

# Some interesting films on US television, August 28-September 3

Marty Jonas (MJ), David Walsh (DW)  
28 August 1999

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

*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989)—A thug buys a restaurant and comes in nightly to eat, pontificating about culture and gourmet food, while brutalizing and humiliating everyone around him, customers as well as associates. The clientele usually pretend not to notice and keep on eating. Meanwhile, the thief's wife steals off each night to have an affair with a bookish customer. It all ends up in an orgy of ghastly revenge. Director Peter Greenaway constructs a universe of brutes and the brutalized, obviously meant to be a strong, despairing comment on our own society. It is an amazing personal film, aided by the photography of Sacha Vierny, which explores the panoramic, warehouse-size set of the restaurant, and the music of Michael Nyman, which underlines the action with throbbing insistence. With Helen Mirren, Michael Gambon, Alan Ryan and Tim Roth. **Warning:** Many scenes are disturbing and disgusting, so this is definitely not a film for everyone. (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, August 28

7:30 a.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)

10:05 a.m. (TMC)—*Modern Romance* (1981)—Occasionally amusing film, directed by and starring Albert Brooks as a neurotic film editor obsessed with Kathryn Harrold. (DW)

\*10:30 a.m. (AMC)—*Laura* (1944)—A murder mystery about a woman believed to be dead who suddenly makes an appearance. Otto Preminger directed an extraordinary cast, including Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews, Vincent Price and Clifton Webb. (DW)

1:30 p.m. (Bravo)—*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)

3:00 p.m. (TCM)—*The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T* (1953)—Charming fantasy film based on designs by children's book author Dr. Seuss. With Peter Lind Hayes, Mary Healy, Tommy Rettig and the manic Hans Conried. (MJ)

\*4:00 p.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)

\*8:00 p.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)

\*9:30 p.m. (TCM)—*The Asphalt Jungle* (1950)—One of the best jewel heist films, and one of director John Huston's best. With Sterling Hayden and Louis Calhern (who has the best line: "Crime is nothing but a left-handed form of endeavor"). (MJ)

\*12:45 a.m. (TMC)—*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)

12:45 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)

2:10 a.m. (HBOS)—*The Cotton Club* (1984)—Richard Gere stars in 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)

## Sunday, August 29

8:00 a.m. (HBOS)—*Mr. and Mrs. Bridge* (1990)—James Ivory directed this touching film that follows a reserved Kansas City couple through several decades, revealing much of what really goes on under the surface of their long, seemingly placid relationship. Starring real-life husband and wife Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward in quiet, sensitive performances. Adapted—with inevitable changes and abridgements—from the brilliant but unfilmable pair of novels by Evan S. Connell, Jr. (MJ)

\*8:35 a.m. (Showtime)—*The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1943)—One of Preston Sturges's wonderful comic looks at American morals and manners. Eddie Bracken, Betty Hutton and William Demarest. (DW)

11:00 a.m. (USA)—*Cape Fear* (1991)—Martin Scorsese directed this ambitious, but overblown and generally unsuccessful remake of the 1962 J. Lee Thompson-Robert Mitchum-Gregory Peck film. This time Nick Nolte is a lawyer whose family is stalked by a vicious ex-convict (Robert De Niro). Jessica Lange is Nolte's wife, Juliette Lewis his daughter. (DW)

1:15 p.m. (HBOP)—*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)

3:00 p.m. (A&E)—*Dog Day Afternoon* (1975)—Based on a true story about a man who held up a Brooklyn bank to raise the money for his lover's sex-change operation. With Al Pacino, John Cazale, Charles

Durning. Directed by Sidney Lumet. (DW)

4:00 p.m. (USA)—*Casino* (1995)—Martin Scorsese directed this story about gambling and thugs in Las Vegas in the 1970s. The first ten minutes are spectacular. The drama never really gets going, in the director's typical fashion. With Robert De Niro, Sharon Stone, Joe Pesci, James Woods. (DW)

\*5:00 p.m. (Bravo)—*Foreign Correspondent* (1940)—Joel McCrea is the correspondent caught up in a spy intrigue in Alfred Hitchcock's film, with George Sanders, Robert Benchley, Herbert Marshall, Laraine Day. (DW)

6:00 p.m. (TCM)—*Gaslight* (1944)—Charles Boyer tries to drive Ingrid Bergman mad in George Cukor's period thriller. (DW)

\*8:00 p.m. (AMC)—*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962)—One of John Ford's best films. The story of a man who rises to fame because he shot a notorious outlaw, though the shooting was done by someone else, embodies Ford's philosophy of myth and the West. Starring Jimmy Stewart and John Wayne, in fine performances. (MJ)

9:00 p.m. (TMC)—*Twilight* (1998)—Crisp dialogue and good plotting carry this film about an elderly detective (Paul Newman) solving murders in Hollywood. Excellent cast also includes Gene Hackman, Susan Sarandon and James Garner. Many smart observations about growing old. Directed by Robert Benton, from a screenplay by Benton and novelist Richard Russo. (MJ)

\*9:30 p.m. (Bravo)—*Heavenly Creatures* (1994)—Odd, compelling film, based on fact and set in 1950s New Zealand. Two inseparable teenage girls kill the mother of one to prevent their being parted. Directed by Peter Jackson. With Melanie Lynskey and Kate Winslet. (MJ)

\*10:00 p.m. (TCM)—*Dr. Strangelove* (1963)—Classic satire on nuclear annihilation. Though heavyhanded in parts, it still retains its incisive humor and impact. Peter Sellers is incredible playing several parts, including the President of the United States. Memorable line: "You can't fight in here—it's the War Room!" Directed by Stanley Kubrick. (MJ)

10:30 p.m. (HBOS)—*Mr. and Mrs. Bridge* (1990)—See 8:00 a.m.

12:25 a.m. (IFC)—*Crumb* (1994)—Remarkable portrait of family of cartoonist Robert Crumb. His two dysfunctional brothers prove to be considerably more interesting than he. Directed by Terry Zwigoff. (DW)

\*12:45 a.m. (HBOS)—*The Last Hurrah* (1958)—John Ford adapted this film about US big-city machine politics from the novel by Edwin O'Connor, which was based on the career of Boston's rogue mayor, James Curley. The great Spencer Tracy is perfect in the lead role, as Mayor Frank Skeffington. (MJ)

\*2:00 a.m. (AMC)—*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962)—See 8:00 p.m.

\*3:30 a.m. (Bravo)—*Heavenly Creatures* (1994)—See 9:30 p.m.

#### **Monday, August 30**

\*6:00 a.m. (TCM)—*The Public Enemy* (1931)—James Cagney as a Prohibition gangster in William Wellman's crude, but energetic film. Mae Clarke gets a grapefruit pushed in her face in a famous scene. (DW)

9:30 a.m. (HBOS)—*Enemies, A Love Story* (1989)—Set in post-World War II Brooklyn and the Catskills, Paul Mazursky's faithful adaptation of Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel has Herman, a Jewish intellectual married to the Polish woman who sheltered him during the war, carrying on an affair with a seductive married woman. Then his first wife, presumed dead in Poland, appears at his door. Mazursky's film is humorous and, at the same time, sad, with superb performances by Ron Silver, Anjelica Huston and Lena Olin. (MJ)

\*12:30 p.m. (Bravo)—*Heavenly Creatures* (1994)—See Sunday at 9:30 p.m.

1:30 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)

4:00 p.m. (HBOS)—*The Sun Also Rises* (1957)—Star-filled adaptation

of the Hemingway novel. Glossy and inadequate. Directed by Henry King. (MJ)

4:30 p.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)

6:00 p.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)

\*8:00 p.m. (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)

2:30 a.m. (HBOS)—*The Sun Also Rises* (1957)—See 4:00 p.m.

4:00 a.m. (IFC)—*Crumb* (1994)—See Sunday at 12:25 a.m.

#### **Tuesday, August 31**

6:00 a.m. (TCM)—*The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (1934)—Sidney Franklin directed this stolid and tasteful MGM production, the story of the romance between poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett in Victorian England. With Norma Shearer, Fredric March and Charles Laughton. (DW)

7:45 a.m. (IFC)—*Gray's Anatomy* (1996)—See Monday at 4:30 p.m.

8:00 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)

\*8:00 a.m. (AMC)—*Monsieur Verdoux* (1947)—Chaplin plays a Parisian Bluebeard who murders women for their money. His famous courtroom speech, in which he describes himself as a small fry among mass murderers, did not endear him with US authorities. With the unlikely Martha Raye. (DW)

2:30 p.m. (IFC)—*Gray's Anatomy* (1996)—See Monday at 4:30 p.m.

\*5:05 p.m. (TMC)—*Last Action Hero* (1993)—See Saturday at 4:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m. (HBOS)—*Local Hero* (1983)—Peter Riegert is an American oil company agent commissioned to buy up a Scottish village whose land is needed for an oil refinery. Directed by Bill Forsyth; with Burt Lancaster, Fulton MacKay. (DW)

\*6:30 p.m. (HBO)—*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)

9:00 p.m. (AMC)—*12 Angry Men* (1957)—Gripping film that takes place in only one room as 12 jurors struggle to reach a verdict. During the process each reveals his character. Great cast headed by Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb and E.G. Marshall. Directed by Sidney Lumet. (MJ)

11:00 p.m. (HBOS)—*Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* (1969)—Paul Mazursky's comic, perceptive look at the sexual mores of the American middle class in the 1960s. With Robert Culp, Natalie Wood, Elliott Gould and Dyan Cannon. (MJ)

1:30 a.m. (AMC)—*12 Angry Men* (1957)—See 9:00 p.m.

2:45 a.m. (Cinemax)—*The Devil's Advocate* (1997)—See Saturday at 12:45 a.m.

#### **Wednesday, September 1**

6:00 a.m. (AMC)—*America, America* (1963)—Elia Kazan's account of the immigrant experience, based on his uncle's emigration in the late 19th century. (DW)

\*9:00 a.m. (AMC)—*To Be or Not to Be* (1942)—Ernst Lubitsch's classic black comedy about an acting troupe in Nazi-occupied Warsaw. Jack

Benny is superb as the conceited ham who heads the troupe, and Carole Lombard is his faithless wife. Not to be missed. (MJ)

12:05 p.m. (Showtime)—*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)

2:00 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)

4:30 p.m. (HBO)—*Super Mario Brothers* (1993)—Underrated, highly imaginative film version of the popular video game, to which it bears only a slight resemblance. The two plumber brothers (Bob Hoskins and John Leguizamo) visit an alternate universe in which evolution took a different course, leaving dinosaurs as the dominant species. Dennis Hopper overacts wonderfully as the dinosaur dictator of this world. (MJ)

6:00 p.m. (TCM)—*Dark Victory* (1939)—Bette Davis is a socialite who learns she has a terminal illness. George Brent is her brain surgeon husband. Directed by Edmund Goulding. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)—*The Nun's Story* (1959)—Audrey Hepburn is a nun undergoing a crisis in Fred Zinnemann's stolid film. She serves in the Belgian Congo and later leaves the convent. (DW)

11:00 p.m. (TCM)—*The Song of Bernadette* (1943)—Jennifer Jones is a nineteenth century French girl who sees visions and stirs up a storm in her village, in Henry King's version of the Franz Werfel novel. (DW)

3:20 a.m. (HBO)—*Taxi Driver* (1976)—Paul Schrader wrote and Martin Scorsese directed this bleak, obsessive classic that looks at the underside of New York City. Starring Robert De Niro, Jody Foster and Harvey Keitel. Great score by Bernard Herrmann. (MJ)

4:00 a.m. (A&E)—*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)

4:00 a.m. (FXM)—*A Wedding* (1978)—See 2:00 p.m.

#### **Thursday, September 2**

\*6:00 a.m. (TCM)—*Freaks* (1932)—Tod Browning's astonishing film, really a revenge drama, about a traveling sideshow and its performers. Once described as the most compassionate film ever made. With Olga Baclanova and Wallace Ford. (DW)

7:30 a.m. (TCM)—*Mark of the Vampire* (1935)—One of Tod Browning's remarkable and obsessive horror films. A vampire terrorizes a small village. With Bela Lugosi, Lionel Barrymore and Lionel Atwill. (DW)

9:00 a.m. (TCM)—*Kid Galahad* (1937)—Classic hard-boiled, nonsense Warner Bros. film of the 1930s. Edward G. Robinson is the boxing promoter, Wayne Morris is the fighter on the rise, Bette Davis is the girl who comes between them. Michael Curtiz directed with his customary efficiency and flair. (DW)

10:00 a.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)

10:30 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)

11:30 a.m. (HBO)—*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. (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)

\*1:00 p.m. (HBOP)—*The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985)—See Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

\*1:30 p.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)

2:35 p.m. (Cinemax)—*Next Stop, Greenwich Village* (1976)—A young man (based on the director, Paul Mazursky) moves from Brooklyn to Greenwich village to pursue a career as an actor. He falls in with an assortment of colorful characters. This fond reminiscence of Greenwich Village in the 1950s is unfortunately marred by a stereotyped, overdone Jewish-mother performance by Shelley Winters. With Lenny Baker, Christopher Walken and Ellen Greene. Watch for a brief, performance by then-newcomer Jeff Goldblum, who steals the scene he's in. (MJ)

4:30 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)

5:30 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)

\*6:50 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)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)—*Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956)—Robert Wise directed this competent biography of New York-born boxing champion Rocky Graziano. Paul Newman plays Graziano; with Pier Angeli, Everett Sloane and, in his film debut, Steve McQueen. (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)

10:00 p.m. (TCM)—*Gentleman Jim* (1942)—Errol Flynn makes a dashing Jim Corbett, early boxing champion, in this biography directed by Raoul Walsh. Ward Bond plays John L. Sullivan with panache. Scripted by Vincent Lawrence and Horace McCoy (author of *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, among other hard-boiled works). (DW)

12:00 a.m. (FXM)—*Gentlemen's Agreement* (1947)—See 10:00 a.m.

2:00 a.m. (HBOP)—*The Devil's Advocate* (1997)—See Saturday at 12:45 a.m.

\*2:00 a.m. (TCM)—*Raging Bull* (1980)—Martin Scorsese directed Robert De Niro in this film biography of the boxer Jake La Motta. An interesting work, even if its themes are somewhat obscure. With Cathy Moriarty, Joe Pesci. (DW)

2:30 a.m. (HBOF)—*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)

#### **Friday, September 3**

9:00 a.m. (Cinemax)—*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)

1:00 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)

4:00 p.m. (FXM)—*At Long Last Love* (1975)—See Wednesday at 12:05 p.m.

\*4:00 p.m. (TCM)—*Madame Bovary* (1949)—Vincente Minnelli's film version of the Gustave Flaubert novel about a bored provincial wife who thinks she has found true love. Jennifer Jones is Emma Bovary, with Van Heflin, James Mason. (DW)

6:00 p.m. (FXM)—*Unfaithfully Yours* (1948)—Not Preston Sturges at his best, but still amusing. Rex Harrison is a symphony conductor convinced of his wife's (Linda Darnell's) infidelity. (DW)

9:30 p.m. (HBO)—*Gattaca* (1997)—See 1:00 p.m.

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)

\*2:30 am (HBOS)—*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)



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**