

# Some interesting films on US television, April 10-April 16

Marty Jonas (MJ), David Walsh (DW)  
10 April 1999

## Video pick of the week--find it in your video store

*Such Good Friends* (1971)--A woman (Dyan Cannon), presumably happily married, discovers her husband's address book while he is in the hospital. He has been anything but faithful. Marvelous New Yorkish black comedy written by Elaine May and directed by Otto Preminger. With Louise Lasser, William Redfield, Sam Levene, and Burgess Meredith. (MJ)

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, April 10

5:20 a.m. (TMC)-- *Touch* (1987)--Interesting but disappointing film written and directed by Paul Schrader about faith healing in the South. With Christopher Walken and Bridget Fonda. (MJ)

11:50 a.m. (HBOS)-- *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)

12:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)--Film adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's anti-war novel about German youths' experiences as soldiers in World War I. Some memorable sequences, although the overall effect is not as strong as one would like. Directed by Lewis Milestone, with Lew Ayres. (DW)

\*1:30 p.m. (TMC)-- *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)

1:30 p.m. (Bravo)-- *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994)--Louis Malle directed this film, his last, about a group of actors rehearsing an adaptation of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. Andre Gregory is the director; writer Wallace Shawn plays the lead character. (DW)

\*5:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *White Heat* (1949)--Not-to-be-missed crime drama about criminal with a serious mother complex. James Cagney is unforgettable in Raoul Walsh's film. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (IFC)-- *Gas Food Lodging* (1992)--Amiable film about a waitress (Brooke Adams) at a diner in Laramie, New Mexico, trying to get by, with two daughters. Directed by Allison Anders; with James Brolin, Ione Skye, Fairuza Balk. (DW)

\*8:00 p.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)

10:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *The MacGuffin* (1984)--A set in a medieval monastery (the MacGuffin is a lost book by Aristotle). Though lacking much of the rich detail of Umberto Eco's fine novel, the film stands well on its own. Sean Connery is perfect as the monk-detective, John of Baskerville. With Christian Slater, F. Murray Abraham and William Hickey. Directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud. (MJ)

\*10:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Lady in the Lake* (1946)--Robert Montgomery directed himself as Raymond Chandler's private detective Philip Marlowe. The camera, as a novelty, takes the first-person (Montgomery's) point of view. (DW)

10:30 p.m. (HBOS)-- *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 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 costar. (DW)

1:45 a.m. (IFC)-- *Gas Food Lodging* (1992)--See 8:00 p.m.

1:50 a.m. (Starz)-- *Wag the Dog* (1997)--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)

2:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *The Late Show* (1977)--An amusing twist on the private eye film, with Art Carney as an aging detective, who has to take a bus to get around, hooked up with Lily Tomlin as a slightly loopy client. Robert Benton directed, with Bill Macy. (DW)

## Sunday, April 11

\*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)

9:15 a.m. (Encore)-- *Duel in the Sun* (1946)--King Vidor's intense Western psychodrama. Jennifer Jones, a "half-breed," is caught between two brothers (Gregory Peck and Joseph Cotten). With Lionel Barrymore, Lillian Gish, Herbert Marshall, Charles Bickford and Walter Huston. (DW)

\*4:00 p.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)

\*5:45 p.m. (Encore)-- *Last Action Hero* (1993)--Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle that proves to be a delight. A boy goes to a movie theater and meets his idol--an action hero--who steps out of the screen and takes him back in. A good action film that spoofs the genre and plays with the

tension between movies and reality. It also includes hilarious send-ups of Olivier's *Hamlet* and Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*. Directed by John McTiernan. (MJ)

\*6:00 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)

\*1:30 a.m. (HBO)-- *Alien* (1979)--A bloodthirsty alien creature pursues the crew members of a merchant space vessel. Beautifully done, one of the most frightening films ever made. Sigourney Weaver plays Ripley, one of the first smart and clever heroines in modern film. With Yaphet Kotto, Tom Skerritt, Ian Holm and John Hurt. (MJ)

\*3:00 a.m. (Sci-Fi)-- *Dead Ringers* (1988)--David Cronenberg's remarkable film about twin gynecologists, played by Jeremy Irons, and their descent into madness. With Genevieve Bujold as an actress who comes between them. (DW)

3:05 a.m. (Cinemax)-- *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)

### **Monday, April 12**

\*6:00 a.m. (FXM)-- *The Gang's All Here* (1943)--See Sunday at 4:00 p.m.

7:45 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)

8:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *Stage Door* (1937)--Amusing, lively comedy-drama set in a theatrical boarding-house. Extraordinary cast includes Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, Lucille Ball, Eve Arden, Franklin Pangborn and Jack Carson. Directed by Gregory La Cava. (DW)

8:15 a.m. (HBOS)-- *Tommy* (1975)--The Who's rock opera done with dazzling, overheated images that assault and often insult your eyes. Often hard to take, but for once director Ken Russell has found a work for which his often annoying style is suitable. Filled with stars such as Jack Nicholson, Tina Turner, Ringo Starr and Eric Clapton. (MJ)

9:00 a.m. (Encore)-- *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)--A visitor from another galaxy visits our planet to issue a stern warning. Robert Wise's film is a liberal plea for peace and understanding; as such, it defied the McCarthyite xenophobia and bellicosity dominating Hollywood at the time. It stands up surprising well almost 50 years later. Starring Patricia Neal and Michael Rennie. (MJ)

\*10:00 a.m. (History)-- *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)

1:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *A Foreign Affair* (1948)--Billy Wilder directed this story of post-war Germany, with Jean Arthur, an American provincial, sent to investigate conditions in Berlin, but falling in love. With Marlene Dietrich in fine form. (DW)

1:30 p.m. (HBOP)-- *Frantic* (1988)--Roman Polanski's failed attempt to make a Hitchcock-type suspense film. With Harrison Ford. (MJ)

\*3:00 p.m. (History)-- *The Elephant Man* (1980)--See 10:00 a.m.

4:30 p.m. (AMC)-- *The Far Country* (1955)--James Stewart, Ruth Roman, Walter Brennan and John McIntire costar in this Anthony Mann Western about a cattleman who brings his herd to Alaska and encounters many difficulties. As always with Mann, the Albert Bierstadt of movie directors, the exteriors are magnificent. (DW)

\*6:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *On the Town* (1949)--Memorable MGM musical--three sailors with 24 hours' leave in New York City. Based on the show by Betty Comden-Adolph Green-Leonard Bernstein, with Gene

Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Vera-Ellen and Betty Garrett. Directed by Stanley Donen and Kelly. (DW)

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)

11:00 p.m. (HBOS)-- *Tommy* (1975)--See 8:15 a.m.

12:50 a.m. (HBOS)-- *The Firm* (1993)--See Saturday at 11:50 a.m.

2:15 a.m. (AMC)-- *Gypsy* (1962)--Unfortunate film adaptation of the great Jule Styne-Stephen Sondheim-Arthur Laurents 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)

3:30 a.m. (HBOS)-- *Ship of Fools* (1965)--Ponderous film that attempts to show the social elements responsible for the rise of Nazism in the microcosm of a ship bound for Hamburg in 1933. By the self-important liberal producer/director Stanley Kramer--the Oliver Stone of his day. Even a star-filled cast (Vivien Leigh, Oskar Werner, Simone Signoret, Jos  Ferrer, Lee Marvin) can't keep this wooden boat from sinking. Interesting only because it shows what passed for serious film in the mid-1960s. (MJ)

### **Tuesday, April 13**

\*7:45 a.m. (Showtime)-- *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)

7:45 a.m. (HBOP)-- *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)

10:00 a.m. (History)-- *The Left-Handed Gun* (1958)--Based on a television play by Gore Vidal, Arthur Penn directed this off-beat version of the Billy the Kid legend. (DW)

11:30 a.m. (TCM)-- *Kiss Me Kate* (1953)--Vulgar, brassy production of Cole Porter musical, with Howard Keel and Kathryn Grayson, based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Directed by George Sidney. (DW)

1:30 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)

1:30 p.m. (HBOS)-- *Days of Wine and Roses* (1962)--Blake Edwards's somber film about alcoholic Jack Lemmon who drags Lee Remick into his orbit. (DW)

1:30 p.m. (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)

3:00 p.m. (History)-- *The Left-Handed Gun* (1958)--See 10:00 a.m.

\*4:45 p.m. (HBOS)-- *Barry Lyndon* (1975)--An intelligent adaptation of William Thackeray's novel about an eighteenth century scoundrel, directed by Stanley Kubrick. (DW)

5:00 p.m. (HBO)-- *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)

\*6:30 p.m. (Showtime)-- *Last Action Hero* (1993)--See p.m.

\*6:35 p.m. (Encore)-- *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)

1:00 a.m. (HBOP)-- *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)

4:15 a.m. (HBOS)-- *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)

#### Wednesday, April 14

8:30 a.m. (TMC)-- *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. (DW)

9:30 a.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 the late, great character actor J.T. Walsh. (MJ)

2:00 p.m. (TCM)-- *Yolanda and the Thief* (1945)--Fred Astaire is a conman in this Vincente Minnelli musical, trying to convince Lucille Bremer, a Latin American heiress, that he is her guardian angel. With Frank Morgan. (DW)

3:30 p.m. (HBOP)-- *The Firm* (1993)--See Saturday at 11:50 a.m.

\*4:35 p.m. (Encore)-- *The Culpepper Cattle Company* (1972)--An unjustly forgotten film about a naive young man joining up with a cattle drive. Grittily realistic depictions of the daily working life of cowboys--the kind of detail rarely shown in Westerns. A gem. With Gary Grimes, Billy "Green" Bush, and Geoffrey Lewis. Directed by Dick Richards. (MJ)

9:00 p.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)

12:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949)--The second part of John Ford's cavalry trilogy, with John Wayne as an officer about to retire, drawn into campaign against a group of Indians. With Joanne Dru, Ben Johnson, Victor McLaglen. (DW)

#### Thursday, April 15

6:00 a.m. (TCM)-- *David Copperfield* (1935)--W.C. Fields as Mr. Micawber and Basil Rathbone as Murdstone are highlights of this lavish film version of the Dickens novel. Freddie Bartholemew is the young David Copperfield. Directed by George Cukor. (DW)

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

8:30 a.m. (TCM)-- *Anna Karenina* (1935)--A superficial and turgid version of the Tolstoy novel. But anything with Greta Garbo is of interest. Clarence Brown, for some reason Garbo's favorite, directed the film. (DW)

\*9:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *The Great McGinty* (1940)--Preston Sturges's fable about a derelict (Brian Donlevy) who, with the help of the political machine, makes it to the governor's mansion and then tries to turn honest, with catastrophic consequences. (DW)

12:30 p.m. (TMC)-- *Hombre* (1967)--See Monday at 8:00 p.m.

2:00 p.m. (HBOS)-- *Tommy* (1975)--See Monday at 8:15 a.m.

Sunday at 5:45 *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954) (AMC)-- no great film--it is burdened with a sentimental and largely fictitious story, as well as insipid June Allyson as Miller's wife--but everything by Anthony Mann of this period is worth seeing. Beautifully done. James Stewart is fine as Miller. (DW)

4:00 p.m. (HBOS)-- *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (1997)--In Copenhagen, a half-Inuit scientist (Julia Ormond) investigates the suspicious death from falling of a young Inuit boy. A quiet, brooding film with beautiful photography of Denmark and Greenland is marred by a conventional melodramatic ending with a conventional corporate villain (overplayed by Richard Harris with evil white hair). Also starring Gabriel Byrne. (MJ)

6:00 p.m. (AMC)-- *Land of the Pharaohs* (1955)--Howard Hawks's historical epic is full of the typical Hollywood hokum, but the scenes of the building of the pyramids are truly impressive. William Faulkner helped write the screenplay. With Jack Hawkins and Joan Collins. (MJ)

7:00 p.m. (HBO)-- *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)

\*7:00 p.m. (HBOP)-- *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)

9:00 p.m. (HBOS)-- *A Star Is Born* (1954)--See 6:30 a.m.

11:25 p.m. (IFC)-- *Gas Food Lodging* (1992)--See Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

1:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *Land of the Pharaohs* (1955)--See 6:00 p.m.

3:20 a.m. (HBOS)-- *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (1997)--See 4:00 p.m.

#### Friday, April 16

5:20 a.m. (TMC)-- *Hombre* (1967)--See Monday at 8:00 p.m.

6:00 a.m. (IFC)-- *Gas Food Lodging* (1992)--See Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

\*7:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *City Lights* (1931)--Chaplin's tramp in love with a blind flower girl. Sentimental, but unforgettable. (DW)

\*7:40 a.m. (Starz)-- *Sorcerer* (1977)--Three trucks driven by desperate men run all kinds of hazards to bring volatile shipments of explosives to an oilfield fire in Latin America. William Friedkin directed this underrated, highly suspenseful remake of the French classic *The Wages of Fear*. Starring Roy Scheider. (MJ)

\*8:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *Modern Times* (1936)--Chaplin on the machine age. Consistently funny and perceptive, with Paulette Goddard. Chaplin's last silent film. (DW)

\*10:00 a.m. (History)-- *In Which We Serve* (1942)--Noel Coward and David Lean directed this patriotic war film, told in flashback, about a crew on a British destroyer and on leave. Coward co-stars, with John Mills, Bernard Miles, Celia Johnson and Richard Attenborough (the latter two making film debuts). (DW)

10:00 a.m. (AMC)-- *Union Pacific* (1939)--Cecil B. DeMille's epic about railroad-building, with Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea, Robert Preston and many others. (DW)

12:30 p.m. (Starz)-- *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974)--Richard Dreyfuss, in an early role, plays a canny, upwardly striving young man in the Jewish section of Montreal. Ted Kotcheff directed, and Mordecai Richler wrote the screenplay from his own novel. (MJ)

2:00 p.m. (TBS)-- *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964)--In the first of Sergio 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)

\*3:00 p.m. (History)-- *In Which We Serve* (1942)--See 10:00 a.m.

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 1930's film musicals is not enough. One of the great bombs. With Madeline Kahn (often funny, despite her material) and John Hillerman. (MJ)

\*9:45 p.m. (Encore)-- *Last Action Hero* (1993)--See Sunday at 5:45 p.m.

10:00 p.m. (FXM)-- *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)

10:30 p.m. (AMC)-- *Dallas* (1950)--A story set in post-Civil War Dallas, with Gary Cooper seeking revenge on those who wronged him. Ruth Roman and Steve Cochran co-star. Directed by Stuart Heisler. (DW)

4:30 a.m. (AMC)-- *Dallas* (1950)--See 10:30 p.m.



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