

Some interesting films on US television, January 2-8

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

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

Saturday, January 2

8:00 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *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)

*11:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Rancho Notorious* (1952)--A Western like no other, except possibly *Johnny Guitar*. Arthur Kennedy gets work at a ranch, really a bandit hideout, run by Marlene Dietrich, to find his girlfriend's killer. With Mel Ferrer. (DW)

12:00 p.m. (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)

12:00 p.m. (TBS)-- *Carrie* (1976)--Director Brian De Palma can never entirely restrain himself, but this film is more interesting than most of his others. Sissy Spacek plays a high school misfit, equipped with telekinetic powers, who wreaks revenge on her tormentors. Piper Laurie, a fine actress, is memorable as her mother. (DW)

12:30 p.m. (TCM)-- *Marnie* (1964)--Tippie Hedren is a woman who can't stop stealing and Sean Connery is her employer, and admirer, who is trying to figure out why. The story traces her problem to psychological trauma. Alfred Hitchcock directed. (DW)

5:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Moulin Rouge* (1952)--John Huston's engrossing account of the life of nineteenth century French painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, with Jose Ferrer. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Mogambo* (1953)--A remake of Victor Fleming's *Red Dust* (1932), with Clark Gable playing the same role, Ava Gardner replacing Jean Harlow and Grace Kelly stepping in for Mary Astor. John Ford directed the film, about big-game hunting and a love triangle in Africa. (DW)

10:30 p.m. (HBO Family)-- *Contact* (1997)--An intelligent, refreshingly nonxenophobic film on the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. Jodie 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)

1:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932)--The original Tarzan, with Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O'Sullivan (Mia Farrow's mother). Directed by 'One-take' W.S. Van Dyke. (DW)

4:30 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *Frantic* (1988)--Roman Polanski's failed attempt to make a Hitchcock-type suspense film. With Harrison Ford. (MJ)

Sunday, January 3

6:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *The Major and the Minor* (1942)--Remarkable film by Billy Wilder, with Ginger Rogers, posing as a 12 year old to save train fare, becoming involved with Ray Milland. (DW)

10:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Cornered* (1945)--A postwar film noir with Dick Powell as a Canadian flyer tracking down Nazis in Argentina. Directed by future HUAC informer Edward Dmytryk. (DW)

Tootsie 10(3982)--Dustin Hoffman (TBS)--amusing

actor who can't find work as a man, but finds great success as the female star of a television soap opera. Sidney Pollack directed; with Jessica Lange, Teri Garr, Dabney Coleman. (DW)

*12:00 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *Badlands* (1973)--Terrence Malick's strangely idyllic recounting of a killing spree in the 1950s Midwestern US. Martin Sheen plays the main character, based on killer Charles Starkweather, and Sissy Spacek plays his teenaged girlfriend, who narrates the film with naive, romantic passages from her diary. Beautifully photographed. (MJ)

*3:00 p.m. (A&E)-- *Rio Bravo* (1959)--Classic Howard Hawks Western, with John Wayne as a sheriff, Angie Dickinson as a dance-hall girl, Dean Martin as a drunk and singer Ricky Nelson joining forces to thwart a jailbreak and other crimes. Much first-rate dialogue by Leigh Brackett and Jules Furthman. (DW)

6:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939)--Not a great, but a remarkable, sensual and disturbing film. Charles Laughton is Victor Hugo's Quasimodo, the deformed bell-ringer. Maureen O'Hara is unforgettable, in her US film debut, as Esmerelda. (DW)

*9:30 p.m. (Bravo)-- *Charley Varrick* (1973)--A modest, intelligent Don Siegel action picture, superior to most films of the 1970s. Varrick is a smalltime crook who robs money from the mob by accident. With Joe Don Baker, as a menacing hit man, Sheree North and John Vernon. (DW)

*1:30 a.m. (Bravo)-- *Charley Varrick* (1973)--See 9:30 p.m.

1:50 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *Night Falls on Manhattan* (1997)--Another of Sidney Lumet's tales of police corruption. They are usually incisive, with a good feel for urban realities, but this one, with Andy Garcia as a cop turned crusading DA, is a bit paint-by-numbers. (MJ)

Monday, January 4

*6:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *They Drive by Night* (1940)--Intense, vivid portrait of two truck driving brothers (Humphrey Bogart and George Raft) and their lives, and the woman they come up against, played passionately by Ida Lupino. With Ann Sheridan and Alan Hale. Directed by Raoul Walsh. (DW)

8:30 a.m. (HBO Plus)-- *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972)--Of interest because it was made when disaster films were peopled by real actors and not filled with ultra-expensive special effects, cartoonish characters, and pretty faces. The preposterous story has a luxury liner and its passengers being turned over by a gigantic ocean wave; the passengers must find their way out of the upside-down vessel. The good cast includes Gene Hackman, Roddy McDowell, Shelley Winters, Ernest Borgnine and Jack Albertson. Directed by Ronald Neame. (MJ)

10:00 a.m. (History)-- *Men in War* (1957)--The seriously underrated Anthony Mann directed this film about the Korean War. With a cast of stalwart character actors, including Robert Ryan, Aldo Ray and Vic Morrow (father of Jennifer Jason Leigh). (DW)

10:15 a.m. (Showtime)-- *A Place in the Sun* (1951)--A George Stevens film based on Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*. Not very faithful to the book, but valuable in its own right. Elizabeth Taylor is

extraordinary as Montgomery Clift's dream girl. (DW)

10:30 a.m. (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. (DW)

*11:30 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Barbarians at the Gate* (1993)--James Garner is outstanding in this saga of the 1980s, about the corporate piracy that led to the takeover of RJR Nabisco. Larry Gelbart wrote the witty screenplay for the made-for-cable film. (MJ)

*12:30 p.m. (Bravo)-- *Charley Varrick* (1973)--See Sunday at 9:30 p.m.

2:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *The Lost Weekend* (1945)--Ray Milland is a drunk, an unrelenting drunk, in Billy Wilder's bleak film. With Howard da Silva as a bartender, Jane Wyman and Frank Faylen. (DW)

3:00 p.m. (History)-- *Men in War* (1957)--See 10:00 a.m.

*8:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *High Sierra* (1941)--Wonderful, hard-boiled Raoul Walsh film about an ex-convict (Humphrey Bogart) and the two women in his life, a lame girl, Joan Leslie, whose treatment he pays for, and the tough, no-nonsense Ida Lupino. Final chase sequence in the mountains captures something essential about America. Written by John Huston and W.R. Burnett. (DW)

9:30 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *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)

1:00 a.m. (Disney)-- *Treasure Island* (1950)--Robert Newton's enjoyably overdone portrayal of Long John Silver ('Har, har, Jim Horkins!') is the highlight of this Disney version of the Robert Louis Stevenson classic. With Bobby Driscoll as Jim Hawkins. (MJ)

*2:45 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *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, John Huston. Directed by Roman Polanski. (MJ)

4:15 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *City of Industry* (1997)--Harvey Keitel gives an excellent performance (almost a reprise of his role in Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*) as an old-school criminal at the end of his career. Otherwise, this is another competently made film about a jewel heist and its aftermath, set in the rundown Los Angeles that is becoming familiar to moviegoers. Directed by John Irvin. (MJ)

5:00 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Little Women* (1933)--See Saturday at 8:00 a.m.

Tuesday, January 5

2:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Clash by Night* (1952)--Fritz Lang directed this melodrama that sees Barbara Stanwyck, as a woman bored with her fisherman husband Paul Douglas, suddenly taken with Douglas's cynical friend (Robert Ryan). Clifford Odets wrote the story. (DW)

*4:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *Touch of Evil* (1958)--One of Orson Welles's greatest films. He plays a corrupt police chief in a border town who plants evidence to convict the 'guilty'--in this instance a hapless young Mexican. A tale of moral, physical and political corruption that is rich in every way. With Charlton Heston, Janet Leigh, Joseph Calleia, and Akim Tamiroff, and uncredited cameos by Joseph Cotten, Marlene Dietrich and Mercedes McCambridge. (MJ)

6:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *Julia* (1977)--Vanessa Redgrave won an Oscar for her performance as the anti-fascist Julia based on Lillian Hellman's autobiographical work, *Pentimento*. With Jane Fonda, Jason Robards; directed by Fred Zinnemann. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *Heaven Can Wait* (1943)--Don Ameche stars as a dead man seeking entry to hell, who recounts in flash back what he thinks has been a life full of sin. With Gene Tierney and Charles Coburn. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. (DW)

A *Fistful of Dollars*. (1964)--In(TNT)-- first

Leone's Italian Westerns Clint Eastwood, in the role that made him a star, plays the Man With No Name. The story, a remake of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, involves warring families in a border town. Ennio Morricone's score is striking. With Gian Maria Volonte and Marianne Koch. (DW)

12:15 a.m. (TNT)-- *High Plains Drifter* (1973)--Clint Eastwood directed (and stars in) this excellent Spaghetti Western tale of revenge, into which he poured everything he learned from his mentors Sergio Leone and Don Siegel. (MJ)

2:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *Julia* (1977)--See 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 6

*8:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *Modern Times* (1936)--Chaplin on the machine age. Consistently funny and perceptive, with Paulette Goddard. Chaplin's last silent film. (DW)

12:00 p.m. (HBO)-- *Contact* (1997)--See Saturday at 10:30 p.m.

12:30 p.m. (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 p.m. (AMC)-- *Bright Leaf* (1950)--Michael Curtiz directed this interesting saga about the tobacco industry in the nineteenth century. Gary Cooper, seeking revenge on old enemies and old lovers, builds a cigarette empire. With Lauren Bacall, Patricia Neal, Jack Carson. (DW)

*5:00 p.m. (HBO Plus)-- *Chinatown* (1974)--See Monday at 2:45 a.m.

*6:30 p.m. (AMC)-- *The Gunfighter* (1950)--Gregory Peck is a gunslinger trying to live down his past. Henry King directed, from a script by William Bowers and Andre de Toth. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (HBO)-- *Contact* (1997)--See Saturday at 10:30 p.m.

8:05 p.m. (TBS)-- *The Dirty Dozen* (1967)--Twelve convicts, serving life sentences, are recruited for a suicidal commando raid in Robert Aldrich's film. (DW)

*12:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *The Gunfighter* (1950)--See 6:30 p.m.

2:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Side Street* (1949)--Anthony Mann directed this story about a young man driven to theft, whose troubles multiply. The same stars as Nicholas Ray's *They Live By Night* (1949): Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell. (DW)

4:05 a.m. (HBO Family)-- *Gattaca* (1997)--In this future capitalist society, your place in the productive process is determined by your genetic makeup--which is mapped at birth and stays with you as your main ID for life. One man rebels against the system. Andrew Niccol wrote and directed this intelligent film, highly derivative of the fiction of Philip K. Dick. (MJ)

Thursday, January 7

*11:30 a.m. (Showtime)-- *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)

*11:45 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Chinatown* (1974)--See Monday at 2:45 a.m.

6:15 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *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)

8:00 p.m. (TNT)-- *Wall Street* (1987)--Oliver Stone directed this film about Wall Street sharks and their comeuppance with his usual subtlety and restraint. With Charlie Sheen, Martin Sheen and Michael Douglas. (DW)

9:00 p.m. (USA)-- *Casino* (1995) [Part 1]--Martin Scorsese directed this story about gambling and thugs in Las Vegas in the 1970s. The first 10 minutes are spectacular. The drama never really gets going, in the

director's typical fashion. With Robert De Niro, Sharon Stone, Joe Pesci, James Woods. (DW)

*10:00 p.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Rosemary's Baby* (1968)--John Cassavetes is excellent as ambitious actor who involves himself in diabolical activities to advance his career. Mia Farrow is his unsuspecting wife. Roman Polanski wrote the screenplay, based on the Ira Levin potboiler, and directed. (DW)

10:45 p.m. (TNT)-- *Wall Street* (1987)--See 8:00 p.m.

11:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939)--The story of American colonials in upstate New York during the Revolutionary War. With Henry Fonda and Claudette Colbert, in one of John Ford's more modest works. (DW)

*12:20 a.m. (HBO Signature)-- *Chinatown* (1974)--See Monday at 2:45 a.m.

5:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939)--See 11:00 p.m.

Friday, January 8

*6:15 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *All About Eve* (1950)--Joseph Mankiewicz wrote and directed this classic about backstabbing in the world of the theater. The dialogue is nonstop witty and incisive. Memorable performances by George Sanders and Bette Davis. (MJ)

7:30 a.m. (HBO Plus)-- *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)

10:30 a.m. (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)

9:00 p.m. (USA)-- *Casino* (1995) [Part 2]--See Thursday at 9:00 p.m.

*10:05 p.m. (Encore)-- *Taxi Driver* (1976)--Paul Schrader wrote and Martin Scorsese directed this bleak, obsessive classic that looks at the underside of New York City. Starring Robert De Niro, Jody Foster, and Harvey Keitel. Great score by Bernard Hermann. (MJ)

10:10 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *Breakdown* (1997)--Suspenseful thriller in which the wife of a meek computer programmer (played by Kurt Russell) disappears during a cross-country trip. One of the last performances by character actor J.T. Walsh. (MJ)

*11:00 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)



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