

Some interesting films on US television, October 3-9

Marty Jonas (MJ) and David Walsh (DW)
3 October 1998

Note: starting this week we are including films on the premium cable channels.

Asterisk indicates a film of exceptional interest.

Saturday, October 3

8:00 am (TNT)--HOW THE WEST WAS WON (1963)--An 'epic' saga, with more weaknesses than strengths, about three generations of western pioneers. Henry Fonda, Carroll Baker, Gregory Peck, George Peppard and countless others star. Co-directed by John Ford, Henry Hathaway and George Marshall. (DW)

9:00 am (TCM)--SOMEBODY UP THERE LIKES ME (1956)--Robert Wise directed this competent biography of New York-born boxing champion Rocky Graziano. Paul Newman plays Graziano; with Pier Angeli, Everett Sloane and, in his film debut, Steve McQueen. (DW)

10:00 am (Cinemax)--THE SUN ALSO RISES (1957)--Star-filled adaptation of the Hemingway novel. Glossy and inadequate. Directed by Henry King. (MJ)

1:15 pm (TCM)--A FINE MADNESS (1966)--Sean Connery is a poet in this amusing, if idealized and sanitized look at non-conformism. Joanne Woodward, Jean Seberg, Colleen Dewhurst and Renee Taylor make things interesting. Directed by Irvin Kershner. (DW)

1:45 pm (TMC)--MARATHON MAN (1976)--Exciting, convoluted spy thriller about stolen jewels, Nazis hiding out in the US, and the CIA. Starring Dustin Hoffman and Roy Scheider. Laurence Olivier is particularly effective as a sadistic Mengele-type dentist. Directed by John Schlesinger. (MJ)

5:00 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. (DW)

8:00 pm (AMC)--AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER (1957)--Leo McCarey directed this remake of his own 1939 LOVE AFFAIR (Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer), this time with Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr. A shipboard romance has unexpected complications on land. Sentimental, but it has something. (DW)

10:00 pm (History)--MERRILL'S MARAUDERS (1962)--It's questionable how much this has to do with real history, but it's an engrossing war film directed by Samuel Fuller; Jeff Chandler as commander of US soldiers fighting Japanese in Burmese jungle. (DW)

12:00 am (AMC)--AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER (1957)--See 8:00 pm.

*1:20 am (Cinemax)--SERIAL MOM (1994)--Kathleen Turner kills to preserve traditional American values, like rewinding before you return your tape to the video store and not wearing white shoes after Labor Day. This hilarious satire was directed by John Waters. (MJ)

2:00 am (AMC)--RUGGLES OF RED GAP (1935)--Charles Laughton is an English butler won in a poker game by an uncouth American westerner. Amusing film directed by Leo McCarey. Laughton's recitation

of the Gettysburg Address is memorable. (DW)

2:00 am (History)--MERRILL'S MARAUDERS (1962)--See 10:00 pm.

Sunday, October 4

*5:00 am (AMC)--SHERLOCK JR. (1924)--A work of genius, made by Buster Keaton. A projectionist walks into a movie screen and becomes part of the action. Not to be missed. (DW)

6:00 am (AMC)--MONKEY BUSINESS (1952)--Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers in Howard Hawks' comedy about a chemistry professor who comes up with youth serum. Marilyn Monroe and Charles Coburn costar. (DW)

*6:35 am (TMC)--SERPICO (1973)--Al Pacino plays a loner taking on corruption in the New York Police Department. As always, director Sidney Lumet captures the texture of New York City. (MJ)

10:00 am (AMC)--AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER (1957)--See Saturday, at 8:00 pm.

11:00 am (History)--MERRILL'S MARAUDERS (1962)--See Saturday, at 10:00 pm.

*12:00 pm (TCM)--NORTH BY NORTHWEST (1959)--One of Alfred Hitchcock's wondrous late 1950s color pieces, with Cary Grant as an ad executive turned into a wanted and hunted man. (DW)

1:00 pm (A&E)--THE DROWNING POOL (1975)--Paul Newman, as private detective Harper, becomes entangled in a murder case. Joanne Woodward is his ex-wife. Based on the Ross McDonald novels. Directed by Stuart Rosenberg. (DW)

*2:30 pm (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. (DW)

3:00 pm (A&E)--BODY DOUBLE (1984)--Another homage to Hitchcock by the talented Brian De Palma--this time, however, unnecessarily violent, especially in the early scenes. (MJ)

5:50 pm (Encore)--TOPAZ (1969) --A lesser Hitchcock film involving US intelligence, French intelligence, Cuba, and the Soviet Union--muddled but still worth watching. It contains an unfortunate cartoonish sequence of Fidel Castro's stay at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem right after the revolution; he and his followers are presented as crude, ignorant buffoons. (MJ)

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. (DW)

*8:00 pm (FX)--THE STEPFATHER (1987)--Gruesome slasher film that is actually a clever attack on the values of the Reagan era. A psychotic killer goes from city to city, marrying widows with children. When they fail to meet his high standards of a perfect family, he slays them all and moves on. A sleeper that shouldn't be missed. Starring Terry O'Quinn as the stepfather. Directed by Joseph Ruben. (MJ)

9:00 pm (Bravo)--THE RULING CLASS (1972)--In a career of over-the-

top roles, this is Peter O'Toole at his most unrestrained. It includes bizarre musical numbers and long stretches where the character believes he is Jesus Christ. Not for everyone. Directed by Peter Medak. (MJ)

*9:00 pm (TMC)--THE GODFATHER (1972)--Francis Coppola's classic film about the Mafia as a form of capitalist endeavor. With Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, James Caan, and Robert Duvall. (MJ)

10:15 pm (Encore)--FULL METAL JACKET (1987)--Stanley Kubrick directed this film about the Vietnam war, which in its first half--Marine training at Parris Island--may be the most harrowing depiction of military life ever put on film (mainly due to the presence of ex-drill instructor Lee Ermey). However, as a coherent anti-war film, it does not equal Kubrick's own PATHS OF GLORY. (MJ)

12:35 am (AMC)--FRIENDLY PERSUASION (1956)--See 8:00 pm.

1:00 am (Bravo)--THE RULING CLASS (1972)--See 9:00 pm.

2:55 am (HBO Signature)--LOST IN AMERICA (1985)--Yuppies Albert Brooks (who also directed) and Julie Hagerty give up their good corporate jobs to tour the country in an RV, with disastrous (and funny) results. (MJ)

Monday, October 5

6:00 am (TCM)--JULIUS CAESAR (1953)--Joseph L. Mankiewicz's intelligently filmed version of Shakespeare's tragedy. James Mason as Brutus, John Gielgud as Cassius, Louis Calhern as Caesar, and Marlon Brando as Antony. (DW)

*8:00 am (HBO Plus)--THE PRODUCERS (1968)--Mel Brooks wrote and directed his funniest film, about two producers whose plan--to mount a deliberately awful Broadway musical that will flop and thereby bring them a tax bonanza--backfires. Starring Gene Wilder and the great, rarely seen Zero Mostel. (MJ)

11:05 am (TMC)--THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO (1985)--Woody Allen combines Keaton's SHERLOCK JR. and Fellini's THE WHITE SHEIK to come up with a satisfying tale about a drab housewife (Mia Farrow) romanced by a character (Jeff Daniels) who literally steps out of the movie screen. (MJ)

11:50 am (Encore)--TOPAZ (1969)--See Sunday, at 5:50 pm.

12:00 pm (TCM)--AH, WILDERNESS! (1935)--Based on the relatively lighthearted Eugene O'Neill play about turn-of-the-century small-town life. Directed by Clarence Brown, with Wallace Beery, Lionel Barrymore and Mickey Rooney. (DW)

12:30 pm (AMC)--ON THE RIVIERA (1951)--Danny Kaye does his one-of-a-kind humor and plays a dual role in this farce about mistaken identities. Directed by Walter Lang. (MJ)

2:00 pm (AMC)--THE PALM BEACH STORY (1942)--Preston Sturges' delirious film about a wife (Claudette Colbert) who leaves her husband (Joel McCrea) because of their financial woes. She heads for Palm Beach, where millionaires congregate. With Rudy Vallee, Mary Astor. (DW)

3:30 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. (DW)

4:00 pm (Sci-Fi)--THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1957)--A scary, well-done thriller from the legendary Hammer Films studios of England. Starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing. (MJ)

6:00 pm (TCM)--MY MAN GODFREY (1936)--A millionaire invites a tramp (William Powell) to be his butler in this Gregory LaCava screwball comedy. Carole Lombard is the millionaire's daughter. (DW)

6:00 pm (HBO Plus)--NETWORK (1976)--Heavyhanded satire on the TV industry. News anchorman (Peter Finch) has a psychotic episode on a national broadcast; his formless rage is taken up by the general populace. He is then regarded as a prophet. Sidney Lumet directed the Academy Award-winning script by Paddy Chayefsky. Starring Peter Finch as the mad newsman. (MJ)

*8:00 pm (HBO)--WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S 'ROMEO + JULIET' (1996)--Inventive and exciting modern-dress version of the play. Starring Claire Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio. (MJ)

*9:00 pm (TMC)--THE GODFATHER, PART II (1974)--One of the few sequels that measures up to its predecessor. The origins of the enterprising, murderous Corleone family. With Robert De Niro, Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, and Diane Keaton. Directed by Francis Coppola. (MJ)

2:45 am (Showtime)--BLUE VELVET (1986)--This is the quirky film that launched director David Lynch's career. It was then a short jump to his influential, idiosyncratic TV series 'Twin Peaks.' Then he flickered out like a shooting star. With Dennis Hopper. (MJ)

4:50 am (TMC)--THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO (1985) --See 11:00 am.

Tuesday, October 6

*5:00 am (AMC)--THE GLASS KEY (1942)--Stuart Heisler directed this version of the Dashiell Hammett novel about a hard-nosed operator (Alan Ladd) who tries to defend his boss (Brian Donlevy), a wardheeler, against murder charges. Veronica Lake is the object of Ladd's affections. (DW)

6:00 am (TCM)--THE PHILADELPHIA STORY (1940)--George Cukor directed this film adaptation of Philip Barry's stage play about a spoiled mainline socialite yearning for--well, what exactly? One critic calls it 'simply the breaking, reining, and saddling of an unruly thoroughbred,' i.e., Katharine Hepburn. (DW)

8:00 am (TCM)--BRINGING UP BABY (1938)--Classic screwball comedy, with Katharine Hepburn as bedazzling, eccentric heiress and Cary Grant as the sedate zoologist whose life she turns upside down. Howard Hawks directed this comedy of sex and morals. (DW)

*11:30 am (USA)--THE FABULOUS BAKER BOYS (1989)--Real-life brothers Jeff Bridges and Beau Bridges play musician brothers in this emotionally gripping story of sibling rivalry, With Michelle Pfeiffer. Directed by Steve Kloves. (MJ)

12:00 pm (TCM)--GASLIGHT (1944)--Charles Boyer tries to drive Ingrid Bergman mad in George Cukor's period thriller. (DW)

*12:30 pm (AMC)--HIS GIRL FRIDAY (1940)--Marvelous film version of Ben Hecht-Charles MacArthur's The Front Page, co-scripted by Hecht, with Cary Grant as a scheming editor and Rosalind Russell as his star reporter trying to get married to Ralph Bellamy. Directed by Howard Hawks. (DW)

2:15 pm (AMC)--NOTHING SACRED (1937)--Fredric March is a cynical reporter who sets out to make headlines with the story of a Vermont girl (Carole Lombard) supposedly dying from radium poisoning. Ben Hecht wrote the script and William Wellman directed. (DW)

4:00 pm (Comedy)--HISTORY OF THE WORLD--PART I (1981)--An example of Mel Brooks' scattershot humor. Many jokes are forced and lame, and most routines just limp along, but the Spanish Inquisition sequence, staged as a Busby Berkeley water ballet, is hilarious and worth staying for. (MJ)

*5:00 pm (HBO Signature)--FEARLESS (1993)--Jeff Bridges experiences the eerie effects of having survived a jetliner crash. Stunning performance by Rosie Perez. Directed by Peter Weir. (MJ)

8:00 pm (Comedy)--HISTORY OF THE WORLD--PART I (1981)--See 4:00 pm.

10:00 pm (TCM)--PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (1940)--Hollywood's version of the Jane Austen classic about five sisters in early 19th century England. Laurence Olivier is the standout as the proud Darcy; Greer Garson plays the 'prejudiced' Elizabeth Bennett. Robert Z. Leonard directed; Aldous Huxley helped write the screenplay. (DW)

12:00 am (TCM)--LITTLE WOMEN (1933)--George Cukor's film version of the Louisa May Alcott classic, perhaps the best of the lot. Four sisters growing up in Civil War America, with Katharine Hepburn and Joan Bennett. (DW)

12:25 am (HBO)--THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE (1997)--Satan (portrayed in an over-the-top performance by Al Pacino) runs a white-shoe law firm in New York City. Keanu Reeves, as an ambitious young lawyer, makes a Faustian bargain and suffers for it. A very funny horror film that trades on the public's distrust of the legal profession. (MJ)

12:30 am (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 Lizabeth Scott, Kirk Douglas, Marc Lawrence and Wendell Corey. Byron Haskin directed. (DW)

*2:00 am (USA)--THE FABULOUS BAKER BOYS (1989)--See 11:30 am.

Wednesday, October 7

8:00 am (TCM)--NATIONAL VELVET (1944)--Elizabeth Taylor is dazzling as teenager determined to enter her beloved horse in the Grand National Steeplechase. With Anne Revere, Donald Crisp and Mickey Rooney; directed by Clarence Brown. (DW)

*9:00 am (HBO Family)--SUPER MARIO BROTHERS (1993)--Underrated, highly imaginative film version of the popular video game, to which it bears only a slight resemblance. 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)

*3:00 pm (AMC)--THE THIRD MAN (1949)--Carol Reed directed this look at life in post-World War II Vienna, impoverished and corrupt, where the Cold War is beginning to take shape. Orson Welles plays the mysterious Harry Lime and, one suspects, contributed to the overall feel of the film. Score, played on the zither by Anton Karas, is justly famous. (DW)

3:15 pm (HBO Plus)--BREAKDOWN (1997)--Suspenseful thriller in which Kurt Russell's wife disappears during a cross-country trip. One of the last performances by the late, great character actor J.T. Walsh. (MJ)

6:00 pm (TCM)--NOTHING SACRED (1937)--See Tuesday, at 2:15 pm.

*7:00 pm (HBO Family)--SUPER MARIO BROTHERS (1993)-- see 9:00 am.

*8:00 pm (TCM)--SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (1952)--Is there anyone who hasn't seen this film by now? Anyway, it's a remarkable musical, with Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, Donald O'Connor, about the days of silent film. Stanley Donen and Kelly directed. (DW)

10:15 pm (HBO Family)--CONTACT (1997)--An intelligent, refreshingly non-xenophobic film on the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. Jody Foster plays the single-minded astrophysicist in this adaptation from the novel by the late Carl Sagan. Unfortunately, toward the end the film becomes mushy-minded and tries to make its peace with religion. (MJ)

2:10 am (HBO)--FACE/OFF (1997)--Hong Kong action director John Woo lets out all the stops in this exciting, humorous, and (of course) preposterous film about John Travolta and Nicholas Cage exchanging faces. (MJ)

*2:15 am (HBO Family)--WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S 'ROMEO + JULIET' (1996)--See Saturday, at 8:00 pm.

Thursday, October 8

*5:00 am (Showtime)--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)

*6:00 am (TCM)--CASABLANCA (1942)--The Michael Curtiz classic about life and love in wartime Morocco, with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. (DW)

10:00 am (History)--A WALK IN THE SUN (1945)--Earnest Lewis Milestone directed, from a screenplay by earnest Robert Rossen, this

study of American soldiers attacking a Nazi entrenchment in Italy. (DW)

*1:30 pm (HBO Plus)--FEARLESS (1993)--See Tuesday, at 5:00 pm.

3:00 pm (History)--A WALK IN THE SUN (1945)--See 10:00 am.

*3:15 pm (HBO)--SUPER MARIO BROTHERS (1993)-- See Wednesday, at 9:00 am.

6:00 pm (TCM)--MR. AND MRS. SMITH (1941)--Alfred Hitchcock's somewhat misguided effort at screwball comedy. Robert Montgomery and Carole Lombard discover their marriage is invalid; mayhem ensues. At least one marvelous scene in a restaurant, in which Montgomery, attempting to impress Lombard, from whom he is now estranged, pretends to speak into the ear of a woman seated next to him. (DW)

*8:00 pm (TCM)--HIS GIRL FRIDAY (1940)--See Tuesday, at 12:30 pm.

12:00 am (TCM)--THE AWFUL TRUTH (1937)--Classic screwball comedy. Cary Grant and Irene Dunne divorce, and plan to re-wed. Each does his or her best to interfere in the other's life. Ralph Bellamy is memorable as Dunne's would-be Oklahoman of a husband. Perhaps Leo McCarey's best film. (DW)

1:55 am (HBO Signature)--NETWORK (1976)--See Monday, at 6:00 pm.

2:05 am (Starz)--SIRENS (1994)--Beautifully photographed, inscrutable tale of sexuality and mythology in a modern, sylvan setting. With Hugh Grant. (MJ)

*3:40 am (Starz)--THE GRIFTERS (1990)--One of the best adaptations of Jim Thompson's gritty, bleak novels, this one about mother-and-son con artists, played by Angelica Huston and John Cusack. With Pat Hingle. Directed by Stephen Frears. (MJ)

Friday, October 9

*6:00 am (AMC)--THE BLUE ANGEL (1930)--Josef von Sternberg's classic, adapted from a novel by Heinrich Mann, about a middle-aged professor (Emil Jannings) who falls for a night-club singer (Marlene Dietrich). (DW)

10:00 am (AMC)--MINISTRY OF FEAR (1944)--Suspenseful, complicated Fritz Lang wartime thriller set in London. With Ray Milland trying to unravel an espionage plot. Dan Duryea also stars. (DW)

1:00 pm (Cinemax)--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. (DW)

*9:00 pm (Bravo)--BRAZIL (1985)--Brilliant, undisciplined satire by Terry Gilliam about a future dystopia that strangely resembles the Great Depression of the 1930s and other bleak periods of the recent past. Starring Jonathan Pryce and Michael Palin. (MJ)

10:00 pm (FXM)--NIGHT AND THE CITY (1992)--Fair remake of the superb 1950 film noir by Jules Dassin. In this version, directed by Irwin Winkler, Robert De Niro takes the Richard Widmark part, and the scene is shifted from London to New York City. The shady world of boxing promotion is well captured in the screenplay by Richard Price. (MJ)

11:00 pm (USA)--SEA OF LOVE (1989)--New York City cop searches for serial killer. Directed by Harold Becker from an excellent screenplay by novelist Richard Price, this was Al Pacino's comeback film after a long period of unwise role choices. (MJ)

*1:00 am (Bravo)--BRAZIL (1985)--See 9:00 pm.

*1:30 am (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)

3:00 am (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 co-starred. (DW)



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