least make sense of things. With Elizabeth Scott, Kirk Douglas, Marc Lawrence and Wendell Corey. Byron Haskin directed. (DW)

*10:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Casablanca* (1942)--The Michael Curtiz classic about life and love in wartime Morocco, with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. (DW)

11:45 p.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Young Frankenstein* (1974)--See Sunday, at 1:00 p.m.

2:00 a.m. (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*. (DW)

I Walk Alone (1948)--See 4:00 p.m. (AMC)--

Tuesday, November 3

*6:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *Force of Evil* (1948)--The principal film effort of director Abraham Polonsky, soon to be blacklisted. A parable about American capitalism. John Garfield plays the lead, a crooked lawyer from the wrong side of the tracks, who faces a moral crisis over a Fourth of July holiday. With Thomas Gomez and Beatrice Pearson. (DW)

*9:30 a.m. (Sundance)-- *Lone Star* (1996)--John Sayles wrote and directed this well-done, politically astute film about the ethnic divisions in Texas. Unfortunately, it suffers from a contrived, hard-to-believe ending. With Chris Cooper and Elizabeth Pena. (MJ)

10:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949)--The last film made by famed musical extravaganza director Busby Berkeley. A relatively restrained work about a baseball team, with Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly as its stars, taken over by Esther Williams. (DW)

10:45 a.m. (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*). (DW)

*12:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *An American in Paris* (1951)--Classic MGM musical directed by Vincente Minnelli and built around its Gershwin score; Alan Jay Lerner wrote the screenplay. Gene Kelly is an artist torn between gamine Leslie Caron and wealthy Nina Foch. With the irrepressible Oscar Levant. (DW)

12:15 p.m. (HBO Family)-- *The Court Jester* (1956)--Classic Danny Kaye farce of confused identities in the Middle Ages. Lots of witty verbal humor. Directed by Melvin Frank and Norman Panama. (MJ)

2:30 p.m. (Showtime)-- *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* (1988)--A pioneer automaker (played by Jeff Bridges) and his company are destroyed by the giants of the auto industry. Director Francis Coppola obviously meant this as a parable about the independent artist versus the film industry, with Tucker standing in for Coppola. The whole thing seems oversimplified. Good performance by Martin Landau. (MJ)

8:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *People Will Talk* (1951)--Odd film, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, with Cary Grant as a philosophizing doctor, married to Jeanne Crain. He is accused of malpractice and has to defend himself. (DW)

9:00 p.m. (Sundance)-- *Lone Star* (1996)--See 9:30 a.m.

3:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *People Will Talk* (1951)--See 8:00 p.m.

3:50 a.m. (HBO Plus)-- *Face/Off* (1997)--Hong Kong action director John Woo lets out all the stops in this exciting, humorous, and (of course) preposterous film about a government agent (John Travolta) and his terrorist nemesis (Nicolas Cage) exchanging faces. (MJ)

Wednesday, November 4

7:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *Shall We Dance* (1937)--A Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers film, directed by Mark Sandrich. A tedious story line, but graced by such Gershwin melodies as 'Let's Call the Whole Thing Off,' 'They Can't Take That Away from Me' and 'They All Laughed.' (DW)

*11:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *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. (DW)

12:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Ninotchka* (1939)--Greta Garbo is an unlikely Soviet official in Paris, who gets seduced by Melvyn Douglas and the pleasures of capitalism, in Ernst Lubitsch's comedy. (DW)

2:45 p.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)--See Sunday, at 9:00 p.m.

4:00 p.m. (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. (DW)

4:15 p.m. (AMC)-- *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955)--Underrated jazz band in the 1920s and its fight against being taken over by the mob, as told by the trumpet player (Jack Webb, who also directed). Excellent jazz score. Director Webb made good use of the wide screen, so the film is best seen in letterbox format. With Peggy Lee (who won an Academy Award). (MJ)

6:00 p.m. (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. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *A New Leaf* (1971)--Elaine May's first directing effort in which she also costarred as a clumsy, introverted heiress wooed by Walter Matthau, a playboy who has run through his fortune. The final cut was taken out of May's hands and she disclaimed it. (DW)

1:20 a.m. (HBO)-- *The Firm* (1993)--Another film that takes a shot at the legal profession. In this paranoid potboiler, a young, ambitious lawyer finds out that his high-toned firm is totally owned by organized crime. An unremarkable film is saved by a remarkable performance by Gene Hackman (always dependable), playing a cynical partner. From the bestseller by John Grisham. (MJ)

2:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *A New Leaf* (1971)--See 8:00 a.m.

2:05 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *The Godfather, Part III* (1990)--See Sunday, at 12:20 a.m.

*3:00 (TMC)-- *Chinatown* (1974)--The best example of modern film noir. A convoluted tale of incest, corruption, and the fight over access to southern California water. Jack Nicholson plays the private detective. With Faye Dunaway and John Huston. Directed by Roman Polanski. (MJ)

Thursday, November 5

5:00 a.m. (Showtime)-- *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead* (1995)--Bizarre crime thriller about horrific revenge exacted by mob boss (played with extreme creepiness by Christopher Walken in a motorized wheelchair) upon local hoods. With Andy Garcia and Steve Buscemi. Directed by Gary Fleder. (MJ)

6:30 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Young Frankenstein* (1974)--See Sunday, at 1:00 p.m.

*9:35 a.m. (TMC)-- *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1943)--One of Preston Sturges's wonderful comic looks at American morals and manners. Eddie Bracken, Betty Hutton and William Demarest. (DW)

12:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *River of No Return* (1954)--See Wednesday, at 6:00 p.m.

8:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938)--Lively, eye-catching version of the Robin Hood story, with Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone and Claude Rains. Directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley, with an award-winning score by Wolfgang Korngold. (DW)

*9:00 p.m. (USA)-- *Red Rock West* (1993)--Modern attempt at film noir, only partially successful, with Nicholas Cage, Dennis Hopper, and the late (great) J.T. Walsh. Directed by John Dahl. (DW)

10:00 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *The Fifth Element* (1997)--Vacuous, silly science fiction film in which the future of the universe hinges on a Brooklyn cabdriver (played in proletarian style by Bruce Willis) finding something called 'the fifth element.' Worth seeing only for its imaginative settings and special effects. Typical scenery-chewing villainy by Gary Oldman. Directed by Luc Besson. (MJ)

12:30 a.m. (TCM)-- *Romeo and Juliet* (1968)--Franco Zeffirelli's lush version of the famous love tragedy. Overwrought and simplified, but entertaining. With 17-year-old Leonard Whiting and 15-year-old Olivia Hussey in the leading roles. (DW)

Friday, November 6

6:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *Rain* (1932)--W. Somerset Maugham story about the South Sea island tramp (Joan Crawford) and the preacher (Walter Huston)

film, who, ~~about~~ ^{about}st, is determined to save her soul. This film has been made numerous times. Lewis Milestone directed this version. (DW)

6:45 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *The Elephant Man* (1980)--David Lynch's moving film about society's cruelty toward John Merrick, the grossly deformed 'elephant man,' set in the context of the brutality of the Industrial Revolution in London at the turn of the century. John Hurt plays Merrick. With Anthony Hopkins, Anne Bancroft and John Gielgud. (MJ)

12:00 p.m. (FXM)-- *Five Fingers* (1952)--James Mason stars as a gentlemanly spy in World War II. Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. (MJ)

2:30 p.m. (HBO Plus)-- *Young Frankenstein* (1974)--See Sunday, at 1:00 p.m.

4:00 p.m. (Comedy)-- *Something Wild* (1986)--Melanie Griffith, in one her rare performances of substance, turns out to be trouble for Jeff Daniels, an uptight businessman. Ray Liotta is her psychotic boyfriend. Not a great film, but it has its moments. Directed by Jonathan Demme. (DW)

4:15 p.m. (HBO Plus)-- *The Godfather, Part III* (1990)--See Sunday, at 12:20 a.m.

9:00 p.m. (Family)-- *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983)--Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo star in this often hilarious low comedy about a quintessentially middle-class family's cross-country trip to the Wally Land theme park. The sequences with Imogene Coca are especially funny. Directed by Harold Ramis. (MJ)

*9:00 p.m. (Sci-Fi)-- *Dead Again* (1991)--Visually exciting film (with a debt to Hitchcock and Welles) set in Los Angeles is a murder mystery in which reincarnation is the key. Kenneth Branagh directed and plays two roles, as does Emma Thompson. (MJ)

10:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Thing* (1951)--See Sunday, at 6:00 p.m.

1:00 a.m. (Sci-Fi)-- *Dead Again* (1991)--See 9:00 p.m.

2:00 a.m. (FXM)-- *Five Fingers* (1952)--See 12:00 p.m.



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