

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

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

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

*The Organizer* (1964)—This film, directed lovingly by Mario Monicelli, is one of the best about the labor movement. An itinerant schoolteacher (played with compassion by the great Marcello Mastroianni) comes to Turin and organizes the embattled and exploited factory workers. He fights to bring them class consciousness and unity against great odds. A gem, not to be missed. (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, July 10

6:00 am (TCM)—*The Curse of the Cat People* (1944)—Not a horror film at all, this is the story of a lonely girl who conjures up a vision of her father's mysterious first wife (Simone Simon from *Cat People*). Val Lewton produced, Robert Wise made his directorial debut. (DW)

8:00 am (HBO)—*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)

9:00 am (TCM)—*The Life of Emile Zola* (1937)—A stolid and not particularly accurate version of the life of the French writer (Paul Muni). The final speech, in Zola's own words, is moving. Directed by William Dieterle. (DW)

\*12:45 pm (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 Doc Holliday. With Ward Bond, Tim Holt, Walter Brennan. (DW)

1:00 pm (TCM)—*Queen Christina* (1933)—Greta Garbo is memorable as the 17th century Swedish queen who gave up her throne for love. John Gilbert, one of her real-life amours, plays her aristocratic lover. Rouben Mamoulian directed. (DW)

1:30 pm (HBOP)—*Serpico* (1973)—Al Pacino plays a loner cop taking on corruption in the New York Police Department. As always, director Sidney Lumet captures the texture of New York City. (MJ)

1:30 pm (HBOS)—*Play It Again, Sam* (1972)—Woody Allen's very funny homage to Bogart and *Casablanca*. Starring and written by Allen, but directed by Herbert Ross. With Diane Keaton. (MJ)

3:15 pm (HBOS)—*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)

3:25 pm (Starz)—*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)—Steven Spielberg's special-effects-filled take on UFO sighting as a religious

experience. Starring Richard Dreyfuss. (MJ)

5:20 pm (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)

5:30 pm (Showtime)—*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)—See 3:25 pm.

6:00 pm (TNT)—*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)

6:45 pm (HBO)—*The Fifth Element* (1997)—See 8:00 am.

\*10:00 pm (IFC)—*The Rapture* (1991)—In this strange, compelling film, writer-director Michael Tolkin considers the Apocalypse literally but non-religiously. A promiscuous woman joins a religious cult, marries, has a child, and awaits the Second Coming in the desert. With David Duchovny. (MJ)

\*10:00 pm (FXM)—*Blood and Wine* (1996)—Jack Nicholson plays a bankrupt wine merchant pulling off a jewel heist with an over-the-hill, nerved-up safecracker (Michael Caine, in an unusual role as a murderous heavy). With Judy Davis and Stephen Dorff. Another neglected film by underrated director Bob Rafelson. (MJ)

10:00 pm (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)

\*11:30 pm (TCM)—*The Set-Up* (1949)—Dull Robert Wise directed this story about a washed-up fighter refusing to give up or throw a fight. Robert Ryan, an underrated actor, is excellent as the boxer. With Audrey Totter, George Tobias and Wallace Ford. (DW)

12:00 am (HBOP)—*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)

2:00 am (History)—*Merrill's Marauders* (1962)—See 10:00 pm.

2:15 am (Showtime)—*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)—See 3:25 pm.

\*3:15 am (IFC)—*The Rapture* (1991)—See 10:00 pm.

3:15 am (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)

## Sunday, July 11

5:40 am (TMC)—*Touch* (1987)—See Saturday, at 5:20 pm.

\*7:35 am (AMC)—*Band of Angels* (1957)—A remarkably complex look at black-and-white relations in Civil War America. Clark Gable plays a Southern gentleman with a past as a slave trader, Yvonne DeCarlo is a Southern belle who discovers she has black ancestors and Sidney Poitier is an educated slave. Directed by Raoul Walsh, from the novel by Robert

Penn Warren. (DW)

9:00 am (HBOS)— *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951)—Elia Kazan's version of the Tennessee Williams drama about the strong and the weak in a New Orleans tenement. Marlon Brando, Vivien Leigh, Kim Hunter and Karl Malden. (DW)

12:30 pm (Encore)— *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)

\*2:00 pm (Bravo)— *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)

\*2:30 pm (IFC)— *Rashomon* (1950)—Well-known work by Japanese master Akira Kurosawa. In medieval Japan, four people give differing accounts of violent attack by a bandit on a nobleman. With Toshiro Mifune. (DW)

\*4:30 pm (Sci-Fi)— *Brazil* (1985)—Brilliant, undisciplined satire by Terry Gilliam about a future dystopia that strangely resembles the Great Depression of the 1930s and other bleak periods of the recent past. Starring Jonathan Pryce and Michael Palin. (MJ)

4:35 pm (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 pm (TCM)— *The Star* (1952)—Stuart Heisler directed this film about a movie star whose career is a thing of the past, with Bette Davis, Sterling Hayden and a young Natalie Wood. (DW)

9:00 pm (HBOP)— *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)

9:00 pm (TMC)— *Sliding Doors* (1998)—Charming, likable light comedy hinges on a gimmick that works well: the film shows the two paths the main character's life could take depending on whether or not she misses her train. A vehicle for the talented Gwyneth Paltrow, performing with a flawless British accent. (MJ)

9:30 pm (Bravo)— *The Molly Maguires* (1970)—Sean Connery and Richard Harris co-starred in this well-meaning film about the secret organization of Irish-born miners in Pennsylvania in the 1870s. Directed by Martin Ritt. (DW)

9:45 pm (TCM)— *Splendor in the Grass* (1961)—Warren Beatty and Sandy Dennis made their debuts in Elia Kazan's film about a small-town Kansas girl (Natalie Wood) in the 1920s suffering the consequences of sexual repression. (DW)

12:35 am (HBOS)— *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)

\*2:00 am (Comedy)— *Real Life* (1979)—Albert Brooks' occasionally amusing account of film-maker who sets out to record the life of a "typical" American family. (DW)

\*2:00 am (TNT)— *Das Boot* (1982)—Life on board a German submarine in World War II. Claustrophobic and harrowing, the film (directed by Wolfgang Petersen) follows the daily life of the crew as the vessel becomes the hunted as well as the hunter. Amazing sound editing. With Jurgen Prochnow. (MJ)

3:30 am (Bravo)— *The Molly Maguires* (1970)—See 9:30 pm.

*The Cotton Club* (1984)—Richard Gere

Francis Coppola's sometimes successful attempt to capture the music and gangster violence of Harlem in the 1930s. The production was riddled with problems and the often-rewritten screenplay is by novelists William Kennedy and Mario Puzo. (MJ)

### Monday, July 12

\*7:40 am (IFC)— *Rashomon* (1950)—See Sunday, at 2:30 pm.

\*9:00 am (HBOS)— *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)

10:00 am (TCM)— *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939)—Stylishly done version of romance between Queen of England (Bette Davis) and Earl of Essex (Errol Flynn). Directed by Michael Curtiz, from play by Maxwell Anderson. (DW)

11:00 am (HBOS)— *Night Falls on Manhattan* (1997)—See Saturday, at 12:00 am.

12:30 pm (Bravo)— *The Molly Maguires* (1970)—See Sunday, at 9:30 pm.

\*1:00 pm (HBOS)— *The Producers* (1968)—Mel Brooks wrote and directed his funniest film, about two producers whose plan—to mount a deliberately awful Broadway musical that will flop and thereby bring them a tax bonanza—backfires. Starring Gene Wilder and the great, rarely seen (because of blacklisting) Zero Mostel. (MJ)

\*2:30 pm (Sci-Fi)— *Brazil* (1985)—See Sunday, at 4:30 pm.

4:00 pm (TCM)— *Jezebel* (1938)—Bette Davis again, as an antebellum Southern belle causing trouble with her willful behavior. Also Henry Fonda. Directed by William Wyler. (DW)

6:00 pm (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)

8:00 pm (Showtime)— *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 sendups of Olivier's *Hamlet* and Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*. Directed by John McTiernan. (MJ)

\*9:00 pm (HBOS)— *The Ice Storm* (1997)—see 9:00 am.

12:30 am (HBOS)— *Serpico* (1973)—See Saturday, at 1:30 pm.

### Tuesday, July 13

8:00 am (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)

11:30 am (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)

2:15 pm (HBOS)— *Play It Again, Sam* (1972)—See Saturday, at 1:30 pm.

\*2:35 pm (IFC)— *The Dead* (1987)—John Huston's deeply felt adaptation of James Joyce's short story, one of the best in the English language. This was Huston's last film; it ended his great career on a high note. With Anjelica Huston and Donal McCann. (MJ)

4:00 pm (FXM)— *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)

\*9:00 pm (HBOS)— *The Producers* (1968)—See Monday, at 1:00 pm.

1:05 am (HBO)— *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)

### Wednesday, July 14

\*6:00 am (Sundance)— *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961)—Alain Resnais' enigmatic film is one of the classics of French cinema. It asks questions (never answered) about the nature of time and memory. A marvelous film to watch, with its energetically mobile camera and lengthy tracking shots down ornate corridors. (MJ)

6:00 am (FXM)— *At Long Last Love* (1975)—See Tuesday, at 4:00 pm.

\*7:25 am (IFC)— *The Dead* (1987)—See Tuesday, at 2:35 pm.

\*8:00 am (AMC)— *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)—Don Siegel's classic parable about conformity in 1950s America. After a meteor lands nearby, inhabitants of a small town are quietly replaced by "pod people" who look like them but act mindlessly as members of a communal hive. With Kevin McCarthy and Dana Wynter. (MJ)

8:45 am (HBOS)— *A Star Is Born* (1954)—See Saturday, at 3:15 am.

9:30 am (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)

\*10:30 am (HBOP)— *The Graduate* (1967)—Important coming-of-age film about a young man (Dustin Hoffman, in his first big role) deciding whether to throw in his lot with the adult world. Should he cast off his rebelliousness and join the prospering middle class of the late sixties—i.e., go into "plastics"? Anne Bancroft is the memorable middle-aged seductress (and mother of his fiancée) Mrs. Robinson. Excellent music by Simon and Garfunkel. Directed by Mike Nichols. (MJ)

\*12:15 pm (HBOP)— *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)

\*12:30 pm (IFC)— *The Dead* (1987)—See Tuesday, at 2:35 pm.

1:25 pm (TMC)— *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)

\*4:25 pm (Sundance)— *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961)—See 6:00 am.

9:40 pm (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)

\*11:20 pm (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)

### Thursday, July 15

5:00 am (TMC)— *Saturday Night Fever* (1977)—See Wednesday, at 1:25 pm.

5:10 am (Starz)— *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)

\*6:00 am (TCM)— *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933)—Busby Berkeley did the spectacular, mind-boggling dance numbers, connected by the usual thin and negligible plot. Highlights in this film—one of Berkeley's best—are "the Ballad of the Forgotten Man" and "We're in the Money" (sung partly in Pig Latin), both of which are sardonic comments on the great Depression. With Dick Powell, Ginger Rogers, and Joan Blondell. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy. (MJ)

7:30 am (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)

8:00 am (HBOP)— *Play It Again, Sam* (1972)—See Saturday, at 1:30 pm.

9:00 am (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)

9:15 am (AMC)— *Don't Bother to Knock* (1952)—Marilyn Monroe, in an early role, is a demented baby-sitter who threatens to kill the child in her care. With Richard Widmark, Anne Bancroft, Jim Backus. Directed by Roy Ward Baker. (DW)

9:15 am (HBOS)— *Marathon Man* (1976)—See Sunday, at 12:35 am.

9:30 am (HBOP)— *Night Falls on Manhattan* (1997)—See Saturday, at 12:00 am.

12:00 pm (Encore)— *A Wedding* (1978)—See Sunday, at 12:30 pm.

\*1:00 pm (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)

9:00 pm (USA)— *Dazed and Confused* (1993)—Richard Linklater's evocative, unsentimental portrait of the last day of school at a suburban Texas high school in 1976. A variety of narrative strands, too many to mention. With Jason London, Milla Jovovich, Ben Affleck, Matthew McConaughey, Parker Posey, among others. (DW)

9:00 pm (HBOS)— *Marathon Man* (1976)—See Sunday, at 12:35 am.

\*9:40 pm (Encore)— *Barry Lyndon* (1975)—An intelligent adaptation of William Thackeray's novel about an 18th-century scoundrel, directed by Stanley Kubrick. (DW)

\*12:00 am (TCM)— *Seconds* (1966)—A middle-aged executive (John Randolph) exchanges his aging body for a new one, and gets a new name and lifestyle in the bargain. A haunting film with many moving moments, especially at the end. Directed by John Frankenheimer in the good years before his decline. Rock Hudson, in one of his best roles, plays the executive after the operation. Stunning photography by James Wong Howe, one of the great Hollywood cinematographers. With Salome Jens and Murray Hamilton. (MJ)

### Friday, July 16

8:30 am (HBOS)— *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951)—See Sunday, at 9:00 am.

10:20 am (Starz)— *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)—See Saturday, at 3:25 pm.

12:00 pm (TMC)— *Sliding Doors* (1998)—See Sunday, at 9:00 pm.

12:30 pm (HBOS)— *A Star Is Born* (1954)—See Saturday, at 3:15 am.

\*2:30 pm (Cinemax)— *Miller's Crossing* (1990)—The Coen Brothers do their version of the *Red Harvest* (Dashiell Hammett) story: gangsters wage a civil war for control of a city. Overblown and self-conscious, but it holds one's attention. With Gabriel Byrne and Albert Finney. (DW)

3:30 pm (HBOS)— *Contact* (1997)—See Sunday, at 9:00 pm.

\*4:00 pm (IFC)— *Rashomon* (1950)—See Sunday, at 2:30 pm.

7:05 pm (TMC)— *Sliding Doors* (1998)—See Sunday, at 9:00 pm.

8:00 pm (HBO)— *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)

\*8:00 pm (Encore)—*Fearless* (1993)—Jeff Bridges experiences the eerie effects of having survived a jetliner crash. Stunning performance by Rosie Perez. Directed by Peter Weir. (MJ)

\*8:00 pm (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' cynical friend (Robert Ryan). Clifford Odets wrote the story. (DW)

9:00 pm (HBOS)—*A Star Is Born* (1954)—See Saturday, at 3:15 am.

\*10:30 pm (AMC)—*Follow the Fleet* (1936)—One of the more mediocre Rogers-Astaire films, with a plot involving a double romance (Randolph Scott and Harriet Hilliard (Nelson) form the other pair). The film's highlight is Irving Berlin's "Let's Face the Music and Dance." Directed by Mark Sandrich. (DW)

1:05 am (HBOP)—*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 a 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)

2:00 am (Comedy)—*High Anxiety* (1978)—Uneven, to say the least, Mel Brooks comedy, but with rewards for the patient. Brooks is the new chief of a sanitarium, in this homage to and spoof of Hitchcock. With Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman and Harvey Korman. (DW)

3:05 am (Encore)—*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)

4:00 am (TCM)—*Berlin Express* (1948)—Spy drama set in postwar Germany, as agents from a number of countries attempt to rescue politician kidnapped by Nazi underground. With Robert Ryan, Merle Oberon and Paul Likas. Directed by Jacques Tourneur. (DW)

\*4:35 am (AMC)—*Follow the Fleet* (1936)—See 10:30 pm.



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