

Some interesting films on US television, November 13-19

Marty Jonas (MJ), David Walsh (DW)
13 November 1999

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

A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies (1995)—Director Martin Scorsese shows the history of American film through the filter of his own experiences as an obsessive filmgoer. Originally done for the British Film Institute and shown on British TV, this is a compelling, intelligent exploration of the art and the industry by a passionate filmmaker. (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, November 13

*6:00 a.m. (Cinemax)—*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)

9:30 a.m. (TCM)—*Anna Christie* (1930)—Greta Garbo is charming, in her first speaking part, as the woman with a past who returns to her father and the sea, and falls in love. Based on the Eugene O'Neill play. Directed turgidly by Clarence Brown; with Charles Bickford. (DW)

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)

6:00 p.m. (AMC)—*The Poseidon Adventure* (1972)—Of interest because it was made when disaster films were peopled by real actors and not filled with ultra-expensive special effects, cartoonish characters, and pretty faces. The preposterous story has a luxury liner and its passengers being turned over by a gigantic ocean wave; the passengers must find their way out of the upside-down vessel. The good cast includes Gene Hackman, Roddy McDowell, Shelley Winters, Ernest Borgnine, and Jack Albertson. Directed by Ronald Neame. (MJ)

6:00 p.m. (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)

*8:00 p.m. (TCM)—*The Fortune Cookie* (1966)—Billy Wilder's ultra-cynical story about a television cameraman (Jack Lemmon) injured during a football game and the attempts by his shyster lawyer (Walter Matthau) to sue for millions. (DW)

12:00 a.m. (AMC)—*The Poseidon Adventure* (1972)—See 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 14

1:15 p.m. (IFC)—*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)

*5:00 p.m. (HBOP)—*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)

5:30 p.m. (AMC)—*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)

6:00 p.m. (TCM)—*The Philadelphia Story* (1940)—George Cukor directed this film adaptation of Philip Barry's stage play about a spoiled mainline socialite yearning for—well, what exactly? One critic calls it "simply the breaking, reining and saddling of an unruly thoroughbred," i.e., Katharine Hepburn. (DW)

8:00 p.m. (TCM)—*Witness for the Prosecution* (1957)—Marlene Dietrich, Tyrone Power and Charles Laughton in Billy Wilder's filming of an Agatha Christie courtroom potboiler. Power's last film. (DW)

*9:30 p.m. (FXM)—*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)

9:45 p.m. (IFC)—*Tommy* (1975)—See 1:15 p.m.

11:45 p.m. (Encore)—*Lost in America* (1985)—Yuppies, played by Albert Brooks (who also directed) and Julie Hagerty, give up their good corporate jobs to tour the country in an RV, with disastrous (and funny) results. (MJ)

2:00 a.m. (IFC)—*Tommy* (1975)—See 1:15 p.m.

*3:00 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)

Monday, November 15

6:00 a.m. (TCM)—*Julius Caesar* (1953)—Joseph L. Mankiewicz's intelligently filmed version of Shakespeare's tragedy. James Mason as Brutus, John Gielgud as Cassius, Louis Calhern as Caesar and Marlon Brando as Antony. (DW)

*6:30 a.m. (Cinemax)—*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)

6:55 a.m. (TMC)—*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)

8:30 a.m. (HBOS)— *Gilda* (1946)—Rita Hayworth (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)

10:15 a.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)

10:45 a.m. (Showtime)— *The Naked Jungle* (1954)—Above-average jungle adventure directed by Byron Haskin, with Charlton Heston and Eleanor Parker. (DW)

12:45 p.m. (HBOS)— *Play It Again, Sam* (1972)—See Saturday at 6:00 p.m.

3:00 p.m. (AMC)— *Deadline U.S.A.* (1952)—Humphrey Bogart as a crusading editor, trying to keep a big city newspaper alive. Ethel Barrymore plays the paper's owner. Directed by Richard Brooks. (DW)

4:00 p.m. (IFC)— *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1966)—See 10:15 a.m.

*6:10 p.m. (Encore)— *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986)—The affairs and careers of neurotic, middle class New Yorkers. Barbara Hershey is excellent, as are Mia Farrow and Dianne Wiest. One of Woody Allen's serious efforts—how successful an effort, let the viewer decide. (DW)

6:15 p.m. (Showtime)— *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)

8:00 p.m. (FXM)— *Compulsion* (1959)—Richard Brooks's fictionalized account of the Leopold-Loeb "thrill" killings of the 1920s. Best thing about the film is Orson Welles in Clarence Darrow role. (DW)

9:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *Gilda* (1946)—See 8:30 a.m.

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. (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)

10:15 p.m. (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)

*2:00 a.m. (Bravo)— *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)—John Ford's version of the John Steinbeck classic novel, about the Joad family, driven from their home in the 1930s "Dust Bowl." Henry Fonda plays Tom Joad. With Jane Darwell, John Carradine. (DW)

*4:00 a.m. (Encore)— *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986)—See 6:10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 16

6:00 a.m. (HBOS)— *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)

6:00 a.m. (TCM)— *The Philadelphia Story* (1940)—See Sunday at 6:00 p.m.

7:35 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)

7:45 a.m. (IFC)— *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1966)—See Monday at 10:15 a.m.

is spectacular *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* a.m. (1928)—Of the later silent films, not directed by him (Charles F. Riesner). Buster must prove his toughness to his father, a steamboat captain. Anything with Keaton is essential viewing. (DW)

10:00 a.m. (Cinemax)— *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)

10:30 a.m. (AMC)— *Little Fugitive* (1953)—Odd independent film, directed by Morris Engel, about a young boy who thinks he's killed his brother and gets lost in Coney Island. Interesting shots of 1950s New York City. (DW)

*12:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *The Ice Storm* (1997)—See Sunday at 5:00 p.m.

*12:30 p.m. (Bravo)— *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)—See Monday at 2:00 a.m.

4:00 p.m. (TCM)— *In the Good Old Summertime* (1949)—This musical remake of *The Shop Around the Corner* is one of the fine films from MGM's Golden Age. With Judy Garland and Van Johnson. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard. (MJ)

4:00 p.m. (AMC)— *You Can't Take It With You* (1938)—Frank Capra's version of the George S. Kaufman-Moss Hart comedy about the antics of an eccentric during the Depression. Starring James Stewart and Jean Arthur. (DW)

*5:10 p.m. (TMC)— *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)

6:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *A Place in the Sun* (1951)—See 6:00 a.m.

8:00 p.m. (IFC)— *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)

1:30 a.m. (IFC)— *A Midnight Clear* (1992)—See 8:00 p.m.

4:00 a.m. (Encore)— *Night and the City* (1992)—Fair remake of the superb 1950 film noir by Jules Dassin. In this version, directed by Irwin Winkler, Robert De Niro takes the Richard Widmark part, and the scene is shifted from London to New York City. The shady world of boxing promotion is well captured in the screenplay by Richard Price. (MJ)

Wednesday, November 17

*5:00 a.m. (Sundance)— *The Big Lebowski* (1998)—A lovable, sprawling mess of a film by the Coen brothers about mistaken identity and bowling. Generally hilarious. With Jeff Bridges, John Goodman and Steve Buscemi. (MJ)

10:00 a.m. (Cinemax)— *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, José 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)

2:30 p.m. (TCM)— *Nothing Sacred* (1937)—Fredric March is a cynical reporter who sets out to make headlines with the story of a Vermont girl (Carole Lombard) supposedly dying from radium poisoning. Ben Hecht wrote the script and William Wellman directed. (DW)

*4:00 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)

5:45 p.m. (TMC)— *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979)—Clint Eastwood plays a convict determined to break out of Alcatraz, the supposedly inescapable prison. Based on a true story, the film methodically follows Eastwood's efforts. Directed by Don Siegel. (DW)

4:50 a.m. (Encore)— *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955)—Otto Preminger directed this film about a heroin addict (Frank Sinatra), the woman who loves him (Kim Novak) and the lowlifes he consorts with. Based on the book by Nelson Algren. (DW)

4:50 a.m. (TMC)— *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979)—See 5:45 p.m.

Thursday, November 18

8:45 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. (Starz)— *The Inner Circle* (1991)—A meek movie projectionist (Tom Hulce) finds himself suddenly a favorite of Stalin's. A harrowing picture of life during the purges. With Lolita Davidovich and Bob Hoskins. Directed by Andrei Konchalovsky. (MJ)

2:00 p.m. (FXM)— *An Affair to Remember* (1957)—Leo McCarey directed this remake of his own 1939 *Love Affair* (Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer), this time with Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr. A shipboard romance has unexpected complications on land. Sentimental, but it has something. (DW)

*4:00 p.m. (AMC)— *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940)—Thoroughly enchanting version of the tale of magic and heroism based on *The Arabian Nights*. Dazzling Technicolor, superb Miklos Rosza score. With Sabu, Conrad Veidt and Rex Ingram (as the genie). Directed by Ludwig Berger, Tim Whelan and Michael Powell. One of the fine films produced by Alexander Korda. (MJ)

4:15 p.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)

*6:00 p.m. (HBOP)— *The Ice Storm* (1997)—See Sunday at 5:00 p.m.

12:30 a.m. (Bravo)— *A Midnight Clear* (1992)—See Tuesday at 8:00 p.m.

1:00 a.m. (HBO)— *The Devil's Advocate* (1997)—See Monday at 10:15 p.m.

2:05 a.m. (HBOS)— *A Place in the Sun* (1951)—See Tuesday at 6:00 a.m.

4:10 a.m. (HBOS)— *Enemies, A Love Story* (1989)—See 4:15 p.m.

Friday, November 19

5:05 a.m. (Encore)— *Carousel* (1956)—Hollywood turned a great dark Broadway musical into a perky feel-good film. Most of the Rodgers and Hammerstein songs are intact, however. Starring Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones. Directed by Henry King. (MJ)

6:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Cimarron* (1931)—Dated early sound Western epic; a version of Edna Ferber's account of an American family living on the frontier in Oklahoma 1890-1915. Wesley Ruggles directed; with Richard Dix hamming it up, and Irene Dunne. (DW)

*7:00 a.m. (AMC)— *The Blue Angel* (1930)—Josef von Sternberg's classic, adapted from a novel by Heinrich Mann, about a middle-aged professor (Emil Jannings) who falls for a night-club singer (Marlene Dietrich). (DW)

8:30 a.m. (TCM)— *What Price Hollywood* (1932)—Early critical view of

Hollywood, with Constance Bennett as a waitress who becomes a movie star and Lowell Sherman as an alcoholic film director. George Cukor directed. (DW)

*9:15 a.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)

10:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Morning Glory* (1935)—Katharine Hepburn is a small-town girl who tries to make it as an actress in New York City. Hepburn, according to one critic, displays "a self-mocking irony and delirious rapture that few actresses have ever attempted, much less achieved." Directed by Lowell Sherman. (DW)

10:15 a.m. (AMC)— *His Girl Friday* (1940)—Marvelous film version of Ben Hecht-Charles MacArthur's *The Front Page*, co-scripted by Hecht, with Cary Grant as scheming editor and Rosalind Russell as his star reporter trying to get married to Ralph Bellamy. Directed by Howard Hawks. (DW)

10:15 a.m. (Showtime)— *The Naked Jungle* (1954)—See Monday at 10:45 a.m.

10:20 a.m. (TMC)— *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)

1:40 p.m. (TMC)— *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994)—See Monday at 6:55 a.m.

2:00 p.m. (FXM)— *The Razor's Edge* (1946)—An overlong film, with some embarrassingly silly moments, but also some extraordinarily believable ones. With Tyrone Power, looking for the meaning of life, Gene Tierney, Anne Baxter. Directed by Edmund Goulding, from the novel by Somerset Maugham. (DW)

2:00 p.m. (TCM)— *King Kong* (1933)—Beauty and the Beast story, with Fay Wray as the former and an animated ape as the latter. Last ten minutes are worth waiting for. Directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack. (DW)

*4:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Top Hat* (1935)—One of the finest of the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musicals, directed by Mark Sandrich. The plot, for those who care, involves mistaken identity. It is the songs by Irving Berlin and the dance numbers that count here, including "Cheek to Cheek," "Isn't This a Lovely Day To Be Caught in the Rain," and "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails." (DW)

4:30 p.m. (Cinemax)— *Gattaca* (1997)—See Saturday at 4:30 p.m.

*6:00 p.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)

*8:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Citizen Kane* (1941)—Orson Welles's classic work, the tragic story of a newspaper tycoon with delusions of grandeur. Based loosely on the life of millionaire William Randolph Hearst, the film was essentially suppressed when it came out. (DW)

9:00 p.m. (Bravo)— *A Midnight Clear* (1992)—See Thursday at 12:30 a.m.

*10:15 p.m. (TCM)— *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942)—Considered by some to be Orson Welles's finest work. The film, based on a Booth Tarkinson novel, examines the impact of social and economic change on a small town family. Joseph Cotten, Ray Collins, Agnes Moorehead are brilliant. The film was taken out of Welles's hands and an ending added. (DW)

10:35 p.m. (AMC)— *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)

*12:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Suspicion* (1941)—Joan Fontaine is a new bride who believes her husband, Cary Grant, is trying to kill her. According to the book, he was, but Hollywood's production Code forbid it. With Nigel Bruce; directed by Alfred Hitchcock. (DW)

3:30 a.m. (TCM)— *The Big Sky* (1952)—One of Howard Hawks's most unsettling Westerns. For the first hour and a half the film seems simply to be a picturesque adventure story, then Hawks makes something different out of it. With Kirk Douglas, Dewey Martin, Arthur Hunnicutt and Elizabeth Threatt. (DW)

4:00 a.m. (FXM)— *The Razor's Edge* (1946)—See 2:00 p.m.

4:30 a.m. (AMC)— *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)—See 10:35 p.m.

4:40 a.m. (TMC)— *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994)—See Monday at 6:55 a.m.



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