

Some interesting films on US television, February 13-19

Marty Jonas (MJ), David Walsh (DW)
13 February 1999

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

A&E=Arts & Entertainment, AMC=American Movie Classics, FXM=Fox Movie Channel, HBOF=HBO Family, HBOP=HBO Plus, HBOS=HBO Signature, IFC=Independent Film Channel, TCM=Turner Classic Movies, TMC=The Movie Channel, TNT=Turner Network Television

Saturday, February 13

*6:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *The Narrow Margin* (1952)--A policeman has to transport a gangster's widow to a trial to testify. They have to avoid various attempts to kill them. With Charles McGraw and Marie Windsor, both B-movie standouts. Directed by Richard Fleischer. (DW)

9:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *The Lusty Men* (1952)--A film about rodeo cowboys, with Robert Mitchum as the ex-champion who becomes a mentor to newcomer Arthur Kennedy. Mitchum then falls for Kennedy's wife, Susan Hayward. Full of moral ambiguities, directed by Nicholas Ray. (DW)

*11:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Fort Apache* (1948)--One of John Ford's classic cavalry trilogy. Henry Fonda is an unbending officer who can't get along with his own men, or the neighboring Apaches. With John Wayne and Shirley Temple. (DW)

*12:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962)--A Korean War hero (Laurence Harvey) returns to the US, brainwashed by his Chinese captors and programmed to kill a presidential candidate. Ostensibly a Cold War conspiracy thriller, this film turns around and becomes an intense satirical attack on right-wing politics. Angela Lansbury gives a superb performance as the war hero's villainous mom, as does James Gregory, playing a politician based on Senator Joe McCarthy. The baroque direction is by John Frankenheimer, from the novel by Richard Condon. With Frank Sinatra and Janet Leigh. (MJ)

*2:05 p.m. (TMC)-- *The Boys in Company C* (1978)--One of the better realistic films about the Vietnam War. Avoids the cliches of most other war films. With James Whitmore, Jr. and Stan Shaw. Directed by Sidney J. Furie. (MJ)

5:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Dial M for Murder* (1954)--A lesser film by Alfred Hitchcock, with Ray Milland as a husband who plots his wife's death. Grace Kelly is the wife who, when the plot fails, falls under suspicion of murder. With Bob Cummings. (DW)

9:35 p.m. (Encore)-- *Apocalypse Now* (1979)--Overrated and overblown Vietnam war film by Francis Ford Coppola, based loosely on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Special agent Martin Sheen is sent into Cambodia to find maverick US officer, played by Marlon Brando, and dispatch him. The film perhaps says more about Coppola and his circle than it does about Vietnam. Worth viewing. (DW)

9:40 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *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)

10:00 p.m. (History)-- *Merrill's Marauders* (1962)--It's questionable how much this has to do with real history, but engrossing war film

directed by Samuel Fuller; Jeff Chandler as commander of US soldiers fighting Japanese in Burmese jungle. (DW)

10:25 p.m. (TBS)-- *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982)--A lightweight film, but some lively performances by a remarkable group of young actors: Sean Penn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Robert Romanus, Phoebe Cates, Forest Whitaker, Anthony Edwards, Nicholas Cage. (DW)

2:00 a.m. (History)-- *Merrill's Marauders* (1962)--See 10:00 p.m.

*4:50 a.m. (TMC)-- *The Boys in Company C* (1978)--See 2:05 p.m.

Sunday, February 14

6:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Ben-Hur* (1959)--Turgid retelling of Lew Wallace's "epic." Charlton Heston stars as the Jew Ben-Hur and Stephen Boyd as Messala, who remains loyal to Rome. Famous for its chariot-race. Directed by William Wyler. (DW)

11:00 a.m. (History)-- *Merrill's Marauders* (1962)--See Saturday at 10:00 p.m.

12:00 p.m. (Showtime)-- *Saturday Night Fever* (1977)--A hardware store salesman in Brooklyn becomes a champion disco dancer at night. This is the film that launched John Travolta's film career, and he is a marvel as a dancer. Music by the Bee Gees. Directed by John Badham. (MJ)

12:00 p.m. (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)

2:00 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *A Star Is Born* (1954)--Judy Garland is the star on the way up and James Mason the unfortunate drunk on the way down, in George Cukor's version of the tragic tale. A remake of the 1937 film made by William Wellman, with Fredric March and Janet Gaynor. (DW)

*3:30 p.m. (A&E)-- *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)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Father of the Bride* (1950)--Spencer Tracy is the father and Elizabeth Taylor the bride in Vincente Minnelli's look at the American marriage ritual. Amusing, and sometimes pointed. With Joan Bennett. (DW)

9:00 p.m. (Bravo)-- *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)

*9:50 p.m. (Starz)-- *Wag the Dog* (1997)--Very timely. A US president hires a PR team to distract attention from a sex scandal by fabricating a war with Albania. Barry Levinson's film has bite, and the screenplay by David Mamet is sinister and funny. Great ensemble acting by Robert De Niro, Dustin Hoffman, Denis Leary and Anne Heche. (MJ)

10:10 p.m. (Encore)-- *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996)--Woody Allen

at his most romantic and artificial. In this, Allen's only musical, people break into song (not unnaturally) and seem to have a genuinely good time, in a cliquish kind of way. The locales are Venice, Paris, and (of course) the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and very quickly the upper-crust, smug liberal values of the jet-set characters become insufferable. With Edward Norton, Goldie Hawn, and Alan Alda. (MJ)

3:45 a.m. (Showtime)-- *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)

Monday, February 15

6:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *National Velvet* (1944)--Elizabeth Taylor is dazzling as a 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)

*6:30 a.m. (HBOS)-- *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)

8:15 a.m. (TCM)-- *Now, Voyager* (1942)--A well-done melodrama with a remarkable cast. Bette Davis is an isolated, neurotic woman helped by psychiatrist Claude Rains, and falling in love with Paul Henreid. Directed by Irving Rapper. (DW)

*8:30 a.m. (HBOS)-- *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)--Billy Wilder's classic about illusions hanging on, and the old Hollywood versus the new. A once-glamorous star of the silent screen living in a gothic Hollywood mansion takes a younger, cynical screenwriter as a lover. One of the great films. With Gloria Swanson, William Holden, Eric von Stroheim, and Buster Keaton. (MJ)

10:00 a.m. (FXM)-- *The Razor's Edge* (1946)--An overlong film, with some embarrassingly silly moments, but also some extraordinarily believable ones. With Tyrone Power, looking for the meaning of life, Gene Tierney, Anne Baxter. Directed by Edmund Goulding, from the novel by Somerset Maugham. (DW)

*10:15 a.m. (TCM)-- *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)--John Huston classic, based on the Dashiell Hammett novel, with Humphrey Bogart as private detective Sam Spade. Sydney Greenstreet, Mary Astor and Peter Lorre brilliantly co-star. (DW)

11:00 a.m. (Showtime)-- *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* (1988)--The pioneer auto-maker (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)

12:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *The Buccaneer* (1938)--Cecil B. DeMille presided over this film about Jean LaFitte, the pirate who aided the American side in the War of 1812. With Fredric March, Franciska Gaal, Margot Grahame and Akim Tamiroff. (DW)

*12:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Big Sleep* (1945)--Howard Hawks's version of the Raymond Chandler novel, with a script again by Faulkner. Detective Philip Marlowe (Bogart) becomes involved with wealthy girl (Bacall) and her spoiled, irresponsible sister. Don't bother to figure out who did the murders, the director reportedly wasn't certain. (DW)

12:30 p.m. (Bravo)-- *Julia* (1977)--See Sunday at 9:00 p.m.

2:15 p.m. (AMC)-- *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939)--John Ford's account of Abraham Lincoln's early years as a frontier lawyer, starring Henry Fonda. (DW)

*2:45 p.m. (TCM)-- *The Big Steal* (1949)--Crime drama, in which Robert Mitchum is chasing a payroll robber and is, in turn, chased by William Bendix. Jane Greer provides the love interest. Directed by Don Siegel. (DW)

North *3:15; Northwest (1990)ae

Hitchcock's wondrous late 1950s color pieces, with Cary Grant as an ad executive turned into a wanted and hunted man. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (Bravo)-- *Breaking Away* (1979)--Intelligent story of group of "townies" in Bloomington, Indiana, home of Indiana University. Directed by Peter Yates. (DW)

*1:25 a.m. (HBOS)-- *North by Northwest* (1959)--See 3:15 p.m.

2:00 a.m. (FXM)-- *The Razor's Edge* (1946)--See 10:00 a.m.

*4:30 a.m. (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)

4:50 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *Against All Odds* (1984)--Decent remake of the 1947 film noir *Out of the Past*. Good performances by Jeff Bridges, Rachel Ward and James Woods. Directed by Taylor Hackford. (MJ)

Tuesday, February 16

10:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *The World in His Arms* (1952)--Gregory Peck is an American ship's captain wooing an aristocratic Russian woman (Ann Blyth) in San Francisco in the 1850s. Raoul Walsh directed with his customary vigor. (DW)

12:45 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)

2:00 p.m. (HBOS)-- *Marathon Man* (1976)--See Sunday at 3:45 a.m.

4:00 p.m. (Bravo)-- *Breaking Away* (1979)--See Monday at 8:00 p.m.

8:00 p.m. (FXM)-- *Hombre* (1967)--Martin Ritt directed, from an Elmore Leonard story, this film about Indian-raised Paul Newman trying to survive in Arizona in the 1880s. With Diane Cilento, Fredric March, Richard Boone. (DW)

*9:00 p.m. (Showtime)-- *Bound* (1996)--A fine first film by brothers Andy and Larry Wachowski. Cinematically, it's a bit of a show-off, but it all works, re-mining familiar film noir elements. A mob money launderer's mistress and her ex-con lesbian lover conspire to run off with the mobster's loot. Played broadly, and often with humor, by Jennifer Tilly, Gina Gershon and Joe Pantoliano. (MJ)

10:00 p.m. (HBOS)-- *Marathon Man* (1976)--See Sunday at 3:45 a.m.

10:30 p.m. (TCM)-- *D.O.A.* (1950)--Rudolph Matá© directed this film noir about a man (Edmond O'Brien) who discovers he has been poisoned and attempts to find out why and who has done it in the time he has left. With Pamela Britton, Luther Adler. (DW)

*11:00 p.m. (Bravo)-- *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)--John Ford's version of the John Steinbeck classic novel, about the Joad family, driven from their home in the 1930s "Dust Bowl." Henry Fonda plays Tom Joad. With Jane Darwell, John Carradine. (DW)

Wednesday, February 17

*7:15 a.m. (TCM)-- *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)--See Monday at 10:15 a.m.

9:15 a.m. (Starz)-- *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997)--Mike Myers plays a double role in this consistently amusing send-up of James Bond movies and the manners and styles of the 1970s. (MJ)

*10:15 a.m. (TCM)-- *Murder, My Sweet* (1944)--Worthy, hardboiled adaptation of Raymond Chandler's *Farewell My Lovely*, with Dick Powell as Philip Marlowe. Directed by future HUAC informer Edward Dmytryk. (DW)

12:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Caged* (1950)--In the words of one critic, a "minor classic of repression." A prison drama, with Eleanor Parker, Agnes Moorehead and Hope Emerson. Directed by John Cromwell. (DW)

*2:30 p.m. (AMC)-- *My Darling Clementine* (1946)--John Ford directed this Western about the lead-up to the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Henry

Fonda is Wyatt Earp, and Victor Mature is Doc Holliday. With Ward Bond, Tim Holt, Walter Brennan. (DW)

5:55 p.m. (Starz)-- *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997)--See 9:15 a.m.

8:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *From Here to Eternity* (1953)--Fred Zinnemann directed this generally overrated work, based on the James Jones novel, about life on an army post in Hawaii on the eve of Pearl Harbor. With Burt Lancaster, Montgomery Clift, Deborah Kerr, Donna Reed, Frank Sinatra. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (Comedy)-- *Married to the Mob* (1988)--Michelle Pfeiffer is the widow of a Mafia hit man, trying to change her life. Dean Stockwell is the crime boss who lusts for her. With Matthew Modine. A semi-amusing, semi-conformist film, directed by Jonathan Demme. (DW)

10:00 p.m. (FXM)-- *All That Jazz* (1979)--Choreographer/director Bob Fosse's overwrought autobiographical film about his mental and physical crackup. Not strictly speaking a musical, but it is filled with musical numbers--including a bizarre one occurring during the main character's open-heart surgery. With Roy Scheider and Ben Vereen. (MJ)

10:15 p.m. (TCM)-- *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935)--Ronald Colman provides some outstanding moments in this film version of the Charles Dickens novel about the French Reign of Terror. An extravagant MGM production, directed by Jack Conway. With Edna May Oliver, Basil Rathbone and Reginald Owen. (DW)

*12:30 a.m. (TCM)-- *The Killing* (1956)--An early effort by Stanley Kubrick, about an elaborate racetrack heist. With Sterling Hayden, Marie Windsor and Elisha Cook. (DW)

*2:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962)--One of the prime examples of Britain's "neo-realist" cinema of the 1960s, directed by Tony Richardson. The story of a young man (a remarkable Tom Courtenay) in a reform school, who takes up running. An uneven work, but it has stirring moments. With Michael Redgrave. (DW)

*2:50 a.m. (HBOS)-- *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)--See Monday at 8:30 a.m.

Thursday, February 18

6:45 a.m. (Showtime)-- *Spellbound* (1945)--Psychiatrist Ingrid Bergman attempts to unravel patient Gregory Peck's dilemmas. Has he committed a murder? Alfred Hitchcock directed. (DW)

8:30 a.m. (HBOS)-- *A Place in the Sun* (1951)--See Monday at 6:30 a.m.

8:45 a.m. (Showtime)-- *Rebecca* (1940)--Alfred Hitchcock's first US-made film, with Joan Fontaine as the second wife of nobleman Laurence Olivier. The first wife's presence hovers over the place. Judith Anderson is memorable as the sinister housekeeper, loyal to the first wife. (DW)

9:00 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *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)

12:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Deep Valley* (1947)--A convict from a prison camp barges in on an isolated farm. With Ida Lupino, Chester Morris and Dane Clark--an excellent cast for a modest, well-made film noir. Directed by Jean Negulesco. (DW)

4:00 p.m. (Comedy)-- *Married to the Mob* (1988)--See Wednesday at 8:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. (AMC)-- *Home of the Brave* (1949)--Mark Robson directed this well-meaning film about black GI suffering abuse from fellow US soldiers in the Pacific during World War II. One of the first to deal with racial discrimination. (DW)

10:05 p.m. (Cinemax)-- *John Grisham's the Rainmaker* (1997)--Francis Coppola took a John Grisham potboiler and made it into an engrossing but pedestrian film. Nonetheless, it is rich in characters, with particularly good work by Danny DeVito and Mickey Rourke (in a surprising stand-out

performance as an ultra-sleazy lawyer) Also starring Matt Damon, John Voight, and Claire Danes. (MJ)

12:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *Home of the Brave* (1949)--See 6:30 p.m.

*2:45 a.m. (HBO)-- *The Ice Storm* (1997)--Excellent film by Ang Lee of aimlessness and disillusionment in the 1970s. As the middle class disintegrates in suburbia, we see the disintegration of the White House playing out in the background as the Watergate crisis runs its course. The fine cast includes Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Joan Allen, Jamey Sheridan and Christina Ricci. (MJ)

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

Friday, February 19

*9:15 a.m. (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 scheming editor and Rosalind Russell as his star reporter trying to get married to an overmatched Ralph Bellamy. Directed by Howard Hawks. (DW)

*11:00 a.m. (Showtime)-- *Hamlet* (1996)--Kenneth Branagh starred in and directed this long, unabridged film of Shakespeare's play. It is exciting and lucid, and it dispenses with the oedipal nonsense of other recent versions. Branagh is strong in the part, and Derek Jacobi is the definitive Claudius. Also starring Julie Christie and Kate Winslet. (MJ)

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

*12:35 p.m. (TMC)-- *The Boys in Company C* (1978)--See Saturday at 2:05 p.m.

2:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945)--Extraordinary melodrama by John Stahl, about a woman (Gene Tierney) consumed by jealousy and possessiveness, to the point of madness and murder. With Cornel Wilde and Vincent Price. (DW)

4:00 p.m. (FXM)-- *At Long Last Love* (1975)--Burt Reynolds and Cybill Shepherd can neither sing nor dance--they are definitely not Astaire and Rogers. Still, it's fun to watch them mangle Cole Porter's beautiful music and lyrics. Peter Bogdanovich's glitzy, expensive film proves that a warm affection for 1930s film musicals is not enough. One of the great bombs. With Madeline Kahn (often funny, despite her material) and John Hillerman. (MJ)

*6:00 p.m. (Encore)-- *The Conversation* (1974)--A security specialist involved in bugging and other surveillance begins to have qualms about his profession. Francis Coppola's detailed, disturbing look at the milieu and practices of the security business is one of his best films. Starring Gene Hackman and the late John Cazale. (MJ)

*6:45 p.m. (HBOS)-- *North by Northwest* (1959)--See Monday at 3:15 p.m.

8:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Now, Voyager* (1942)--See Monday at 8:15 a.m.

8:05 p.m. (TBS)-- *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. (DW)

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

*4:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *The 400 Blows* (1959)--François Truffaut's semi-autobiographical film about a young boy in Paris suffering the slings and arrows of everyday, lower middle-class life. With Jean-Pierre L aud. (DW)

Video Pick of the Week--Find It in Your Video Store:

The Milky Way (1969)--The past and the present are interwoven in Luis Bu uel's funny, often surrealistic film of two tramps making a pilgrimage to a holy place in Spain. Throughout, the Catholic Church is held up to ridicule: for example, two noblemen fight a duel over the question of free

will, and a mad priest and a policeman argue whether God is literally or symbolically present in the host. (MJ)



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact