

Some interesting films on US television, November 27-December 3

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

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

The New Age (1994)—The super-yuppie Witners both lose their high-paying jobs during the Recession. To maintain their spoiled, Southern California lifestyle they join various cults, consort with bizarre gurus, and open a trendy boutique that rapidly goes under. They are no longer invited to parties because failure is depressing. Michael Tolkin wrote and directed this cutting satire in manic style. Peter Weller and the always remarkable Judy Davis play the frantic couple. (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 27

*5:00 a.m. (History)—*The Searchers* (1956)—John Ford classic. John Wayne and Jeffrey Hunter search for Wayne's niece, taken by Indians. Natalie Wood plays the girl. An essential American film. (DW)

5:00 a.m. (TCM)—*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)

7:30 a.m. (HBO)—*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)

*8:35 a.m. (Encore)—*The 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)

*9:30 a.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)

*9:45 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)

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)

12:30 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 p.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)

1:30 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)

*3:00 p.m. (TCM)—*An American in Paris* (1951)—Classic MGM musical directed by Vincente Minnelli and built around its Gershwin score; Alan Jay Lerner wrote the screenplay. Gene Kelly is an artist torn between gamine Leslie Caron and wealthy Nina Foch. With the irrepressible Oscar Levant. (DW)

*6:05 p.m. (AMC)—*Stagecoach* (1939)—Famed western, directed by John Ford, about a group of disparate passengers thrown together on the same eventful journey. Starring John Wayne, Claire Trevor, Thomas Mitchell, John Carradine. Dudley Nichols wrote the script. (DW)

6:30 p.m. (IFC)—*What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1966)—See 10:15 a.m.

*8:00 p.m. (A&E)—*Horatio Hornblower* (1999) [Episodes 1 and 2]—This series—based on the novels of C.S. Forester—first appeared on British TV and then on US cable TV. In four two-hour episodes, it follows the career of young Horatio Hornblower from midshipman in the royal navy to commissioned lieutenant, in the context of the French Revolution and the subsequent war between France and England. The series is distinguished by superior acting (especially by Ioan Gruffudd as Hornblower and Robert Lindsay as Captain Pellew) and scrupulous attention to historical detail. It has some of the best battles at sea ever put on film. The fourth episode "The Wrong War" is particularly good at showing the class issues at stake in the French Revolution. (MJ)

9:45 p.m. (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 after murdering her child as a sacrifice to God. With David Duchovny. (MJ)

*12:00 a.m. (A&E)—*Horatio Hornblower* (1999) [Episodes 1 and 2]—See 8:00 p.m.

*12:15 a.m. (AMC)—*Stagecoach* (1939)—See 6:05 p.m.

1:40 a.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)

3:15 a.m. (IFC)—*The Rapture* (1991)—See 9:45 p.m.

Sunday, November 28

6:15 a.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)

6:30 a.m. (Cinemax)—*Sunrise at Campobello* (1960)—This biographical

work about Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt is not a great film, but worth seeing for its historical content. Directed by Vincent J. Donehue, with Ralph Bellamy and Greer Garson. (DW)

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

*11:00 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)

*2:05 p.m. (Starz)— *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)

4:00 p.m. (TCM)— *The Thin Man* (1934)—The first of the films featuring husband-and-wife detection team of Nick and Nora Charles, with more than a touch of madcap comedy. With William Powell and Myrna Loy as the duo. Directed by W.S. Van Dyke. (MJ)

4:45 p.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)

*6:45 p.m. (TMC)— *Last Action Hero* (1993)—See 2:05 p.m.

8:00 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)

*8:00 p.m. (A&E)— *Horatio Hornblower* (1999) [Episodes 3 and 4]—See Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

10:00 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)

*11:00 p.m. (Sundance)— *The Big Lebowski* (1998)—See 11:00 a.m.

*12:00 a.m. (A&E)— *Horatio Hornblower* (1999) [Episodes 3 and 4]—See Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

*2:35 a.m. (HBOS)— *The Ice Storm* (1997)—See Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

Monday, November 29

6:00 a.m. (Cinemax)— *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965)—Cold War melodrama of double- and triple-agents, based on the John Le Carre novel, with Richard Burton as the embittered British agent and Oskar Werner. Directed by Martin Ritt. (DW)

6:25 a.m. (Encore)— *All That Heaven Allows* (1955)—Extraordinarily perceptive view of postwar America. Jane Wyman plays a rich woman in love with a gardener. Her children and friends do everything to disrupt the relationship. The scene in which her children give her a television as a present is a classic. Directed by Douglas Sirk, the basis for R.W. Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. (DW)

11:10 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)

11:15 a.m. (HBOS)— *Chinatown* (1974)—See Saturday at 9:45 a.m.

12:00 p.m. (FX)— *The Fly* (1986)—David Cronenberg's film about a scientist (Jeff Goldblum) who experiments on himself and evolves into a human fly. Cronenberg apparently saw his character's condition as a metaphor for AIDS. Geena Davis is the woman who stands by him. As usual, Cronenberg gets caught up in the machinery of his conceits and loses track of his theme. (DW)

*1:20 p.m. (Encore)— *Barry Lyndon* (1975)—An intelligent adaptation

of William Thackeray's novel about an 18th-century scoundrel who gets his comeuppance, directed by Stanley Kubrick. (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)

*9:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *Chinatown* (1974)—See Saturday at 9:45 a.m.

1:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Vivacious Lady* (1938)—Not director George Stevens at his best, but an entertaining film about a college professor (James Stewart) marrying a night-club singer (Ginger Rogers), and having to let his strait-laced family in on the news. (DW)

*3:00 a.m. (Showtime)— *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)

Tuesday, November 30

*7:45 a.m. (Cinemax)— *High Sierra* (1941)—Wonderful, hard-boiled Raoul Walsh film about an ex-convict (Humphrey Bogart) and the two women in his life, a lame girl, Joan Leslie, whose treatment he pays for, and the tough, no-nonsense Ida Lupino. Final chase sequence in the mountains captures something essential about America. Written by John Huston and W.R. Burnett. (DW)

*12:30 p.m. (HBOP)— *The Ice Storm* (1997)—See Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

1:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *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)

2:00 p.m. (TCM)— *Captain Horatio Hornblower* (1951)—Raoul Walsh directed this sea epic set in the Napoleonic wars, based on the C.S. Forester novels, in his vivid, muscular style. Some remarkable sequences. The normally dull Gregory Peck is well-cast as Hornblower. (DW)

10:00 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)

12:00 a.m. (TCM)— *Harlan County, U.S.A.* (1977)—Powerful documentary by Barbara Kopple about the mineworkers strike in Harlan County, Kentucky. (MJ)

Wednesday, December 1

10:00 a.m. (FXM)— *Young Frankenstein* (1974)—One of Mel Brooks's 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)

*12:00 p.m. (FX)— *The Stepfather* (1987)—Gruesome slasher film that is actually a clever attack on the values of the Reagan era. A psychotic killer goes from city to city, marrying widows with children. When they fail to meet his high standards of a perfect family, he slays them all and moves on. A sleeper that shouldn't be missed. Starring Terry O'Quinn as the stepfather. Directed by Joseph Ruben. (MJ)

2:00 p.m. (TBS)— *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964)—In the first of Sergio Leone's Italian Westerns Clint Eastwood, in the role that made him a star, plays the Man With No Name. The story, a remake of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, involves warring families in a border town. Ennio Morricone's score is striking. With Gian Maria Volonte and Marianne Koch. (DW)

2:45 p.m. (Showtime)— *Young Frankenstein* (1974)—See 10:00 a.m.

8:00 p.m. (FXM)— *Young Frankenstein* (1974)—See 10:00 a.m.

*9:00 p.m. (TMC)— *The Big Lebowski* (1998)—See Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

*10:00 p.m. (AMC)— *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)—Nicholas Ray's socially conscious portrait of disaffected youth, with James Dean, Natalie

Wood, Sal Mineo. Memorable scene in a planetarium. (DW)

12:00 a.m. (FXM)— *Young Frankenstein* (1974)—See 10:00 a.m.

2:05 a.m. (TBS)— *For a Few Dollars More* (1966)—The sequel to *A Fistful of Dollars*. One of the more memorable "spaghetti Westerns"; with Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef and Gian Maria Volonte, directed by Sergio Leone. (DW)

*4:00 a.m. (A&E)— *Night Moves* (1975)—Superior mystery in which a good deal is happening under the surface, and things are not what seem. Gene Hackman plays a world-weary private eye searching for an actress's spoiled missing daughter. Directed by Arthur Penn. (MJ)

Thursday, December 2

10:30 a.m. (AMC)— *They Live by Night* (1949)—Wonderful, tragic film directed by Nicholas Ray about doomed young lovers during the Depression. Based on Edward Anderson's *Thieves Like Us*, remade, under that title, in 1974 by Robert Altman. With Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell. (DW)

12:15 p.m. (AMC)— *Dark Command* (1940)—Raoul Walsh directed this lively Hollywood version of the rise and fall of the murderous Quantrill raiders, active in Kansas during the Civil War. Walter Pidgeon plays William Quantrill, John Wayne is the marshal with whom he clashes. (DW)

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)

*6:00 p.m. (HBOS)— *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)

*6:00 p.m. (Showtime)— *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)

10:45 p.m. (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)

2:05 a.m. (Encore)— *The Warriors* (1979)—Walter Hill's bizarre and exciting retelling of Xenophon's ancient Greek classic *The March Up-Country*. Set in nighttime New York City, the film shows members of a juvenile gang fighting their way back to the Bronx. (MJ)

Friday, December 3

7:00 a.m. (Cinemax)— *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)

*9:00 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)

*12:30 a.m. (Bravo)— *Heavenly Creatures* (1994)—See 9:00 p.m.

3:45 a.m. (Encore)— *The Mephisto Waltz* (1971)—Effective, eerie film about a journalist (Alan Alda) who makes a deal with the devil to become a great concert pianist. With Curt Jurgens. Directed by Paul Wendkos. (MJ)

4:00 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 1930s film musicals is not enough. One of the great bombs. With Madeline Kahn (often funny, despite her material) and John Hillerman. (MJ)

*4:00 a.m. (Cinemax)— *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)



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