

Some interesting films on US television, June 19-25

Marty Jonas (MJ), David Walsh (DW)
19 June 1999

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

Indochine (1992)—A fine film that sets its overwrought love story in the context of the developing revolution in Indochina. It spans the period from the birth of the Indochinese Communist Party to the defeat of the brutal French colonialists and the division of Vietnam at the 1954 Geneva Conference. Catherine Deneuve gives a remarkable performance as the owner of a rubber plantation. With Vincent Perez. Directed by Regis Wargnier. (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, June 19

6:00 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)

*8:00 a.m. (HBO)—*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)

12:00 p.m. (TNT)—*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)

*1:00 p.m. (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)

2:00 p.m. (HBO)—*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)

4:15 p.m. (AMC)—*River of No Return* (1954)—Otto Preminger directed this interesting, relatively somber story. Robert Mitchum rescues a man (Rory Calhoun) and a woman (Marilyn Monroe) from drowning. Calhoun promptly steals his horse and takes off. Vengeful Mitchum, with his young son, and Monroe pursue him by raft. (DW)

6:00 p.m. (TNT)—*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)

*6:45 p.m. (HBO)—*Last Action Hero* (1993)—See 8:00 a.m.

8:00 p.m. (TCM)—*West Side Story* (1961)—Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins co-directed this screen version of the remarkable Leonard Bernstein-Stephen Sondheim musical. Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer are dull, Rita Moreno, Russ Tamblyn and George Chakiris are memorable. *Romeo and Juliet* set in New York City of the 1950s. (DW)

3:55 a.m. (Encore)—*Endless Love* (1981)—Franco Zeffirelli made a very bad film out of Scott Spencer's very good novel. With Brooke Shields, Martin Hewitt, Shirley Knight and Richard Kiley. (MJ)

4:15 a.m. (TCM)—*The Hospital* (1971)—Exposé of the workings of a big city hospital. George C. Scott as a doctor on the verge of cracking up. Arthur Hiller directed, Paddy Chayevsky wrote the long-winded script. (DW)

Sunday, June 20

6:00 a.m. (TCM)—*Northwest Passage* (1940)—King Vidor's vivid film about Rogers' Rangers, an elite corps opening up territory in pre-Revolutionary America. Spencer Tracy is Rogers, with Robert Young and Walter Brennan. (DW)

8:15 a.m. (Cinemax)—*Heaven Can Wait* (1978)—Warren Beatty stars as a football player who dies before his time and returns to earth in another body, that of a millionaire businessman. Julie Christie is a social activist who awakens his conscience. With Jack Warden. Directed by Beatty and Buck Henry. Good-natured, but not extraordinarily insightful. (DW)

10:00 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)

*11:30 a.m. (IFC)—*I Shot Jesse James* (1949)—Samuel Fuller's remarkable film—done mostly in close-ups—about the shooting of Jesse James by Robert Ford, "that dirty little coward." With Reed Hadley and John Ireland. (MJ)

*2:30 p.m. (TNT)—*Rain Man* (1988)—Barry Levinson's anti-Reaganite work, with Dustin Hoffman as an autistic man and Tom Cruise, a 1980s Babbitt, as his yuppie hustler brother. (DW)

4:30 p.m. (HBOP)—*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)

6:00 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)

8:00 p.m. (FXM)—*Gentlemen's Agreement* (1947)—Gregory Peck is a writer who pretends to be Jewish to gauge anti-Semitism. Moss Hart wrote the relatively tame script; Elia Kazan directed. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)—*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)

9:30 p.m. (Bravo)— *A Midnight Clear* (1992)—Strong anti-war film about a squad of US soldiers in France near the end of World War II. Ethan Hawke, Peter Berg, Kevin Dillon, Gary Sinise starred. Directed by Keith Gordon, from William Wharton's novel. (DW)

10:30 p.m. (TCM)— *The Champ* (1931)—Wallace Beery is an over-the-hill boxer and Jackie Cooper his adoring son in this sentimental, but very moving work, directed by King Vidor. (DW)

*11:45 p.m. (Encore)— *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)

*11:55 p.m. (HBO)— *Last Action Hero* (1993)—See Saturday at 8:00 a.m.

3:30 a.m. (Bravo)— *A Midnight Clear* (1992)—See 9:30 p.m.

Monday, June 21

6:00 a.m. (TCM)— *His Kind of Woman* (1951)—A lively tale, as Robert Mitchum heads off to Mexico for a routine pay-off 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)

*11:45 a.m. (Encore)— *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)

*12:00 p.m. (FXM)— *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)

12:30 p.m. (Bravo)— *A Midnight Clear* (1992)—See Sunday at 9:30 p.m.

5:30 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)

*7:00 p.m. (Encore)— *Reconstructing Evil* (1998)—Excellent documentary on the making of Orson Welles's great *Touch of Evil* and the recent reconstruction of the film as Welles had wanted it. With Charlton Heston, Janet Leigh and Peter Bogdanovich. (MJ)

*8:00 p.m. (Encore)— *Touch of Evil* (1958)—See 11:45 a.m.

*2:00 a.m. (FXM)— *The Culpepper Cattle Company* (1972)—See 12:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 22

*6:30 a.m. (Showtime)— *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1969)—Sergio Leone's drawn-out classic anti-Western, with Claudia Cardinale as the owner of land made valuable by the impending arrival of the railroad. Henry Fonda is a cold-blooded killer. With Jason Robards and Charles Bronson. Memorable score by Ennio Morricone. (DW)

8:00 a.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)

12:00 p.m. (TCM)— *The Citadel* (1938)—King Vidor's moving and insightful adaptation of the A. J. Cronin novel about an idealistic doctor who experiences a few disappointments in a mining village and opts to treat the wealthy and hypochondriacal instead. With Robert Donat and Rosalind Russell. (DW)

~~Heaven 12:00 a.m. (1943)—(AMC)—Monday~~

p.m.

2:00 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)

6:30 p.m. (IFC)— *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1966)—Woody Allen's first film is actually a hilarious redubbing of an atrocious Japanese spy thriller. With music by the Lovin' Spoonful and the voices of Allen and Louise Lasser. (MJ)

9:30 p.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)

*1:45 a.m. (TCM)— *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935)—Famed German theater director Max Reinhardt oversaw this oddity, with James Cagney as Bottom and Mickey Rooney as Puck in Shakespeare's magical play. (DW)

4:15 a.m. (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)

Wednesday, June 23

7:30 a.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)

7:45 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)

10:00 a.m. (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 p.m. (Encore)— *The Hustler* (1961)—Basically a boxing film, but set among serious pool sharks. Robert Rossen's movie is beautifully shot and capably acted, but the dialogue is full of stagey, pseudo-profound, high-proletarian language. With Paul Newman, Piper Laurie, George C. Scott and Jackie Gleason. (MJ)

1:35 p.m. (IFC)— *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1966)—See Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

2:00 p.m. (TBS)— *Two Rode Together* (1961)—James Stewart and Richard Widmark are an army officer and a marshal negotiating with Comanches about the return of some prisoners. John Ford directed. (DW)

3:00 p.m. (History)— *A Walk in the Sun* (1945)—See 10:00 a.m.

4:30 p.m. (Cinemax)— *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)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Elmer Gantry* (1960)—Burt Lancaster is the salesman who becomes a fire-and-brimstone preacher, joining evangelist Jean Simmons' crusade, in this critical look at fundamentalism and fakery in 1920s America. Richard Brooks directed, based on the novel by Sinclair Lewis. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (IFC)— *Riff Raff* (1991)—A Ken Loach film. The trials and tribulations of building workers in London, with Robert Carlyle (of *Full Monty*). Some moving moments and performances. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (Encore)— *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)

*11:20 p.m. (Starz)— *Deconstructing Harry* (1997)—Woody Allen's film is mean-spirited, misanthropic, bitter, cynical, crude, and foul-mouthed, but it is deliberately provocative, often funny, and one of his best films of recent years. A writer (Allen) confronts the friends and family members that he has cruelly featured in his novels, as well as their fictional representations. Also, Allen and his character confront their horror at growing old. Compare this film with the one preceding it, the light-hearted romantic musical *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), which this film seems to rebut. (MJ)

1:15 a.m. (IFC)— *Riff Raff* (1991)—See 8:00 p.m.

2:30 a.m. (Starz)— *Frantic* (1988)—Roman Polanski's failed attempt to make a Hitchcock-type suspense film. With Harrison Ford. (MJ)

*3:45 a.m. (HBO)— *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)

3:50 a.m. (Encore)— *The Rain People* (1969)—One of Francis Ford Coppola's first efforts: an unhappy housewife takes off and picks up a football player on the road. With Shirley Knight, James Caan and Robert Duvall. (DW)

4:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Sylvia Scarlett* (1935)—Disconcerting, interesting film about a father (Edmund Gwenn) and daughter (Katharine Hepburn), who take to the road with a touring show, which later includes Cary Grant. Hepburn disguises herself as a boy, which turns all sorts of social and sexual relationships upside down. George Cukor directed. (DW)

Thursday, June 24

*10:00 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)

*10:35 a.m. (IFC)— *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964)—Luis Bunuel shows, perhaps too elliptically, the rise of fascism in 1930s France; at the same time, he skewers the bourgeoisie, its foibles and perversions. Jeanne Moreau plays a chambermaid in a French rural estate, during which time a child is brutally murdered by an overseer who is a leader of Action Francaise. Well done, but the motivations are vague and it is too diffuse to be powerful. (MJ)

*11:00 a.m. (Cinemax)— *The King of Marvin Gardens* (1972)—Overlooked film by Bob Rafelson about the American dream and those who foolishly pursue it. Jack Nicholson atypically plays an introvert. With Bruce Dern, Ellen Burstyn and Scatman Crothers. (MJ)

11:15 a.m. (Showtime)— *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)

1:30 p.m. (AMC)— *Finian's Rainbow* (1968)—Petula Clark sings beautifully, Fred Astaire is miscast as her dreamy dad, and Tommy Steele quickly wears out his welcome as the broad-smiling, hyperactive leprechaun in Francis Copplola's flat version of the hit populist Broadway musical. In the course of this unrelentingly upbeat film, a tobacco-growing commune struggles for survival and a bigoted Southern senator is turned into an African-American. However, the songs by E.Y. Harburg retain their charm. (MJ)

2:00 p.m. (TBS)— *Coogan's Bluff* (1968)—A good action film, directed by veteran Don Siegel, concerning an Arizona lawman (Clint Eastwood) who comes to New York City to pick up a prisoner (Don Stroud); complications ensue. (DW)

*4:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Two Weeks in Another Town* (1962)—Vincente

Minnelli's adaptation of Irwin Shaw's novel about the making of a film in Rome. A "garish drama" with Kirk Douglas, Edward G. Robinson, Cyd Charisse, George Hamilton. (DW)

4:45 p.m. (Showtime)— *At Long Last Love* (1975)—Burt Reynolds and Sybill 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)

6:15 p.m. (AMC)— *Jane Eyre* (1944)—Robert Stevenson directed this version of the Charlotte Bronte classic about a poor governess thrown into a mysterious household. Joan Fontaine is Jane and Orson Welles an unforgettable Rochester. (DW)

1:00 a.m. (AMC)— *Jane Eyre* (1944)—See 6:15 p.m.

Friday, June 25

*6:00 a.m. (IFC)— *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964)—See Thursday at 10:35 a.m.

8:00 a.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)

*9:45 a.m. (AMC)— *The Court Jester* (1956)—Classic Danny Kaye farce of confused identities in the Middle Ages. Lots of witty verbal humor. Directed by Melvin Frank and Norman Panama. (MJ)

1:30 p.m. (AMC)— *People Will Talk* (1951)—Odd film, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, with Cary Grant as a philosophizing doctor, married to Jeanne Crain. He is accused of malpractice and has to defend himself. (DW)

3:30 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)

*8:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Ride the High Country* (1962)—Sam Peckinpah directed this anti-Western, with Randolph Scott and Joel McCrea, as two aging gunfighters guarding a gold shipment shipped from a remote mining town. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (Encore)— *Young Frankenstein* (1974)—One of Mel Brooks' 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)

8:00 p.m. (HBO)— *Breakdown* (1997)—See Sunday at 4:30 p.m.

*10:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Winchester '73* (1950)—Remarkable Western, directed by Anthony Mann, about a man (James Stewart, in the first of his films with Mann) tracking down a stolen Winchester rifle and the man who took it. The gun is the connection between the different episodes. With Shelley Winters, Dan Duryea and Stephen McNally. Script by Robert L. Richards and Borden Chase. (DW)

11:00 p.m. (Cinemax)— *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)

*1:50 a.m. (Encore)— *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)—Stanley Kubrick's brilliant but thoroughly nasty film about a sadistic young street thug (Malcolm McDowell) in the near future turned into a passive, spiritless citizen by means of a cruel form of aversion therapy. In the process, he also loses his ability to enjoy Beethoven. Kubrick adapted this from the novel by Anthony Burgess, and Burgess always hated the result. (MJ)

*2:00 a.m. (TCM)— *The Seventh Seal* (1957)—This is the film, much-

parodied, in which Max von Sydow, a knight returning from the Crusades, plays Death in a chess game. Somewhat ridiculous, but still fascinating. Directed, of course, by Ingmar Bergman. (DW)



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