

Some interesting films on US television, May 22-28

Marty Jonas (MJ), David Walsh (DW)
22 May 1999

Video pick of the week—find it in your video store

The Parallax View (1974)—An exceptional, haunting conspiracy film from director Alan Pakula. Journalist (Warren Beatty) investigates a political assassination and the murders of all witnesses to it. He finds himself completely involved and his life in peril. Marvelous beginning at the top of the Space Needle in Seattle. With Paula Prentiss, Hume Cronyn, William Daniels. (MJ)

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, May 22

6:00 a.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)

7:00 a.m. (HBOS)—*The Sun Also Rises* (1957)—Star-filled adaptation of the Hemingway novel. Glossy and inadequate. Directed by Henry King. (MJ)

7:45 a.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)

*9:30 a.m. (TCM)—*2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)—Stanley Kubrick's science fiction epic. A space vehicle heads for Jupiter in search of aliens. One critic, somewhat unfairly, called it a project "so devoid of life and feeling as to render a computer called HAL the most sympathetic character in a jumbled scenario." Despite silly ending, the film is worth seeing. (DW)

10:00 a.m. (IFC)—*Gray's Anatomy* (1996)—One of actor Spalding Gray's filmed monologues. This time he describes his efforts to find alternative treatments for an eye ailment. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. (DW)

12:00 p.m. (AMC)—*A Shot in the Dark* (1964)—Blake Edwards directed the second of the Inspector Clouseau films, starring the inimitable Peter Sellers. With Elke Sommer, George Sanders and Herbert Lom. (DW)

5:00 p.m. (Bravo)—*Burnt by the Sun* (1994)—Nikita Mikhalkov's film, in which he plays the leading role, about a Soviet leader in 1936 brought face to face with the realities of Stalinism. (DW)

6:30 p.m. (IFC)—*Gray's Anatomy* (1996)—See 10:00 a.m.

*7:00 p.m. (Sci-Fi)—*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 only a thin relationship to it. Starring Linda Blair, Max Von

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

8:00 p.m. (FXM)—*A Wedding* (1978)—Robert Altman doing what he does best—directing a large ensemble of actors. Carol Burnett stars in this amusing, farcical film. (MJ)

10:30 p.m. (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)

*1:25 a.m. (Starz)—*Fearless* (1993)—Jeff Bridges experiences the eerie effects of having survived a jetliner crash. Stunning performance by Rosie Perez. Directed by Peter Weir. (MJ)

*1:30 a.m. (Encore)—*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." And then he flickered out like a shooting star. With Dennis Hopper. (MJ)

*2:10 a.m. (HBOS)—*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)

4:00 a.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)

Sunday, May 23

*7:00 a.m. (TMC)—*Notorious* (1946)—One of Alfred Hitchcock's best. American counterespionage agents convince the patriotic daughter of a convicted Nazi spy to marry a Nazi agent in South America. Very suspenseful (especially the sequence with the dwindling champagne bottles), and with complex characterizations. Wonderful chemistry between Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman, and an oddly sympathetic performance by Claude Rains as the Nazi agent. (MJ)

12:00 p.m. (Bravo)—*The Ruling Class* (1972)—see Saturday at 10:30 p.m.

*3:15 p.m. (HBOS)—*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)

4:00 p.m. (Comedy)—*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)

*5:00 p.m. (Sci-Fi)—*Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977)—See Saturday at 7:00 p.m.

9:00 p.m. (HBOP)—*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)

12:00 a.m. (TCM)— *My Favorite Year* (1982)—Richard Benjamin directed this uneven look at early television. In 1954 a young man has the job of chaperoning the star (Peter O'Toole) of that week's show. Joseph Bologna plays a Sid Caesar type. (DW)

4:00 a.m. (TCM)— *2010* (1984)—A nuts-and-bolts sequel that tries (and fails) to answer the riddles of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Though it holds one's interest and is well made, it lacks the vision, magic, and mystery of the first film. With Keir Dullea, Roy Scheider and John Lithgow. Directed by Peter Hyams. (MJ)

4:10 a.m. (HBOS)— *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* (1988)—The 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)

Monday, May 24

6:10 a.m. (HBOS)— *John Grisham's the Rainmaker* (1997)—See Sunday at 9:00 p.m.

12:00 p.m. (AMC)— *Imitation of Life* (1959)—Douglas Sirk directed this work, "A big, crazy film about life and death. And a film about America." Lana Turner is a career-driven actress; Juanita Moore is her black maid. Moore has a daughter (Susan Kohner) who wants to pass for white. The characters' thoughts, wishes and dreams "grow directly out of their social reality or are manipulated by it" (R.W. Fassbinder). (DW)

*1:00 p.m. (HBOP)— *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)

3:15 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)

5:30 p.m. (Cinemax)— *Contact* (1997)—An intelligent, refreshingly non-xenophobic 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)

*6:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Show Boat* (1936)—Paul Robeson is unforgettable singing "Old Man River" in James Whale's version of the Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein II musical about riverboat entertainers. Helen Morgan is also memorable singing "Bill." With Irene Dunne, Allan Jones. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (AMC)— *Love in the Afternoon* (1957)—Billy Wilder directed this film about the affair between a young Parisian woman (Audrey Hepburn) and a middle-aged American businessman (Gary Cooper). Maurice Chevalier is her father, a private detective. This was Wilder's first film cowritten with I.A.L. Diamond. (DW)

*10:00 p.m. (Encore)— *Five Easy Pieces* (1970)—Early Jack Nicholson film that helped define his sardonic screen persona. He plays a concert pianist from a wealthy family who opts to work on an oil rig. Watch for the memorable scene in the diner between Nicholson's character and a waitress. Directed by the underappreciated Bob Rafelson. With Karen Black, Billy "Green" Bush and Susan Anspach. (MJ)

1:50 a.m. (HBOP)— *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)

2:15 a.m. (AMC)— *Love in the Afternoon* (1957)—See 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 25

6:30 a.m. (Showtime)— *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)

6:30 a.m. (AMC)— *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)

7:55 a.m. (Encore)— *Love with the Proper Stranger* (1963)—Natalie Wood is pregnant and Steve McQueen is her musician boyfriend in this occasionally affecting film shot on location in New York's Greenwich Village. Directed by Robert Mulligan. (DW)

8:30 a.m. (Showtime)— *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961)—Marlon Brando's only directing effort. He plays an outlaw seeking revenge on Karl Malden, a former friend, now a sadistic sheriff. (DW)

*10:00 a.m. (AMC)— *Hail the Conquering Hero* (1944)—A Preston Sturges comedy. Eddie Bracken, rejected by the military, is mistaken for a war hero by his hometown. William Demarest is marvelous. (DW)

*10:30 a.m. (Cinemax)— *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)

*11:15 a.m. (HBOS)— *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)

*2:45 p.m. (Showtime)— *Reds* (1981)—Warren Beatty's account of the life and times of John Reed, American socialist and author of *Ten Days that Shook the World*, the authoritative chronicle of the October Revolution of 1917. With Diane Keaton and others. (DW)

*4:00 p.m. (Starz)— *Last Action Hero* (1993)—See 10:30 a.m.

6:00 p.m. (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)

*9:00 p.m. (TMC)— *Last Action Hero* (1993)—See 10:30 a.m.

*9:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *North by Northwest* (1959)—See 11:15 a.m.

9:30 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)

*9:30 p.m. (FXM)— *The Name of the Rose* (1986)—A murder mystery 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)— *Gilda* (1946)—Rita Hayworth is spectacular (singing "Put the Blame on Mame") in Charles Vidor's drama about a love triangle in postwar South America. George Macready is a shady casino owner, Hayworth his restless wife and Glenn Ford a new employee. (DW)

11:00 p.m. (TBS)— *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1970)—The formerly blacklisted Albert Maltz wrote the script, from a story by director Budd Boetticher, about a drifter (Clint Eastwood) who helps a "nun" (Shirley

MacLaine) stage an uprising in Mexico. Veteran action filmmaker Don Siegel directed. (DW)

11:30 p.m. (HBOS)— *The Sun Also Rises* (1957)—See Saturday at 7:00 a.m.

*4:00 a.m. (A&E)— *Mean Streets* (1973)—Excellent, highly influential film by Martin Scorsese about growing up in New York's Little Italy. With Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel, both very young, (MJ)

Wednesday, May 26

*6:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Mildred Pierce* (1945)—Powerful melodrama, directed by Michael Curtiz, about a woman (Joan Crawford) who goes from rags to riches and her ungrateful daughter. Based on the novel by James M. Cain. (DW)

*6:00 a.m. (Showtime)— *The Shootist* (1976)—John Wayne plays a gunfighter dying of cancer who returns to his home town for a last bit of peace. James Stewart is the doctor. This excellent, moving film was Wayne's last. Directed by Don Siegel. (MJ)

8:00 a.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.. (DW)

6:00 p.m. (TCM)— *My Favorite Wife* (1940)—Amusing film, directed by Garson Kanin, with Irene Dunne, thought dead, returning to find husband Cary Grant married to another woman (Gail Patrick). Produced and co-written by Leo McCarey. (DW)

*8:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Red River* (1948)—Montgomery Clift is a young cattleman who rebels against his guardian/father figure, John Wayne (in a relatively rare unsympathetic role), in Howard Hawks' extraordinary Western. With Walter Brennan, Joanne Dru and John Ireland. (DW)

10:30 p.m. (TCM)— *The Quiet Man* (1952)—John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara star in this John Ford film about an Irish-American boxer who goes back to his native country. (DW)

1:00 a.m. (TCM)— *They Were Expendable* (1945)—An extremely well-done film: the story of an American PT boat squadron, directed by John Ford. John Wayne and Robert Montgomery are the squadron's officers, but equally memorable is Donna Reed, as a nurse in love with Wayne's character. (DW)

Thursday, May 27

6:00 a.m. (TCM)— *His Kind of Woman* (1951)—A lively tale, as Robert Mitchum heads off to Mexico for a routine payoff and finds out a gangster boss (Raymond Burr) has plans to kill him and take his identity. Jane Russell is in top form and Vincent Price is amusing as a ham actor. Directed by John Farrow. (DW)

9:30 a.m. (HBOP)— *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)

2:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *John Grisham's the Rainmaker* (1997)—See Sunday at 9:00 p.m.

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)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)— *99 River Street* (1953)—The underrated Phil Karlson directed this crime drama. John Payne is a taxi driver who gets mixed up with jewel thieves and has to clear himself of a murder charge. With Evelyn Keyes, Frank Faylen. (DW)

8:00 p.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)

10:05 p.m. (TBS)— *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)

*11:00 p.m. (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)

12:00 a.m. (TNT)— *The Longest Yard* (1974)—A prison comedy-drama, with Burt Reynolds, as a former football player, who directs a team against warden Eddie Albert's squad. Directed by Robert Aldrich. (DW)

12:15 a.m. (AMC)— *Land of the Pharaohs* (1955)—See 6:00 p.m.

2:10 a.m. (TBS)— *High Plains Drifter* (1973)—See 10:05 p.m.

2:15 a.m. (AMC)— *Gypsy* (1962)—See 8:00 p.m.

4:00 a.m. (IFC)— *Repulsion* (1965)—Catherine Deneuve starred as a sexually repressed girl who goes homicidal when her sister leaves her on her own in an apartment for a few days. Startling at the time, it seems dated today. Directed by Roman Polanski. (DW)

Friday, May 28

*6:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Louise Brooks: Looking for Lulu* (1998)—A profile of the silent screen actress Louise Brooks, one of the most extraordinary figures of the 1920s, the devastating star of *Pandora's Box* (1928). (DW)

*6:30 a.m. (HBOS)— *North by Northwest* (1959)—See Tuesday at 11:15 a.m.

12:00 p.m. (AMC)— *Reap the Wild Wind* (1942)—Cecil B. DeMille directed this intriguing film about nineteenth century salvagers off the coast of Georgia. Ray Milland and John Wayne fight over Paulette Goddard, as a spirited Southern belle. (DW)

12:00 p.m. (IFC)— *Repulsion* (1965)—See Thursday at 4:00 a.m.

1:00 p.m. (TCM)— *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)

*2:30 p.m. (HBOS)— *Barbarians at the Gate* (1993)—See Sunday at 3:15 p.m.

4:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Alice Adams* (1935)—Katharine Hepburn as social-climbing girl in George Cukor's filming of Booth Tarkington's novel. Memorable dinner table scene, as Hepburn embarrassingly tries to impress wealthy Fred MacMurray. (DW)

4:15 p.m. (HBOS)— *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* (1988)—See Sunday at 4:10 a.m.

6:00 p.m. (IFC)— *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1989)—The tall tales of the German baron are retold by Terry Gilliam in his typical brilliant but sprawling style. With John Neville and too much Robin Williams. (MJ)

6:00 p.m. (TCM)— *A Guy Named Joe* (1943)—Spencer Tracy is a World War II pilot who is killed and comes back to earth to whisper advice in the ear of his replacement, Van Johnson, in the affections of Irene Dunne. Sentimental as can be, but affecting. Directed by Victor Fleming. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (Bravo)— *The Big Picture* (1988)—A recently graduated film student tries to succeed in Hollywood. Many hilarious moments. Starring Kevin Bacon, Martin Short, and J.T. Walsh. Directed by Christopher Guest. (MJ)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)— *High Noon* (1952)—Gary Cooper stars in this Fred Zinnemann-directed Western about a sheriff who, on his wedding and retirement day, has to confront a gunman seeking revenge. With Grace Kelly, Thomas Mitchell, Lloyd Bridges, Katy Jurado, et al. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (FXM)— *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)

10:30 p.m. (AMC)— *The Lady Eve* (1941)—Barbara Stanwyck, as a conman's daughter, and Henry Fonda, as a rich young man who happens to love snakes, slug it out in this battle of the sexes directed by Preston

Sturges. "Snakes are my life," says Fonda. "What a life!," replies Stanwyck. (DW)

11:00 p.m. (HBOP)— *Gattaca* (1997)—In this future capitalist society, your place in the productive process is determined by your genetic make-up—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)

11:35 p.m. (IFC)— *Repulsion* (1965)—See Thursday at 4:00 a.m.

12:30 a.m. (TCM)— *Act of Violence* (1949)—Fred Zinnemann directed this well-meaning effort. Robert Ryan is a crippled, former soldier in pursuit of a former officer who betrayed his men while a prisoner. With Van Heflin, Janet Leigh, Mary Astor. (DW)

1:30 a.m. (Bravo)— *The Big Picture* (1988)—See 8:00 p.m.

2:20 a.m. (HBOP)— *Alien* (1979)—See Monday at 1:50 a.m.

*3:30 a.m. (Bravo)— *Living in Oblivion* (1995)—Sometimes amusing look at the making of a (relatively) low-budget film, with Steve Buscemi as the harassed director. James Le Gros as a spoiled, self-important rising star (allegedly based on director Tom DiCillo's experiences with Brad Pitt) is the highlight of the film. (DW)

*4:20 a.m. (HBOP)— *Rosemary's Baby* (1968)—See Monday at 1:00 p.m.



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